



COMMUNICATION

Getting and Giving Information

An old movie called *Cool Hand Luke* included this famous line: "What we've got here is a failure to communicate." But communication failures don't just happen in the movies; they happen in school, in families, and in Scout units. Have you ever had a campout where somebody showed up late because he didn't hear the announced time? Have you ever had a meeting where nobody listened, even when the senior patrol leader held up the Scout sign for five minutes? Have your parents ever failed to hear what you were trying to say about chores or homework—or have you ever failed to hear them?

Communication is an essential life skill—a critical skill—that all people need. The activities in this program feature will help your Scouts use a variety of communication techniques more effectively. It will also put Scouts on the road toward earning the Communication merit badge or other badges and awards related to communication.

Objectives

This month's activities should:

- Help Scouts become better communicators and listeners.
- Introduce Scouts to a variety of communication methods.
- Help Scouts understand and overcome communication barriers.
- Emphasize the importance of Internet safety.
- Encourage Scouts to pursue communication-related awards.
- Introduce Scouts to careers in the communication field.
- Build self-confidence by learning and demonstrating skills.

RELATED ADVANCEMENT AND AWARDS

- Tenderfoot requirement 2
- Second Class requirement 3a
- First Class requirements 3, 11
- *Communication, Computers, Digital Technology* (which will replace *Computers* in 2014), *Journalism, Public Speaking, Radio, and Theater* merit badges
- Interpreter strip
- Cyber Chip
- Ranger: Communications core requirement



Leadership Planning

During your planning meetings, you and your leadership team may want to discuss the following items when choosing communication as your program feature:

1. What do we want our main event to be?
2. Which merit badges would we like to focus on this month?
3. What adults in our unit have communication expertise?
4. Who else do we know who could serve as a communication instructor?
5. Are there areas in our unit where we struggle to communicate?
6. How can we involve parents?
7. To meet our needs, what should we change in the sample meeting plans?

PARENTS CAN HELP WITH THE COMMUNICATION PROGRAM FEATURE BY:

1. Serving as presenters or merit badge counselors
2. Identifying a location for the main event
3. Providing transportation for the main event

COMMUNICATION: A KEY TO OPENING DOORS

Communication is important to your life. Being able to communicate effectively is key to achieving success. It is the way you get people to understand your values, interests, talents, abilities, needs, and wants. It is how you show your knowledge about things.

Good communication means more than just expressing yourself. It also involves listening carefully to others, knowing when to speak up, and knowing when to keep your thoughts to yourself. If you can communicate well, you will be better at just about everything you do, from Scouting to schoolwork to being a good friend.

As you grow older, your ability to communicate grows with you. When you were an infant, you cried to communicate simple messages such as “I’m hungry!” or “My diaper needs changing!” At about 6 weeks of age, you learned to communicate by smiling. This was how you said: “I’m happy” or “I’m comfortable with you.” At around 6 months, you started talking. A mixture of sounds and words tumbled out of your mouth. Every day, you got a little better at it. By the time you started school, you had advanced from “Da-da!” to “Can you come over to play?”



Today, you are able to communicate complex thoughts about things like sports, math, and movie plots. You may have learned a special group of words related to a favorite hobby or sport. You may have even learned to communicate in a second language.



What Is Communication?

Simply put, communication is the act of sharing information with others. Most forms of communication are symbolic. A symbol is something that means or stands for something else. For example, the American flag is a symbol of America.

Language. Language is the most common way we use symbols to communicate verbally and in writing. Most languages use an alphabet to symbolize (stand for) sounds in the spoken language. We combine letters in the alphabet to form words that can be spoken or written. Some words symbolize things you can hold or touch. “Apple,” for example, stands for a fruit we love to eat. Other words, such as “love,” “intelligence,” and “freedom,” stand for intangible things—things you cannot hold or touch.



We combine words to form sentences. Sentences state facts, opinions, questions, or commands, such as, “The apple looks delicious” and “May I have one?”

Speaking without words. Not all communication uses words. There are many ways we communicate nonverbally, or “without words.” Nonverbal communication can still use symbols, however.

For example, if a Scout is in a public place and he sees a female figure on a bathroom door, he will know not to go through that door, even if there are no words on it.

Some types of communication use words and nonverbal symbols. The eight-sided red sign printed with the word STOP in white letters tells drivers to stop their cars. You would probably know the sign’s meaning even if the word was not there. That is because the color red, which signifies danger, and the eight-sided shape (called an octagon) are used on no other road sign in the United States. In this case, three different symbols—a word, a color, and a shape—all help communicate the same important meaning.



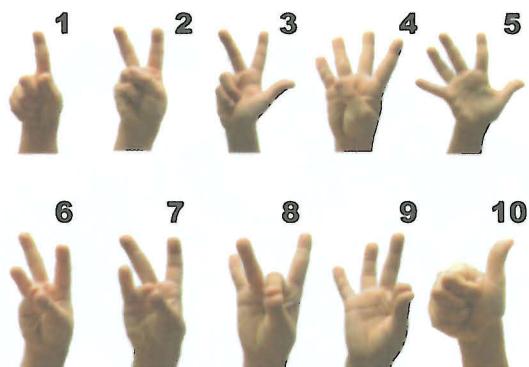
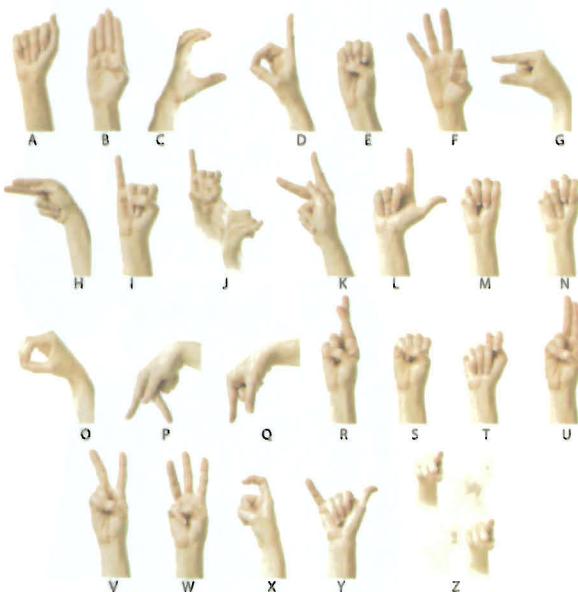


Talking with your body. Another nonverbal way to communicate is through “body language.” Body language is communication through body movements, gestures, and facial expressions. It can be as simple as a smile, frown, or nod of the head.



Shaking hands when you meet someone is a nonverbal way to communicate goodwill. For people in the military, a salute—raising the right hand, held flat to the forehead over the right eyebrow—shows respect. Legend has it that the practice had its origin in the Middle Ages, when knights raised the visors of their helmets to greet each other.

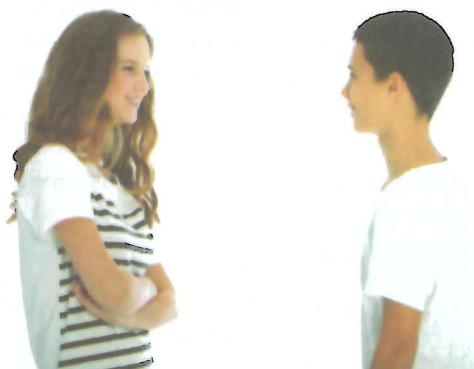
Body language can even communicate whole sentences. For example, many people who are deaf, and their friends and families, use a special language called American Sign Language, or ASL. This language uses hand movements and “finger spelling” to communicate thoughts.



Why Study Communication?

If we learn to communicate naturally, why do we study communication? The answer is that we all can improve our communication skills if we practice them. That improvement means learning to be a better listener and a more confident public speaker.

