



# Make Up Your Own Mind: Self-Determined Project

4-H MEMBER MANUAL • EM2956

A self-determined project allows you to plan what you want to do and learn in 4-H, regardless of the subject. Before starting your self-determined project, read this entire project guide. By being familiar with all the necessary steps, many wasted efforts and much time may be saved.

It is important to have a plan at the beginning of a self-determined project. Review your plan with an adult; in this way, you can obtain suggestions and guidance.



## SELECTING YOUR SELF-DETERMINED PROJECT

It is important to learn how to make decisions. The selection of a worthwhile and interesting project is an important decision you have an opportunity to make.

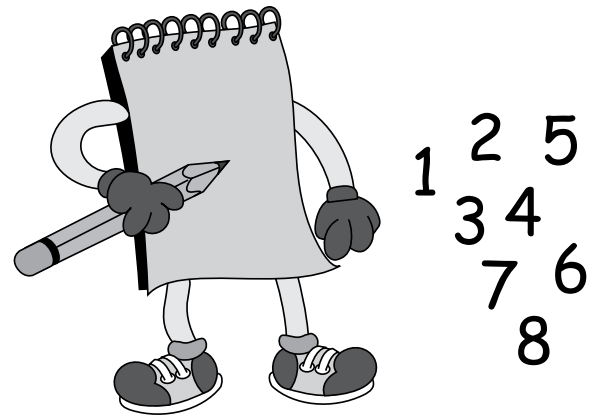
This guide was designed to help you select, plan, and evaluate projects of your own choosing.

One way to begin is to make an inventory of your interests, needs, aspirations, and concerns. This inventory is not necessarily related to anything you are now doing or have done—it could include something new you want to do.

As you work on your inventory, you may want some help and guidance from other people. For example, you could talk with friends, neighbors, parents, leaders, teachers, Extension workers, clergy, counselors, scientists, artists, craftspeople, business people, farmers, ranchers, homemakers, engineers, mechanics, dietitians, nurses, doctors, dentists, or laborers. You can probably think of other people who can also help you.

Before you make an inventory of your interests, needs, aspirations, and concerns, review these definitions.

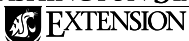
- An *interest* is something that excites your feelings and gains your attention or curiosity. It causes you to say, "I'd like to do that!"
- A *need* is something that you, your family, or your community wants, lacks, or requires. You say to yourself, "Yes, I can see that it is necessary to do that."
- An *aspiration* is a strong wish, something you long for or seek to attain. It makes you think, "I really want to try to reach that."
- A *concern* is something that affects the welfare and happiness of you, your family, your club, and your community, society, or world. A concern causes you to say, "I care about that."



### Making an Inventory

Think of yourself in relation to others. List five to eight ideas that interest you. List ideas that are related to you and your ever-expanding relationships with other people: you, yourself; you and

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your home and family; you and your friends; you and others in your community, county, state, nation, and world.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

Include ideas or problems you'd like to investigate; something that you'd like to be able to do, find out about, or learn; situations about which you feel strongly; things that you think you need to do or wish you could do; ways in which you could be helpful to other people.

### Making a Choice

When you have listed your interests, needs, aspirations, or concerns, narrow these down to *three* ideas you might be able to do something about this coming year.

Consider these things when trying to choose your ideas.

- What are your personal experiences?
- How and where can you get information?
- How much is it going to cost?
- How worthwhile is the project going to be to you?
- What do you think you might be able to learn from it?
- What other people besides you will benefit from it? Should your idea be an individual project or should a group of people work together on it?
- What other things (such as your school activities) will you be doing which may affect your time, energy, how well you can do the project, cost?

- Do you have someone to go to who is willing to help and who knows something about what you want to learn?
- Would this help you decide your future career?
- Will it fit in with your home and family situation?



Using the suggested criteria for making choices, select three ideas from those you listed earlier.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Now, pick *one* of the three ideas (above) which you (or you together with others) will develop as a project. Circle it. Tell why you chose this project and what things you considered when making the selection.

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## PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

We all plan ahead; we have to. A plan is what we make *ahead of time* so we can do something we want in the future.

Some plans are just thoughts; other plans are written. It is well to write down a plan when there are many things to consider—for example, facilities, equipment, availability of subject matter material, seasonal planning, and expenditure of time and money.

### Setting Goals

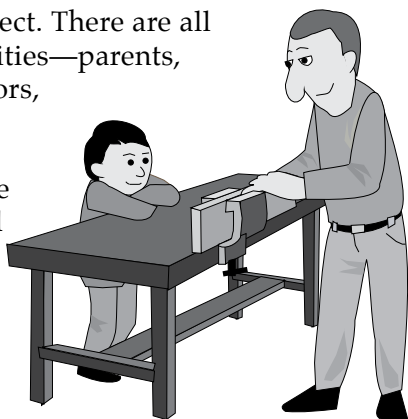
Goals are meaningful if stated in terms of “what I hope to learn.” Learning implies change or growth, and takes place in three interrelated areas:

1. Attitudes, feelings, values, beliefs, dedications.
2. Skills, ways of doing things, actions, behavior.
3. Knowledge, facts, information, thinking, understanding.

