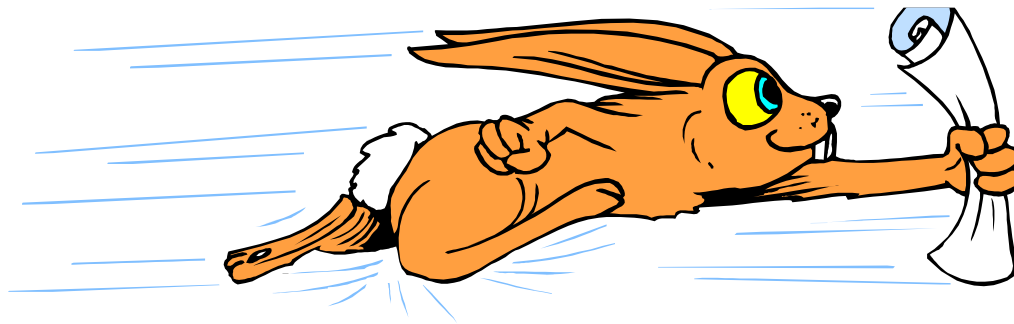


# "RUN YOUR RACE"



## **Montana State FFA Officer Candidate Guide**



You are about to begin or have already begun studying for what may seem to be the most life changing week you have ever experienced. For some it may be something you decided on this year, and for others it may be a dream you've had for as long as you can remember. As you study, memorizing names and facts about agriculture and FFA, remember one very important thing... know yourself!

Know why you desire to serve over 2,500 FFA members in Montana, not why you think your advisor, parents, or even the nominating committee wants you to serve.

Know why you want to spend a year of your life traveling around the state, communicating a message of agriculture and youth leadership to thousands.

It's not all about wearing a jacket that has "association" printed on the back it's much more. Being prepared will help you have a successful convention.

Search your heart, know its desires, and be passionate about your yearning to truly serve.

Your life up to this point has been your true preparation for these few days at the State FFA Convention.

And your life, what you do say and how you look will be the message people hear following that week and throughout the rest of your life.

Are you in it for the right reasons? If so, run your race.

## What is a Montana State FFA Officer?

The role of the Montana State FFA Officer might best be described as someone who “facilitates member success”. What is that? The role of an officer is to help promote FFA on a state-wide basis and act on behalf of all members at FFA and other agriculture related activities. State Officers can be found doing the following:

- Attend executive meetings and play a role in determining the current scope and advancement of the Montana FFA Association.
- Motivate members across the state, provide leadership workshops and retreats
- Participate in Business and Industry tours
- Promote FFA, Agricultural Education and Agriculture when ever possible.
- Articulate the value of FFA, Agricultural Education and Agricultural in Montana and the United States.
- Plan and carryout activities for state convention
- Provide current information on agriculture, agriculture issues, state FFA activities to members and others in a written format, minimally 4 times per year (*Montana FFA Reporter*).
- State-wide contests and events
- Provide a Program of Activities
- Provide workshops for other youth groups.

## Is there a difference in officer duties on the state level?

Duties of the State Officers are defined in the By-Laws of the Montana FFA Association. While the By-Laws define each office, there are other duties assigned during the year. There are committees that work on state convention, National FFA Week, DLS, 4-H Congress, just about anything that the association takes part in. We are commonly asked to provide leadership in parliamentary procedure, invocations at meal functions, presentations to other youth groups around Montana, classroom workshops at both the elementary and secondary level and school assemblies. Each state officer must be able to effectively work with people of all ages and in all walks of life. All state officers, even though they have different duties described in the constitution, are not ranked and expected to be able to perform the duties of any other officer.

## The Convention in Review:

Arriving sometime Wednesday morning, as a state officer candidate, you basically “hit the ground running.” Immediately you’ll meet other candidates and begin making amazing friends. It’s the beginning of a few days that will change your life, whether you receive an office or not. The week will begin with a written test. Then there is a time in which you meet all of the candidates, nominating committee, and advisor chair. During this time, the current state officer team may also come to speak with the candidates. Coordinators also tell of the interview process and functions that you will attend. Read on for a more detailed view...

## Written Exam:

This exam is divided into 4 parts, each carry the same weight.

- FFA History and Knowledge
- FFA Actual Workings
- Agricultural Issues and Knowledge
- Parliamentary Procedure

Be familiar with:

- Official FFA manual
- Student Handbook
- *FFA New Horizons* <http://www.ffa.org/news/newhorizons/>
- *Robert’s Rules of Order*

Know the basics. It’s almost impossible to learn it all. Learn what was the most important to you first. Learn the history and the people first. Yes, the rules are important. So, know the basics that relate to typical FFA meetings. Put yourself in the place of an FFA member, agriculturist, or someone who has never heard of FFA asking a state officer a question.

By doing this, it’s obvious that you need to focus most of your energy on the FFA timeline, current FFA events, and common knowledge of agriculture issues. Then know basic parliamentary procedure skills, and let the remaining knowledge fill up extra time you have.

## Written Activity:

You're given a scenario and you have to produce something, such as a letter, in response to a scenario in a final draft form. You will be given a time limit in which to create your written assignment. A scenario *might* be something like this:

You are writing a letter to thank a Representative for supporting FFA during the past year. He was instrumental in helping the FFA advance with the State Government.

You are to write a thank you letter (described above) that is ready to be sent (final draft), you have 45 minutes to complete it. In the letter you want to thank him/her for his/her time and talk about things you feel are important in Agricultural Education and FFA.

Make the letter very personal. Here are additional situations that *might* occur:

- Declining an invitation to a banquet.
- Sending a thank-you letter to a sponsor.
- Sending a congratulatory note to a member who achieved an honor.
- Responding to an email of a member
- Etc...

When the real assignment comes at convention, you'll have an idea of what needs to be said and how much time you have to do that. Again...make it personal, make it sincere. Let them see YOU!

Each candidate is guaranteed five rounds. The rounds will vary in length and how many committee members you will be talking/presenting to. The rounds listed below will most likely be in a different order at convention, be prepared for all of them!

## Personal Round (One-on-One Interview):

In this round you rotate in 5-10-minute intervals with each nominating committee member. They ask a series of questions pertaining to your application, SAE, State FFA Degree application, and personal questions. Be sure that you can give information about yourself in short but informative answers, as the time limit does not allow time to ramble to get to your accomplishments.

## Personal Interviews:

There are two individual rounds where you will interview with the entire committee. These rounds are looking for personal traits that best fit with personal traits identified as being important for a state officer. These rounds may be on agriculture issues, agricultural education/FFA issues or personal questions about your experiences in FFA and other leadership activities/involvement. There are examples of personal questions in this guideline that will help you to prepare for these interviews.

### **-Agriculture In Montana and The World Today:**

The nominating committee can ask about current agriculture issues. The situation may be one in which you have to give a small extemporaneous speech to an audience who knows little about agriculture, or they can ask you questions. There's no way to know everything. But here are a few examples of questions:

- What are two major agricultural issues facing the world globally? In Montana?
- Why does the United States have the safest food in the world?
- What do you think will be a major impact that will influence agriculture in the future?

In preparing for this round. Keep up-to-date on current agriculture issues and be informed. There is no way you can know every fact about every agriculture issue. The nominating committee doesn't expect that either. Pick out a few Ag issues and know them well. Write down facts on each issue and summarize what your feelings are on those topics. Then seek out new information about those particular issues. It's better to know a lot about a few things than to know little or nothing about everything. They just want to see that you know about agriculture.

### **-Agricultural Educational/FFA Issues:**

It's a lot like the agriculture issues round. They may have you stand in the middle of the room or sit with the nominating committee in a semi-circle around you.

Example questions:

- Will there be a future for agricultural education?
- What is the Local Program of Success?
- Is there a place for home-schooled students in agricultural education?
- Will a voucher system work? How will it affect agricultural classes?
- How can an agriculture program remain viable in a school with block scheduling?
- What are three top issues facing our education system and what can we do to combat these issues?
- How can a strong local program be built?
- How do you develop sound relationships with partners?
- Explain the Perkins Act is and how it affects Agriculture Education and FFA.
- What is the total program?

Once again, it's important to know a lot about a few issues. Pick a few issues in education that you feel are the most important and do the same thing with them that you did with the agriculture issues. These topics are affecting us as FFA members, and we need to be well-informed, concerned leaders. These are rounds to demonstrate your love for agriculture and education.

## Group Rounds: Candidate Group Discussion and Interaction

You will have **2 group rounds**. Group rounds may involve a theme such as agricultural issues or agricultural education/FFA.

Basically this is a situation in which you'll work with a group to plan and present an idea to the nominating committee who acts as your audience. It's important to know what you're talking about, present your idea clearly, and to insert facts to make yourself credible in your presentation, but that is not the most important issue here. This is a round where the nominating committee wants to see how well you interact with a group. As long as you get along well with others on a day-to-day basis, there is little preparation for this round. Participate and make sure your back is not to any nominating committee members. Speak up. You do not want to be overbearing or have long explanations for everything. Bring others and their ideas into the planning process and make sure all take part in presenting. Work together. Present together. Be a team player. Be a team!

These rounds might be something like this: With a group of people you have 15-30 minutes to plan and present a workshop to the nominating committee about FFA. It can be anything from planning a camp skit to preparing for a state convention workshop. Here are a few examples:

- You are given a box of props and can use what you want to present a workshop that explains the basics of FFA to people living on Mars.
- You have to present a state convention workshop on national and international FFA opportunities using one sheet of poster board.
- Motivate a chapter officer team with a presentation including duties of officers and ways to become more involved.
- Prepare a skit having to do with goal-setting for a leadership camp.

Or it could be:

- Informing the Montana Legislature about FFA and the National FFA Convention.
- Convincing a school board to implement an agriculture education and FFA program in your local school system.
- Explaining the benefits of FFA to a state government who wants to cut the funding for the program.

It's important that you communicate the basics of FFA into your workshop/presentation scenario. As a state officer, this would be a common duty. But once again, team work and bringing out the best in others is the key.

Many of these topics are affecting us as FFA members, and we need to be well-informed, concerned leaders. These are rounds to demonstrate your love for agriculture and education.

## Committee's Choice (Call Back):

This round is completely open, usually done on an individual basis. However, it is up to the committee if they need this round and who they need to see. These are generally very open-ended questions asked to see more of you as an individual if that wasn't apparent in the previous interviews, remember this is the committee's choice so it may not be done on an individual basis or with questions only. A few questions *might* be:

- Name the three things you value the most in order of importance, without an explanation.
- How can you influence student's lives without youth organizations?
- What does FFA mean to you?
- Name each member of the nominating committee and one fact about each member.
- Who are you?
- You have 10 minutes to tell us whatever you want us to know. Go...

Here is your last chance to tell them what you've wanted to tell them but haven't had the chance to yet. This is your final impression. Pour your heart out. Don't leave this round without laying it all on the line. Don't leave without the committee knowing exactly who you are and why you desire to serve. Let them see you...one last time. This round could be the deciding factor in your opportunity to serve thousands as a State FFA Officer. If you are in this interview, leave with no regrets! Know you gave it your all and if you fit the makeup of the team great.

## Personal/Behavioral Questions:

Here are some questions to ask yourself along the journey. No, they will not all be asked. Maybe some will, maybe some won't. But they will make you think. They'll make you evaluate who you are. And they'll give you a deeper understanding of yourself and why you are running to serve hundreds of FFA members. Journal (write your thoughts) about them. Answer them in front of a mirror. Think about them. Question yourself and know yourself so that you can answer in clear concise answers, practice them with someone else. You will be more at ease in the interviews if you have practiced!

## State Officer Behavioral Questions:

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation and how you dealt with that.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to achieve it.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Tell me about a time in which you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.

- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
- Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
- Tell me about a difficult person you've met in the last year.
- Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed.
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- Give me an example of a time when you motivated other people
- Tell me about a time in which you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- Describe a time when you set your sights too high or too low.
- Describe a time in which you felt it was necessary to modify or change your actions in order to respond to the needs of another person.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to positively influence the actions of others in a desired direction.
- Tell me about a time when you took a public stance on an issue and then had to change your position.
- Describe a really tough time and how you dealt with the situation.
- Relate a personal story in which you persuaded someone to do something that initially did not appeal to them.
- Tell me about a time when, if it hadn't been for teamwork, your goal might not have been achieved.
- Describe a time in which you took initiative rather than waiting to be told what to do.
- Describe a project or goal that has caused you frustration.

## Other possible questions:

- Who are you? (Your likes/dislikes, morals/values, faith)
- What do you stand for? (How do you feel about alcohol, sex, drugs, abortion, death penalty, education, the future, diversity, etc.)
- Where did you come from? (Family, community, farm/non-farm, college, high school, friends, activities)
- What makes you happy?
- What makes you sad?
- What do you enjoy?
- What are your strengths and talents?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What has been your most traumatic and/or sad and/or worst experience and how did you react?
- What has been your happiest and/or best experience and how did you react?
- What is your favorite quote and why?
- How would you describe yourself?
- If you could describe yourself in only 3 words, what would they be?
- What do you want to accomplish in your life?
- Where are you headed in life?
- Who and/or what do you credit for your success?

- Why do you want to run for state office?
- Who is your biggest role model and why?
- What is your best and worst memory in FFA?
- Why do you deserve to be a state officer over the other candidates?
- Describe your SAE.
- How has your SAE helped you in your life?
- What is the one thing you would change about Montana FFA?
- How can you help members?
- What will you be remembered for?
- What is your purpose in life?
- What concerns you most about this world?
- What is the most pressing problem with youth today? What is the solution?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What is your passion?
- What will you do if you are elected?
- What will you do if you aren't elected?
- Why did you join FFA?
- Name two things you consider your passions.
- If you were going to be on the television show "Survivor", what one item would be your luxury item?
- Which of your strengths do you think will help you the most this year?
- What are your hopes for the year?

## Basic Information to be Familiar With:

### Fundamentals of FFA:

- What is the place of FFA within the program of agricultural education?
- Why was the FFA organized?
- What are your responsibilities as a State FFA Officer?
- What is a POA and how is it developed?
- As you look back over your experiences in the FFA, why did you join the organization and how does this reason compare to what it has meant to you?
- If a sponsor of the FFA who was also a supporter of the 4-H asks you, "What is the difference between the FFA and the 4-H," how will you respond?
- What is the purpose of the National Chapter Award Program?

### Alumni:

- When was the FFA alumni chartered?
- Why was the FFA alumni organized?
- How do you organize or charter a local FFA alumni affiliate?
- Do you have to be a former FFA member to be a member of the Alumni?

### Problems that you may encounter:

- How can officers develop more interest and enthusiasm among members?

- In electing state officers, is it best to have a nominating committee or to run a campaign?
- How can a member develop self-confidence?
- How can a chapter/state increase membership?
- How do you have an SAE in an urban area?
- What advice would you give a greenhand who wants to become a state FFA officer?
- What are chapters doing for fund-raising activities?
- How is the FFA financed?
- A member has just been defeated in running for chapter office; what advice would you give him/her?

### Strategies: (Possibilities that may work for you)

- Notecards
- Speaking with informed agriculturists
- Writing facts down until they're in your mind for good
- Speaking in front of a mirror
- Tape-recording information and playing it back until you remember it
- Actually presenting workshops to FFA members
- Taking a journal with you everywhere and writing down thoughts/feelings
- Mock-interviews
- **Anything you can do to learn the facts and increase the heart!**

### Personal Views of being a State Officer Candidate or Committee Member:

“I had a good experience this week! Running for State Office is more about the process than the position, and I am walking away feeling very good about this week.”

“If I were to give any advice to future candidates the number one thing I would tell them is to get to know who they are. You must know who you TRULY are, not who you think a state officer should be. When they go into the interviews be themselves. Because no one can act like a "state officer" for a whole year. They must be themselves no matter what. But that doesn't mean they shouldn't work on their habits, lifestyle, mannerisms, knowledge, appearance, etc. Once the candidate discovers who they are, work on their knowledge, be a well-rounded person. That's really the best advice I could give anyone.”

“I can tell you that the main goal of the committee is to choose the best individuals who will come together to make a well rounded team. In the interviews the committee is looking for who you are. Be yourself, let your strengths shine through, don't try and compensate for weaknesses because that will take away from your strengths. Other than that, know why you want to serve as a state FFA officer. That is really all of the advice I would have to give. My best piece of advice to state officers is to remember that the members are the reason for them being there, and get ready to experience a ton of growth.”

## List of Sources (just for your benefit):

Montana FFA at [www.montanaffa.org](http://www.montanaffa.org)

Agrigator Index of Agricultural and Related Information -  
<http://gmv.ifas.ufl.edu/www/agator/htm/ag.htm>

American Farm Bureau [www.fb.org](http://www.fb.org)

National Cattlemen's Beef Association [www.cowtown.org](http://www.cowtown.org)

National Corn Growers Association [www.ncga.com](http://www.ncga.com)

United States Department of Agriculture [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

United States Department of Education [www.usde.gov](http://www.usde.gov)

Chicago Board of Trade [www.cbot.com](http://www.cbot.com)

Today's Market Prices [www.todaymarket.com](http://www.todaymarket.com)

Futures and Options Markets <http://exchanges.barchart.com/cme/cmeagr.htm>

Food Safety Consortium [www.uark.edu/depts/fsc](http://www.uark.edu/depts/fsc)

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy [www.iatp.org/iatp](http://www.iatp.org/iatp)

Center for Ag & Rural Development [www.ag.iastate.edu/card](http://www.ag.iastate.edu/card)

National Agriculture Statistics Service [www.usda.gov/nass](http://www.usda.gov/nass)

Foreign Agriculture Service [www.usda.fas.gov/](http://www.usda.fas.gov/)

Ag Youth Magazine [www.agyouth.com](http://www.agyouth.com)

Beef Today [www.farmjournal.com/beeftoday/](http://www.farmjournal.com/beeftoday/)

Farm Journal [www.farmjournal.com](http://www.farmjournal.com)

List of Electronic Magazines [www.agpr.com/consulting/zines.html](http://www.agpr.com/consulting/zines.html)

The Old Farmers Almanac [www.almanac.com](http://www.almanac.com)

Successful Farming [www.agriculture.com](http://www.agriculture.com)

Progressive Farmer [www.progressivefarmer.com](http://www.progressivefarmer.com)

Profarmer [www.profarmer.com](http://www.profarmer.com)

The Western Producer [www.producer.com/](http://www.producer.com/)

Aurora Leadership [www.auroraleadership.com](http://www.auroraleadership.com)

Leadership [www.leadership.com](http://www.leadership.com)

USA Today Education [www.usatoday.com/educate/home.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/educate/home.htm)

CNN Interactive [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)

U.S. House of Representatives [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

U.S. Senate [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

National FFA [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org)

## Other Things To Keep In Mind!

The key to a successful personal interview is to pretend that you are at a job interview. The members of the nominating committee are basically "screening" you for the position a State Officer which IS comparable to a full or part time job, whether you are a Vice President or President. The following are the most important tips to remember when preparing for an interview:

- ◆ Repeat the question in some form. This way you are giving more of a complete and grammatically correct answer. For example: If your question is "Who is your biggest role model and why?" Your answer should sound something like this: "My biggest role model is my grandmother, because she taught me the importance of high morals, strong family ties, and to always believe in yourself."
- ◆ At the end of your entire interview, please make sure to say thank you.
- ◆ If you do not know the answer or don't have one that's ready to give yet - ask them to Please repeat the question - this gives your brain a few more seconds to formulate an appropriate answer.
- ◆ You can always take a guess at the question - but don't make it seem that way. If they ask you a question, and you give an answer you are *not* certain is correct - make it correct in your mind. The more you believe your answer is correct, even if it isn't - will score you higher in personality points.
- ◆ Never say anything offensive in your answers. For example – If you cannot think of an answer and feel that you need to say something DO NOT say that you are "having a huge brain fart" – the Nom Com might laugh for a minute, but after a while they will see the inappropriateness of your answer. This shows absolute immaturity and detracts from the qualities you have.
- ◆ Interview Questions may consist of a few factual questions, and a few personal opinions. Remember that even with personal opinion still give a complete answer.
- ◆ Relax, and be yourself! At the time you might feel like you have *not* given your best performance, but 90% of things will be attitude.
- ◆ ALWAYS be yourself ! This is the most important part of the interview - even more so than the knowledge portion itself. The members of the committee are looking for someone who is at ease under pressure and can make others laugh and carry on a conversation. If you are nervous

because you don't know the answers to the question - ignore that feeling and make them like you for who you are.

