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A Hiking we will go!

Velma Carter, The Leader, April 1976

There's nothing like a fine spring day to bring out the wanderlust in all of us. And what better way to satisfy this feeling than by planning a great outdoor activity, like a hike, for your group?

Hikes provide an excellent opportunity to take time out on the trail to quietly look and listen--to appreciate the realities and contrasts of our environment.

Since hikes must have a purpose, besides getting from point A to point B, they should be carefully planned in advance. Many times the spur-of-the-moment How about a hike this Saturday? will result in a wasted day due to lack of foresight and planning.

Spontaneous enthusiasm, however, should be used to its best advantage. Get your group to help with the planning. Have them help choose a theme or to combine several themes. Let their imaginations roam, corralling the impracticable.

Depending on your group, their ages and interests, hikes can range from easy training in the outdoors (simple nature observation, fire-building and cooking a light meal) to more challenging excursions that include building a bridge across a stream, constructing a shelter or dealing with (unexpected but planned) accident simulation.

Once you've chosen the type of hike you'll go on, make an outline with the boys. Include the destination, schedule and, if possible, a mapped route. Your schedule should include departure time, estimated arrival time, allotted time for cooking, cleaning up, rest stops and approximate time of return. It should, however, be realized, that the schedule is not 'iron tight' and there is room for spontaneous changes in plans. Leave a copy with someone who is staying behind in case of an emergency.

If this is the first hike of the year, prepare your group during the meetings before the scheduled date. Go over the hiking section in your leaders' handbook for ideas. Scouts can re-read their Canadian Scout Handbook for tips on hiking such as proper footwear, safety, clothing and other items they may have overlooked.

Stress the necessity of proper equipment, its care and use. For groups who will be backpacking, see *The Canadian Leader*, April 1972, Most of Canada Beckons, for tips and diagrams on backpacking.

During the meeting before the hike, go over the type of clothing that should be worn, reminding the boys about raincoats or ponchos, suitable shoes, sweaters or jackets. If it rains and your group is prepared, no one will mind a little inclement weather. If your theme requires added items such as wrist watches, plastic bottles or magnifying glasses, this is your

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chance to remind your group. Finally, check that first aid kit!

No group should set out on a hike without proper first aid supplies.

No one should begin a hike on an empty stomach and supplying energy on the trail is just as important. Your first consideration in choosing your food should be nutrition; then food, light in weight but giving the proper nutrients and finally, the ease of preparing a meal. Two of your options are dehydrated foods or food pre-measured and pre-packed at home. Avoid carbonated drinks and milk. 'Quick energy' foods such as raisins, apples and dates are handy to carry in reserve.

It's a good idea to have your group meet at one point and start off together. Since a hike is not a race, make sure there are frequent and short rest stops. This gives the boys a chance to look around and enjoy nature, the weather (in most cases) and the company. Spring is one of the most interesting seasons for hikers because there are such contrasts to be seen, heard and smelled.

If yours is a young group, suggest games to be played along the way to prevent boredom. This can include signalling, first aid, collecting, tracking or observation. Keep the rules of the games simple, thus saving you from trying to gather the group together again to explain the rules.

Hold a Bike Hike

A bike hike is an exciting project that any pack or troop can plan -- the length depending on the experience and stamina of the boys.

Start by planning a one-day hike--this can lead to weekend jaunts as everyone's conditioning improves. Light, ten-speed bikes are ideal for this type of event but you'd be surprised at the durability of a properly cared for, single-speed bike.

Keep the bike hike fun. A long, tiring trip will dampen everyone's enthusiasm for another. When choosing a destination -- a zoo, museum, campsite or historical site--keep everyone's ability and bike in mind. Check road maps for less travelled side roads that offer pleasant scenery and for approved bike paths. Plan to start and finish in daylight hours, keeping daily travel to ten or 15 miles -- but don't be afraid to modify this according to your group's ability.

Each boy should travel light--with rain gear, lunch, a water bottle or flask and personal gear. Proper clothing is important. Lightweight, close-fitting clothing saves weight and reduces effort. Layer sweaters and windbreakers. They can be worn or removed to fit the temperature of the day. Cycling shoes, soft soled casual shoes or sneakers enable easy foot action.

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Have the boys share the tools, pump, first aid kit and extra tires (unless someone is to follow by car). Have everyone carry his own small pack rather than one individual carry it all. When packing, distribute the weight evenly. Keep it as low as possible. The higher the weight, the higher the centre of gravity and the more unstable the bike will become. For this reason don't advise backpacks. Try bicycle saddle bags or a day hike bag.

Hold a planning meeting. Use a map so that every one knows where they are going and what to expect. If possible, give a copy to each boy. Time should be allowed for stops, little emergencies like a flat tire or a spur-of-the-moment snack break.

Review the rules of the road.

While on the road, keep the riders in single file on the extreme right of the road. It would be wise to have the last cyclist carry a warning sign for motorists signifying a procession of cyclists. Space patrols or sixes at least 100 yards apart to avoid the danger of bunching large groups of cyclists. Maintain a bicycle-length between each bike. Increase the interval to ten lengths while going downhill. Don't hesitate to walk up some of the steeper hills. The idea is to cover ground steadily--not to engage in a series of breathless sprints.

Never start a ride on an empty stomach. Eat sparingly at the first signs of hunger or drink lightly before getting thirsty.

Here are a few suggestions that each boy can carry or wear:

- windbreaker or jacket
- cap, hat or (for long hair) headband
- sunglasses
- raincoat or poncho
- sunburn lotion, lip balm
- small first aid kit

Here are a few theme ideas to use on your hikes. Inventing imaginative titles will win the enthusiasm of the boys:

Soil Detection

- Find as many examples of soil erosion in the community, camp or the edge of town, as you can. (Prepare the boys before the hike so that they will recognize the signs of erosion on the trail).

- Examples: bare patches of soil, muddy creeks, streams or rivers
- Take along plastic or glass containers and collect water from a muddy stream, or river. Let the water evaporate and see what is left.

Beeline Hike

- Hike along a compass bearing without deviating from the course, no matter what obstacles are in the way--a stream, bluff or building. The idea is to go around the obstacles and still hit the objective.

Historic Hike

- Hike along a historic trail or hike to a historic spot or museum.
- Study the history of the destination before the hike and pass it long to the boys or have little quizzes if they have been prepared.

Conservation

- Take a commonly used trail or for a spur-of-the-moment idea, the one you're on.
- Clean it up and get rid of hazards like loose rocks that might cause a sprained ankle; barbed wire; dead overhanging branches that might fall in a heavy wind; rotted planks and boards in steps and bridges that can be replaced; broken bottles and bottle caps.

Cooking without Utensils

- Each boy plans his own meal and method of preparing the food.
- Suggest aluminum foil, flat rocks, kabobs, twist on a stick, steak on coals, potatoes baked in mud, corn on the cob cooked in the husks, etc.
- Remember, no canned goods or prepared meats like weiners.
