

Achievement in FFA

IT FEELS GOOD to be recognized for our accomplishments! The FFA organization has a wide array of award programs, degrees, and competitions that allow members to be recognized for their hard work and for the knowledge and skills they've developed through agricultural education. FFA members who work hard to achieve their goals are rewarded, and they serve as role models to younger members of their chapters. What is your area of expertise? Are you the next award winner from your FFA chapter?



(Courtesy, National FFA Organization)

Objective:



Describe FFA degrees, proficiency awards, and career development events.

Key Terms:



American FFA Degree
career development
events
Chapter FFA Degree

Discovery FFA Degree
entrepreneurship
Greenhand FFA Degree
placement

proficiency award
State FFA Degree

Recognition for Accomplishments

With all the wonderful activities, competitions, and programs the FFA organization offers students, it is no surprise the award programs to recognize outstanding achievement by teams or individual students are very popular. This E-unit discusses the activities in which students can participate and the awards available to students who work hard to meet their goals.

FFA DEGREES

Accomplishment within your FFA chapter can be measured by the degree you have achieved within the organization. Five levels of FFA degrees are available, each more challenging to reach than the level below it. They are Discovery FFA Degree, Greenhand FFA Degree, Chapter FFA Degree, State FFA Degree, and American FFA Degree. Achievement of these degrees is based on meeting the standards set forth in the National FFA Constitution.

The **Discovery FFA Degree** is available to middle school students enrolled in agricultural education programs. The Discovery Degree is the only degree that does not have to be attained to be eligible for the next degree, because not every student has the opportunity to enroll in agricultural education courses at the middle school level.

The **Greenhand FFA Degree** is available to first-year FFA members. It is symbolized by a bronze pin to wear on the FFA jacket.

After chapter members have achieved the Greenhand Degree, the **Chapter FFA Degree** is available to them, usually as sophomores or juniors. The silver emblem pin of the Chapter Degree replaces the bronze pin of the Greenhand Degree on the jacket.

The **State FFA Degree** eligibility is determined by the state FFA association and may have a limited availability, such as 2 percent of the overall membership. It requires two complete years of a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program as one qualification, so students are not eligible until at least their junior year of high school. The gold emblem pin represents the State FFA Degree and replaces all pins worn on the jacket.

The **American FFA Degree** is the top level of achievement in FFA. The standards are set very high for the American Degree, making its attainment a high honor. The American Degree requires the candidate be out of high school at least 12 months before applying.

The requirements for each degree can be found in the *Official FFA Manual* or online at <http://www.ffa.org>. First-year FFA members are encouraged to learn the qualifications for each degree so that they can strive to meet those requirements during their time as FFA members. Proper planning can help you reach your goals!

PROFICIENCY AWARD PROGRAM

The **proficiency award** program recognizes achievement within student supervised agricultural experience programs. SAE programs extend to all areas of entrepreneurship or placement. **Entrepreneurship** involves owning and operating a business enterprise or project. **Placement** involves working for a company or another individual as either a paid or unpaid employee. While the areas in which supervised agricultural experience programs can be conducted are limitless, the proficiency award program currently identifies 51 areas in which students can compete for awards. This list continues to grow yearly. Check <http://www.ffa.org> for the latest list.

The proficiency award areas are:

- ◆ Agricultural Communications
- ◆ Agricultural Education
- ◆ Agricultural Mechanics Design & Fabrication
- ◆ Agricultural Mechanics Energy Systems
- ◆ Agricultural Mechanics Repair & Maintenance—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Agricultural Mechanics Repair & Maintenance—Placement
- ◆ Agricultural Processing
- ◆ Agricultural Sales—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Agricultural Sales—Placement
- ◆ Agricultural Services
- ◆ Aquaculture
- ◆ Beef Production—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Beef Production—Placement
- ◆ Dairy Production—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Dairy Production—Placement
- ◆ Diversified Agricultural Production
- ◆ Diversified Crop Production—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Diversified Crop Production—Placement
- ◆ Diversified Horticulture—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Diversified Horticulture—Placement
- ◆ Diversified Livestock Production—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Diversified Livestock Production—Placement
- ◆ Emerging Agricultural Technology
- ◆ Environmental Science and Natural Resources Management
- ◆ Equine Science—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Equine Science—Placement
- ◆ Fiber and Oil Crop Production
- ◆ Floriculture
- ◆ Food Science and Technology
- ◆ Forage Production
- ◆ Forest Management and Products
- ◆ Fruit Production
- ◆ Grain Production—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Grain Production—Placement