- ◆ When you prepare your Official Dress - remember to have your jacket dry-cleaned if it needs it, have your blouse/shirt, skirt/slacks pressed, shoes polished, and the correct number of pins on your jacket, black hose or socks. This is the time when you are extremely close to the committee. They will notice if your skirt is too short, if your jacket is dirty, or if you are violating the rules of proper Official Dress.
- ◆ When you enter the room - SMILE! Let them see that although you may be nervous, you are friendly and excited to share your personality with them. Greet the committee by introducing yourself to them or saying "Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening". Remember, this is a job interview - would you shake your prospective boss' hand? If so, then shake their hands and then sit -when THEY tell you to have a seat. If you know the Advisor's, name- say hello to them by last name while shaking their hand. For instance if your judge is named Joe Agteacher - shake his hand and say " Nice to see you Mr. Agteacher or Nice to meet you Mr. Agteacher." Also, greet the members by their names. This shows your attention to detail and dedication to remembering their names.
- ◆ When you sit down - try not to fidget. It is best if you sit somewhat at an angle, and cross your feet at your ankles. It is a more comfortable position than keeping your feet directly in front of you. Place your hands in your lap palms upward, cradling each other to aid in fluid gestures. Remember to sit up straight and keep eye contact with the committee to show interest.
- ◆ During the questioning session - remember to answer truthfully and completely. If they ask "What do you think is the most important leadership quality you possess?" Answer them in a way that makes a complete sentence – for example : "I think that my most important leadership quality is honesty, because no matter the situation, I can walk away feeling good about myself." Have a sense of humor, but remember to not go overboard.
- ◆ Think like the committee when preparing. Ask yourself:
  - If I were one of the Nom Com members - would I have answered the questions correctly and kept an easy conversation going?
  - Was I confident in my answers even if they weren't correct?
  - Did I sit properly and keep good eye contact?
  - Did I sound responsible enough to carry out my duties if I am elected to State Office? Did I show that I am knowledgeable of FFA, Agriculture Education and Montana?
  - Was my official dress in order? Did I pay attention to detail?
  - Did I make myself stand out?
- ◆ Thank the committee when you leave and shake their hands again on the way out if you think it is necessary. Remind them that they made the interview wonderful and helped you feel at ease - even if you were nervous the entire time. This makes them feel like they are doing a great job of relaxing you and shows that you had a great time.
- ◆ Never leave your chair until they tell you too - remember that they are in charge. Also remember - that even though they are in charge - members of the committee are regular people just like you, and most often are just as nervous as you. Their job is to make you feel a bit of pressure -

but if you just relax and talk to them - you can find out more information often about them - which is great to assist you in the rest of the process.

- ◆ Realize that the committee wants to see the REAL you. The person you always are, and make sure to show those qualities during this time. If you are funny, then use that, but don't stress if you don't always have a joke. Being yourself and showing that person to the Com is a 100 times more important.

## Managing Your Nerves

- Like competing in the Olympics, facing the Nom Com whose scores on your "performance" could change the course of your life is an understandably nerve-wracking experience. It's a one-shot deal and you've got minutes to win the panel over. Indeed, NOT being nervous would be the real surprise.
- The pressures of being a state officer candidate, possibly in CDE's and being just being at State Convention can be especially tough on your confidence and ability to concentrate. The most effective way to conquer such point-losing jitters is to prepare beforehand.
- Keep in mind that members of the committee are real people. Like anyone, they work long hours with SAEs, get the flu during judging season, and have car trouble. So, when you are hit with the shakes, sweaty palms, and rapid breathing, remember to relax and treat them as regular folks. It is a matter of keeping the experience in perspective. It is just a conversation with people. They mess up and make mistakes, they are not perfect, and they know that you are not. This will be your time in the spotlight. Why be nervous? Let it be fun! If you have your mental attitude right, it's usually not too stressful.

## Keep Your Composure

- In any competitive situation the unexpected can occur: a candidate trips walking into the room, knocks over the table as they sit down, or calls a Nom Com member by the wrong name. Because mishaps do happen on any level of competition, remember that no disaster is so calamitous that you can't handle it with poise. Always keep your composure. When the unexpected occurs, turn it to your advantage with honesty, humor, or wit.
- Should the unexpected occur, turn the incident to your advantage by keeping your composure and handling it in a relaxed, down-to-earth manner.
- Indeed, while the prospect of being grilled by a panel of judges can be unnerving, the actual experience of meeting with the Nom Com should be an enjoyable opportunity to let them to see your finest qualities.

# Preparation and Practice = Strong Performance

1. Check your motive  
Ask yourself, "What is my motive for saying or writing this?" If your motive isn't positive or productive, you cannot expect any other response.
2. Get to the point  
If you cannot summarize your message in 60 seconds, you may not understand it well enough to communicate it in more detail.
3. Stick to the point  
Make it clear where you are going with your communication and stay with it. People do not like to be kept in the dark unless it's a mystery movie.
4. Remember that your body speaks volumes  
Up to ninety percent of communication is visual. When you speak, your listeners are watching to be sure that your facial and body clues match what you are saying.
5. Check your tone  
The written word, in particular, is often much more harsh than intended. Let important written messages sit for a day before you send them and read them for tone as well as content.
6. Say what you mean and mean what you say  
People, while trusting by nature, are very perceptive and can find any hint of insincerity or lack of credibility.
7. Listen first for understanding. To listen effectively you must CARE for those you're listening to:  
Concentrate - focus on the speaker  
Acknowledge - through body language - nod your head  
Respond - ask questions for clarification and interest  
Empathize - share in their emotions and feelings.
8. Practice, practice; practice  
Writing and speaking, as arts, improve with study and practice.
9. Get help with tough communications.  
Bounce your ideas off your advisor, friends and/ or family. They can provide a clarifying perspective for you.
10. Speak from the Heart.  
Along with being yourself and showing that to the members of Nom Com, also give answers that have meaning, and show your passions and character.

## Packing List Ideas

Here are a few ideas of things you might bring with you to make the Nom Com experience more pleasant:

A Backpack containing the following items:

- pens/pencils (bring extras to share, you will be a hero)
- a note pad, post-its (something to write on)
- bottle of water or water bottle that you can refill (sessions get long and you won't always have time to run to a coke machine or water fountain)
- snacks such as: granola or Nutri-Grain bars, fruit, pretzels, other "healthy" snacks. (Try to avoid excessive junk, the sugar could add to your nerves or make you hyper)
- breath mints, Listerine strips (You'll want fresh, minty breath for interviews, don't chew gum, incase you forget to take it out)
- Your Study Resource(s)
- FFA Manual
- Camera (for all the great memories)
- Phone Card or Cell Phone
- Phone Numbers of people you might need to contact if you are elected, or need help
- Simple materials that might be useful for a workshop, (think small and light)—playdoh, crayons, colored paper, index cards
- Extra pantyhose (for the girls—runs are just waiting to happen)

Ideas for preparing your Study Resource(s)-

- Take a 3 Ring Binder or folder, put in dividers for different sections
- Sections might include:
  - Schedules (Convention & Nom Com)
  - "Run Your Race"
  - Answers to Study Questions
  - Current Events/Ag News
  - FFA Facts
  - Notes
- Make it easy to use and organize it to suit your individual needs

# Additional Preparation Information

## General FFA-

- What is the difference between the FFA & 4H?
- What is the FFA ?FFA means, Future Farmers of America, right?
- FFA is just for someone who wants to be a farmer isn't it?
- What's in the FFA for me, I don't want to just learn about farming?
- Name one National Scholarship sponsor? One State Scholarship sponsor?

## Personal FFA-

- How did you become involved in the FFA?
- Who has been your biggest inspiration as an FFA member?
- What is the hardest challenge you face as a FFA member at your high school?
- Have you ever thought about not being a FFA member?
- What is your biggest personal achievement in the FFA?

## General Agriculture Education-

- What benefits are there to being enrolled in Ag. Education classes?
- Currently, what are some of the issues facing Ag. Education in Montana?
- Does Ag. Literacy or Illiteracy play a role in the perception of Agricultural Education?
- Is there a future for Ag. Education in Montana?
- What role do State Officers play in promoting Ag. Education?

## Personal Ag Education-

- What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing Montana Ag. Education Programs?
- How can the State Officers better inform the public about Agricultural Education and what it has to offer?
- Why do you think Agricultural Education belongs in the public school system?
- Aside from FFA, what was the best experience you have had in your Ag. Education classes?
- Where do you think Ag. Education is headed in the future?

## General Agriculture-

- What are some of the topics covered in the Farm Bill?
- What are Genetically Modified Organisms?
- Does cloning and genetic engineering benefit agriculture?
- Are disease such as Foot and Mouth, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, and Chronic -- Wasting Disease a concern to Agriculturists?
- What impact do the prices of crops or livestock have on the Agricultural Economy?
- What is Food Safety? Is the US Food Supply safe?
- What does PETA stand for? How does PETA impact the Ag. Industry?

## Montana Agriculture-

- How does the wolf reintroduction affect ranchers in Montana?
- Many people are moving to Montana from non-rural or non-agricultural lifestyles, does this affect Montana Agriculture? Why?
- Which industry is more important to Montana, Agriculture or Tourism?
- How will forest fires, lack of moisture, and other environmental factors affect Montana Ag?
- What are some of Montana's top crops? Where are they grown?
- What agriculture industries can be found where you live?
- How are you involved in Montana Agriculture?

## What Would You Do? & What Do You Think?

- If you were to have a song written about your FFA career, what would the title be?
- What do you feel is the most important attribute a State Officer can possess?
- If you had the opportunity to create a new CDE what would it be and why?
- National FFA wants State Officers to come up with the criteria for a new award for members, what would you suggest and why?
- If you could come up with a new program that would address an issue facing Ag. Education in Montana what would it be and why?
- During a chapter visit, a couple of students help themselves to all of the candy that you have brought for prizes and rewards. How do you handle this situation?
- While flying to National Convention your luggage is lost, what do you do?
- You are on your way to speak at a Chapter Banquet when your car breaks down and there is no way that you will make it on time, what do you do?
- You get to your first chapter visit, while dressing that morning you find that your tie/scarf is missing, what do you do?
- You arrive at a chapter visit, however the Ag teacher forgot that today was an In-service day. There are no students at school. What do you do?
- An FFA member asks you to attend prom with them. How would you handle this?
- You haven't been home in a week, your homework is piled up, and you get a phone call asking you to come to a FFA function for a chapter that is across the state. What do you do?
- At the State Fair you are working in the animal barn when you notice a group of fair-goers making a loud scene near one of the animals. They are claiming FFA is cruel to animals. How will you deal with this?
- At MFE, you notice several members using tobacco products during the conference. What can you do about this?
- A blind person approaches you to give a description of a CDE at State Convention. They have never seen any of it before, which contest do you tell them about, and what do you say?
- Wild land and forest fires have become a common occurrence, do you think that Federal and State governments should be responsible for helping those who have lost homes in such fires rebuild?
- If you had the choice to live one day as a. A) National Officer, B) A Chapter Advisor, or C) a Greenhand member which would you choose and why?
- What is your biggest FFA related pet peeve, and why?
- Describe the perfect:
  - Saturday
  - Judging Season
  - Ag teacher
- Who is a sponsor of the National FFA?
- Who is your biggest role model and why?
- If you could be anyone for a day - who would you be and why?
- Who has been the most influential person in your FFA career?
- Do you think a state officer should have boyfriend or girlfriend for their term in office?
- What is your best/worst quality?
- Who is a State Officers biggest fan?
- What do you hope to accomplish as State Officer if you are elected?
- How will you spend your free time while you are a State Officer?
- What roles do State Officers play in the eyes of members?

**\*\*Note\*\***--These are sample questions only, questions you might encounter and in no way are the only questions or situations that might be discussed.

## Knowledge

*Know the meaning of the following FFA Acronyms/Programs:*

ALD	Advanced Leadership Development Conference
AAAE	American Association for Agricultural Education
BLAST Off	Building Leaders and Strong Teams of Officers
CDE	Career Development Event
EDGE	Experiencing Discovery, Growth and Excellence
ILSSO	International Leadership Seminar for State Officers
LPS	Local Program Success
MFE	Made For Excellence
MAAE	Montana Association of Agricultural Educators
NAAE	National Association of Agricultural Educators
NASAE	National Association of Supervisors of Agricultural Education
NLC SO	National Leadership Conference for State Officers
The Council	National Council for Agricultural Education
PAS	National Postsecondary Agricultural Student Organization
NCF	New Century Farmers
NFA	New Farmers of America
PALS	Partners in Active Learning Support
SPC	State Presidents' Conference
SAE	Supervised Agricultural Experience Program
WLC	Washington Leadership Conference
WEA	World Experience in Agriculture
ALC	Alumni Leadership Camp (Montana)
DLS	District Leadership School

## Know who the following people are:

Tom Vilsack	Secretary of Agriculture, USDA
Dr. Larry Case	National Advisor
Dr. Steve Brown	National Executive Secretary
Ron De Yong	Director, Montana Dept of Ag
Bill Jimmerson	Montana State FFA Advisor
Lee Boyer	Montana FFA Foundation President
Ramey Lunceford	Montana FFA Foundation Development Officer
Kristen Swenson	Montana FFA Alumni President
Levy Randolph (CA)	National FFA President
Bethany Bohnenblust (KS)	National FFA Secretary
Chelsea Doss (TN)	National Southern Region VP
Alexandria Henry (MI)	National Eastern Region VP
Chase Rose (MT)	National Central Region VP
Randa Braune (TX)	National Western Region VP
Henry Groseclose	Father of the FFA
Gus Litner	Inventor of the FFA Jacket
E. M. Tiffany	Writer of the FFA Creed

## FFA Places:

Mt. Vernon	Past Home of the National FFA Center
Hotel Baltimore	Place where the FFA began
Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center (KFEC)	Current site of National Convention
National FFA Center	Current home of the FFA Organization

## FFA Cities:

Kansas City, Missouri	City where FFA was founded
Alexandria, Virginia	Original home of the FFA
Indianapolis, Indiana	Current home of the FFA
Indianapolis, Indiana	Current home of National Convention
Bozeman, Montana	Montana FFA Association Office
Helena, Montana	Montana Department of Agriculture
Helena, Montana	Office of Public Instruction

## FFA Knowledge:

- What are the official colors? National Blue & Corn Gold
- What is the FFA Motto? “Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve”
- What is the mission of the FFA? “FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.”
- When was the FFA founded? 1928
- When was the Creed adopted? 3<sup>rd</sup> Convention - 1930
- When was the National FFA Foundation started? 1944
- In what year was the FFA granted a federal charter? 1950
- When did the FFA, and NFA merge? 1965
- When were females admitted to membership? 1969
- When was the National FFA Alumni established? 1971
- When did the FFA change its name? 1988
- When was the National Convention moved to Indianapolis? 2006
- What is the web address of the National FFA? [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org)
- What is the web address of the Montana FFA? [www.montanaffa.org](http://www.montanaffa.org)
- What are the parts of the FFA emblem?
  - Cross section of the ear of corn
  - The rising sun
  - The plow
  - The eagle
  - The owl
  - The words “Agricultural Education” and “FFA”
- What is the official publication for FFA members? FFA New Horizons

## Agricultural Education:

- What did the Smith-Hughes National Vocational Education Act first establish?  
It set up courses in vocational agriculture.
- What year did the Smith-Hughes Act come into existence? 1917
- What are the 3 major components of Agricultural Education?
  - Classroom Instruction
  - Supervised Ag. Experience
  - The FFA Organization
- What are the 4 areas that an SAE might cover?
  - Entrepreneurship
  - Placement
  - Exploratory
  - Research/experimental & analysis
- Be able to name the CDE's for Judging & Leadership
- Be able to name all of the current State Officers and where they are from

## OFFICIAL DRESS DO'S & DON'TS

### Female Candidates:

- a black skirt, at least knee length, conservative in appearance
- white blouse with official FFA blue scarf, black
- close-toed dress shoes, moderate heels (comfortable) worn with black panty hose
- Official jacket always zipped to the top, displaying only 3 medals- These should represent the highest degree earned, the highest office held and the highest award earned by the member
- Hairstyles and make up should compliment the candidate, not detract from their appearance.
- Use perfume with moderation

### Male Candidates:

- Black slacks or pants
- white shirt with official FFA blue tie
- black shoes (comfortable) worn with black socks
- Official jacket always zipped to the top, displaying only 3 medals- These should represent the highest degree earned, the highest office held and the highest award earned by the member
- Use cologne/perfume with moderation

The area where you and the other candidates are located may be warm, if you are someone who sweats easily, you might want to bring some Febreze or other fabric refresher to keep your jacket smelling good!!

Strive to look professional and represent yourself and the FFA in the best light possible.

## After the fact ...

Wow, preparing for state FFA office is an incredible journey in which you really get to know who you are, what you believe in, and what's really important to you. It's a time of preparation that goes far beyond studying facts. It's a reflection of your life.

While it's easy to get caught up in the "right things to say" and the "best way to dress/appear," it's not about that.

The selection process is a time of emotional interviews, thoughts, and questions about yourself. It doesn't matter if you answer the questions perfectly or if your shirt is without a wrinkle at all times.

What matters is that you are yourself...a person defined not by a state officer jacket but by a heart full of love and a desire to help others. It's a stressful time.

It's something you've worked extremely hard for. It is a time in which you have to put forth your very all in order to hopefully achieve a goal. You're there with many other amazing people who are there to achieve the same goal. Get to know them. Get to know people at convention, just as you would any other year.

Don't smile and be positive because you think you have to. Do it all because you want to. There's only one you, and it's not worth it to try to be a carbon-copy of someone else, because you never will be.

Through interviews, tests, and observation, the nominating committee will nominate a team to dedicate a year of their life to FFA. Many more than those eight are well qualified. All you can do is your very best. It may be your purpose to spend a year meeting with FFA members across the state, sharing hopes, dreams, passions, and growth. On the other hand, you may be needed elsewhere to share that same love for life and people. There are people everywhere that need help, and if that's your reason for running, then no matter what the results are, you're in the right place upon the announcement.

You won't leave from convention the same person. It's a week of incredible growth. There will be great times and there will be a few disappointments along the way, but whatever happens, happens for a reason. Remember that.

You'll meet friends to last a lifetime.

You'll learn more about yourself than you ever thought possible.

And you'll risk so much, with so much gained in return. Live it up, and be content knowing the best is yet to be. With whatever path you take remember to "run your race."

Good luck!

## Motivational Quotes:

What does not destroy me makes me strong. -Nietzsche

Don't be afraid your life will end; be afraid it will never begin. -Hansen

Dream as if you'll love forever. Live as if you'll die today. -Dean

It's good to have an end to journey toward; but it's the journey that matters in the end. -LeGuin

The man on top of the mountain didn't fall there. -Unknown

Know that you yourself are a miracle. -Unknown

If you're not enough without the gold medal, you'll never be enough with it. -From *Cool Runnings*

We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. -Mandela

If you can't accept losing, you can't win. -Lombardi

Don't compromise yourself. You're all you've got. -Unknown

Fall in love with the climb. -Unknown

For everything one gains, something is lost; Now the question is, how much are you prepared to lose? -Scott

Thank you to the New Mexico FFA Association, the Arizona FFA Association and Nebraska FFA Association for their help and use of written materials in forming this guidebook.