

4-H Creative Writing

Project Manual



Hamilton County

4-H Creative Writing

Table of Contents

Introduction to 4-H Creative Writing	3
Categories and Exhibitor Level Requirements	3
General Rules	4
Getting Started	4
Short Story Guidelines	5
Poetry Guidelines	6
Children’s Story Guidelines	7
Comic Book Guidelines	8
Micro-fiction Guidelines	9
About the Author Guidelines	10
Special Notes	10
Sample Title Page	11
4-H Creative Writing Project Record Sheet	12
Sample Judges Score Sheet	13

Introduction to 4-H Creative Writing

This project is designed to give you an opportunity to explore or refine your writing skills and to display your creativity. Writing is a skill that you will use your entire life. You write papers for school, emails and letters to family and friends, and some day you will use your writing skills in your career.

One of the best ways to improve your writing is to practice. This project is designed to let you practice your writing in a fun and creative way. You can choose from several categories; including short stories, poetry, children's stories, comic books, or micro-fiction.

Categories and Exhibitor Level Requirements

Not Eligible for State Fair Entries

Categories:

1. **Short Story** – Exhibit is a fictional short story, play, or screenplay. Length depends on your exhibitor level.
2. **Poetry** – Exhibit is a poem or song lyrics of any length or style.
3. **Children's Story** – Exhibit is a story written specifically for young children and includes illustrations.
4. **Comic Book** – Exhibit is a comic book that includes illustrations. Length depends on your exhibitor level.
5. **Micro-fiction** – Exhibit is a story told in exactly 50 words, no more and no less.

Exhibitor Level Requirements:

Beginner – Grades 3-5

One of the following: A short story of 50-300 words, a comic book of 8 or more panels, a poem or children's story of any length, or a micro-fiction of 50 words exactly.

Intermediate – Grades 6-8

One of the following: A short story of 300-800 words, a comic book of 14 or more panels, a poem or children's story of any length, or a micro-fiction of 50 words exactly.

Advanced – Grades 9-12

One of the following: A short story of 800-1300 words, a comic book of 20 or more panels, a poem or children's story of any length, or a micro-fiction of 50 words exactly.

General Rules

1. Only one exhibit is required to complete the Creative Writing project. However, you may choose to have an entry in multiple project categories, but may not have more than one exhibit in an individual category.
2. All exhibits should be typed or handwritten clearly.
3. Please submit 2 copies for judging, so that the judge may mark on one copy, while the other is “clean” for displaying at the fair.
4. All exhibits must have been written since the previous year’s county fair. Work that has been judged in any writing contest is ineligible for 4-H competition. All exhibits must be the exclusive work of the 4-H member. No group projects, collaborations, or fan-fiction should be submitted for judging.
5. You may exhibit writing that you did for school, so long as it meets the project requirements. Do not turn in pages with grades or teacher comments; reprint or rewrite your exhibit so it is clean and easy to judge.
6. All exhibits must be submitted in a binder, folder, or report cover to keep it neat and clean during judging and display at the fair.
7. Only the basic binder, folder, or report cover is required. However, you may decorate the cover or use your creativity to personalize your project. You may use any tools available to you to present your exhibit in the best possible way, such as professional binding, laminating, etc. These are optional and above and beyond the basic exhibit requirements. Make sure you concentrate on the project, before the presentation of it.

Getting Started

Your first step is to choose a subject. Maybe you want to write about a person or pet in your life. Maybe you want to write about your backyard. Do you like history? Maybe you want to write a story about a cowboy in the old west. Perhaps you have imagined what it would be like to live in a different state or country. Is there a story inside your imagined thoughts? There are no limits to what you can write about!

The next step is to choose your project category. Do you like to tell stories or do you prefer to express yourself through poems? Do you want to create illustrations to help tell your story? Maybe you want to submit a writing project in a couple different categories!

Now all you have to do is write! Remember, even famous writers have to create many drafts of their work, so don’t be discouraged if your first try doesn’t turn out perfect. Keep writing and refining your style. Writing is a way to express yourself, but it can take a lot of practice to figure out how to make your unique voice come through.