- ◆ Home and/or Community Development
- ◆ Landscape Management
- ◆ Nursery Operations
- ◆ Outdoor Recreation
- ◆ Poultry Production
- ◆ Sheep Production
- ◆ Small Animal Production and Care—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Small Animal Production and Care—Placement
- ◆ Specialty Animal Production
- ◆ Specialty Crop Production
- ◆ Swine Production—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Swine Production—Placement
- ◆ Turf Grass Management—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Turf Grass Management—Placement
- ◆ Vegetable Production
- ◆ Wildlife Production and Management—Entrepreneurship
- ◆ Wildlife Production and Management—Placement

Proficiency awards are based on accomplishments in SAE programs and on knowledge gained through the programs. Students begin competition at the local level, where a winner is identified in each of the appropriate award areas. Local winners then compete in a sectional or district competition, and sectional or district winners move on to the state level. All state winners compete at the national level, where four finalists are selected to compete at the National FFA Convention. At the convention, a national winner is named. Awards at the state and national levels may include cash prizes, scholarships, and international award trips!

CAREER DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

The FFA organization was founded in 1928 when the American Royal Livestock Show, in Kansas City, Missouri, invited agriculture students and Future



FIGURE 1. Agricultural communication skills developed through involvement in an SAE program can lead to proficiency awards and to participation in CDEs. (Courtesy, National FFA Organization)

Farmers groups to participate in livestock judging contests held in conjunction with its national livestock show. This was a place where students could showcase their leadership and agricultural knowledge and skills in a practical way! Since that time, much has changed within the agricultural industry and with agricultural education, but FFA still provides students the opportunity to showcase their leadership, knowledge, and skills through career development events.

Career development events (CDEs) allow students to apply what they've learned in the classroom in a competitive environment, thus preparing them for employment in the agricultural industry. Many students have the opportunity to learn about segments of the agricultural industry and become better consumers simply as a result of their participation in career development events. CDEs are available as individual or team events.

The career development events are:

- ◆ Ag Communications
- ◆ Ag Issues
- ◆ Ag Mechanics
- ◆ Ag Sales
- ◆ Agronomy
- ◆ Creed Speaking
- ◆ Dairy Cattle
- ◆ Dairy Handler's Activity
- ◆ Dairy Foods
- ◆ Environmental and Natural Resources
- ◆ Extemporaneous Public Speaking
- ◆ Farm Business Management
- ◆ Floriculture
- ◆ Food Science and Technology
- ◆ Forestry
- ◆ Job Interview
- ◆ Horse Evaluation
- ◆ Livestock Evaluation
- ◆ Marketing Plan
- ◆ Meats Evaluation & Tech
- ◆ Nursery/Landscape
- ◆ Parliamentary Procedure
- ◆ Poultry Evaluation
- ◆ Prepared Public Speaking

Each career development event listed has a national contest. Participation is determined by the state winner in each event. Many events are also held at the local level, where FFA chapters can compete with neighboring schools. While everyone likes to win, the true value of career development events is the application of the knowledge gained in the classroom. CDEs should be learning experiences that students enjoy participating in!

Summary:



The FFA organization provides a variety of activities for students to exhibit their knowledge and skills competitively. From FFA degrees to proficiency awards to career development events, students who want to develop their skills and apply their knowledge have lots of opportunities to do so!

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. List the five FFA degrees in order, from earliest and most basic to most advanced.
2. Describe the difference between entrepreneurship and placement.
3. What component of the agricultural education program are proficiency awards based on?
4. What was the first FFA career development event?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Research the proficiency award areas. Identify five proficiency award areas in which SAE projects could be developed in your community. Name activities you are involved in that could be developed into an SAE based on this list.

Web Links:



National FFA Career Development Events

<http://www.ffa.org/programs/cde/index.html>

National FFA Proficiency Awards

<http://www.ffa.org/programs/proficiency/index.html>