

Scout Skills - Campsite Layout and Selection



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Camping is very much part of Scouting, an activity undertaken by most Members at one time or another during their 'Scout life'. A lot of time and effort can be invested in camping and so it is important to get it right for all concerned. A good camp will be remembered for many years, and so will a bad one! A bad experience can put people off camping for life so it is our responsibility to try and ensure that all camps are successful ones.

Two of the factors that will affect the success of a camp are where you choose to camp - the place and the environment, and the layout of the site - making sure that the basic facilities are available and well planned.

Camp Site Selection

There are local and National Scout Camp sites all over the United Kingdom and, of course, in other parts of the world. A list of District, County/Area and National camping areas in the United Kingdom is published annually, and a list of sites and areas unsuitable for use by Members of the Movement is issued annually to District Commissioners. These publications can also be purchased from The Scout Information Centre

There are other sites and places such as National Trust properties, privately owned land and public sites which can be used. However, all of these will need to be checked against the above list and permission granted before setting up camp. If you wish to camp on common land or other local areas, make certain that local bye-laws do not prohibit camping. Scouts do not have the right to camp anywhere they like!

To lead a nights away event for young people in Scouting you will need to have a Nights Away

Permit. Information on the Nights Away Permit Scheme can be found on dedicated Nights Away Factsheets. You are also required to notify your District Commissioner of the event using Form NAN.

The choice of where to camp depends on several factors; cost and accessibility of transport to get there, the purpose of the camp (there's no point in going to Brighton if you want to go mountain climbing!), the time of the year and so on. Many of these factors will have already been determined, and then it is necessary to start looking at some of the other basic factors which need to be considered when looking for a place to camp:

- Safe drinking water should be available within a short distance. If none is available or you are uncertain of the quality of the water, the water should be boiled or purifying tablets used.
- The site must be well drained and unlikely to flood. Avoid clay and peat soils and sites adjacent to the sea, a river, or other stretches of water.
- Make sure there is sufficient level ground for all tents and recreation areas.
- If a sunny aspect is preferred, the tents should be pitched facing south east to get the morning sun.
- The site should have an adequate supply of wood for open fires, if permitted, and for the construction of camp gadgets.
- Check that there is protection from the prevailing winds.
- The site should be accessible for vehicles; a road or track is therefore essential.
- Depending upon the purpose of the camp, facilities must exist for the camp's major activities.

The Scout Information Centre

Gilwell Park Chingford London E4 7QW Tel + 44 (0)20 8433 7100 Fax + 44 (0)20 8433 7103 email info.centre@scout.org.uk www.scoutbase.org.uk

- Beware of natural hazards. Do not camp directly under large trees because of the risks of falling branches, a lightning strike or the continual drip of water after rain has stopped. Avoid overhanging cliffs with risk of falling rocks and rock slides.
- If you are backpacking, ensure that you will be able to reach a site at least one hour before sunset.

It may not be possible to include all these factors - unless you have found the perfect site of course! You will need to decide what are the most important for your camp.

Camp Site Layout

Every site will be different, with varying facilities available. Whatever type of camp you are planning, the layout of your site is important so that those taking part know where certain things are, how they are organised and how they can make the most of the facilities available. After all, your site and its surroundings are going to be home for a while - don't make life too uncomfortable!

Generally speaking, for a Troop camp, it is usual for each Patrol to have its own 'self-sufficient' area. There should be two main areas clearly marked:

- The central area containing the camp 'services' such as first aid, Quartermaster's stores, notice board, water point, Leaders' tents, and so on.
- The Patrol areas which are individual sites and should be easily accessible and yet self-contained. The boundaries of these should be well defined especially if there is not a lot of space.

There are then other factors which should be taken into consideration when placing tents and other facilities or amenities. There are no hard and fast rules as it will of course depend on the individual occasion, however the following chart may give some suggestions:

For mixed camps, males and females will need separate sleeping, washing, and toilet facilities. You will need to think carefully where you put these to maintain privacy.

	Water	Shade & Shelter	Lighting (Lamp)	Drained	Downwind	Ideal Position
First Aid Tent	*	*	*			Centre of camp and accessible
Dining Shelter		*	*			Close to kitchen to stop food going cold, but not in line with smoke from fire.
Kitchen	*	*	*			Positioned so that smoke will not blow into camp and the dining shelter
Latrines		*	*	*	*	Downwind of the camp itself, but not too far.
Washing Area	*		*	*		Positioned between latrines and camp
Chopping Area						Roped off from rest of camp. Close to woodpile – but woodpile not too close to fire.
Water Point	*			*		If possible, positioned where any spilt water can be drained away.
Tents	*			*		Positioned so that wind does not blow through tent doors.

