**Fill out every blank**

This might seem like a no brainer but you’d be surprised by how many books I check over that have blank spaces. Teach your kids to make sure every box is checked and every question is answered. Even if the answer is “NA” for not applicable.

I’ve been told by our County 4-H organizer that she has set aside many job applications because the applicant didn’t fill out every blank. So doing this on their record books is good practice for the future.

**Type up the record book**

Our state has our record books available online so it can be typed up. This makes for a very nice finished record book. So we take a sloppy copy to all our meetings and transfer the info to the typed version later.

Because I’m OCD about some things I like to put the books into nice report covers. I think this just gives the record book a nice finished touch. You can get a box of 25 for just $19.99 at Amazon. I bought a big box because each of my kids does multiple projects.

**Choose great goals!**

We have requirements by age of how many goals the kids need to have for their project. I ask my kids and the kids that are in the projects I lead to have at least one more goal than is required.

Have your kids choose S.M.A.R.T. goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely). For instance a goal of winning a blue ribbon isn’t very specific and if you never work your animal it isn’t very realistic either!

Another idea for goals is to choose:

One knowledge based goal (ie: learn all about a disease, learn about the meat cuts, learn the body parts, read a book on raising goats/pigs/sheep…)

One skill based goal (ie: how to ear notch a pig, how to tattoo a rabbit, how to trim hooves, clip my animal for show)

One personal development goal (ie: work on my record book once a week, keep a log of my practice time, help the younger members at a project meeting, keep a chore chart)

**Make the expense record as detailed as possible.**

Provide as much information as possible in your expense record. You might add details such as how many bags of feed you bought. How much the bag weighed. Where you bought your feed. This also provides you with a good record that you can go back and reference in the future. Who gives you the best deal on feed. How much have prices gone up over the last few years? All this info could be in your record books for you to access in the future.

**Fill up the space given**

When it comes time to fill out the record book have your child answer questions in complete sentences. If they can fill up the space given with their answer it shows they put some effort into it.



You can find this handy drawstring bag in my [**Etsy shop**](http://www.etsy.com/shop/thrivingonordinary).

**Write a great story!**

4-H is all about developing future leaders! Write about what you learned and how you grew as a person.

Be creative. Write a story from the perspective of your animal. Make sure to include actual events and what their “human” learned so it still hits on the educational aspect.

Focus on one specific event or lesson learned. If you can make a whole story out of breeding your animal it shows an in depth understanding of the topic.

Write an overview. Talk about what was learned throughout the year. The favorite parts of the meetings. What was hard and what you learned through trying.

**Add extra pages**

If your county allows extra pages at the back of your record book then fill it up!

-You can add an extra page of photos.

-Any handouts that were given out at project meetings.

-A recipe if the project is a food project.

-A drawing of the plan used to build your exhibit.

-charts/graphs/time cards of how often you worked with your animal.

Be creative with what you add.

Pay close attention to what your county allows. We are allowed extra pages but the number is based on the age group. The kid’s stories also are included in these “extra pages”. So if you are allowed 6 extra pages and your story is 3 pages long you only have 3 pages to play with.

Following instructions is also good practice for the future!