Short Story Guidelines

1. For the short story category you may write a narrative story, a play, or a screenplay. Remember to meet the length requirement specific to your Exhibitor Level.
2. You may find it helpful to create an outline. Write down your ideas on how to begin the story, the major events in your story, and your ideas for how you want the story to end. Remember, an outline can be flexible. You can make changes as you write. An outline just allows you to brainstorm and gives you a place to start.
3. Develop your characters. Pick your character names and write a short description of who they are and what they look like.
4. It may be helpful to carry a small notebook with you at all times. Make note of any ideas or plot points that you think of, you never know when inspiration will strike!
5. Do any research you may need to do and write down your sources. Even when your story is fiction you still may need to research geographical locations or historical eras. Be sure to credit your sources.
6. Once you have a first draft you can start the proofreading and revision process. Check for spelling and grammatical errors, punctuation problems, or overused words. You can use a dictionary and thesaurus to help you.
7. You may include illustrations to enhance your short story. Illustrations are completely optional.
8. Once you have 1 story or play picked out to exhibit, follow the directions below to put together your exhibit packet.

Submitting your Short Story Project

The pages of your project should be compiled in this order:

1. Title Page
2. Your writing project
3. Bibliography (only required if you did research for your story)
4. Record Sheet
5. About the Author page (optional)

Poetry Guidelines

1. For the poetry category you may write a poem or song lyrics of any length.
2. A poem sets out to present an idea. Often this idea has come from the emotional stimulus of a scene that may appear to be very ordinary to another person, but to the poet is a unique experience worthy of putting down in poetic form.
3. It may be helpful to carry a small notebook with you at all times. Make note of any ideas or observations that strike you as interesting, you never know when inspiration will strike!
4. Choose your words carefully to express what you want to say in a few words or lines.
5. Keep a dictionary, thesaurus, and a rhyming dictionary nearby as you write your poetry.
6. After the poem is finished, go back and review your poem for correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
7. If you wish, you may include a short description of the poetry form you used. For example, if you choose to submit a Haiku (a Japanese verse form), you could write a description and brief history of the Haiku.
8. You may include illustrations to enhance your poem. Illustrations are completely optional.
9. Once you have 1 piece picked out to exhibit, follow the directions below to put together your exhibit packet.

Submitting your Poetry Project

The pages of your project should be compiled in this order:

1. Title Page
2. Description of poetry form (optional)
3. Your writing project
4. Bibliography (only required if you did research for your story)
5. Record Sheet
6. About the Author page (optional)

Children's Story Guidelines

1. An exhibit in this category is a story written specifically for young children and includes illustrations.
2. Choose a subject based on subjects that preschool children are interested in and ones that are appropriate for young children. Avoid complex, heavy subjects such as divorce, death, or abuse. Keep in mind the maturity level of the child for whom the book is written.
3. Use words the preschoolers can already understand or are capable of learning.
4. Illustrations are required. Young children follow along with the reader of the story by looking at the pictures. Sometimes the pictures can tell part of the story without any words at all.
 - a. Illustrations can be hand drawn, or you may use computer graphics, photos, stencils, or tracings.
 - b. You may create a pop-up book or include 3-D objects, but be sure they are securely fastened to the page so your book is safe for children who may put things in their mouths.
5. When you are finished with your children's story, try it out. Read the story to a preschool child. Watch the child for their reactions to the story and to your illustrations.
6. You may want to create an illustrated book cover to make the outside of your book attractive to young children. This is completely optional.
7. Once you have 1 children's story picked out to exhibit, follow the directions below to put together your exhibit packet.

Submitting your Children's Story Project

The pages of your project should be compiled in this order:

1. Illustrated Book Cover (optional)
2. Title Page
3. Your writing project
4. Bibliography (only required if you did research for your story)
5. Record Sheet
6. About the Author page (optional)

Comic Book Guidelines

1. An exhibit in this category is a story in comic book format with illustrations. Remember to meet the length requirement specific to your Exhibitor Level.
2. You may find it helpful to create an outline. Write down your ideas on how to begin the story, the major events in your story, and your ideas for how you want the story to end. Remember, an outline can be flexible. You can make changes as you write. An outline just allows you to brainstorm and gives you a place to start.
3. Develop your characters. Pick your character names and write a short description of who they are and what they look like.
4. It may be helpful to carry a small notebook with you at all times. Make note of any ideas or plot points that you think of, you never know when inspiration will strike!
5. Illustrations are required for this project. Illustrations can be hand drawn, or you may use computer graphics, photos, stencils, or tracings.
6. Comics tell their story in panels and often use speech bubbles to allow the characters to speak. It might be useful to read some comic books to research style and types of artwork that professional comic book writers use. Just be sure that your story and characters are your own original works.
7. Once you have a first draft you can start the proofreading and revision process. Check your spelling, grammar, and punctuation. You can use a dictionary and thesaurus to help you.
8. You may want to create an illustrated book cover to make the outside of your book eye catching. This is completely optional.
9. Once you have 1 comic book picked out to exhibit, follow the directions below to put together your exhibit packet.

