

Still More for Patrols

Robb Baker The Leader, June/July 1989

Last issue, we offered a series of warm weather ideas for patrol activities and signed off with a suggestion that patrol leaders add an element of mapping to some of their outdoor expeditions. This month's offerings follow through with ideas for practicing map-reading skills, as well as other activities to challenge patrols during the summer.

Mapping Mistakes: Draw an enlarged section of an imaginary topographical map and introduce various errors such as incorrectly numbered contour lines, rivers going uphill, upside down trees, and the like. Ask patrol members to look at the map for two minutes and then, individually, list the mistakes. Who gets them all?

Cross-Country Expedition: Organize the patrol into two groups. Give each a separate course of map references and compass directions to follow. Include in the course roads, paths, creeks, and the like. To add extra interest to the activity, give the Scouts various jobs to do en route or plant treasures along the way.

Missing Squares: Give the patrol a topographical map of their local area from which you have removed three 1,000 square metre sections. The patrol's job is to explore the area and, from their observations, restore the missing sections of the map.

Triangle Trip: Select an area bounded by three map references. Go out to locate the area. Study and compare it to the way the topographical map represents it. Other ideas are to study the natural life in the area or devise a game the patrol can play within the bounds of the mapped area.

Night Drop: Arrange to have blindfolded patrol members driven to an unfamiliar area and dropped off. After they remove their blindfolds on arrival, supply them a topographical map of the area and a compass. Their job is to work out their exact position on the map and the best route to hike back. Plan a back-up system to help Scouts who get lost or find themselves in other difficulties.

As their ability grows, Scouts begin to get keen on stalking, tracking and following trails. Sharpen their appetites with one or two of the stunts that follow. Talk about the theory of the thing only after they've been out trying it. If you begin with a talk first, you'll dull their interest.

Blindfold Trail: Get a large ball of twine and set a trail using the twine to mark your route. Lead it around trees, bushes, and the like, and make it reasonably difficult to follow. Blindfold patrol members and send them off to follow the trail by following the twine.

Chalk Trail: Make a trail by marking trees, lamp posts and the like with white or coloured chalk and set the patrol loose. Another idea is to organize the patrol into two groups, one to set the trail and the other to follow it.

Nature Trail: Lay a nature trail using predetermined signs such as knotted grass, stones in various formations, twigs, and the like. Study some of the older Scout books for Scout trail signs or adopt signs used by native North Americans. You can combine the trails with treasure hunts to add some spice.

Weather study is a very full subject on which you can spend quite a bit of time. The topic also calls for a little research by the Scouts.

Pressure: Illustrate air pressure by showing its effect on coloured water in a piece of clear plastic tubing. If you close one end of the tube with your thumb, you can change the water level by moving the tube. When you remove the thumb, the water finds its own level because of air pressure.

Clouds: Show the different cloud types using their family names (stratus, cumulus, cirrus) plus the two Latin descriptive words alto (high) and nimbus (dark). Prepare a table that includes photographs to show the type of weather associated with each cloud type. Make two sets of cards, one with weather descriptions, the other with cloud types, and use the cards for a matching up game or competition.

Weather Maps: Learn how to read weather maps and explain them to your patrol. Relate them to the weather maps that appear in the local newspaper and on television.

Weather Station: Set up a patrol weather station. Include a barometer to measure air pressure, a thermometer to measure temperature, a weather house that shows humidity, an anemometer to measure wind speed, a wind vane to show wind direction, and a rain gauge. Keep a record of your readings over a three month period.

Games are an important part of outdoor activities, adding fun and variety to liven up the day. Try a few of these ideas.

Stick Pull: Two Scouts sit facing each other with the soles of their feet touching. They both grasp a strong stick between them and, on signal, pull. The first to lift the other guy's buttocks off the ground is the winner.

Nerve Test: Have each member of the patrol try this challenge in turn. Blindfold a Scout and ask him to walk six paces forward and drive a tent peg lightly into the ground. Still blindfolded, ask him to return to his start point, turn around, walk back to the peg, and drive it in deeper.

Blind Spider: On an overhanging tree limb, tie one rope for each Scout in your patrol. Every Scout takes hold of a different rope. Blindfold one - the spider who, on signal, tries to tag the others. A tagged Scout or one who drops his rope to escape retires from the game. Give each Scout a certain amount of time to be the spider. The player who tags the most bait is the winner.

Rope Swing: For this energetic game, you need two thick climbing ropes and a tree or two. Fix the ropes to the branch of a tree with an interval of about one metre between them. Tie a big knot at the end of each rope so that it hangs about a metre from the ground. This is a challenge for two Scouts at a time. They can begin by standing on a log or rock with rope in hand to jump- start a swing, or simply leap up, grab on and start swinging. The object is to try to unseat the Scout on the other rope. They may climb onto their opponent's rope if they can. A player is out as soon as any part of his body touches the ground.

Enjoy the summer with your patrol. Try out these ideas and work together to create some activities of your own so that, when regular meetings begin again this fall, you'll be well prepared to challenge the other patrols in your troop.