

Frequently Asked Questions – Record Books 2025-26

FAQ – Record Books

** To keep answers to questions on one page, there can be large separations between questions. The end of all the questions is indicated by the phrase **THE END**.

If you do not find the answer to your record book question here, contact the Incentives and Recognition committee (nkeller91711@gmail.com).

Where do I find information about LA County record books?

Information can be found

- in this FAQ (frequently asked questions),
- in the record book information packets on the LA County 4-H website
- on the county website itself
- ask a member of the county I&R Committee (Incentives & Recognition).

Remember there is a separate information packet for the ACHIEVEMENTS program and for the STAR RANK program.

What is our 4-H age?

Your 4-H age is the age you will be on December 31 of the current 4-H program year (July 1 to June 30). In other words, members born after December 31 will continue to use the age they were at the beginning of the program year for 4-H opportunities in the second half of the program year. If a member was 10 on Dec. 31, but turned 11 on Feb. 12, the member would still indicate age 10 on his 4-H forms for the rest of that 4-H program year.

Do I have to do a record book to be a 4-H member?

No

Do I have to do the Spark Achievement Report form to do a Record Book?

No, the new 4-H Achievements Program is separate from the Record Book Program. You can create a record book whether you are working on an achievements level or not. If you are not working on 4-H achievements, just leave that record book section (Section 2) empty.

Why are there two record book information packets on the LA County 4-H website?

The State 4-H started a new Achievements Program a few years ago, but is allowing those members, who were working on earning star ranks in the prior achievement program, to continue in the prior program if they had earned a BRONZE STAR rank by June 30, 2023. The prior program was called the STAR RANK program. The new, current 4-H achievements program is called the new ACHIEVEMENTS program. There is a separate record book information packet for each of these programs. Record books from both of these programs can be entered in the LA County 4-H Record Book Competition.

What is the end date for the Star Rank program (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum)?

June 30, 2027.

The Star Rank Program forms say I must have completed my Silver Star Rank by 6/30/2024 to continue in the Star Rank Program this year. Is this true?

No, if a member has been working in the Star Rank Program and earned their BRONZE STAR by June 30, 2023, but did not complete their SILVER Rank by June 30, 2024, LA County 4-H will allow the member to still continue in the Star Rank Program if they submit a request to continue form to the county Incentives & Recognition (I&R) committee to receive permission. The request form is available on the LA County 4-H website and should be sent to Noel Keller (**421 Juilliard Dr., Claremont, CA 91711 or nkeller91711@gmail.com**).

If I have an approved request to continue in the Star Rank Program form from last year, do I need to complete another form for this program year to continue in the Star Rank Program?

No, just include the signed approval form in your record book behind the ID Form (entry form) before Section 1 of the record book.

Can I compete in the County Record Competition if I am not working on a new Achievements Program level, such as Spark Achievements?

Yes, just leave Section 2 empty.

In the Spark Achievement program, must I have 80% attendance at club meetings for the program year to earn an achievement level for that year?

No, that is not a requirement.

What level code do I use for district activities?

Use C for district level activities, not L.

Can I count my officer and committee reports in the Communications as reports given?

No, those reports are part of the duties of your position.

Star Rank path program question

Can I count my 10 hours of piano lessons in the Healthy Lifestyle Activities section of the PDR?

No, an activity must have a minimum of 25 hours in the year to include it in the Healthy Lifestyle Activities section of the PDR.

What if I didn't complete a record book for last year?

You can continue with your record keeping for this year.

If you want to get credit for your 4-H activities from last year (missing years), you need to talk with your community club leader about preparing at least a minimum record book (PDR) for the missing year(s), so that your credits for that year can be approved with the appropriate signatures. The record book section for a particular year should basically only contain your 4-H activities and accomplishments for that year.

When do I learn the results of county record book judging?

The results are announced in a County Awards Ceremony held via zoom. This year it will be held on Sept. 5, 2026 at 9am via zoom. The zoom room link will be emailed out to those who submit 4-H records to the County Record Book Competition. The results will also be posted on the County 4-H website after the ceremony.

Do I have to do all of the sections of the record book?

