

Camping Standards



Camping standards is one of the most difficult areas that a Scout Leader has to deal with because there are so many variable factors. As a basis, though, the book *Scout Camping* details the normal arrangements for a camp to ensure that cleanliness and hygiene are maintained, equipment is safely and correctly stored and personal effects are tidily kept and not lost.

The variable factors though are perhaps the most important. One factor is the changing nature of camping itself. Usually, it is no longer seen as an end in itself but more a means to an end. Troop summer camp is more often a base for other activities or exploration rather than a camp for camping's sake. Patrol and hike camping equipment has become so lightweight and compact that standards you would apply to a standing camp are often impractical.

The biggest problem for Leaders is not so much as what to do and what the standards are, although this is important, but how these standards are to be achieved.

Without question you could impose standards on 10 or 12 year old Scouts and they will do what they are told - but it would not be the way to deal with 15 year olds if you wished to keep them in the Troop for long. Another variable is the background and experience of the Scouts. The new Scout who has camped with the Cub Scouts will know more than the direct entrant. The 11 year old Scout who camps every year with the family may well know more in practice than the Patrol Leader! As a Scout Leader you will have to both know your Scouts well and set realistic standards for them on each occasion.

What can be stated with conviction however is that the Scout way of camping and of establishing and maintaining standards, is through the Patrol System. This means giving the Patrol Leaders real responsibility, trusting them and assuring them that they have the necessary support to overcome difficulties.

When the Scout Leader has created the right relationship with the Patrol Leaders and the Patrol Leaders' Council is working effectively, standards will be maintained by the Scouts themselves,

encouraged by the Scout Leader. Usually, the Scouts' own standards are far higher than you would expect. If you wish to test this out then get the Patrol Leaders in camp as a team to inspect each other's site in turn.

When starting out with new or inexperienced Scouts, they must be trained in what you expect. It is amazing how often this simple fact is overlooked. Two simple ways of doing this are either to set up an ideal camp site and then explain to the Scouts why things are put in certain places and in a certain way or alternatively, create your very own disaster area and ask the Scouts to point out what is wrong and to put it right.

Having established the standards you require, a set routine of inspection, possibly based around a competition for points, is the best way of establishing the correct habits. When this has been achieved, it should then lead to self-contained Patrol camping with Patrol Leaders being trusted with a minimum of involvement.

This does not mean that the Scout Leader does nothing there is still a very positive role in encouraging and helping the Patrol Leaders with this difficult and often boring job. What needs to be constantly stressed are the benefits and advantages of having things clean, tidy and organised.

It will still probably be necessary to hold some sort of formal inspection at least once a day and this will often be accepted by the Scouts if it is clearly understood. Don't forget, there is no reason why the Scouts from time to time should not inspect themselves. It is important therefore to understand the purpose of inspections.

1. What is the purpose of inspection?

- Personal - to ensure cleanliness and tidiness and identify any personal hygiene problems
- Group - to ensure pride in the Patrol and team work
- Orderly living - to stress the benefits of being able to find things when you need them, for

example, clothing - to sort the wet from the dry and the clean from the dirty

- Food - to ensure hygienic cooking and storage of food and hygienic waste disposal.
- Dixies and dishes - to ensure cleanliness and correct storage.
- Fires - to ensure correct control of size, provision of good, reduce wood wastage and examine the safety aspects
- Stoves - to ensure safe storage of fuel and correct maintenance, equipment and to ensure Patrol equipment is safely and correctly stored.

2. What standards should Leaders expect?

This is dependent on age, experience and existing standards within the Patrol. Encourage progress slowly starting with the most important areas. If you criticise everything at once, the Patrol may well give up. Younger Scouts need greater attention, more detailed guidance and clear demonstrations.

Older Scouts should be encouraged to set high standards for themselves and for their Patrols and maintain them amongst themselves.

3 Now regularly should Inspections occur?

- This is dependent on the age and experience of the Patrol.
- Younger Scouts appreciate regular routine and enjoy the competition aspect more.
- Older Scouts require helpful reminders rather than criticism.
- Inspections should not be a ritual controlled solely by adults and the topic of inspection should be varied regularly.
- Spot inspections and informal tours by Leaders and Patrol Leaders should be encouraged.
- A regular inspection period during the early days of a camp help to establish a routine of tidiness and order on a Patrol site.

4 Who should be responsible for inspection?

- Initially the Leaders and Assistant Leaders
- Shared with senior Patrol Leaders and Patrol Leaders.
- Given to all Scouts occasionally, including inspection of the Leaders' site.

5. How can Scouts be encouraged to achieve high standards?

- Explain the standards, do not just impose them and explain the purpose of inspection.
- Praise more than you criticise
- Reward good efforts. Attempt to acknowledge all the high standards and not just the best.
- Train the Scouts in the standards required and don't just expect them to happen
- Use the training handbooks, *Enjoy Camping and Scout Camping* as regular reference.
- Encourage a tradition of high standards in the Patrol and the Patrol Leaders' Council.

Make individual comments to the Patrol Leaders from time to time privately, using praise or helpful suggestions as necessary.

Never forget, and this cannot be stressed strongly enough, that the best thing you can do is to set a good example. Regular inspections of your own site should also be carried out by the Patrol Leaders and the Scouts. They will learn more from what you do than anything that you ever tell them.