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Writing 4-H News : Extension Circular 0-32-2

Dick Fleming

Dan Lutz

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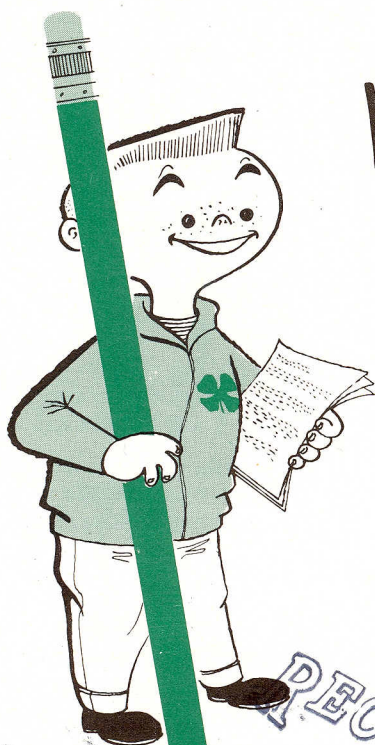
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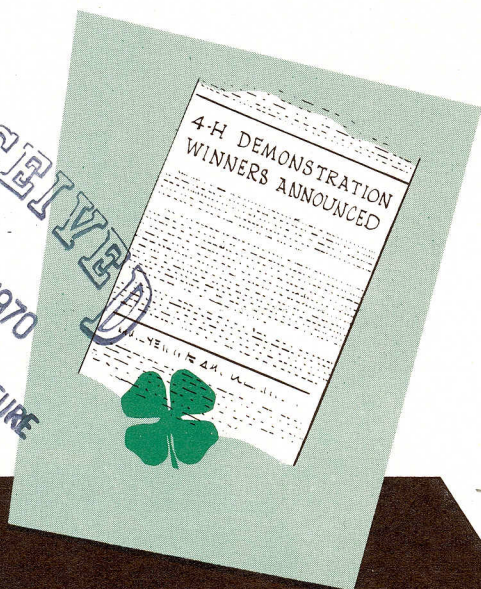
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E.C.O-32-2



Writing 4-H news

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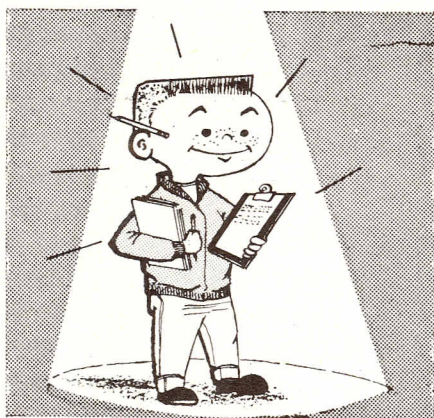
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Writing 4-H News

by Dick Fleming and Dan Lutz

Assistant Extension Editors

WHY REPORT 4-H?



Let's take a moment to look at your job as a 4-H News Reporter.

The 4-H movement is one of the greatest youth programs in the world. Every member has a right to be proud of 4-H achievements and goals. Each club meeting report, each picture of a 4-H activity, and every minute on radio and television will help tell others what 4-H is doing.

By electing you News Reporter, members of your club believe you can tell "The 4-H Story." Many people will be watching for the stories you write—parents, members of your club, members of other clubs, friends, relatives and your newspaper editor.

When you think of how many people are likely to read YOUR stories, you will want to do a good job. Remember, people who read your stories were not at the 4-H club meeting and do not know much about your club.

That's why it is important for you to know how to report the news of your club clearly and concisely. This bulletin is written to help you become the best News Reporter your 4-H club has ever had. If you achieve success, there may be a future for you in the writing profession.

WHAT TO REPORT

Four-H activities are NEWS. There is a wealth of good story material right in your own club and community.

One of the secrets of a good reporter is recognizing 4-H happenings as news. Some people call it developing a "nose for news."

Club meetings are news. And it is possible to write an account of almost every meeting in a way that will interest the newspaper editor and readers.

