



## Educational Design and Delivery

# Use of Age-Appropriate Activities

VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy

### Intended Audience:

4-H volunteers

### Learning Outcomes:

- Volunteers will be able to describe why selecting age/grade-appropriate activities for youth is important for positive youth development.
- Volunteers will be able to identify and select age/grade-appropriate activities for youth.

### Time:

20 – 30 minutes

### Supplies Needed:

- A variety of hard candies
- Sticky notes
- Pencils and paper
- Markers and flip chart paper
- Power Point, Computer and LCD Projector
- Handouts and Evaluations

### Do Ahead:

Prepare the Match Game. Prepare handouts, including the *Ages and Stages of Youth Development* handout located here: <http://extension.missouri.edu/FNEP/LG782.pdf>, and Handout 1.

### Author:

Sue Pleskac, Professor, Volunteer Leadership Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Extension

### Editor:

Sue Pleskac, Professor, Volunteer Leadership Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Extension

### Volunteerism for the Next Generation:

<http://nextgeneration.4h.org/volunteerism/>

### 4-H National Headquarters:

<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/>

## INTRODUCTION

Having a good understanding of the ages and stages of how youth develop allows volunteers to select appropriate 4-H projects, activities, and events that match youths' abilities. These developmental stages include physical, intellectual or cognitive, social, and emotional growth. (Power Point Slides 1, 2)

## WHAT TO DO

(Power Point Slide 3) Youth learn by doing. This is the foundation for experiential learning. Selecting appropriate activities and experiences for youth is critical to their success in the learning process. It keeps youth engaged and provides the foundation to reflect and apply what they have experienced, leading to additional learning.

It is important to recognize that these are guidelines. Each youth grows physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually at their own pace. It is important for a volunteer to observe youth while engaging in hands-on activities and adjust the activity to match the individual's stage of development.

Selecting age-appropriate activities is about:

- Matching activities with where a youth is developmentally
- Engaging youth in learning where they can experience success
- Making learning fun so youth have a better chance of building on past educational experiences and applying what they have learned
- Retaining 4-H members

### Activity 1: Know Your Audience

Pass around a bag of hard candies, asking each volunteer to take the flavor of their choice. Form groups of four or five per group, with each group representing one flavor of candy. For example, volunteers selecting the peppermint candies form one group, and those selecting the cinnamon candies form another. The number of different flavors in the bag is determined in advance, depending on the number of groups desired. Add or subtract candies from the bag as needed to ensure that groups will be the same size.

Introduce the activity by saying that now it's time for us to think about who our audience really is, since members come in different ages, sizes, shapes, and genders, and with different levels of experience. Should we treat them all the same? Should the same activity be used for each age/grade group or gender?



Volunteerism for the Next Generation



**VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy for 4-H Youth Development:**

<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/comm/vrkc.pdf>

**VRKC Research and Design**

**Team:**

*Ken Culp III, Ph.D., University of Kentucky*

*Renee K. McKee, Ph.D., Purdue University*

*Patrick Nestor, Ed.D., West Virginia University*

**References for this lesson:**

- Tomek, J. and Williams, M.J. 1999. *Ages and Stages of Youth Development*. University of Missouri Columbia Outreach and Extension. <http://extension.missouri.edu/FNEP/LG782.pdf>
- *Implementing 4-H Project Experiences: Knowing Our Audience*. University of Wisconsin-Extension 4-H Youth Development. 2007. Developed by C. Belczyk. 4-H Community Club Central Web Site. <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/pubs/showdoc.cfm?documentid=20103>
- *Ohio 4-H Clubs Advisor Handbook; Youth Development Needs*. 2006. Ohio State University 4-H Youth Development. <http://advisorshandbook.ohio4h.org/clubmembers/developmentalneeds.html>

Assign each group a particular age/grade and gender of youth to “draw,” depicting that youth’s typical physical, emotional, social, and intellectual characteristics. Possible subjects to draw include a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade girl, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade boy, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade girl, and an 11<sup>th</sup> grade boy. Have each group tape its drawing to the wall and report on the characteristics they’ve illustrated. Process this activity by asking: What are the similarities that were observed? What are the differences? What similarities and differences do participants observe among the members in their club or group? What are considerations needed in planning activities and events that meet the needs of individuals and the group?

Review the handouts “Ages and Stages of 4-H Youth Development” and “Tips for Selection of Age-Appropriate Activities,” Handout 1. (Power Point Slides 4-8)

Activity 2: The Match Game

Write the following activities on sticky notes, fold them so they don’t stick together, and place them in a basket. Write the four developmental stages (see Power Point Slide 4) on four separate pieces of flip chart paper and post them on a wall. Round robin style, have each volunteer select a sticky note from the basket, read it, and match it with the age/grade of the youth best suited to do it by sticking it to the paper. Complete the round robin selection until all activities have been placed on the flip chart paper. Each volunteer should provide reasons for his/her match.

