

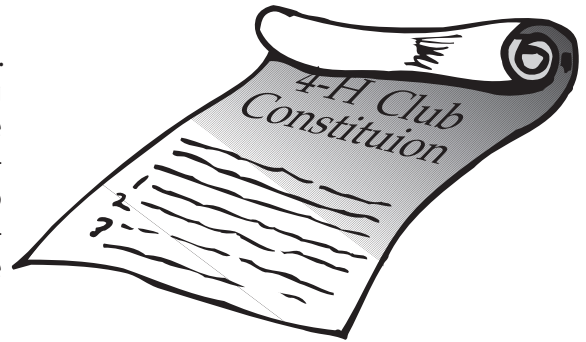


Virginia 4-H Club Constitution and Bylaws

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Purpose of the constitution and bylaws

In Virginia, every 4-H club is required to have a constitution and bylaws. The constitution and bylaws describe the organizational and governing structure of a 4-H club. Just like the Constitution of the United States, the 4-H club constitution is the highest law of the club. The constitution describes the purpose of the club, basic principles that govern the club, who can be members, how often the club meets, etc. The bylaws are secondary principles that govern the club. Bylaws describe in detail the steps the club must follow in order to conduct business.



Who is responsible for writing and approving the constitution and bylaws?

It is important that club members, volunteer leaders, and parents all have input in the development of the club's constitution and bylaws. Often a committee of club officers and adult leaders drafts the first version for the club's approval.

After completing its constitution and bylaws, the club must provide a copy to the local Extension office. The unit 4-H staff must approve the 4-H club's constitution and bylaws to ensure that they are in compliance with state and federal laws and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) policies and guidelines. The purpose and needs of the 4-H club may change over time so it is important that the club review its constitution and bylaws on a regular basis.

Tips on writing your constitution and bylaws

In addition to using the sample templates in this publication, a 4-H club may use the *Virginia 4-H Handbook: Fundamentals, Policies, Guidelines and Procedures*; VCE publication 388-536 (found on the Virginia 4-H website, www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h), which provides information about 4-H policies that can guide the development of the club's constitution and bylaws.

The constitution and bylaws must be written so that the entire membership can understand and feel ownership for these documents. The club should use simple language written from a positive point of view. For example, rather than writing "Any member who misses three meetings is not in good standing and cannot exhibit at the fair." Instead write "Members must attend seven meetings to be in good standing. Members in good standing are eligible to exhibit at the fair."

How to use your constitution and bylaws

A written copy of the 4-H club's constitution and bylaws should be given to all club members, leaders, and parents. This will ensure that everyone is aware of how the club will function. It also will help to unify the members by informing them about the opportunities that exist for participation and the procedures they must follow to be active, contributing members. The annual 4-H club officer training should include a thorough review of the club's constitution and bylaws.

Sample constitution and bylaws

A 4-H club can use the following sample templates to design its constitution and bylaws. Some sections are required without revision, other sections are required with revisions allowed, some sections are highly recommended, and others are optional. Example statements are provided to illustrate possible wording.

SAMPLE VIRGINIA 4-H CLUB CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE 1 – Name *(Required but revisions allowed)*

Example: This club shall be known as the _____ 4-H Club of _____ County/City, Virginia

ARTICLE 2 – Purposes *(Required but revisions allowed)*

Example: The purposes of this club shall be:

1. To stimulate member's personal growth and development
2. To have fun while learning practical life skills
3. To develop effective leadership in youth and adults
4. To help youth develop responsible citizenship

The development of club members will occur through 4-H project work; club meetings, demonstrations, and community service; club, county, district, state, regional, national and international 4-H events; and other activities.

ARTICLE 3 – Membership

Section 1 – Nondiscrimination *(Required without revision.)*

Club membership is open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

Section 2 – Age *(Required with revisions allowed. A determination of the permitted age groups for this club needs to be made, i.e. will it include all ages, be limited to seniors, etc.)*

Example 1: Membership is open to all junior, intermediate, and senior 4-H members. Cloverbuds cannot be club members, but may participate as a subgroup of the club according to state 4-H policy.

Example 2: Membership is limited to senior 4-H members.

ARTICLE 4 – Officers *(Required with revisions allowed. At a minimum, a 4-H club should have a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. All of the other officers in the list below do not need to be included; however, 4-H club participation is designed to provide youth with leadership skill practice. Use as many officers as possible.)*

Example: The officers of this club shall be president, vice president, recording secretary, corresponding secretary, treasurer, historian, parliamentarian, song leader, sergeant at arms, and recreation leader.

