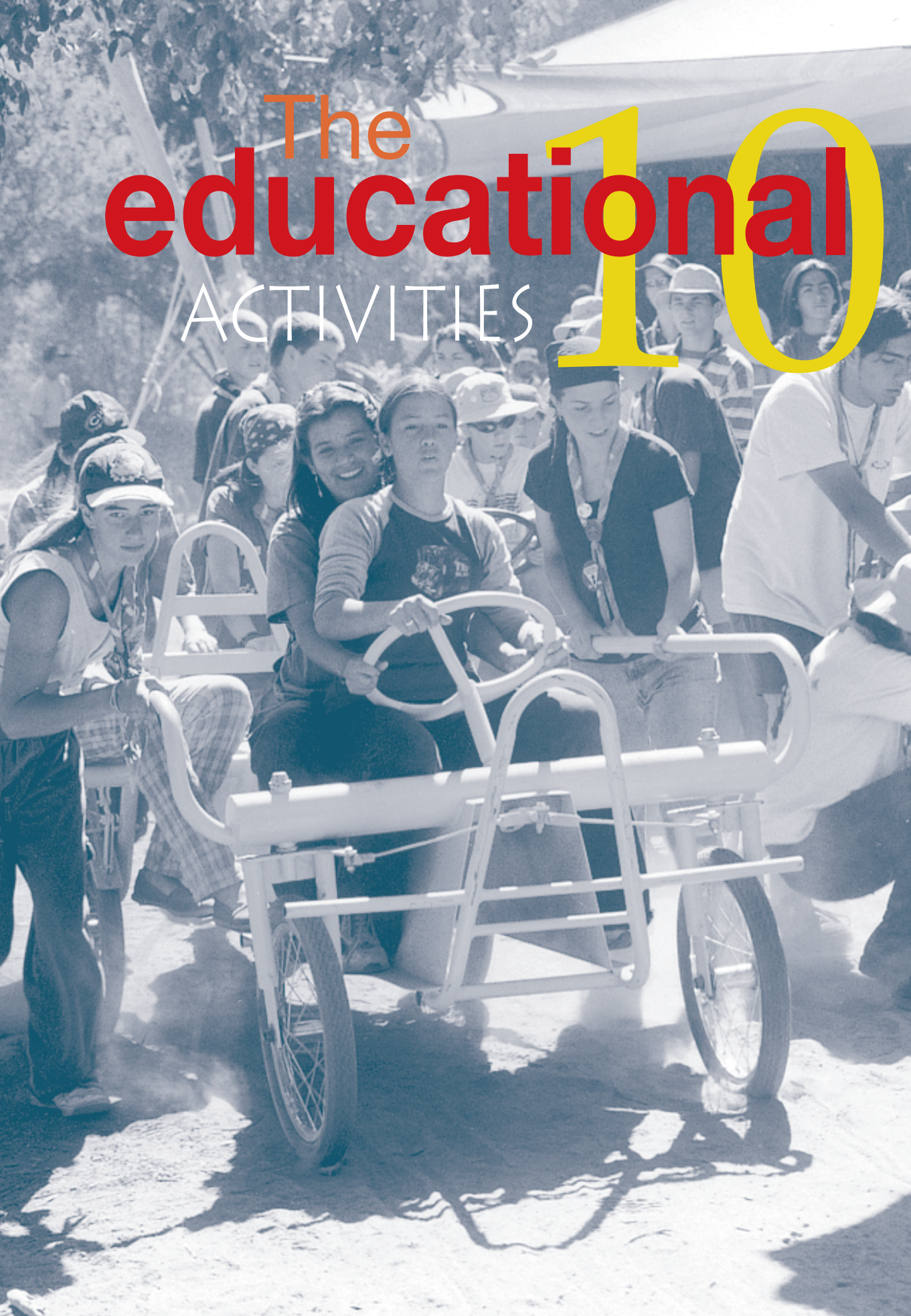


# The educational ACTIVITIES

# 10





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# OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES



In Scouting the young people *learn by doing*, since everything is done in the form of *activities*.



**WE CARRY  
OUT ACTIVITIES  
TO REACH OUR  
OBJECTIVES**

In the Patrols and in the Unit the young people are the main players in the activities. They are the ones to propose them, they choose for themselves, prepare them, develop and evaluate them with the support of the Adult Leaders.

The activities give the young people experiences which help them to develop the desirable behaviour patterns envisaged in the objectives.

Building camp infrastructure is a good way to learn about some of the laws of physics; planting a tree and helping it to grow is the best way of coming to value nature; sharing what we have allows us to experience solidarity; cooking our own food and cleaning the pots afterwards incorporates basic everyday skills into the sum total of what we are like as people.

*Learning by doing* leads to *learning by discovery*, as a result of which the knowledge, attitudes or skills we learn are assimilated in a deep and lasting way. At the same time, this has been shown to be more effective than other systems for getting the young people to take an interest in their self-education.

**THE YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN  
THROUGH THE EXPERIENCES  
THEY GAIN FROM THE ACTIVITIES**



If the activities give the young people personal experiences, then we must distinguish between the *activity* which everyone carries out and the *experience* that each young person has during the activity.

## **ACTIVITY**

- What is happening externally, the action which involves everyone.
- A tool which generates different situations.

## **EXPERIENCE**

- The internal part; it happens within each person. It is what each person gets from the action.
- The outcome for each young person of being exposed to these different situations.

**The truly educational part is the experience, since this is the personal relationship that each young person has with reality. This is what helps each young person to observe and analyse his or her own behaviour, and assimilate and practise the behaviour envisaged in the objective.**

## **EXPERIENCES ARE PERSONAL**



A single activity can generate different experiences in the young people who are taking part in it, depending on a wide variety of circumstances, which usually have to do with what each individual is like as a person.

An activity can go very well indeed and be very successful for the group as a whole, yet may not generate the desired results in a number of the young people.

On the other hand, an activity may not be evaluated as having been very successful, and yet have generated experiences that help one or several of the young people to acquire the desired behaviour.

**Since the experience is a personal relationship between each young person and reality, as Leaders we cannot affect, manipulate or foresee it with any degree of certainty. We can, however, influence the activities, to try to make them generate or facilitate experiences that are conducive to the acquisition of the behaviour envisaged in the objectives.**

### **How does this affect our Unit's programme of activities?**

- ➡ The programme of each Patrol and of the Scout Unit must include a wide variety of activities.
- ➡ Activities cannot be improvised. They must be properly selected, prepared, conducted and evaluated.
- ➡ It is not enough to carry out activities, and it is not even enough for them to be successful. We must also be alert to the personal experience that each young person draws from them, and we do this by monitoring individual progress.



There is no direct, immediate, cause-and-effect

relationship between the activities and the objectives. The activity does not automatically lead to the achievement of the desired objective.

**THE ACTIVITIES  
HELP TO ACHIEVE  
THE EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES  
GRADUALLY, SEQUENTIALLY  
AND CUMULATIVELY**



The Patrol and Unit activities help the young people to achieve their personal objectives by generating successive and varied experiences.

