

The ability to cooperate with others is a key skill that makes our everyday lives run more smoothly. We have to learn to live and work with our family members, classmates, friends and fellow employees.

The art of cooperation is especially crucial when tackling a community project. But to cooperate effectively, we also need good communication skills.

In this section's activities, team members will learn how to communicate better. They'll also work on cooperation skills in a comfortable, nonthreatening environment where they can really get to know each other.

When choosing activities, pick at least one from each of the major activity groups listed.

### Activities

- ❑ **Get-Acquainted Activities** – These are great icebreakers when the group is newly formed and members are unfamiliar with one another. Try them again later on as a way to re-establish group bonds and inject some fun into a meeting:
  - ✓ Meteor Juggle – 10 minutes
  - ✓ Musical Chairs the Cooperative Way – 10 to 15 minutes
- ❑ **Group-Building Activities** – Designed to encourage a newly formed group to work cooperatively, a necessary skill for all YEA experiences:
  - ✓ Understanding Cooperation and Competition – 30 to 40 minutes
  - ✓ Tower Building – 30 minutes

### Activities, cont'd.

- ❑ **Sharing-Our-Skills Activities** – In order to work together cooperatively, group members need to know more about each other on a more personal level:
  - ✓ Celebrating Our Experiences – 30 to 40 minutes
  - ✓ Celebrating Our Skills and Interests – 30 to 40 minutes
- ❑ **Discovering-Our-Potential Activities** – Each of us have the potential to contribute wonderful things. But young people, especially, need help developing the self-confidence to unlock this potential. These activities can help:
  - ✓ Matches – 20 to 30 minutes
  - ✓ Community Circle – 10 to 20 minutes

# MINI-LECTURE

## BECOMING A SELF-AWARE COMMUNITY MEMBER

### Building Your YEA Team

When you're self-aware, you really think consciously about your interests, desires and needs, and the relationships you have with others.

You also have a pretty good idea about the role you play in your own neighborhood, at school, in your home, with your circle of friends, or, in this case, as part of a YEA team.

Still, you may wonder exactly how you fit into your community, and what you could do to help where it's needed.

Let's use the forest as an example. It's probably safe to say that most of us don't think about all the action that's happening in the forest as we move through our day-to-day lives.

But if you stop to think about it for a moment, a forest is a very busy place. It's really a community, composed of plants, trees, insects, animals, and even critical microscopic organisms we never see. Everything that's in a forest has a role to play in order to keep that "community" thriving.

It's kind of the same in our communities. Adults usually have a better idea of their roles because of all they've learned through the years.

By learning more about yourself, your fellow team members and the community in which you live, you'll be able to see how your talents and skills can be used to maximum benefit in service to the community. That's what being a member of YEA is all about!

## GET-ACQUAINTED ACTIVITY

# METEOR JUGGLE

## Procedure

1. Set the stage for the activity by reading:  
  
*“Zillions of meteors are flying through the universe. They’ve started crashing into planets and each other. Our challenge is to prevent the meteors from crashing into the Earth. To do that, we need to channel all of our cosmic energy together to stop the meteors from falling out of the sky.”*
2. Ask the participants to stand in a large circle, leaving a space between each person. Tell them to raise their hands even with their heads.
3. Start with one pair of balled-up socks. Throw it to someone in the circle. The person who catches it should throw it to someone else. Each person should remember who threw it to him or her, and whom he or she threw it to. When someone catches a meteor, he or she must put both hands down so the group knows who’s already had a turn. The last catcher throws the meteor back to the person who started the sequence.
4. Run through the sequence again for practice.
5. Next, start a meteor on its way around the circle. Then, add another so that two are in the air at the same time. Continue the catch-and-toss pattern, adding still more meteors depending on the size of your group.
6. To help the participants remember each other’s names, have each person say the name of the person to whom they are tossing the meteor.  
  
*(Volunteer Hint: If they don’t know one another at all, make nametags before starting the activity. If they are acquainted, they can wear a tag that states their favorite sport, hobby, country, or the like.)*
7. Once the group starts juggling successfully, you can start winding the game down. Have the person who began the cycle take the meteors out of orbit.

## PURPOSE

- To help create a cooperative group spirit
- To learn to accomplish a task in a fun way

## BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary materials and review the activity.

## SETTING

A large room or outdoor area where members are able to spread out

## MATERIALS

Several pairs of clean, old socks (each rolled into a ball)

## TIME

10 minutes

Adapted with permission from *Shared Space: Similarities and Differences of the Earth's Peoples* (4-H 1494), Michigan 4-H Youth Programs, Michigan State University Extension, 1991.

