HIKING

"SCOUTING IS THREE-QUARTERS -OUTING." Anyone who has been around the BSA very long has heard that saying. Hiking, camping, and other outdoor activities are the heart of Scouting's attraction for boys. Spending plenty of time outdoors will help every troop succeed.

The hiking program feature concentrates on hiking skills. It also offers Scouts opportunities to learn other outdoor lore. As they prepare for hikes and set out on the trail, younger Scouts can work on a variety of requirements for the ranks of Tenderfoot through First Class. Older Scouts will be able to tackle some of the requirements for a number of outdoor-related merit badges.

The troop's big event for the month will be a trail trek—a hike of at least five miles in territory unfamiliar to the Scouts. As the patrol leaders' council is planning a hike, they might want to figure out some special activities to do along the way—nature study, map and compass use, or some other skill Scouts will enjoy. The destination of a hike can suggest activities, too—fishing in a lake or stream, cooking a meal over a camp stove or open fire, reaching the top of a high hill, or pitching in to help with a conservation project.

SCOUTING OUTCOMES

The hiking program feature should give your Scouts

- Improved physical fitness
- Growth in skill and confidence in their ability to take care of themselves on the trail
- A sense of communion with nature and God
- Greater appreciation for the outdoors and a strong determination to follow the Outdoor Code
- Increased understanding of and commitment to Leave No Trace methods for hiking (For the Principles of Leave No Trace, see the *Boy Scout Handbook* or visit *http://www.scouting.org.*)

ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

By the end of the month, the Scouts should have had opportunities to meet the majority of their basic hiking requirements through First Class rank. Depending on the activities that occur during the hike, they might also complete all or part of the following rank requirements:

Tenderfoot

- Outdoor—hiking, cooking
- Citizenship—flag ceremonies
- Patrol/troop participation—patrol identification
- Personal development—Scout Oath and Law

Second Class

- Outdoor—cooking, map and compass, hiking, identifying wild animals
- Citizenship—flag ceremonies
- Patrol/troop participation—leadership
- Personal development—Scout Oath and Law

First Class

- Outdoor—finding directions, orienteering, identifying native plants
- Citizenship—flag ceremonies, Good Turn
- Patrol/troop participation—leadership
- Personal development—Scout Oath and Law

Merit Badges. Older Scouts can concentrate on completing most of the requirements for the Hiking merit badge and can help younger Scouts prepare for the troop hike. Boys with backcountry experience might also wish to fulfill various requirements for Camping, Cooking, Orienteering, Backpacking, Pioneering, Wilderness Survival, and other nature-related merit badges.

PARENT/GUARDIAN PARTICIPATION

The patrol leaders' council can involve parents and guardians in the hiking program feature by

- Inviting them on the troop trail trek
- Asking qualified parents and guardians to help with instruction in hiking skills and Leave No Trace techniques
- Arranging with parents and guardians to provide transportation to and from the starting point of the hike

PATROL LEADERS' COUNCIL

The patrol leaders' council should have met during the early part of the previous month to plan troop activities for this program feature. If they didn't complete all of the items on the following agenda, they can continue planning at brief patrol leaders' council meetings after each troop meeting.

- Decide on the route and destination of the troop hike.
- Review the skills Scouts must have for a successful hike.

- Discuss Leave No Trace principles that apply to hiking.
- Choose a highlight activity for the hike—orienteering, cooking a trail meal, etc.
- Make a list of equipment needed for the hike and determine how it will be acquired.
- Consider inviting a Hiking, Backpacking, or Orienteering merit badge counselor to help with skills instruction at troop meetings.
- If permits or other forms of permission will be required to hike on public or private land, they should be arranged by the Scoutmaster, a member of the troop committee, or another adult leader.

BIG EVENT

The Trail Trek

A troop trail trek can have a triple-barreled objective: to provide fun and adventure for Scouts, to help them meet hiking requirements for Tenderfoot through First Class ranks, and to offer other opportunities for advancement with activities along the route and at the destination.

Match the trek to the level of your Scout's experience. If most of the Scouts are young and new to the backcountry, a five-mile hike over fairly easy terrain is long enough. If the Scouts are older and more seasoned, a 10-to-20-mile hike over fairly rugged terrain could be about right. In all cases, Scouts should pack everything in—and out—including patrol equipment, food, and personal gear.

Ideally the route and destination should be unfamiliar to the Scouts so that they can use a map and compass to find their way. If feasible, each patrol might start from a different spot so that Scouts will not simply follow the patrol ahead.

Here are three highlight activities that can be featured at the destination of a hike:

Orienteering

During a hike, Scouts can practice taking compass bearings, identifying landmarks on their maps, and setting courses from one point to another. Refer to the *Boy Scout Handbook* for information on using maps and compasses.

The *Orienteering* merit badge pamphlet explains ways to set up orienteering courses and to conduct cross-country and relay orienteering challenges. An Orienteering merit badge counselor or members of a Venture patrol can set up a course ahead of time and have it ready when Scouts reach the destination of

their hike. Another useful exercise would be to use triangulation at the end of a hike to determine the distance traveled.

Nature Lore

A nature study highlight might encourage Scouts to work on several rank requirements and on certain requirements for the following merit badges: Bird Study, Environmental Science, Fish and Wildlife Management, Geology, Insect Study, Mammal Study, Nature, Reptile and Amphibian Study, and Weather. Merit badge counselors and other experts in these fields could accompany the troop to provide guidance. Scouts can also carry field guides to identify plants and animals along the way.

Conservation Project

A conservation project can be a highlight of the troop trail trek. Because Scouts will spend more of their day hiking than working, a project should be small in scope, well planned, and coordinated with knowledgeable land managers. A key to successful conservation projects is thorough planning and guidance by experts.

(For project ideas and guidelines for carrying them out, see chapter 19, "Community Service," and "Conservation Projects" in chapter 9, "The Outdoor Program," in the *Scoutmaster Handbook*. The BSA's *Conservation Handbook* also contains plenty of information about ways Scouts can complete worthwhile projects on public and private lands.)

HIKING

TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ Week 1

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes	If it is dark enough, practice following directions by using the North Star Method (*Boy Scout Handbook*), or play Indian Wrestling games (Games section of *Troop Program Resources**).		
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes	• Form the troop into a horseshoe. • Hold a uniform inspection. • Repeat the Scout Oath. • Repeat the Pledge of Allegiance.		
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	• New Scouts practice reading a compass and learn how to set a pace *(Boy Scout Handbook)*. Begin work on Leave No Trace hiking principles. • Experienced Scouts review the selection of gear and footwear for hiking and begin planning the troop hike. • Older Scouts work on the Venture program or study a topographic map of the troop hike destination in order to layout an orienteering course.		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Discuss plans for the hike this month and make sure everyone knows what his assignments are and what to bring for the outing. Any Scouts who have not been hiking yet will need some extra help. All other patrols plan activities to work on advancement. Plan any meals that will be needed for the outing. If it is going to be an overnighter, begin to make plans for equipment distribution and tent needs.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	Play Hot Isotope Transport. (See the Games section of the *Troop Program Resources.**)		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	• Assemble patrols, repeat the Outdoor Code. • Scoutmaster's Minute. • Retire colors.	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and plans for the troop campout or outing. Begin work on next month's program feature.		

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HIKING

TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ Week 2

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes			
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes			
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	• New Scouts practice figuring the height and width of objects (*Boy Scout Handbook,* pages 122–25). Work on Leave No Trace hiking principles. • Experienced Scouts work on packing up for a troop hike and study maps of the hike route. Review Leave No Trace hiking principles. • Older Scouts work on the Venture program.		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Review assignments for the hike. First-time hikers continue working on troop procedures for hiking. All other patrols continue to work on activities for advancement on the outing.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	Play Roman Chariot Race. (See the Games section of the *Troop Program Resources.**)		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	• Scoutmaster's Minute. • Retire colors.	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and plans for the troop outing. Troop committee conducts a board of review. Continue work on next month's program feature.		

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HIKING

TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ Week 3

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes			
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes			
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	• New Scouts practice reading topographic maps and review what to do if lost *(Boy Scout Handbook)*. • Experienced Scouts plan a game for the troop to use during the hike. Use a topographic map of the hike's destination and lay out an area to play the game. • Older Scouts work on the Venture program or help younger Scouts with map reading skills.		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Finalize the menu for the outing. Review clothing and equipment and make sure everyone knows what to bring. Go over the route to be hiked and consider potential weather conditions and how to prepare for them.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	Do Ball Over Relay. (See the Games section of the *Troop Program Resources.**)		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	• Scoutmaster's Minute. • Retire colors.	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and plans for the troop campout or outing. Continue work on next month's program feature.		

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HIKING

TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ **Week 4**

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes			
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes			
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	• New Scouts practice map reading and taking bearings *(Boy Scout Handbook)*. Review Leave No Trace hiking principles. • Experienced Scouts bring in packs for a prehike inspection. • Older Scouts work on the Venture program or assist in map and compass activities.		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Review plans and assignments for the hike. Make sure everyone knows travel plans and equipment needs. Practice any interpatrol activities that will take place.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	Do Human Obstacle Race. (See the Games section of the *Troop Program Resources.**)		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	• Scoutmaster's Minute. • Retire colors.	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and checks last-minute details for the troop campout or outing. Finalize work on next month's program feature.		

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HIKING

TROOP OUTDOOR PROGRAM PLAN

Date _____

TIME	ACTIVITY	RUN BY
Saturday 8:00 A.M.	Load gear at meeting location. Drive to beginning point of hike.	SPL
8:30 A.M.	Patrol leaders organize patrols, look over maps, review Leave No Trace hiking principles, and set out together on the hike.	PL
11:30 A.M.	Sack lunch	
Noon	Continue hiking	
Afternoon	Related activities, orienteering, nature study, etc.	SPL
	Return hike, patrols staying together and practicing Leave No Trace principles	PL
At end of hike	Take a few moments to reflect on the day, emphasize the value of the experience, and provide a sense of closure.	SM
	Store any troop equipment.	QM