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SCOUTING FOR WILD ONES

Brittney McGann

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Resources Used

Scouting for Boys by Robert Baden-Powell

Tom Brown's Field Guide, Nature and Survival for Children by Tom Brown Jr.

Tracking and the Art of Seeing by Paul Rezendes

Find the Constellations by H.A. Rey

KEY



PRACTICE ACTIVITY



DRAWING CONCLUSIONS



CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

“We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”

- T. S. Eliot

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Introduction to Scouting



OBSERVATION

13 Introduction

15 Lesson 1: Eyes to See

18 Lesson 2: Observing People

22 Lesson 3: Ears to Hear

25 Lesson 4: Making Distinctions with Sound

29 Lesson 5: Making More Distinctions with Sound

33 Lesson 6: Use Your Nose

37 Observation Badge Test



STALKING

39 Lesson 1: Camouflage

43 Lesson 2: Fox Walk

47 Lesson 3: Animal Stalking

52 Stalking Badge Test



TRACKING

53 Introduction

55 **Lesson 1:** Signs

60 **Lesson 2:** Human Tracks

64 **Lesson 3:** Animal Tracks

68 **Lesson 4:** When Tracks are Unclear

74 **Lesson 5:** Measuring Stride

78 **Lesson 6:** Tracking in the Field

81 Tracking Badge Test



HIKING SKILLS UNIT

82 Lessons

87 Hiking Badge Test



COMPASS WORK

89 **Lesson 1:** Cardinal Points

92 **Lesson 2:** Finding True North Without a Compass

95 **Lesson 3:** Using a Compass

98 **Lesson 4:** Using a Compass to Follow Directions

102 Compass Work Badge Test



USING A MAP

103 Lesson 1: Reading the Map

107 Lesson 2: Pacing

111 Lesson 3: Draw a Map

113 Mapping Badge Test



KNOT TYING UNIT

114 Lessons

117 Knot Tying Badge Test



FIRE BUILDING UNIT

118 Lessons

125 Fire Making Badge Test



MAKING CAMP

126 Introduction

127 Lesson 1: Choose a Location

129 Lesson 2: Identify Potential Dangers

131 Lesson 3: Build a Fort

134 Making Camp Badge Test



NIGHT SKY

135 Introduction

137 Lesson 1: Find Polaris

141 Lesson 2: More Constellations

143 Lesson 3: Evening Outside

144 Lesson 4: Cycles of the Moon

148 Night Sky Badge Test



WEATHER PREDICTIONS

149 Introduction

151 Lesson 1: Observe Cloud Formations

155 Lesson 2: Look for More Clouds

158 Weather Prediction Badge Test



SIGNALING

159 Introduction

160 Lesson 1: Morse Code

164 Lesson 2: Semaphore Signaling

168 Signaling Badge Test

INTRODUCTION TO SCOUTING



“The free exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world.” - John Steinbeck

W

hen stripped down to its most basic idea, the object of scouting is simply this: to teach the scout to care. If he can be taught to care, about his family, his friends and all created things - it follows naturally that out of this care - this love, he would have a desire to serve and to do his duty. It is the goal of this particular scheme of scouting to first teach the children to notice, and then to marvel at the world around them. From this reverence grows the attributes of a scout.

Scouting is as much a part of citizenship as it is part of nature study. In order to participate in scouting adventures, a scout must put himself under the authority of his scout leader and obey without hesitation. He must learn to keep a cheerful attitude and work with his fellow scouts toward a common goal. A scout must always be aware of his surroundings and prepared to take action when necessary. Therefore, he must keep his body strong and in good health. Through his experience in nature and working alongside other scouts, he will learn that his duty rests in serving others, whether that be to help in an emergency or

simply to keep silent so as not to scare off a bird while stalking. Working in community teaches a scout to judge a person on his merits, rather than any outside circumstance. In addition, working individually toward specific goals by way of badges teaches self discipline and endurance.

This scouting course offers a beginning, an introduction, to outdoor life in the spirit of the adventurers and explorers of old. It is our hope that working through this course will instill in the children a love for the world around them along with a sense of duty both to serve others and to steward the Earth and all living things that call it home.

HOW TO USE THIS COURSE

This scouting course is written for groups but also with family-style learning in mind. Children as young as five or six years old will find that they are capable of learning these skills, while teens (and adults) will find themselves challenged by the activities. A scouting group can be as small as one family of four, but the fullest benefits of the course will be realized with a group of between ten and thirty children, with parents to assist the scout leader. This resource is written for the seasoned as well as the “tenderfoot” scout leader. Please note, however, that it is not meant to serve as a survival guide, and the welfare of the scouts should always be safeguarded.

