

## 4-H LEADER GUIDE

# TEACHING 4-H ORAL REASONS

Making good choices and explaining them to others can build a 4-H member's self-confidence. Selecting the best of four comparable items sharpens the decision-making skills of a member. Giving reasons for his or her selections stimulates habits of careful and thorough thinking.

As a 4-H leader, you can help your 4-H members learn to judge and to give oral reasons by using the practical tips in this bulletin.

### **WHAT ARE ORAL REASONS?**

A good set of oral reasons is an organized statement which compares the values of items judged by the member. Oral reasoning statements must be clearly stated in proper terms and must justify the placings assigned by the member.

In order to develop sound oral reasons, the 4-H member must have a mental picture of the class being judged. This method is much more effective than memorizing reasons. It develops the imaging powers of the brain as well as the ability to make comparisons, then uses both to explain the member's placings of the original class.

### **SUGGESTED STEPS FOR TEACHING ORAL REASONS TO MEMBERS:**

1. Help members develop a working knowledge of accepted terminology. Terms and their meanings apply to real specimens. If members tend to over-use terms when giving reasons, review the range of appropriate terms with them.
2. Explain the accepted oral reasons procedure using the "Sample Format for Reasons" section of this bulletin.
3. Set up a judging class so that members may

- practice giving oral reasons. Encourage members to use the imaging method mentioned previously.
4. Offer comments tempered with plenty of praise. Too much criticism is obviously not good for building a member's self-confidence. Tape recording or videotaping provides an opportunity for members to critique themselves.
  5. Provide opportunities throughout the year for members to present oral reasons.

### **BASIC ELEMENTS OF ORAL REASONING**

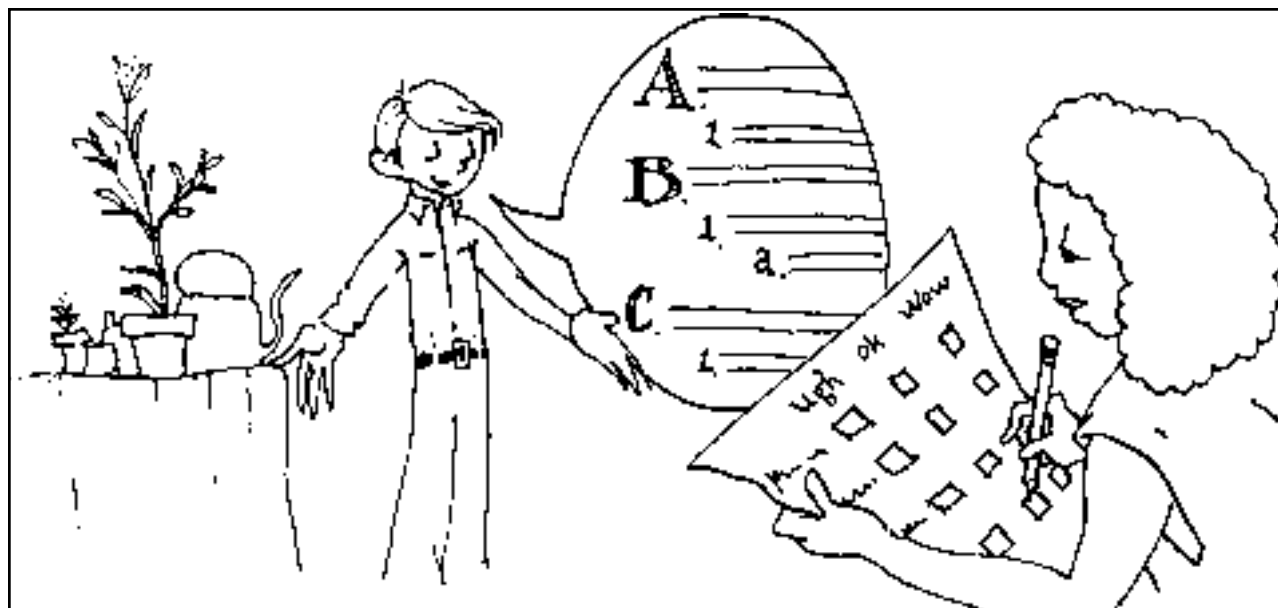
The first task in judging is for members to place the items in the class in order. Members should make brief written notes that will help them recall a mental picture of the class. While members are waiting to give reasons to the oral reasons judge, they can organize their thoughts and practice giving reasons out loud.

There are four important and basic criteria in every good set of oral reasons. Oral reasons judges assign the following percentage values to each of the four criteria:

- Knowledge of Subject—40%
- Use of Appropriate Terminology—25%
- Presentation—20%
- Organization—15%

*Knowledge of subject* is the most important part of giving reasons and is worth the greatest number of points. A member needs to see major things in the class correctly and discuss them accurately and completely. The oral reasons judge will always weigh accuracy more heavily than the other three basic criteria. Therefore, a persuasive and pleasant sounding set of reasons without a high degree of accuracy is worthless.





