DESIGNING MY OWN PROJECT
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Acknowledgments

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Specific materials were obtained from:
- Designing Your Own 4-H Project, Gleason, Mesler, Pierick, University of Wisconsin Extension
- Do Your Own Thing, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Nebraska
- Self Determined, Cooperative Extension Service, Colorado State University

Original authors: Rod Robinder, Volunteer Leader, and Gene Rohrbeck, former University of Wyoming CES 4-H and Youth Program Coordinator
Revised by: Betty Holmes, UW CES 4-H Youth Specialist
Editor: Diana Marie Hill-Chavez, Office of Communications and Technology
Graphic Designer: Tana Stith, Office of Communications and Technology

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What is a Self-Determined Project?

A self-determined project is one you design yourself. This project allows you to pursue subjects not offered in traditional 4-H projects.

Check Point: Be sure to complete the application form found on page 7 and have it approved before beginning your project.

Sample ideas for self-determined projects include:

- Designing computer Web pages
- Restoring a vintage vehicle
- Producing an educational video tape
- Exploring astronomy
- Learning sign language
- Helping to build a house with Habitat for Humanity

See page 11 for more ideas.

Selecting a Project

You already may have selected a topic for your self-determined project. If you have, develop that idea. If you’re searching for an idea, make an inventory of your interests, needs, aspirations, and concerns. In the beginning, write down everything you can think of, and then start rating ideas until you select the idea you want to pursue.

Make a list for each of the following:

Interests:
Subjects that excite you and gain your attention or curiosity, ideas that cause you to say, “Oh, I’d like to do that!”

Needs:
Items you, your family, or community seem to lack: you say to yourself, “Yes, I can see that it is necessary to do that.”

Aspirations:
Strong wishes and goals you want to achieve: welling up in you is an ardent desire, which causes you to say, “Now, I really want to try to reach that goal.”

Concerns:
Those issues that affect the welfare and happiness of your family, club, community, society, or world.

Experiences:
Personal knowledge of various subjects.

Skills:
Competence in various tasks.

Resources:
Items, tools, or people to which you have access.
How to make your brain storm

Ask many people for ideas. People who might be helpful include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Neighbors</th>
<th>Family members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-H leaders</td>
<td>Business people</td>
<td>Farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchers</td>
<td>Homemakers</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension personnel</td>
<td>Specialists</td>
<td>Professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with social concerns</td>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>Mechanics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors</td>
<td>Scientists</td>
<td>Nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen</td>
<td>Dietitians</td>
<td>Dentists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>Small shop owners</td>
<td>Doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers</td>
<td>Artists</td>
<td>Professors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer technicians</td>
<td>Bankers</td>
<td>Veterinarians</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To select the topic you will use for your self-determined project, ask yourself:

1. What personal experience have I had in this area?
2. Where will I go to find background information?
3. How much will the project cost?
4. Who could be helpful in planning or carrying out the project?
5. How worthwhile will the project be?
6. What will I learn from the project?
7. How will the project fit into my home and family situation? Will my parents approve?
8. How will the project benefit others?
9. How will the project benefit me?
10. Do I have enough interest to see the project through to completion?

My Inventory of Interests

List some topics suitable for your project. Include ideas or problems you would like to investigate, an activity you would like to do, ways in which you could be helpful to other people, and topics that could be helpful to you. Select one or two specific ideas to pursue.

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________
**My Project Plan (Sample)**

Review this sample plan before writing your own.

**Title and description of project:** Design and produce a video tape

**Why I selected this project:** To provide an educational video for the 4-H dog project

**Month** January **Day** 11 **Year** 2000

---

**My Project Goals**

(What I plan to do and learn)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date to be finished</th>
<th>Accomplishments and Frustrations (Complete this section throughout the year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal: Learn to use video equipment. 5/1/2000</td>
<td>1. In early January, Dad and I went to several TV shops but nobody rented video equipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Goals and Objectives: 2/1/2001</td>
<td>1. During a basketball tournament game on January 29, I saw a family friend videotaping the games. Dad and I told him about my project. He agreed to teach me how to use the video camera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Contact TV stores and the Extension office to locate video equipment.</td>
<td>2. Mr. Brewer took me out on Sunday afternoon to practice with the camera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Find a person to teach me how to use the video camera.</td>
<td>3. With my paper route money, I bought two videotapes to use for myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Practice using the camera at 4-H Fun Night.</td>
<td>4. Mr. Brewer taught me how to use a tri-pod.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Develop a videotape of two judging classes as a practice exercise.</td>
<td>5. At the 4-H Fun Night we videotaped each performance and evaluated the tape for composition, focus, color, and brightness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other goals: 6/1/2001</td>
<td>6. When meats team workouts began in April, I videotaped a class of hams, as well as 20 retail cuts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a videotape of basic exercises in the novice dog training program.</td>
<td>7. The week before the dog show, the dog leader and I set up model scenes of the exercises for the novice dog. As he directed the members, I videotaped each of the seven exercises. We have made two copies of this tape for leaders and members to borrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ask a dog trainer to set up a model exercise.</td>
<td>Designing my own video tape project made this an exciting year. During the next year, I want to save up to buy my own videotape camera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Videotape the following exercises: a. Heel on leash b. Figure 8 c. Stand for examination d. Heel off leash e. Recall f. Long sit g. Long down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Make a Project Plan