Further Information and Resources

Ask other Leaders in the Group or District about their experiences of different sites. Which ones would they consider going back to and why?

As previously mentioned, publications are available from Headquarters listing suitable and unsuitable camping areas.

Contact the District or County Secretary for the area that you are interested in. They may be able to advise you about local sites.

Contact the your AAC/ACC (International) or International Office at Gilwell Park if you are considering camping abroad.

Teach Yourself

Knowledge and understanding of camp site selection and layout can really only be gained by experience. However, by using a methodical approach and carefully considering the appropriate factors, you can usefully start to plan your camp.

Learning All About It

Before having a go, you will need to have read the Information Sheet if you have not already done so.

Camp site selection - The first method by which you can find out about selecting a camp site, is to talk with other Leaders who have themselves been camping on various sites. They may either be able to give you suggestions for specific sites or some general advice as to what to look for. Base your discussions on a checklist of criteria, such as the one outlined overleaf.

The second method, and probably the most valuable thing you can do, is to visit any proposed camp site. It is very important that you ensure that it is suitable and provides the facilities that you require and by seeing it for yourself, you can make full use of the amenities. If it is possible, it will be useful to see the site in, or shortly after, poor weather conditions to give you a realistic idea of what you might have to cope with!

So, when visiting a camp site, it is important to collect as much information as possible. Along with the criteria outlined in the Information Sheet, you may like to consider the following points:

- Call on local people who may be required during your camp and check that they will be able to offer help should you need it. For example, a doctor or minister.
- Find out about local events that might be happening during your stay. These could then either be incorporated in the programme or avoided!

- Make contact with local organisations: Scout Group, Guide Company, and so on.
- Find out the location of the nearest church, hospital, police station and other local services.
- Take photographs or slides of the area and site to show to Members, other Leaders and perhaps parents.
- Check what food and dairy supplies can be obtained locally and when.

At the end of this section there is a Camp Site Checklist which may be useful for recording information. Alternatively, you could design your own.

Camp site layout - Again, if you are in a position to see the site, this will give you a much better idea of how the site may be organised. However, even without seeing it, you will be able to design a layout plan, using the criteria outlined in the Information Sheet. At some stage, you will know what equipment you need to take, how many Patrol tents to include, and so on.

The first method is a simple sketch map, drawn to an approximate scale. For example, one centimetre equals one metre. This will give you an idea of the space that you may have available. Even without visiting the site, when considering a particular site, the warden or person responsible for taking bookings, should be able to give you a rough idea of the size of the 'plot'. Think about the equipment and various features that are likely to be included in your camp situation and then draw them on your 'map'. You don't have to be an artist to do this, simple line drawings will suffice or, easier still, use symbols and a key.

The second method, along the same lines, may give you a slightly more accurate idea of what your site could look like. This can be achieved by cutting up pieces of paper, again to scale, of the various features. This enables you to move things around more easily until the ideal layout is reached. This can further be improved upon by making small 3D models out of paper or card. This makes the job of explaining your layout to someone else a lot easier.

Both of these methods are likely to need adapting when you arrive at the site itself, but by thinking it through beforehand, you've already done a lot of the hard work!

You may well be restricted in space and facilities, and so you will need to make the most of what is available to you.

Can You Do It?

When you feel confident about camp site selection and layout, see how many of the following you can tick off:

- Can I list some possible sources of information on camp sites?
- Can I state the considerations for selecting a camp site?
- Can I state the factors to be considered when planning a camp site layout?
- Can I sketch a plan of a camp site layout?

Camp Site Checklist

- Ordnance Survey Map Sheet
- Grid References
- Location
- Travelling Time
- Nearest Shops
- Early Closing (?)
- Nearest Telephone at
- Tel No
- Local Scout Group / Contact
- Local Attractions
- Local Hazards
- Camp Site Access
- Space Available
- Flat Ground
- Water
- Aspect
- Wood

- Soil
- Drainage
- Natural Scenery
- Other Notes and Comments

How To Train Others

This section is designed to give you some practical ideas about how you can help other people to learn about camp site selection and layout. They might be Leaders or Scouts - either in an informal way on a Troop night or more formally on a skills workshop, training course or something similar

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- 1 List possible sources of information on camp sites;
- 2 State the considerations for selecting a camp site;
- 3 State the factors to be considered when planning a site layout;
- 4 Sketch a plan of a camp site layout.