Other events you may want to write about include:

Outstanding project work

Camping activities

Parties and recreation programs

Rural Life Sunday

Election of officers

Club Congress winners

Scholarship winners

Winnings at fairs and shows

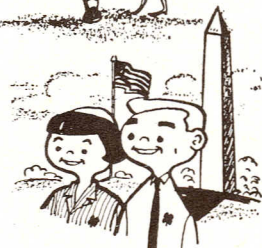
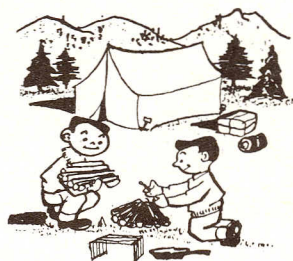
Public speaking contests

Community service

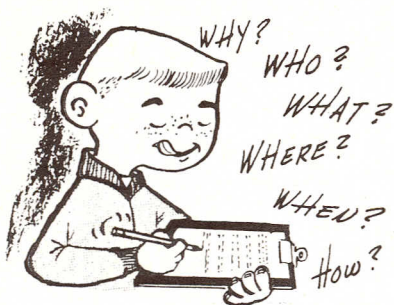
Demonstrations

Judging

Club activities in health and safety



LET'S TAKE SOME NOTES



Four-H news writing begins as you take notes. News reporting starts at the club meeting or event. That's where everything happens. You need to have accurate, clear notes of the meeting so you can write a good story. It's best if you can take your own notes.

Your notes should include what are called the five W's and H. They are:

WHO—Who took charge of the meeting? Who became new members? Who visited your club? Who gave a demonstration or talk? Who was elected to office?

WHAT—What happened at your meeting? What did speakers or leaders talk about? What kind of a demonstration did you have? What was the special event?

WHEN—When was the meeting held? Be exact as to the day of the month, such as May 31, not Thursday, etc.

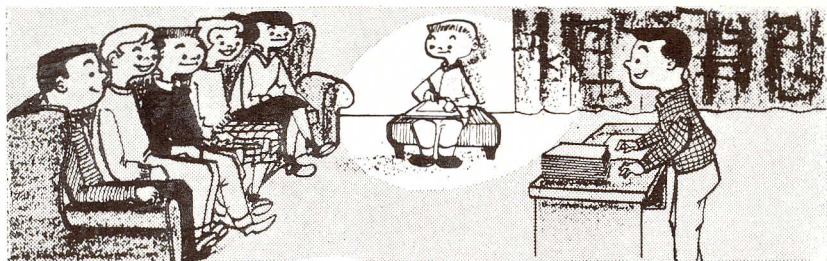
WHERE—Where was the meeting held? Give names and address of family or meeting place?

WHY—Why was the meeting important? Why was a special meeting called?

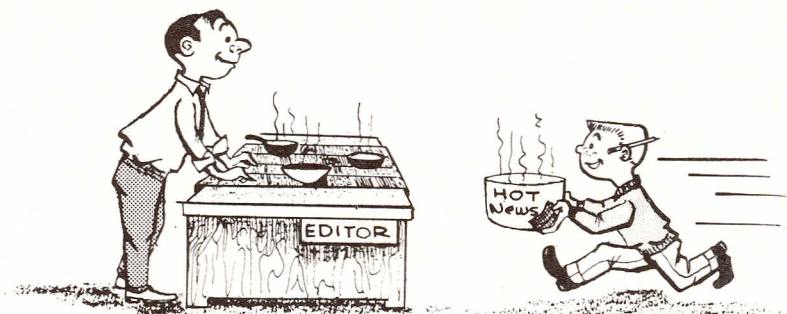
HOW—How did members conduct the demonstration? How did the club decide on a new project or activity?

Before leaving the meeting look over your notes to make sure that all facts are collected for the news story.

Now let's see how these facts should be put together into a story that will be accurate, brief and clear to the newspaper editor and reader.



WRITING THE 4-H STORY



A news article can be compared to a dish of food. Your mother chooses different foods to fit the taste of all members of your family. In the same manner, the newspaper editor "sets a full table" so that every reader will find something he likes.