Consequently, at the end of an activity all we can evaluate is the activity itself.

We can only assess the young people's personal growth –in other words their progress– every so often. When we evaluate educational objectives, we are assessing maturity, and individual maturity is a state of realization which is reached through a process of gradual, sequential and cumulative development.



# TYPES OF ACTIVITIES



## THERE ARE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

In the last chapter we mentioned that the personal objectives span the whole of the young people's lives, involving a great variety of activities, many of which are not connected with the Patrol or Unit. We can therefore distinguish between internal and external activities.

**Internal activities** are those which are instigated by the programme of activities, whether they take place in the Patrols, in the Unit or outside them. **External activities** are those which the young people engage in outside their Patrols and Unit and which bear no direct relation to these.

The actions of Scout educators are concerned essentially with the internal activities, but it would be a mistake to think that we can disregard the external ones altogether.

As well as being Scouts, the young people are school pupils, the children of a family and members of a religious community. They probably practise a sport, may play a musical instrument, have non-Scout friends and interact with different social groups.



As the Patrol and the Adult Leaders encourage progress, guide development and help to assess all the educational objectives the young people have undertaken, they need to bear in mind that Scouts develop through all these roles, as they all have an influence on their personality.

Of course, we cannot evaluate each and every activity that the young people are involved in outside Scouting, and still less can we influence or affect these. However, we must have a general awareness of the effects they have on the young people and how they view their role in each activity when we come to assess their personal progress.

## THE MAIN DISTINCTION WE HAVE TO MAKE IS BETWEEN FIXED AND VARIABLE ACTIVITIES



Activities may be classified as either **fixed** or **variable** depending on the form they take, how often they are conducted and the way in which they contribute to the application of the Method and to the achievement of educational objectives.



## FIXED ACTIVITIES

- Usually take a single form and generally relate to the same subject.
- Need to be carried out continually to create the right atmosphere for the Scout Method.
- Contribute in a general way to achieving the educational objectives.

## VARIABLE ACTIVITIES

- Take many different forms and refer to very diverse subjects, depending on the young people's interests.
- Are not repeated, unless the young people particularly want to and then only after a certain length of time.
- Contribute to achieving one or more clearly specified educational objectives.

**Fixed activities** are, for example, the different ceremonies we hold in the Unit. A ceremony is always similar however many times we hold it, and its repetition helps to create the atmosphere of group life in the Unit. Ceremonies are not intended to achieve any specific educational objective or group of objectives in the young people, but they are nevertheless related to several aspects of the personality and thus contribute in a general way to the achievement of objectives across the growth areas.

What we have said about the ceremonies is true for all the fixed activities that are conducted in the Patrols and the Unit, such as meetings, outings and camps, upkeep and improvement of the Patrol corner and the Unit meeting place, games, songs, the way the Patrol system works and many others.



**Variable activities** might include, for example, learning how to recycle paper and grow plants hydroponically, setting up a puppet theatre for a children's centre, making an audio-visual production or conducting a photographic report or a travelling camp to different rural areas of cultural interest.



To be incorporated into the Patrol or Unit programme, a variable activity must be:

- challenging,
- useful,
- attractive and
- rewarding.



Any activity that represents a challenge, is useful for the young people's personal growth, attracts them and makes them feel that they have achieved something is an educational activity and therefore of interest to the Patrols and Unit.

## THE PROGRAMME MUST STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN FIXED AND VARIABLE ACTIVITIES



One of the keys to enriching *group life* in the Unit lies in building a programme of activities –with the active and responsible participation of the young people– which has a good balance between these two types of activities.





## FIXED ACTIVITIES

- Strengthen the Method by ensuring youth participation, collective decision-making and the tangible presence of the values.
- Contribute to creating the atmosphere in the Unit and give the young people typically “Scout” experiences.

## VARIABLE ACTIVITIES

- Ensure that the programme responds to the young people’s interests and concerns and project these onto diversity of the world.
- Are directly related to the needs of the community.

**This balance is planned first  
when the activities are pre-selected  
and then when they are organized,  
as we will see when we discuss the programme cycle.**

In fact, the fixed and variable activities are not either separate or antithetical. They are connected and a single activity may include both types.

A camp, for example, is basically a fixed activity, but it usually involves several variable activities too.

## **A PROGRAMME WITH TOO MANY FIXED ACTIVITIES AND NOT ENOUGH VARIABLE ONES**

Can make for a “closed” Unit, which is self-centred and isolated from the events around it. This does not prepare young people for life but for Scouting alone. It would be “Scout programme for Scouts” and not “Scout programme for young people”.

Can affect the young people’s harmonious development, making it difficult to assess their progress in the different growth areas, which is done specifically through the experiences generated by the variable activities.

May make the programme rather boring and prone to becoming obsolete very quickly.

## **ON THE OTHER HAND, A PROGRAMME WITH TOO MANY VARIABLE ACTIVITIES AND NOT ENOUGH FIXED ACTIVITIES**

Runs the risk of de-characterizing the Unit. It may well still be an attractive and useful “youth group”, but will have little “Scout flavour”, which would threaten the cohesion of the group and the young people’s sense of belonging.

Diminishes the overall educational impact of applying all the elements of the Scout Method together, as the atmosphere created by the continuity of the fixed activities will be lacking.

May turn the programme into activity for its own sake, in which the young people do not reflect about what they are doing and the group has difficulty in achieving stability.

## VARIABLE ACTIVITIES CAN BE DIVIDED INTO PATROL ACTIVITIES, UNIT ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS



*Patrol activities* are those carried out by a Patrol, which do not necessarily bear any relation to what the other Patrols are doing.

*Unit activities* are shared by the whole Unit, either because all the Patrols have decided to carry out the same activity in parallel or because they are undertaking specific tasks within an activity that involves all the Patrols. The frequency of Unit or *shared* activities should not interfere with the Patrol activities, which are a priority.

A *project* is a set of activities which forms part of a wider –and usually long-term– initiative. The Patrols undertake different and complementary activities in the effort to achieve a common objective.



**This distinction is important for the balance between the individual Patrol's internal life and its interaction with other Patrols.**

**It is also important for selecting and evaluating the activities. The Patrol selects and evaluates its own activities, while the Unit activities, like the projects, are *pre-selected* by the Unit Council, then *selected* by the Unit Assembly and finally evaluated by everyone.**



# THE FIXED ACTIVITIES

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## THE FIXED ACTIVITIES TEND TO HAPPEN IN A FAIRLY STANDARDIZED WAY

In practice, the fixed activities tend to happen in a fairly standardized way. Variations can arise, however, so it is a good idea to frequently review the way we do them, ask ourselves how we could improve them, vary them and generally avoid them becoming mere routine and losing their attractiveness and educational value.

We will go on to look at the main fixed activities.

