Beyond Ready

4-H Character Ready
PROGRAM CHECKLIST

Introduction

Helping youth develop strong and positive character traits and values is an important part of readiness. In fact, if you look closely at the "Ready for Life" indicators in the Beyond Ready Framework you will see that most of these are related to various aspects of character.

4-H's approach to character readiness prepares young people to excel in life and the relationships they build. Building strong and positive character has long been part of 4-H, and as we move through Beyond Ready together, intentionally emphasizing character is one of the most meaningful ways we can help young people become ready and confident for life and work.

As with other aspects of Beyond Ready programming, being intentional about character development is essential. This checklist outlines key components of Character Ready programming, building on the Ready for Life Indicators in the Beyond Ready Framework.

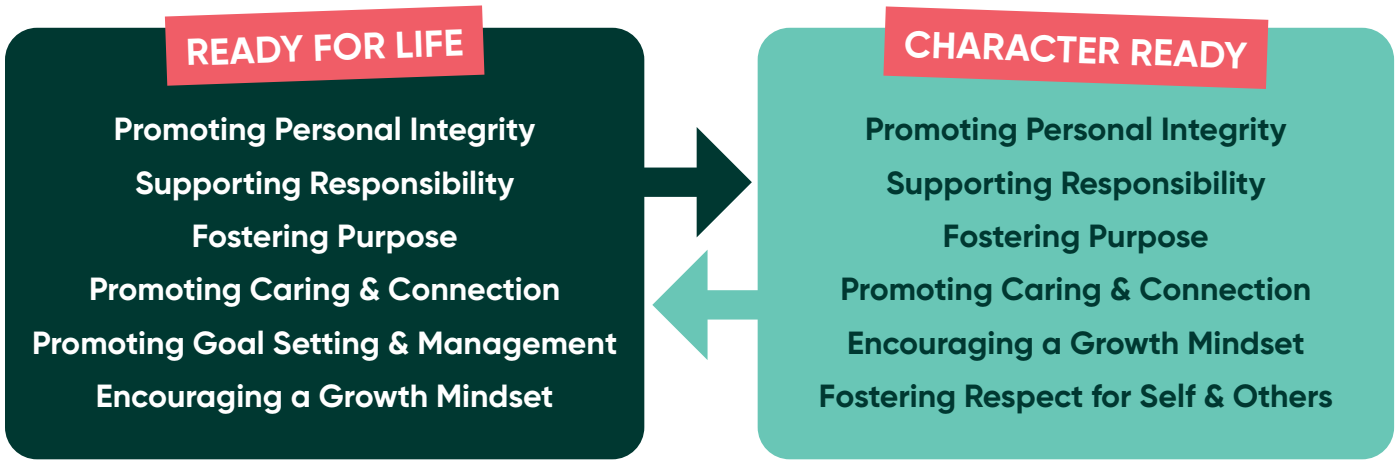
4-H CHARACTER READY PROGRAM CHECKLIST

- ☑ Promoting Personal Integrity
- ☑ Supporting Responsibility
- ☑ Fostering Purpose
- ☑ Promoting Caring & Connection
- ☑ Encouraging a Growth Mindset
- ☑ Fostering Respect for Self & Others

Beyond Ready Framework: Ready for Life

This checklist expands the "Ready for Life" section of the Beyond Ready Framework, providing more detailed information on ways that programs can be designed to promote youth character development. The checklist is designed to support intentional program planning, reflection, and program improvement as well as to be used to assess what you are already doing well and identify opportunities for growth.

Used together with the other elements of the Beyond Ready Checklist, you can feel confident that your programs are preparing youth to be ready for both work and life.



Price, T. T., Arnold, M. E., & Baker, J. (2026). *4-H Character Ready Checklist*. Washington, DC: National 4-H Council.

Are you Promoting Personal Integrity?

Does the program intentionally create opportunities for youth to develop honesty, ethical behavior, and strong moral principles?

- ☐ Are scenarios or activities included that help youth think through consequences of their decisions?
- ☐ Are youth encouraged to be truthful, even when doing so is uncomfortable or difficult?
- ☐ Are youth given opportunities to speak up, express concerns, or stand for what is right?
- ☐ Are youth given roles where others depend on them to follow through?
- ☐ Are youth taught to support teammates, friends, or club members in appropriate and positive ways?
- ☐ Are group activities structured to encourage fair play and impartial decision-making?

Customizable: *Intentionally target one or more strategies that strengthen personal integrity.*

Notes:

Are you Supporting Responsibility?

Does the program create environments where youth practice self-discipline, accountability, and follow-through?

- ☐ Are youth provided opportunities to practice delaying gratification or working steadily toward long-term goals?
- ☐ Do activities encourage youth to manage their time, attention, and behavior effectively?
- ☐ Are youth encouraged to take ownership of their actions, decisions, and responsibilities?
- ☐ Do leadership roles require youth to be dependable and fulfill commitments?
- ☐ Do youth have opportunities to persist through challenges, setbacks, or multi-step projects?

Customizable: *Intentionally target development in one or more responsibility skills.*

Notes:

Are you Fostering Purpose?

Does the program help youth identify direction, motivation, and a sense of meaning in their work and life?

- ☐ Do program activities help youth set goals or identify steps toward something they care about?
- ☐ Are youth encouraged to take initiative and pursue tasks that interest them?
- ☐ Are opportunities created for youth to reflect on what feels important, fulfilling, or purposeful?
- ☐ Are youth provided with activities that allow them to explore new areas and potentially discover new sparks?
- ☐ Do program experiences foster excitement, curiosity, and joy?

Customizable: *Intentionally target one or more purpose-building strategies.*

Notes:

Are you Promoting Caring and Connection?

Does your program cultivate kindness, compassion, and meaningful relationships?

- ☐ Do activities prompt youth to think about how their actions impact others' well-being?
- ☐ Are youth provided opportunities to practice responding kindly when others struggle or make mistakes?
- ☐ Do program activities encourage youth to share time, resources, or talents to benefit others?
- ☐ Are youth encouraged to think before they act and consider how choices affect others?
- ☐ Do activities teach youth to recognize and understand the feelings of others?

Customizable: *Intentionally target development in one or more caring and connection behaviors.*

Notes:

Are you Encouraging a Growth Mindset?

Does your program teach youth to embrace challenge, curiosity, and continuous learning?

- ☐ Are youth encouraged to share their own unique perspectives and ideas?
- ☐ Are youth encouraged to experiment with new methods and revise their work as needed?
- ☐ Are youth encouraged to explore topics that spark their interest?
- ☐ Are youth encouraged to view challenges as opportunities for learning rather than obstacles?
- ☐ Are youth taught strategies to manage setbacks, frustration, or mistakes constructively?

Customizable: *Intentionally target development of one or more growth mindset attributes.*

Notes:

Are you Fostering Respect for Self and Others?

Does the program intentionally teach and model respect, courtesy, and positive relationships?

- ☐ Are youth encouraged to reflect on how their words and actions affect others?
- ☐ Are youth taught strategies to manage stress, frustration, or strong emotions?
- ☐ Are youth encouraged to be patient and respectful when interacting with people who think or act differently?
- ☐ Are opportunities provided for youth to work through disagreements respectfully?
- ☐ Do youth practice making group decisions that consider everyone's needs?
- ☐ Do youth learn habits that promote emotional, social, and physical well-being?

Customizable: *Intentionally target one or more respect-building practices.*

Notes: