

Working with... Rainy Days

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Few of us like to think that rain will spoil our troop or pack camping plans. However, if the weather I've experienced during camping programs is any indication of what's normal, I would have to conclude that a plan for rainy day activities should be included on every camp's program-somewhere near the top!

Unfortunately, most Scouters seem to feel it's a bad omen to plan for rain and wait until it's coming down in buckets before they try to find an alternate program to keep boys amused when confined to tents or dining shelters.

Perhaps the ideas that follow will help you at camp. If you don't use them at this summer's camp, don't be tempted to integrate them into your normal program, because the value in any good rainy day activity, which must be carried out in the confined space of a tent, lies in it being a new idea, or a new twist on an old idea.

My suggestion would be to gather together the materials you need to carry out the ideas you think will work with your boys, and place them in a cardboard box, wrap the box in plastic, and label it "Rainy Day Box". Take this to camp with your other provisions. Then, when you're faced with a real rainy day at camp, break open the box and begin with the ideas listed below, in whatever order seems appropriate.

Before I begin the suggestions, please don't misinterpret my intentions in respect to confining boys to their tents on a rainy day. To me, this is always a last resort, and only after all the possible outdoor activities in raincoats and boots are exhausted or when the boys are too wet or the rain too severe or too cold. As much as possible, the normal camp routine should continue, but when it can't, try:

Who is it?

Have cards containing the faces of a number of famous people for each patrol. Give the patrol a sheet of paper with numbers for each person on the sheets. Members of the patrol identify the people on their card, and then pass the cards to the next patrol. Later, pass the answers around.

Defacements

When the boys have finished identifying the people, have them alter each face by drawing in mustaches, beards, freckles, bumps, lumps, stitches, etc. Cross out the numbers with black pen and pass the cards again to see how many of the boys can still identify the famous folks.

Blindfolded

One Scout is blindfolded and is asked to perform some ordinary task; such things as sewing a button on a piece of cloth, lacing a shoe, tying a clove hitch, writing all the patrol members names on a sheet of paper, drawing the patrol tent, sorting a collection of nails and screws into piles, by size, etc.

Fests

Have each patrol member, in turn, laugh until he can laugh no longer, or whistle, sing, smile, frown, talk, or (and perhaps this shouldn't even be suggested as it may be in the realm of the impossible) keep quiet as long as he possibly can. The winners in each patrol will play off at the campfire that evening.

Still Life

A short game. One patrol member is chosen to be "the artist". All the others assume a comfortable posing position and sit perfectly still while the artist moves about studying them for the painting he is going to create. Should the artist note the slightest movement on the part of his subject, he taps him on the forehead and eliminates him from the game.

Famous Couples

The patrol make a list of all the famous couples they can think of. For instance-Adam and Eve, Donnie and Marie, Romeo and Juliette, and on and on. The patrol with the longest list is the winner. It may be useful to limit the field for the older boys to specific categories, such as married couples, historical couples or biblical couples.

Code Work

A rainy day is a good time to practice the troop code. You don't have one? Well, one of the simplest is the S.A.C., or Sliding Alphabet Code, where "a" becomes the first letter of the day of the week. For example, pretend this is Thursday:

T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Thus the sentence-"Scouting is fun" is written "L V H N M B G Z B L Y N G" However, to make it a bit more interesting, everything is grouped in fives, and the above message really appears as-L V H N M B G Z B L Y N G 6 5. The 6 and 5 are simply fill-ins to make the last group come out to an even five characters. And if a letter is repeated, you simply use the number 2. For example, the word "Booth" would be "U H 2 A 0".

This code is easily written, easily deciphered, yet adds so much to wide games, treasure hunts,

or just troop room activities. A wet day at camp is an ideal time to teach and practice it.

Predicaments

Patrol "A" makes up a hypothetical predicament, writes it on a card and sends it to Patrol "B". Meanwhile "B" has done the same. For instance, basing the predicaments on home or camp emergencies, the following might be asked:

Your Scouter has developed sudden chest pains. They are very sharp, and have come after a big meal. What should you do?