### PATROL MEETINGS



**The Patrols meet at least once or twice a week, not just at weekends, since Scouts get together depending on their personal interests and the needs of each activity. One of these occasions usually coincides with the Unit meeting.**

The meetings can be held in the Patrol's own "corner", at the Unit meeting place, at the home of one of the Patrol members, at school, at the facilities of the religious community, at the place where an activity is being carried out, in camp or any place the young people choose that is suitable for the circumstances.

A Patrol meeting does not necessarily have to mean all of the members. Sometimes 2 or 3 of them may get together for specific tasks. This is what young people normally do with their friends.



Patrol meetings vary a good deal in content from one meeting to another. Their purpose may be to pre-select, select, prepare or evaluate activities; carry out an activity or part of it, work on one stage of a project, hold a Patrol Council meeting or assess progress. The members may also meet to arrange the Patrol corner, bring the Patrol Book up to date, sort out internal difficulties or simply for the pleasure of being together, chatting about everything and nothing without a formal agenda, as happens in any informal group.

## THE UNIT MEETING

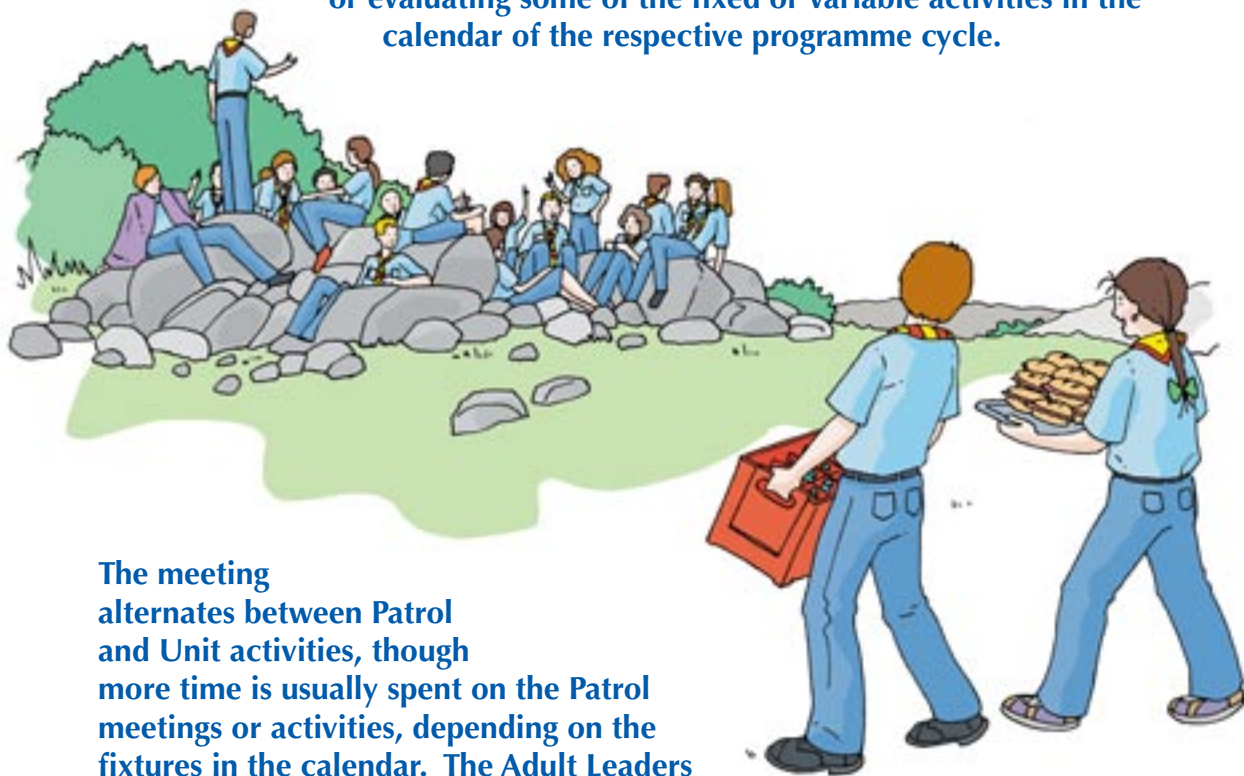


The Scout Unit meeting is usually held at weekends and can last about three hours.

It takes place in the Unit or Group meeting place if there is one, or at a venue provided by a community institution.

It begins punctually with a “greeting” or some brief symbolic gestures: raising flags, saying a prayer, singing a song or shouting out the Patrol yells. Then the main news is heard and the young people embark on the programme of activities to which the meeting will be devoted.

**Most of the available time is devoted to preparing, carrying out or evaluating some of the fixed or variable activities in the calendar of the respective programme cycle.**



**The meeting alternates between Patrol and Unit activities, though more time is usually spent on the Patrol meetings or activities, depending on the fixtures in the calendar. The Adult Leaders should be available during the time devoted to Patrol meetings or activities to provide support and monitor the young people individually and as a group. In some cases they may participate in the activities alongside the Scouts.**

As Patrols all differ in levels of experience, development, number of members, ages and probably gender, their activities may be very varied and have different time frames and rhythms. It is therefore possible, for example, that a Patrol might not be present at a given Unit meeting because it is on a weekend excursion. Also, a Patrol may well withdraw after the meeting has begun to complete an activity that it is conducting at another venue in the community.



The Adult Leaders must resist the temptation to try to standardize the Unit meetings. It must be remembered that the Unit is essentially a support organization for the Patrol system. The ideal way to run a Scout Unit is far from holding a gathering in which the small groups operate in unison, under the watchful eye of an Adult Leader and much less to the rhythm imposed by a whistle.

This does not mean that everyone does what they like at the meetings. Neither does it exempt the Adult Leaders from supervising, encouraging and providing support or overseeing safety. The point is that the structure of the meeting is flexible and is adapted to the calendar of activities approved by the Unit Assembly for the respective programme cycle.

When the activities are finished and before the meeting is closed, some time must be devoted to discharging routine and administrative tasks, such as cleaning the meeting place, updating the notice board or bringing records and fees up to date. The meeting may be closed in a similar way to the opening.

**A number of points need  
to be borne in mind to avoid  
the Unit meeting losing its significance:**



- The Unit meeting is not limited to a specific length of time. Every so often –ideally once a month– it can take a whole day, to accommodate a variable activity that needs more time.
- On some occasions –such as a long-term variable activity or a project– almost all the available time will be spent on that activity. More than a meeting, it will be a day's work.
- The requirements of the variable activities mean that sometimes the meeting will not be held at the Unit meeting place, but out in nature or elsewhere in the neighbourhood or town. This may involve individual Patrols or the whole Unit together, depending on the requirements of the calendar of activities.
- Activities and administrative tasks should be combined during the meeting. Try not to separate them into two blocks since this would have the effect of dividing the meeting into two parts: the interesting part and the boring part.
- In any event, the Unit meetings should always be very active. Meetings that are passive or have long gaps will make the participants lose interest.
- Unit meetings should not be limited to weekends, but can also take place on public holidays. Units sponsored by schools should avoid meeting only at school, at the end of the school day or even in school hours, since this would risk giving the false impression that Scouting is a school duty or just another school subject.

