

General Outdoor Skill Activities



Water Boiling Race

These challenges provide Scouts with an opportunity to put a variety of outdoor skills and knowledge of campcraft into action. They illustrate how the skills are used, reinforce the Scouts' ability to use the skill, and provide an opportunity to rely upon the skill in order to satisfy the challenge.

In accordance with their level of skill, pitting one patrol against another in a competition can be lots of fun. If patrols are organized by age, dividing the troop into equally-skilled Scout teams can be a practical alternative.

"wide" = large indoor or outdoor setting for those activities requiring a greater amount of space

"small" = small area for those activities that do not require as much space, or can be carried out in close quarters, or with a smaller number of Scouts

"in" = indoor activity

"out" = outdoor activity

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BOW SAW RELAY (*small, in or out*) [View Video](#)

- *Materials:* for each patrol, one bow saw, one pair of leather gloves, protective eyewear, one log about 3 to 4 feet long with a 2 to 4-inch butt, and one short, thick log or block for support
- *Method:* The patrols line up in relay formation, each facing their log from a distance of 20 feet. The bow saw is placed alongside the log. On signal, two Scouts from each patrol run up to the log. One Scout steadies the log positioned on the support block, while the second Scout puts on the gloves and saws off a disk about 2 inches thick. As soon as the disk drops to the ground, the Scouts change positions and another disk is sawed off. When the second disk hits the ground, the bow saw and gloves are placed beside the log, then both Scouts race back to the starting line and tag the next two Scouts, who repeat the process. This continues until all Scouts have had a chance to saw and all members of the patrol have returned to the starting line.
- *Scoring:* The first patrol to finish wins.
- *Note:* All Scouts participating in this activity must have completed [Totin' Chip](#).

DINING FLY RACE (*wide, out*) [View How-to Demonstration Video](#)

- *Materials:* for each patrol, one tarp with grommets and ridge line attached, four 15-foot guylines, four Scout staves, four 6-foot lashing ropes, six stakes, one mallet
- *Method:* Patrols assemble with their materials in an area large enough to accommodate the extended guylines and ridge line. On signal, with round lashings, they lash together the four Scout staves into two upright poles, attach the ridge line to the top of each upright with clove hitches, attach a guyline to the corner grommets with two half hitches or a bowline, extend the guylines out 45° and tie the ends to stakes with taut-line hitches, doing the same with the two ends of the ridge line. They then stand up their fly and adjust the tension of the ropes. When the dining fly is properly erected, all patrol member stand underneath.
- *Scoring:* The first patrol to finish wins. Add points for excellent team work and deduct points for incorrectly tied knots.
- *Variation 1:* If the activity needs to be held indoors, substitute six chairs for the stakes (best with heavier chairs or stacks of chairs to add weight).

FUZZ STICK RELAY (*small, in or out*) [View Video](#)

- *Materials:* for each patrol, one sharp knife and one stick of dry softwood, 9 inches long and 1/2 inch thick
- *Method:* Each patrol lines up in relay formation opposite their knife and stick, about 20 feet away. On signal, the first Scout runs up and cuts one sliver on the stick, lays the knife down, and runs back to tag the next Scout, and so on. Slivers should be at least an inch long. Twenty slivers, all attached, complete the fuzz stick.
- *Variation 1:* The Scouts each cut three or four slivers instead of just one.
- *Variation 2:* Each Scout cuts six slivers into their own stick.
- *Scoring:* The first patrol to finish wins.
- *Note:* All Scouts participating in this activity must have completed [Totin' Chip](#).

LIFELINE RELAY (*wide, in or out*) [View Video](#)

- *Materials:* for each patrol, one 50-foot rope with a bowline tied on one end just large enough for a Scout to slip over their wrist, a 5-foot board (rows of chairs can be used in lieu of the boards)
- *Method:* Position the boards horizontally on the ground as targets, ten feet apart and about 45 feet from the throwing line. Patrols line up in relay formation behind the throwing line facing their targets. The first Scout in line slips the bowline of their patrol's rope over their wrist and then coils the rope for throwing. Holding the coil, they toss the rope at the target. After this is done, the bowline loop is transferred to the second Scout's wrist, who recovers and recoils the rope, then throws, and so on until all patrol members have made their attempt to hit the target.
- *Scoring:* Score 5 points for each throw that hits the target.