Time

Approximately one to two hours will be required for discussion and preliminary camp site layout, and depending on the number of training games undertaken. Extra time will also be required if visiting any site(s).

Equipment

Pen, pencil, paper, card and any other items required for any training games.

Copies of Headquarters' publications of suitable and unsuitable camping areas.

Lego, Duplo or equivalent (optional).

Training Method

The best way to learn about camp site selection and layout is to do it for real! So, whenever it is possible, participants should be taken to a site to look at the factors and identify for themselves what makes a good site.

However, this is not always possible, of course. Participants can learn about the criteria for selecting and planning camp sites before they go near one. This session can be done either with

both subjects being covered or being split into two or more sessions.

There will need to be some input of information by the session leader, but much of the time could be spent with participants in small groups deciding what they consider the main criteria to be for camp site selection. Most people will have had the experience of a camp even if they had no responsibility for it's organisation. They will, therefore, have experiences to refer to.

Participants should then draw up their own checklist of factors to consider so that next time they need to choose a site, or if a visit to a site can be arranged, they can try it out. Explanation should also be given about finding sites and who they might contact.

For camp site layout, participants should consider and discuss what the 'perfect site' consists of and how it is laid out. They should then either draw this on a sketch map; cut up small pieces of paper to represent amenities and place on an outline drawing; or construct the layout using a child's building blocks (for example Lego, Duplo, and so on). Magnetic boards and magnets also provide a flexible visual aid for either demonstrating or working out a camp layout.

Training Games

'Where to camp?'- With participants in small groups, each group should be given one or more scenarios of a camping situation and an appropriate Ordnance Survey map(s).

For example, 'You are a group of older Scouts (14 and 15 year olds) undertaking a three day camp with the prime objective being to practise some hill walking. You can only take bicycles for transport so you are unable to take much food with you as you have to carry tents and other equipment. You also need to telephone your Home Contact once a day.'

Using the Ordnance Survey map and perhaps their camp site selection checklist, participants should then discuss where an appropriate place for this camp might be. This may be either an

actual camp site, or where a suitable position for one might be. Participants then need to explain and justify their reasoning.

Selling yourselves - Ask each group of participants to design an advert for a specialist magazine (therefore technical details are required!) promoting their 'perfect' camp site, its layout and all its amenities. The purpose here is to include the factors outlined in the Information Sheet not just to dream about a 50 metre swimming pool!

Alternatively, the groups could be asked to prepare a one minute television (or radio) advertisement, which they should then demonstrate to everyone else.

- *Camp Site Challenge* - With participants in small groups (as teams), organise a quiz with points being given for the correct answers and deducted for wrong ones and so on. You may like to invent other 'penalties'. The statements might include a list of statements about camp sites - some TRUE and some FALSE.

For example:

- 1 Latrines should be placed next to the sleeping tents for convenience. (FALSE)
- 2 Cooking fires should be placed underneath canvas (such as a dining shelter) in wet weather to stop it going out. (FALSE)
- 3 A first aid tent should be central to a camp. (TRUE)
- 4 Tent doors should be placed facing into the prevailing wind. (FALSE)
- 5 The tents should be pitched under trees wherever possible to protect them from the wind and rain. (FALSE)
- 6 Check what food supplies are available locally as it is not always possible to take all provisions with you. (TRUE)
- 7 Choose a site that is well drained and preferably not clay or peat soil. (TRUE)
- 8 You are allowed to camp on any official, public site in the country. (FALSE)

- *Map it* - The teams are given a large sheet (flip chart size) of paper and several coloured felt tip pens. They are then given a certain time (for example, 15 minutes) to draw a plan of their perfect site layout which would enable any new camper to quickly locate any facility. Points can be awarded for the most completed (and legible!) plan.
- *Hangman* - Play a team game of hangman, with each team, in turn, requesting a letter and building up a phrase or sentence. An example of a sentence might be: 'Safe drinking water should be available within a short distance'.)

Checking Their Progress

Ask participants if they can do the following:

- List possible sources of information on camp sites.
- State the considerations for selecting a camp site.
- State the factors to be considered when planning a site layout.
- Sketch a plan of a camp site layout.

So They Want To Know More?

Organise a day trip or two (or a weekend camp!) to various camp sites both locally and further afield.

Consider the uses for different sites and prepare an informal report which outlines the advantages, disadvantages, amenities, accessibility and so on.