

Designing Activities

Approvals

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A guide to designing Activities for Youth Programme

The Purpose of Activities

When designing activities, we need to take a step back and ask 'what purpose do they serve?' Our ultimate aim in Scouting is to enable young people to develop into full and active citizens. Can we do this through activities? Of course we can.

We need activities that focus on what we want to achieve and which deliver appropriate learning experiences. If hiking is the activity, it's not enough to 'just run a hike' and consider it a success. We must ask:

What do we want the young person to have learned from this?

Fun, friendship, challenge and adventure are key outcomes of Scouting activities, but in order to deliver Scouting we must have a deeper understanding of what we are doing and why.

For every activity we devise we should know what we can achieve from it and should try to gain the maximum that we can from it.

The activities we incorporate into our programme must contribute to delivering the Aim of Scouting Ireland and fulfilling the learning objectives of the section.

Delivering the Aim of Scouting Ireland

Scouting already has hundreds of activities that have been conjured up over the years. We don't need to reinvent the wheel. What we do want to do is ensure that the activities are balanced and that we incorporate such aspects of the Aim and the respective learning objectives of the Youth Programme as are practical and applicable for that activity.

The Aim of Scouting Ireland contains six **areas of personal growth**:

- **Social**
- **Physical**
- **Intellectual**
- **Character**
- **Emotional**
- **Spiritual**

Learning Objectives

A set of Learning Objectives has been devised appropriate to each area of personal growth and relevant to each age range. These in turn are broken down into suitable sub objectives for each stage of development of the young person. The goal is to ensure that activities that make up our programme help us to achieve these objectives - as well as fun, friendship, challenge and adventure.

The Scout Method

It is critical that activities are delivered through the Scout Method (*how we do Scouting*), which has eight inter-related elements:

- **Promise and Law**
- **Service to Others**
- **Learning by Doing and Reviewing**
- **Nature and the Out-of-Doors**
- **Adults and young people working together**

- Small group (Patrol) system
- Imagination and Identity, a symbolic framework
- Personal Progression

All eight elements must be applied effectively for the game of Scouting to happen.

Progression

Activities must work within a progressive scheme that encompasses all the developmental stages –

1. Pre-Adolescence (co-operation)
2. Early Adolescence (transition)
3. Adolescence (identity)
4. Post Adolescence (maturity and departure)

We need to ensure that where applicable there can be a logical progression of appropriate activity through the stages of development. For example, common sense will dictate that in general we will not bring 9 year olds on a week-long hiking and camping trip in the mountains. However, the stage should be set and the 9 year olds introduced to hiking and camping at a level appropriate to their abilities. The young people will be able to see that they are working towards this sort of activity.

Evaluating

After each activity, it is important that the activities are **evaluated** by the participants. This is so that each young person can fully appreciate what they learned from it in measurable skills and in life skills - and to see how the activity could be improved for future participants. Evaluating helps the young person to realise that an activity is more than just taking part. They will begin to become aware that it can teach them about themselves and how they deal with issues:

There is no learning without evaluation.

Depending on the length of the activity it may be appropriate to evaluate how things are going during the planning and participation stages in addition to the final evaluation of the activity.

So how do we go about drawing up a suitable activity?

Step 1: Decide on an activity area

The theme for the programme cycle and activity ideas will be determined during the initial Planning steps. The young people should be actively involved in this step in a manner appropriate to their stage of development. This could be an imaginative idea or a practical activity area e.g. a car crash or a First Aid activity. First Aid is a skill-set so this pre-supposes that some training has already been made available to the participants.

Taking the example of First Aid, we want to create an activity that will develop First Aid skills.

Step 2: Know the stage of development of youth participants

We must know the age of the participants and their stage of development. In the example we have chosen it will be the Scout section. However, one activity could cover more than one section age grouping, with the different participants having different objectives.

Step 3: Understand which areas of personal growth are included

We need to figure out which areas of personal growth are going to be covered in our selected activity. It's a First Aid incident so: Physical? Yes. Intellectual? Yes. Social? Yes, if the activity is correctly structured. Character? Yes - it should be an opportunity to see how the young person reacts under stress.

