

# COMMUNICATIONS



Every human is constantly communicating through speech, reading, body language, even a raised eyebrow. We have many other means of sending and receiving messages, too—the telephone, television, radio, photographs and drawings, computers, recorded tapes, and compact discs.

This month your Scouts can explore some of the older means of communication such as Morse code, flags, and sign language. Each patrol might want to become proficient in one means of communication and teach it to the others.

The big event will be a send-the-word campout. Besides having contests in communications skills, the troop can also work on other outdoor and nature skills. To top off your activities, you will want to have a troop campfire that provides an opportunity to use various means of communication.

## SCOUTING OUTCOMES

This month's patrol and troop activities should give your Scouts

- The knowledge and skills to be comfortable in a variety of communications methods
- A sense of communion with nature and God
- A greater respect for the outdoors and a determination to follow the Outdoor Code
- Enhanced self-confidence
- Enhanced camping skills

## ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Depending on the campout activities, all Scouts may complete all or part of the following rank requirements:

### *Tenderfoot*

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

### *Second Class*

- Outdoor—cooking, camping
- Citizenship—flag ceremonies
- Patrol/troop participation—patrol identification
- Personal development—Scout Oath and Law
- Physical fitness—drug awareness

### *First Class*

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

*Merit Badges.* Older Scouts can concentrate on the Communication and Computers merit badges this month; they should be able to complete many of the requirements. Depending on activities during the campout, they may also complete requirements in



Camping, Cooking, Hiking, and other outdoor-related merit badges.

### **PARENT/GUARDIAN PARTICIPATION**

The patrol leaders' council can involve parents in the program feature this month by

- Asking qualified parents to assist with instruction for computer and signaling skills
- Inviting parents on the campout
- Asking parents to provide transportation to the starting point for the backpacking trek into camp, if necessary
- Getting help in arranging to visit communications businesses such as television and radio stations and computer centers

### **PATROL LEADERS' COUNCIL**

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

- Decide on the campsite for the send-the-word campout. If permissions will be needed, assign someone to secure them.
- Plan the special activities for the campout. See the ideas on these pages. If special gear or tools will be needed, assign someone to obtain them; seek help from the troop committee, if necessary.
- Inventory the troop's camping equipment, if not done recently.

- Plan details of troop meetings for the month. Assign patrol demonstrations, covering skills that will be needed for the campout activities. For example:

**Patrol A**—Morse code with mirrors or flashlights

**Patrol B**—trail signs

**Patrol C**—sign language

- Have an activity where Scouts working on the Communication merit badge can give a demonstration.

### **FEATURE EVENT**

#### **Send-the-Word Campout**

The primary purpose of this outing is to use communications skills and have some fun. The skills you have been working on all month will now come into play.

Games and activities can be set up using certain communications skills to achieve particular goals. These activities can take place day or night, and they provide an opportunity for related activities. As an example, you might have an orienteering course where each station has directions written in Morse code.

Each patrol will have an opportunity to instruct the rest of the troop in the communications skill it has learned.

#### **Campout Activities**

Obviously the activity schedule will depend on the weather and the length of your campout. There are many possibilities for activities for the campout. Besides working on communications skills, Scouts might work on cooking, camping, and nature skills. Climax the activities with a troop campfire.

The following are some good contests for communications practice:

#### **GET THE MESSAGE**

**Equipment:** Signal flag for each patrol, paper and pencil for each Scout, secret message for each patrol to send.

**Method:** Each patrol has one signaler and one dictator. These two players are sent 100 yards or more away from the rest of the patrol and given a secret message of 30 letters.

Each receiver in the patrol writes the message on his paper. (There must be no communication between receivers in the patrol.) The signaler may not repeat the message, but he may send it slowly enough to be understood by all his patrol members. When the message is completed, the patrol leader collects the slips for the judge.

**Scoring:** Correct letters received by all patrol members are added together, then divided by the number of receivers to get the patrol average. The patrol with the highest average wins.



