

Games for Scouts



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The Importance of play

For Beaver and Cub Scouts, the games they play are very real things. It is not a case of pretending, it is a real world with real incidents and real experiences. It is through this world of play that youngsters learn and test out the rules of life which will have to be observed later as an adult. It is in the fantasy of games that they learn to give and take, to co-operate with one another, to accept defeat without complaining and to be successful without being boastful.

When Cub Scouts become Scouts they begin to put these social skills into practice. Here they are testing them out in the real world. That doesn't mean that by some magic skill they instantly understand the difference between play and reality, but it is a steady part of their progress into young adulthood. In time they will demonstrate confidently skills they already have, but they are also establishing new ones. There will be times when they will be unsure and will slip back into the security of play in order to re-think and observe what is going on around them.

Play therefore is still very much part of a younger Scout's world. Through carefully planned games and play Leaders can continue to contribute to the process of the Scout growing in a gentle and understandable way.

The Troop and Patrol can therefore provide a friendly and secure atmosphere in which it is safe to develop these skills for use in later years.

How to use games

Scouts will enjoy exhilarating games that involve running, jumping and chasing. These help physical development and limb control. Many of these games provide mental relaxation whilst others deliberately promote mental alertness.

Some games, particularly those that can be related to the Programme Zones, can be used to supplement training and reinforce learning.

Troop games enable a Scout to work as part of a team, usually in competition with other teams. This is helpful for Scouts, but it is also useful to develop games that involve co-operation of teams rather than competition. In real life, most successful ventures are achieved through working with other groups rather than clashing with them.

Often the two are compatible. In inter-Patrol games for example, all the Scouts will be working as a team with the other members of their Patrol whilst still being in competition with others. Both co-operation and competition needs to be learned.

It therefore follows that the Leader's task is to choose games carefully with a purpose in mind and to build a programme, which balances one

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type of game against another. Games should normally be more than just time fillers.

To be of value, the game must also be enjoyable. There is little value in a rowdy, ill-tempered game leading to the distress of some Scouts. The Scouts themselves will quickly recognise that if games are to be enjoyed at all, some rules and a great deal of self-discipline is necessary. The importance of fair play and the need to be unselfish and provide help for smaller, weaker Scouts or perhaps Scouts with special needs can begin to be appreciated by them.

Preparing games

When preparing games, consider the following points:

Variety - Don't overdo old favourites. Even a Troops' favourite game can become very boring if overplayed.

Equipment - Ensure you have all the equipment you need ready and in good order before you start.

Rules - Make them simple and clear. Complicated rules often get forgotten and misunderstood and in the heat of the game are easily and unintentionally broken.

Fairness - If the rules are broken or the game goes wrong, then explain it again. Cheating by one side will usually lead to reciprocal action by the other side if not stopped immediately.

Quiet - Quiet is essential when explaining a game to ensure that all the rules and instructions are understood

Trial run - A new game, particularly if it is a little complicated is worth a slow test run to make sure everyone understands. The Patrol Leaders might do this themselves before the meeting.

Knockouts - Games that involve Scouts standing idle on the sidelines should be avoided. Almost inevitably it is the younger, smaller Scouts who are knocked out first. If using games that involve people being 'out' use a time penalty system so that the Scout can rejoin the game.

Time - Do not over-play a game. A good game can be killed if the fun element is completely exhausted - so stop whilst it is still being enjoyed.

Types of Games

There are many different types of games. These include quiet, noisy, energy release, skills training, individual, inter-team, wide, competitive and co-operative games. It is usually possible to find one appropriate for every situation.

Troop and Patrol games boxes

Every Troop, and indeed Patrol, should have a games box or bag. The contents will obviously vary but should include articles like ropes, small balls, bean bags, chalk, footballs, rolls of newspaper, batons, whistles, blind-folds and washing-up liquid bottles.

(A more detailed list is included on page 25 of Troop Programmes)

There is a tendency for the games boxes to develop quickly into junk boxes. Here is an opportunity for a young member of the Patrol or someone wanting quartermaster skills to take care of it.

Troop games book

It is useful to keep a games book to record new games or variations of games, together with a list of equipment required. It is also worth recording for future programme planning, which games were last played and when so that repetition can be avoided.

Ideas for games

There are endless books on games available from local libraries and *Scout Games* and a range of Print Force Games Books are available from Scout Shops Ltd and the Information Centre at Gilwell Park.

Another source of ideas for suitable books, especially on the lesser know areas such as co-operative games is at www.amazon.com

Radio and television programmes also provide a great deal of useful material that can be adapted for Troop and Patrol games. A useful Patrol or group project to invent a new game can also provide a wealth of new material.