

Photography Project Evaluation

4-H Youth Programs Cooperative Extension Service Michigan State University

"The kid's 4-H project is photography; the evaluator's project is the kid."

What is Evaluation?

Evaluation is the process of examining the value of an experience. In the Michigan 4-H photography project, evaluation lets kids show and talk about what they've learned in the project. Evaluation can also help 4-H'ers identify areas of their project that need improvement, and challenge them to set goals. Most importantly, evaluation can affirm a child's sense of self-esteem.

When Does Evaluation Occur?

Ideally, the 4-H'er and his or her leader set project goals at the beginning of the 4-H project. Progress made by the 4-H'er in reaching these goals should be assessed during the project. At the end of the project an evaluation can occur within the club, at the fair, during county achievement days or in similar settings.

Evaluation Versus Competition

When it's done correctly, evaluation is a "win-win" situation. There is no limit to the number

of 4-H'ers who can be recognized. For example everyone has the potential to receive an "A" rating or a participation ribbon. During contests the youth competes against others for recognition such as "Best of Show" ribbons. The Michigan 4-H photography project emphasizes evaluation, and not competition.

Where Does Self-Concept Fit Into the "Picture"?

Michigan 4-H is a youth development organization. All experiences offered through 4-H are intended to help young people become confident and capable adults. A major goal of 4-H is to help members and volunteers build positive self-concepts. (Self-concept is the way a person thinks about himself or herself.) The 4-H evaluation process, even as brief as it often is at a county fair or in similar settings, can have a significant impact on a young person's self-concept. Four building blocks of self-concept that can be affected during the evaluation process follow.

1. Achievement: A sense of achievement is the result of one or all of the following: effort, completion and success. A project that can be evaluated with standards of quality based on age, ability and experience contributes to this feeling of earned achievement. The 4-H Photography Project Evaluation Form represents this standard of quality.

2. Identity: Identity is a person's mental picture of such things as "Who I am," "What I enjoy," "What I do well," "What is difficult for me," and "What are my limitations." This mental picture is constantly being changed and modified. The evaluation process can help a 4-H'er define his or her mental picture.

3. Recognition: Recognition reinforces this "mental picture." Ribbons, certificates, pins, newsletter and newspaper announcements, and comments from parents, peers, project leaders and evaluators are all forms of recognition. Positive recognition must be given to all 4-H'ers who participate in the evaluation process.

4. Autonomy: A growing sense of independence and of being able to do things on one's own reflects autonomy. A youth who completes a project with only as much guidance as he or she needs from the volunteer leader is developing a sense of autonomy. The project evaluator can nurture that autonomy by encouraging 4-H'ers to set new project goals.

The 4-H Photography Evaluation Form

The 4-H Photography Project Evaluation Form offers quality standards set by the Michigan 4-H Photography Programming Committee. The evaluation form is divided into two sections. The first section (60 points) covers the techniques of photography. The second section (40 points) targets self-expression and creativity. The point imbalance between technique and self-expression is due to the newness of self-expression as an evaluation standard and the potential for an evaluator's personal bias entering into the self-expression section. An optional numerical scale for determining awards is given on the back of the form.

Self-Expression: The Heart of Photography

The quality of a photograph depends on more than doing the right thing technically. It also depends on the photographer's ability to express his or her ideas and feelings, make a statement, and experiment with line, color and pattern. The very heart of photography is allowing self-expression and creativity to blossom. Even young and novice photographers will bring their own perspectives to photos.

Evaluating Self-Expression and Creativity

An evaluator must be respectful, empathetic and non-judgmental when evaluating the technical aspect of a 4-H photography project. These three qualities are even more important when evaluating self-expression and creativity.

SUBJECT SELECTION

Subject selection is a good starting point in evaluating a photographer's self-expression and creativity. All good photography communicates a feeling, mood, story or meaning. Communication is heightened by a subject choice that is significant to the photographer. Creativity is shown in a willingness to experiment with how feelings, stories, etc. can be shown in a photograph.

Sample questions:

- "Describe to me what you were feeling (or thinking) when you took this picture."
- "Share with me what's happening in this picture."
- "What do you like best about this picture?"
- "If there is more than one photo, "Which picture is your favorite, and why?"
- "Why did you decide to photograph birds (or whatever the subject is)?"

- "What else do you like to take pictures of?"

COMPOSITION

Good composition is usually a deliberate effort. The selection and arrangement of subjects within a picture should produce a visually unified photograph and lead the viewer's eye to the main point of interest. Composition, like subject choice, communicates feeling, mood, story or meaning.

Sample questions:

- "What is the first thing you see when you look at your photograph, and why?"
- "What would have happened if you had taken this photograph lying on the ground (or from above...or to the right...or to the left)?"
- "How would this have affected the mood (or story...) of your photograph?"