# METEOR JUGGLE

## Talking It Over

1. How do these “icebreaker” activities help people get to know each other?
2. What did you think of this activity?
3. Did you learn something you didn't know before?

# GET-ACQUAINTED ACTIVITY

## MUSICAL CHAIRS- THE COOPERATIVE WAY!

### Procedure

- 1.** Set up the chairs just as you would for a traditional game of “Musical Chairs” (in a circle with one fewer chair than the total number of participants).
- 2.** Tell the participants that in this variation of the game, the whole group either wins or loses. Each person walks around the chairs. When the music stops, everyone should be in a chair. The entire group is responsible for making certain that everyone has a place to sit—even if it’s on someone’s lap.
- 3.** Start the music and stop it unexpectedly. Make sure everyone gets a seat (no one is eliminated). Then, remove one chair.
- 4.** Continue to play the game by stopping the music and eliminating chairs. Emphasize that everyone must find a seat on the chairs that remain and that all of the participants must help each other stay in the game. If anyone falls, the entire group loses and the game starts over.

### Talking It Over

- 1.** Ask the participants what they thought of this game.
- 2.** Discuss what’s different between this game and the other kind of musical chairs.

### PURPOSE

- To introduce the concept of cooperation to a group
- To help participants get to know each other

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary materials and review the activity.

### SETTING

An open area to hold chairs that offers enough space to move around freely

### MATERIALS

- Chairs
- Music

### TIME

10 to 15 minutes

Adapted with permission from *Shared Space: Similarities and Differences of the Earth's Peoples* (4-H 1494), Michigan 4-H Youth Programs, Michigan State University Extension, 1991.

# GROUP-BUILDING ACTIVITY

## UNDERSTANDING COOPERATION AND COMPETITION

### Building Your YEA Team

### Procedure

1. Explain that this activity centers on understanding cooperation and competition.
2. Together, as a group, define “competition.” Include the kinds of competition found individually and as a group. Have one person write the different definitions on paper and tape the sheets to the wall in plain view. Then ask the participants to come up with a “best” definition.

*(Volunteer Hint: The definition should include the idea that, in **competition**, people learn and work as individuals or teams against one another in order to succeed or win over others.)*

3. Next, have the group define “cooperation.” Equal time should be spent on this discussion. These definitions should also be written down and displayed on the wall. Again, have the participants come up with a “best” definition.

*(Volunteer Hint: This definition should include the idea that, with **cooperation**, people learn and work toward common goals so that everyone succeeds and wins.)*

4. Divide the participants into groups of three or four. Give each group a pencil and the “Competition and Cooperation Worksheet.” Each group should come up with – and write down on the worksheet – examples of competition and cooperation they may have experienced at home, in school, during out-of-school activities and with friends.

### PURPOSE

- To help young people better understand the concepts of cooperation and competition
- To help participants explore their feelings and experiences with cooperation and competition at home, in school and with friends

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary materials and review the activity.

### SETTING

A large room, so that participants can form small groups

### TIME

30 to 40 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Masking Tape
- Competition and Cooperation worksheet (one per group)
- Pencils

Adapted with permission from *Shared Space: Similarities and Differences of the Earth's Peoples* (4-H 1494), Michigan 4-H Youth Programs, Michigan State University Extension, 1991.



## Talking It Over

- 1.** Get back together in a large group and have the participants share their examples. After the examples are given, ask the participants how they feel when they face similar situations. What do they like about competition? What don't they like? Why?
- 2.** Once examples have been shared, ask them all whether they think future problems are best solved by cooperation or competition? Why?
- 3.** If they're at a loss to identify future problems or challenges, suggest these topics: acid rain, holes in the ozone, world peace or setting up a community in outer space.

# WORKSHEET

## COMPETITION & COOPERATION

Building Your YEA Team

Write one example of competition and cooperation at home, in school, during out-of-school activities or with friends in the appropriate boxes.

