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*as Program Leader
of an Extension Homemakers Club*

Your Role as Program Leader of an Extension Homemakers Club

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Your Role as Program Leader of an Extension Homemakers Club

June Cline*

Do you know that you are a *very important person* in your Extension Homemakers Club? As a program leader, you provide leadership for helping to carry out the purpose of your club—to learn and share information related to home and family living and concerns of the community. Without able program leaders, your club could not fulfill its important purpose.

Planning and conducting programs will be as worthwhile for you as it is for the members of your club. You will probably learn more than anyone else—and improve your public speaking skills.

This leaflet can help you to be an effective program leader and to make programs beneficial to you and the members of your Extension Homemakers Club.

Think Ahead

Before you say one word, you should do some thinking. Leader training sessions held by county Extension agents or other resource people will provide the contents and suggestions for conducting the program. It is up to you to adapt the program topic to the interests of the members of your club.



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How do you go about adapting a topic? First, you need to think about the members of your club. What are their interests, concerns and needs? It is your job to pinpoint what will benefit them — and aim the program in that direction.

Suppose you attend a training session on nutrition as it relates to weight control. How should you present the program? If most of the members are young mothers, you could use the information about the nutrients for growing bodies to maintain normal weight and prepare a recipe for young children. But if most of the members are childless, you would be wiser to use the information related to weight control and prepare a low calorie recipe suitable for adults.

Get Organized

The next step is to list the specific ideas you will teach — or make an outline. These ideas are the backbone of your program.



The list of important points is not enough to make a good program. Plan how to communicate these points. Use clear, concise sentences, supported by visual aids. Posters, a flip chart and examples of actual products are examples of good visual aids.

Practice giving the program in your own words to a friend or to your mirror. Club members listen better if you speak from organized notes rather than read from printed materials. They would rather listen to your own words than listen to you read.

Before the club meeting day, check with two key people — the club president and the hostess for the meeting. Tell the president your program plans. Let her know that you will need at least 30 to 40 minutes for a worthwhile program and discussion. Together you can decide exactly how much time the program should take and where it should come on the agenda.

The hostess should be alerted in advance if you need to use something in her home, even if it is just the oven or a card table.

Set the Stage

When your program is ready, get set and go! Getting the stage set is not difficult, but it is vital for a successful program.

Arrive at the meeting early. Select a good spot to set up your program — a spot where every member will be able to see and hear you comfortably. Organize the teaching materials before the members arrive.

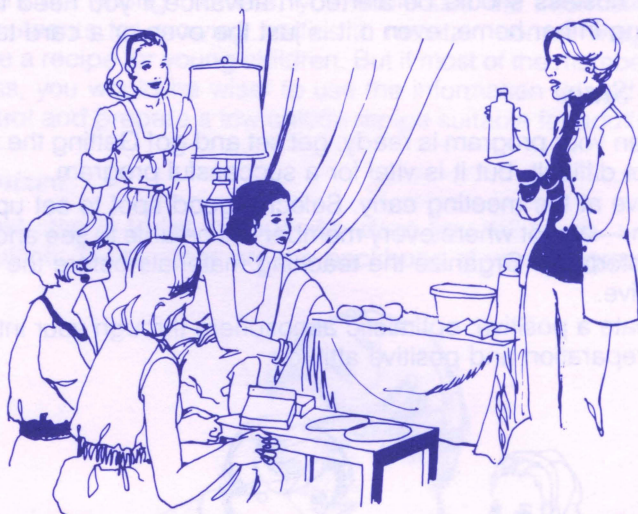
Create a positive, optimistic atmosphere through your interest, good preparation and positive attitude.



Use Visual Aids

Teaching materials such as charts, slides and magazine articles can help you communicate. Select visual aids that are appropriate to the topic, easily available and easy for you to use.

The real thing is often the easiest and most effective visual aid. For example, if you are talking about electrical cords, you can illustrate what you are saying with a real cord to show the steps you are teaching. If you are giving a program on scarves, demonstrate with several scarves.



A newsprint pad and felt tip marker can be an effective visual aid. As you present the program, write down key words or phrases or drawings that emphasize the program. This method will help keep the group's attention and make the point.

You might show magazine pictures that illustrate what you are saying. If you use this technique, select pictures that are large enough to be seen and mount the pictures on posterboard. Hold or pin them up as you talk. Do not make the mistake of passing the pictures around as you talk. Club members' attention will be on the passing pictures and they will lose track of what you are saying. If you think the audience needs a closer look at the pictures, pass them around after you speak.

Slides are a popular visual to help you explain important points. Make the primary message what you say and use the slides to illustrate the point visually. Plan the explanation of the slides as you plan the program. Don't rely on the slides to prompt you. Your slide presentation will go smoother if you set up, focus and practice using the projector before the meeting starts.

Involve Others

Let the members get in on the action. A few weeks before the program, ask some members to take part in the presentation. A

panel might present a part of the program. Or some members might arrange a skit. Your originality can keep people interested.

A good way to involve others is to build buzz groups into the program. You might find it best to decide on the number of groups and assign discussion leaders for each group before the meeting. You may want to prepare written background information for each group to use during the discussion.



If you decide to have buzz groups, give the members clear directions about how to form groups and what topics to discuss. When the groups have met for a sufficient length of time, it is your job to tie the discussion together and add any additional information.

Bring It To A Close

Even if you do not use buzz groups or skits, you can involve club members in the closing of the program. Involving the members in a discussion is almost a must at the end of every program. Members might discuss ways to use the program information or ways to share it with others. At the next meeting or two, follow up by asking for the results of the program.



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