

2025-2026 TEXAS 4-H RECORD BOOK

FAMILY GUIDE

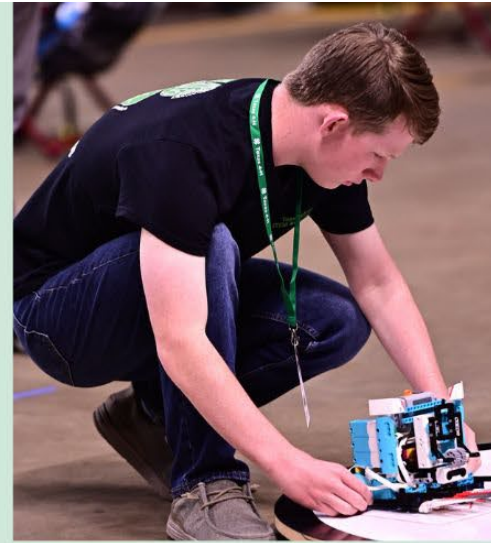
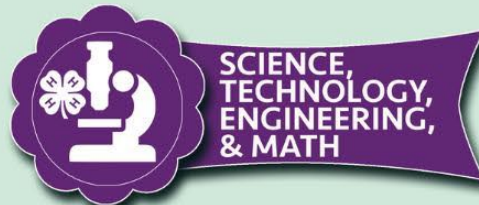


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WHY RECORDKEEPING MATTERS

Recordkeeping is a valuable skill taught to members of the Texas 4-H program. Members are encouraged to keep project records and have these records reviewed annually by submitting a Texas 4-H Record Book. The primary purposes of completing a Record Book are for a young person to develop the skills necessary to set goals, work toward achieving those goals, reflect on his/her experiences, and set new and higher goals for themselves. A secondary benefit is to prepare young people for the process of completing academic scholarship and/or collegiate admission applications.

The Texas 4-H Record Book is the tool where youth practice this skill. Members gather and organize their project experiences into a formal document. Some complete a book just for the learning experience, while others submit their books to compete at the County, District, or State level.

PURPOSE OF THE RECORD BOOK

The Record Book helps 4-H members:

- Show how they have grown, what they've learned, and where they want to improve.
- Understand the value of keeping written records.
- Practice goal-setting and documenting the steps to reach those goals.
- Gain confidence for future applications (scholarships, college admissions, and jobs).

THE RECORD-KEEPING PROCESS

1. Goal Setting – Getting Started

At the beginning of the 4-H year, members should set personal goals for each project. Parents, club managers, volunteers, and County Extension Agents can guide them in this process. Goals can be anything a member wants to learn or achieve.

2. Journaling – Recording As You Go

The best records are kept *as things happen*. Members can choose whichever method works best:

- Calendar – Write down every 4-H activity on a wall or desk calendar, then file it away at the end of each month.
- Notebook or Binder – Write down activities by date or category, keeping them all in one place.
- Electronic Device – Use apps or spreadsheets to track events, trainings, leadership, or finances (for example, the “4-H Livestock Record” app).

3. Reflecting – Looking Back

Reflection is what turns recordkeeping into learning. When preparing the Record Book, members should ask themselves:

- What did I learn from my projects?
- Did I achieve my goals? If yes, what helped me? If not, what obstacles got in the way?
- How did my projects grow or change over time?
- Did I take on any leadership roles?
- What impact did my involvement have on my club or community?
- How have these experiences influenced my future goals or career path?

WHAT MAKES UP A RECORD BOOK?

A complete Texas 4-H Record Book includes:

- **Report Forms** – Documentation of goals, activities, leadership, and awards.
- **Narratives** – Written reflections where youth explain their growth and experiences.
- **Photo Portfolio** – Pictures showing their 4-H journey

The finished book is printed, bound, and submitted for evaluation. Whether or not a member competes, the process itself builds skills that will serve them for a lifetime.

Record Books contain 4 parts: (all three age divisions: Junior, Intermediate, and Senior)

1. Personal Information Page
2. Narratives (number of narratives required varies by age)
3. Photo Portfolio
4. Report Forms

All age divisions (Junior, Intermediate, and Senior) complete the same Report Form; however, the number of allowable entries and pages varies by age group. Members may include information from their entire 4-H career, but they should be sure to highlight and include details from the current year.

	Junior Grades 3-5 (Clover Kid years should not be included)	Intermediate Grades 6-8	Senior Grades 9-12
Personal Information Page	Include	Include	Include
Narratives & Photo Portfolio	<i>Must be 12-point font Use Times Roman, Arial or Calibri Fonts. 1 page Single Space The text and the photos DO NOT incorporate together on the same page DO NOT REMOVE THE HEADERS/INSTRUCTIONS ON THE TOP OF PAGES</i>		
About Me Narrative	Max : 1 page – 12 point font. Single Spaced	Max : 1 page – 12 point font. Single Spaced	Max : 1 page – 12 point font. Single Spaced
Photo Portfolio	Max 1 page 4–6 photos minimum	Max 1 page 4–6 photos minimum	Max 1 page 4 photos minimum
4-H Report Form Sections	<i>10-point font minimum – DO NOT REMOVE THE HEADERS/INSTRUCTIONS ON THE TOP OF PAGES ** DO NOT INCLUDE CLOVER YEAR INFORMATION **</i>		
I – 4-H Project Experiences	Entire 4-H Career Encourage 4 projects 4 pages max	Entire 4-H Career Encourage 4 projects 5 pages max	Entire 4-H Career Encourage 4 projects 6 pages max
II – 4-H Leadership Experiences	Entire 4-H Career Max: 10 entries 1 page max	Entire 4-H Career Max: 15 entries 2 pages max	Entire 4-H Career Max: 25 entries 3 pages max
III – 4-H Community Service	Entire 4-H Career Max: 10 entries 1 page max	Entire 4-H Career Max: 15 entries 2 pages max	Entire 4-H Career Max: 25 entries 3 pages max
IV – 4-H Recognition & Awards	Entire 4-H Career Max: 10 entries 1 page max	Entire 4-H Career Max: 15 entries 2 pages max	Entire 4-H Career Max: 25 entries 3 pages max
V – Non-4-H Activities	Up to 3 years 1 page max	Up to 4 years 1 page max	Up to 4 years 1 page max
VI – College & Career Exploration	Response to question Entire 4-H Career Max: 10 entries 1 page max	Response to question Entire 4-H Career Max: 15 entries 1 page max	Response to question Entire 4-H Career Max: 15 entries 2 pages max
Additional Narratives <i>IF THE NARRATIVE DOES NOT APPLY TO YOUR AGE DIVISION, YOU DO NOT HAVE TO INCLUDE THESE SECTIONS IN YOUR RECORD BOOK</i>	<i>Must be 12-point font Use Times Roman, Arial or Calibri Fonts. 1 page Single Space The text and the photos DO NOT incorporate together on the same page DO NOT REMOVE THE HEADERS/INSTRUCTIONS ON THE TOP OF PAGES</i>		
College & Career Exploration Narrative (Intermediate & Senior Only)	Max : 1 page – 12 point font. Single Spaced	Max : 1 page – 12 point font. Single Spaced	Max : 1 page – 12 point font. Single Spaced
Essay Prompt Narrative (Senior Only – changes annually)	Max : 1 page – 12 point font. Single Spaced	Max : 1 page – 12 point font. Single Spaced	Max : 1 page – 12 point font. Single Spaced

****Make sure to update the forms each year, and include CURRENT YEAR activities**

SECTIONS OF THE RECORD BOOK

PERSONAL INFORMATION PAGE

A single page that contains personal contact information; used to verify the appropriate age division, category entered, and that information contained within the Record Book reflects the work of the individual submitting the records for evaluation. This information page is not judged.

NEW

4-H RECORD BOOK NARRATIVES

Narratives are an important part of the Texas 4-H Record Book. They provide members with the opportunity to tell their story in a reflective, meaningful way that highlights growth, learning, and impact. Unlike the report forms, narratives allow youth to explain the “why” behind their activities and demonstrate the personal development gained through 4-H.

General Narrative Guidelines

- Narratives are limited to 3,500 characters (approximately 1 single-spaced page). Use a standard font (Times New Roman, Calibri, or Arial) in 12 pt size.
- Write in the first person (“I”) to reflect your own experiences. Narratives should be authentic, personal, and demonstrate growth rather than just listing activities.
- Emphasize the quality of experiences instead of quantity. Focus on lessons learned, goals achieved, challenges overcome, and the impact made on yourself and others.