**Like all Scout activities, the excitement of meetings  
should never be allowed to wane.**

**They have to create a “buzz” that the young people  
will remember until the next meeting or activity.**

## CAMPS AND OUTINGS



**The camp is the most important fixed activity in a Scout programme of activities. The Scout Method does not make sense without life in the outdoors.**

Scouts usually camp between 3 and 6 times a year, trying to accumulate a total of at least 15 days. Depending on the season, camps can last from 2 to 5 days, except for the camp that finalizes a year of activities, which can last about 10 days.

**A camping calendar for the year could look like this:**



One 2-day camp or excursion during each programme cycle.



One 3 to 5-day camp in one of the non-principal vacation periods the Scouts have during the year. This may coincide with a change-over in programme cycle.



One camp lasting about 10 days, during the summer or the young people's longest vacation. Bear in mind that this camp concludes the "Scout year", and therefore closes a programme cycle and needs to include time for the different evaluation tasks.



Camping is an activity that involves other activities: fixed and variable activities that have been scheduled in the calendar of the respective programme cycle are conducted during camp, such as large-scale games, evening gatherings, campfires, celebrations, service activities, exploration and much more.





A camp is not just an extended version of the normal meeting. Neither should it be burdened with an overly hectic programme of activities. There should be opportunities for quiet and for contact with nature, and time for observing, resting and even lazing around. It is an opportunity to really live.

*Excursions*, by contrast, are shorter outings –lasting 1 or 2 days– and are therefore not considered “camps” in the true Scout meaning. Excursions are usually organized by Patrol and at any time of the year as programmed in the respective programme cycle.

### Camps and excursions:

- Take place in a natural environment which renews the immediacy of the symbolic framework: *exploring new territories with a group of friends*. The adventures that young people have in camp and on excursions place them in contact with dimensions that are new to them.
- Help the young people to develop their personal autonomy by exercising responsibilities and overcoming difficulties away from their family environment or usual surroundings.
- Strengthen the internal cohesion of the Patrols.
- Create a special environment that facilitates the achievement of each young person's personal objectives in all the growth areas.



### Camps enable young people to practise life in the outdoors, which is a fundamental element of the Scout Method.

Life in the outdoors has such an educational impact on the young people that nothing can replace the experience of Scout camps. On camping excursions, Scouts:

- Rediscover natural rhythms.
- Use their senses and develop their imagination.
- Lose their fear of the unknown.
- Discover the importance of showing solidarity and working as a team in an environment with limited resources.
- Experience life in simple and rudimentary conditions.
- Have experiences which are far removed from those of a town or city-dweller, especially in highly urbanized areas.
- Come face-to-face with themselves.
- Marvel at Creation and renew their questions or certainties about God.

There is no substitute for the experience of a night under the stars, the watch around the campfire, the birdsong of the early morning, observation of wildlife, the cosy feeling of sleeping in the Patrol tent or the sound of the wind in the forest.

## The Unit camp is organized to allow the Patrols to be as autonomous as possible



The Patrols camp at the same site, but far enough from each other and with enough space to carry out their activities independently. The Patrols set up, arrange and maintain their own camping areas, prepare their food and carry out their own activities in the times allocated to them.

Referring to the location of the Patrols in a Unit camp, Baden-Powell firmly advised that they should be “each in a separate tent and on a separate ground, so that the Scouts do not feel part of a big herd, but members of independent responsible units. Patrols should be kept intact under all circumstances” (*Headquarters’ Gazette*, June 1910).



For this reason, the choice of site is a key to the success of the camp. The site should provide independent and safe areas, and should be itself an enticement to discover and embark on adventures, in the midst of rich and varied natural surroundings that encourage exploration.



The Adult Leaders should camp in a section of their own, ideally equidistant from all the sectors in which the Patrols are camping. At mealtimes, they take turns to accept invitations from the Patrols. In long camps, the Team of Adult Leaders can also deal with aspects of the central supply of ingredients for the Patrols' meals.





During a long camp, each Patrol will make at least one excursion out of the area in which the whole Unit is camping. This outing may last from 24 to 48 hours. It is not just a long walk, but involves lots of exploration in nature and environmental observation, learning about the region and its inhabitants and, obviously, a degree of physical exertion.

This challenge means that each Patrol member needs to prepare in advance and use some of his or her knowledge and skills. The planning and the excursion itself should be carefully supervised by the Leaders, who must ensure that risks are minimized and, especially in the case of Patrols which have younger or inexperienced members, they may accompany the expedition.

**In camp or on outings no activity that could put the young people's health or safety at risk, frighten them or make them feel inhibited is allowed, even under the pretext of encouraging skills or self-mastery.**



## **GAMES AND PLAY**

Games and play may be viewed from two perspectives.

First, play may be considered as an attitude. From this perspective, play is an approach, a personal style and a way of doing things. It is a standpoint from which to observe and judge things, not gravely but with optimism and humour, allowing oneself to be surprised by life.



Given that this attitude comes naturally to young people, for them the Scout Method is one huge game which they make their own, and which constitutes Scouting's greatest attraction for them. This "playful attitude" is what makes boys and girls open up and be themselves uninhibitedly, which allows the Adult Leaders to get to know them better and identify the best way to support them.

Second, games may be viewed as an activity, as a spontaneous means of discovering oneself, others and the world. Playing entails experimenting, seeing how far you can go, venturing, striving and celebrating. Playing with others involves sharing, helping each other, getting organized, learning how to win and lose. From this perspective, play is a means of introduction to life in society since, like in everyday life, there are rules everyone must abide by.

Organized games attract young people most and are most conducive to learning. In organized games each participant has a responsibility to discharge, using his or her intelligence and skill. Each participant must concentrate on what he or she is doing, since if they become distracted, their team may lose out.



Through play young people learn that we cannot always win, that sometimes we have to put ourselves in someone else's place, control our physical impulses, contain ourselves and master the urge to interpret the rules to suit us. Likewise, the most skilful players have to share with the less able ones who, in turn, learn from their more practised colleagues. In games everyone, even those who are least skilful, shine at something in particular.

In adolescence games require physical strength and a degree of complexity that allows the young people to think and make their own decisions. That is why it is common for games to have a theme since, together with the physical activity, they require technical skill and tactical aspects to think up a plan and put it into action.

For the best educational results, games should generate the sensations of winning and losing alternately. A variety of styles of games with different types of demands is needed to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience the thrill of victory.



