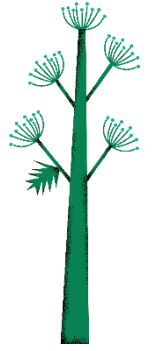


Resources for young leaders



Managing groups outdoors

Scouts is about adventure, fun, and building skills for life – and we try to do as much of this as possible outdoors. Running sessions outside brings another set of considerations, so we've put together some handy tips to help you get the most of outdoor activities while managing risk.

The importance of numbers

Making sure that you're keeping everyone safe starts with making sure everyone stays part of the group. When enjoying outdoor adventures, people can easily drift off – you need to keep everyone together so that they're supervised.

It's always a good idea to place a leader at the back of the group to give people encouragement and to make sure you definitely know where the back of the group is.

Some other ways to avoid people drifting off include:

Roll call or numbering off

Gives each young person a number. When you should 'roll call!', the young people shout their numbers back in order.

This helps you to check that you have everyone, but also makes sure people are paying attention. You can make it more fun by challenging the group to see how loud or quickly they can complete the roll call.

Buddy system

Give each child in the group a buddy. Buddies stick together at all times and look after each other. You'll need to clearly explain what buddies do and make sure everyone understands – and you'll need to think carefully about the people in each pair.

Easy identification

If you ever see Scouts out and about, they'll probably be wearing a brightly coloured scarf. This isn't just because they're proud to be Scouts – it makes it easier for leaders to identify the young people that are part of their group. You can apply this principle with hats, scarves, rucksacks, or waterproofs.

However you use these different techniques, it's vital that you carry out regular headcounts to check that everyone is where they should be.



Managing unscheduled free time

No matter how detailed and considered your session plan is, there are likely to be moments of [unscheduled free time](#). For example, unscheduled free time often happens when a group has finished an activity, but they have to wait for another group to finish before everyone can move onto the next task. When you have nothing to do, it's easy to get restless.

Sometimes there's nothing you can do about some people in the group taking more time than others. Sometimes you might want to slow down the people who are faster by giving them an extra challenge. It's up to you how you do this – you could give them something extra to carry on a hike or give them fewer helpful resources for a puzzle-solving challenge, for example. You could also give everyone a longer challenge that they can work on whenever they have time between other activities.

Games and songs

Play a **game** that keeps the group together. Here are a couple of five-minute fillers (some require props, but others can be played at a moment's notice):

- **Monster in the middle.** The group hold hands to form a ring – they'll pretend this is an electric fence. In the middle is a monster – you! The group move so that the monster never touches the fence. The monster carefully picks a path to the next destination (occasionally making strange noises and jumping towards unsuspecting members of the electric fence).
- **Knights, dragons and shields.** Everybody is a knight. They secretly pick another person in the group to be a dragon, and a second person to be their shield. When the leader shout 'Go!', everyone should move to keep their shield between themselves and the dragon. Everyone has different dragons and shields, so people have to stay on their toes.
- **Zip, zap, boing!** In a circle, pass the word 'Zip' from person to person with an appropriate hand action (such as pointing). If someone says 'Zap' instead of 'Zip', then the direction changes and everyone should start passing 'Zip' the other way around the circle. If someone says 'boing' then the next person is missed out. Got that?
- **Scavenger hunts.** Prepare a list of cryptic clues, then challenge everyone to find objects matching your descriptions and bring you the evidence.
- **Juggling balls.** Hundreds of games can be played with a set of juggling balls. 'Team juggle' requires the whole group to pass the ball in a sequence. 'Object tag' is similar to normal tag but you become 'it' if the ball hits you, while in 'human chains', players have to pass the ball from one end of the chain to the other in the quickest possible time.
- **Songs** that are based on repetition are ideal for keeping a group together. The format is simple: you sing or shout a line, and the group sings or shouts it back at you. Try searching for songs such as The Crazy Moose or The Little Jeep.

You could also try activities where everyone has to follow a leader – they can't follow the leader if they can't see them, which means everyone has to stick together.



Splitting up the group

You've split everyone into small groups, but there's a world out there for them to disappear into. You need to keep them safe, and you also need to get back on time. Boundaries, time limits, and recall will help.

Boundaries

Use boundaries to define the area a group is allowed to explore. You could set physical boundaries, for example, between this wall and that tree, without crossing any fences, or only outside. You could also use sight lines, for example, saying people can go anywhere as long as they can still see a rucksack, a set adult, or the picnic area.

Timekeepers

It can be easy to lose track of time when you're having fun! Choose one person in each group to act as a timekeeper – it's their job to make sure their group gets back on time. You could give them a stopwatch or a countdown timer, but a normal watch would work too.

Recall

Choose a signal that everyone can recognise to mean that it's time to return. You could use a whistle, the chiming of a clock tower, or standing with your arms stretched out, for example. You might want to reward the first two groups to get back to encourage everyone to pay attention for the signal.

Don't forget

Make sure everyone goes to the loo

If you're about to leave somewhere with toilets, take advantage of the facilities before you head off. It's much easier than stopping on the way or holding out until you arrive at your destination. Make sure everyone visits the toilet, even if they're not sure if they need it.

Take spare kit

You'll probably want to include essentials for doing group work (pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners) as well as other extras. For example, think about taking bottles of water, a hat and gloves (depending on weather), emergency ponchos (a roll of bin bags can prove very adaptable), or spare snacks. If you're taking part in an adventurous activity, then hair bobbles are also useful.

