

The Group Method of judging has been developed to evaluate exhibits and meet the needs of the 4-H Youth Development Program. It is used almost exclusively in Washington 4-H, and it is the accepted method for evaluation in use throughout the 4-H Youth Program in the United States. The group method of judging is sometimes referred to as the 'Danish System' or 'Modified Danish System' of Judging.

What is the Group Method?

The Group Method is a method of evaluating entries or exhibits in a particular class or contest according to the pre-set standards developed for that class or contest. The entries, exhibits, or contestants are evaluated and arranged into groups for recognition of their achievements, based upon how closely that particular exhibit meets the pre-established program standards.

How do you use the Group Method?

After evaluation of each item in the class, the entire class maybe subdivided into four groups according to their own merit. All exhibits in this approach are judged in comparison with a pre-established standard, as opposed to comparison to the other exhibits in the class. The standard for each exhibit is established by the characteristics of the "ideal" product in each category. If the performance of 4-H members is being evaluated, due consideration of their age and/or development and personal experience must be taken into account.

The Three Groupings

 **Excellent or Blue:** A blue ribbon is given to those entries or members who most nearly meet the standards established for the particular class or level of performance. Excellent does not indicate perfection, but it is a wide grouping indicating a high degree of achievement toward the elements in the standards for the exhibit.

 **Good or Red:** the second or red grouping indicates those exhibits or individuals who rank good in relation to the particular standards or expected achievement of the class or contest. Either the general level of the accomplishment is less than excellent, or contains significant specific shortcomings are found to cause the placing to drop from excellent to good.

 **Fair or White:** The white grouping contains those exhibits or contestants who, upon evaluation, are found to be lacking and rate only average, acceptable, or fair for the standards established.

No Award or No Ribbon: May be given to exhibits or individuals who, for one major reason or another, fail to produce that level of achievement which can be reasonably expected in relation to the specific class or performance in which they are entered. A "no ribbon" can also be given when an exhibit fails to meet specific elements of a particular class.

The difference between the Danish and Modified Danish Systems is the degree of specificity in the number of exhibits distributed between the Blue, Red, White, and No Award groups. In the Danish System, exhibits are generally assigned an award based on a numerical score for blue, red, and white ribbons. Some projects have a history of assigning different scores from the general rule. The scoring most often would be : Blue Ribbon-score of 90-100; Red Ribbon would be 80-89; White Ribbon would be 70-79; and No Award or participation

ribbon or a score of 69 or below. In the case of certain contests, like a judging contest for example, the ribbon grouping maybe based on a “curve” to take into account the unique contest conditions. Then the Modified Danish System is employed, individual entries or contestants within each group are further ranked in relation to their relative standing within each group. In this method, the judges give strict adherence to a standard of characteristics for a blue, red, or white ribbon.

Why is the Group method used in the 4-H Program?

It provides recognition for the maximum number of 4-H members. Recognition is a basic need of all young people (and adults, too), and public recognition for achievement helps fulfill this basic developmental need.

The Group Method or Danish System of Evaluation recognizes the existence and allows for the relatively minor differences between two or more entries or performances by individuals or groups of individuals. The method promotes the educational objectives of 4-H and furthers the motto “Make the Best Better” by providing incentives for the maximum number of youth. In short, the Danish system honors individual achievement while giving positive recognition to the greatest number of youth.

The Group Method attempts to distribute awards (ribbons, premiums, and public recognition) among the majority of those participating.

When the Group Method of Judging is used, the following should be considered:

- The exhibit should be judged against outlined 4-H project standards and applied equally to all participants, not against other items.
- The exhibitor is judged in classes such as fitting and showing; equitation classes (horse); dog obedience; fashion revue; public presentations; record books, etc. The criteria is that the exhibitor is being judged on their performance.
- The judge should not determine what members should make, grow, or enter in the fair. This is a program decision!
- The judge should not assume that a member has experience because of age; if a person makes an error, they are inexperienced. For example, a first year senior in a certain project/exhibit may have less experience/skills than a junior who is in their 3rd year of their project/exhibit
- When selecting champions, the exhibit must be of blue ribbon quality and be the first and second best blue ribbon exhibits in the class. However, a blue ribbon is not an automatic champion. Champion and reserve ribbons are awarded at the judge’s discretion.
- **Grand** champions are the best of the champions and reserve grand champions are the 2nd best of the champions. There is a difference between a champion and **grand** champion.

Finally, all recognition should be conducted to provide each youth dignity and respect.