



# Oklahoma 4-H Interviews

# The 4-H Interview

## Interview Process for State Award Programs

- Winners in the state awards program will be selected on the basis of record books and personal interviews.
- 4-H members may enter two record books and interview in two project areas (Level I or Level II, depending on eligibility). 4-H'ers may enter any state scholarship for which they meet eligibility requirements, plus National 4-H Congress and Hall of Fame.
- Record judging committees will review project books and three books will be selected for interviews and ranked. The committee will also select three alternates for each project. These committees will score applications for Hall of Fame and all state scholarships.
  - Up to three members will be eligible to interview in each project. If a member declines an interview, then the first alternate will be invited to interview and so on down the list of alternates.
  - One committee will interview all Level III and Level IV scholarship candidates who make it to the interview. The number of candidates interviewed will vary each year.
  - Up to 10 members of the Blue Award Group will interview for Hall of Fame.
  - Interviews may be conducted for National 4-H Congress if there are more qualified applicants than Oklahoma can send.
- The state 4-H office will contact Extension educators via email following record book judging to verify the 4-H member's agreement to interview. The 4-H member must verify the agreement to the state 4-H office by the announced deadline.
- To be eligible for awards, members must participate in interview(s) as scheduled.

## The Interview Process

- Project interviews will be approximately 12 minutes long and will cover only the project entered. This will not be a comprehensive review of the member's entire 4-H career nor a public speaking interview. Interviewee will be responsible for all subject matter, up through the current year enrolled. Questions may address the member's leadership and community service activities in the project entered.
- Hall of Fame interviews may last up to 30 minutes and will cover the member's major project work, leadership and citizenship activities. Seven minutes of the interview will be devoted to the member's presentation.
- Interview committee members will rank interviewees as a committee.
- Totals of record book rankings from the records committee and interview committee rankings will be used to determine state winners.
- State winners will be announced during the State 4-H Roundup Honor Night Assembly.
- Interview committees for project books and Level III and IV scholarships will consist of three people. The Hall of Fame interview committee will have five members, one from each district and one from the state 4-H office.
- Committees will be selected from nominations submitted by county and district staff. Nominations for committee members knowledgeable in subject matter will also be requested from Extension specialists. Nominations will be taken when other task force nominations are submitted. Specific forms and job descriptions will be sent out with those requests. This committee will receive orientation training in interview skills, etc., prior to the interviews.
- Check with county Extension educators for information on interviewing.

The 4-H program provides a number of opportunities for members to participate in individual interviews – county, district and state awards, trips, and counselor or committee positions. The following information provides some suggestions for making the most of these interviews.

### Preparing Yourself

The interview is an opportunity for judges, selection committees or individuals to ask you questions about your 4-H project and your 4-H career. Most interviews on the state level – whether for project awards, scholarships, or special programs – will be 12-15 minutes in length. The interview portion is used to help determine the extent to which you actually participated in a project, what knowledge and skills were gained and how you handle yourself when asked “tough questions” concerning your project or 4-H activities. Interviews may count for half of the selection process (as in project/scholarship awards) or be the final part of the selection process (i.e. National 4-H Conference).

In order to prepare for an interview, the best method is “trial by fire.” The more experiences and practice sessions you have prior to the actual interview, the more relaxed and natural the interview will be. To prepare for the interview, you, your parent, a volunteer and anyone else who helped you with a project should try to anticipate as many questions concerning your project as possible. Some questions will be obvious from the project or procedures you used, while others may take some thought. It is often the obvious questions that are bungled, so study even the most trivial points and have an explanation for everything.

Judges will ask questions to determine your understanding of your project and how it relates to other 4-H activities. They may ask questions to determine your understanding and knowledge of the 4-H program on the county or state level. Be prepared to talk about your successes and failures in your project, if and how the project impacts your future goals, and what 4-H has done for you.

The best advice for an interview is to relax and enjoy the experience. Remember, you know more about your project or 4-H career than anyone else. Judges are looking for how comfortable you are with your project and knowledge of the subject matter. Never underestimate the power of a smile – judges are looking for the confidence that says you are enjoying the experience of presenting your project and yourself. Put your best appearance forward at all times.