There are required sections and optional sections in a record book. The member is encouraged to complete the required sections, but the optional sections are OPTIONAL. The record book will be more competitive in the County Record Book Competition if the optional sections are completed, but the member can decide which sections they want to complete.

Sections required in a Spark Achievement Program record book

For easy reference, we request that section numbers consistently relate to the same information, such as Section 3 is for MY 4-H STORY. Optional sections, therefore, could be empty.

The required sections for a Spark Achievement Program record book:

Section 1: Title Page, Table of Contents

Section 2: New Achievement Report (only if working on Spark Achievement levels or Emerald Star I and II or Impact Star)

Section 3: My 4-H Story

Section 4: Projects

Section 7: 4-H Resume (Seniors only)

Sections required in a Star Rank Program record book

For easy reference, we request that section numbers consistently relate to the same information, such as Section 3 is for MY 4-H STORY. Optional sections, therefore, could be empty.

The required sections for a Star Rank Program record book:

Section 1: Title Page, Table of Contents

Section 2: Personal Development Report (PDR)

Section 3: My 4-H Story

Section 4: Projects

Section 6: Leadership Development Reports (only for Seniors, who are involved with leadership activities)

Section 7: 4-H Resume (only for Seniors)

What are the record book competition levels in 4-H?

There are three record book competition levels – Junior (ages 9-10), Intermediate (ages 11-13) and Senior (ages 14 and above). The age used is the age the member is on December 31 of the 4-H program year. Primary members (ages 5-8) cannot enter their record books in the County Record Book Competition.

What are the possible awards in the County Record Book Competition?

For a project area,

In each of the age categories – Junior, Intermediate and Senior,

County Winner – GOLD medal – only one

Silver medalist – any number

Certificate of Achievement – any number

Certificate of Participation – any number

A modified Danish system (evaluating against a standard) is used for evaluating the record books.

County Winner and silver medalist may not be awarded if record books are not evaluated to be at those levels.

Is there some way that my Record Book can be disqualified from the County Record Book Competition?

Yes, no late record books are accepted for the Competition.

What if required signatures are missing in my records?

If required signatures are missing in the records, the records are not considered verified and the records will not be eligible for any medal awards.

What signatures are required for county medal consideration in the County Record Book Competition for a Star Rank Program record book?

The required signatures for the Star Rank Program record book are on

- the PDR
- the APR for those projects being identified for the competition
- plus the ID form (entry form) for the competition
- plus the Request Form to continue in Star Rank Program (if you don't already have your Silver Star Rank)

What signatures are required for county medal consideration in the County Record Book Competition for a Spark Achievement Program record book?

The required signatures for the Spark Achievement Program record book are on

- the New Achievement Program Member Confirmation Form (if present)
- the APR for those projects being identified for the competition
- plus the ID form (entry form) for the competition

If you are the only member in a judging category (project, age-level), are you automatically the County Winner?

No, a member's overall 4-H experiences (project, service, leadership, participation, achievements, etc.) as stated in their record book are considered. There is no one formula to be a county winner.

Does the awards listing indicate how much competition there was in a judging category (project, age-level)?

No, the awards listing just indicates the awards given. If only one member is listed on the awards listing for a category, it doesn't mean that there was only one member judged in that category. If a member earned county winner in their second project requested for judging, their name would not be listed for their first choice where they were not judged as county winner. Considering the member's choice of projects, we give the highest award to the member that the member earns.

Is the club evaluation of the record book considered in the county record book judging?

No. Some clubs evaluate record books before the county competition and some clubs evaluate record books after the county competition.

What if two record books are judged to be possible County Winner in a judging category (project, age-level)?

What if two record books are judged to be possible County Winner in a judging category (project, age-level)? There can be only one County Winner in a judging category, so the record book judged as best would be declared County Winner and the other book would receive a Silver medal. A silver medal does not necessarily mean that the record book was not excellent. It can depend upon the competition in that judging category that year.

What if I can't fit my answer in a box on a form?

Try to see if the box can expand. Some forms allow boxes to be expanded, added or deleted. If not, then the answer can be continued on a page behind.

What can I do to make my record book more competitive?

