

Appendix T CAMPFIRES

Why should we do a campfire? Campfires can be an exciting and inspirational part of the Cub Scout outdoor program. Ask what any Cub Scout likes about going to campfires, and the answer will be one of the following:

Fun! It's hard not to have fun at campfires! There is enjoyment for all concerned.

Entertainment! Our families, friends, neighbors, and guests get pleasure from attending a pack campfire.

Fellowship! We can bring a den or pack closer together—a deeper feeling than just “fun.”

Action! Cub Scout-age youth always have extra energy. Let's use it singing songs, doing cheers, and performing skits!

Adventure! A campfire is a great place to share someone else's adventure or start one of your own!

Training! Baden-Powell said it: “Scouting is a game ... with a purpose.” Our Cub Scouts can learn new things in an informal setting.

Inspiration! Campfires will inspire everyone to leave with a greater commitment to Scouting's ideals.

Many packs use indoor campfires as part of their regular programs. Let's make it even better by taking our Cub Scouts out for a real campfire, if possible. Don't let them miss this great experience.

Campfire Leadership

Most leaders will take a lot of time physically building a campfire. The location and construction are important, but above all, it's the program that counts. Campfires can be big, little, formal, or informal, and can feature storytelling, dramatics, mystery, guest night, stunts, or a songfest.

Location Considerations

- Scenic spot
- Good drainage
- Protection from wind
- Freedom from insects
- Fire safety
- Firewood supply



Layout Considerations

- Stage area
- Lighting
- Fireplace
- Types of fires
- Sound—Will it carry?
Will it get lost?

What do I need for a successful campfire? Just remember the Four S's!

Scouting songs

- Can be peppy, quiet, action, special occasion, or novelty songs.

Stunts

- Fire-lighting. Adult supervision is required. Make it safe!
- Opening ceremony—sets the tone for your program.
- Stunts can be action, contests (physical/mental), humorous, mixers, “magic,” or educational.
- Closing ceremony—should be quiet and inspirational, can be the “main event.”

Stories—adventure, humorous, heroic, biographical, nature, or scientific

- Watch out for “scary” stories.
- Cubmaster's Minute—inspirational talk

Showmanship—Adds sparkle and life!

- Peppy when the fire is high.
- Vary the pace and timing of stunts.
- “Dress up” the setting.
- Encourage enthusiasm, but control discipline at all times.
- Quiet down as the embers die.

Remember to “Follow the Flames”

When the flames are high, action songs, loud cheers, and noisy stunts get everyone involved! When the flames burn down, have quiet songs, inspirational stories, and a respectful tone.

Build your fire to last 45 minutes to an hour. Don’t keep adding wood. Let the fire die down, and use the natural quiet that goes with that to build your mood. The formula for a great campfire is: Start FAST, reach a PEAK, slow DOWN, and give an inspiring CLOSE!

The sequence of events you choose will affect the success of your program. Make sure you let people know who they follow and where they are in the program, to keep everything running smoothly. If someone gets “lost,” be prepared with a run-on or joke to fill the time. Be sure to have an impressive opening and closing so everyone knows the campfire has begun and that it is over.

Everything that happens at your campfire should be checked and approved in advance. There is no place for off-color or questionable jokes, stories, or songs. Have the groups walk you through the skit or song if you are not familiar with it. You should not be surprised by anything at your campfire! A good rule of thumb is “Would you do this if your saintly grandmother was in the audience?” When in doubt, leave it out!

Help your audience with campfire etiquette. Some rules are

- Enter and leave in silence.
- Be courteous when it’s not your turn on stage.
- Cheer everyone for their contributions. (Support the effort of every Scouter.)
- Keep your flashlights off during the program.

Storytelling and Yarns

Baden-Powell once said, “The Cubmaster can command rapt attention at any time by telling the Cubs a story and through it conveying the intended lessons. It is the gilding of the pill which never fails if the teller is any good at all.”

Stories are a favorite part of any campfire. A good storyteller can take over a whole pack with just a few key thoughts in mind! There are four types of stories:

Adventure. These have a fast-moving plot, a romantic background, and unexpected events! We all are natural “hero worshipers.”

Instructive. These teach important things about nature, skills, safety, or others.

Good fun. These call for laughter and jokes. They share happiness, good fortune, and fun. Telling a funny story about a mistake can teach an easy lesson.

Inspirational. These are serious, with a moral, such as the Scout Oath or Law, or even religious themes.

How Do I Tell a Story?

Here are a few simple things to remember to help you tell a great story.

Believe in your story. Make it your own. Create names, use places that are familiar to you, and it will come across in your story. Remember that you're "selling" this story by the way you tell it.

Paint your picture with words. Remember, your audience is used to "seeing" the story on a TV. Use your talents to help them develop their imaginations. Don't hurry, except at appropriate spots to help create excitement. Let the story move at its own pace—slow to get their attention, faster when the action gets exciting. Pace your telling speed to the action in the story.

Vary the tone of your voice to fit the points of the story. When the action is exciting your voice should be louder; when it's suspenseful, lower it. Volume can be adjusted either way to get and hold attention. Use your voice as an instrument.

See the action in your mind's eye. If you live the story while you're telling it, your audience will join you in the adventure. Be sure everyone is comfortable before you begin. Nothing kills a mood faster than someone getting up to go to the bathroom.

Songs

I sing like a frog. How can I lead a song? So, sing a frog song! Enthusiasm will cover for a lack of skill. Here's what an audience really needs from a song leader:

- **The name of the song.** Give the name of the song, and if it's an unfamiliar song, give the tune. You may have to sing a line or maybe a verse to get them going.
- **The pitch or key.** Sing that first note; make sure they can sing it with you. If you are too high or low, adjust and try it again.
- **The tempo—marking time.** Shout "Let's go!" in rhythm, or clap hands to get the beat, then start with a nod of your head. Keep director-type motions to a minimum. Keep it simple.
- **Information about the song.** Make sure everyone knows it. If not, teach them. If you've chosen a song that needs the songbook, teach them with it and then put the book down. The result will be more satisfactory.
- **Pep—enthusiasm!** Don't insist on volume at the start. Tell them it's "singing" you want, not "noise." If it doesn't go well, say that was a good practice, now let's do it for real. Show them you really like this song.
- **Leadership—control.** Plan your selections carefully, using songs that fit the crowd and the event. Watch for parodies that might offend. Always tell them what the next song is; don't ask for suggestions.

Scouters tell stories of a famous campfire leader who had a tradition of yelling, "That's my favorite song!" when a song was announced, no matter what song was being sung. What a great way to sell enthusiasm and get everyone right into it!

Singing at a campfire should be a fun, natural thing. "Old favorites" are great for this purpose. Sing a song everybody knows in the beginning, just to get everyone singing. Adults generally like to harmonize, and youth like action songs. Singing rounds will help groups form together. Substituting motions for words will help you keep control. Sing in natural groups, keep the formal leadership to a minimum, and enjoy yourself too!

And the important advice: Know the songs you are singing!

And don't forget: Singing builds a group!

