



## Session Two

# Sizzle of the Outdoor Program

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### Time Allowed

15 minutes

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### Teaching Objectives

- Discuss the excitement and importance of the outdoor program, noting that the outdoors is the arena in which much of Scouting unfolds.
  - Highlight the fact that outdoor experiences are why many boys—many adults, too—join the BSA.
  - Give new Scoutmasters the confidence that they have the resources and abilities to enjoy successful outdoor experiences with their troops.
  - Encourage Scoutmasters and their troops to get beyond “tailgate camping” and explore a wider range of outdoor program opportunities.
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### Materials Needed

- “Pop Quiz” for distribution (appendix)
  - *The Scoutmaster Handbook*, No. 33009A
  - *The Boy Scout Handbook*, No. 33105
  - PowerPoint slides or overheads from CD, if desired
  - Wall posters
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### Recommended Facility Layout

- Session meeting area. Each participant should have a comfortable place to sit, take notes, and organize written materials. That setting most often consists of tables, each accommodating six to eight participants forming a patrol, and enough chairs for all participants.
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- Instructor-led discussion

### Presentation Procedure

At the beginning of Session One, participants considered the promise of Scouting, as presented to boys on the first page of *The Boy Scout Handbook*. An important part of that passage is the promise of the great outdoors.

Ask a participant to read the following paragraph from the first page of *The Boy Scout Handbook*:

Scouting promises you the great outdoors. As a Scout, you can learn how to camp and hike without leaving a trace, and how to take care of the land. You'll study wildlife up close and learn about nature all around you. There are plenty of skills for you to master, and you can teach others what you know. Everybody helping everyone else—that's part of Scouting, too.

—*The Boy Scout Handbook*,  
11th edition, page 1

#### ***The Importance of the Outdoor Program***

For the next few minutes, invite participants to consider the power of the outdoor program in delivering the message of Scouting to boys. The discussion may unfold along these lines:

When you think about a Scout troop, what image comes into your mind? It could be Scouts doing community service or Scouts in uniform in a parade or at a patriotic event. At or near the top of the list, though, it's very likely that you'll imagine Scouts hiking and camping. Ask the boys in your troop why they joined. Most, if not all, will mention camping.

Ask Scout leaders why they became involved with Scouting. Many will say it is because their sons are involved in a troop, or that they believe in the values Scouting offers. For many, there is also the lure of the outdoors—the chance to hike and camp, paddle a canoe, climb a mountain, spend time in the backcountry.





Ask a dozen people on the street what Scouting is all about, and the majority are bound to talk about adventures in the outdoors.

- From its earliest days, the program of the Boy Scouts of America has been deeply entwined with outdoor experiences.
- The allure of the outdoors is great to the active imaginations of Scouts. It means excitement, fun, adventure, camping, sleeping outside, and being prepared to face challenging environments and situations with their friends.
- The outdoors is the stage upon which so much of Scouting finds room to roam and space to succeed. The outdoors is the arena in which much of Scouting unfolds. For Scoutmasters, the outdoors is key to delivering the promise of Scouting.
- The outdoor program is a classroom without walls where Scouts can:
  - Use the skills they are mastering.
  - Solve problems as a team.
  - Look out for one another.
  - Learn self-discipline.
  - Respect others and the environment.
  - Encounter situations that require them to become leaders.
  - Enjoy the beauty in nature.
  - Learn the value of leaving no trace in the wilderness.

Scoutmasters have the ability to involve Scouts in outdoor programs that will help build their character, encourage citizenship, and develop their physical, mental, and emotional fitness. Camping is one of the primary tools used by the Boy Scouts of America to achieve these goals.

— *The Scoutmaster Handbook*,  
Chapter 9, "The Outdoor Program"

### ***Troop Opportunities for Outdoor Adventures***

At a minimum, Scouts should spend at least 10 days and nights outdoors each year. Among the opportunities for making that happen are:

- Troop and patrol hikes
- Short-term camping
- Conservation and service projects
- Resident camping
- Camporees and jamborees



- Council high adventure programs
- National and council high adventure bases

### Instructors' Note

*A tremendously helpful resource for participants will be a locally generated listing of opportunities that new Scoutmasters can use immediately as their troops are planning their outdoor programs. Prepared with the help of experienced Scout leaders and the district and council staffs, this handout can include listings of outdoor destinations of interest to Scoutmasters, each with information concerning any limitations on activities or group size, how to get permission to use these trails and campgrounds, and any other information that will assist troops in making the most of their activities.*

*The handout can also include a district and council calendar of upcoming camporees, resident camps, and other opportunities for Scouts.*

### **The Challenge of Delivering the Outdoor Program**

- As adults, we make the opportunity possible. We create boundaries and a format within which Scouts have the freedom to carry out their experiences the way they wish. The boy-led troop helps make this happen.
- New Scoutmasters need some confidence that they will have the resources and abilities to have successful outdoor experiences with their troops. Discuss starting small with outdoor activities that are within the skill levels and comfort zones of Scouts and Scoutmasters, then building on that foundation of shared experiences to take on more challenging adventures. A troop can start with tailgate camping and learn many outdoor skills together, but they should not get stuck with only that kind of camping, though, or with any other single outdoor activity. There are many opportunities available to troops, and Scouts should have the opportunities to try as many as possible.
- It is important for new Scoutmasters (and experienced ones, as well) to realize that the experience of an outdoor adventure is different from the perspective of a boy than of an adult. An outdoor experience that may have seemed a failure to a Scoutmaster (the Scouts got cold and wet, the tents blew down, critical ingredients for the evening meal were forgotten, etc.) can be perceived by boys as fine memories (they survived, they solved problems as a team, they learned the importance of more thorough planning, they strengthened friendships, etc.). The important thing is for troop leaders and Scouts to get into the outdoors, do their best with the skills they have,



skills, assess their performance, learn from their mistakes, and get back out there for another adventure as soon as they can.

- A novice Scout leader and a new troop can learn together. Adults and youth can use the resources available to them (to be discussed in the next presentation) to discover the best ways to begin having outdoor adventures. As they gain experience and confidence together, they can expand the range of what they want to learn and what outdoor challenges they want to consider.
- For Scoutmasters, an important part of leadership is recognizing where to expend energy and where the boys can resolve issues. There are times when Scoutmasters should be closely involved—putting together the framework of the boy-led troop, for example, helping the patrol leaders' council plan worthwhile activities, and ensuring that those activities comply with the safety policies of the BSA.

On the other hand, there are many issues that require no input from the Scoutmaster and many others that can be handled by the boy leaders of the troop with a little coaching by adults.

### **Summary**

The outdoor program brings sizzle to Scouting. It offers boys excitement, adventure, and opportunity. In addition, it is a vehicle for instilling the values of Scouting, for encouraging advancement, and for building on the methods of Scouting.

The presentation that follows will explore the two sides of a Scoutmaster's responsibilities for the outdoor program ... *skills* and *safety*. We'll make sure you have the tools and the resources to make the outdoor experience a strong, vital part of your troop's program. You will be ready to help Scouts get the most out of the outdoors. You will also find that these tools and resources will help you fully enjoy the role of being a Scoutmaster.

## Pop Quiz

### Instructors' Note

*This session ends with a "pop quiz"—true or false questions exploring issues of the outdoor program. Because the intent is not to test participants, but rather to reinforce learning points, the answer to every question is true.*

*Distribute copies of the quiz (see appendix) to participants. They are to work together as patrols to complete the quiz. When they are finished, read each question aloud and ask one of the patrols for its answer.*