### For games to be successful, we must:

- Know lots of games or have plenty of material to draw on.
- Choose the right game for the occasion.
- Prepare what we need in advance.
- Set simple rules which allow no room for alternative interpretations, and explain them clearly at the right time: the young people need to know at the outset how the game is played and, if appropriate, how it is won or lost.
- Provide constant encouragement without the Adult Leaders becoming involved in the game.
- Not leave anyone out, unless they are "out" and, in that case, providing the rules of the game permit, they ought to be allowed to join in again quickly.
- Let the game run its course and not interrupt it without a good reason.
- Finish the game before the participants begin to lose interest, providing that the ending can be controlled (some games need to finish in their own time or the point is missed). A game that ends at the right time will be remembered with pleasure and people will look forward to playing it again.
- Make sure that respect is shown for the loser and the winner is given credit.
- Not play the same game too often.
- Evaluate the game, the performance of the participants and of those who were assigned organizational tasks.



Many handbooks and publications offer different kinds of games for young people which Scouts can play: for indoors and outdoors, short or long, involving ingenuity or physical effort, wide games for the city or games to be played out of doors at night.

However, none of these can replace the *personal games book*, in which Adult Leaders and Patrol Leaders each keep a record of the best games they have come across.



## STORIES, ANECDOTES, TALES



There is no particular special time to “tell stories” with adolescents. But between the ages of 11 and 15, young people are typically curious, love having adventures and revel in the pleasure of losing themselves in the unknown and the mysterious. They will always appreciate a historical account, a tasty anecdote or an impressive legend, especially if it has some bearing on things that are already in their minds thanks to the symbolic framework.

Stories are like the seasoning in a good recipe: too little is as bad as too much. That is why Leaders need to be alert to the opportunities that arise in everyday group life: when a meeting opens or closes, before setting off on an excursion, in camp before retiring for the night, during a breather in a long walk, during a long bus or train journey.

There are many occasions on which a wide repertoire of stories, anecdotes, tales and experiences will give an able Leader the opportunity to fire the young people's imagination and hold up values through testimonies, social models and situations that they can emulate or reject.

The young people themselves can invent stories for this repertoire. This encourages them to develop the creative habit of thinking up situations and allowing the magic to take over. The testimonies of explorers, inventors and scientists are almost always true stories, but there is nothing to prevent us drawing on fiction from the vast treasury of good universal literature, especially writing that is directed at young people.

Finally, it is a good idea to look once again at what we said about story-telling at the end of chapters 2 and 8, concerning the symbolic framework and the growth areas, respectively.

## SONG AND DANCE



Song and dance are very important to help young people develop artistic skills, learn to handle their body and socialize as a group.

Singing and dancing are activities that bring people together, help us to overcome inhibitions and raise our spirits. At this age there is usually someone who plays a musical instrument and can accompany the singing too.

Neighbouring Scout Units, Association activities and more experienced Leaders are good sources of Scout songs and dances. There are also a number of songbooks, which can help to broaden your personal repertoire. A Leader who strikes up a song at the most unexpected moment is encouraging his or her Unit to sing spontaneously whenever they feel like it. The counterpart to this is that if a Unit never sings, it is usually because the Leaders do not sing.



Songs and dances do not necessarily have to be “Scout” themes. Our region and country have a rich heritage of folk material to draw upon. The young people themselves will spontaneously come up with popular songs that are in tune with what interests them and the way they feel. And as they spend time with them, the Adult Leaders can add guidance to help them value the music and appreciate the contents of these themes.

Adolescence is an age that is particularly receptive to “festivals” and “competitions”, so it is always feasible to encourage activities with neighbouring Units or at the District level, in which different Units make presentations and compete in songs and dances.

## THE CAMPFIRE











In the Unit the *campfire* consists basically of an artistic gathering round the fire, which usually lasts about an hour to an hour and a half. It is “planned fun” which mixes songs, little sketches, short stories, dances and other artistic activities presented by the young people.



The campfire is usually organized on the occasion of an anniversary that is important for everyone, at the end of a programme cycle, on the last night of camp –during long camps more than one may be held– and other similar occasions.

### Some recommendations concerning the content of campfire activities

-  The programme must be prepared in advance. All the young people and their Patrols should participate in this, following the guidelines agreed upon at the Unit Council.
-  Every Scout should have a role in the campfire activities, whether in the organization, keeping up the general atmosphere or the artistic numbers presented by his or her Patrol.
-  The Patrols’ artistic numbers should be short, varied and in good taste.
-  Each Unit tends to evolve its own ritual for gathering the participants, lighting the fire and launching the activity. This gives the celebration flavour, tradition and a sense of belonging. Some Units vary these rituals each time.
-  Like the pace of the day, which begins full of cheer and motion, and then slows and calms toward the evening, the rhythm of the campfire progresses from expansive cheer to a reflective thoughtfulness. The most festive activities should thus be scheduled at the beginning and the quieter ones at the end, to conclude with a moment of reflection and prayer.
-  In camp, the end of the campfire coincides with the time when the young people are withdrawing to their Patrol areas to sleep, unless there is a brief interval to share a hot drink or refreshment around the embers.
-  Parents and family members can be invited when the campfire is held near home. Sometimes, however, the campfire needs to be a private Unit celebration.
-  The campfire can have a central theme around which the different acts take place: a legend, a historic event or recounting the camp anecdotes, for example.





As we have said, the campfire is held on special occasions and involves a certain degree of ritual. If all that is intended is to enjoy each other's company, then an *evening gathering* is sufficient. This can involve the Patrol or the whole Unit, and has no special venue requirements, does not need a fire and can even be used to prepare a campfire activity.

## AS BADEN-POWELL WARNED US, MARCHES AND PARADES ARE NOT SCOUT ACTIVITIES



Some readers may be surprised to find that certain fixed activities that are common in some Scout Groups are not mentioned here. For example, the marches and parades that were usual at one time.

As early as 1935, Scouting's Founder clearly warned leaders about these activities. The text below reflects Baden-Powell's recommendation of a programme of activities centred on the aspirations of the young people and on their education.

"I have often been asked by Adult Leaders –not by young people– to include more drill training in the scout programme; but although, after 34 years of military experience, I acknowledge the disciplinary value of drill, I am also very aware of its shortcomings. Briefly, these are:

Drill training gives lazy and unimaginative Leaders something to keep the young people busy, whether or not it appeals to them or really does them good. It saves this kind of Leader a world of trouble.

Drill is a matter of instruction, "hammering it into" the young people, and is by no means an education where they learn for themselves.

Drill tends to destroy individuality, while in Scouting we want to develop the individual personality. Once drill has been learned it bores a young person who is longing to be tearing about doing something more interesting; it blunts their enthusiasm."

(Taken from *Notes for Instructors*, annexed to the 17<sup>th</sup> British edition of *Scouting for boys*, 1935)

# VARIABLE ACTIVITIES

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## THE VARIABLE ACTIVITIES MUST BE CHALLENGING, USEFUL, REWARDING AND ATTRACTIVE

We have said that the variable activities can involve the most diverse subjects, depending basically on the young people's interests and the needs of the community in which the Scout Unit operates. The themes, or groups of themes, which appear most often among a Scout Unit's variable activities are:

- Manual techniques and skills
- Reflection, knowledge of oneself and of others
- Sport
- Different kinds of arts
- Knowledge and protection of nature
- Community service
- Family life
- Intercultural understanding
- Human rights and democracy
- Education for peace and development



The fact that these are the most common themes for variable activities does not in any way rule out other areas which may be of interest to the young people or relevant to their surroundings. Nevertheless, we must remember that, in accordance with its educational method, Scouting affords priority to those that are related to play, service and nature.



