Each Illinois 4-H Spark Sheet starts with a “Spark” activity. These hands-on activities are intended to help spark a member’s interest in a project area.

4-H is based in experiential learning - the opportunity for young people to take part in a learning experience, process and reflect about what they did, and then apply what they learned. An adult mentor - a parent or grandparent, a family friend, or a 4-H volunteer - can help coach a young person throughout a learning experience, and in doing so, can help increase its impact. While you guide youth through a Spark Activity, keep the steps of the experiential learning process in mind:

**DO** - a fun, hands-on activity. The key to this learning is about the **process** of the experience, not just the final outcome or final **product**. The process of learning is much more important than what is produced.

**REFLECT** - focused reflection is an essential step of 4-H project learning. This step encourages members to consider why each project experience matters, how it relates to their overall project experience and ultimately how the experience impacts their role in being influencers, change-makers and leaders.

**APPLY** - practice this skill or advance to a new level using the new information learned. Encourage 4-Hers to use what they’ve learned to expand or improve their project work in their club, community, country or world.

Find more ideas and additional resources for each project in the “Want to Learn More?” section of each 4-H Spark Sheet.

### 4-H Project Goals and Pathways

The “4-H Project Levels and Goals” section of a Spark Sheet helps youth select appropriate project levels, plan their path for project learning, and set yearly goals. 4-H projects...

- **Provide pathways to new learning**  - trying new projects is a great way to explore new hobbies and areas of interest
- **Allow for mastery** - enrolling in a project and learning over multiple years gives 4-Hers an opportunity for deeper exploration, skill development and project leadership
- **Connect youth to opportunities**  at the club, county, state, national and even international levels
- **Engage young people in learning**  in a network of family, friends, neighbors and community
- **Expose youth to potential careers**  - both the content expertise and the life skills developed in 4-H project work have lasting impacts on future careers
Put Your Project Into Action

4-H project learning is at its best when it becomes a community experience for a 4-H member - within a network of family, friends, neighbors and community. Each Spark Sheet has specific ideas for enriching the project experience in several ways:

Show Your Skills
Exhibits are one part of the 4-H project learning experience and a perfect opportunity to demonstrate the mastery of what has been learned during the year at 4-H sponsored fairs and competitions and at community or school-sponsored events.

Service and Leadership
Using our “Hands for larger service” is a key part of the 4-H pledge. The independence a member develops from taking on leadership roles and the spirit of generosity a member develops from service projects are skills that last for a lifetime. Each Spark Sheet includes specific ideas for service and leadership related to the project area.

Entrepreneurship and Career Explorations
The Illinois 4-H mission is to empower and prepare all youth for future success. In addition to career exploration opportunities, youth are encouraged to consider business opportunities that can evolve from a project they enjoy. Each Spark Sheet includes ideas for youth-run businesses and possible future careers.

Technology Connection
As part of the University of Illinois, 4-H connects youth with the latest real-world innovation and practices. Spark Sheets include ideas which inspire 4-Hers to explore technology in all 4-H projects.

Connecting with a Mentor
Project learning is enriched with peer and adult mentors. In some cases, mentors with specific project expertise may be part of the 4-H club. Spark Sheets have ideas for potential community connections for role models or expert advisors.

Events
There are many 4-H sponsored events each year that may relate to a given project. Participating in these events is an opportunity for 4-H members to learn and grow while connecting with others who share a similar passion. In addition, Spark Sheets identify examples of community events and virtual experiences to enrich project learning.

Want to learn more?
Visit the specific “go.illinois.edu/...” link on each 4-H Spark Sheet - it will take you to both print and electronic resources specifically related to the project.

Find the complete list of 4-H Spark Sheets here:
4h.extension.illinois.edu/project-spark-sheets

Explore more at Illinois 4-H!
4-h.extension.illinois.edu