4-H Youth Development: I have to do what?—Pieces to a 4-H Presentation Puzzle

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Pieces to a 4-H Presentation Puzzle

You are sitting at a 4-H club meeting. Someone tells you that all 4-H’ers need to sign up to give a presentation at a future club meeting. Your hands get sweaty, your heart falls into your stomach, and you think, “I have to do what?”

Then you watch some of the older members give presentations at the meeting, who seem to be completely relaxed! It seems like they just get up and start talking. Some people can do this, but most of us have to plan and practice to look like we are not nervous!

Put your jitters to rest; use this fact sheet to help you prepare for your first presentation. Understanding the steps to getting ready will help take the panic out of giving your first presentation. Like a puzzle, a presentation has different pieces that fit together. Sometimes the little puzzle piece doesn’t look like it makes sense until it is a part of the entire puzzle. Let’s look at the pieces to the presentation puzzle.
Puzzle Piece #1
What is a presentation?
What is a presentation? Basically, it is sharing information about yourself or another subject with someone else. You have been doing “presentations” for years, without even realizing it! Think about “Show and Tell” from your early school years. Think about answering roll call at a club meeting. Think about showing a friend a collection you have started, or explaining how you made something, or telling how your team won the game.

Each of these is basically a presentation! You have already given your first presentation; soon you'll give your first 4-H presentation.

Puzzle Piece #2
Choose a topic.
This is like choosing a puzzle! You probably look for a puzzle that looks fun to you, one that is not too hard or easy, and one that can be done in the time you have. The same things can be true for choosing a presentation topic!

Where do you get ideas for your presentation? How do you get ideas? During club meetings, watch others give their presentations. This may give you clues for both topics and presenting. Look through your 4-H project information.

Here are some ideas to get you started:
• Look through your 4-H project materials for ideas.
• “Brainstorm” on paper! Make a list of things you:
  Do for 4-H projects
  Collect
  Do after school
  Read or learn more about
  Do for fun
  • Ask a parent, leader, or older 4-H member for ideas.

Take a look at your list. Write the topic you’d like to “present” to your 4-H group.

Puzzle Piece #3
How do I do it?
Some presentations are called demonstrations; others are called illustrated talks. In a demonstration, you show others how to do something by doing it yourself. As you show how, you explain what you are doing in each step. An example of a demonstration is making a milkshake or kicking a soccer ball.

When giving an illustrated talk, most of the time, you are talking and showing at the same time. While you are talking, you are also showing it to the audience. You can tell how or explain with the use of posters or models. An example would be sharing a collection and explaining how you got started, your first item, your favorite item in the collection, etc.

Which is the best way to get your information to your audience?
A demonstration or an illustrated talk? Circle one!

Using these terms may seem like we’re getting ahead of ourselves! Deciding on the type of presentation is like finding the corner puzzle pieces. The corner pieces are the ones you look for first, and after they are in place, you start building on them! So, let’s move on to the next piece.

Puzzle Piece #4
Investigate your topic or idea!
This step is like dumping all the puzzle pieces on the floor and turning them all right side up. You look at the shape, the color, and compare the piece to the picture on the box! Look at the pieces of your presentation. To investigate your topic, make notes on things you’d like to tell others. How did you get interested in this? How
long have you been doing it?
You can make your notes on
notecards or regular paper. If you
need more information, read
your 4-H project materials,
encyclopedias, magazines, or
books in your school or commu-
nity library. You also could talk
with your parents, leaders,
grandparents, or other adults who
might know about your topic.

**Puzzle Piece #5**
**Organize!**
This step is like sorting the puzzle
pieces by border edges or differ-
ent colors. Now is the time to take
all the information on your paper
or notecards and organize it! If
you have put your steps or ideas
on notecards, arrange them in an
order that makes sense to you.
If you are showing how to do
something, you will want to list
the steps in making the item. If
you are sharing a collection, ideas,
or information, arrange the items
in a way so others easily can
understand. If you have written
your ideas on regular paper, you
can cut up the paper and place
them in the order you want to use
them in for your presentation.
Tape them on another sheet of
paper or notecards.

Another way to organize is to
make an outline. Use whichever
method works best for you! (You
probably won’t read your notes
word-for-word during your
presentation, but it’s helpful to
have them with you in case you
need them!) Since first presenta-
tions are usually short (under
5 minutes), you may not need to
use all the notes or information
you have!

4-H members who have given
presentations before say it is
easiest for them to organize
presentations (either demonstra-
tions or illustrated talks) into three
parts: introduction, body, and
conclusion.

1. **Introduction:** Tell briefly what
you are going to do and why you
chose this topic.

2. **Body:** Give the details of doing
it, showing it, or telling it!

3. **Conclusion:** Repeat the main
points and ask if there are any
questions. Mention where you
found your information, in case
someone else wants to learn
more about your topic.

After you’ve answered the ques-
tions or if there are no questions,
say, “This concludes my presenta-
tion.” Then, everyone knows that
you are done, and it’s time to
applaud!

Another way of thinking about
organizing is the old saying:
“Tell ‘em what you’re gonna’
tell ‘em (introduction). Tell ‘em
(body). And tell ‘em what you
told ‘em (conclusion).”

**Puzzle Piece #6**
**Practice!**
You know how puzzles become
easier the more you do them.
You know what to look for and
how to sort the pieces! The same
is true for presentations! Here are
a few hints we’ve collected from
4-H’ers with experience in giving
presentations.

**Be neat!**
Consider using trays to organize
your props or items needed for
each step. Clean up the mess
as you go! Good posture and
standing on two feet—instead of
rocking back and forth or from
side to side—say positive things
about you. Of course, no chewing
gum or twirling hair or rocking
from side to side is allowed! What
should you do with your hands?
Unless you are using them to
indicate a point, simply keep them
at your sides.

**Make posters.**
Posters help to “show” or highlight
the main points. They also serve
as notes for you! Back up, and see
if you can read your posters from
a distance. Color adds a nice
variety, but be sure to use colors
that show up; sometimes pink or
yellow are hard to see. Also, be
sure to use colored markers,
rather than highlighters, for your
poster!
**Give a mirror presentation.**
If you are very brave, you could practice your presentation in front of a mirror! This will give you a good idea of how you look to your audience. Remember, this is good practice, but it is a little tricky!

**Use a “presentation voice.”**
It usually works best if you speak a little more slowly and louder than you would in normal conversations. This will help your audience hear and understand you better.

**Look at your audience.**
This may be difficult at first! But, good eye contact helps get your message across. Some of the “experts” say they look at different people during their presentation, some pick out a friend or friendly face to smile at, and others look just over the top of the heads of their audience.

**Involve your audience.**
Get your audience involved by handing out recipes, samples, or asking questions.

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**Puzzle Piece #7**
**The Presentation—Just Do It!**
So now you’ve picked your topic, organized it, and even practiced! Now, it’s your turn! If you are nervous, that’s normal and natural! Remember, you have something to share with the group, and many of them also have been in your shoes—giving their first presentation!

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**Evaluation**
What went well?

What will you change next time?
Most people say they were nervous the first time they gave a presentation. Were you nervous?
If so, how could you tell?

What advice do you have for others giving their first presentation?

**Puzzle Piece #8:**
**Review what you have just done.**
Your puzzle is together! Now celebrate!

Congratulations! You made it through your first presentation! Doesn’t it feel good? There may be things you would change another time. Perhaps it wasn’t perfect. That’s okay! We hope it was a good experience and that you will move on to more “puzzles” or “harder puzzles.” Consider giving more presentations in your club, school, or other places.

Jot down ideas you have for your next presentation and hints you want to remember next time!

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