

From Bay Area Council
Scout Success Seminar 2008
"Pizzazz, Songs, & Skits"

- Materials
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Disclaimer so I'm not plagiarizing: I have shamelessly appropriated the layout from The Complete Idiot's Guide books. Also, a lot of the text of this pamphlet (especially in the Skits section) has been adapted from the intro in the Big Book of Skits on the MacScouter Website (see Resources).

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Intro: I should give the kids pizza? Oh, that says **PIZZAZZ!** (or pizazz. or pizzaz. =))

in this chapter...

WHY DO I NEED PIZZAZZ? DON'T I HAVE ENOUGH TO THINK ABOUT?

- Pizzazz will make your life easier -- REALLY! Your kids will pay way more attention to you if you're entertaining. You will keep more of your Scouts in the pack instead of losing them to other activities. You will leave your meetings as a more cheerful person. And it's FUN! Cub Scouting is all about FUN.
- Note to the stage fright victims: If you're a person who's uncomfortable with a bunch of eyeballs looking at only you, there's still a place for you in the Land of Cub Scout Pizzazz. You could track down and provide pizzazz material to someone who's a bit more of a ham. Also, you can maybe teach skits to groups of Cub Scouts so THEY can perform it.

REMEMBER, IT'S NOT SCHOOL

- While there are certainly times when the kids need to be quiet and listening, try to remember that they've been in school all day, and they're energetic kids. If you don't give them a good outlet for all that energy, you shouldn't expect them to pay attention as you're teaching them how to make their craft project, or whatever. Songs with lots of noise and/or movement are perfect for this.
- If you need them to pay attention to a skit or story (or the unending announcements for parents!), get the noise and wiggles out with either a song (if there's time) or a group scream and full-body shake.
 - Warn parents with very small kids first
 - make sure no one gets too out-of-control with the movements
 - Make it clear when it starts ("when I lower my hand...") and when it ends. Be ready with the Cub Scout Sign!

AGE-APPROPRIATE

- It can be hard to remember to make sure that the “performance pieces” are appropriate for all of the different ages in Cub Scouts. Try anyways, because if the skit/song/story/joke is geared too old, you’ll leave your Tigers and Wolves totally puzzled, and if it’s too young, your Webelos could get bored. When in doubt, opt for the stuff for younger kids. If it’s a song or chant, you can keep your older boys entertained with more complicated movements or by gradually increasing the speed.

LENGTH

- My experience is that songs, skits, etc. will often take longer than I expect. Don’t forget to calculate the time you’ll need to explain the audience participation, set up the skit, or sing all 842 verses of your chosen song.

EXAGGERATE!

- Kids appreciate a show, and you’ll give your best show if you exaggerate EVERYTHING. Thing about the cartoons they watch -- the characters’ eyeballs pop out when they’re excited, their arms are flung all about, their facial expressions are over-acted. The (well, one) secret to entertaining kids is to be as cartoon-y as possible. YOU are the center of attention -- ham it up! Embarrassment has no place in an adult Scouter’s emotional palette. THE KIDS WILL LOVE IT!!

THEMES

- Cub Scouts have a “theme” for every month, and you can find a lot of resources relating to these themes. Some packs choose to follow the theme; others don’t. If your pack does use the monthly theme, you can find songs/skits/etc. following the theme online and at the monthly Roundtable.

BE READY TO ADAPT TO YOUR GROUP NEEDS

- Don’t be afraid to change a line in a skit or a movement in a song if you think it won’t work well for your group.

GO OUT AND FIND THEM!

- At the end of this booklet is a list of MANY places where you can find more pizzazz “toppings” -- more skits, more songs, more run-ons, more cheers. DO NOT rely on the very small sampling of stuff in this packet -- there’s much better stuff out there! GO GET THEM! (although, let me congratulate you on using one of your resources by coming to the Scouter Success Seminar -- that’s a great resource!)

SO: The least you need to know

- using Pizzazz will make your Scouting life EASIER, not harder
- It’s Cub Scouts, not school
- Pick pizzazz that’s funny to Cub-Scout-aged kids
- Plan for the length of the song/skit
- Be a cartoon; exaggerate your facial and body movements
- Use the resources listed at the end of this booklet to find more skits and songs

Songs: or, “Cub Scout Noise”

in this chapter...

KIDS LOVE TO SING!

- Especially if there’s movements. And gross lyrics. And silliness. Do not leave them songless!

MOOD: DURING AND AFTER

- What mood do you need your kids to be in AFTER the song? If you want them to be reasonably quiet, and they’ve been listening to announcements and awards, now might be a good time for a noisy, busy song. If you want them to be serious, it might be a good idea to calm and quiet them with a “rainstorm” (described below).

CAN’T CARRY A TUNE?