A class of four is divided into three pairs: a top pair, a middle pair, and a bottom pair. The basic organizational outline for an entire set of reasons and comments on specific steps (placing 1-2-3-4) follows.

**Step I:** Give name of class and placings. Example: "I placed this class of \_\_\_\_\_ 1-2-3-4."

**Step II:** Make some general comments about the class (optional). Point out the most important points of your top placing.

**Step III:** Give reasons in comparative terms for placing 1 over 2 in the top pair. Begin with important points and follow with details.

**Step IV:** Each item in a class has some good points. Tell how 2 is better than 1. Example: "I grant (concede) that 2 is ..... than 1." End a "grant" statement with "than" plus a number.

**Step V:** Repeat steps III & IV comparing the next two pairs, one pair at a time. Example: "In the middle pair, I placed 2 over 3 because ...." and "In the bottom pair I placed 3 over 4 because ...."

**Step VI:** Give one or two comments about why number 4 cannot place higher in the class.

**Step VII:** Conclude by saying "These are my reasons for placing this class \_\_\_\_\_ 1-2-3-4. Are there any questions?"

### EXAMPLE OF ORAL REASONS FOR A FOODS AND NUTRITION CLASS

I placed the measuring liquids class 2-1-4-3.

I placed the glass cup first because it is recommended for measuring liquids. It has a spout for easy pouring and clear markings for easy reading. Because it is clear, the amount of liquid in the cup is easily read at eye level.

It is easier to accurately measure liquids using a glass measuring cup than with an aluminum cup because of the clear markings on the glass cup. It also is easier to pour from the glass measuring cup because it has a spout and the aluminum cup doesn't.

I placed the aluminum cup second because it must be filled to the brim to measure accurately. It would be difficult to pick up the aluminum cup and move it without spilling. The aluminum cup is better than my third choice because its shape is not changed by temperature.

I placed the plastic measuring cup third because it could melt or become misshapen if hot liquids were being measured. Also, plastic sometimes gives an odor to liquid. Measurement in a plastic cup is likely to be more accurate than using a regular tea or coffee cup which could vary in size. I placed the regular tea cup fourth because it does not always measure accurately. Tea and coffee cups vary according to their patterns so accurate measurement would be impossible. I grant that 4 is better than 3

because it would not give an odor to the liquid as the plastic cup might. For these reasons, I placed the measuring liquid class 2–1–4–3. Are there any questions?

### **EXAMPLE OF ORAL REASONS FOR AN ANIMAL SCIENCE CLASS**

I placed this class of four-year-old Holstein cows 2–4–3–1.

I placed 2 over 4 because she is superior in general appearance and has the best mammary system in the class. She blends more smoothly throughout, moves more attractively, and walks more correctly on her rear legs. I concede that 4's head shows more breed character and that 2 is plain-headed.

I placed 4 over 3 based on dairy character and body capacity. Four shows greater evidence of milkiness, is sharper over the withers, and shows less thickness through the neck and in the thigh region. Four also is a deeper- and longer-bodied cow than 3. She shows greater depth and more spring of rib.

I placed 3 over 1 because her mammary system shows more quality and has a firmer udder attachment. Her udder is level and is more balanced than 1's. Three is also a taller, more open-framed cow than is 1.

I placed 1 last because she has a meaty, tilted udder and long, pointed teats that strut out.

These are the reasons I placed the class of Holstein four-year-olds 2–4–3–1. Are there any questions?



By Jan Hiller, Extension 4-H/Youth Specialist; John Moore, Grant-Adams Area Extension Agent (retired); Jerry Newman, Extension 4-H/Youth Specialist.

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### **SERVING AS AN ORAL REASONS JUDGE**

You may be asked to serve as an official oral reasons judge. In this capacity, your responsibility is to evaluate a member's presentation of oral reasons. Age-graded oral reasons scorecards for juniors, intermediates, and seniors are listed in EM2778, *4-H Projects and Publications*. You may order a supply from your county Extension office.

The oral reasons judge should consider the member's:

- ability to make accurate, clear-cut comparisons which justify placings.
- knowledge of the essential qualities and standards required in the class.
- ability to organize ideas and to state them in a clear-cut, brief manner.
- use of a varied, descriptive vocabulary and correct grammar.
- general poise and confidence.

An incorrect placing does not mean reasons will automatically be scored lower than if the placing was correct. The member may assign importance to a different aspect of the item than the judge does. However, point deductions should be made for inaccurate statements to discourage members who memorize reasons rather than judge each class separately.

### **CONCLUSION**

Helping young people learn to clearly express their ideas is a rewarding part of being a 4-H leader. Use the materials in this guide to help your 4-Hers learn to make decisions and to state their opinions effectively.

Have fun teaching oral reasoning! If you need more information about judging, refer to *Learning Through 4-H Judging*, EM4647.