



## Educational Design and Delivery

# Knowledge of Subject Matter

VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy

### Intended Audience:

4-H volunteers

### Learning Outcomes:

- Volunteers will describe how their knowledge of subject matter is critical for youth to gain mastery.
- Volunteers will identify ways they can increase their own subject matter knowledge.

### Time:

20 – 30 minutes

### Supplies Needed:

- Pencils and paper
- Markers and flip chart paper
- Power Point, Computer and LCD Projector
- Handouts and Evaluations

### Do Ahead:

Prepare handouts.

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### Volunteerism for the Next Generation:

[http://nextgeneration.4h.org/  
volunteerism/](http://nextgeneration.4h.org/volunteerism/)

### 4-H National Headquarters:

[http://www.national4-h  
headquarters.gov/](http://www.national4-h<br/>headquarters.gov/)

## INTRODUCTION

*Becoming good at something useful is the bridge between our dreams and reality. –Maurice Gibbons*

Knowledge of subject matter is the basis of a discipline: factual information, organizing principles, and central concepts (Grossman, 1989). Mastery within a given subject area can be determined in many ways, such as through comparison of the learner to others, comparison of the learner to pre-set standards, and the learner's growth over time. Mastery, or becoming good at something, is a process that occurs over time. Mastery can occur at higher levels when we work together and learn with others. Youth and adults can both gain new knowledge by participating in the 4-H Youth Development program. (Power Point Slides 1, 2)

## WHAT TO DO

Mastery is one of the four Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development and is key to the development of self confidence. "Youth need to feel and believe they are capable, and they must experience success at solving problems and meeting challenges." (4-H 101 Lessons) Mastery, or knowledge, of subject matter sounds like a lot of hard work, but non-formal learning environments are often the key to actively engaging youth and adults in their learning so that they "own" it and are not "passive receivers" of information and knowledge.

Building life skills is a goal of 4-H Youth Development. Learning how to learn is one core life skill, among many others, that 4-H is designed to strengthen. The volunteer is one of the 4-H partners who offer his or her time, talents, and resources to young people to ensure mastery and to help them learn how to learn.

### Activity 1: Mastery Discovery

Have each person identify a subject they are good at or teach as a 4-H volunteer. This could be a project they provide leadership for. Have each person complete Handout 1 according to the subject they chose. Have individuals share responses with the group. Have participants respond to the questions at the bottom of Handout 1, on how they personally have gained mastery. Record these on a flip chart.

(Power Point Slide 3) Volunteers teach and facilitate a positive learning environment for and with 4-H members. When volunteers bring a strong mastery of a particular subject matter, this strength



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

**Development:**

<http://www.national4-h.org/headquarters.gov/comm/vrkc.pdf>

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**References for this lesson:**

- *4-H 101: The Basics of Starting 4-H Clubs* (no date) National 4-H Headquarters, USDA.
- Gibbons, M. (2002). *The Self-directed Learning Handbook: Challenging Adolescent Students to Excel*. California: Jossey-Bass.
- Grossman, P. L., Wilson, S. M., & Schulman, L. S. (1989). Teachers of substance: Subject matter knowledge from teaching. In M.C. Reynolds (Ed.) *Knowledge base for the beginning teacher* (pp.23 – 36). Elmsford, NJ: Pergamon Press.

can be used to help youth recognize how to approach subject matter accurately and to guide a young person's inquiry process. A volunteer's knowledge of subject matter can also be a resource to youth as they search for questions to investigate. Finally, volunteers have networks of social and professional connections that can be accessed by youth to further their learning. Role modeling how adults form "social capital" in order to pool knowledge and resources is an important skill that adults can help youth develop.

Participation in 4-H Youth Development programs encourages the exploration of subjects and projects that can lead youth to lifelong learning and enjoyment. We all know youth and adults who love their hobbies, talents, skills, or subjects so much that they become completely engaged in them. You can make a difference in a young person's life by encouraging him or her to develop lifelong learning practices that engage him or her fully and increase their quality of life.

(Power Point Slides 4, 5) Volunteers can expect ongoing training and support to become more knowledgeable in the subjects that interest you. In addition, 4-H project curricula include research-based guides for leaders that apply hands-on teaching experiences for youth in the specific subject matter and give directions for facilitating and processing those experiences to develop specific life skills.

**Activity 2: Personal Learning Plan for Volunteers**

Using Handout 2, have volunteers begin to complete a personal learning plan for a subject or skill they need to learn or improve.

**Conclusion:**

Learning how to learn is a life skill that can be strengthened by developing competence in a subject matter area. Volunteers can work alongside youth to develop plans to tackle projects, activities, and skills. Learning how to learn is more than picking an area of interest. Learning how to learn is being systematic in developing an understanding of a subject or skill. As youth become more skilled, a 4-H volunteer's role is not so much a teacher of subject matter, but a connector, connecting youth to the social capital in that area—the resources, people, and places that can build knowledge and the life skill of learning how to learn. (Power Point Slide 6)

**TALK IT OVER**

**Reflect:**

- Why is knowledge of subject matter important for volunteers personally and in their work with youth?
- What are important factors to consider in developing a personal learning plan?



**Apply:**

- Describe ways that volunteers can model mastery of subject matter and learning to learn to youth.

**EVALUATION**

Ask each participant to complete the evaluation tool (Handout 3).

**ENHANCE or SIMPLIFY**

4-H project or club leaders may want to pursue additional knowledge and skills for these specific roles. Wisconsin 4-H Community Club Central has a variety of lesson plans that can be used for this purpose: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/clubs/volunteersproject.cfm> and <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/clubs/volunteersclub.cfm>

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## Handout 1

**Developing Opportunities for Mastery**

<b>Area of Consideration</b>	<b>How is this done presently?</b>	<b>What are additional ways to encourage 4-H members?</b>
Do youth get guidance in selecting activities for appropriate for their developmental level for projects or 4-H club activities?		
Do youth set individual and group goals?		
Are members allowed to practice skills until they master them?		
Do youth receive and feedback and recognition for accomplishments?		
Are learning opportunities sequential to build on past learning?		
Are members encouraged to seek out additional resources and training?		
Are members encouraged to share what they have learned?		

**How do you develop your own mastery?**

- Do you set goals for what you want to learn?
- Do you practice your skills until you master them?
- Do you get feedback on your skills?
- Do you seek out resources and training?
- Do you share what you have learned?



Handout 2

## Personal Learning Plan for Volunteers

Name:	Period covered:
What do I want to learn? What problem is to be solved? What do I need to be able to do?	
How will this knowledge/ability benefit the organization? How will the learning be applied to the volunteer role?	
Activities that develop the necessary knowledge and skills (include timing):	
How should the learning activity be structured to recognize learning style? (How do I learn best? When is learning most enjoyable?)	
Learning resources available to me: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- people (reap the benefits of personal networking)</li> <li>- materials (books, CBT, videos, models, anything!)</li> <li>- experiences (mine and others; past and future possibilities)</li> </ul>	
How will I know that I learned it? (Learning process successfully completed.)	



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## Handout 3

## 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 knowledge of subject matter is critical for youth to gain mastery.	1	2	3	1	2	3
2. I can model mastery for 4-H members.	1	2	3	1	2	3
3. I can put a plan together for increasing my subject matter knowledge and skills.	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?



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