SLOPPY CAMP (*small, in or out*)

- *Materials:* a simple camp setup (dining fly, tent and fireplace) with many things wrong—tent flaps open, boots left outside tent, ax on the ground, bow saw unsheathed, glass jar in the fireplace, no fire buckets, firewood unsorted and uncovered, trash on the ground, dirty pot on camp table, poorly set tent pegs, guylines at wrong angles, wrong knots on guylines, etc.
- *Method:* The patrols study the camp for five minutes without talking. The Scouts are permitted to touch what they see, but must replace objects exactly as they found them. Each patrol then huddles to come up with a list of wrong things.
- *Scoring:* The patrol with the best list of “incorrect” objects wins.

SPLIT THE MATCH RELAY (*small, in or out*) [View Video](#)

- *Materials:* hand ax (hatchet) and chopping block for each patrol, a wooden matchstick for each Scout
- *Method:* The patrols line up in relay formation with a chopping block and an ax in front of each. On signal, the first Scout in each patrol walks up to the chopping block, lays their matchstick on the chopping block with the head away from them, and takes three strokes with the ax to split the match. When they have taken three strokes (or fewer if they split the match sooner), they carefully replace the ax on the chopping block, walk back to their patrol, and tag the next Scout in line, who repeats the procedure. This continues until all patrol members have had three strokes.
- *Scoring:* The patrol that splits the most matches wins. This is not a race.
- Note: Exercise all proper safety precautions in the handling of axes!
- Note: All Scouts participating in this activity must have completed [Totin' Chip](#).

STRING BURNING RACE (*wide, out*)

- *Materials:* for each patrol, two 2-foot sticks, two 3-foot lengths of binder twine, two matches
- *Method:* Before the race, each patrol pushes the two sticks into the ground, 24 inches apart. They tie one length of twine between the sticks, 12 inches off the ground, and the other one 18 inches off the ground. Each patrol gathers native tinder and firewood. On signal, two representatives selected by each patrol build a fire lay (not higher than the

lower string) and light it. After being lit, the fire must not be touched, nor can more wood be added.

Note: Patrols are limited to using only one “fist-sized” amount of tinder in their fire lay.

– *Scoring*: The team whose fire burns through the top string first wins.

[Back to top of page](#)

SUPREME A-FRAME TARP PITCH (*wide, out*)

– *Materials*: for each Patrol, two 8-foot cords, four 3-foot cords, four 5-foot Scout staves, four 6-foot lashing ropes (1/4-inch manila), six tent stakes, four smooth, round stones, plastic ground cloth (6-foot x 8-foot plastic sheet), mallet

– *Method*: On signal, each patrol will erect an A-frame shelter, by constructing a ridge pole made by joining two Scout staves with two round lashings, and attaching an upright on each side using the other two Scout staves and square lashings. One round stone is positioned at each corner of the plastic sheet by enfolding the plastic around the stone and securing it snugly with a 3-foot cord. The plastic sheet will be draped over the completed frame, with each of these four corner guylines extending out at 45° and secured to a properly angled tent stake with a taut-line hitch. A bowline is tied to the end of each 8-foot cord, and looped over the top of each upright on either side of the frame. These guylines will extend straight out at each opening of the shelter and are secured with a taut-line hitch to each of the two remaining tent stakes.

– *Scoring*: This is a timed event. 30 seconds will be deducted for each incorrectly executed knot or lashing.

– *Variation*: Instead of lashing together a ridge pole and two uprights, use two 4-foot sticks and two additional smooth, round stones to attach the center guylines directly to the plastic and then tying the guylines to the top of the sticks with a clove hitch. ([Plastic Tarp-No Grommets](#))

SUPREME STRING BURNING RACE (*wide, out*)

– *Materials*: for each patrol, one 2-inch x 4-inch x 9-inch piece of pine, one hand axe, two sharp knives, one “hot spark kit,” two cotton balls, one thin cotton string suspended between two upright sticks, 10 inches above the ground

– *Method*: On signal, using the hand axe, each patrol will split their wood into kindling and immediately start making tinder shavings using the knives. ([Using a Hand Ax and Knife to Prepare Kindling and Tinder Video](#)) When ready, they will build a small fire under their string, igniting the tinder shavings using the hot spark kit and a cotton ball. Kindling may be added throughout the race. ([Feeding a Fire Video](#))

– *Scoring*: The patrol whose fire burns through the string first wins.