Know the LA County 4-H guidelines for a record book. Although only certain sections are required, complete the optional sections. We only use the information included in the record book about what was done or experienced by the member, not what may be known about the member outside of the record book. The optional Summary of Activities and the Collection of Work sections expand what can be told about a member's 4-H experiences. The record book should include more information than just project work. On your project APR forms, indicate what you learned from your project meetings and activities. Make it easy for judges to see what you have done in 4-H during the program year.

What is an APR?

An APR is an Annual Project Report. The report is used to record project activity for a member – what they did, what they learned, etc. For the APR to be complete, there should be a free-form Expression Page which teaches the reader something that was learned in the project by the member. The APR form is available on the county website.

What is an Expression Page?

An Expression Page is a required part of the APR (Annual Project Report). A free-form Expression Page should follow the APR. The Expression Page should teach the reader something that the member learned in the related APR project and was interesting to them. There is no specific format or layout for an Expression Page, except that it can only be one page and should follow the related APR form. The Expression Page should be age-appropriate and creative. The Expression Page should not just be a worksheet or handout from a project meeting.

What is a LDR?

A LDR is a Leadership Development Report. The report is used to record your leadership skill goals and then to later evaluate how the member did in reaching those goals. The LDR forms for the two 4-H achievement (Star Rank and Spark Achievement) programs are different. The LDR forms are available on the county website. Try to include some discussion of which of the 6 4-H C's (Character, Confidence, Competence, Caring, Connection, Contribution) that you are working on this year.

Do the activity credits I earn carry forward to the next year?

Primary member credits do not carry forward into the Junior level.

Credits do carry forward in Spark Achievement phase of the new Achievements Program..

Credits do carry forward from Bronze to Silver to Gold to Platinum in the Star Rank Program.

Can I add extra pages in my 4-H Record Book?

In general, no, you should not put extra pages in record book sections where page or word limits have been indicated. For instance, the Collection of Work section is limited to 11 pages. The State says you do not have to complete any parts of the Record Book if you don't want to – it's your book – do the parts that are meaningful to you. If adding pages is more meaningful to you, then add them, but the extra pages will not be considered in the county record book evaluation process. Better would be to add those pages after the county record book competition for that year. In the county record book competition, evaluators are told to ignore extra pages in the record book to be fair to all participants in the competition.

Are my 4-H achievements not indicated in my Record Book considered in the record book competition?

No, the evaluators are told to only consider the records in the record book in the record book competition, even if they are aware that the 4-H member has done more than they have indicated. This is to be fair to all the participants in the competition. Try to include all your significant accomplishments in your records. Make it easy for the evaluators to see what you have accomplished.

Can I handwrite my records in my Record Book?

Yes, but be careful that your handwriting is easy to read. It is okay to have some record book sections handwritten and some typed.

Can I leave some parts of a form blank?

Yes, but your records will be more complete if all parts of the form are completed, if appropriate. In some cases, you might want to consider indicating "NA" (not applicable). Empty areas can give the impression that you forgot to consider completing them.

If I complete my Platinum Star in the Star Rank Program, can I start the Spark Achievement Program?

Yes, but the activities used to complete the Star Rank Program cannot be used for the Spark Achievement Program.

What if I was in the Star Program, moved to the new Achievement Program, but now want to return to the Star Rank Program?

If you earned a Bronze Star in the Star Rank Program by June 30, 2023, you could return to the Star Rank Program to work on your Silver, Gold and Platinum stars, but you couldn't use any of your activities from the Achievements Program for the Star Rank Program and the Star Rank Program ends on June 30, 2027.

Can I earn more than one Spark pin in a 4-H program year?

Yes. You can earn up to 4.

Once I earn my 4 Spark level pins and declare my Spark, may I start working on my Emerald Star I?

Yes, do you not need to wait until the start of the next 4-H program year to start working on your Emerald Star I.

Can an Emerald Star I and Emerald Star II be earned in the same year?

Yes, but it would require a lot of effort. Emerald Star work/credits carry forward until the project is completed. The project does not have to be completed in one year.

Do I need a second member to work with me on my Emerald Star I project?