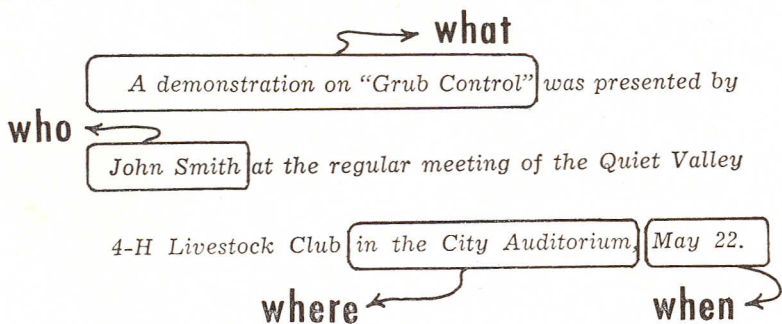
Four-H news must compete with many other items. It is a good "dish," but must be prepared attractively so that the newspaper editor will use it.

A newspaper is printed for all the people who read it with the idea of interesting as many as possible. As in a meal, some members of the family like spinach and others don't.

The newspaper editor won't put something on the "table" that **nobody** cares to read. The purpose of a 4-H news report is to inform others, many of whom know little about 4-H.

In writing your story, start off with the most important facts about the meeting. Sometimes the last item of business may be the most important.

The first paragraph of your 4-H story is called the lead. It catches the readers' attention and makes them want to read further.



Make your lead answer some of the six questions, WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE? WHY? HOW?

The lead should include the fact you decide is most important about the event or meeting you are reporting.

GOOD LEADS

Mothers and grandmothers were special guests of the Sewing Suzies 4-H club at the home of the leader, Miss Alice Smith, May 10.

Bob Smith was elected president of the Happy Hours 4-H Club at a reorganization meeting, May 4, at the E. R. Smith home.

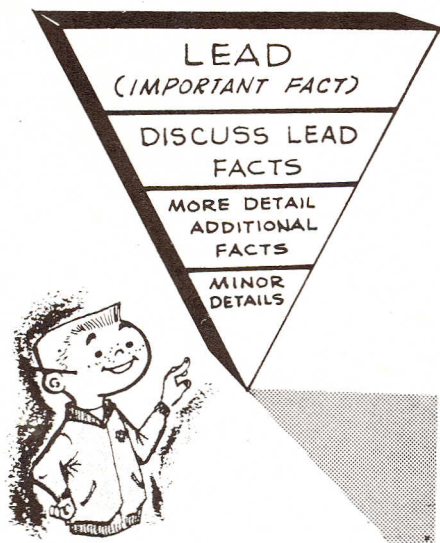
POOR LEADS

The Willing Wranglers 4-H Club held their meeting Monday at 7:30 p.m. at the high school. We have nine members in our club. There were six visitors present.

First Rate 4-H Club met at the City building, Wednesday with all members present. John Doe, our president, had charge of the business meeting.

Next, you use other notes taken at the meeting that may help explain the lead or the first paragraph. More sentences and paragraphs should be written using other notes taken at the meeting.

Finally, you must stop writing when all the important notes have been used in the story.



The completed story will resemble an inverted pyramid. Facts at the end of the story that make up the point of the pyramid can be taken away without losing the main facts. If an editor has only four inches of room in his newspaper, and your story, set in newspaper type, is six inches long, the story must be shortened. Newspaper type, unlike rubber, cannot be squeezed together. The newspaper editor will likely take out the last paragraph or two.

It's a good idea to keep sentences short, with an average of 15 or 20 words in length. This should be true of your first sentence lead as well as the rest of the sentences in the story.

After writing the story, you should look it over again to make sure the most important part of the meeting is in the first sentence.

You also need to check over the story to make sure it is accurate, brief and clear.

Always be sure that the story is written in third person; avoid using I or we in a news story.

Names make news. Always use both the first and last names of members who took part in the meeting.