DESIGN ELEMENTS

Experimenting with the design elements (line, shape, color, texture and space) and arranging these elements in a visually satisfying way can be very exciting for the young photographer. The evaluator can decide which (if any) design elements dominate and comment on their use.

Sample questions:

- "What kind of lines do you see in your photograph?" (Younger children may not identify horizontal, vertical, diagonal or curved lines by name). "What feeling do these lines create?"

LIGHT

Experimenting with light can also be exciting for young photographers. A fluorescent light bulb, a candle and the sun will all give a much different look to the subject being photographed. Even the color of natural light varies from sunrise to sunset and from season to season. Mechanically produced light can be harsh, but it can be diffused with filters and other devices. When evaluating a photograph,

consider whether the light source or the direction of the light draws the viewer's eye to the main point of interest. Also consider whether the choice of light supports the feeling or mood of the picture.

Sample questions:

- "What would have happened if you had taken this photo on a stormy and cloudy day?" "How would this have changed the story (or meaning...) in your photograph?"

Getting Down to the Evaluation

It is ideal to have the 4-H'er present when his or her photography project is being evaluated. However, if the member is not available, complete the 4-H Photography Project Evaluation Form and use the back of the form for comments. Write your comments as if you were speaking directly to the 4-H'er. First, comment on what he or she has done well; be clear and specific. Second, comment on areas that need improvement; once again be clear and specific. Last, reaffirm the youth's photographic strengths with a summary statement and encourage his or her future involvement in the 4-H photography project.

When the 4-H'er is present during the project evaluation the following format works well.

1. Wear a name tag with the name you use to introduce yourself, such as "Mr. Smith" or "Jim." Greet the youth, smile and introduce yourself.
2. If you are seeing the member's photos for the first time, say "Mary, I need to take a minute to look at your photos."
3. After you have briefly looked at the photos, began to ask questions. Refer to the

"Evaluating Self Expression" section for sample questions. Below are a few additional questions. You'll be able to think of many more.

- "What kind of camera do you have?"
- "You are really good with color film, have you ever tried black and white film?"
- "Are you planning to continue in the 4-H photography project?"
- "Have you ever volunteered in a camera shop or with a professional photographer?" (For members aged 15 and up.)

4. Complete the scoring portion of the evaluation form. As you complete the form say "Jeannette, I need a few seconds to complete this form."

5. Look the member in the eye and comment on what he or she has done well. Be specific.

6. Take a few moments to let the 4-H'er internalize your positive comments.

7. Once again look the member in the eye and comment on areas he or she may need to work on. Be specific.

8. Give the 4-H'er a few moments to think about your comments and ask questions.

9. Explain your reasons for the score or rating you have given him or her. Ask if he or she has any questions about the ratings.

10. Reaffirm the youth's photography strengths.

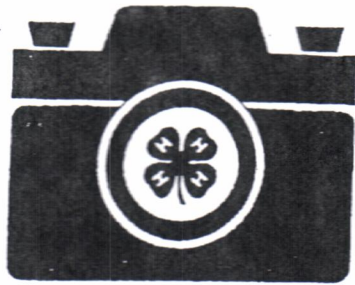
11. Smile and wish him or her well.



MSU is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution. Michigan 4-H Youth educational programs and all other Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, sex or handicap.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Michael J. Tate, Acting Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, MI 48824.

This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service or bias against those not mentioned. Reprinting cannot be used to endorse or advertise a commercial product or company.



4-H Photography Project

Evaluation Form

4-H Member _____

CRITERIA	POSSIBLE SCORE	SCORE
TECHNIQUE:		
Focus	15	_____
Exposure and Lighting	15	_____
Composition (Check areas that need work)	30	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Format (horizontal/vertical)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Point of view (camera angle)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Balance (element arrangement)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Framing		
<input type="checkbox"/> Rule of thirds (subject placement)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Leading lines/geometric shapes		
<input type="checkbox"/> Mergers		
*SELF-EXPRESSION & CREATIVITY:	40	_____
Do the photographs		
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate meaning or a story		
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate a feeling or mood		
<input type="checkbox"/> Use composition and focus to create meaning/story/feeling/mood		
<input type="checkbox"/> Use special effects (filters, lighting, exposure) to communicate meaning/story/feeling/mood		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the photo enhanced by its presentation		
TOTAL:		_____
<p><i>*If "Self-Expression and Creativity" will not be scored, shift points to "Technique" as follows: Focus=25; Exposure and Lighting=25; Composition=50.</i></p>		

Comments:

Optional Scoring Range

		1-2	3-6	7 and Up
		9-11	12-15	16 and Up
(Blue) A		50-100 pts.	70-100 pts.	80-100 pts.
(Red) B		40-49 pts.	60-69 pts.	70-79 pts.
(White) C		30-39 pts.	50-59 pts.	60-69 pts.