The only requirement is that the activities we propose must be **challenging, rewarding, useful and attractive**.



**Challenging** means that they must involve a challenge in proportion to the young people's abilities, which stimulates them to do better.

An activity which requires less effort than the young people are capable of does not add to their abilities nor does it encourage the development of new knowledge, attitudes or skills.

If, on the other hand, the challenge is way beyond their abilities and level of maturity, the young people are likely to lose heart and will not achieve the desired behaviour.



**Useful** means that the activities must aim to generate experiences that are conducive to real learning.

To be considered educational, activities on the spur of the moment, ones that are just fun, repetitive or full of action are not enough. They have to target personal development, in other words they must offer the opportunity to practise one of the desired behaviour patterns proposed in their personal objectives.



**Rewarding** means that they should give the young people the feeling that they will achieve something through the activity, either because there is some advantage to be gained or because they will satisfy some kind of need or longing.



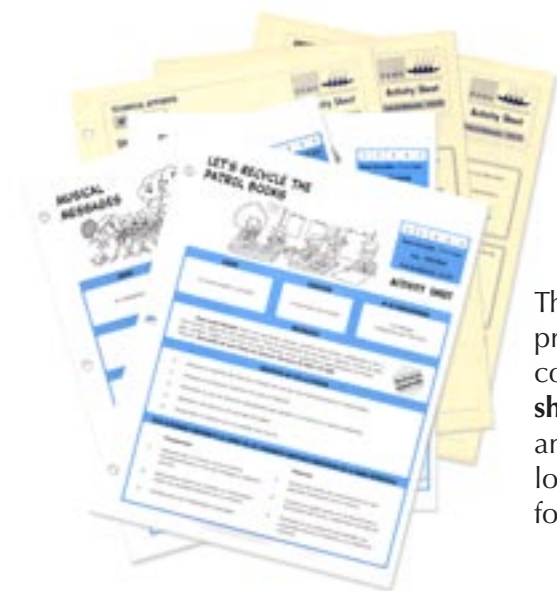
**Attractive** means that each activity must awaken the young people's interest and enthusiasm. This might simply be because they like it, because it is original or because they feel committed to a value that is implicit in it.

**We must check for these four conditions  
when we pre-select and select the activities,  
as we will see in chapter 12.**

## **ACTIVITY SHEETS AND TECHNICAL APPENDICES HELP TO FIND AND THINK UP ACTIVITIES**



The Association provides a wide, constantly renewed and updated range of **activity sheets** and **technical appendices**. Adult Leaders and Patrol Leaders will find these very useful for locating ideas for variable activities that meet the four requirements outlined above.





For the purposes of organization, the **activity sheet** has a name and indicates the growth area which it benefits most in terms of the types of behaviour the activity helps to develop.

Next, the activity sheet indicates where the activity is best carried out, how long it lasts, how many participants it involves, how they take part and what they will need for the activity.

It also indicates the objectives the activity is intended to achieve and the specific educational objectives it contributes to. It then describes the activity itself and gives some hints on making the most of it.

When the activity requires particular technical knowledge that the Leaders might not normally be expected to have, this is summarized in one or more **technical appendices**. These provide the information in an accessible way and avoid the Leaders having to consult large volumes of material or researching different sources.

*Activity sheets and technical appendices are support tools which stimulate the imagination and offer a variety of possible alternatives. Every so often a publication comes out with a certain number of sheets and appendices, offering a wide repertory of activities to carry out in a single volume.*

These instruments are by no means intended to dispense with the creativity of the young people and the Adult Leaders, who must never stop creating activities of their own inspired by their own surroundings. But the most creative people know that to make new things it is essential to have lots of information to draw on.





## VARIABLE ACTIVITIES DIFFER IN DURATION



How long the variable activities last is highly relative:



There are *spontaneous* or *instantaneous* activities which are almost always “surprise activities” and are intended to capture the young people’s attention, create a moment of fun or fill up some unforeseen spare time. All Patrol Leaders and Adult Leaders need to have a ready stock of such activities since experience shows that they will always be needed. Some can take the form of a game or be accompanied by music.





*Short-duration* activities usually take up a single Patrol or Unit meeting (for example, each Patrol makes a TV commercial to promote an article of the Law, and acts it out “live” through a large simulated screen); and *medium-duration* activities can last two to three weeks (for example: after learning a method for recycling paper, the young people make the Patrol Book with sheets they have made themselves).



*Long-duration* activities may last over a month or even a whole programme cycle, or take several days during a camp (for example: choose a melody, compose a song, make the instruments to play it, organize a festival, present the songs and choose the winning number). In this case, all the Patrols are engaged on the same activity, but work separately.



*Projects* are medium or long-duration type activities which involve a set of complementary activities undertaken by the Patrols in order to achieve a common objective (for example, to prepare a Christmas party in a home for the elderly, which involves making gifts, preparing artistic numbers, decorating the venue, coordinating with the management of the establishment, obtaining resources and many other tasks). In this case, the Patrols carry out different activities which all contribute to the success of the same enterprise.

### The length of an activity is relevant to its planning and to the young people’s and leaders’ participation in proposing, selecting and planning it.



**Spontaneous** activities do not need to be planned or included in the calendar of activities. They are normally proposed by the Patrol Leader or Assistant Patrol Leader or by the Adult Leader running the meeting.



**Short-duration** activities need to be taken into account in the programme cycle planning, but an activity of this type may also be set up to replace another that could not be carried out due to unforeseen circumstances. In the first case the participation of the young people in proposing and selecting it is obviously greater than the second, in which the Patrol Leader or Assistant Patrol Leader or the Adult Leader in charge brings the activity out of his or her stock for these situations.



**Medium and long-duration activities** are the most frequent ones in the Scout Unit. These stem from proposals of the young people through their Patrols and require lots of support from the Leaders in planning, which must be done very carefully.



Medium and long-duration activities can turn into **projects**, if they require a combination of different types of complementary activities.





## VARIABLE ACTIVITIES CAN FOLLOW EACH OTHER OR RUN IN PARALLEL



The variable activities can run *successively*, meaning that the next activity is not started until the previous one is finished. But given the nature of some medium and long-term activities, two or more activities often run at the same time.

This could happen, for example, if the Patrol is conducting an activity that requires action to be carried out beforehand or at the same time by other Patrols or by third parties. It may also happen when an activity requires a certain length of time between stages. For example, if the Patrols are experimenting with hydroponics, the plants need time to germinate. While they are waiting for the plants to grow, the Patrols will naturally carry out other activities too.