ARTICLE 5 – Committees *(Highly recommended. Including a committee structure in the club provides greater opportunities for member leadership development.)*

Example: The following committees shall be appointed to serve for the club year: (a) program, (b) recreation, (c) membership, and (d) audit. Standing or special committees may be created as needed. Members are expected to volunteer for committee assignments. The president has the authority to appoint committee chairs and members.

ARTICLE 6 – Meetings *(Required but revisions allowed.)*

Example: There shall be a minimum of eight meetings of the club each year. Attendance and participation can be promoted through incentive and recognition programs.

ARTICLE 7 – Finances *(This statement is required without revisions. Additional information may be included.)*

The club will follow all Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia 4-H fiscal policies as well as state and federal regulations. One volunteer club leader will be assigned as the mentor to the elected treasurer.

ARTICLE 8 – Volunteer Leaders *(A section describing the responsibilities of volunteer leaders is required without revision. Additional information may be included.)*

The volunteer leadership of this club shall consist of a minimum of two (2) adults. A 4-H volunteer is anyone beyond 4-H member age who is enrolled, and of his/her own free will, without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond possible reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the Virginia 4-H program. All 4-H club leaders are expected to abide by the *Standards of Behavior for Virginia 4-H Volunteers* and will have received 4-H volunteer orientation and training prior to leading a 4-H club.

ARTICLE 9 – Parents *(A section describing the responsibilities of parents is highly recommended.)*

Example: Parents/guardians of club members should wait until two responsible adults are present before leaving their child(ren) at a meeting. They must arrive to pick up their child(ren) 15 minutes before the scheduled meeting adjournment. Parents/guardians are expected to abide by the Virginia 4-H Expectations of Volunteers statement.

ARTICLE 10 – Extension 4-H Staff *(Required without revision.)*

The organization, program, and activities of this club shall be under the general direction of the unit 4-H or other Extension staff.

ARTICLE 11 – Dissolution *(A section describing the club dissolution procedures is required with revisions allowed.)*

Example 1: Upon dissolution, the members of the _____ 4-H Club agree to the following procedure:

The _____ 4-H Club shall be terminated and dissolved by a majority vote of the membership in favor of dissolution and termination of the 4-H club. The members shall also vote on how to disburse club resources to a project or activity or contribution to the betterment of the county or state 4-H program. If this 4-H club dissolves or fails to reorganize without a vote of the members, the resources become the property of the unit 4-H council or the unit 4-H foundation after a waiting period of one year. During the one-year waiting period, a volunteer representative of the county 4-H program will maintain the account.

Example 2: Upon the dissolution and termination of the _____ 4-H Club for any reason, the officers shall take full account of the _____ 4-H Club assets and liabilities, and shall liquidate the assets and shall apply and distribute the proceeds there from in the following order:

- A. To the payment of the debts and liabilities of the _____ 4-H Club.
- B. To the setting up of any reserves that the officers may deem reasonable for the purpose of paying any unforeseen liabilities or obligations of the club.
- C. The remaining balance shall be distributed to the _____ Unit 4-H Council for the purpose of program development directly related to the enrichment of the 4-H youth program.

Each of the members shall be provided a statement prepared by the _____ 4-H Club outlining the assets, liabilities, and the distribution upon complete liquidation. Upon compliance with these terms and the distribution of the funds, the 4-H club shall cease to exist.

ARTICLE 12 – Amendments *(A decision on how the constitution will be amended is required with revisions allowed.)*

Example: Providing notice has been given at the previous meeting, this constitution may be amended at any regular meeting by a two-thirds vote cast by those in attendance.

SIGNATURES:

Club President

Club Recording Secretary

Unit Extension 4-H Staff

Organizational Leader

Date Adopted

SAMPLE 4-H CLUB BYLAWS

ARTICLE 1 – Election of Officers

Section 1 – Eligibility *(Required but revisions allowed.)*

Example 1: All club members are eligible to serve as officers.

Example 2: Only club members with one full year of enrollment are eligible to serve as officers.

Section 2 - Election Procedures *(It is required that the club determine when and how elections will take place. Revisions allowed.)*

Example: The officers of this club shall be elected at the _____ (month) meeting each year. A nominating committee consisting of a chair and three (3) members will make its officer nominations report to the club one month before the election. Officers shall hold office for one year. Voting for officers is by majority rule and by secret ballot.