Submitting your Comic Book Project

The pages of your project should be compiled in this order:

1. Illustrated Book Cover (optional)
2. Title Page
3. Your writing project
4. Bibliography (only required if you did research for your story)
5. Record Sheet
6. About the Author page (optional)

Micro-fiction Guidelines

1. An exhibit in this category is a story told in exactly 50 words, no more and no less.
2. At first it may sound easy to tell a 50 word story, but it can be tricky. You still need to tell a story and portray an event, feeling, or situation. You should still have a character or characters. The hard part is to take a story and condense it into 50 words. The other part is making sure it's exactly 50 words, which may mean rearranging words, cutting out extra words, or using different words to express your story.
3. Every word counts, including "a", "the", "and", etc.
4. It may be helpful to research and read some other 50-word stories. There are many resources online with examples from other authors. It's ok to read and research other authors, but be sure that your exhibit is your own original work.
5. Once you have a first draft you can start the proofreading and revision process. Check for spelling and grammatical errors, punctuation problems, or overused words. You can use a dictionary and thesaurus to help you.
6. After you make revisions, double check the word count to make sure you are still at 50 words.
7. You may include illustrations to enhance your story. Illustrations are completely optional.
8. Once you have 1 story picked out to exhibit, follow the directions below to put together your exhibit packet.

Submitting your Micro-fiction Project

The pages of your project should be compiled in this order:

1. Title Page
2. Your writing project
3. Bibliography (only required if you did research for your story)
4. Record Sheet
5. About the Author page (optional)

About the Author Guidelines

Including an “About the Author” page is optional, but is a good way for your readers and the judges to get to know you! Your “About the Author” page should be written in paragraph form and might include some of the following:

1. Your name and a recent photograph
2. Your age, grade in school, and name of your school
3. The name of your 4-H club
4. Number of years you have been a 4-H member
5. Your favorite 4-H experiences or projects
6. Why you enjoy creative writing
7. Your favorite author or book
8. Your plans for the future; college, career, etc.

Special Notes

Vulgarity and Obscenities: Do not use cuss words, overly gross or violent actions, or intimate subject matter in your writing. Your story may include action scenes or romantic relationships, but keep the subject matter appropriate and tasteful. Lengthy descriptions of gore or sexual situations are not appropriate for 4-H projects. If your parent, 4-H leader, or school teacher wouldn't like it in your paper, then you can assume that a 4-H judge wouldn't like it either. Make sure your writing reflects your good manners and the high quality of the 4-H program in our county.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is taking the thoughts or writings of another person and using them as your own. It is stealing. It is also against the law when a piece of writing is copyrighted. You cannot copy the work of another author, classmate, or 4-H member. Be sure that the thoughts and words you write are your own. It is ok to have someone read your work and give you corrections or suggestions, but make sure the writing is still your original work.

Judging: Judging for the Creative Writing project will be closed. 4-H members will not be able to directly speak with the judge or view the judging process. Judging written works can be a lengthy process and closed judging allows the judges to take their time and not feel rushed. The judges will provide you with comments and suggestions to help you learn and improve your writing skills.

*This Creative Writing Project Manual was adapted from manuals in Clay, Jasper, LaGrange, Noble, White, Blackford, Parke, and Porter counties.

Sample Title Page

“Title”

By Ima Talented Kidd
June 15, 2013

Category: Poetry
Grade: 6th
Club: Jackson Ag

4-H Creative Writing Project Record Sheet

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Club: _____

Tell us about your project.

How did you pick the category? (short story, poem, comic book, etc)

How did you pick your subject? What inspired you?

What was the most difficult part of this project?

What was the easiest part of this project?

Signature of 4-H Leader: _____

SAMPLE

4-H Creative Writing Project Judges Score Sheet

Placing: _____

4-H Member's Name: _____

Club: _____ Grade: _____

Category: Short Story Poetry Children's Story Comic Book Micro-fiction

Level: Beginner (Grade 3-5) Intermediate (Grade 6-8) Advanced (Grade 9-12)

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
WRITING: (50%) imagination, creativity, expression, ability			
PRESENTATION: (20%) neatness, handwriting is readable, binder/folder			
MECHANICS: (10%) grammar, spelling, punctuation			
MEETS REQUIREMENTS: (10%) length, binder/folder, includes all required pages			

Judge's Comments:
