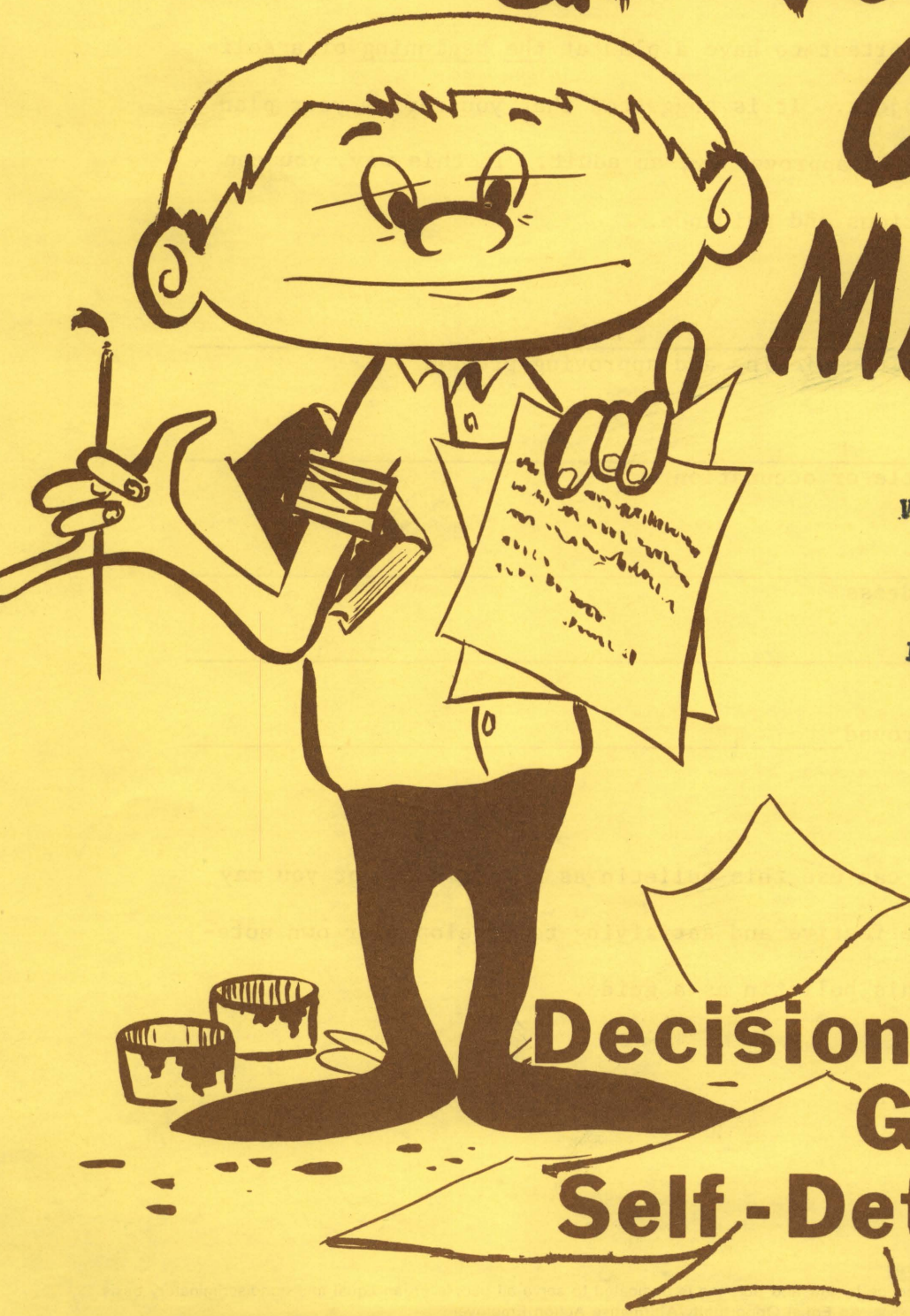


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MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND



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BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

Decision - Making Guide for Self - Determined Projects

Name _____ Address _____
Age _____ Date Project _____ Date Project _____
Started _____ Completed _____

It is important to have a plan at the beginning of a self-determined project. It is suggested that you review your plan with, and have it approved by, an adult. In this way, you can obtain suggestions and guidance.

Signed _____
Adult reviewing and approving project

Title or occupation

Address

Date Approved _____

You can use this bulletin as a work book, or you may find it more effective and satisfying to develop your own notebook, using this bulletin as a guide.

This decision-making guide
is designed
to help you
learn how to

SELECT, PLAN, and EVALUATE

projects
of your
own
choosing.

PROJECT SELECTION

Leaders
Friends
Parents
Neighbors

Extension workers
Teachers
Specialists
Church leaders

Counselors
Scientists
Artists
Craftsmen

Homemakers
Business people
Farmers
City officials

Engineers
Mechanics
Dieticians
Nurses

Doctors
Dentists
Laborers
People with social concerns

Professionals of all kinds

It is important to learn how to make decisions. We make them all of our lives. The selection of a worthwhile and interesting project is one of the important decisions a young person has an opportunity to make.

One way to begin is to make an inventory of your interests, needs, aspirations, and concerns. This inventory is not necessarily related to anything you are now doing or have done.

The inventory is supposed to be anything "under the shining sun" in which you are interested. However, the inventory certainly can include, or be based upon, your current interests.

As you work on your inventory, you may want some help and guidance from other people.

At the left is a partial list of people to stimulate you to think of the one(s) with whom you would like to talk.

On the opposite page, it is suggested that you make an inventory of your interests, needs, aspirations, and concerns. Perhaps it will help you to look at some definitions of these terms.

INTERESTS

An interest is something which excites your feelings, gains your attention, or arouses your curiosity. It causes you to say, "Oh, I'd like to do that." or "I'd like to find out more about that."

NEEDS

A need is something which you, your family, or community seem to be in want of, to lack, or to require. You say to yourself "Yes, this is something really necessary to do or to learn."

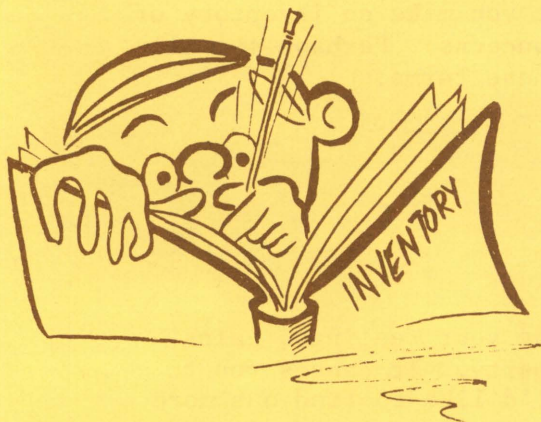
ASPIRATIONS

Your aspirations are strong wishes: something you long for, desire with eagerness, or seek to attain. Welling up in you is an ardent desire which causes you to feel, "Now, I really want to try to reach that."

CONCERNS

Your concerns are those things which affect the welfare and happiness of yourself, your family, your club, your community, the nation or the world. A concern is of importance to you: you care. You want to do something about it.

INVENTORY OF INTERESTS,
NEEDS, ASPIRATIONS, AND CONCERNS



THINK OF YOU; THINK OF YOU IN RELATION TO OTHERS. List eight ideas which interest you. List ideas which are related to you personally and your ever-expanding relationships with other people: (1) You, yourself; (2) You and your home and family; (3) You and your friends; (4) You and others in your community, county, state, nation, and world.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

Include ideas or problems you'd like to investigate: something which you'd like to be able to do, find out about, or learn; situations about which you feel strongly; things which you think you need to do or wish you could do; ways in which you could be helpful to other people.

One young person advised, "Make sure you have reasonable ideas. Some of mine have been completely impossible!"

Other young people point out that a self-determined project can stem from, or be in connection with, a project you are already carrying. This gives you a chance to do some research in the field.

A girl said, "Letting the project open to anything gives a person a chance to broaden his horizon. My self-determined project has led me to a future career."

RESOURCE PEOPLE WHO HELPED ME

Sometimes it is difficult to pinpoint one's own interests. Other people may help mirror your enthusiasms, abilities, potentialities, and difficulties. They can help you see what you want to do or wish you could do now - or possibly 5 years from now.

Name and describe some of the people you talked with. Tell how they helped you with ideas for your inventory.



QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU MAKE CHOICES

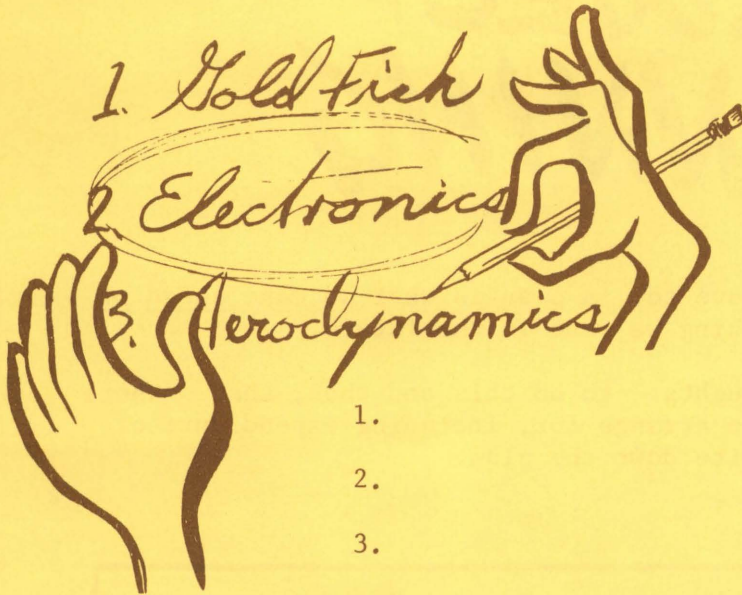
You have listed eight of your interests, needs, aspirations, or concerns. Next, you will want to narrow these down to three ideas which you might be able to do something about this coming year.

You will want to consider the following things when trying to choose among your eight ideas.

1. What are your personal experiences?
2. How can you get to the background of your interests? How and where can you get information?
3. How much is it going to cost?
4. How worthwhile is the project going to be to you?
5. What do you think you might be able to learn from it?
6. What other people besides yourself will benefit from it? Should your idea be an individual project or should a group of people work together on it?
7. Will it fit in with your home and family situation?
8. What other things (such as your school activities) will you be doing which may affect your time, energy, or how well you can do the project?
9. Do you have someone to go to who is willing to help and who knows something about what you want to learn?
10. Would this help you decide your future career?
11. Would this help you in the years to come?



MY PROJECT CHOICES



Using the suggested criteria for making choices, list the three ideas you have chosen from the eight you listed on page 4.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now, pick one of the three ideas which you (or you together with others) will develop as a project. Circle it above. Tell why you chose this project and what things you considered when making the selection.

PROJECT PLANNING

We all plan ahead; we have to. A plan is what we make ahead of time so we can do something we want in the future.

Some plans are just thoughts - to do this and then, that. Where there are many things to arrange for, including expenditure of money, it is well to write down the plan.

Setting Up Goals (What I Want to Learn)

Goals are meaningful if stated in terms of What you hope to learn. Learning implies change or growth and takes place in three inter-related areas:

1. Knowledge, facts, information, thinking, understanding.
2. Feelings, attitudes, values, beliefs, dedications.
3. Skills, ways of doing things, actions, behavior.

Note that several different words are listed under each of the three areas to indicate the various meanings involved.

You have chosen a project yourself. Therefore, it is self-determined. You want to have satisfactions in carrying out your project. Therefore, you need to set goals and describe ways you will go about trying to accomplish your goals.

The following outline may help you develop your project plan.

MY

GOALS

AND

METHODS

1. What do you need to learn in order to carry out this self-determined project?

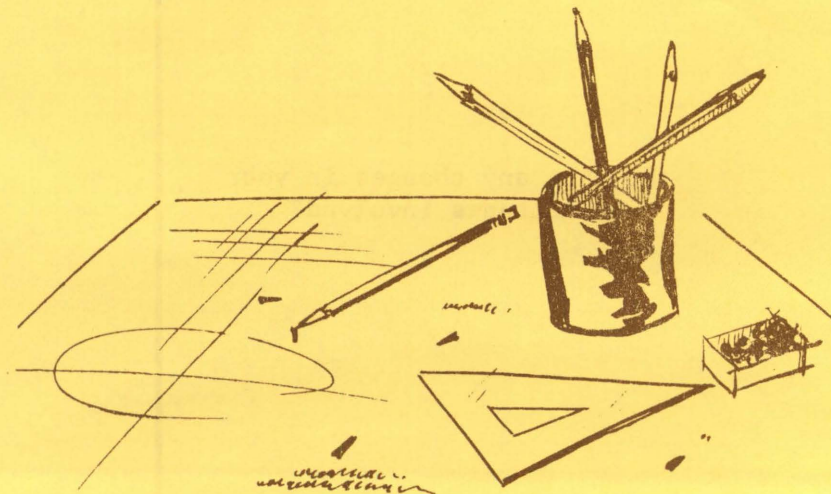
What do you need to do?
Where can you get help?
What resources do you need?
What kinds of recordkeeping will help you? What learning experiences will help you accomplish your goals?

2. What skills will you need to develop?

3. Are any changes in your attitudes involved?

SKETCH OF MY PROJECT

You may prefer to write a description of your self-determined project rather than use the outline form given on the preceding page. Include: 1) How and why you chose the project; 2) Your goals; and 3) Methods, procedures, tasks, responsibilities, and learning experiences you plan to use in order to accomplish your goals.



(A project summary by Jon E. Swenson, Montana may give you ideas)
 "STUDY OF THE BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE"
 Jon E. Swenson, Montana

"I chose to study the life history of the Black-Billed Magpie because I had a pet magpie, Jose, and I wanted to know more about him. Also, I live on a farm and plan to make a career of ornithology."

This is a summary of the different things Jon did to carry out his self-determined project:

1. Obtained information from:

National Geographic Society
 National Audubon Society
 Society for the Preservation of the Crow
 Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University

2. Visited a nesting pair of magpies for 21 consecutive days.

Observed courtship rituals, nest building habits, and feather development.
 Made growth rate records by banding and weighing three of the young.
 Took color slides and made tape recordings.

3. Received help from:

Louis M. Moos, Montana State Biologist.
 Don MacDonald, President of Billings Audubon Society.
 William Hohiesel, Head of the Biology Department, Eastern Montana College.
 C. Joe Packham, District Supervisor of Wildlife Service U.S. Department of
 of Interior, Idaho.

4. Wrote a paper on:

"Life History of the Black-Billed Magpie"
 Documented this paper with information from 12 references.
 Included rate of growth information on three birds.

5. Prepared an illustrated talk on the Black-Billed Magpie.

This talk placed in upper 10 in county and state contests.

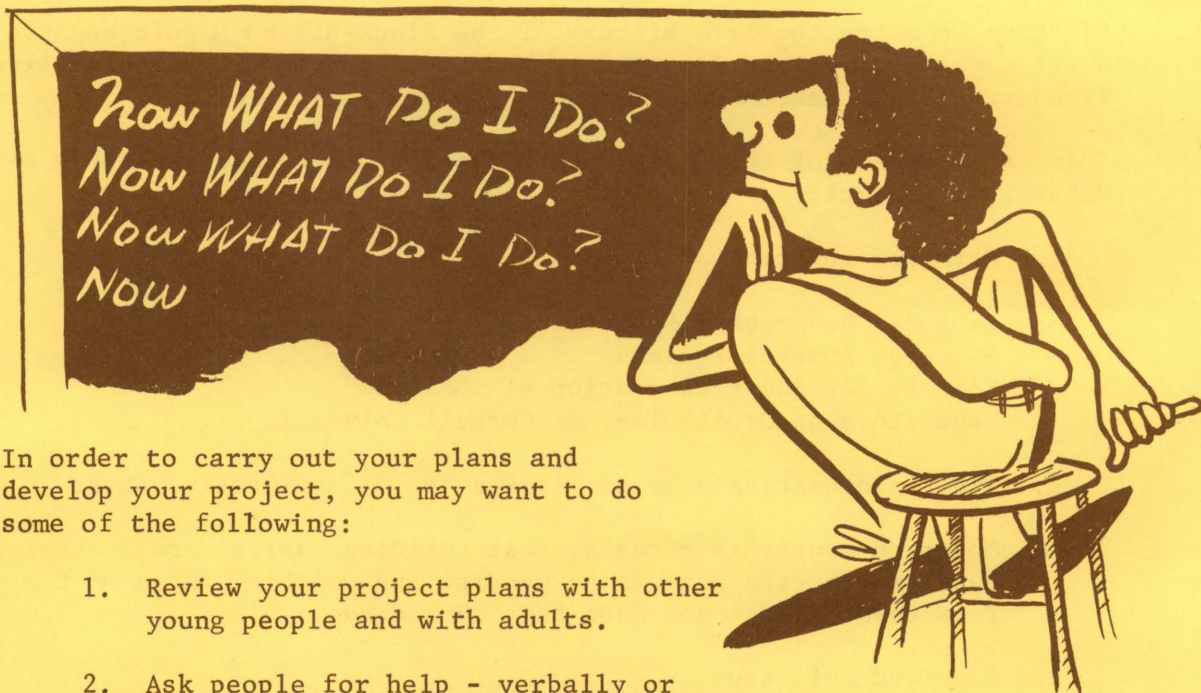
6. Became a member of:

Billings and National Audubon Society.
 Society for the Preservation of the Crow.
 National Pigeon Association.

7. Participated in the North American Nest Record Card Program.

Jon says, "The most important thing I learned was about the magpie's role in nature. The Black-Billed Magpie performs many highly useful functions and is not the villain most people think it is."

Mr. Ralph Grey of the National Geographic Society asked Jon to write an article about the Black-Billed Magpie for the National Geographic School Bulletin.



In order to carry out your plans and develop your project, you may want to do some of the following:

1. Review your project plans with other young people and with adults.
2. Ask people for help - verbally or by letter. Make appointments with people; respect their time and energy.
3. Write for literature and materials. Inquire about costs.
4. Subscribe to magazines or other publications which will help.
5. Go to libraries. What books, magazines, or pamphlets do they have which give information related to your project?
6. Visit persons and places where information can be obtained on your project.
7. Clip information from newspapers and magazines.
8. Watch for help from radio and TV programs.
9. Ask to be included in meetings, tours, events, and activities related to your project.
10. Try out, experiment, investigate, do many things which will help you learn.

PROJECT EVALUATION

It is often satisfying and helpful to look at your progress.

Progress or growth is measured in terms of the goals you set at the beginning of your self-determined project. You need to ask yourself and ask others:

What am I learning?

What am I accomplishing?

How well am I doing?

How do I feel about what I am doing?

Is this project really helping me to grow?

In order to evaluate your own growth in relation to your self-determined project, you will want to learn how to collect evidences of progress towards the goals which you listed.



HOW TO COLLECT EVIDENCES OF PROGRESS

The following ways are suggested to collect evidences of progress towards your goals.

1. **TAKE PICTURES.** Photographs and colored slides or movies can tell a story. You could take before-and-after pictures. You could plan a series of pictures to show the steps or different stages in the development of your project.

Through pictures or a slide series, you can effectively record experiences, data, or the results of investigations.

2. HAVE RECORDS. There are many kinds or forms of records such as: diaries, outlines, stories, notebooks, written reports, tables, charts, drawings, and pictures.

You will need to decide what best fits your project. Whatever methods you use to keep records, the following considerations may help you.

How can you show the extent to which you are learning or accomplishing what you set out to do?

How can you describe or show what you did?

How can you show the data collected or the results of your investigations or work?

In what ways is what you have done of benefit to other people?

Is there any reason to show how you used your time and energy? Do you need to keep track of the money spent and received?

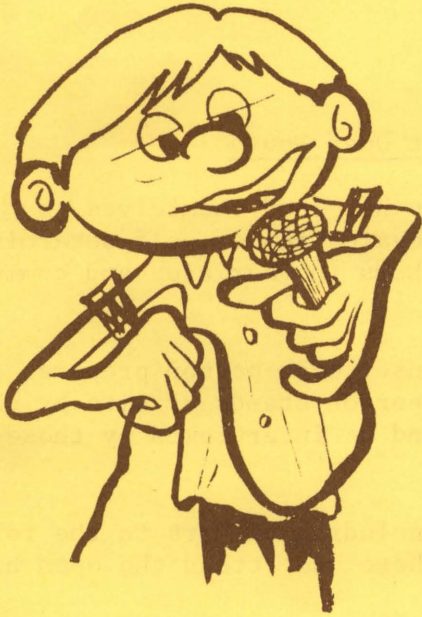
Turn on your imagination! Let your creative potential go to work. Records need not be a boring, meaningless chore. The records you develop can be exciting because you think them up, and they make sense to you and to others.

3. HAVE SAMPLES, MODELS, OR OBJECTS. Some projects lend themselves to growing, making, or collecting. These examples of what you have done provide evidences of your growth in knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes.
4. DISCUSS WITH PEOPLE. A girl with a rabbit project was not aware of how much she knew and could do until she was asked to tell Peace Corps trainees visiting her home about her work.

Thus, you can gain insights about your progress by discussing your project with people who have experiences different from yours or in addition to yours.

You might arrange for visits or interviews, in some cases. In other instances, you may want to exchange letters with people interested in you and your projects.

A boy with a ham radio operator project talked each week via short wave with his uncle in another state. This helped the boy decide how he was getting along and what he wanted to do next.



SHARING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

Further satisfactions and opportunities for growth come from sharing what you have learned (or a piece of what you have learned) with other people.

Sharing can also help you summarize, analyze, and further assess what you are accomplishing.

These ways of sharing were suggested by young people:

1. Individual help, workshops, programs, meetings, and serving on committees.
2. Exhibits, window displays, bulletin boards, and fair booths.
3. Demonstrations, illustrated talks, skits, and TV programs.
4. Talks, interviews, panel discussions, and radio programs.
5. Tours and field trips.
6. Newspaper articles and features in magazines.
7. A self-determined project open house.

Planning a Workshop

Let's say that people in your community or county have asked you to help put on a 2-hour workshop. It is to be for young people and adults who are interested in self-determined projects. These questions are designed to help plan such a workshop.

1. How would you get the people acquainted and feeling comfortable?
2. What do you think the people coming to the workshop could learn about self-determined projects?
3. What learning-teaching experiences (methods) would you use so that they could learn these things?
4. How would you program the 2 hours? When would the program begin and end? Figure out the approximate time you would devote to each learning activity.

A Self-Determined Project Open House

Usually achievement days and shows do not lend themselves to adequate sharing, presentation, and evaluation of self-determined project work. Therefore, you and others in your club and community may want to stage an open house.

In a self-determined project open house, each person prepares a display on a table. Then the young person stands or sits by this table in order to answer questions and be interviewed by those who come to see and learn.

A written summary of your project, including answers to the following questions, would be of interest to those who attend the open house:

1. How did you happen to choose this project?
2. Did you have help in setting up your goals?
3. Did you discuss your plan with anyone after it was written?
4. How and when did you decide whether you would do the project for 1 year, or continue it longer?
5. Did you have any resource person to guide you?
6. What books or other publications have you read related to your project? What resource people did you contact?
7. What people have interviewed or questioned you or have been interested in your project?
8. How have you shared what you learned with other people?
9. To what extent have you accomplished goals you set for yourself? Does this give you any guide for what you want to do next year?

Other young people in your community could help stage the open house. They may like to carry out such responsibilities as: arranging for invitations, publicity, hospitality, a guest book, name badges, music, get-acquainted activities, a master of ceremonies, and the program.

EXAMPLES OF SELF-DETERMINED PROJECTS

Self-determined projects can take several courses. For example, a young person can:

Take a different direction on a single phase of an already existing project, or

Set up his or her own plan to continue or expand on an already existing project.

Develop a plan for a project not currently listed by 4-H.

PROJECT IDEAS

These ideas may suggest topics you want to consider in selecting your self-determined project.

Motorcycling
 Learn to Fly and Get Pilot's License
 Restore Old Cars
 Backpacking
 The Appalachian Trail
 Spelunking
 Wildflower Classification

Study of a World Problem
 Settlement of the Valley of Virginia
 Local Church or School History
 History of My Community
 Study of a Cultural Group in Virginia
 Culture of House Plants
 How Light Affects Plants
 Herb Culture

Learning about the Stars
 Space Exploration
 Oceanography
 Solar Energy, Storage or Collection
 Learn to Play a Guitar
 Teaching Folk or Square Dancing

Geneology
 Customs and Culture in a Foreign Country
 Indian Artifacts
 Prehistoric Artifacts

Taxidermy
 Fish Farming
 Aquariums
 Hydroponics

*NOTE - Many of these topics are very broad; some are very general; others would take a long time to accomplish.

This points up how important it is to write down specific goals for each topic and to decide what can reasonably be done in a year's time.

Such a written plan makes it possible to check back on goals; see what progress has been made; and develop plans for the next year.