

Campfire Program

Background

Campfire programs are an important part of the camping experience for all Scouts attending summer camp. They set the example for campfire programs at council, district, and unit camping activities for the rest of the year. As such it is extremely important that everything done at a campfire program at summer camp be of the highest quality and meet the highest standards of the Boy Scouts of America.

Plan a Campfire

Campfire, through ceremonies, reinforce the ideas of Cub Scouting and patriotism, citizenship, and duty to God that are part of what we promise. Respect, not goofing off, is the order of the day during ceremonies. Insist upon it by example and word.

Remember when planning a campfire:

- ✓ Campfire ingredients: Four S's - Songs, Stunts, Stories, and Showmanship
- ✓ Campfire elements: Fun, participation, recognition, and inspiration
- ✓ Campfire no-no's: No embarrassing of boy, staff, or adult; nothing of questionable taste or parents wonder, "What have they been teaching my son?"
- ✓ Make sure the den has all the help needed to conduct the campfire with other dens participating.

Why Campfire Programs

Campfire programs perform a real function in the summer camp program:

- Fun - an enjoyable program of participation for all campers.
- Entertainment - like a night at the movies, watching TV or going to a stage play, entertainment for the audience.
- Fellowship - a time of sharing together with fellow Scouts. Deeper than just fun, here we bring the group closer together.
- Action - like a three ring circus - something always going on. A change to let off steam through active participation.
- Adventure - the unexpected, new experiences, new stories.
- Education - informative, learning something new, learning how to do campfire programs (by example).
- Inspiration - motivation, scouting ideals, cubmaster moments, character development.
- Leadership - opportunities for Scouts to be leaders in the planning and execution of the entire program and its parts.

Kinds of Campfires

To accomplish our program we must choose the kind of campfire to use as a "means to our end." Generally a campfire will overlap into several of the following kinds of campfire programs:

1. Stunt Campfire - an evening of games and stunts.
2. Mystery Campfire - an evening of surprises.
3. Songfest Campfire - all singing.
4. Story Telling Campfire - sharing stories of all kinds.
5. Native American Campfire - sharing stories of all kinds.
6. Parent/Guest Night Campfire - to show off the boys accomplishments.
7. Education Campfire - an important guest (naturalist, hike master)
8. Court of Honor/Recognition Campfire - all types of recognition.
9. Inspirational Campfire - patriotic, spiritual

General Rules

- ✓ Follow the fire - As the fire is ignited and when it is burning brightly, the action is lively; as the fire dies down, the action dies down in a smooth progression from the rowdy opening to the quiet, inspirational closing.
- ✓ Stand behind the fire - to be effective, you must be seen by the audience, you can only be seen if the light is shining on you.
- ✓ Keep it clean - there is no place in the scouting program for toilet humor; dirty jokes, racist, sexist, or off color material of any kind. Violence must be kept to a minimum and should never be used to resolve conflict. If you have to ask the answer is probably "No."
- ✓ Everything in the program must be screened - every song, skit, yell, stunt, walk-on, every word and action that will be in the public performance must be screened and approved for content, location in the program, and to avoid any duplication.

The Fire

The fire itself is an important aspect of the campfire program:

1. Build a solid fire - start with three solid rows of logs at the base of the fire, add a log cabin fire on top. Light the log cabin fire and the fire will burn down to the log base providing light for the actors throughout the program.
2. Don't add wood after the program has started. Remember, the action of the campfire follows the mood of the fire - if you add wood when you are trying to slow down the pace of the campfire program, you are changing the tone of the program.
3. Assign fire builders and extinguishers. The responsibility for building the campfire and for extinguishing the fire after the program need to be assigned to specific individuals just as songs, skits, etc. are assigned.
4. Have fire fighting equipment available. Hoses, shovels, buckets, etc. need to be available at the campfire bowl.

Song Selection

Choosing the right song for the right place in the campfire program is very important. Not only is it important for the leader and the audience to be familiar with the song, it must be appropriate in content, tempo, and appropriate for the age group.

1. Fast Songs - The first songs in the campfire need to be fast, active, and somewhat rowdy to get the campfire off to the brisk start needed. When the flames of the fire are burning brightly.
2. Medium Songs - The songs in the main part of the campfire should be neither rowdy, active songs, nor slow songs - something in the middle.
3. Slow Songs - As the campfire dies down to coals, the tempo of the songs slows down to the more serious, slower tempo songs for the closing of the campfire.
4. Action Songs - Songs with hand motions, standing and sitting, or other motions are action songs. Action songs need to be early in the campfire program.
5. Rounds - Many songs can be sung as two or three part rounds. Leading rounds requires good song leaders and practice to make sure that all the parts of the round come in at the right time and end at the right time. It is important for song leaders of rounds to lead in the same tempo. Rounds are generally slower or medium songs, so they are generally in the last half of the campfire program.

Music

Instrumental background accompaniment adds a lot to the singing around the campfire, but it also requires practice with the instrumentalist and the song leader.

Stories

Campfire stories come in three categories:

1. Humorous Stories - stories with a funny ending, a twisted ending, "Shaggy Dog" stories, tall tales, or just a long joke.
2. Historic Stories - stories of pioneers, Indians, frontiersmen, Scouting history, local history, folklore.
3. Inspirational Stories - stories with a moral, or stories that promote the ideals of Scouting. Cubmaster minutes are essentially inspirational stories.

General rules for stories:

- Keep them short. Keep to the audience's interest, stories like other parts of the campfire program need to be only 3-4 minutes long.
- Speak up. Stories depend almost entirely on the audience hearing the story teller, so speak loudly to the last row of the audience.
- Avoid ghost stories. It's not our job to scare campers. Many are away from home for the first time or at a camp for the first time.
- Wear costumes/use props. Use anything that will add to the dramatic presentation of the story.
- Keep them clean. The same as other parts of the campfire, keep stories on a high moral level.