Your little brother has just swallowed two dozen of your mother's iron pills. Is this dangerous? What would you do?

The farmer whose land we're camped on has given us permission to go to the well near the barn to get water.

One night you smell smoke and, as you enter the barn, you see that a fire has started. How would you get the horses out?

Of course the boys will dream up all sorts of better ones than these. The only condition you should place on the predicaments is that those dreaming them up must know the answers.

Camp Newspaper

Provide a sheet of newsprint, lots of black markers, rulers, glue, etc., and ask your lads to produce a camp newspaper, with many newsy items. The paper should include at least one interview with someone outside their tent, one cartoon, a crossword puzzle, an imagined interview with B.-P., or one of their favourite heroes, etc. If you provide a piece of lined paper for each boy, with a suggested topic, and the paper is ruled into three newspaper-like columns, you'll get a neater job and one in which all will participate. Simply glue the smaller pieces of paper to the large sheet of newsprint for your complete paper, and add weather reports, daily words of wisdom, jokes and other fillers, as needed. These make great souvenirs for a leader to keep.

Police Report

Challenge your patrols to produce an accurate description of the troop Scouter which would enable the local police to find him, if he were missing. At the same time the other patrols are doing one of the group committee chairman, the group chaplain, or other persons all the boys know well. Then, have these passed to the other patrols who, when they read the descriptions, try to identify the individuals being described.

Cooking

Provide the boys with tea biscuit mix, jam, milk, plastic containers for mixing, a can of sterno and some foil. Challenge them to rig up an oven, mix up the tea biscuits, place a dot of jam in the centre, wrap it in foil, and bake it in their makeshift oven over the sterno. Leave the details to the boys as to how they rig up an oven. What they are baking is called jam fritters, and they are so good every boy will want one or two, so be prepared.

Camp Crest

A rainy afternoon might be a good chance to get the boys busy designing a camp crest. This will not take everyone's interest, so you might run it in conjunction with some of the other suggestions.

Crossword Puzzles, Mazes, Hidden Word Games

There are many books on the market with these diversions. Find a good one and buy a number of copies so that each group can work on the same puzzle. Toss one into each tent, along with a pencil, to see which patrol can finish the same puzzle first.

Skits

Wouldn't it be great if some troop invented a really new skit? Why not challenge your lads to do this?

Songs

Have the boys write new words to an old, well known tune. The theme should be suggested to them, perhaps a song about camp life, or about their city, town or province. Of course, it goes without saying that the boys will be expected to present their song at the first opportunity, preferably the next troop campfire.

Smallest Cup of Tea

Provide the boys with a thimble, a 50c piece, a box of wooden matches, a tea bag, a bit of powdered milk and a bit of sugar. Challenge them to fill the thimble with water, to light a fire on the 50c piece (which has been wrapped in tinfoil to avoid damage to the coin), burning only the box of matches. The object is to boil the water, add a few grains of tea, a bit of milk and sugar and call the Scouter when the tea is ready to serve, to act as official "taster".

A Crafty Idea

Give each tent a box of alphabet macaroni, some white glue and one or two popsicle sticks per boy. Have them do the following--(The popsicle sticks are dipped in glue and the glue is placed on the back of each letter to fasten it.) Write a message to another patrol using a firm sheet of cardboard on which to glue the letters. A short message is best, about 20 words. When the

message is passed to the other patrol, they are blindfolded and try to decipher the message by touching the letters with the ends of their fingers only (like reading braille.)

Other ideas you can try include making mementos of camp, with the camp and boy's name glued onto dry sticks, fungus, sawed circles from pine limbs, or heavy cardboard. Some boys might even undertake to write favourite poems, or make up a poem. Other ideas include making up motto cards, like "It ain't no use to grumble and complain, if the Lord sorts out the weather and sends rain, we want rain". The individual macaroni can easily be coloured with felt pens and a picture in the background will complete a craft that will be a nice memento of your rainy day in camp.

And that's what these ideas have been all about. A rainy day in camp need not be the highlight of your program, but there's no need for it to be a disaster either.

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