Since many things may happen at a 4-H club meeting, it's always a good idea to show your story to the 4-H club leader or your parents before taking it to the local newspaper. This helps you make sure the story is complete and accurate.

PREPARING THE 4-H STORY FOR THE LOCAL EDITOR

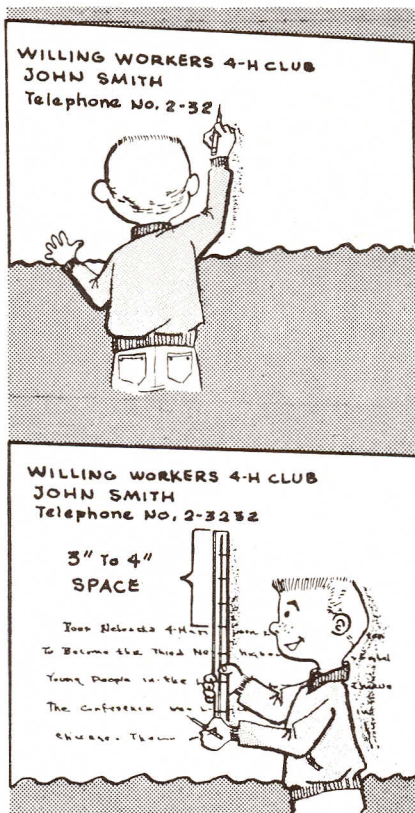
Now for some tips on preparing your story for delivery to the local newspaper.

Write or Typewrite Stories Neatly

Editors enjoy getting stories that are easy to read. If you can type or know someone who can, the editor will appreciate such stories. If you write stories by hand, print all names.

Let the Editor Know It's YOUR Story

This can be done by placing your club's name, your name and telephone number in the upper left hand corner of each page. If there is a question, the editor will know whom to call.



Leave Some Space at the Top of Each Page

Editors may need some white space to write notes at the top of your story, so it's a good idea to start writing three or four inches down the page. Always use plain white paper and write on only one side. Use "more" at the bottom of the first page to let the editor know that there is a second page. At the end of the story, always make a mark such as ### or the figure "30."

Double Space All Stories

If you skip a space between each line in typing and handwriting, it will be much easier for the editor to read.

the 4-H'ers will travel to

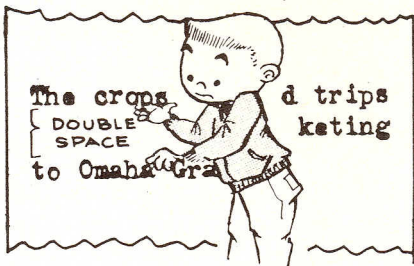
-more-

page 2

Omaha to visit the stock

in various 4-H projects.

###



LET'S GET ACQUAINTED WITH THE NEWSPAPER EDITOR

It's always important to know who handles 4-H stories at your local newspaper. Find out his or her name so you will know where to send your stories.

The editor also can give you some tips on the kinds of stories that he likes. This will help you write better 4-H stories for the newspaper. You may want to take your first story with you when you visit the editor.

Every newspaper must have 4-H news by a certain time each week. If the story arrives after the deadline, it may not be used for another week. In some cases the story may be thrown in the wastebasket if it arrives too late.

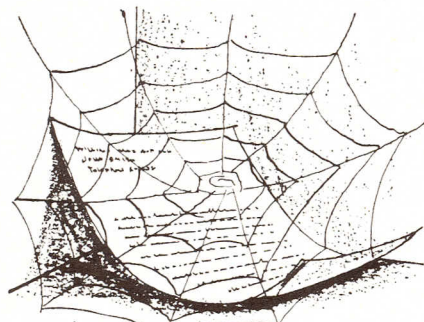


TABOOS OF 4-H STORIES

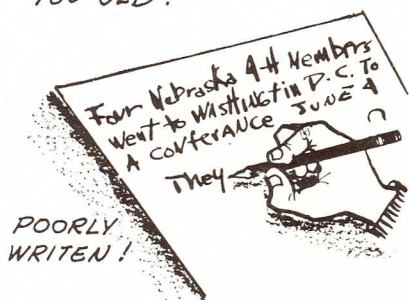
Occasionally, even though you have followed all the rules of good news writing, and covered an interesting subject, there isn't enough space to get everything in the newspaper.