Match Game Activities:

Building a bluebird house  
Caring for a rabbit  
Painting park benches at the fairgrounds  
Leading a community group service project  
Refinishing a wooden stool  
Creating a wall mosaic  
Designing and assembling a quilt  
Leading a song

Fishing  
Sewing a shirt  
Hosting a Japanese student  
Growing pumpkins  
Cleaning a nature trail  
Riding a horse  
Planting test plots for seed corn  
Taking a digital photograph  
Juggling  
Giving a book report to a group  
Organizing a book club

Building a campfire  
Teaching a game at a meeting  
Building a simple electrical switch  
Rock-climbing  
Identifying breeds of cattle  
Training a dog  
Creating a rain garden  
Demonstrating how to make cheese  
Teaching fire safety  
Knitting a sock  
Shooting a bow for archery



Have participants share:

1. What matches were easy to make?
2. What did you consider when selecting an activity for an age/grade?
3. Give an example of an activity that you could alter to make it appropriate for a certain age/grade. Describe the changes that could be made.
4. Why is it important to select age/grade-appropriate activities for youth?

### **Conclusion:**

Selecting appropriate activities and experiences for youth is critical to their success in the learning process. It keeps youth engaged and provides the foundation to reflect and apply what they have experienced, leading to additional learning. (Power Point Slides 9, 10)

### **TALK IT OVER**

#### **Reflect:**

- What are age-appropriate activities for youth?
- Why is it critical for volunteers to understand and use age-appropriate activities?

#### **Apply:**

- What tips can you share on selecting age-appropriate activities for 4-H members in projects and activities? How can youth be involved with this?

### **EVALUATION**

Ask each participant to complete the evaluation tool (Handout 2).

### **ENHANCE or SIMPLIFY**

Create questions and challenge volunteers to find the answers in the “Ages and Stages of 4-H Youth Development” handout. For example, “At which stage should we avoid competitions between boys and girls?”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



*Volunteerism for the Next Generation*



## Handout 1

**Tips for Selection of Age-Appropriate Activities**

<p>Early Childhood</p> <p>Ages 5-8 / Grades K-2 (Cloverbuds)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide short, fast-paced activities of 5 to 15 minutes led by adult or teen volunteers.</li> <li>• Select activities that promote small groups to work together and share with an adult supervising every 3-4 youth.</li> <li>• Focus on the hands-on learning, not the finished product.</li> <li>• Provide activities that encourage physical activity: running, painting, games, etc.</li> <li>• Conduct activities that use the five senses.</li> <li>• Offer time for members to play together and develop friendships.</li> <li>• Facilitate cooperation, not competition.</li> </ul>
<p>Middle Childhood</p> <p>Ages 9-12 / Grades 3-6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a variety of activities so as to better match youth's skills, interests and abilities.</li> <li>• Work with youth in pairs or small groups to enhance project learning experiences.</li> <li>• Conduct active, fast-paced meetings, activities and project work with simple directions.</li> <li>• Reassure youth, praise progress not just completion, and celebrate successes.</li> <li>• Engage older youth to provide assistance with the activities.</li> </ul>
<p>Young Teens</p> <p>Ages 12-14 / Grades 7-9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage active, fun learning experiences that include social time.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for youth to demonstrate their individual special skills and talents.</li> <li>• Allow young teens to plan activities and help direct group work.</li> <li>• Plan activities that include problem solving.</li> <li>• Help youth find solutions on their own by providing supervision without interference.</li> <li>• Praise progress and completion towards personal goals.</li> </ul>
<p>Teens</p> <p>Ages 15-18 / Grades 9-12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage activities that engage youth in civic opportunities and service learning, addressing real-life problem-solving situations.</li> <li>• Plan activities that allow youth to help younger and/or less experienced members.</li> <li>• Provide resources that allow teens to select, plan, conduct, and evaluate an activity or experience.</li> <li>• Provide experiences and activity choices that challenge the skills and abilities of youth.</li> <li>• Provide activities and educational experiences in mixed groups.</li> </ul>



## Handout 2

## Evaluation

Please complete the following evaluation. The results of the evaluation will be shared with those who work with the program. Your participation in this evaluation is voluntary. Your responses will be combined with the responses of all other participants and you will not be individually identified on any report prepared.

Please answer the questions by circling the number that indicates your level of understanding of the topics listed before and after the training.

1 = Very little understanding

2 = Understand somewhat

3 = Clear understanding

	NOW – After the training			THEN – Before the training		
1. I can describe why selecting age/grade-appropriate activities for youth is important for positive youth development.	1	2	3	1	2	3
2. I am able to identify age/grade appropriate activities for youth.	1	2	3	1	2	3
3. I can assist others in selecting age/grade appropriate activities for youth.	1	2	3	1	2	3

- Please list at least two ideas or skills that you learned as a result of this presentation.
- How will you use what you learned in this presentation?



*Volunteerism for the Next Generation*

