



The Phoenix Challenge 2010 – The Big Bang

Document 03a

General Campcraft & Mountaincraft Guidelines

Camping in a Scout context can take a number of forms, but generally two distinct types of camping are undertaken:

- Lightweight Camping
- Standing Camping

Lightweight Camping

This generally involves short term camping, or camping 'on the move'. It involves lightweight equipment, as more often than not the camper carries all of his or her equipment, including tentage and cooking gear. Many activities in Scouting make use of lightweight camping, including MPC's/Sionnach's, The Explorer Belt, survival challenges, or indeed any activity that requires a 1 or 2 night stay.

Standing Camping

This generally involves longer term camping, where the camper will be based in the one campsite for a period of days or even weeks. Because a longer term stay is being made, the effort required to provide more comfortable living conditions is justified. More equipment is used and more time can be spent constructing a campsite. Annual Camp is often the main occasion that a standing camp set-up is used, but it can also be used on weekend camps.

Both types of camping call for the development of various skills. Between them they provide many programme opportunities.

Campcraft can be said to be the set of skills that apply to Standing Camps. These include :

- Erection and maintenance of relevant tentage
- Construction and maintenance of campsite gadgets
- Food storage and hygiene
- Cooking
- General campsite safety and hygiene

Campsite Gadgets

The question needs to be asked, why construct gadgets from timber and rope in the first place? Indeed, it may be asked, why do we simply not use fold out camp tables and benches, etc, when on standing camps?

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Before going on to look at the various approaches to constructing campsite gadgets, it is important to know why we should bother to construct them in the first place.

- The patrol is required to work together as a team to construct the site.
- The site requires maintenance by the patrol, which in turn demands organisation on behalf of the patrol.
- There is a major sense of achievement to be gained by the patrol being able to say 'we made that'.
- It is a very different sort of camping to that undertaken by families or other youth groups, and is identifiable as 'scout camping'.

Approaches to Constructing Campsite Gadgets

There are two basic approaches that can be taken when constructing gadgets for camp or any other activity.

Pre-prepared. In this approach, timber is collected well before the activity, and is cut into various lengths. Patrols design gadgets for the various parts of the campsite and practice the construction of these. The timber can then be stored in bundles ready for use when next required.

On-the-spot. With this approach timber is gathered at the site of where it will be used and patrols construct gadgets with the available timber. Gadget designs used by patrols may be based on gadgets built previously, but will often vary due to the differing amounts of timber that may be available from site to site.

There is much to be said for the ingenuity required in constructing campsites with whatever timber is available at any given site. However, timber is rarely available in great quantities at any recognised campsite, and even if the campsite happens to be near to a forest, cutting of fresh timber for every camp cannot be regarded as being very environmentally friendly.

There are a number of advantages to a troop adopting the pre-prepared approach.

- Basic principles in gadget construction can be taught to patrols before the camp.
- Patrols can design their own gadgets in advance of the camp, giving them the chance to 'play around' with different ideas.
- Quantities of timber are guaranteed, which means that the basic gadgets required for a comfortable camp can be constructed.
- Safe and structural sound gadgets can be built as the quality of timber is assured.
- Additional responsibility is put on the patrols to ensure that their timber is prepared and ready for the activity.

Of course a major disadvantage to the pre-prepared approach is that all this timber has to be 'lugged' with the troop to the activity. The availability of suitable transport may in turn limit the amount of timber that can be brought on any one trip. Like wise the timber needs a place to be stored when not in use, and this may be a concern for troops who do not own their own property.

There is also a danger that 'set' gadgets will be used by all the patrols within a troop. While over a number of years, favourite designs may, and probably will, develop within a troop, patrols should be encouraged at all times to experiment and come up with new designs for campsite gadgets

