

# Communications - Express Yourself

## Supporting School-Age Accreditation and Quality Programming

Providing opportunities for children and youth to speak in front of their peers is a valuable component of a school-age program. Children can demonstrate anything they like doing, from taking photos or grooming pets, to threading needles or painting rockets. When a child learns a skill, ask for a demonstration at the next club meeting.

## Opportunities for Youth Leadership and Development and Cross-age Teaching

Youth and adults can work together to develop "teen teachers." Youth come up with topics that elementary school children will be facing as they grow up, such as drugs or alcohol, peer pressure, and bullying. Youth can write scripts about how they would teach elementary school children to handle these difficult situations and then deliver it through role plays, panel discussions or media presentations.



## Ideas! Ideas! Ideas!

Brainstorm with children, youth, and parents to generate ideas for speakers, field trips, and websites.

Visit your local AFN or community television or radio station to learn about the training received by the various on-air and behind-the-scenes employees.

Have the commander and community leaders give presentations on what helped them get their positions.

Visit the local playhouse or community theatre. What skills are needed to be an actor/actress?

Have a member of Toastmasters talk about becoming a public speaker.



## Providing Quality Middle School and Teen Programming

4-H *Express Yourself* can enhance many Middle School and Teen programs. During workforce prep activities, teach youth how to interview for a job and apply for a scholarship or to a college. Help youth determine what would make their community better, and recommend that they participate in local Army Family Action Plan (AFAP) meetings. Assist youth as they complete the Youth Of the Year package and put together their presentations.

## Essential Elements of 4 H Youth Development

Through 4-H, youth know they are cared about and feel a sense of **BELONGING**; they exercise **INDEPENDENCE** by using decision-making and action to influence people and events; they develop a sense of **MASTERY** by learning skills needed in making positive career and life choices; and they experience **GENEROSITY** by helping others through community service. These elements support the Army Youth Development Components of Belonging, Success, Service and Independence.

## Summary

It's not necessary to be an expert communicator, just have an interest in the subject. The materials give many ideas to teach skills that will help youth communicate more clearly.

# THE Army 4-H EXPRESS GUIDE TO Communications-Express Yourself



Think about all the different types of communication used everyday.

Effective communication is important in all aspects of day-to-day life, and yet it's also one of the most frightening for many people.



## Project Goals

There is so much more to communication than just speaking! *Express Yourself* shows the many forms that communication can take such as pictures, codes, poetry, humor, writing, and much more.

## Four Fun Activities

**1** Many forms of communication are used every day. We all express our ideas in different ways. Helping youth learn about the many modes of communication gives them tools to help present their thoughts. Through **Communication and Me, Picking Up the Pieces, Unit 1** youth share a fun experience using at least five different methods of communication.

**2** Giving instructions requires being very clear. The choice of words can change the meaning for the listener and affect the final outcome. The way listeners interpret information depends on their own experiences and ability to use the information. In **Clear It Up, Putting It Together, Unit 2** some members of the group give instructions to the others on how to draw a specific object – no questions can be asked. When everyone is finished, the group compares their pictures to the original. How hard is it to give clear directions?



**3** Email, instant messaging, and text messaging constitute a huge expansion of the written word. People are bombarded with electronic mail. Is it okay to check text messaging in class? Should a funny joke be sent to everyone? **Electronic Etiquette, Putting It Together, Unit 2** helps youth learn about cyber etiquette and create rules for effective and polite electronic communication.

**4** What makes a presentation dull or dazzling? Often it is the visual aids that make the presentation come to life. In **Speech Accessorizing, The Perfect Fit, Unit 3** youth develop presentation aides that reinforce and enhance an oral message.

## Experiential Learning



Experiential learning engages children and youth while they learn, share, and grow through their 4-H experiences. The focus is on them as learners with an adult as the coach. First comes the “doing” or exploring. Next, youth share what they did and discuss the experience with their peers. After they’ve identified the skills and knowledge gained, help them determine how to apply these skills to other situations in their lives.

## Project Activity Guides and Target Age Groups

**Picking Up the Pieces – Level 1, (grades 3-5)** explores the world of communication as youth learn about themselves and others. This curriculum includes information and activities to build confidence and to be a successful, clear communicator.

**Putting it Together –Level 2, (grades 6-8)** gets youth thinking about and practicing aggressive and assertive communication, collecting and telling jokes, presenting a demonstration, and mentoring younger youth in communication.

**The Perfect Fit – Level 3, (grades 9-12)** helps youth identify a communication gap: plan research, and present a speech; debate an issue; run for an office; prepare a resume; and conduct or participate in interviews.

## Life Skills

“Skills that help an individual to be successful in living a productive and satisfying life” are identified as Life Skills (Hendricks, 1996). Life Skills in this project include communication, leading, learning, critical thinking, planning, keeping records, and building self-esteem. Only one life skill is targeted for each activity, but in each one youth will have the opportunity to practice several.



## Related 4-H Projects

*Express Yourself* can be related to just about any 4-H project. The communication skills in the curriculum can help youth develop an illustrated talk or demonstration about any project-specific skill or talent such as how to make a banana split, ways to stretch before exercising, painting with watercolors, kicking a soccer ball, planting a garden or fixing a bicycle.

## Integrating Technology

Creating and using PowerPoint slides, digital photos, recording songs, and writing a newsletter are just a few ways you can integrate technology into *Express Yourself!*

Many fun and interactive activities are posted at [www.n4hccs.org](http://www.n4hccs.org)



## Character Connection

Character Counts everywhere...all the time. Reinforce the power there is in communications. Encourage youth to always do the right thing; provide bias free messages, don't infringe on copyright laws and encourage safety when using technology.

Additional character resources can be found at [www.4-hmilitarypartnerships.org](http://www.4-hmilitarypartnerships.org)

## Linking to the Army's Four Service Areas and Baseline Programming

### Sports, Fitness and Health Options

Giving clear directions is a skill used every day. Making sure everyone understands the rules to a game or steps in completing an exercise is particularly important in sports, fitness and health. The activity about giving clear directions in **Picking Up The Pieces, Level 1, pages 20-21**, fits into this area.

### Arts, Recreation and Leisure Activities

Communication takes many forms: cartooning, interpretative reading and storytelling - all skills easily applied to arts, recreation and leisure activities. Another important skill is showing others how to do something in a logical and organized way. **Do-able demos, Putting It Together, Level 2, pages 28-29**, is an example of this life skill useful in arts, recreation and leisure activities.

### Life Skills, Citizenship, and Leadership Opportunities

People use communication skills every day - communicating with family and friends, participating in show-and-tell at school, giving a demonstration, or interviewing for a job. Often those who effectively use communication and listening skills are given leadership opportunities. The activities in **The Perfect Fit, Level 3, pages 16-17**, are examples of preparing youth for leadership roles.

### Academic Support, Mentoring, and Intervention Services

Listening and verbal skills are important life skills that are particularly helpful when mentoring someone. The mentoring activities in **Putting It Together, Level 2, pages 22-23** are an example of academic support and mentoring.

## Community Service Service Learning Opportunities

There are many ways to give back to the community:

- Volunteer to help in a classroom, at a child development center, with an after-school program, at the library, or in another setting.
- Design birthday cards for residents at a local care center. Add a personal greeting inside each card and send or deliver them to residents on their birthdays.
- Teach the elderly how to use the computer for writing stories or sending email.
- Become a conflict mediator at your school or after-school program.

