

Games in Scouting



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The Importance of Play

Games are essential for the full development of children and the creation of fun through games is necessary for their growth and happiness.

For Beaver and Cub Scouts, the games they play can be very real to them. 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.

How to Use Games

It is important that all games are played with good order and discipline. Some ways of keeping

control of the various types of games and ensuring they are fun for all concerned are:

- Have all the necessary equipment ready before the game starts.
- Have the young people sitting down whilst you explain the game. They fidget less that way and you have more command of the situation. Have complete silence before you start to explain.
- Choose games with simple rules. Make sure that the young people understand them before you begin. Have a trial run if it will help you to make sure that everyone knows what to do. Be quite certain you know how to play the game yourself!
- Knockout games are undesirable if they leave children idle on the sidelines where they are sure to start up a rival game of their own. Arrange that they shall only lose a life and return to the game.
- If the game goes wrong, stop it immediately and explain the rules again. Be firm about keeping the rules.
- Young people should learn that fair play and good sportsmanship bring rewards.
- Introduce new games gradually; lots of new games all at once can be confusing.
- Do not play the same few 'favourite' games too often.
- Be aware of the capabilities of the young people; ensure the games offer a challenge as well as remaining fun and enjoyable.
- Praise and encourage the young people when they have tried hard.
- Beware of adults joining in the games as this can overexcite the section particularly in the younger

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sections. There are also issues around safeguarding and the possibility of harming a young person.

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

It is the leader's task to choose games carefully with a purpose in mind, and to build a programme which balances one type of game against another.

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

Types of Games

Playing games is an ideal way to give young people experience of working in different sized groups. Some games focus on the individual, others require pairs to work together, others are organised with the section divided in half. Some games promote team work while others are enjoyed as a whole section. Some promote competition between individuals or teams; others rely on the young people co-operating together to succeed.

A good section will offer over the three to four month planning period, a wide range of games, run in a variety of ways and balancing competitive and non-competitive games.

Here are a few examples of different types of games.

Energetic games

This type of game can help the section release energy; something all young people, especially the younger ones, have in great abundance.

Relay games can be adapted to suit any theme, (assault courses, dressing up, carrying objects, hopping), and are easy to organise.

Snowball fight The section forms up on the banks of the river, defined by two ropes or chalked lines. Both groups are equipped with a supply of balls made out of old clean tights or

newspaper balls and at the appropriate signal, throw the 'snowballs' at each other. Any snowballs that fall in the river are deemed to have melted and cannot be used.

Link-up tag When a young person touches or catches another, the second young person is captured and they join hands and chase the remainder. As each new captive joins, the chain gets longer.

Quiet games

This type of game can calm the section and be an opportunity for the less agile to do well.

Let's pretend young people sit in a circle, an object is passed round (a stick, cloth or piece of rope). When the whistle is blown or the music stops, the young person with the object has to mime an action using the object. The rest of the section has to guess the action e.g. a paper plate as steering wheel, flying saucer, clock, mirror, etc.

Games of skill

This category can be split into two: physical skills and sense training skills.

Team games involving throwing balls into buckets or boxes from a distance.

Crab football. This is the same as ordinary football, except the young people move around with their bottoms and their hands on the floor.

What's that? The young people listen to household sounds that have been recorded. How many can they identify?

What's in the bag? Each member of the team takes it in turns to feel an object in the bag. As soon as they recognise an object by feel, they run up and tell the Leader who marks it off a list. The first group to guess all the objects is the winner. This game could have a seasonal touch by using objects the young people would possibly find on festive occasions.

Outdoor games

Most indoor active games can be played outside, taking advantage of a larger playing area. It also

gives the opportunity for collection games, e.g. collect six objects that are coloured red, different leaves, grasses, stones; the large scale ball games or chase games; and for treasure hunts and trails.

Section Games Boxes

The Beaver Scout, Cub Scout and Scout sections now all have a games book which is available from Scout Shops Ltd:
<http://www.scoutshops.com/>

Every section 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, and blind-folds.

Further information

For more ideas look on Programmes Online at www.scouts.org.uk/po/

There are endless books on games available from local libraries and websites, as well as a range of Print Force Games Books, available from Scout Shops Ltd.

Radio and television programmes can also provide a great deal of useful material that can be adapted for games.