Each lesson has notes for the scout leader to help prepare for the activities and direct him when additional research and resources are required. Lessons are scripted (intended to be read aloud) and include questions (and possible answers) to encourage the children to discover

OBSERVATION



INTRODUCTION TO OBSERVATION

(Indoor/Outdoor Activity)

Scouts will begin to learn how to train their skills in visual observation and understand why it is important to be aware of one's surroundings.

PREP

For the Quick-sight activity, gather about twenty small items found around the house (coins, spool of thread, paper clip, toy car, etc.), a tray and a piece of cloth to cover the tray for each group of 5 or 6 children. Each child should also have a piece of paper and writing utensil.

Leader: Point out the following key benefits of being observant and ask the follow up questions below to encourage the children to begin thinking like a scout.

1. **To see beautiful and interesting things.** There are many wonderful things in nature that are easily overlooked if you don't think to notice them.

2. **To alert us to dangers.** Some examples include venomous snakes, poisonous plants, speeding cars.

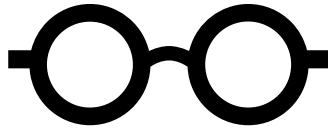
3. **To answer our questions.** Scientists and detectives both work in the same way. They make observations to help them figure out what chain of events led to a certain outcome; why it happened; and how it could be prevented, replicated, or more carefully observed in the future.

4. **To be ready to take action in any situation.** A scout is always ready to help, but he must know where he is most needed and decide quickly on the best course of action. He is best able to do this by being observant.

Today we begin training ourselves to be more observant.

For this course we are going to focus on sight, smell, and hearing to avoid the potential dangers of tasting or touching unknown or harmful things.

OBSERVATION



LESSON 1: EYES TO SEE

(Indoor Activity)

First we learn to see and remember what we have seen.

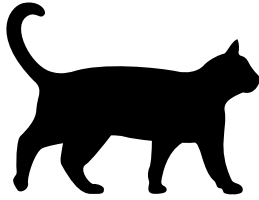


PRACTICE ACTIVITY: QUICK-SIGHT

A tray with approximately twenty objects, some common and some unusual, is placed before the children. They take a few minutes to study everything on the tray before it is covered. The children try to remember as many things as they can. The children can each be given paper to list all the objects they remember individually, or they can take turns orally listing as many of the objects as they can recall. After everyone has tried, the tray is uncovered and the children can see what they missed.

Cover the tray back up. Encourage the children to visualize the tray and give as many details about the objects as they can remember (yellow block, spotted feather, red ribbon, etc.)

STALKING



LESSON 3: ANIMAL STALKING

(Outdoor Activity)

Scouts will put the fox walk into practice while learning the art of stalking, or sneaking up on things.

PREP

Choose a location that will allow plenty of space for the scouts to walk freely. The game will require a fairly open circular space so that the children can practice stalking their scout leader, who is waiting in the center of the space. Fallen leaves or twigs on the ground will add an extra challenge to walking quietly. The leader should have a bandana to serve as a blindfold and a parent should be designated as a referee.

Leader: Who would like to come demonstrate how to do the ‘fox walk’ from last week? I hope you have all gotten used to moving more slowly and quietly through the wilderness! We are going to need that skill for our next lesson which is on stalking. What do you think of when you think of “stalking”?

Student: Predators stalking their prey.

Leader: How do they move when they do that?

Student: Slowly, quietly, low to the ground

Leader: If we were predators about to attack our prey, we would not want that prey to see us until it is too late for them to escape. We would use our skills of camouflage, remaining hidden, and moving silently to get close enough to make a surprise attack. Though our goal is not to catch dinner, we can use the same tactics to get close enough to observe animals in the wild. We have already learned to camouflage ourselves. Who can tell me some ways to do that?

Student: Wearing colors that blend with surroundings, hiding behind trees or rocks.

Leader: And last time we learned how to move quietly. How will that help us to observe animals better?

Student: Answers will vary.

Leader: Today we are going to learn actual stalking technique, and then we are going to play a game to test our skills.



PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: STALK LIKE A PREDATOR

Stalking Technique

(Scout leader should demonstrate each movement as it is explained)

Leader: When we move around animals, it is important that we move slowly, very slowly. Even a small movement, like a turn of the head, brushing your hair out of your face, or reaching for your

binoculars, can startle an animal. So while we are stalking, any move you make should be done in slow motion.