According to the National Communication Association, “Communication is a learned skill. Most people are born with the physical ability to talk, but we learn over time to speak well and communicate effectively.”



Interpreter Strip

ESPAROL

Have you studied a foreign language in school? If so, you could qualify to wear an interpreter strip on your uniform. To earn this award, you must carry on a five-minute conversation, translate a two-minute speech or address, and write a letter in the language (this requirement does not apply for sign language), and translate 200 words from the written word. (Different requirements apply to the Morse Code strip.)



COMMUNICATION GAMES

Sealed Orders

Equipment: Pencil and two sheets of paper

How to play: Divide the troop into two teams. Each team chooses a captain. The two teams assemble to await orders. Give the captain of each team a folded slip of paper with orders written on it for the captain's team. The captain returns to his team, looks at the orders, and, without moving the team, determines the strategy to be used in carrying out the orders. On signal, both teams attempt to carry out their orders. The orders given to the two teams contradict so that they work against each other. For example, one message might read, "Leave the room," and the other might read, "Don't let anyone leave the room." Establish a one-minute time limit for the action.

Scoring: For each team, give 1 point for every player who accomplished the assignment, and, for every player who failed, 1 point goes to the opposing team.

Who Am I?

Equipment: For each player, a card or piece of paper at least 2 inches square, each printed with a famous name (can be those of real people or of fictional characters—Spider-Man, Christopher Columbus, a current or past U.S. president, Robert Baden-Powell, etc.)

Procedure: Each player has a name card pinned on his back but does not know whose name is on the card. The players circulate and ask yes-or-no questions such as "Am I alive?" and "Am I an American?" Only two questions can be asked of one person, then the player must move on to ask another person questions. Players who identify the name on their card may stop or get another name and start over.



Get the Message

Equipment: Signal flag and secret message of 30 letters for each patrol, signal system chart for each patrol, paper and pencil for each Scout

Procedure: Each patrol has one signaller and one dictator. These two players are sent 100 yards or more away from the rest of the patrol and given a secret message to send with the signal flag. The rest of the patrol members are the receivers. When the message is sent,

each receiver writes the message on his paper.

There must be no communication between receivers in the patrol. The signaller may not repeat the message, but he may send it slowly enough to be understood by all his patrol members. The patrol leader collects the slips for the judge.

Scoring: All correct letters recorded by the receivers are added together, then divided by the number of receivers to get the patrol average. The patrol with the highest average wins.

Variation: This same game could be played at night using flashlights and Morse code, or during the daytime using mirrors.

Follow My Voice

Equipment: Blindfold

How to play: Blindfold one Scout and assign a second Scout to be the guide. Without touching the blindfolded Scout, the guide should direct the Scout to a specified destination across the room, being careful to avoid any obstacles along the way. The catch is that the other players can shout contradictory directions to the Scout. Continue playing with different Scouts in the two roles until time is up.



E.D.G.E. Ideas

Explain how it is done—Tell them.

Demonstrate the steps—Show them.

Guide learners as they practice—Watch them do it.

Enable them to succeed on their own—Have them practice/teach it.

EXPLAIN

- Describe the various communication-related merit badges and awards.
- Explain the three things you should avoid doing related to use of the Internet.
- Introduce the Cyber Chip program.

DEMONSTRATE

- Invite ham radio operators to demonstrate their skills at a meeting.
- Show YouTube videos of famous speeches.
- Have communication professionals demonstrate their work at a meeting or on a field trip.
- Demonstrate less-familiar communication methods like semaphore and Morse Code.

GUIDE

- Have the Scouts list as many ways as they can think of to communicate with others.
- Play games that create communication barriers to illustrate the importance of good communication.
- Make arrangements for Scouts to get hands-on practice with equipment at a television studio, newspaper office, or other communication facility.
- Guide older Scouts in a discussion of the unit's communication methods, including what works and what could be improved.

