

A Hiking we will go! Part I

There's nothing like a fine spring day to bring out the wanderlust in all of us. And what better way to satisfy this feeling than by planning a great outdoor activity, like a hike, for your group?

Hikes provide an excellent opportunity to take time out on the trail to quietly look and listen--to appreciate the realities and contrasts of our environment.

Since hikes must have a purpose, besides getting from point A to point B, they should be carefully planned in advance. Many times the spur-of-the moment *How about a hike this Saturday?* will result in a wasted day due to lack of foresight and planning.

Spontaneous enthusiasm, however, should be used to its best advantage. Get your group to help with the planning. Have them help choose a theme or to combine several themes. Let their imaginations roam, corralling the impractical.

Depending on your group, their ages and interests, hikes can range from easy training in the outdoors (simple nature observation, fire-building and cooking a light meal) to more challenging excursions that include building a bridge across a stream, constructing a shelter or dealing with (unexpected but planned) accident simulation.

Once you've chosen the type of hike you'll go on, make an outline with the boys. Include the destination, schedule and, if possible, a mapped route. Your schedule should include departure time, estimated arrival time, allotted time for cooking, cleaning up, rest stops and approximate time of return. It should, however, be realized, that the schedule is not 'iron tight' and there is room for spontaneous changes in plans. Leave a copy with someone who is staying behind in case of an emergency.

If this is the first hike of the year, prepare your group during the meetings before the scheduled date. Go over the hiking section in your leaders' handbook for ideas. Scouts can re-read their Canadian Scout Handbook for tips on hiking such as proper footwear, safety, clothing and other items they may have overlooked.

Stress the necessity of proper equipment, its care and use. For groups who will be backpacking, see *The Canadian Leader*, April 1972, *Most of Canada Beckons*, for tips and diagrams on backpacking.

During the meeting before the hike, go over the type of clothing that should be worn, reminding the boys about raincoats or ponchos, suitable shoes, sweaters or jackets. If it rains and your group is prepared, no one will mind a little inclement weather. If your theme requires added items such as wrist watches, plastic bottles or magnifying glasses, this is your chance to remind your group. Finally, check that first aid kit!

No group should set out on a hike without proper first aid supplies.

No one should begin a hike on an empty stomach and supplying energy on the trail is just as important. Your first consideration in choosing your food should be nutrition; then food, light in weight but giving the proper nutrients and finally, the ease of preparing a meal. Two of your options are dehydrated foods or food pre-measured and pre-packed at home. Avoid carbonated drinks and milk. 'Quick energy' foods such as raisins, apples and dates are handy to carry in reserve.

It's a good idea to have your group meet at one point and start off together. Since a hike is not a race, make sure there are frequent and short rest stops. This gives the boys a chance to look around and enjoy nature, the weather (in most cases) and the company. Spring is one of the most interesting seasons for hikers because there are such contrasts to be seen, heard and smelled.

If yours is a young group, suggest games to be played along the way to prevent boredom. This can include signalling, first aid, collecting, tracking or observation. Keep the rules of the games simple, thus saving you from trying to gather the group together again to explain the rules.

Hold a Bike Hike

A bike hike is an exciting project that any pack or troop can plan -- the length depending on the experience and stamina of the boys.

Start by planning a one-day hike--this can lead to weekend jaunts as everyone's conditioning improves. Light, ten-speed bikes are ideal for this type of event but you'd be surprised at the durability of a properly cared for, single-speed bike.

Keep the bike hike fun. A long, tiring trip will dampen everyone's enthusiasm for another. When choosing a destination -- a zoo, museum, campsite or historical site-- keep everyone's ability and bike in mind. Check road maps for less travelled side roads that offer pleasant scenery and for approved bike paths. Plan to start and finish in daylight hours, keeping daily travel to ten or 15 miles -- but don't be afraid to modify this according to your group's ability.

Each boy should travel light--with rain gear, lunch, a water bottle or flask and personal gear. Proper clothing is important. Lightweight, close-fitting clothing saves weight and reduces effort. Layer sweaters and windbreakers. They can be worn or removed to fit the temperature of the day. Cycling shoes, soft soled casual shoes or sneakers enable easy foot action.

Have the boys share the tools, pump, first aid kit and extra tires (unless someone is to follow by car). Have everyone carry his own small pack rather than one individual carry it all. When packing, distribute the weight evenly. Keep it as low as possible. The higher the weight, the higher the centre of gravity and the more unstable the bike will

become. For this reason don't advise backpacks. Try bicycle saddle bags or a day hike bag.

Hold a planning meeting. Use a map so that every one knows where they are going and what to expect. If possible, give a copy to each boy. Time should be allowed for stops, little emergencies like a flat tire or a spur-of-the-moment snack break.

Review the rules of the road.

While on the road, keep the riders in single file on the extreme right of the road. It would be wise to have the last cyclist carry a warning sign for motorists signifying a procession of cyclists. Space patrols or sixes at least 100 yards apart to avoid the danger of bunching large groups of cyclists. Maintain a bicycle-length between each bike. Increase the interval to ten lengths while going downhill. Don't hesitate to walk up some of the steeper hills. The idea is to cover ground steadily--not to engage in a series of breathless sprints.

Never start a ride on an empty stomach. Eat sparingly at the first signs of hunger or drink lightly before getting thirsty.

Here are a few suggestions that each boy can carry or wear:

- windbreaker or jacket
- cap, hat or (for long hair) headband
- sunglasses
- raincoat or poncho
- sunburn lotion, lip balm
- small first aid kit

Here are a few theme ideas to use on your hikes. Inventing imaginative titles will win the enthusiasm of the boys:

Soil Detection

- Find as many examples of soil erosion in the community, camp or the edge of town, as you can. (Prepare the boys before the hike so that they will recognize the signs of erosion on the trail).
- Examples: bare patches of soil, muddy creeks, streams or rivers
- Take along plastic or glass containers and collect water from a muddy stream, or river. Let the water evaporate and see what is left.

Beeline Hike

- Hike along a compass bearing without deviating from the course, no matter what obstacles are in the way--a stream, bluff or building. The idea is to go around the obstacles and still hit the objective.

Historic Hike

- Hike along a historic trail or hike to a historic spot or museum.
- Study the history of the destination before the hike and pass it along to the boys or have little quizzes if they have been prepared.

Conservation

- Take a commonly used trail or for a spur-of-the moment idea, the one you're on.
- Clean it up and get rid of hazards like loose rocks that might cause a sprained ankle; barbed wire; dead overhanging branches that might fall in a heavy wind; rotted planks and boards in steps and bridges that can be replaced; broken bottles and bottle caps.

Cooking without Utensils

- Each boy plans his own meal and method of preparing the food.
- Suggest aluminium foil, flat rocks, kabobs, twist on a stick, steak on coals, potatoes baked in mud, corn on the cob cooked in the husks, etc.
- Remember, no canned goods or prepared meats like wieners.

A Hiking We Will Go! Part 2

Previously we featured ideas on planning hikes for your group, with several themes to start you off. Here 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 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.