Campfires

Time Available

10 minutes.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand more about the purposes of Campfires at Scouting events
- Know that Scouts BSA campfires should be youth led
- Have a better understanding of the “4 S’s of a Campfire.”
- Be able to better coach their youth leaders to plan and stage a great campfire.

Suggested Presenter(s)

- Your favorite Campfire Emcee or
- The Campfire presenter at your council’s last Wood Badge course or
- An experienced Scoutmaster whose troop is known for great campfires
- A youth that has led a campfire at NYLT or Camporee

Presentation Method

- Facilitated discussion
- You may wish to display a model fire or one suitable for use indoors as a visual aid

BSA Reference Materials

- The Campfire Program Planner
- Fillable Campfire Program Planner
- Program Resources: Campfires

Presentation Content

A Time for Memories at the end of the day.

A campfire is a great way to finish a great day of Scouting outdoors! And you don’t even need a fire and it doesn’t have to be dark! Any gathering of Scouts, leaders, family members, and/or others gathered for some fun and fellowship can be a Campfire.

It is about the Scouts.

A campfire should be about the Scouts not the Adults. Have a Youth Emcee. Sure, he may need some coaching and other help but why not? The key is in planning properly to fit it all together. The Scout Campfire Planning sheet makes that easier. By having the Scouts come up front to do the skits and lead songs, and other stuff, when they are adults they will not be afraid to stand in front of a group and talk to them. They will not be afraid to take the lead as they go through life.

A campfire has many elements –

- Fun
- Action
- Entertainment
- Training
- Adventure
- Fellowship
- Inspiration

The Four S’s of Campfire Success

- Songs – all kinds of songs! And lead them with enthusiasm. Wave your arms. Have action. Start with a familiar song to get everyone involved. Maybe teach one later in the campfire. Close with a serious song as the fire fades away.
- Stunts (includes Skits)
- Stories Be careful of Ghost Stories – or be ready to have a bunch of Scouts waking you up at 3 AM and telling you they are afraid.
- Showmanship

Follow the Flames

Start familiar and slowly. Build tempo quickly as the fire builds. Build to a peak as the fire goes higher. Begin to taper off as the fires begins to fade away. Close with a serious song and Leader’s Minute as the fire is almost out. When the flames are high, the fire is bright – do high energy, action parts loud, noisy, songs with actions – great Then as the fire burns down, the mood should come down – quieter songs, more reflective, maybe a story to quiet the group down… When the fire is down to the coals, it’s time for a quiet story, a final slow song, and a Scoutmaster Minute

Use The Campfire Program Planner

You place all the acts, cheers, stunts, songs, everything on side 1. Then on side 2 you put everything in the desired order remembering to Follow the Flames.

No Surprises / Positive Values

The Adult responsible for the Campfire must know everything that is planned to happen at the Campfire. This is one responsibility that cannot be delegated to a youth. And I mean EVERYTHING - “spontaneous” run-ons, cheers, everything, etc. The Adult Leader shall have reviewed and approved them all. Every Campfire and every Scouting activity should be a positive experience in which youth and leaders feel emotionally secure and find support from their peers and leaders. Everything we do with our Scouts—including songs, skits, and ceremonies—should be positive and meaningful, and should not contradict the philosophy expressed in the Scout Oath and Law.

A Campfire should:

- Reinforce the values of Scouting.
- Get the whole group involved.
- Make everyone feel good.
• Be positive.
• Make every element meaningful.
• Teach the ideals and goals of Scouting.
• Use age-appropriate activities.

Campfire activities shall NOT include:
• Embarrassing an audience member
• Racial or cultural putdowns
• Violent behavior
• Bathroom humor
• Water skits (Where someone gets wet as part of the gag)
• Sexual overtones
• Material that is not consistent with BSA Standards

A Few Last Pointers:
• **Tell them** – let the Youth Leaders know in advance if possible, what is expected at the campfire. You can discuss this when you review their skits. Or maybe at a Patrol Leaders' Meeting the day of the campfire.
• **The Opening sets the expectations** – set everyone's expectation for a great campfire with an impressive fire lighting and a well-planned opening ceremony
• **Use the Sign** – if things get out of hand, bring the group back with the Scout sign – make sure your Master of Ceremonies is aware of this as well! Just put up the sign, and wait – it'll happen!
• **Keep Control** - the best campfires run smoothly along from one thing to the next, with minimal interruptions, and everyone has a great time!

Well-Planning, well-paced –
• All the groups/presenters need to know when they will be on stage. Perhaps give them a copy of the Planner. An "on deck" system works well, getting the next group ready to run on as soon as they are called. If it is a large campfire (e.g. Camporee), the audience will remember the first skit, their skit, and the last skit. Send them off on a very positive note. **Stop if not approved** – if a group starts in with something that is not on your approved plan, just stand up, use the sign to restore order, thank them, and move on to the next group/event.

Keep Control – the best campfires run smoothly along from one thing to the next, with minimal interruptions, and everyone has a great time!