	Competition	Cooperation
Home		
School		
Out-of-School Activities		
Friends		

# GROUP-BUILDING ACTIVITY

# TOWER BUILDING

## Procedure

1. Divide the group into teams of four to eight people – there should be space enough between tables so that teams can see each other, but won't be bothered by each group's discussion. Place the straws and tape for each team on its table.
2. Read or paraphrase the following  
*"In order to get used to working together, I want each team to build a free-standing tower with the tapes and straws laid out in front of you. You'll have 15 minutes to work on the tower, then I'm going to judge each one using these criteria: height, beauty and creativity. So, before you begin, take five minutes to plan it. Are there any questions?"*
3. Time the planning session, then tell them when they can begin building.
4. You can answer any questions about the rules, but don't give them ideas about accomplishing the task. If team members want to alter the plan they formed for building, assure them they may change the design and improvise as they proceed.
5. Call time after 15 minutes of building. The teams can then inspect each tower.
6. Ask each team to explain their building process and what it took to accomplish it.

## Talking It Over

Ask the group the following questions:

1. In what ways did your team work well together?
2. What steps did you take to plan your tower and its construction?
3. Did you alter your original plan?
4. In what ways is building a tower like planning a project?

## PURPOSE

To help participants learn how to plan the steps needed to complete a project

## BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary materials and review the activity.

## SETTING

A large room with tables that fit 4 to 8 people each

## TIME

30 minutes

## MATERIALS

- Drinking straws (20 per team)
- Masking or adhesive tape
- *Optional:* "Group Roles" handout (one per person)
- *Optional:* "Group Participation" handout (one per person)
- *Optional:* Pencils or pens

# TOWER BUILDING

## Try This, Too

1. Distribute the “Group Roles” handout and briefly discuss each role.
2. Pass out copies of the “Group Participation” handout and ask participants to make a check mark in the left hand column, next to the role that best defines their own role in planning and building the tower.
3. Tell them to fold the sheet in half (along the dotted line) so that the two halves are on opposite sides. Names should be written on the bottom of the right half of the page (without the check mark) and pass the sheet to the left.
4. Each person should then check the one box of the column they think best describes that person’s role.
5. Keep passing the sheets around until everyone has checked one point on everyone else’s table.

## Talking It Over

1. How many agree with most of the group about their roles?
2. Did anyone have several different roles checked?
3. Did anyone change roles when planning and building?

(Note: These activities were adapted from *Youth Volunteers Program: Community Improvement Projects*, 4-H Program, Cornell University.)



## 1. Thinker

Has lots of ideas and suggestions. Takes a stand and explains the reasons for that stand.

## 2. Supporter

Finds positive things to say about other people's ideas. Encourages people by nodding, smiling and looking at them while they are talking.

## 3. Summarizer

Moves the discussion along by summarizing what has been said. Combines parts of different suggestions.

## 4. Questioner

Asks questions that bring out new information and helps people think more clearly.

## 5. Informant

Provides information that helps the group move on.

## 6. Doer

Listens carefully during discussions but doesn't say much. Ready to pitch in when work needs to be done.

**HANDOUT**

# GROUP PARTICIPATION

Building Your YEA Team

Group Roles	What My Role Was	Group Roles	What Others Think My Role Was
Thinker		Thinker	
Supporter		Supporter	
Summarizer		Summarizer	
Questioner		Questioner	
Informant		Informant	
Doer		Doer	

Name \_\_\_\_\_



### Procedure

- 1.** Gather the participants in one large circle. First review – and discuss – the 4-H Pledge, then read or paraphrase the following:  
  
*“Even if this is your first time as a YEA team member, you’ve probably already had experiences helping others. Maybe you taught someone a new skill, participated in a group project, tried to be a good friend when someone needed you or helped a neighbor.”*  
  
*“Take a few moments and think about the different ways you may have helped people in the past year. They would include things you did on your own, with your family, in 4-H, at school or with another group.”*
- 2.** After a few minutes have gone by, ask the members to find someone they haven’t worked with much before and sit next to that person. Then pass around newsprint and other supplies.
- 3.** Ask the group to give examples of how they’ve helped someone else. After a short discussion, have the partners trace each other’s hands on their sheets of newsprint.
- 4.** Next, partners should label their own newsprint with the words, “My Hands to Larger Service,” then decorate it with pictures or lists showing the ways they helped others over the past year.
- 5.** Allow about 10 minutes to finish the posters and let the partners discuss with each other what they’ve drawn.
- 6.** Take another 10 minutes for the partners to choose one experience that was most meaningful to them and discuss it with each other. They should examine why they became involved, how they felt while they were doing it, why it was important, what they gained personally and what the people they helped gained.

### PURPOSE

- To help participants learn more about each other
- To explore how they’ve already helped others and why they want to continue to do so

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary materials and review the activity.