- Hide people individually unless there is reluctance to stay alone; if there is, allow a pair to hide together.
- A Hider must be in a partially exposed position. Completely concealing a person behind something is not allowed. The Hider should try to blend in with the natural surroundings; a rock, tree, stump, etc. A Hider must be no more than 20 feet away from the trail.

The Seekers wait patiently in the building until the leader of the Hiders returns and announces that all is ready. Seekers should follow these guidelines:

- The object of the game is to find as many Hiders as possible.
- Point scores are kept for each team.
- The Seekers are taken to the trailhead and told that from here on, they can expect to find hidden people on each side of the trail.
- The Seekers must stay on the trail.

**Variation:** This same game could be played at night using flashlights and Morse code or during the daytime using mirrors.

#### MESSAGE RELAY

**Equipment:** None.

**Method:** A leader gives a message to a Scout, using sign language. The Scout must relay it to the next member in his patrol and so forth, until the last member of the patrol repeats it to the leader.

**Scoring:** The patrol getting the most words correct wins.

#### WHO'S THAT?

**Equipment:** None.

**Method:** A nocturnal hunt sometimes shows people as they aren't. In an outdoor setting, split the troop in half. One team will be Hiders, the others Seekers. The Hiders go outside to a well-known or an established trail, not far from the main cabin or building, but not with dense cover. No street lamps or building lights should be visible.

Tell the Hiders that motionless people in the dark may take on other forms that appear to be rocks, stumps, or logs. Indicate that, as Hiders, they should cover all parts of their body that stand out (skin or clothing), and camouflage their body to blend with surroundings. They then begin hiding along the trail, following these rules and guidelines:

- When someone thinks he has spotted a Hider, he calls others over to have a look. If the consensus is that there is actually someone there, the attending instructor shines his flashlight directly at the spot indicated by the Seekers. If a Hider is revealed, the Seekers get a point. If no one is there, the Hiders get a point.
- If all of the Seekers pass a Hider on the trail, the instructor calls the group back and points out the Hider with a flashlight. The Hiders then get a point, and that particular Hider may join the group and silently cheer on his group.

This procedure continues until the last Hider has been found or is revealed. Points are tallied. The teams then reverse roles and the game is played again.

The reason the Seekers remain indoors until the Hiders are set is to show how night vision helps make walking in the dark a little safer. The exercise is a natural lead-in to a discussion about how nocturnal animals can see in reduced light. Mention bats, owls, and cats.

Do not allow any flashlights to be carried, except by the leader.

**Variation:** The trail could be laid out using trail signs.

#### Your Campfire Program

A troop campfire program should have elements of fun, inspiration, and good fellowship. Each Scout should leave with pleasant memories.

The campfire doesn't have to be an elaborate production, but it does require planning. You will want lots of variety, including ceremonies, songs, skits and stunts, games, and usually a Scoutmaster's Minute. The general rule is that the campfire program "follows the fire." That is, while the fire is blazing, you have lively songs, games, and skits. As the fire dies, you have inspirational songs, the Scoutmaster's Minute, and other more serious elements.

In many troops, the patrol leaders' council plans the campfire and assigns elements to each patrol. In others, one patrol is assigned to build the fire lay and another to plan the program. In either case, the Scoutmaster or another adult leader should stay in touch with the planners to make sure that many boys (not just the campfire planners) will have a part, and that all activities, stunts,

and songs will be in good taste. If questions arise, the adult leader should make it clear that there is no place in Scouting for poor taste, poor manners, or hurting anyone in body or spirit.

The campfire planners should figure on a program lasting about an hour or a little less. It's better to end the program while the Scouts are having fun than to let it drag on until they become restless. One way to ensure a fast-moving, well-planned campfire is to use the Campfire Program Planner, No. 33696. With that sheet to guide them, the planners can estimate the time for each element and end the program accordingly.

