

Planning a 4-H Field Trip

A Guide for 4-H Clubs & Project Groups in
Washington County



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Why Go On a Field Trip?

Determine the reason and value for venturing outside of your typical club or project meeting.

Identify what you want youth members to “get” out of the field trip.

Make sure the destination is tied in to your charter goals and/or learning goals.

Involve youth members in discussions about why the club or group may want to go on a field trip.

Some Field Trip Ideas:

- Environmental and nature centers
- Bird sanctuaries and wildlife refuges
- Historical sites
- Natural attractions, including state and national parks
- Hiking, biking, walking, canoeing
- Farms, orchards, greenhouses, nurseries
- Factories and corporations
- Government offices and agencies
- University campuses, laboratories, and research stations
- Hospitals and veterinary clinics
- Museums
- Cultural festivals
- Supermarkets and other retail stores
- Zoos, hatcheries, aquariums
- Radio & television stations, newspapers
- Police and fire stations
- Restaurants and bakeries

Where Will You Go?

Plan ahead and use these questions to evaluate destinations:

- What will be learned?
- What teaching methods will be used?
- What opportunities for hands-on experiences will be included?
- How can the field trip be used to introduce a project or to culminate a project?
- How can it be made more special and fun?

Look for destinations that:

- Match needs of the club or project members
- Are relevant and interesting to youth (give them choices when possible)
- Are affordable
- Are close by

How to Decide

Involve club or project members in researching field trip destinations and voting on their choice. An interactive voting method allows all youth to feel comfortable sharing their opinion.

Sticker Voting

Materials needed: Large pieces of paper, tape, one sticker for each youth

1. Review the details of each field trip destination with the youth members.
2. Tape large pieces of paper to the wall (one for each possible field trip destination). Write the name of the destination on the piece of paper. For younger members, you may want to include a picture of the destination.
3. Give each youth a sticker. Tell them to place the sticker on the paper for their top choice for a field trip destination.
4. Count up the stickers on each piece of paper. The field trip destination with the most stickers is where you will go!

Planning Ahead

Call Your Destination In Advance

Call your field trip destination and cover the following things:

- Make reservations if needed.
- Find out if there are fees; ask for group rate discounts and check methods of payment.
- Visit site in advance if possible.
- Determine how accessible the site is for people with disabilities.
- Identify where the bathrooms are when you get there.

Call the UW-Extension Staff

Contact the 4-H Youth Development Educator or 4-H Youth Development Staff Assistant to talk through your field trip plans and discuss risk management for the experience.

Communicating with Participants

Make sure to communicate important information to participants ahead of time.

- **Food** – Will they need to bring bag lunches or will they be buying lunch at the destination? Will snacks be provided?
- **Clothing** - What is appropriate clothing for participants to wear? (Example: There may be certain types of shoes to wear or not to wear). If you have club or group t-shirts, field trips are a great opportunity to wear these. It showcases your group identity and also makes it easier to visually identify who is a part of your group.
- **Photos** - Are cameras allowed at this destination? If so, let participants know to bring them along.
- **Money** - Will the participants need to bring money for food, entrance fees, souvenirs, etc.? Clearly communicate this ahead of time.
- **Emergency Contact Information** – Who should families call the day of the trip if someone is sick or cannot make it? Also be sure to discuss an emergency plan with the group just in case you have to leave your destination suddenly, or if a participant gets sick during your trip. Collect the emergency contact information for parents/guardians of all participants.

Talk It Over

Mentally prepare participants for the visit through a group discussion.

- Explain where they are going and what they will do or see.
- Agree on rules of behavior and safety.
- Encourage them to think of questions to ask when they get there.
- Identify some of the things to look for at your destination.

Paying for Expenses

Some destinations offer group rates for certain sizes of groups. Be sure to explore options for discounts.

Will the field trip be paid for through club funds? If so, the club members need to approve this expenditure, either through the club or group annual budget or through a voting process at a regular meeting.

Things to consider:

- If members have to pay for the field trip themselves, will the cost be prohibitive? If the destination has a high price of admission, would this prevent families from participating?
- If club funds are being used, who will they pay for?
 - Clubs often choose to cover the field trip fees for enrolled youth members in good standing, enrolled adult volunteers, and chaperones. This must be approved by the club or group membership. Work with the youth treasurer to evaluate how this might impact your club or group budget.
 - Will siblings or other parents/guardians be invited to participate? If so, the club/group will need to pay for their accident insurance coverage. Typically these participants are asked to cover their own fees for participating in the fieldtrip.
 - Is there a maximum number of people who can participate? If so, what is an equitable way to arrange sign-up for this opportunity?

Selecting Chaperones

Ratio: A ratio of 1 adult chaperone for every 10 youth is recommended. A lower ratio is recommended if you are working with younger children.

For overnight events, this ratio is required. The preference is also to have the ratio of like gender (e.g. 1 male chaperone to 10 male youth). Allowances can be made, if necessary, when both genders are staying in the same facility (e.g. hotel rooms located next to each other). However, it is recommended that more than one female chaperone check male rooms and that the females not enter the male rooms (and vice versa) or that male and female chaperones check rooms together. If the facility does not allow for lodging in a similar proximity (e.g. dorm rooms or camp cabins) the like gender ratio should apply.

Age Requirements: Chaperones must be at least 21 years of age.

Expectations of Chaperones: Chaperones need a role description that outlines what is expected of them while serving in this volunteer role. In cases of emergencies, chaperones need to focus on the youth member and their emergency care. It is recommended that chaperones be enrolled adult volunteers who have gone through the 4-H Youth Protection Process and this is required if chaperoning overnight events.

Transportation

Option #1 (Highly Recommended): Use a Bus.

Local bus companies include Johnson Bus Company, Wittenberg, and Riteway Bus. Renting a bus with a trained driver transfers the risk to the bus company and is the recommended option for 4-H field trips.

Getting there can be half the fun! Invite youth members to plan songs and games for the bus ride. Be sure to respect the bus driver's need to focus on the road if you plan to sing/play games along the way.

When renting vehicles or chartering busses for transporting participants, it is recommended that insurance be purchased from the rental agency. Rental should be in the name of the 4-H club or group. Insurance offered by the rental dealer may be secondary coverage. If you need assistance on rental of vehicles, please contact the 4-H Youth Development Staff.

Option #2: Everyone is responsible for their own transportation.

That means that each family or member must either drive themselves or arrange their own transportation to the field trip destination. Remember that the Washington County 4-H Leaders Association has a driving policy that prohibits youth members from driving alone or transporting other 4-H youth members for out-of-county overnight programs due to the concern of liability.

Option #3: Participants Arrange Their Own Carpooling.

Personal transportation to and from 4-H program activities is the responsibility of the youth participant and his or her parent/guardian. That means that if they want to carpool, families need to connect with each other to arrange a carpool situation.

Best practice, and the state recommendation, is for drivers transporting youth to be at least 18 years of age with at least 2 years of successful driving experience, a valid driver's license and automobile insurance. Driving personal vehicles for 4-H events is the **least recommended** transportation option as personal insurance will be primary. The county insurance coverage may be excess coverage depending on the situation.

Use of 12/15-passenger vans for transporting youth is highly discouraged; UW-Extension staff members are prohibited from driving these vehicles.

If you are coordinating a field trip for a 4-H club or project group, let the participants know that they will have to arrange their own transportation. You can provide phone numbers of participating youth from the group so that families may arrange carpooling on their own. You should not initiate the carpooling arrangements in your 4-H adult volunteer role, because this places additional liability in your hands.

If families choose to carpool, plan ahead and think about these things:

- Have maps and directions available for all participants.
- Identify if stops will be needed along the way. Consider the need to schedule bathroom breaks.

Creating a Safe Field Trip Environment

- Secure accident insurance coverage for any participants who are not already enrolled 4-H youth members or adult volunteers, "just in case." UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Staff can help you secure that insurance coverage.
- Bring first aid kits. Try to bring along adults with First Aid or CPR training.
- Keep kids together. Do periodic head counts. You can assign each youth a number and then have them count off in order.
- Break into smaller, more manageable groups. Have check-in times if the group splits up.
- Assign "buddies" or "treddies" (pairs or groups of three youth who will look out for each other).

Use the 4-H Youth Development Risk Management Checklist (included in this guide) to think through a safety plan for your club or group field trip. If you have any questions about any of the items on this list, please contact the UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Staff.

Capture the Memories

Ask your club historian to come along and take photos so that it will be captured in your club scrapbook.

Invite the club reporter to write an article about the field trip learning experience.

After the Field Trip

Evaluate the experience and share reactions of participants:

- What did participants learn? How did the experience relate to the 4-H project or real life?
- What did participants like and dislike? Why?
- What could be improved?

Have youth decide how they want to thank people (handwritten notes, big cards with group signatures, send souvenirs/mementos, post cards, etc.) Write thank you notes/letters to all who helped (parents, chaperones, tour guides, etc.) This leaves a positive, lasting impression of 4-H and its members.

Sources

Risk Management for 4-H Youth Development Volunteers

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/resources/mgt/documents/RiskManagementfor4-HVolunteers42012.pdf>

Planning a Successful Field Trip – Clemson University

http://www.clemson.edu/extension/4h/volunteers/files/Its_fieldtrips.pdf

Planning a Successful Field Trip – University of Florida

<http://florida4h.org/volunteers/training/files/VTS/Section3/Planning%20a%20Successful%20Field%20Trip-%20print%20ready.pdf>

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