Think about the ideas used in this sample. Consider the project ideas you selected on page 2. Write your project plan on page 4 and 5. Complete your project goals soon after you receive your materials.

My Project Plan

Review the sample plan before writing your own.

Title and description of project: ______________________________________________

Why I selected this project: _________________________________________________

Month _______________________ Day _______________ Year _______________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Project Goals (What I plan to do and learn)</th>
<th>Date to be finished</th>
<th>Accomplishments and Frustrations (Complete this section throughout the year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| My Project Goals  
(What I plan to do and learn) | Date to be finished | Accomplishments and Frustrations  
(Complete this section throughout the year) |
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</table>
Before you begin your 4-H self-determined project, complete the form below and send it to your county Extension office. Because the self-determined project includes a wide variety of subjects and programs, your county Extension personnel need to be informed of your plans. Wait until the form is signed and returned to you before starting your project.

Name: _________________________________________________________________

County: ________________________________________________________________

Address: ________________________________________________________________

Phone number: __________________________________________________________

Age: ___________________________________________________________________

Topic or subject of your self-determined project:

______________________________________________________________________

Briefly describe what you will do:

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

Approved: ___________________________ County Extension Office

_________________________________________ U W Risk Management Office
Evaluating the Project

How well did you accomplish what you set out to do?

Evidence of what you have accomplished can be collected in a number of ways.

**Take Photographs**
Photographs, slides, even a video can tell a story. Before and after photos are very effective. A series of photos showing the steps or different stages in the development of your project can effectively evaluate your project in pictures.

**Keep Records**
Decide what kind of information you need to keep. A diary, outline, story, tables, charts, drawings, and/or pictures can help tell your story.

Your record should show:
- What you have done
- What you learned from the project
- The project’s cost
- How your project benefitted others
- How your project benefitted you

Use your imagination. Let the records you develop be an exciting reflection of what your project means to you.

**Tell Others**
Further satisfaction and opportunities for growth come from sharing what you have learned with others.

Sharing also can help you summarize, analyze, and further assess what you are accomplishing.

Other 4-H members suggest offering:
1. Workshops, programs, meetings, and sharing with individuals
2. Exhibits, window displays, bulletin boards, and fair booths
3. Demonstrations, illustrated talks, dramatic scenes, and TV programs
4. Talks, interviews, panel discussions, and radio programs
5. Tours and field trips
6. To write newspaper articles and feature stories in magazines
7. A self-determined project open house
My Project Evaluation

What aspect of the project was most valuable? Why? ______________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

What difficulties did you encounter? _________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

What could have been improved? ____________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

What recommendations would you make for others conducting a similar project? _______
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Helper or leader evaluation: _________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________  
Date                                  Name
Ideas

- Adopt a grandparent
- Study animal behavior
- Learn more about antiques
- Study astrology
- Study astronomy
- Study aviation
- Try bird watching
- Learn more about cartooning
- Learn how to play chess, bridge, or backgammon
- Collect coins and stamps
- Learn more about computers
- Study creative writing
- Learn how to design jewelry
- Study electronics
- Study engineering
- Study film making
- Explore various art forms
- Work on family genealogy
- Study genetics – humans and plants
- Learn more about growing plants
- Study historical events or collect historical photos
- Try hot air ballooning
- Learn how to build a hot rod
- Learn how to conduct Internet searches
- Study karate
- Study magic
- Learn about medical technology
- Study music
- Learn how to restore antique autos
- Serve as a Big Brother or Big Sister
- Learn how to use a shortwave radio
- Study sign language
- Study small animals (gerbils, hamsters, aquatics)
- Learn about solar home design
- Help with Special Olympics
- Learn how to do stained glass
- Learn about storytelling
- Study taxidermy
- Learn how to design terrariums or aquariums
- Study theater arts
- Learn how to train mice
- Study weather
- Study welding
- Study yoga