

What is 4-H Shooting Sports?

By Larry Barker, Extension Field Specialist, Youth & Family



Shooting sports is a hands on project, attractive to youth and adult audiences. The curriculum is designed to assist young people in personal development, establish a personal environmental ethic and explore life-long vocational and leisure activities. The program uses experiential learning. Further, positive interactions with both youth and adult role models helps young people develop self-concept, self-assurance, and a positive self-image.

Participation in this project provides a framework of knowledge and skills for lifetime participation in recreation, hobbies and careers related to shooting sports and natural resources. Core concepts stress safety, ethical development, personal responsibility, and life-time recreational skills.

The program promotes responsibility, decision making and identifying realistic, personal goals. Participants may elect to compete at a level appropriate for their abilities or pursue other objectives. Participants have shown high achievement in the field, shop or classroom and on the target range, but personal development for young people and leaders is the real objective. The program strives to make "every kid a winner," and to "make the best better."

Like other 4-H projects, shooting sports has a subject matter base. It has strong links to natural resources, wildlife, outdoor recreation and safety. The content is drawn from sports medicine, psychology, education, biological and physical sciences, engineering, mathematics, technology, as well as American traditions, folklore and history.

The proportion of volunteers and participants who are new to 4-H can be as high as 80 percent in shooting sports

programs. Links with other 4-H programs allow the program to introduce the wide array of activities and learning experiences 4-H has to offer. The program promotes positive interaction between young people and concerned, interested and well-prepared adults with shared interests. Those relationships result in recruitment of both youth and adults not being reached by other programs.

The program continues to grow, and its scope is limited only by the availability of leaders and the imaginations of participants. The program is flexible and adaptable to nearly any local audience - rural or urban. Equipment and facilities are also flexible, and numerous funding alternatives are available. Its major disciplines include archery, hunting and wildlife, muzzle loading, pistol, rifle, reloading, and shotgun. A foundation of basic programs leads into more advanced activities.

Shooting sports involves too much for a single leader to deliver successfully. It is designed to be delivered by a team of volunteers with Educator advice, consent, and support. It emphasizes the value of a cohesive and dynamic group of volunteers, each with limited responsibility to present a program that is better than any one of them could present alone. Identifying, recruiting, selecting, and equipping leadership teams is one of the most significant keys to success. State and regional workshops prepare leaders to deliver and promote the program.

If you like kids, have an interest in shooting or related activities and are willing to



learn, then the 4-H shooting sports program and youth of your community need you. For more information, contact your county Cooperative Extension office or state 4-H office. We will be happy to help you get a program started.

Adapted from Ronald A. Howard, Jr., 4-H and Youth Development Specialist, Texas Agricultural Extension Service.



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