As you think about the areas of personal growth covered you will begin to see how the activity could be structured to take advantage of different scenarios and enhance what the scouts get from the activity. You can identify what areas are not addressed and perhaps consider adjusting the plan.

Step 4: Select objectives for the activity

The purpose of the activity and the areas of growth covered will indicate the objectives for the activity i.e. what the young people will achieve through participation in the activity.

Step 5: Select specific learning objectives which the activity will help to achieve

We now need to go a bit deeper and look again at the general areas of Physical, Intellectual etc. with reference to the learning objectives as listed for each section. These objectives are more specific and detailed and you can see how different objectives can best be associated with your activity. From doing this we begin to get more ideas for the activity as well to achieve more from the activity. Also, going through the learning objectives can spark off ideas for other activities that incorporate similar objectives. It is important to note that participating in an activity does not result in the learning objectives being achieved. The learning objectives are achieved over time by repeated experiences.

Some considerations for our example:-

Character:

"Know my strengths and use them to strive to address my areas of need"
"Understand the importance of Scouting Spirit"

Perhaps the group are on their way back to camp to a promised treat, or are coming back tired from having done some other activity. How do they react to having to help people?

Physical

"Identify my unique physical strengths and know my limitations"
"Take responsibility for personal hygiene and the impact it has on others"

Perhaps there may be a dangerous situation or an obstacle they are not capable of overcoming - they can see that sometimes there are limits to what they can do and they can only try their best. Do they take into consideration that they may be infecting people with dirt and grime? Is it a conscious decision to try to help out and prevent further injury or do they dive straight in without consideration?

Emotional:

"Be prepared to challenge myself"

As you will notice, this wasn't in the original list but it seems appropriate! Can the young person take charge of a situation? Can they move out of their comfort zone? Always be prepared to incorporate ideas that seem to suit even if you hadn't originally covered them.

Intellectual:

"Be able to source information and be able to critically evaluate each possibility to help make decisions"
"Show an understanding of the benefits of teamwork, identify my role as a team member & the contribution I can make, including the willingness to lead and accept responsibility."

This is an opportunity to develop triage skills and selection of which injured person to help first. Ensure there is more than one casualty with different injuries and that there is some perceived danger and that decisions have to be made.

Can they work as part of a team? Can they step up and take the lead if required. More importantly can they do the opposite? If they normally are leaders can they step back and take the lead from someone else and act appropriately without undermining the new leader?

Social:

"Be involved in my community and help those around me when needed."

This will show up as part of the willingness to get involved and help when needed.

As you can see while going through the list of personal development objectives we make an activity that could have been a test merely of how good their first aid training is into something that can be readily evaluated and that everyone can learn from, whether it's the top first-aider or the young person thrust to the front to take charge.

All of the learning objectives are not just abstract thoughts. They provide a concrete foundation and training for young people. We know that skills such as being able to source and evaluate information, critical analysis and performing under stressful conditions are of value and deliver on the aim of Scouting in a very tangible way.

Step 6: Description of the activity

While it is important to cover all the objectives and areas of personal growth, it is equally important to ensure that the activity is entertaining and appropriate. The organiser, whether it is a Scouter or young person, must use their imagination to embellish and expand activities to motivate, fully develop and challenge the young people involved. We can provide a framework for the organiser to build on. What we need to remember is that in embellishing we don't lose sight of what we want young people to gain from the activity.

A fantastic scenario involving crashed planes and underground cave rescue could be a brilliant 'fun' experience but if at the end the young person hasn't learned from it (in relation to some of the areas of personal growth) then it is not a fully effective activity.

Step 7: Specify Materials Required, Suitable Venue, Duration & Numbers involved

What sort of equipment is needed to run this activity?

What facilities are needed?

Where should it be held?

How long will it take?

Who will participate?

Step 8: Evaluation

The evaluation questions should be identified – these will relate to the Activity Objectives. They should also include more general questions such as:

Did the Scouts have fun?

Did they work well as a Patrol?

What did they like about the activity?

What should be done differently next time?

