

Your 4-H Image



Guidelines for appropriate dress while representing the Florida 4-H Youth Development Program.



What am I going to wear? Will I look ok? If you have ever asked yourself either of these two questions, then you know how important your image is. Whether you are speaking to your local Kiwanis Club, or before a school group, you need to be proud of the image your project. Not only do you need to think about the message you are speaking about, but also the impression of 4-H you are making to others. As the old saying goes, "First impressions are the most lasting impressions." We have all been told not to judge people by the way they look, but appearance does indeed affect what we think about someone. In fact, more than 50% of the impression you make is influenced by your nonverbal "image." You want to make sure you are making the very best impression possible not only for 4-H, but for you as well.

Image has been defined as the visual representation or a mental picture. Impression is an influence or effect on one's feelings, senses, or minds. Visual impressions are very important. When you meet others for the first time, they often form opinions about you and 4-H based on how you are dressed. When you stand before a local civic group such as Kiwanis or Rotary, you make an impression even before you deliver your presentation.

Many things make up your image besides your clothing and accessories. Your smile, hair, overall cleanliness,

and/or makeup help people form opinions (whether positive or negative) about you. Clothing is often referred to as our "second skin." It is more than fashion and it is more than style. It tells others who and what we are. Being well-dressed results in you feeling good about yourself as well as having the confidence to "know" that you can do anything! Even the way you sit, talk, walk, and stand, affects what people think. In other words, **all of these things combined become the total you.** All of us start with the same potential – it is what we do with it that counts.



Many businesses have installed a dress code requiring uniforms. For example, Starbucks requires their employees to dress in the Starbucks uniform. While the dress code is very rigid in that there is little room for clothing selection, the employee's appearance speaks for itself in other aspects of personal grooming as well as neatness of the garments. While 4-H does not have a standard dress code, 4-H does expect members representing 4-H to be well dressed and exhibit a clean, neat appearance.

What is 4-H attire? It is typically a green jacket or blazer with black slacks or skirt with the 4-H emblem on the left side of the jacket below the shoulder. The blouse or shirt should be white. Boys should wear a tie. Some other options are listed below:

- Black/khaki slacks or skirts with a white blouse or shirt
- Black/khaki slacks or skirts with a green polo – other colors are acceptable as long as the 4-H emblem is visible on the clothing
- White skirt/slacks with green polo
- White or green dress
- Green or white vests worn with black or khaki slacks/skirts
- Business suit or slacks/skirt and dark jacket are appropriate at certain times.

Again, some counties may have a set policy as to what is deemed “4-H attire,” and you should follow those standards. When representing 4-H in the show ring, vests and jackets with white shirts/blouses, and black slacks are the most accepted form of dress. There may be additional expectations depending on species of animals shown.

Some 4-H t-shirts or polos can be worn when representing your county at judging events, but they should be clean and neat. **Most importantly, the 4-H emblem is to be visible when wearing “4-H attire.”**



What is your image saying about 4-H?

Are you presenting a good image, and are you easily recognized as a 4-H'er? One way to be easily recognized is to always wear 4-H attire when you are representing 4-H – whether you are speaking before a group of county commissioners or representing your county in a livestock judging contest – it is important to be neat, clean, and well-groomed at all times. It is just as important to make sure that your clothes are neatly pressed, and shoes clean.

Make sure your undergarments are not showing, and that they are appropriate for your clothing. Girls need to wear slips with dresses or skirts; be sure not to wear bright colored undergarments under white or light colors. It is advisable to wear colors closely matching your skin tone when wearing white.

Also, keep in mind, that when in front of an audience (other than a formal function), strapless tops, spaghetti straps or even tank tops are not appropriate and shoulders should be covered with a sweater, jacket or other form of wrap. However, if relaxed style dress is “the dress style” for the event, it will be important to check with your 4-H

Agent about the appropriateness of your dress. Hats are not part of the “4-H attire” and should not be worn inside at any 4-H function. Even at livestock or other judging events, hats still are not part of the “4-H attire.” It is recognized that hats and caps are very fashionable items and worn by many youth, however in keeping with the image of 4-H, they may not be deemed appropriate at most 4-H functions.

When should you wear 4-H attire?

