

# Campfire Magic



**NOTE: to reflect Scouts Canada's changes to our practices and to ensure that we build a culture of Safe Scouting this document has been heavily edited to try to remove most of the inappropriate and what could be seen a culturally insensitive material. Also, some of the questionable and higher risk campfire procedures have also been deleted. Some examples have been left as is to provide a look at what was used in the past.**

**Caution should be used at all times regarding campfires and campfire procedures.**

**Ron Planden,  
DCC Safety, Cascadia Council, January 31, 2019**

## **The Purpose of a Campfire**

- **To have fun and create good feelings**
- **To instil the Scouting Spirit into youth and adults alike**
- **To stimulate a youth's social and emotional development through music and playacting (SPICES)**
- **To inspire as well as entertain**
- **To set the stage for awards and recognition**
- **To end a busy day/camp with a positive and memorable event**

## Anatomy of a Campfire



## Campfire Magic (attributed to The Leader magazine 1989)

Campfire Magic! You've experienced it. You chose the songs, practiced skits, and organized everything into a program. Then you brought people together and began.

Everything went without a hitch. Participants sang the songs enthusiastically and laughed uproariously (or groaned painfully) at skits. From there, the tone and pace of the program slowed until the final prayer was just a memory on the lips and the ears.

As the dying campfire crumbled into ashes, campers reluctantly drifted off to bed. You stood before the glowing embers, soaking in their fading warmth and knowing that everything was just right. You; You've been touched by "Campfire Magic."

Campfires like this are rare but need not be. With a little careful thought and preparation, they can become the rule and not the exception.

### Planning

The structure of a magic campfire is like the shape of the fire. It builds up slowly from the lighting and opening to a peak, then subsides gradually to the closing as the fire burns down to embers.

The opening includes parading to the formal circle, introduction, the fire lighting, and a short, upbeat opening verse that sets the mood and guidelines for the fire and welcomes people to the magic of the experience. You may deliver it dramatically with arms in the air or holding a hand over the fire. You may involve participants by having them echo a line or, if you are using a "magic start" asking them to concentrate to inspire the fire to light. Perhaps you'll have a number of torch bearers light the fire as you declare it open.

Build up from the opening with some well known songs, a few rounds, some fun songs, some action songs, a game and stunt or two [I've not seen this done RP 2019] and, at the peak of excitement, skits and yells. Bring down things slowly with a few rousing songs, some quieter songs, a story or Scouters' Five, a spiritual song or two, vespers, and taps and a closing verse.

You might include a short Scout Silence before the verse or invite participants to pause for a moment to listen to night sounds or reflect and be thankful. Many campfire leaders end the verse with "I now declare the campfire closed" but, as Lewis Carroll once said, "They don't seem to have any rules in particular, at least, if there are, nobody attends to them."

### Hints for Success

Before the event, review campfire etiquette with your gang. The campfire circle is sacred and always quiet before and after the fire. Discourage use of flashlights at the circle, remember safety first in getting to the campfire and a flashlight might be needed for reading. Discourage talking - show respect for the presenters. If wood needs to be added to the fire during the event, only the Keeper of the Flame may do it (this can be the campfire chief or designate). Applause takes the form of yells or cheers, not

clapping. However, spontaneous applause shouldn't be discouraged, it is a form of appreciation.

Choose a magic site if it is away from a formal campfire pit (e.g. lake shore, etc. - check with authorities to ensure it is OK wherever your fire will be). Keep the fire to a reasonable size for the number of participants and the length of the program (that's why you have a Keeper of the Flame). Fires that are too big take away from the magic. To add to the mystique, you may want to add ashes from a previous fire to this one. And, if you clean up all the coals and other signs of festivity before the next morning, your campers will always think of the campfire site as a special place.

Keep the program short. If you're having a mug-up later, plan time so that it won't break up a good program (timing is important with younger sections). For greatest success involve as many people as possible as leaders of songs, skits, yells, etc. If you can, audition songs and skits ahead of time to avoid possible problems, those in poor taste or duplication. If not an audition at least get to know what will be presented.

Choose songs that are enjoyed and know your young members enjoy. Stick to the familiar rather than trying to teach a new song, unless it is really easy, repetitive and fun [Note: Wood Badge or Adult Campfires are often times when new songs are debuted] Avoid song sheets or books. The atmosphere of the fire can be destroyed as participants try to read the words in the dim light.

Look for audience feedback. Are they engaged, participating or are they bored. Keep it alive and be prepared to shorten a song or the program as need be. Speed up slow moving songs, have a lively action song up your sleeve. Set a brisk pace with minimum breaks between program items.

Sometimes campers become so caught up in the fun they want to keep the campfire going well past the planned program. This shouldn't be discouraged but be aware of other things on the camp agenda, ie mug-up, bed times. You are able to close the campfire and allow for those interested to return to continue on their own time. SAFETY NOTE: the campfire should never be left unattended.

Instruments are welcomed at campfires. Be sure that it enhances the experience and doesn't turn into a solo concert.

Best practice, announce the next act or song at least one act ahead to give those time to prepare. If you know who is on next, and you should, you can simply whisper in an ear to alert them. Keep a set of quickie yells, stunts (run-ons), on hand in case a group is not quite ready. You can also designate fellow conspirators to do the "run-ons."

Be ready despite your pre-campfire screening, things can still go wrong. Skits/songs that are inappropriate or in poor taste should be stopped. Move on to the next. Review your decision with those involved after the campfire.

Encourage presenters to speak up and to try to position themselves so all can see. Work with the audience. Keep the fire high enough to provide adequate light for the program. If more light is needed for safety consider lanterns around the perimeter (LED

lanterns can add to the ambience). Be creative - use flashlights as spotlights for a performance.

Keep a firm rein on proceedings to avoid things like poorly timed announcements that can destroy the magic. Keep track of the time as campers might start getting bored and cause distractions. Have Scouters on hand to assist on keeping the noise level and conversations around the fire down to a minimum.

A campfire may be magic, but there's no trick to it, just good planning and some common sense. At the many campfires in your future, may you often be touched by the magic.

The Following was Compiled by Scouter Stewart Bowman 8th Whitby Scout Troop  
Whitby District Lakeridge Region

Ontario, Canada November 1992

### Introduction

The following compilation of "Magic Campfire Starts" has been collected over a period of years and from a variety of resources. Although new methods have been added to this production, the core of ideas was submitted to The Leader magazine in April 1992 and a modified version appeared in print in the October 1992 issue of that magazine.

The Leader magazine omitted any of the chemical based methods submitted, however the reasons were valid and totally understandable. I have Included a full range of magic fire starts in this booklet as I trust that recipients, who intend to practice and refine the art of magic fire starts, will exercise due care and diligence in the attempts to try some or any of the following ideas.

I caution everyone who may wish to try these ideas to be careful. I accept no responsibility for the results of your efforts, whether they be good or bad.

I do however maintain a strong interest in continuing to build and refine the ideas presented here. I would be very interested in hearing from users of this material your comments on the content and any new ideas that you may have used.

Good Luck, and have fun ! Yours in Scouting,  
Scouter Stewart Bowman,

### A WORD OF CAUTION.

Unless you are very comfortable with the ideas presented here, the results may not always conform to your expectations -remember Murphy's Law !

With a little forethought, care and caution you can maximize the opportunity for success and minimize the chance for failure.

Don't interpret the following as rules, they are merely clarifying the common-sense approach that most use anyway

1. These ideas are not games and should not be approached as if they are.

2. I know this is contradictory, but only people in full control of their mental faculties should try these. The contradiction being that you've got to be slightly off balance to be an adult Scouter anyway!

3. Exercise extreme caution when dealing with corrosive, poisonous, inflammatory material

- Always mix and use chemicals outdoors,
- Follow instructions to the letter. Do not experiment,
- Never throw a lighted match into a mixture to ignite it,
- Avoid large quantities -more is NOT better.

4. Practice the chosen fire start several times before you actually use it in front of an audience, and always have sufficient supplies on hand for your practice runs.

5. Check reaction times between activation and ignition as this will help you plan the story that you will use in conjunction with the fire start. Become familiar with the "noises" that may accompany certain of the fire starts,

6. Always have a "plan a" ready if "Plan A" fails - and it will, sooner or later.

#### CAMPFIRE ETIQUETTE.

There are a number of other resources covering the structure and contents of a well planned formal campfire. Repeating these concepts here would be somewhat redundant, but I have taken the liberty of including a copy of an excellent article on campfires that appeared in the June/July '89 issue of The Leader (Appendix 111). There is one aspect, however, that I feel does warrant repetition here and that is how we conduct ourselves at the campfire.

There are 3 basic practices which we try to follow at every formal campfire :

- No flashlights -we have the fire to light our way.
- No clapping or Booming -that's why we have 'cheers',
- No Talking -unless you're Involved in an activity, talking spoils the mood and detracts from whatever is going on.

In campfires I've attended or lead, the later point is sometimes not controlled too well. Scouter, please make sure that your Scouts are not the ones disrupting the campfire. Have them show proper respect towards the efforts Of the Campfire Leader and participants.

#### FIRE LAY CONSTRUCTION.

There are a number Of different ways to build your fire in preparation for the magic fire start.

Where pre-positioning of the fire-start mechanism is involved, the Council (or Pyramid) fire lay is the preferred style. By building the various layers with dry kindling between the wood pieces, you can easily conceal your fire start material. The natural structure of this style of fire also leaves a chamber' in the centre that is just what you need to place your



fire start mechanism in, so that any material that has to be added to cause ignition can drop on to the mechanism.

Should your fire start involve material being flown in -such as for the 'Flaming Arrow fire start -then the Teepee style fire lay might be the choice. Where the 'arrow' enters the fire lay, an opening can be left in the fire material which can be well packed with dry kindling and other quick combustibles.

If your personal favourite is the Log Cabin style, this can also be used quite nicely with some of these magic fire start ideas. This particular style is well suited to electrical based fire starts where the ignition mechanism can be placed in the middle of the fire lay and yet still be hidden by kindling.