Next, we want to disguise our human shape by bending our knees and crouching down a little bit. Instead of having your hands at your sides cross them a little in front of you, or put them on your thighs for extra support.

Now comes the walk. The foot placement is the same as the fox walk, coming down on the blade of the foot first, then the ball, heel and toes, shifting weight onto the front foot only after the entire foot is placed on the ground. The only difference is that when you are stalking, you slow it way down.

If you feel something under your foot, like a twig that might snap, do not step down. Instead, keeping your weight on your back leg, pick your front foot up again and set it down in a new spot, just as slowly.

All this time, be sure to keep the animal in sight, also remaining aware of anything else in your field of vision.

Since you are watching the animal you're stalking the whole time, never taking your eyes off him, and be sure to notice if he looks your way. If he does, you must freeze, in whatever position you happen to be. Don't move a muscle until the animal looks away. If you move, you will give away your presence and probably scare the animal away.

Before you begin stalking on your own, we should talk about one important thing. There are some animals we can get very close to without worrying that we are in danger, as long as we don't try to touch them. Examples include song birds, squirrels, or rabbits. If they are afraid, they'll usually run or fly away. But all wild animals can become

aggressive if they are afraid. Don't try to touch ANY wild animals. Before deciding to get very close to an animal, you should know about its behavior. For example, rabbits will not charge you, but groundhogs will. Good scouts do not take foolish risks.

Now practice your stalking technique for about ten minutes before we will play a game to sharpen your skills.

Stalking Game

Leader: This game is to practice stalking silently and freezing when necessary. I (the scout leader) am going to be the animal you are stalking. And I will be blindfolded. You need to spread out about twenty - thirty feet away (depending on the ages of the children) from me. I am going to stay in the middle.

Your goal is to get close enough to me to touch me without making a sound or falling over. If I hear a sound, point in your direction and call out the sound (like the snap of a twig, a giggle or a cough) you have to go back to your starting place. If I turn in your direction that means I think I hear something, but I'm not sure, you must freeze until I turn away or risk making a noise. If you lose your balance and fall over while frozen you go must back to your starting place. The first person to touch me wins and can take my place.

Play 2 - 3 rounds of the game.



DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

How do you feel about your new stalking skills?

How do you think they're going to help you?



CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Continue to practice your stalking skills on birds and small animals in your neighborhood. If you can, use a camera to document how close you are able to get. Write about your observations and experiences in your nature journal.



STALKING BADGE TEST

To earn a badge in stalking, the scout must pass two out of three tests.

1. He must be able to do the fox walk correctly and fluidly at a steady pace for approximately twenty feet. The instructor will observe his movements, looking for correct foot placement and balance of weight. The scout may try this up to two times on a testing day.

2. The scout must be able to walk up from behind his blindfolded scout instructor from a distance of fifteen feet, touching the scout leader's shoulder without alerting her to his presence.

3. The scout should present five photos or describe in detail his observations in five instances when he has successfully stalked an animal in the wild. This will or must be done in the scout's own time and presented to the scout leader on a testing day.

SIGNALING



SIGNALING BADGE TEST

This badge should be attempted only by scouts who can **read easily**. *(Even though young scouts can memorize certain words, they will not be able to decode the messages).*

1. The scout must memorize at least one of the alphabets presented.
2. He must explain how the chosen signaling system is communicated.
3. He must send a message to the scout leader (who may need someone to help record or write down the letters) of three to six words. Words should be spelled correctly, as missing or wrong letters can change the meaning and affect the message. The scout should be given three tries to send a message successfully.
4. The scout must be able to receive a message, in the same means used to send his message, of three to six short words from

the scout leader of three to six short words. The scout who is testing must be the one to read the signals, but he may have a friend serve as recorder to write down the letters as he calls them out. He may ask for the message to be repeated up to three times.

CONGRATULATIONS, SCOUTS!

You have completed this course and proven yourselves capable and determined. You have learned to be true observers and make informed deductions. You have learned to blend into your surroundings, find safe shelter, and get to where you want to go. Your hands have grown skillful and your eyes and ears are alert. This is a foundation that will help you throughout your life. Use what you have learned to learn more. Be prepared. Always be ready to serve others. Let your observations inform your actions and always act according to your duty, to do what is right.

“There is nothing in the wide world so precious, so necessary for the world’s uses, as a boy or girl prepared on these lines for the calling that may come...These possibilities belong to each of us; and the more we realize what we can be and what we can do, the more we shall labour to answer to our call when it comes.”

Charlotte Mason, Ourselves, Book 1, page 206