



## 4-H on the Cheap

Area 5 Economic Issue Team

Education has never been cheap no matter what form it takes. But the value 4-H offers in lifetime skill development really is a bargain in today's economy. Several families are looking for ways to tighten their belts even further, but still provide a quality learning experience in 4-H for their child. A few ideas are provided below.

### EASY IDEAS:

**Sometimes** 4-Hers want to do multiple projects. You may have done a project at school that meets the requirements for woodworking, crafts or fine arts. Use this as your 4-H exhibit, or modify it to meet the requirements. Other projects, like a scrapbook you might be keeping anyway, that can be easily converted to a 4-H scrapbook. These projects are a great way to show off your abilities while not costing you any extra money.

**Purchase animals** that can be shown multiple years. For example, in beef a fall calf can be shown two years. A senior pygmy goat wether can be shown multiple years and goat does can be shown as long as you can keep them healthy and in shape.

**Love Animals?** Well, many counties will allow you to exhibit an animal poster or do an action demonstration where you can learn about animals without the cost of owning or leasing them.

**Take advantage** of low-cost projects your county offers. Some counties have Electric division one projects that are sponsored by the local REMC. All you have to do is show up and complete the project. Others like genealogy, beginning weather and first year wildlife offer you most of the materials you need to complete the project.



A 4-H Boer Doe is one of the many 4-H animals that can be shown in multiple years. Here Kelsie Risk is shown with her Boer doe at the Indiana State Fair.



**USE WHAT YOU HAVE:**

**Use your backyard!** Gardening, strawberry and some of the flower projects are one of the all-time inexpensive projects to do. Take the soil you already have, add a few seeds and a lot of work weeding, and tending the plants, and you have a nice garden display or inexpensive flower display. Take it a step further and enroll in the Food Preservation project to learn how to preserve the bountiful harvest of your garden for your family to enjoy through the winter months.

**It's in the house!** Spend some time collecting items that you already have on hand and think about creative ways to use them in your exhibit. Some counties have the table setting project. You can use a table cloth you already have mixed, with silverware and a few design items, to make a pleasing table setting. Other items you might need to complete an action demonstration or demonstration project at the fair often are in the barn, can be found in your closet or are in the junk drawer.

Gardening is an inexpensive project. Sean Huss is shown planting his own seedling tomato plants in the winter in so he won't have to buy plants next spring.



**Use what you have:** Courtney Slough used an old bowling ball for a garden ornament, and kitchen utensils for a nice table lamp decoration.



**Trash to treasure.** Some craft project ideas take simple items that might end up in a yard sale or maybe even the dump, and with a little creativity you have a craft that lasts for generations. Trash to treasure is just a great way to express your creativity while saving money.

**Recycle poster backs.** If you check your closets, you might find a poster you did or your sibling did that has a perfectly good



clean back that can be used. Or you can buy an inexpensive colored poster to put over a display you have exhibited previously or a damaged back of another poster.

**Use old fabric.** Sew for fun is a project some counties have. Others have quilting. Both projects allow you to use scrap material from other projects to create something new and beautiful at a low cost to you. Think also about recycling denim or old blue jeans to make a tote bag, placemats or an organizer for your sewing exhibit.



**Not only** is raising animal cheaper, but provides valuable lessons. Mike Scully is shown above clipping needle teeth in his baby pig 4-H project.

**Raise your own animals.** Although feed costs for cattle year round are high, generally high quality livestock can be obtained from your family's own breeding animals. As long as you watch your costs, maintain good animal health, and avoid death loss, this can be a profitable experience for a 4-Her. Moreover, a 4-Her can learn so much more by raising their own livestock. Additionally, with AI and use of quality genetics, as well as a good eye for quality animals learned through the 4-H judging program, competitive 4-H animals can be obtained at a much lower cost.

**Use work equity.** Often a 4-Her can work out a deal with a relative, neighbor or others who might have the females to breed, animals that need worked with or barns that need cleaned. Many 4-Hers work out so many things when they want to apply the abundant energy they have to access to

facilities, pastures or animals they might need for breeding or show. The 4-H crops project can be done the same way. Help your grandpa or a neighbor with their crops and exhibit what you worked on together.

**Exhibit items you collect:** What could be cheaper than exhibiting leaves in the 4-H forestry project, or bugs, weeds or wildflowers from the backyard. It's out there, go and get it, and show off what you learned about it along the way.



**All families eat, right?!** Sign up for the 4-H Foods project and learn to prepare foods that are healthy and your family will enjoy.

**Think about community service.** Some projects offer this as an exhibit option. Document your community service efforts and make that your exhibit. You have a less-expensive exhibit and can be proud of what you gave to your community.

**Consumer Clothing** gives you the opportunity to find the best deal ever! Your county may have an option for “recycling” a garment found in a resale shop or at a garage sale. Be sure to add the extra pieces, including accessories, from what you already have on hand or can borrow. Who knows, this may be your new favorite outfit!



Here Kennedy Williams models a jacket, shoes and top all bought at the thrift store for under \$15.



**Learning to cook** is a great skill and a great way to lower your cost. Families that enjoy cooking not only eat out less but also enjoy more time around the kitchen and dinner table together. Here Britney Scott has learned not only how to cook, but how to set a table and prepare a menu in the 4-H foods project.

**Shop consignment stores** for items that can be used in Home Environment and Arts & Crafts projects. Used tables, chairs and other items can be recycled into new uses for your exhibit.

**Use your computer skills** to build a website for your 4-H Computer exhibit.

**Learn.** The easiest way to save money often is to just learn new skills and knowledge. In the livestock projects for example 4-Hers can learn about formulating rations. Once you do you soon discover that fancy prepared bagged show feeds offer little advantage over mixing your own feed. The cost of purchasing your own hay and 20 pounds of prepared show feed can be almost \$3 per day more than raising your hay and mixing a simple ration of your own ration by hand. If a family feeds out three animals over several years, this can easily add up to a major savings. (Beef Feeding and Nutrition Management by Patrick Gunn, Purdue University).



**Sew your own clothes.** 4-Hers can use their own talents learned in the 4-H program. In the sewing project for example 4-Hers can save big money on prom and formal gowns just by learning how to sew. Each year many 4-Hers across the nation save hundreds of dollars by purchasing material and with skills learned in the 4-H sewing project they come up with nice formal wear.

**Learn to relax.** Often families spend so much money by being on the go all the time. Learn to enjoy a slower pace. 4-H has so much to offer families where they can slow down and work on projects together. Often by doing so families will not be out on the town spending money in other venues and opportunities. Time spent in 4-H is worth not only the learning children can get, but often families find ways to have fun together right at home while using time to work on projects together.



Alex Lockhart is shown with an inexpensive outfit she made in 4-H.



Sometimes we just need to slow down. Often 4-H just helps us enjoy the good times right around us. Here Quintin Rice settles down for a nap on his steer at the fair. You can't get much more inexpensive than that!

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