ARTICLE 2 – Duties of Officers *(Required but revisions allowed. At a minimum, the 4-H club should have the following officers: president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.)*

Example: The President shall preside at all meetings of the club and have in mind at all times the best interests of the club.

The Vice President shall perform the duties of the president in his or her absence. He or she shall serve as chair of the yearly program committee.

The Recording Secretary shall keep a record of all proceedings of the club and shall keep an accurate roll of all members. The secretary shall submit a completed club secretary book that includes an up-to-date club constitution and bylaws to the unit Extension office by the unit deadline.

The Corresponding Secretary shall act as correspondent in matters pertaining to the business of the club.

The Treasurer shall receive and take care of all money belonging to the club and shall pay it out upon the order of the president. The treasurer shall also be the chair of the Budget and Finance Committee. The treasurer will submit a completed club treasurer's book to the unit Extension office by the unit deadline.

The Historian shall keep an accurate scrapbook of all local club news and events, as well as unit-wide and statewide events.

The Parliamentarian will help the presiding officer conduct the 4-H club meetings smoothly by being well informed of parliamentary procedure.

The Reporter shall write news reports of all meetings and activities and send them to the local newspapers.

The Song Leader shall be prepared to lead the members in community singing at club meetings and social events.

The Recreation Leader shall be responsible for the recreation period at club meetings and special events.

The Sergeant at Arms shall be expected to maintain order of all members at each meeting.

ARTICLE 3 – Membership

Section 1 – Responsibilities *(It is highly recommended that the club determine what the responsibilities are for its members.)*

Example: Members must:

- a) Complete 4-H Enrollment, 4-H Code of Conduct, Health History Report, and Media Release forms and return them to the 4-H club volunteer organizational leader.
- b) Abide by the Virginia 4-H Code of Conduct. Members may be removed from 4-H programs or activities for violation of the Virginia 4-H Code of Conduct.

- c) Regularly attend local club and project meetings.
- d) Attend a minimum of three-quarters (3/4) of the regular club meetings to be eligible to participate in district and state competitive events.
- e) Enroll in one or more projects and keep 4-H project records and portfolio.
- f) Share what they learn in one of their projects through talks, demonstrations, or exhibits.
- g) Participate in at least one club service project.
- h) Agree to abide by project or club agreements, if used.

ARTICLE 4 – Meetings

Section 1 – Dates *(It is highly recommended that the club choose a consistent meeting date.)*

Example: The regular meetings of the _____ 4-H Club will take place on the _____ of each month. The President with the consent of the club organizational leader can call special meetings of the club with a minimum advance notice to the membership of seven (7) days.

Section 2 – Quorum *(A club is required to determine what constitutes a quorum. Revisions allowed.)*

Example: The club may transact business when a quorum of 50 percent of club members is present. Voting members must meet membership criteria listed in Article 3 of the constitution.

Section 3 – Order of Business *(Highly recommended. The order can be adjusted.)*

Example: The following order of business shall be followed at regular club meetings:

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance and the 4-H Pledge
3. Roll Call
4. Minutes of Last Meeting
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Other Reports (other officers, committees, 4-H leaders)
7. Unfinished Business
8. New Business
9. Announcements
10. Adjournment
11. Educational Program/Project Work
12. Team Building (recreation, singing, refreshments, etc.)

Section 4 – Parliamentary Procedure *(The use of parliamentary procedure is highly recommended. This is a key skill for learning leadership and citizenship.)*

Example: *Robert's Rules of Order* shall govern the meetings of the club.

ARTICLE 5 – Fiscal Operations

Section 1 – Dues *(Optional)*

Example 1: This 4-H club will not assess dues of its members.

Example 2: This 4-H club will assess dues of _____ per month per member for club expenses. The treasurer is responsible for collection and accounting of dues payments.

Section 2 – Club Financial Account *(Highly Recommended)*

Example: The _____ 4-H Club finances will be kept in an account in _____ Bank. Two signatures will be required on the account, the 4-H club treasurer and the adult leader assigned as the treasurer’s mentor.

ARTICLE 6 – Plan of Work *(Required with revisions allowed.)*

Example: A committee of the club officers and the adult leaders will write The Club Annual Program Plan. The plan will be presented to the club membership for adoption not later than the second meeting of the year.

ARTICLE 7 - Amendments to the Bylaws *(A decision on how the bylaws will be amended is required. Revisions allowed.)*

Example: These bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the members present at any regular meeting.

SIGNATURES:

Club President

Club Recording Secretary

Unit Extension 4-H Staff

Organizational Leader

Date Adopted