



Interviewing Tips



Interviewing as part of the Illinois 4-H Recognition for Excellence program is an opportunity to sell **YOU**– your knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences. This fact sheet will give you a few tips for helping to enhance your preparation time and to ensure a successful interview.

Preparation

✦ Prior to the interview, **take time to reread your award application and 4-H story** so that you are familiar with the content and the work you have done in your 4-H career. Review the scorecard for the interview so you can anticipate what type of questions might be asked. Know the details of your 4-H experience – years in 4-H, different projects taken, leadership roles, community service involvement.

✦ **Analyze your strengths and weaknesses in the 4-H program area(s) as well as in leadership and community service.** Be ready to “sell” yourself by expanding upon what you wrote in the award application. Have facts about yourself stored in your memory.

✦ **Think ahead to the types of questions that might be asked**, but don’t memorize your responses. You want to sound natural. Many of the questions asked will be open-ended questions so be prepared to answer the questions with more than a “yes or no” response. Do not use slang: “okay”, “you know”, and “yea”. Think about your interests, abilities, skills, experiences and your goals.

✦ **Practice, practice, practice!** Do this in front of a mirror or friends/family so you can see what little mannerisms you need to eliminate and whether or not you are speaking clearly and concisely. Try not to show outward signs of nervousness – twirling hair, cracking knuckles, biting fingernails, clicking with a pen, or fidgeting with a rubber band.

✦ **Anticipate and be prepared to answer the questions you’ll probably be asked.** Practice answering questions out loud before the interview. This will help you make sure you like the way your answers sound.

At the Interview:

✦ **Arrive 15- 20 minutes early for the interview.** Sometimes interviews may run a little ahead and you might get in early. Other times, the interviews may run long. Know where you are going for the interview. Allow plenty of time for traffic, trains and to find the interview location and parking. Be patient as you wait for your turn.

✦ **Greet the interviewer with a smile, a firm handshake, and by name if you know it.**

✦ **Be sure you look into the camera and establish “eye contact”** with the camera. Eye contact is extremely important and powerful. Look at the camera lens as if it were the familiar eyes of your best friend. Don't let your eyes stray away from the camera lens while it is recording. Wandering eyes make you look shifty and insecure. Practice by saying your answers as you look at an eye-level mark on the wall. The more you practice, the better you will become at this.

✦ **Show your enthusiasm.** Enthusiasm, energy, and a sense of humor can help create a good impression. Don't be passive or indifferent.

✦ **Dress appropriately for the interview.** Wear clean, neat, pressed clothing and simple jewelry. Comb your hair, clean your fingernails, and shine your shoes.

✦ **Display poise and good posture.** Smile and keep your hands out of your pockets. Stand until invited to sit. Sit down with poise. No slouching or touching anything on the desk or table. Smile and be yourself. Stand tall, sit straight, and be relaxed but confident.

✦ **Do not chew gum or place personal articles on the table** – especially if you have a tendency to fidget with items when you are nervous or are talking. Use hand gestures only if appropriate. Effective hand gestures come from being relaxed and spontaneous.

✦ **Planning for the interview will help.** Listen carefully to the interviewer's questions. Don't fall into the trap of thinking about what you're going to say next instead of listening. Ask the interviewer to repeat the question if you don't understand it.

✦ **Answer all questions truthfully and clearly.** Don't be afraid to answer the questions fully and to expand upon what was included in your written materials. Be honest and direct but have a good attitude. Admit if you don't know something.

✦ **Speak distinctly and positively.** Be enthusiastic but sincere. Speak slowly to give yourself time to organize your thoughts and to get them across more clearly. This will lend confidence and authority to your statements. Use complete sentences. Don't use slang and try not to ramble or mumble.

✦ **Express thanks to the interviewer.** Do not spoil the interview with an awkward or delayed departure. Thank the interviewer for his/her time and interest.

Remember:

- Know your 4-H and career goals
- Prepare for the interview
- Practice your interview skills before the interview
- Communicate your strengths
- Be persistent

Sample Interview Questions:

The following is list of sample questions that may be asked during your interview. You may want to use this list in your preparation, so that you begin to think about possible answers to these types of questions. In the interview, if the interviewer does not ask you questions that allow you to share all that you feel is important, feel free to add additional comments in your closing comments.

Tell me about yourself and your 4-H experience.

What knowledge have you gained in the specific curriculum area in which you are applying? Cite specific examples.

Tell me what you have gained from your 4-H experience. What were some long and short terms goals you set for yourself in your 4-H program area(s).

Tell me how 4-H has had an impact on your life and that of your family.

If you could sum up 4-H in one word, what would it be?

Please share how the 4-H program area(s) relate to future career plans or how program areas helped you eliminate choices for future plans. (Know what your future plans or goals are and be able to articulate these clearly.)

Share what skills you have gained from 4-H leadership or community service activities.

What was the most challenging thing you have done in your 4-H experience?

Share why you think other young people should get involved in 4-H.

What, if anything, would you do differently in your 4-H career?

What are the three most important skills that you have gained/learned through 4-H?

How would you describe the 4-H program to your peers who don't know what it is?

What event in your 4-H career has had the most impact on you personally and why?

What would you say has been your greatest accomplishment in the 4-H program?

Sample 4-H Interview Scorecard

Note – Scorecard criteria will change from year to year depending upon the exact questions asked of the applicants.

CRITERIA	POINTS
Goal-setting and Accomplishments	7
Application of the Knowledge and Skills gained	7
Skills from Leadership activities/Impact on others	7
Impact of 4-H/Specific Event on personal life/family	7
Impact of 4-H on future plans	4
General Information provided	7
Delivery and ability to communicate ideas; Conviction; Sincerity; Attitude; Confidence	7
Personal appearance; Grooming	4
TOTAL SCORE	50

References:

Channing L. Bete Co., Inc. *What you should know about Job Interviewing Skills*. 1985.

LaFevre, John L. *How You Really Get Hired*. 1989.

Michigan State University. *Communications Toolkit: Fun Skill-Building Activities to Do With Kids*. 2000.

Smith, Neal. *4-H Career Directions: Preparing Youth for the 21st Century Workplace*. University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service.

University of Illinois Extension. The Interview. *Career Connections Plus*.

University of Illinois Extension. Section D: Preparing for Interviews. *A Job For Me!*

The University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment

*The 4-H Clover is Protected Under 18 U.S.C. 707.

University of Illinois•U.S. Department of Agriculture•Local Extension Councils Cooperating