# Prepare for a Winning Interview!

## Preparing Yourself

The more prepared you are, the less anxious you'll be at the interview.

- Rehearse the interview.
- Use a full-length mirror to evaluate your posture and gestures while you introduce and seat yourself. Be sure you know how to sit down and stand up from a chair properly.
- Use a tape recorder to hear how your voice sounds. Try to speak enthusiastically.
- Practice being interviewed by your parents or a friend.
- Know how much time will be allowed for the interview.
- If you feel nervous, simply be aware of it and accept it. Most interviewers will be expecting you to be nervous.

## Making Yourself Memorable

You can do it. Just remember first impressions count.

- Look the interviewer(s) in the eye.
- Lean slightly forward as you converse.
- Put one hand over the other.
- Show enthusiasm – low tones convey competence, high tones insecurity.
- Listen actively – respond to what the interviewer says.
- Let the interviewer finish the question before you answer it.

## Answering Questions

The interviewer(s) will ask you about yourself, so relax – no one knows you better than you do.

- Remember the first few minutes are important, so try to be as relaxed as possible.
- Sort out your background beforehand so you are ready to bring up your most outstanding accomplishments and milestones.
- Answer questions directly and honestly. Most interviewers can tell if you're bluffing and don't really know the answer.

## Ending the Interview

The interviewer(s) will usually indicate when the interview session is over.

- Smile, thank the interviewer(s) for their time and leave the room in a dignified manner.
- Save the big sigh of relief until you are outside the interview room!

## Interview Tips

- Arrive on time
- Shake hands firmly, if offered
- Wait to be asked before sitting
- Don't chew gum
- Keep clothes and hair neat and tasteful; choose "business" attire
- Sit up straight on the end of the chair
- Think about the question before giving an answer
- Prepare for expected questions
- Be yourself
- Be enthusiastic about 4-H
- Sell yourself
- Explain achievements or good characteristics in story form
- Give specific answers
- Don't be too good for your own good
- Be honest
- Have intelligent questions memorized to ask at the end of the interview
- Practice, practice, practice
- Enjoy your interview!

## Practice Questions

### General:

- How and why was the project selected?
- What is your goal? What do you want to accomplish with your project?
- Have there been any surprises in your project? How did you deal with them?
- What have you learned from your experiences in this project/in 4-H?
- How much time do you devote to your project/4-H?
- Were you ever discouraged with your project? What kept you from being discouraged?
- How do you manage time for this project/4-H in relation to your other activities?
- What advice would you pass on to others working in this project or belonging to 4-H?
- What is the value of doing a project such as yours or belonging to 4-H?
- What was the greatest challenge in your project? In your 4-H career?
- What was the solution to this challenge?
- 4-H is often called a “learning-by-doing” youth development organization. What does that mean to you? Can you think of a learning experience in 4-H that typifies that statement?

### Project Activities:

- Where did you learn the most about your project? Through what activities?
- How did you learn it? Describe activities in which you have participated.
- How has your project involvement grown since you enrolled in it? Include not only numbers, but also the complexity of skills learned.
- How are you using these skills in everyday life?
- What was the most important thing or things you learned in this project?
- How have these skills helped you in other 4-H experiences?
- What is the value of these skills? Why is it important that people learn these skills?

### Leadership/Citizenship:

- How have you helped others in your community through this project?
- How have you applied what you have learned for the betterment of your community?
- What are your future plans in terms of citizenship in this project?
- How can you transfer your skills to adult citizenship roles?
- What needs does your community have that you can help with through this project?

### Life Skills Learned:

- What is the value of the life skills you have learned? Why is it important that people learn these skills?
- What was the greatest challenge you faced in your project? What solutions did you come up with to overcome your challenge?
- How have the experiences and skills you have developed through 4-H influenced your future goals and plans?
- The 4-H motto is, “To make the best better.” What does this mean to you?