Types of Narratives in the Record Book

1. **About Me Narrative** (All Ages)
 - A personal reflection that summarizes your 4-H journey.
 - Highlight personal development, leadership, service, goals, and how 4-H has shaped who you are today.
2. **College & Career Exploration Narrative** (Intermediate & Senior Only)
 - Prompt: *“As of today, what career would you choose, and how have your 4-H projects helped shape or support that goal?”*
 - Explain how your 4-H experiences connect to your career interests.
 - Include examples such as job shadowing, skill development, coursework, or project work that influenced your decision.
3. **Essay Prompt Narrative** (Senior Only – changes annually)
 - Current prompt: *“Describe a challenge you faced and how you overcame it or explain a new leadership role you took on. What did you learn about yourself, and how has this experience shaped your goals, values, or approach to life?”*
 - Focus on resilience, leadership, and personal growth.
 - Provide specific examples and lessons learned that tie into your future goals and values.

Tips for Strong Narratives

- **Be Specific:** Replace general statements (“I learned leadership”) with detailed examples (“As club president, I learned to run meetings using parliamentary procedure, which taught me how to listen and delegate”).
- **Show Growth Over Time:** Highlight how your involvement has changed year to year.
- **Make It Personal:** Tell *your story*, not just a report of activities. Judges want to understand how 4-H has shaped you as a person.
- **Proofread:** Check grammar, spelling, and word count. Have a parent, mentor, or agent review for clarity.

NEW

MY 4-H YEAR IN PHOTOS

- Each Record Book may include **one page of photos** that represents your 4-H year.
- Minimum of 4 photos should be included.
- Be creative in your design — use captions, layouts, or digital collages to help tell your story.
- Photos should reflect your project work, leadership roles, community service, and personal highlights in 4-H.
- The goal is to visually show your involvement and experiences, not just to display posed pictures.
- This page is separate from the written narratives and forms. It does not count toward page limits in other sections.
- Keep your layout simple and clean avoiding too much text or decorative clutter.

REPORT FORMS

****Make sure to update the forms each year, and include CURRENT YEAR activities**

Forms are available as a fillable Word document. The Texas 4-H Report Form is the main reporting form for the 4-H Record Book. It is used to report all of the activities that a member does, along with school, church and other community groups in applicable section. Always keep in mind that 4-H teaches growth, so show as much growth as possible when filling out the report form.

The maximum number of entries and pages will vary between section and age division.

Section I - 4-H Project Experiences

What is a 4-H Project? A 4-H project is a planned series of learning experiences where youth explore an area of interest over time. Projects involve hands-on learning, goal setting, recordkeeping, leadership, and citizenship activities that help members develop knowledge, skills, and personal growth. Projects may be short-term or long-term and can cover a wide range of topics. At least six learning experiences and two leadership or citizenship activities are expected for a project to be complete.

This section asks: What is your project? How did your project change or grow? What have you done and what have you learned? Describe years involved, knowledge and skills gained, scope and activity related to projects, demonstrations, presentations, exhibits, workshops, tours, interviews, etc. Describe why these projects were important and significant and what impact your involvement provided you to have on other people. Put emphasis on the quality of your experience, rather than quantity. Please reference the level of participation/involvement as L=local, C=county, D=district, R=regional, S=state, N=national, and I=international.

The project names you list here should not be 4-H contests. Contests are experiences that go under a project. For example, Food Challenge is not a project. It is an experience that falls under the Food & Nutrition Project. Livestock Judging is a contest that could fall under any Animal Project or the Animal Agriculture Project

Recommended to include at least 4 projects with your main project being your first entry.

Maximum page limits by age division:

- Junior – 4 pages
- Intermediate – 5 pages
- Senior – 6 pages

This section includes, but is not limited to, such things as: number of years in the project, items bought, items made and/or raised, places visited, profits/losses, and hours spent on the project.

Share the highlights of what you have done and learned through your 4-H projects. This is your chance to showcase your experiences and say, “Here’s what I have accomplished or learned!” Examples may include workshops, contests, and/or tours. These learning experiences may take place in 4-H project settings, as independent efforts, or even through other youth or community organizations, as long as they connect back to your 4-H project. Be sure to focus on what you learned from each activity.

Learning experiences are those activities in which the 4-H member has been a participant and not a teacher or instructor. Project-related **leadership** experiences should be reported in Section II - 4-H Leadership Experiences.

Many 4-H members gain valuable learning experiences through activities that take place outside of their regular 4-H club or project group. These experiences often enhance their 4-H project work and should be included in the Record Book when the learning directly supports the 4-H project.

Key Rule of Thumb: If the activity teaches knowledge or skills that strengthen the 4-H project, it belongs in **Project Experiences**. If it is a competition or performance outside of 4-H, it belongs in **Non-4-H Activities**.

Examples:

Livestock Project Example

Attending a showmanship clinic sponsored by a cattle breed association is considered a learning experience and may be reported in the Project Experiences section. Competing in a breed association showmanship contest, however, would be listed under Non-4-H Activities.

Theatre & Performance Arts

Participation in rehearsals, workshops, or skill-building activities with a school or community theatre group may be reported as learning experiences in the Record Book. Performing in a competition or production sponsored by that group would be listed as a Non-4-H Activity.

Self-Directed Projects

Some 4-H members pursue self-determined projects, where they may be the only youth in their club or county working in that area. These projects are just as valid as any other and should be reported in the Record Book. Learning activities that are independently planned, researched, or carried out are considered Project Experiences and should be documented accordingly.

Section II – 4-H Leadership Experiences

List what you did to assist others throughout your 4-H years. Also include general leadership such as Club Officer, 4-H County Council, or Committees. Included elected, appointed and volunteer leadership.

Maximum entry and page limits by age division:

- Junior – 10 entries and 1 page
- Intermediate – 15 entries and 2 pages
- Senior – 25 entries and 3 pages

Remember, everything done in 4-H is at some level: club, county, district, state, national or international. The member needs to let others know the level of participation in these activities. Code each experience by using: “Cl” = club; “Co” = county; “D” = district; “S” = state; “N” = national; and “I” = international

4-H leadership experiences are the most important things that tell others how the member has been involved in teaching and leading. The 4-H member should be able to demonstrate leadership in four different areas:

- Promotion
- Volunteer
- Elected
- Appointed

Promotion Leadership (P)

Sharing and promoting 4-H to others. “How have I told someone about 4-H?”

Examples:

- Wearing a 4-H T-shirt to school.
- Being pictured in the newspaper with a 4-H project.
- Speaking on the radio about 4-H.
- Riding on a 4-H float in a parade.

Volunteer Leadership (V)

Leading, teaching, or helping others learn in 4-H. “How did I lead or teach others in 4-H?”

Examples:

- Leading the Pledge of Allegiance at a 4-H meeting.
- Demonstrating how to measure ingredients at a project meeting.
- Teaching younger members how to halter a calf.
- Organizing or leading a workshop, clinic, or skill-based activity.

Elected Leadership (E)

Serving in a leadership role you were chosen for by your peers.

Examples:

- Serving as president, secretary, or reporter of a local 4-H club.
- Being elected to county, district, or state 4-H council.
- Representing your club on a planning or decision-making committee.

Appointed Leadership (A)

Serving in a leadership role you were selected for by an adult leader, agent, or committee.

Examples:

- Being appointed as chair of a club committee (such as refreshments, recreation, or service).
- Serving as a project leader or junior leader under the guidance of an adult volunteer.
- Being selected as a 4-H Ambassador or serving on a special county or district committee.

Section III – 4-H Community Service

List community service or service-learning projects that might include: clean ups, collections, repairs, construction, care packets, visitations, education, and donations.

Maximum entry and page limits by age division:

- Junior – 10 entries and 1 page
- Intermediate – 15 entries and 2 pages
- Senior – 25 entries and 3 pages

Community service is the opportunity for 4-H members to go out into the community and help others, or to improve the quality of the town and the lives of those around them. How do you know if what you have been doing is community service? Ask yourself: “What did I do to help other people because of 4-H?”

The descriptions of the community service activities should reflect the importance and impact of the activity. This can include but not limited to the number of lives impacted by the project.

There are three codes that reflect this:

- **Y = Yourself** – this was a community service project that you did all by yourself with no help from other 4-H members or club.
- **P = Provided Primary Leadership** – you were the organizer, you made all the arrangements, and recruited other 4-H members to help you.
- **M = Member of a Group** – when another 4-H member called asking for help, you were there as a worker and helper.

Note: This section is for community service activities only and not for citizenship experiences (citizenship is a project; see category description document for more details).

Section IV – 4-H Recognition and Awards

List 4-H recognition and awards.