Yes, an Emerald Star I project is to be done by teams of 2-4 members. However, team members will all fill out individual reports for the project.

Must the same Spark be used for the Emerald Star I and Emerald Star II projects?

No, you could change your Spark and/or your team for the Emerald Star II project.

Is there a regional competition for 4-H Record Books?

No

Is there a state competition for 4-H Record Books?

Yes, there is a state record book competition for record books, but it is only for Senior members (ages 14 and above). You do not need to compete in the county record book competition to enter the state record book competition. If you want to submit your record book to the state competition, look at the State 4-H website for the guidelines and dates for the competition. LA County does have some modifications to the state requirements, such as LA County allows more pages in the Collection of Work section. You may want to make some adjustments to your county-level record book to compete well at the state level. Usually the record books are submitted online in mid October and the results are announced in January. If you plan to submit your record book, you will need to submit an Intent to Submit online in early October.

Does a Senior member need to submit their record book to the County Record Competition to be able to then submit their record book to the State Record Book Competition?

No, the Senior member can submit their record book straight to State.

Can I submit the record book I submitted for county record book competition to the state record book competition?

Yes, but a hard copy of your record book is submitted to the county competition and your record book for the state competition is submitted online. Also, there are some LA County 4-H modifications to the state guidelines that should be reviewed. If you plan ahead few adjustments will need to be made. Record books at the state level are evaluated overall, not just for one project area.

What are the LA County 4-H modifications to the state record book guidelines?

The State does allow counties to make minor modifications to the state record book guidelines.

The LA County 4-H modifications include:

- county has no minimum or maximum word counts for descriptions/story
- State looks at the entire record book for the year, not just two possible project areas
- State does not have a Collection of Work section
- State does not have a confirmation form before the Achievement reports in Section 2
- State does not expect any empty sections. You may need to renumber your sections and update your Table of Contents
- State does not have a request to continue in the Star Rank program and does not allow members to continue in the Star Rank program if the member has not completed the Silver Star Rank by June 30, 2024.

** Best is to look at the state guidelines and check that your record book follows them.

Junior/Teen Leader – patch or pin?

A member can use a Junior/Teen Leader patch or a Junior/Teen Leader pin on their 4-H hat.

How can I earn a Leader Merit Award?

To earn a Junior Leader Merit, the member must have been an active Junior Leader and enter their record book in the County Record Book Competition for that year, indicating on the competition entry form that they want their records reviewed for a Leader Merit Award. The record book must include an APR (Annual Project Report) with an Expression Page for a Leadership Project and a LDR (Leadership Development Report) for that year. The member must have done exemplary work as Junior Leader.

To earn a Teen Leader Merit Award, you do the same thing as a Junior Leader, but as a Teen Leader.

A member can only earn the Junior Leader Merit Award once and the Teen Leader Merit Award once. Once the Merit Award is earned, the Junior or Teen Leader patch (or pin) remains on the 4-H hat with a gold felt patch behind it indicating the Leader Merit Award.

How can I earn a Senior Award of Excellence?

All Senior member record books at the County Record Book Competition are reviewed for a possible senior award of excellence. To earn a possible Senior Award of Excellence the member must enter their record book in the County Record Book Competition. The record book is evaluated for all six possible awards for that year. Only one award in each category is presented in a program year. An award is given only if there is a senior member who meets the excellence criteria in that category that year.

In what areas are Senior Awards of Excellence given?

Achievement
Leadership
Community Service
Healthy Living
Project Work
S.E.T (Science, Engineering and Technology)

What do I do to get a year pin and stripe at the end of the program year?

You need to complete at least one 4-H project with at least 6 hours of participation AND complete an Annual Project Report (APR) with an Expression Page for at least one of your 6-hour(+) projects. A completed record book for the program year is not required. Some clubs may have a variation for this policy.

Do you still have a question about LA County 4-H record books?

Contact the Incentives & Recognition Committee with your question and they will try to answer it. Do you have suggestions for questions that should be added to the above list?

By County Incentive and Recognition Committee
Noel Keller, I&R Committee Chair (nkeller91711@gmail.com)

**** THE END ****