### SETTING

A large room, so that people can work in pairs

### TIME

30 to 40 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Newsprint (one sheet per person)
- Pencils, markers, pastels, crayons or paints
- Masking tape
- Poster with 4-H Pledge (the pledge can be found on the inside flap of the folder)



## Talking It Over

Bring the group back into one large circle. Ask the group the following questions:

- 1.** What kinds of experiences have you had helping others?
- 2.** Which of those were most important to them and why?
- 3.** How do you think you – and those you've helped – benefited?
- 4.** Why do you think people help others?
- 5.** What does the phrase, “my hands to larger service,” in the 4-H Pledge mean to you?

# SHARING OUR SKILLS ACTIVITY

## CELEBRATING OUR SKILLS AND INTERESTS

### Procedure

1. Pass out the handout and a pencil to each participant. Introduce the activity by reading or paraphrasing the following:  
  
*“An important part of becoming involved in our communities is learning to identify the skills and interests we have. Some of the most successful community projects are those that combine the skills and interests of those doing the project with the needs of the community.”*
2. Ask the members of the group to take a few minutes to think about the things they like to do as individuals or as part of groups. For example, they might think about things they’ve done in 4-H, school or other groups, including their families. Also, they might think about hobbies they have or things they’d like to learn more about.
3. Next, ask them to look at the handout and use picture or words to complete Part One. When they’re finished, have each person find a partner – someone they don’t know or haven’t worked with before – to talk about their different interests.
4. Give each pair 5 minutes to talk, then ask each pair to join up with another pair. Hand out a sheet of newsprint or butcher paper to each group, along with some markers.
5. Have each group choose one member. That person will lie on the sheet of paper while the other team members trace his or her outline in pencil. All group members will then fill in the outline with words or pictures that depict their skills.
6. When that’s completed, have the groups discuss the questions in Part Two of the handout on page 18.

### PURPOSE

To help the group learn more about different skills, interests and talents each team member can share with the community

### BEFORE THE MEETING

1. Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), then review instructions. Gather necessary materials.
2. Decide where you’ll hang completed pictures. You could tape them to a wall or hang them from a clothesline.
3. Make copies of the “Celebrating Our Skills and Interests” handout.

### SETTING

A large room with enough space so that teams of four people can trace and color life-sized images of themselves

### MATERIALS

- One large sheet of butcher paper or paper tablecloth rolls
- Markers, crayons and pencils
- Masking tape
- *Optional:* “Celebrating Our Skills and Interests” handout
- *Optional:* Clothesline and clothespins

### TIME

30 to 40 minutes

## Talking It Over

When 10 minutes have passed, bring the groups together in a large circle. Ask each group to talk about what they drew and to answer the following questions:

- 1.** Why do you think it's important for YEA teams to celebrate their skills and interests before choosing a community project?
- 2.** Now that you know what your skills are, how can you find out what the community wants and needs?
- 3.** Why is it important to find a good fit between your skills and what others need and want?
- 4.** How do you create a partnership with the community and yourself, where you learn or benefit from each other?

## Some Other Things to Think About

- This activity can be used in conjunction with "Helping Others: Respecting Differences" as a way to help teens think more about forming partnerships with those they want to help.
- Can your group really choose a community project? Ask each group to choose three skills they'd most like to share, then develop a plan for finding out what the community needs and wants.

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## **PART ONE – “Uniquely Me”**

In the space below, use words or pictures to describe your unique talents, skills and interests. Include things you really like to do either alone or with a group. They can be things you’ve done for 4-H, at church, with your family, at school or as hobbies. Feel free to include things you’d like to learn more about.

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## **PART TWO – Matching Our Interests With Community Needs**

Now that you’ve identified some of your skills and interests, how can you discover what a community may need or want? Along with your partner(s), talk about why it’s important to find a good fit between what you have to offer and what others may want. Write down some of your thoughts in the space below.

# MATCHES

## Procedure

1. Explain matches to the group.
2. Divide the group into subgroups of six to eight people each. Try to group together participants who don't know each other very well yet.
3. Have each person write on one card, "Things I'd Like to Learn or Do," and then list three items. These items can be personal, recreation, school, job or family-related or anything else that interests them.
4. On the second card, each person should list, "Things I Do Well." (This should take about 5 minutes).
5. Next, ask the small groups to share among themselves those items they listed on the "Things I'd Like to Learn or Do" card.
6. Ask the small groups to share with the total group any common interests they discovered.
7. Have the small groups talk about the items listed on the "Things I Do Well" card.