Maximum entry and page limits by age division:

- Junior – 10 entries and 1 page
- Intermediate – 15 entries and 2 pages
- Senior – 25 entries and 3 pages

Awards and recognition are important in the 4-H program. They provide an opportunity for 4-H members to be recognized for all of their hard work and dedication to a 4-H project, leadership provided to others, community service activities, and of course for being the “best all-around 4-H member.”

Section V – Non-4-H Activities

*List leadership, community service, awards and recognition from other activities such as school, church, FFA, FCCLA and other community organizations. **This section includes current year and previous 3 years (less than that if younger age) only, not your entire 4-H career like the other sections.***

Maximum page limits by age division:

- Junior – 1 page
- Intermediate – 1 page
- Senior – 1 page

This section allows the member to show off school, church, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, or other youth organization activities, leadership, community service, and awards and recognition.

Section VI – College and Career Exploration

List activities that have helped you learn more about careers or the necessary education to enter a career.

Maximum entry and page limits by age division:

- Junior – 10 entries and 1 page
- Intermediate – 15 entries and 1 page
- Senior – 15 entries and 2 pages

List 4-H and non-4-H activities that have helped the member learn more about careers or the necessary education to enter a career of interest. Examples of these activities include: presentation by professional, interviews, tours, job shadowing, research, mentoring, work experience, skill development, course work, etc.

Record Books submitted for evaluation (4-H Competition)

What will judges look for?

Record Books submitted for competition will be evaluated based on project work, leadership, community service, awards, and non-4-H activities. Please refer to the score sheet for judging criteria.

Record Books will be judged primarily on content. Emphasis will be placed on the quality of the member's experiences, activities, leadership, service, and accomplishments. When readers look at a Record Book, they take into account the details in relation to how long the member has been in 4-H.

Record Book Cover

All types of covers or binders are accepted. Official 4-H Record Book covers can be ordered from National 4-H Supply if desired. Some county Extension offices may have a supply of these covers or may place county orders; check with them.

General Recommended Guidelines

NEW

Headers/
Instructions:

DO NOT REMOVE THE HEADERS/INSTRUCTIONS ON THE TOP OF PAGES

NEW

Typed:

All record books should be typed. Handwritten books should not be submitted. We understand it may be harder for younger kids to type, therefore an adult can take their written presentation and type into the format. This is a move towards the potential future of the submissions being in an online format only.

Grammar and
Punctuation:

For all age divisions, members are encouraged to write using proper grammar and punctuation within the 4-H Story & Photo Portfolio. The Report Forms may be presented in a table or chart form.

Text Margins:

Top, bottom and right margins must be between one-half and one inch. The left margin must be 1 1/2 inches to allow for hole punching and binding.

Paper Type:

Typing paper and bond weight paper are acceptable. Do not paste typing paper onto construction paper. Do not use sheet protectors or dividers.

NEW

Creativity:

Creativity varies from person to person and can also come in the form or style of writing. Creativity should be presented in a digital format.

NEW

Font:

Color or black fonts are acceptable. 12-point font is REQUIRED on the narratives, single spaced. The forms can use a minimal 10-point font. Standard fonts should be used on all sections which include Times Roman, Arial or Calibri

Competitive Record Book Categories

A 4-H member will choose one of the categories for their Record Book entry. These categories are described in detail beginning on page 16. The category selected should be reflective of the 4-H member's main (most active) project.

1. Beef
2. Citizenship, Civic Education & Community Service
3. Dog Care & Training
4. Consumer Education
5. Entomology
6. Fashion & Interior Design
7. Food & Nutrition
8. Gardening & Horticulture
9. Goat
10. Health and Personal Safety
11. Horse
12. Leadership
13. Natural Resources
14. ***NEW*** Open/Self-Directed
15. Photography
16. Poultry
17. Public Speaking
18. Rabbit
19. Range Sciences and Agronomy
20. Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM)
21. Sheep
22. Shooting Sports
23. Swine
24. Visual & Performance Arts
25. Veterinary Science

Texas 4-H Record Book Winners

Senior 4-H members who win first place at the state level Texas 4-H Record Book Judging competition, **MAY submit a Record Book in future years in the same category in which they earned first place.**

State record book winners will earn the opportunity to attend the Texas 4-H Leadership Conference which is typically held during Thanksgiving break. There is a cost to the 4-H members associated with the trip that is between \$2,000-\$2,500.