Step 9: Tweaks

Think about other options, alternatives or variations for the activity. These may be used as alternatives in case of changes of circumstances, or may just be recorded for use at some future stage.

Step 10: Notes

Double-check whether there are any other areas we need to be aware of with this activity. What skills are required to undertake this activity? Can any outside groups help – the Order of Malta perhaps? Are there insurance implications? What qualifications are required? Who needs to be notified? etc.

An Example – finally!

Following is an example of a sample activity based on what is discussed above.

Step 1**Title**

First Aid – Staged Incident

Step 2**Section**

Scouts

Summary

A small group comes across a first aid situation. They have to decide how to deal with it and the people who are injured.

Step 4**Activity Objectives**

- To learn and practice first aid skills
- To work as a team
- To deal with a challenging situation

Step 7

Place

An Open field

Duration

2 Hours

Participants

The Scout Troop, working in Patrols
4 volunteers

Materials required

- Car or other vehicle
- Heavy object to cause obstruction
- Fake blood/injuries

Step 5

Helps achieve the following Learning Objectives

- Be involved in my community and help those around me when needed
- Be able to source information and be able to critically evaluate each possibility to help make decisions
- Show an understanding of the benefits of teamwork, identify my role as a team member & the contribution I can make, including the willingness to lead and accept responsibility
- Be prepared to challenge myself
- Identify my unique physical strengths and know my limitations
- Take responsibility for personal hygiene and the impact it has on others
- Know my strengths and use them to strive to address my areas of need
- Understand the importance of Scouting Spirit

Step 6

Description

The group should be returning from or on their way to some other activity when they come across the staged crash. 4 people with various injuries. One should be trapped under something heavy (without danger obviously). Injuries should cover –

- Broken Leg
- Patient Unconscious and not breathing
- Head Wound with disorientation and copious bleeding
- Unconscious patient trapped in car under heavy load.

There should be the temptation to continue on to their original activity

They may be faced with a dilemma as some things will not be possible (e.g. they may not be able to remove the obstruction from the trapped patient) and they will have to make a decision

There should be a perceived danger such as the car may be about to go up in flames or victims may be a biohazard.

Step 8

Evaluation

- What did the young people think of the activity?
- How did they feel if they had to take charge?
- Could somebody else have taken charge?
- Was everybody involved?
- Was everybody doing his or her best to help?
- How did they feel if they couldn't help some of the people, or weren't physically able for certain things?
- On a practical level how did their training help?

- What additional training do they think would be useful?
- How would they improve the scenario for other participants?
- What was the leader's assessment of how they did?

Step 9

Tweaks

The activity could be part of a disaster-type theme e.g. Tornado, Tsunami which will suggest other variations.


The activity could also incorporate a service aspect, such as heightening awareness of the need for family, friends and people in the community to learn First Aid in partnership with a First Aid organisation.

Step 10

Notes

- First Aid training – REC, Order of Malta, St John's ambulance
- Ensure no actual physical danger to participants
- Ensure activity is covered by insurance.

First Aid – Staged Incident

Section Scouts Place Scout Den Duration One meeting Participants The troop	
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Summary

A small group comes across a first aid situation. They have to decide how to deal with it and the people who are injured.

Activity Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn and practice first aid skills To work as a team To deal with a challenging situation 	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car or other vehicle Heavy object to cause obstruction Fake blood/injuries
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Helps achieve the following Learning Objectives

- Develop and demonstrate a sense of civic responsibility. Define and explore my opinions on social equality and inclusion *[Social]*
- Demonstrate that I appreciate my own physical capabilities and the abilities of others *[Physical]*
- Take responsibility for personal hygiene and the impact it has on others *[Physical]*
- Understand the implications of my decisions and learn from the outcomes *[Intellectual]*
- Demonstrate a commitment to working with others within a team Understand the role, skills & responsibilities of team membership and leadership *[Intellectual]*
- Demonstrate that I can learn from my experiences and accept the outcome of my action *[Character]*
- Live the Scouting Spirit *[Character]*
- Be able to assess the challenges I can deal with and how *[Emotional]*

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