The coexistence of *simultaneous* variable activities during a programme cycle gives the work diversity and continuity and is part of the attraction of group life in the Unit. There is always something “going on”, which means that there is less possibility of the young people getting bored and they always have outlets for their time and energy.

The only difficulty with this system is that the Adult Leaders and Patrol Leaders need to take greater care over the planning process. This is why the *programme cycle* is so important.





## ACTIVITIES ARE USUALLY CONDUCTED JOINTLY, BUT SOME MAY BE INDIVIDUAL

Although the experiences and the achievement of personal objectives are essentially individual things, the fixed and variable activities are almost always done in groups and involve the whole Patrol or the Unit together.



However, certain *fixed activities* are carried out individually, such as joining the Unit, performing a responsibility in the Patrol, making the Promise, receiving a badge for a progress stage, doing a good turn, keeping up one's Log, moving up to the next Section and a few others that we have already mentioned or will discuss in the coming pages.



Certain *variable activities* are also carried out individually, such as back-up activities, personal tasks within a group activity and proficiencies.



*Back-up activities* are specific tasks within or outside the Patrol, which are suggested to a young person by the Patrol or by the monitoring Adult Leader, in order to acquire experiences which will help him or her to *reinforce* a type of behaviour which has been difficult to achieve.

These activities are not normally linked to the rest of the Patrol or Unit activities and they do not require to be planned or carried out within a given programme cycle. They arise from the ongoing dialogue between the young person in question and the other Patrol members, the Patrol Leader or the monitoring Adult Leader.



*Personal tasks within a group activity* are the small individual tasks that each young person is required to carry out to help achieve a common objective, and need no further explanation.



The *proficiencies* are important enough for us to look at in more detail.

# PROFICIENCIES



**A *proficiency* is a particular area of knowledge or skill.**



**PROFICIENCIES  
DEVELOP  
INNATE SKILLS**

In order to become *proficient* you need to be dedicated and spend time studying and practising. But everyone has to start somewhere, and we often start thanks to someone or something that stimulates us in a certain direction. Unfortunately, not all young people have the opportunity or can take advantage of it and it is common to hear people say that they would have liked to do or be something in particular, but they never had the opportunity to try, or circumstances did not allow them to.

***Proficiencies* are intended to provide that starting point. They are intended to encourage young people to acquire and practise skills in specific areas, develop innate abilities and explore new hobbies. As a result, they raise young people's self-esteem through the confidence that comes with having a skill.**



**PROFICIENCIES  
ARE VOLUNTARY,  
INDIVIDUAL  
AND SUPPORTED  
BY A MONITOR**

In the Scout Unit young people are encouraged to develop and acquire proficiencies, but the decision to do so is entirely their own. They are also free to choose the subject, which they can suggest themselves on the basis of their own interests or choose from a list provided by the Association or Unit.





Proficiencies are pursued individually, at different times, outside the usual Unit meetings. Their duration depends on the subject chosen, but they may last from 2 to 6 months. This period is independent of the Unit's programme cycle and need not coincide with it.

A monitor provides support for the young person in the development of a proficiency. This may be one of the Adult Leaders who knows enough about the respective subject or a qualified person who is appointed by the Team of Leaders. The Leaders must be reliably informed about the professional suitability and moral integrity of any outside people who are nominated for this task. Monitors have a direct relationship with the young people and the leaders must be absolutely certain that this relationship will be strictly an educational one.



## THE OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF PROFICIENCIES ARE FLEXIBLE

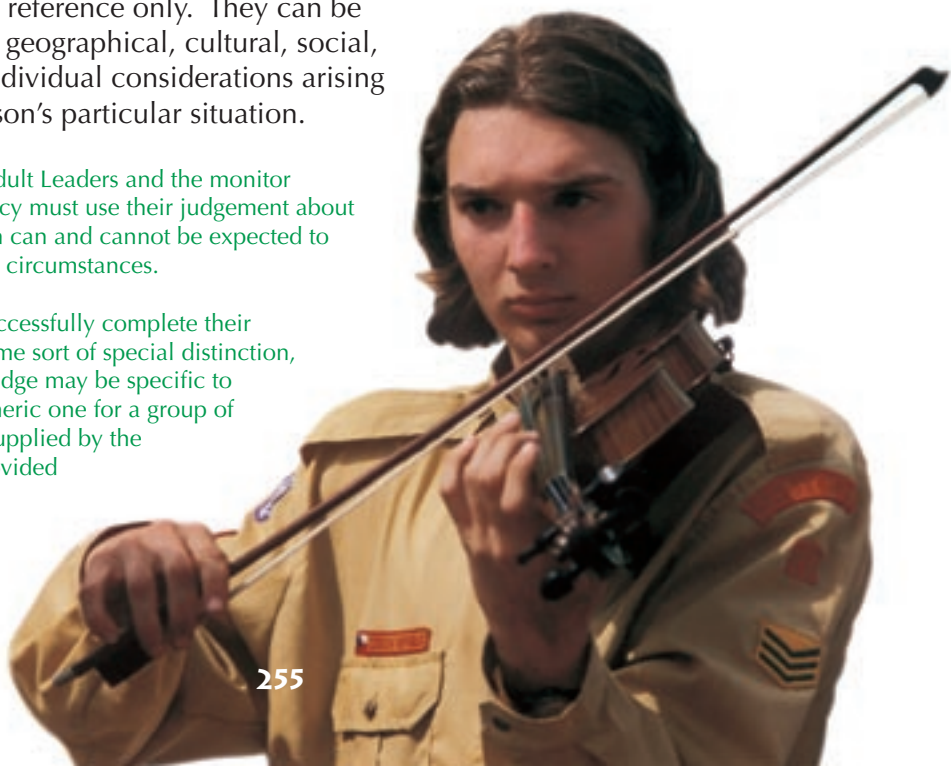


Once the young person has chosen a proficiency and a monitor has been found, the monitor, young person and the Adult Leader responsible for following his or her progress agree upon the *objectives* for the proficiency, the *actions* involved in developing it and the *requirements* for approving it.

Even when the proficiency is chosen from a pre-established list in which these things are defined, it is a good idea to review them in the light of each individual case. The *objectives*, *actions* and *requirements* in these lists, which define the level of achievement the young person is expected to attain, should be used as a reference only. They can be adapted to different geographical, cultural, social, financial or other individual considerations arising from the young person's particular situation.

The Team of Adult Leaders and the monitor overseeing the proficiency must use their judgement about what each young person can and cannot be expected to achieve in a given set of circumstances.

Scouts who successfully complete their proficiencies receive some sort of special distinction, usually a badge. The badge may be specific to that proficiency or a generic one for a group of proficiencies. Badges supplied by the Association or those provided at the international level can be used for the proficiencies.



## PROFICIENCIES INVOLVE EXPLORATION, DISCOVERY, ACTION AND SERVICE TO OTHERS



A proficiency provides the opportunity to explore a new field of knowledge, learn about the subject chosen, put it into action and carry out some service using the new knowledge. The most important thing is having the opportunity to do things, and learning from the experience gained as a result.