Note that several different words are listed for each of the three areas to indicate the various meanings involved.

You have chosen a project. Therefore, it is self-determined. You want to have satisfaction from completing your project. Therefore, you need to set goals and describe ways you will go about trying to accomplish your goals.

You may want to find out what there is to learn in a project before you write down goals. So, you might want to visit with someone who can give you some information or ideas on the subject. There are all kinds of possibilities—parents, teachers, neighbors, friends, business people, farmers, laborers—anyone who is interested in the subject or who is doing something related to it.



### Making Your Project Plan

Consider your goals and the techniques you will use to meet them when you develop your project plan.

#### Goals

What do you need to learn in order to complete this project? \_\_\_\_\_

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What skills will you need to develop?

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Are any changes in your attitudes involved?

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#### Techniques

What do you need to do? \_\_\_\_\_

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Where can you get help? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

What resources do you need? \_\_\_\_\_

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What kinds of record keeping will help you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What learning experiences will help you accomplish your goals? \_\_\_\_\_

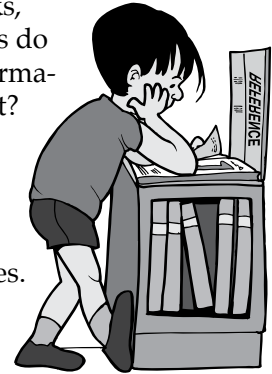
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You may want to write a description or plan of your self-determined project rather than answering the above questions. Include how and why you chose the project; your goals; and techniques, procedures, tasks, responsibilities, and learning experiences you plan to use in order to accomplish your goals.

## DEVELOPING YOUR PROJECT

In order to implement your plans and develop your project, you may want to do some of the following:

- Review your project plans with other young people and with adults.
- Ask people for help—verbally, by letter, by e-mail. Make appointments with people; respect their time and energy.
- Write for literature and materials. Inquire about costs.
- Go to libraries. What books, magazines, or publications do they have which give information related to your project?
- Visit persons and places where information can be obtained on your project.
- Clip information from newspapers and magazines.
- Watch for help from radio and TV programs.
- Look on the Web.
- Ask to be included in meetings, tours, events, and activities related to your project.
- Try out, experiment, investigate, do many things which will aid learning.



List some of the ideas you have for developing your project and resource people who can help you. \_\_\_\_\_

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## EVALUATING YOUR PROJECT

Satisfaction comes when you can see your progress or improvement. Evaluate your progress throughout the project.

Progress is measured in terms of the goals you set at the beginning of your self-determined project. You need to answer these kinds of questions:

- What am I learning?
- What am I accomplishing?
- How well am I doing?
- How do I feel about what I am doing?
- How is this project helping me grow?

### Recording Progress

Here are some ways to record progress toward your goals.

1. *Take pictures.* Photographs and slides can tell a story. Take before and after pictures. Plan a series of pictures to show the steps or different stages in the development of your project.
2. *Keep records.* There are many forms of records such as diaries, outlines, stories, notebooks, written reports, tables, charts, drawings, and pictures. Decide what best fits your project. Whatever methods you use, consider these questions:
  - How can you show the extent to which you are learning or accomplishing what you set out to do?
  - How can you describe or show what you did?
  - How can you show the data collected or the results of your investigations or work?
  - How does your project benefit other people?
  - Should you show how you used your time and energy?
  - Do you need to keep track of the money you spent and received?



3. *Have samples, models, or objects.* Some projects lend themselves to growing, making, or collecting. These examples of what you have done provide evidence of your growth in knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes.
4. *Talk with people.* You can gain insights about your progress by discussing your project with people who are knowledgeable about it.

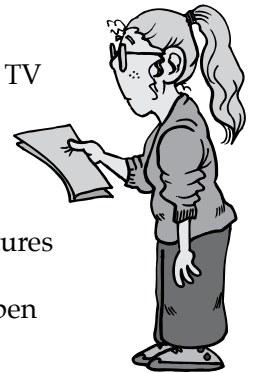
### Sharing What You Learn

Further satisfactions and opportunities for growth come from sharing what you have learned with other people.

Sharing can help you summarize, analyze, and further assess what you are accomplishing.

Consider these ways of sharing:

- Workshops, programs, meetings, and committees.
- Exhibits, window displays, bulletin boards, and fair booths.
- Demonstrations, illustrated talks, dramatic scenes, and TV programs.
- Talks, interviews, panel discussions, and radio and TV programs.
- Newspaper articles and features in magazines.
- A self-determined project open house.



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