You should wear 4-H attire whenever representing 4-H. Some examples are:

- Giving a demonstration or illustrated talk
- Public Speaking functions
- County, District and State Functions when in a leadership role
- Appearing before groups such as Kiwanis, Rotary, Garden Clubs or Extension Groups
- Appearing on TV
- Anytime you are in the public representing 4-H

Counties may vary their requirements or standards as to when wearing 4-H attire is appropriate for county functions or activities, so please check with your 4-H Agent.



There is more to your 4-H image than just the colors you wear. Your overall look is influenced by several details. If you take all of the following points into consideration, you can be sure that you are making a good first impression. Keep in mind that what you wear to school, on a date, or other social functions may not be appropriate when attending 4-H functions or representing 4-H in the community. Even though these outfits are “trendy” and worn by “everyone”, they still may not be appropriate for certain 4-H functions and the 4-H image you want to project. Take into consideration the following points before leaving your home to represent 4-H, no matter what the event.

- Do your clothes fit properly – not too tight or too loose?
- Are your clothes neatly pressed – not looking like they just came out of the laundry basket?
- Are your slacks/skirt at a flattering and/or appropriate length – not too long or too short?
- Is your hair neat and clean?
- Are you well-groomed?
- Are your shoes clean and suitable for your outfit? Flip-flops and sandals are not appropriate when wearing 4-H attire.
- Are your undergarments showing? Girls, are you wearing a slip?
- Girls are you wearing pantyhose (if appropriate)?
- Boys, are your socks/tie coordinated with your outfit? Are you wearing a belt if your slacks

have belt loops? Are your slacks/pants worn at the waist and not on your hips?

- Do your accessories complement your outfit?
- Are your clothes clean?

Learn about your present 4-H image by asking other 4-Hers. Try to see yourself as others see you. Decide on the kind of image you are presenting as a 4-Her and then decide on the kind of image that you would like to present. Remember you are not only representing your club, county or state but also a worldwide organization. Your appearance can set the stage for the image and message you want to send. It affects the 4-H message when you are trying to recruit new members, to get younger members involved and especially when talking to civic groups about the many benefits of 4-H and what 4-H has done for you. Your image will tell others how proud you are to be a part of 4-H.

Looking good requires discipline – not a lot of money. Just think about how you want others to see you. When it comes to your image, there is no reason to settle for anything but the best.

On the next page you will find the Florida 4-H State Dress Code Guidelines.

Florida 4-H State Dress Code

Youth and Adult

General Guidelines:

- General appearance should be neat and clean
- No clothing deemed inappropriate (see below)
- No bare feet
- Hats should be worn respectfully. Hats are not appropriate during meals and group sessions while indoors
- Event leaders may ask individuals to modify their clothing selection if standards of decency in appearance are not met

Items that are inappropriate for any 4-H event or activity:

- Shorts more than 4" above the knee
- Blouse straps must be at least 2" wide
- No spaghetti strap, halter or tube tops
- No cut-off or muscle shirts
- No offensive or inappropriate language, graphics or logo t-shirts
- No holes in clothing (Shirts or pants/shorts)
- No pajamas
- No low cut pants or shirts

Relaxed:

- Your choice, as long as it follows the general guidelines

Business Casual:

- Khaki shorts, slacks, skirts, capris
- Polos, shirts with collars (no ties), blouses
- Flats or low heeled shoes, western boots
- Sports jacket for boys is optional
- Denim must be dark, pressed and clean. Only skirts and jeans allowed
- **No** tennis shoes or flip flops
- **No** spaghetti straps or strapless dresses/tops unless worn with a jacket or sweater, t-shirts
- **No** hats

Professional:

- Matching suit jacket and skirt/slacks
- Tie for boys
- Dress shoes, sandals as appropriate, dress shoes with socks for boys
- Dresses, skirts, blouses
- If pants/skirts have belt loops, belt is required
- **No** Denim
- **No:** tennis shoes or flip flops, hats, spaghetti straps or strapless dresses/tops unless worn with a jacket or sweater

Formal:

- Suits with ties for boys
- Strapless or spaghetti strap dresses for formal or banquet attire are acceptable
- Dress shoes, sandals as appropriate, dress shoes with socks for boys
- **No** Backless, low-cut or exposed midriff dresses
- **No:** tennis shoes or flip flops, denim, or hats

These guidelines will be used for all State Level 4-H Events and Activities. However, please read each event's guidelines as there maybe exceptions for certain events.



"Your 4-H Image", Nadine Hackler, Clothing Specialist,(retired), University of Florida/IFAS, Gainesville, FL., 1981.

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