TENT MESS RELAY (*wide, in or out*)

– *Materials*: the complete contents of several tent bags (at least one for each patrol) containing all the parts necessary to properly set up the tents, placed in a mixed pile at one end of the playing area

– *Method*: Patrols line up in relay formation facing the pile of tent parts. (When played indoors, the tents must be of the freestanding variety.) On signal, one Scout from each patrol runs to the pile, selects one item, and racing over to a designated area, uses that

part to set up their patrol's tent. They then run back to their patrol to tag off the next Scout who in turn does the same thing with another retrieved item. One by one, the Scouts in each patrol continue running up to retrieve tent parts until they are able to set up their tent. Scouts who retrieve the wrong tent parts must return them to the pile and select other parts.

– *Scoring:* The first patrol with their tent put up correctly wins.

TENT PITCHING RACE (*wide, out*)

– *Materials:* for each half-patrol team, one troop tent with everything properly packed

– *Method:* The half-patrol teams line up across from their tent. On signal, each team pitches their tent. When completed, the sides must be smooth and tight and the tent door closed.

– *Scoring:* The first patrol with both tents put up correctly wins the race.

TENT STRIKING RACE (*wide, out*)

– *Method:* This race is the same as for "Tent Pitching Race", but in reverse.

– *Scoring:* The first patrol with both tents properly packed wins the race.

TRAIL SIGNS RELAY (*small, in or out*)

– *Materials:* two sets of 3-by-5 index cards for each patrol (each of the first set bearing a drawing of a trail sign; each of the second set with the definition of one of the trail signs)

– *Method:* The patrols line up in relay formation. The two sets of cards are placed about 25 feet in front of each patrol. The cards with the pictured trail signs are placed face down; the cards with the definitions are spread out face up. On signal, the first Scout from each patrol runs to their set of cards and draws one of the face down cards. They place it on the correct definition card, run back, and tag the next Scout. Continue until all cards are matched.

– *Scoring:* The first patrol to correctly match all cards wins.

WATER BOILING RACE (*wide, out*) [View Video](#)

– *Materials:* 16 oz. can filled with water to within 1/2-inch from the top and containing one teaspoon of soap powder or squirt of liquid soap, two or three matches, two bricks to rest the can on, an area to build the fire that will not impact the environment and is positioned a safe distance from other patrol fire areas, filled fire bucket for each patrol

– *Method:* Before the race, each patrol gathers and organizes native tinder, and kindling for their fire (or is limited to materials provided). Each patrol selects two representatives. On signal, the two Scouts set up their fireplace, light a fire, place the can of water over the fire, and keep feeding the fire until the water boils. Other patrol members help as needed. ([Lighting and Feeding a Fire Video](#))

– *Scoring:* The first patrol to get the water boiling wins.

WOOD SPLITTING RELAY (*small, in or out*)

– *Materials:* protective eyewear, leather gloves, a chopping block, and hatchet for each patrol, a 9 inch x 1 inch dry stick for each patrol member

- *Method:* Patrols line up relay formation 15 feet from their chopping block, hatchet, protective eyewear, and leather gloves. An equal number of sticks are passed out to each patrol so that every patrol member has one. On signal, the first Scout in line walks over to their patrol's materials, places their stick on the chopping block, and puts on the protective eyewear, and gloves. When ready, they pick up the hatchet and use the contact method to split their stick. Once split, they carefully place the hatchet back on the chopping block, take off the eyewear and gloves and tag off the next Scout in line who repeats the process.
- *Scoring:* The first patrol to split all their sticks wins.
- Note: All Scouts participating in this activity must have completed [Totin' Chip](#).