If your troop has Scouts who have been to several big campfires at camporees, they will have lots of ideas for skits, stunts, and songs.

# COMMUNICATIONS

(Use Troop Meeting Plan sheet found in the Forms section, Troop Program Resources, No. 33588, in adapting the suggested program for your troop.)

	First Week	Second Week	Third Week	Fourth Week
<b>Preopening</b> _____ minutes	Have one or more computers set up for Scouts to use. Explain how they work and what they can do. Also, have a telegraph key to practice Morse code.			
<b>Opening Ceremony</b> _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form the troop using silent signals. Explain what you are doing, and at the next meeting use only silent signals to gather the troop.</li> <li>Present colors.</li> <li>Repeat the Pledge of Allegiance.</li> <li>Repeat the Scout motto and slogan.</li> </ul>			
<b>Skills Instruction</b> _____ minutes				
New Scouts	Work on basic map and compass skills for orienteering and measuring heights and distances. Do Direction-Finding Relay. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i> .)	Review how to pack for a hike and work on telling time without a watch. Play Silver Dollar Hunt. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i> .)	Work on tying knots: two half hitches, tautline, bowline.	Work on building fires or making fire lays ( <i>Boy Scout Handbook</i> ).
Experienced Scouts	Work on three computer programming languages or prepare a flowchart to compute attendance and dues paid for the past five troop meetings.	Begin work on a campfire program for the campout, or if you have a court of honor in the near future, plan the program.	Make semaphore flags and practice sending messages in code. Plan to tour a local television or radio station to see how it operates, or have local ham radio operators explain how they communicate around the world.	Work on map and compass skills and prepare an orienteering course for the campout. Practice pacing. Do Direction Hunt (see the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i> ), or continue work with semaphore flags.
Older Scouts	Work on the Venture program or prepare a drug awareness program for the troop that could be used as part of a troop opening or on the campout. The program should not last more than five minutes.	Work on the Venture program or construct several heliographs to use on the outing.	Work on the Venture program or get a map of the campout area and lay out a nature trail. Plan to go early to mark the trail for the campout.	Work on the Venture program or assist in map and compass activities or in layout of an orienteering course for the campout.
<b>Patrol Meetings</b> _____ minutes	Discuss plans for the campout this month and make sure everyone knows what his assignment is and what to bring for the campout. The new-Scout patrol needs to know what support it will provide for the campout. Any Scouts who have not been camping will need extra help. All other patrols plan activities to work on advancement. Patrol leaders should also review the interpatrol activities that will take place and the skills Scouts need to work on for them.	Review assignments for the campout. First-time campers continue working on basic camping techniques. All other patrols continue planning activities for advancement during the outing. Practice interpatrol activities.	Finalize the menu for the campout and make sure everyone knows what he will need to bring. Review clothing and equipment needs and collect any necessary fees. If you need to have a shakedown campout with your patrol or an outdoor practice for the patrol activities, schedule it now. Older Scouts can plan to take pictures at the campout to add to your troop's scrapbook, or plan to shoot slides to show at the troop's next family gathering.	Review plans and assignments for the campout. Make sure everyone knows the travel plans and equipment needs. Review the patrol duty roster. Practice interpatrol activities that will take place.
<b>Interpatrol Activity</b> _____ minutes	Play Human Obstacle Race. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i> .)	Do Blindfold Compass Walk. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i> .)	Play British Bulldog. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i> .)	Play Hot Isotope Transport. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i> .)
<b>Closing</b> _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repeat the Outdoor Code.</li> <li>Scoutmaster's Minute.</li> <li>Retire colors.</li> </ul>			
<b>After the Meeting</b>	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and plans for the campout. Begin work on next month's program feature.	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and plans for the troop outing. Continue work on next month's program feature.	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and plans for the outing. Continue work on next month's program feature.	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and checks last-minute details for the troop outing. Finalize work on next month's program feature.

\*Troop Program Resources for Scout Troops and Varsity Teams, Supply No. 33588