- You can still “sing” -- there are several songs that are more “chants” than tunes. These usually depend on rhythm and motions. Examples are: Hello, my name is Joe; Bananas of the World, Unite; and Making a Rainstorm.

REPEAT AFTER ME

- These are perfect songs for Cub Scouts. They don’t have to read anything, and they don’t have to remember more than a sentence or two at a time. These are my favorite type of songs for Cub Scouts, because everyone can do it right away.
- I like to start these by calling “Repeat after me!” and having them call back “Repeat after me!”

ACTION

- Action songs are almost always better than statue songs, but: Think about the space you have if you want to do a song with motions. Will the kids be packed like sardines and hit each other in the face? Are there breakables close by? Use big motions if you can. If you can’t, try to adapt them into “mini-motions” -- move your fingers instead of your arms, etc. The kids will think it’s funny if you explain that you can’t do the big motions because of (whatever), so instead you’re doing mini-motions.
- Often at pack meetings, the kids are sitting in chairs just before the song. If you’re doing an action song, try to get them to step away from their chairs and each other (not too far, or it’ll take forever). If you don’t have space, try to minimize it or pick another song. Or, there are several songs that make use of the kids’ chairs (My Bonnie, the Grand Old Duke of York, etc.) -- try one of these.

NOISY vs. QUIET

- Noisy wins. Hands down. There just aren’t that many quiet songs, and not too many places to use them. Nonetheless: making a “rainstorm” is calming (if not exactly quiet), and Taps or Cub Scout Vespers are both sung quietly.

LENGTH

- Be aware that the songs where the verses grow longer and longer (like the Twelve Days of Christmas, where you’re adding something on for each of the Twelve Days) are often really long (which may be what you want).
- Be really careful about long songs that the kids don’t already know and that aren’t repeat-after-me songs. It’s not easy to sing a song straight from words on a page if you don’t already know it, and many Cub Scouts aren’t very strong in reading fast enough yet. If you really want to do a long song, you’ll have to practice it over several meetings -- maybe you could make it the “song of the month” (or of a couple months). The kids will be willing to learn it if it’s funny and/or gross, but: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

- If you choose a short song and you have extra time, repeat it (over and over) using a different style. Changing it up is easy, and kids LOVE it! Some songs consist on ONLY this concept (like Boom-Chicka-boom). Try the following:
 - louder/softer, super-loud, super-soft
 - slower, faster, super-slow, warp speed (or Cub Scout speed)
 - underwater-style (waggle your finger over your lips as you sing)
 - southern-style (with an exaggerated drawl)
 - opera-style
 - girly
 - like a cat, like a dog, etc. (replace the words with “meow meow” or “arf arf”). a funny one is “like a turtle” -- don’t make any noise at all.

OLDIES BUT NOT GOODIES

- Look out for old songs with racist or otherwise inappropriate words or sentiments. There are lots of really old songs that have been handed down that should be laid down to rest. Also, be careful about killing animals violently.

The least you need to know:

- **Don’t neglect to sing with your kids!**
- **Even if you think you can’t carry a tune, there are still songs you can “sing.”**
- **Think about the mood you want them to be in for whatever’s coming after the song.**
- **Repeat-after-me songs are perfect for Cub Scouts!**
- **Action songs are what Cub Scouts is all about -- movement, noise, and silliness.**
- **Noisy is (practically) the only way to be**
- **Short songs for short attention spans...**
- **Old songs reflecting old mindsets should be put aside**

Skits, Walk-Ons, Running Gags, and Audience Participation: Cub Scouts doesn't have enough drama already?!

in this chapter...

WALK...WHAT? COME AGAIN?

- **Skit:** a very tiny comedic play. This is the hardest for Cub Scouts to manage, and requires the most practice. Here is an example:

The Nutty Fisherman

Center stage is a lad fishing from a billy can or bucket, he keeps pulling the rod as though he has something on the line. A passer by looks at him as he walks by and then walks on, after a few steps the passer by comes back to the lad.

Passer by: "What are you doing there then?"

Fisher: "I'm fishing, what does it look as though I'm doing?"

Passer by: "Fishing eh!, what are you fishing for."

Fisher: "I'm fishing for suckers."

Passer by: "Have you caught any?"

Fisher: "Yes you're the third today"

- **Walk-On:** A walk-on should in general be pre-arranged with the person who is supposed to be up there talking. If it is not pre-arranged it can be more of a practical joke. While the leader is talking, a Scout interrupts him/her by walking on stage and doing or saying something. The leader responds accordingly, usually in an exasperated way, and the scout then says the groaner punch line. These are very short, and a Cub Scout can handle these with a little practice. Also, other leaders could do these (without the need for practice usually) to spice up the meetings or campfires. Here are several examples:

Scout: "The squirrels are after me! The squirrels are after me!!"

Leader: "Why on earth would squirrels be after you?"