Don't be discouraged if occasionally your story does not get printed. Try again! Anyone who has ever written news stories has had the experience of having some of them left out of the paper.

Perhaps you will have fewer rejections, however, if you know some of the reasons why stories fail.



TOO OLD!



POORLY
WRITTEN!



HARD FOR EDITOR TO READ!

Here are some "taboos":

Story has lost news value.

You waited too long to report the event after it happened. Write news while it is "hot." Consult your notes as soon after the meeting as possible, and write your story before you forget the details.

Story may not be of general local interest. Try to write something of interest to many people.

Poorly written. Try to observe the general rules of news writing given in this pamphlet. Be careful about spelling names correctly. Get complete information, but keep the final story brief.

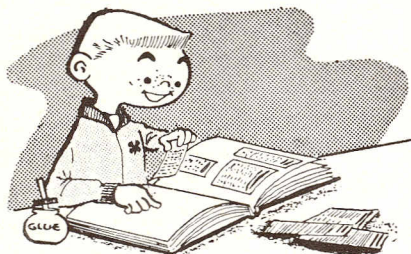
Hard for editor to read. Remember to double-space and keep it neat.

Too late. Your story may have broken the deadline for accepting news to be printed in a given issue. Failure to observe the deadline may be a short-cut to the wastebasket for even top stories.

Uncomplimentary statements. Tell only the facts. Don't express your own opinion, or "editorialize."

Rumors in the story. Facts can always be verified or checked. Don't use statements in your story where there is a question of accuracy or truth. If you use rumors in your articles, both the editor and your fellow club members will quickly lose confidence in you.

KEEP A SCRAPBOOK



A scrapbook will bring you a great deal of pleasure when you look over the newspaper clippings of stories you have written. It will be interesting to compare the first story you write to a later one, and see how much you improve.

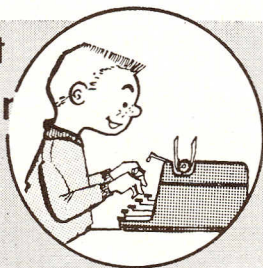
It always pays to make an extra copy of each story so you can compare the article you prepared with the one that is actually published in the newspaper. Extra copies also come in handy if the story you send to the newspaper is lost. You can place the extra copy in your scrapbook, right with the actual clipping of the published article.

By clipping all 4-H stories that appear in your local paper, you will have a nice record of your work. Such a record may help you to take part in news writing contests.



taking notes

**preparing it
for the editor**



writing story

PICTURES FOR NEWSPAPERS AND TELEVISION STATIONS

Once in a while your newspaper editor or television news director may be interested in a picture of 4-H club activities. If so, it is your job to see that the editor or TV news director is told about your special activity. Then he can make plans to have a photographer take pictures. Editors and news directors probably will be interested in pictures only when you have a special project or activity, so do not be disappointed if they do not take a picture every time you tell them about an activity.

RADIO

Radio stations, like television stations and newspapers, are interested in special projects and activities which your club is conducting. Therefore, it's a good idea to let them know about special programs. They may want to tape record a radio program at the scene of your special activity or they might want to have you or someone in charge record a radio program at the station. The important thing to remember is that you must let them know if you expect to receive publicity from radio stations.

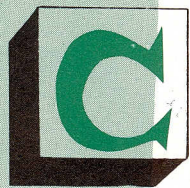




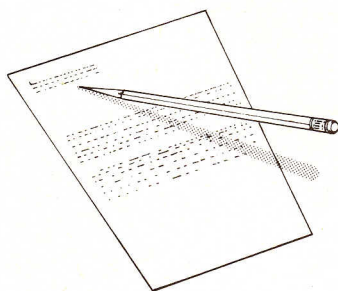
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the A,B,C's of
NEWS WRITING