

# Do Program!

By Rob Hathaway

Don't do advancement, do program!

The boys do advancement, as they wish, when they wish.

This relates to some of the mistakes I made in my earliest years as SM. Why was attendance bad? Why was retention very poor? One reason! Meetings weren't fun! At least that's what the boys said when I asked.

When we based our troop program on advancement... a large part of meetings resembled "school". We had lectures... sometimes we even had written tests. Scouting skills should be picked up one-on-one and hands-on whenever possible!

Avoid classroom-like lecture style instruction. Skills instruction can be accomplished with games, skits, interactive discussions, role-playing, hands-on demonstrations... and skills instruction doesn't have to directly relate to a specific advancement sign-off!

Look at *Woods Wisdom*, (or the new edition i.e. *Program Features for Troops, Teams and Crews a guide to Program Planning, Volumes 1, 2 and 3*), to see what I mean! These days, we have a monthly program feature. It may or may not have any direct relationship to advancement... usually not. There may be several break-outs during the skills instruction phase of the troop meeting... each break-out working on a different aspect of that program feature.

If the PLC thinks the entire troop would enjoy a particular activity... then no break-outs... whatever is appropriate. An actual example might be in order... this is all fresh from my PLC last night.

November's program feature is *Backpacking*. Our activities will build up to a one-day backpacking trip on Dec 1-2. Since the troop had the same feature just last June... the PLC hasn't scheduled any multiple tracks, they felt skill levels are pretty close except for a few Philmont veterans who will be instructional resources, and they felt that the activities planned will all be fun for everyone.

On 11/5, the Wolverines will lead a discussion on how to pack and menu planning. They will bring a well-packed backpack to take apart and lead a troop-wide brainstorming session on how to plan menus.

On 11/12, I agreed to make up and run a game of *Backpacking* and *Hiking Jeopardy*. This has become a popular activity... different skills each time. I will go through the requirements for *Backpacking* and *Hiking MB* and make up 25 questions and answers based on them to fill out a 5 X 5 Jeopardy board. This takes me about an hour... (and I did threaten to delegate it back to the SPL if they don't ask someone else to do it next time). Patrols compete against each other in playing Jeopardy... takes 20 to 25 minutes. (Yes, the New Scout patrol might not do as well... but they are free to adjourn to another room with a troop guide and do something else... that happened in May during a *Safety Afloat* and *Canoeing Jeopardy Game*).

Note that we aren't working on either *Backpacking MB* or *Hiking MB*... I will announce that I have the names of councilors available to interested Scouts, however.

On 11/19, the SPL will make up 4 envelope skits. These are likely Scenarios... each patrol will draw one... they will have 10 minutes to prepare skits depicting the scenarios... and hopefully resolving any problems... patrols then present the skits to the troop... discussion follows each. Scenarios will probably include "You are halfway up Johnson's Peak. Your Patrol leader stumbles and has a badly sprained ankle... what do you do?" This is only the second time we've done this but it is likely to become

**ADULT AIMS DIFFER FROM BOY AIMS**

~~ADULT AIMS~~ → .....  
(Character, Citizenship)

~~BOY AIMS~~ → .....  
(Pleasure, Interest)

**ADULT AIMS CAN BE REALIZED  
ONLY THRU BOY INTERESTS**

as much of a staple as Jeopardy. It doesn't have to be *First Aid* all the time either.

On 11/26, the skills instruction and game periods will be combined. Patrol Meetings will be held first, (final preparations), then a patrol trail dinner cooking contest. Each patrol has \$10 to spend, they'll have a backpacking stove and 40 minutes to prepare a tasty trail dinner... the SPL will act as judge. (*Speaking as an adult... this may flop... too many cooks spoil the soup... we'll have to see... when I, as SM, have these forebodings of doom... I've learned that they are only occasionally warranted... so I keep quiet!*) Between now and the campout... the troop will have prepared for the outing, and had lots of fun. No specific advancement will have been accomplished... but I guarantee you that we'll have a new round of SM conferences and BOR's waiting on 12/4.

Advancement sign-offs happen... one-on-one... pre-meeting, during Patrol Meetings, and especially during outings. You will hear Scouters claim that this goes against the 1st-class emphasis idea... bullfeathers. Scouts have to have fun before they'll get excited about advancement.

Evidence from my recent years as SM... understanding that it took a while to transition from what we once did... 1st class in roughly 8 or 10 months... we've had 2 who finished first class in under 4 months. I've had one, and only one, ACTIVE scout who took more than a year... and that was a swimming problem. We are a troop of 34 boys... but I'd say 25 active.

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## Things to think about!

### Key Findings

- Over time, Scouts reported significant increases in several character areas, while non-Scouts did not
- Scouts are more likely to embrace positive social values than non-Scouts
- The more regular their meeting attendance, the better character attributes
- More tenure = better character attributes
- Better program + more involvement = better character attributes

## Training Scenarios – Improvisation Guidelines

I like this idea of using *Training Scenarios* to act out and use the tools and techniques. It should make the training fun and memorable... and lively!

### Foreword

There are no real definite rights and wrongs for improv, partly because any attempt to control it just stifles it, as with any creative activity. There are some things that you can do to make the game better. As a result, most of these guidelines are to do with "keeping the ball in the air".

### The Guidelines

#### 1. Listen.

Pay attention to what is being said. Think about what is happening, rather than what you're going to say next.

#### 2. Don't Deny.

This is more than just not saying "no". You should go with the scene that everyone else is building, unless it's specifically part of the game not to. Don't change the environment or relationship that someone else has set up. Equally, don't feed other people lines that will kill the momentum (such as closed questions).

#### 3. Collaborate.

Take part. Build on the ideas of others. Use the environment given to you. Show the action of the scene, and react to what other people are doing.

#### 4. Be consistent.

Remain the same character throughout the scene, and remain consistent with the rules of the game.

#### 5. Look out for the parts of the story.

Establish the scene at the beginning, make it complicated, and then look out for a way to end.