Scout: "They think I'm nuts!"

Scout: Walks on stage tossing a ball up in the air a foot or two and catching it.

Leader: "What are you doing?"

Scout: "Throwing up!"

Scout: Runs up to the leader on stage, starts grabbing at his own clothes, as though he has bugs on him, and says, "They're on me, they're on me!"

Leader: "What's on you."

Scout: "My Clothes!" and walks off stage.

- **Running Gag:** A string of walk-ons with a related theme. Examples are: The Infantry is Coming! and The Briefcase. These are a little better than Walk-ons only because it's easier to involve more kids.

The Briefcase

Scene: A person standing on a stage reciting a long story (or some other activity). A second person will enter at various stages and interrupt him, after which the story teller starts again.

The second person will need the following props: A briefcase, and a step ladder.

1. Person 2 walks on with a briefcase. First person asks him what he's doing.
Reply: "I'm taking my case to court". Walks off.
2. Enters again with a step ladder. Same as before, this time replying:
"I'm taking my case to a higher court"
3. This time, person two places the hands of the story teller in front of him, and puts his case on them.
"I rest my case" (This one works best when the story teller doesn't know about it).
4. Final entry, without a case: "I lost my case"

This can of course be expanded.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION SKIT

- These are stories read by one person during which the audience says things in response to cue words. They're really fun, and very easy to do with Cub Scouts and their families with little preparation. The directions will often take time to explain. If your den is "putting on" the audience participation skit, then the members of your den can lead the different groups in the appropriate responses. Otherwise, you can either "volunteer" other adult leaders or pick volunteers from the audience. An example is shown below:

A Pirate Story

The Characters -- what the audience should say/do:

Old Sea Pirate -- Ho! Ho! Ho! and a bottle of Rum

Bosun -- snore, snore

Black Cloud -- Blow wind Blow

Sea Gulls -- caw, caw (flapping arms)

Long John Silver -- Aharr me maties

Polly Parrot -- Polly wants a cracker

Croaky Crocodile -- Tic Toc, Tic Toc (shake head)

The Story:

Once upon a time there was an Old Sea Pirate and his Bosun who sailed out on the ocean blue in their sturdy ship the Black Cloud. Far off in the distance he could hear the Sea Gulls cry. The Old Sea Pirate and his Bosun dropped anchor and went fast asleep, first making sure all the hatches were secured on the Black Cloud. Now creeping up the side of the ship came Long John Silver and his parrot Polly looking for the treasure of the Old Sea Pirate and his Bosun. Looking for Long John Silver was Croaky Crocodile who had swallowed a clock. Just as Long John Silver and Polly Parrot discovered the treasure chest, Croaky Crocodile's clock woke up the Old Sea Pirate and his Bosun who thought it was the Sea Gulls landing on the deck of the Black Cloud. Well Long John Silver grabbed hold of Polly Parrot and turned to run, and only in his haste he tripped overboard, much to the glee of Croaky Crocodile. The Old Sea Pirate and his Bosun chased after them, but the Black Cloud rolled in the waves, clearing the deck of Sea Gulls, the Old Sea Pirate and his Bosun. Now, from a very good source, I am told that the last anyone heard of all these characters was strange sounds in the night as the Sea Gulls flew overhead followed by Long John Silver and Polly Parrot, chased by the Old Sea Pirate and his Bosun, all frantically swimming away from Croaky Crocodile with his ticking clock, while to this day, the Black Cloud is anchored far out at sea with its treasure chest still aboard.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

- It will increase the kids' confidence and can help to avoid whispering, fumbling, amnesia, arguing about who says what, and all sorts of problems. The performance will be stilted and slow without practice -- don't put your kids in that situation!

- This is especially important because Cub Scouts usually don't read fast enough to read cold from cue cards.
- If it's your den's turn to do the skit for the pack meeting, practice the skit for 5 minutes each week for the month before. THAT'S the sort of practice that's almost essential.
- be prepared to quietly prompt the boys on their lines during the actual performance (although don't be over-eager -- give him a chance to remember it!).

VOLUNTEER OR VICTIM?

- A volunteer is usually a pre-selected person who you seem to pluck out of the audience, but of course is planted there.
- A victim, on the other hand, is a person who is chosen at random or pre-selected (without their knowledge) to be the butt of the joke. Of course, discretion is advised, ESPECIALLY if your victim is a kid!

AGE APPROPRIATE

- Look out for skits that are too advanced for Cub Scouts -- there's LOTS of stuff out there for older Boy Scout troops. Kids will have a hard time with the jokes if they're not obvious enough.

LENGTH

- Skits are ideally somewhere around 90 seconds and never longer than 3 to 5 minutes.
- With Cub Scouts, the shorter skits are better -- they'll take a bit longer to act it out for real than in practice.