Since we need a certain amount of information to do things, the young person is first encouraged to *seek out information* for him or herself. The young people are thus encouraged to learn for themselves through the things that they do, or plan to do.

The monitor encourages this search for information by introducing the subject, stimulating the young person to make new discoveries and helping him or her to draw conclusions from the process. Exceptionally, and only if the self-informing process has proven insufficient, the monitor may provide *knowledge* directly.

For the same reason, the requirements for recognizing proficiency can only be assessed on the basis of what the young person has actually done. A *photographer* who exhibits the photos he has taken or an *actress* who presents a sketch at the campfire both demonstrate far more about what they have achieved than they would with the right answers about measuring light or the techniques of body language.

The assessment will be better still if the young person can demonstrate, apart from how the proficiency has enabled him or her to *do things*, ways in which these things constitute a *useful service* to other people. The *photographer* could illustrate the problem of litter in the local area and the *actress* could take part in a play in a home for the elderly. This helps adolescents to experience the sensation of deepening their social integration through learning for themselves and for others. The proficiency badge thus bears witness to the young expert's willingness to serve others in the field of his or her proficiency.



## PROFICIENCIES COMPLEMENT PERSONAL PROGRESS



Each young person's educational objectives are like a central axis along which the personality develops, while the proficiencies are like a helix around that axis. At any point on the axis a proficiency adds depth to the development process: an extra effort on the part of the young person which complements and adds value to the overall educational process.

Since there is an almost endless variety of proficiencies, they can be used to reinforce the educational objectives in all the growth areas, not to mention that most of the proficiencies develop attitudes and skills that span several growth areas.

For example, a young person might decide to do an extra proficiency to obtain the "gardener's badge", inspired by an activity which has highlighted the value of plant life in the environment. The process of acquiring the skills that go with this proficiency takes the young person far deeper into the social development educational objectives which have to do with environmental conservation. But, at the same time, acquiring the proficiency demands dedication that will have an influence on character and spending time outdoors will have a positive impact on physical development.

## PROFICIENCIES INCREASE THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S NEED FOR PERSONAL ATTENTION



In order to help young people to decide on and develop a proficiency, the Adult Leaders need to know more about their interests, skills and possibilities, which means spending even more time with them, listening to them even more than usual and forging closer links with the family and other adults who are involved in their education. The close relationship between a Patrol and the Adult Leader responsible for monitoring the personal development of its members is key to increasing this knowledge about each young person.

By the same token, the very fact that most of the Scouts in the Unit will be working on a proficiency at any given time increases the need for personalized follow-up and making the most of the Adult Leaders' time, all of which requires good forward planning.



## PROFICIENCIES CAN BE GROUPED INTO SETS



Since the proficiencies deal with objective subject areas, they can readily be grouped into sets by fields of knowledge or activity.

Below are some examples of sets and three proficiencies that might be included in each. The general content of each proficiency is described briefly. Other examples of possible proficiencies are also given for each set.

### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

#### ELECTRONICS

Encouraging and developing the ability to make or repair everyday electronic equipment, for music, photography, video, computing, measuring or remote control, using the most common tools and instruments of this science.

#### BOOK-BINDING

Acquiring the skills needed to bind books, booklets or documents and restore books that are in poor condition, using the most common tools and materials of this profession and employing different methods.



#### DESSERT PREPARATION

Learning the skills needed to follow a recipe and prepare desserts and sweets for different situations at home or in camp.

#### OTHER POSSIBILITIES

Astronomy, boat maintenance, car mechanics, carpentry, chemistry, computing, electricity, geology, glass-making, household repairs, masonry, mineralogy, model-making, photography, plumbing, printing, saddlery.

## ART, EXPRESSION AND CULTURE

### MUSIC

Acquiring the skill to play a musical instrument, building up a varied repertoire and using this skill to enliven activities in the Unit and other environments.

### VIDEO

Learning skills for producing, recording, editing and presenting documentaries or simple stories to a young audience using this means of expression.

### WOODCARVING

Developing the skill to express oneself through carvings of three-dimensional objects or relief-work, using the most common carving tools and helping to decorate one's living and working spaces.

### OTHER POSSIBILITIES

Architectural modelling, basket-weaving, coin-collecting, drawing and painting, folklore, graphic design, journalism, knitting and embroidering, oratory, pottery, radio-broadcasting, reading, religious art, sculpture, singing, stamp-collecting, theatre and acting.



## SPORTS

### MODEL AEROPLANES

Acquiring the skill to build small-scale model aeroplanes, fly them and present them at exhibitions or competitive activities.

### MOUNTAINEERING

Learning to conduct excursions in mountainous areas or rocky, forested, snowy or icy terrain; and taking part in mid-mountain treks and simple climbs, using the correct safety procedures.

### FISHING

Acquiring the skill to use fishing equipment to catch different species of one's own region, applying rules of personal safety and environmental conservation.

### OTHER POSSIBILITIES

Archery, athletics, baseball, basketball, cricket, cycling, fencing, football, handball, horse-riding, netball, rowing, sailing, skating, skiing, swimming, tennis, volleyball.

## SERVICE TO OTHERS

### NURSERY CARE

Developing the ability to care for small children in different situations, dealing with their basic food, hygiene, clothing and recreation needs.

### NEEDLE AND THREAD

Acquiring the skill of helping out at home and in the Patrol, using dressmaking tools and materials to make or repair everyday fabric articles.

### TRAFFIC SAFETY

Learning the skill of preventing hazards during journeys on foot or by bicycle and helping in situations of congestion or risk.

### OTHER

### POSSIBILITIES

Care of natural parks, care of the disabled, care of the elderly, fire prevention and fighting, first aid, interpreting, life guard skills, mountain safety, public health and hygiene, recycling, religious ministry, rescue skills, safety, signalling and transmission, teaching literacy, tourism, urban orientation.

## LIFE IN NATURE

### COOKING

Acquiring the skills to prepare simple, tasty and nutritious meals for one's Patrol, especially on outings and camps.

### REARING ANIMAL SPECIES

Learning to attend to the feeding and tending of species which can be kept in small spaces; and undertaking to raise the young of one of these species for a certain time.

### ORIENTATION IN NATURE

Developing the skills to pinpoint one's location and route on excursions by using maps, a compass and the natural methods of orientation.

### OTHER POSSIBILITIES

Bee-keeping, botany, camping skills, conservation, dairy-making, entomology, forestation, gardening, horticulture, marine life, ornithology, pet care, poultry raising, stalking and tracking, wildlife, woodcrafts, zoology.

The above paragraphs mention over 100 possible proficiencies, but these are just some alternatives. There are plenty more on the list of proficiencies published by the Association. Any list can be expanded and adapted according to the interests, needs and possibilities of the young people, as well as their geographical, cultural and social circumstances.

