

Last month, in the article A Hiking We Will Go, we featured ideas on planning hikes for your group, with several themes to start you off. This month we have included seven more ideas that will help during the hiking season.

The first hikes of the season are important ones. They help condition and prepare the members of your group for more strenuous and exciting excursions later on in the year. After the long winter, not everyone is in top physical condition and so, it is an excellent idea to start with a Fitness Hike, the idea being to see just what each boy's capabilities are and how they can improve.

First, determine the ideal weight each boy should be able to handle according to past physical prowess. Then fill the packs to that weight with items, such as rocks and wood, that can be thrown away without disturbing the ecological balance. Now you're ready for the hike.

After awhile on the trail, the packs will seem heavier to the boys. When they feel they are tiring, they should start to unload their packs -- not all the weight at once, just a bit at a time -- until it feels comfortable and they can continue.

The hike route should not be too strenuous at first, but rather similar, if not the same to trails you intend to use later on.

On this hike, the boys will become aware of their limits without returning home exhausted and sore.

Be sure they understand this is a conditioning program and not an endurance test. The boys will also realize the value of proper footwear and clothing while hiking.

Once they are ready to pack their kits with real equipment you can include a brief demonstration on packing.

Using a list of all the essentials for the hike, start by filling the bottom corners of the pack with the items needed last -- and least. The items needed first and most often should be on top. If there are outside pockets, these are ideal for the first aid kit, snacks or matches. Pack the soft items so they will be against the back.

No Compass Hike

This hike tests the ability of the members to find directions without a compass.

Preparation before the hike includes instruction on finding compass directions using the sun, stars and nature's own compasses. If it's cloudy or overcast, neither the sun nor stars can be seen and the boys will have to rely on the clues that Indians and early scouts used, such as:

- Scars and blemishes in the bark of poplar trees occur more frequently on the south side than the north side of these trees.

- Moss is more apt to grow on the north side than the south side of trees. Special care should be taken if the trees are in dense woods since the constant shade is apt to cause moss on the south side to be equally heavy as the north. For more clues have the boys re-read the Canadian Scout Handbook, page 83 or prepare other resource material for them.

While on the trail, each group leader should carry a compass and every so often ask the members to stop and indicate a given direction without using a compass. This also keeps everyone on the right track.

Lost Child Hike

This hike can also be called a lost pilot, missing hunter or even a lost Scouter hike, depending on your locale and surrounding territory. It's not the title but the realism of the experience that counts here.

Prepare the boys by giving them some background information of the situation. When was the lost child/hunter/pilot last seen? What direction was he/she heading? And other ideas to add to the sense of adventure.

Before setting out, announce whatever necessary equipment will be needed. In lost person searches, the searchers are usually called into action using a mobilization plan. You can set up your own plan according to the number of searchers in your group using a relay system or any other you may have devised. For realism, have a few walkie-talkies on hand. Go over the plan of action with the boys. Stress communication points. For example, if one member can't be reached, bypass him and contact the others he was supposed to call.

A dummy is ideal for this event. It can be prepared from burlap sacks stuffed with straw, hay or any other filling. Put a shirt or other piece of clothing over the dummy, so the boys will realize they have found the real thing.

Place the dummy in a spot before the mobilization call. It should be located in an area that will prove interesting and challenging to the searchers. Set up clues such as footprints or bits of torn clothing to help lead the searchers to the dummy.

When the searchers have been assembled by the mobilization call, organize them into a search party, reminding them of the possibility of clues. The search area should be marked on a map and copies of it distributed to the searchers. Recall signals should be agreed upon so that the search doesn't continue after the dummy has been found.

A Ten-Miler

A ten-miler hike is a great eye-opener for every member of your group. It enables each boy to plan

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and pack his own backpack, choose his own menu and what he will wear to ensure comfort on the trail.

A problem in setting the route in many larger cities is that it takes more than five or ten miles to reach a campground outside city limits. In this case you might consider a park, approximately five miles away that allows overnight camping, having the boys hike the distance one day and complete the ten miles upon returning. Or you can arrange to have the group driven to within five miles of your campsite and let them hike to it. They can hike the other five miles, to the cars, the next day.

Preparation before this hike includes instruction on good packing, cutting lists down to the essentials, proper clothing and menu planning. Light, nutritional food, such as packets of dehydrated food could be suggested for complete main meals. If the boys haven't had a chance to practise with full packs or want to prepare themselves for the hike, you can suggest climbing up and down stairs with weighted packs on, to increase their stamina.

Once you get to the camp spot, check the condition of packs, equipment and feet. Any mistakes made in preparation will be revealed at this point, remedied and remembered the next time.

Follow the Stream

This hike will take your group into new territory and will prove adventurous and appealing. If the area has good fishing streams and fishing is allowed, why not incorporate a fishing trip?

Following a stream downstream is the easiest way to begin since side creeks merely flow into the one they are following. Following creeks to their source going upstream can pose many decisions, since it could be the main stream you are following or just a side creek. But the group will encounter new sights and sounds along the way, adding to the pleasure of the challenge.

Rock Finding Hike

You can organize one or more rock finding hikes, taking the group along beach areas, in woods and open trails, thus ensuring a variety of different rocks -- in various colours, shapes and sizes. Now what to do with the rocks?

Try making a collection of different kinds of rocks from which soil is formed, such as limestone, sand stone, shale and granite. You can see the teaching possibilities.

Each sample should be about the size of an egg. Identify them. Then, arrange them in a cardboard tray. Mix some plaster of Paris, pour into the tray around the rocks so that the samples jut out. Allow to harden and then label your samples.

Community Hikes

Not all hikes must take place in the wilderness or parks. The Zodiac Patrol explored their local

community and fulfilled several of their badge requirements while visiting city hall, the museum, the local newspaper, the fire hall and a movie house.

Planning the hike took approximately a month and a half from start to finish and was well worth the effort. For more information and details on conducting a similar hike, see page 200 of the Scout Leaders' Handbook.

This hike can be adapted to a large city, town or rural community. You might take it one step further by transporting your group to a nearby town or other community for the hike.

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