## Talking It Over

Bring the entire group together, noting any interests and talents that have been matched through this exercise.

### PURPOSE

- To help participants learn more about each other's interests and talents
- To help identify potential resource people

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary materials and review the activity.

### SETTING

A large room, so that people can work in groups

### TIME

20 to 30 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Two index cards per person (or other writing material)
- Pen or pencil (one per person)

This activity was developed by Colorado State University through a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture, SEA-Extension.



# COMMUNITY CIRCLE

## Procedure

1. Divide the large group into two smaller ones, asking participants to form two circles, one inside the other. The circles should be lined up so each person in the inner circle faces a person in the outer circle.

2. Read or paraphrase:

*“When we think about communities, we usually think about a particular place, like our neighborhood or town. But communities are also created by groups of people who share a common interest – our school classes, a group of friends or 4-H clubs.*

*“We give and take from each of these different communities. Our senses of humor, willingness to help do a job or teach a skill to someone else are all ways we help our different communities.*

*“As you’re standing in your circle, think about some of the communities you may belong to and how you contribute. Introduce yourself to the person across from you. As I read a statement, I want you to take turns talking about what it means to you with your partner. When I tell you to, you’ll change partners to your left. Then, I’ll read a new statement for you to discuss.”*

3. You can read the following statements or create your own:
  - Besides my family and friends, I belong to other groups. These include my class at school, a sports team, 4-H, a church group and...
  - One of the things I contribute to these groups is my...
  - The things I like best about my town or neighborhood are...
  - A favorite hobby is...
  - I could share my interest or hobby with others in my community by...
  - When I hear the words “global community,” I think of...

## PURPOSE

- To help participants learn more about each other
- To help participants discover what comprises a community and the contributions they can make through community service

## BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary materials and review the activity.

## SETTING

A large room, so that participants can form two circles, one inside the other

## TIME

10 to 20 minutes

## MATERIALS

None



## COMMUNITY CIRCLE

- Something I could do to help others in the global community is...
- When I hear the words “community service,” I think of...
- A project I’d like to do in my community is...

### Talking It Over

Bring the group back into a large circle. Ask the participants to discuss:

- 1.** One or two things each of them could do to help others in their communities.
- 2.** One or two ideas about ways they could help their global community.
- 3.** How they see themselves as part of the global community.
- 4.** Different ways people described community service.

# REFLECTION

## IDEAS FOR REFLECTION

### Procedure

Start the discussion with some of the questions below. (These are different from the “Talking It Over” questions at the end of each activity.) Participants may also want to respond to these questions in journals.

Ask one of your helpers to start leading the discussion and another to write the group’s answers on a sheet of newsprint. Have the helper ask the following questions:

- 1.** Do you feel closer to your team members now? If so, was there a particular experience that made you feel that way?
- 2.** Why is it important for members of a team to be able to work together?
- 3.** What are some things you can do to ensure that everyone on the YEA team will be able to work together in the future?
- 4.** What will happen when new members are added to the team?
- 5.** What have you learned about your own skills and experiences? Were you surprised by all you’ve done?
- 6.** Why is it important to understand what interests you before you choose a project?
- 7.** Are there times when you might want to help others, even if some of the things you need to do might not be much fun?

### PURPOSE

- To take time for the entire group to discuss ideas that came out of the section’s activities
- To talk over what participants learned and how that may help make them more effective volunteers

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Recruit one or two helpers, gather necessary materials and review the activity.

### SETTING

A large room

### TIME

10 to 15 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers



## IDEAS FOR REFLECTION

### Ideas for Projects

- 1.** Attend a teamwork or leadership workshop with other teens to strengthen your YEA team. (For example, Michigan 4-H Youth Development holds an annual Peer Plus, Group Dynamite and YEA Workshop. Contact your county MSU Extension office for more information.)
- 2.** Keep a resource file that lists everyone's skills, interests and pertinent experiences. This can help when you plan future projects.
- 3.** Organize a "skillathon." This is a method of involving young people and adults in challenging, noncompetitive, learning-by-doing activities that can help them develop skills. A skillathon can be organized as a series of learning stations with an assistant at each station. Participants rotate from station to station attempting to perform a task such as making quilts for infants who have AIDS, making doghouses for animal shelters, learning how to run a food collection or putting together personal needs kits for residents of homeless shelters.