ENABLE

- Have Scouts use the EDGE technique to teach a skill.
- Make time in unit meetings for Scouts to give Communication merit badge speeches.
- Hold campfire programs and interfaith services to let Scouts practice communication skills.
- Make counselors available for communication-related merit badges.

MAIN EVENT SUMMARIES

ESSENTIAL	CHALLENGING	ADVANCED
Day Activity	Day Activity	Overnight Activity
Communication field trip—Take a field trip to a television studio, newspaper office, ad agency, movie studio, or other site where communicators work.	Communication hike—Take a hike with a twist. Create communication barriers to illustrate the importance of effective communication.	Merit badge weekend—Camp in a favorite spot and use part of the time to work on the Communication merit badge. Be sure to take advantage of other activity and advancement options at the campsite.



COMMUNICATION

Meeting Plan: Communicating Effectively



Week 1 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	As Scouts arrive, give them copies of the Scout Oath and Scout Law from other countries (in the original languages). Challenge them to translate the texts into English.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 15 minutes	Have the Scouts list as many ways as they can think of to communicate with others (face-to-face, by telephone, by email, by texting, etc.). For each type of communication, have them name instances when that method would or would not be appropriate or effective. Note: This activity relates to Communication merit badge requirement 1d.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Learn and practice the EDGE method.● Work on Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class requirements as needed.● Review the EDGE method.● Work on Communication merit badge requirement 1c together.● Review the EDGE method.● Working with the unit leader, review the ways the unit communicates with members and parents.● Discuss what works and what doesn't, and make a plan for improving communication.		7:25 p.m.
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Discuss plans for the main event.● Review what personal and group equipment will be needed.		7:55 p.m.
Game 15 minutes	Play Sealed Orders (described earlier).		8:10 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



COMMUNICATION

Meeting Plan: Nonverbal Communication



Week 2 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Post pictures around the meeting room of sports officials giving signals. Challenge Scouts to correctly identify what the signals mean.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Have a Scout working on the Communication merit badge give his five-minute speech, or show a YouTube video of a speech such as an inaugural address.Have half the group watch the speech and the other half listen with their eyes closed.Afterward, invite Scouts to discuss how persuasive the speech was and how the speaker's body language, delivery, and mannerisms affected the message.Discuss whether and why those who watched the speech reacted differently from those who just listened to it.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 30 minutes	Work on Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class requirements as needed.		7:25 p.m.
	Work on Communication merit badge requirement 4 together.		
	Begin planning a campfire program or interfaith worship service to be conducted during the main event.		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Plan a cooking menu.Begin meal planning and create a duty roster for the main event.		7:55 p.m.
Game 15 minutes	Play Paper-Wad Tennis. (See <i>Troop Program Resources</i> .)		8:10 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



COMMUNICATION

Meeting Plan: Communicating Online and Over the Air



Week 3 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Invite a ham radio operator to set up at your meeting place so Scouts can experience amateur radio as they arrive. Introduce Scouts to the Morse Code interpreter strip.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 25 minutes	Have a guest speaker discuss the dos and don'ts of Internet safety. Watch a video from the NetSmartz Workshop website.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 25 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the Cyber Chip requirements for grades 6–8.• Read and sign the Level II Internet Safety Pledge from NetSmartz. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the Cyber Chip requirements for grades 9–12.• Read and sign the Level II Internet Safety Pledge from NetSmartz. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make plans to use the EDGE method to teach Internet safety to a patrol or Webelos den.• Continue plans for the main event campfire program or interfaith service.		7:35 p.m.
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each group fills out a duty roster for upcoming campout.• Identify special equipment needed for additional activities.		8 p.m.
Game 10 minutes	Play Get the Message (described earlier).		8:15 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



COMMUNICATION

Meeting Plan: Careers in Communication



Week 4 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Play Slow Motion Telephone: Give a verbal message of 20 or so words to the first Scout who arrives. He passes the message on to the next Scout who arrives, and so on. At the opening, have the last Scout who received the message repeat it out loud to show how much the message changed in transmission		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 40 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recruit representatives from three or more careers in communication. (Ideally, these individuals would also be counselors for communication-related merit badges.)Set up a round-robin so that Scouts in small groups can visit all the representatives and learn about their careers.Representatives should discuss the education, training, and experience required for their careers (Communication merit badge requirement 9).		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 10 minutes	Work on Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class requirements as needed.		7:50 p.m.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review the list of communication-related merit badges.Encourage each Scout to pick one to work on in the months to come.		
	Finalize plans for the main event campfire program or interfaith service.		
Breakout Groups 10 minutes	Finalize plans for the main event. Plan the group's portion of the campfire program or interfaith service.		8 p.m.
Game 15 minutes	Play Follow the Leader (described earlier).		8:10 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



COMMUNICATION

Main Event: Communication Field Trip



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: 3 to 4 hours

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Tour and activity plan: Completed _____ Submitted _____

Essential (Tier I)

Take a field trip to a television studio, newspaper office, ad agency, movie studio, or other site where communicators work.

Equipment List

- Food
- Water
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

Activity

- Identify a local communication facility your unit can visit. (If it's not local, the field trip could easily be combined with a campout.)
- Make arrangements to visit and try to get permission to do a hands-on activity rather than just a passive tour.
- Review the requirements for related merit badges to see if any requirements could be completed during the visit.
- Share those requirements ahead of time with the contact person at the site to see if he or she can tailor the visit to accommodate those requirements.

Safety

Use the buddy system; cell phones are a good idea as appropriate. Have a first-aid kit handy.

Notes



COMMUNICATION

Main Event: Communication Hike



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: 4 to 6 hours

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Tour and activity plan: Completed _____ Submitted _____

Challenging (Tier II)

Take a hike with a twist: Create communication barriers to illustrate the importance of effective communication.

Equipment List

- Pencil and paper
- Food
- Water
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

Activity

- Plan a day hike in your area.
- To add a communication element to the hike, set up scenarios that complicate communication: a Scout who speaks a foreign language should use only that language; certain Scouts should not be allowed to talk; Scouts should talk only to adults through designated intermediaries, etc.
- Change up these assignments throughout the hike.
- Have other periods where no one is allowed to speak but must use other methods of communication.
- At the end of the hike, have a time of reflection and discuss what the group learned about effective communication.

Safety

Use the buddy system; cell phones are a good idea as appropriate. Have a first-aid kit handy.

Notes



COMMUNICATION

Main Event: Merit Badge Weekend



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: Weekend

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Tour and activity plan: Completed _____ Submitted _____

Advanced (Tier III)

Camp in a favorite spot and use part of the time to work on the Communication merit badge. Be sure to take advantage of other activity and advancement options at the campsite.

Equipment List

- Paper and pens
- Supplies for the Communication merit badge, such as poster board, markers, and collage materials
- Camping gear (individual and group)
- Food
- Water
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

Activity

- Find and reserve a campsite. Look for a place with a shelter or building where you can work.
- Choose the Communication merit badge requirements that can be done during the campout.
- Identify adults who can teach those requirements and facilitate work.
- Set up a round-robin schedule so Scouts can work on each of those requirements during the campout.
- Take time during the day for hiking or other activities.

Safety

Use the buddy system; cell phones are a good idea as appropriate. Have a first-aid kit handy.

Notes



REFERENCES

Books

Communication, Computers, Journalism, Public Speaking, Radio, and Theater merit badge pamphlets

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Smith, Bud E. *Creating Web Pages for Dummies*, 8th ed. For Dummies, 2008.

Websites

Scout Oath in various languages

Website: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scout_Promise

Scout Law in various languages

Website: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scout_Law

Cyber Chip information

Website: <http://www.netsmartz.org/scouting>

High school journalism

Website: <http://www.hsj.org>

Newseum

Website: <http://www.newseum.org>

National Communication Association

Website: <http://www.natscom.org>

Related Program Features

Citizenship, Drama, Project Planning, and Special Needs Awareness