DITCH THE IMPROV (politely)

- You're not crushing their creativity, you're keeping control of time and content. Don't let them invent a skit for a pack meeting or campfire unless it's exceptional.
- Generally, a good way to get the kids involved in a good skit is to provide them with a choice of about two or three skits and let them choose a tried and proven skit, then help them modify it to the number of kids available and the theme. Make sure everyone understands the words he's saying.
- If you have a kid who's insistent on writing his own skit scripts, have him perform them for the den meetings.

FIND THE HAM

- Often, Scout skits have one or two main speakers. Equally often, your den or pack will have some kids who love to ham it up. Match these kids to these parts!
- Conversely, kids who don't like to speak publicly can do the support roles.

PROPS AND COSTUMES

- Don't worry about being super-complicated -- kids have a great imagination.
- That being said, after-Halloween sales on costume pieces are great deals, and can be used throughout the year in skits and just for entertainment.
- A few skits require a prop -- make sure you read through the skit entirely.

TURN UP THE VOLUME

- The joke won't be funny if no one can hear it -- the boys have to speak up, in the direction of the audience, so that everyone can hear them. That's also where rehearsing comes in handy.

EXAGGERATE

- Or, at least, encourage your Scouts to exaggerate to help the younger kids get the jokes. For example, in The Briefcase, he gently shake the briefcase as he says "I'm taking my *case* to court" to draw attention to it.

TOUCHY TOPICS

- Watch out for using or modifying skits that touch on sensitive topics. What used to be considered acceptable jokes no longer are, such as ethnic or handicapped targets. Keep to topics of common ground.'

The least you need to know

- **PRACTICE!! This cannot be emphasized enough!**
- **Audience Participation skits require the least amount of preparation and practice**
- **Choose your victims carefully**
- **Make sure your skit is funny to Cub Scouts**
- **Keep it SHORT**
- **Don't let kids make up skits for a group presentation.**
- **Match the hams to the talky parts.**
- **Make sure they speak loud enough to be heard**
- **Exaggerate to help the younger kids get the jokes**
- **Look out for inappropriate topics, often from old skits.**

Cheers: or, "Yes, yes, quite nice, well done!"

in this chapter...

SO SIMPLE...

- This is the easiest type of pizzazz to bring to your Cub Scout program. It takes a couple of seconds, no real practice necessary, and one sheet of paper can hold enough cheers for a meeting. Everyone likes to be recognized -- using a Cub Scout Cheer instead or normal applause really makes the recognition special.
- 15 minutes of preparation could provide you with a year's worth of cheers -- just write a bunch down on pieces of paper, fold them up and put them in a box, and have people pick them out randomly as needed. "Hey everyone, let's give Assistant Scoutmaster Bob a Cub Scout 'round' of applause for putting together our tee shirt design!" (everyone should clap while moving their clapping hands in a circle)

TOO SHORT? REPEAT!

- Cheers are often really short. To help people get the hang of it, it's typical to repeat short cheers 3 times, or whatever.

CHEERMASTER (CHEERMEISTER)

- A cheermaster is a useful person, as he or she will keep track of the box with cheers and leads them as needed. This person should explain the cheer, demonstrate if necessary, and really be clear about when the cheer starts and how often it is to be repeated.

LOOK OUT FOR OLD STEREOTYPES

- Again, lots of these have been handed down through the generations. You should discard any that represent ethnic stereotypes or that could otherwise be offensive.

the least you need to know

Where else can I find this stuff? RESOURCES

Sources for Pizzazz:

- Roundtable Handouts
- Monthly program helps
- Cub Scout Leader's Guide
- Den Chief Handbook
- Training sessions (like Scouter Success Seminar...)
- Cub Scout Pow-wow (always the 1st Saturday in November, put on by the Sam Houston Area Council); also, old Pow-wow books and CDs
- Council and District camps, campfires
- other Scout leaders
- Sunday Schools, Girl Scouts, YMCA groups, and other youth organizations
- online (LOTS -- see below)
- *Scouting* Leader magazine
- your imagination

Online Resources

- www.google.com is an invaluable help for finding lots of Cub Scout info online.
- Baloo's Bugle: <http://usscouts.org/bbugle.asp>
- Monthly Program Helps: <http://www.scouting.org/cubscouts/resources/34304/index.jsp>

SONGS: <http://www.macscouter.com/Songs/>

- repeat after me songs, action songs, gross songs, short songs, silly songs, camp songs, campfire songs, girl scout/girl guide songs, patriotic songs, chants, holiday scouting songs, AND .pdfs of songbooks

SKITS:

- Google "audience participation scout skit"
- <http://macscouter.com/Skits/>
- <http://usscouts.org/usscouts/stories/runons.asp>
- <http://usscouts.org/stories.asp>

CHEERS:

- <http://www.wtsmith.com/rt/cheers.html>