One item that I strongly discourage from being included in any fire lay -regardless of the weather conditions - is liquid fuel (white gas; naphtha; charcoal starter fuel, etc.) as the results can be somewhat unpredictable if used with some of the ideas presented here. Any Scouter who needs this to get a fire going is probably not suited to trying Magic Fire Start Ideas (see page 3, A Word of Caution, Item #2).

### SETTING THE SCENE.

Before everyone gets to the campfire, you can do a lot to prepare the scene and get everyone in the right frame of mind. Three ideas I've seen work very well, but are more appropriate at a District (or higher) camp(oree) where you have a large number of participants involved.

The first involves gathering everyone together away from the campfire area. This avoids disruption or delays at the fire itself, when groups arrive late. It also gives the Camp Fire Leader an opportunity to go through any last minute instructions. When ready, everyone can then walk quietly in file and form up around the fire site.

The second idea, coupled with the first, solves the problem of everyone not quite knowing where to stand when they get around the fire. Since we are talking about a formal campfire, reinforce this by predetermining and marking the circumference of the fire site with suitable markers and establish an 'entrance' to this area through a flag honour guard. The Campfire Leader can then lead everyone through the honour guard and around the boundary line. By the time the leader comes back around to the perimeter to the entrance way, everyone else who followed him will be properly positioned around the fire.

The last idea is neat and very effective. Although you can mark the perimeter Of the campfire circle in a number of ways, my personal favourite has involved placing lighted candles in brown paper bags. To do this you need a supply Of small brown bags, then add a couple of handfuls Of sand into each bag. The sand not only keeps the bag anchored on the ground, but it also keeps the neck of the bag open and forms a base in which you place a candle.

If you want to get really clever with this idea, a normal household emergency type candle will bum down at an approximate rate of 2 inches per hour. If you've planned a one hour campfire, anchor the candle with about 2 inches left above the level of the sand.

Pre-position the bags around the perimeter Of your campfire circle and have a couple of helpers (depending on the number of candles) light the candles as participants are being lead towards the fire area. This looks really neat for those approaching the area.

Hopefully, if things go right, your perimeter candles will keep your audience from goofing around too much (since they can now be seen ?), will stop them creeping ever closer to the campfire ('cause they don't want to get too close to the candles ?) and will nicely close off the campfire as they all burn down around about the same time -yeah, right ! But give it a try anyway.

Should you wish to to a little more creative or formal in the illumination of your campfire circle, there are a number of styles of 'torches' that can be made.

As with any matters dealing with open flames, please make sure that safety is uppermost in your thoughts when determining style, placement, proximity to people, etc

### THE USE OF STORY'S

Since we frequently arrange camps with a theme, why not evolve your campfire also around a theme which could further impact both your campfire opening comments and the method of lighting.

In any event, magic fire starts deserve to be supported with a story. In determining the story to use remember that it should in some way 'explain'. the magic involved; it could get participants active in the fire start itself; and it will enable you to set up particular timing prompts if the fire start needs assistance from others. Below is one example of using a story to light a fire.

#### Peter the Elf

"While getting the wood ready for the fore tonight, I came across a small wood-elf trapped in the

underbrush. Since a Scouter is always kind, considerate and helpful, I helped free him. In return he promised to help me if I ever needed it. "All I have to do is call."

"Since this is the first time I've ever met a wood-elf, I've no idea if he will keep his promise to me. Maybe we should see if he will help us to light this fire ?"

Shout out - "Peter the Elf, will you light this fire for me ?" -no response. Call a second time. still nothing happens.

"Maybe he can't hear my voice. Let's all shout - Peter the Elf, will you light this fire for me ?"

Time the fire start so that the fire lay ignites after the last shout.

### MAGIC CAMPFIRE STARTS

Everyone thought that the campfire was great ! It was a beautifully clear night, the fire burnt down precisely on schedule; the skits were good; the cheers were new -and appropriate. Everyone knew the words to the songs -and sang in tune (especially the adults !). How can you improve on that ? Well, here are a few ideas to add to your repertoire of campfire magic.

Imagine the scene at your next campfire. Everyone has walked into the campfire circle, your opening is inspirational but everyone is wondering why the fire isn't lit yet. You then lead off with a short story to fit the circumstances and then ask for everyone's help in calling on the appropriate spirits to light the ceremonial fire. A short pause, then, "... FLASH! ..... the campfire is roaring away and yet no one was anywhere near the fire to light it !

These magic campfire starts may help you add that touch of mystique to a potentially memorable occasion.

## **MECHANICAL FIRE STARTS**

1] Take a 2 x 4 piece of wood, about 3 -4 inches long. In the middle of this drill one 3/8" hole all the way through. This should be large enough to put a large nail or spike through and secure the wood to the ground. Still with this same piece of wood, drill as many 1/8" diameter holes in it that you can, but not all the way through the wood. A drill guide will help you to get all these holes the same depth. The depth will be determined by the length of the blue tip wood matches that you should then place in these holes, leaving only the match heads slightly above the wood surface.

Take a second piece of 2 x 4 wood and glue some sandpaper to one side. Also secure a small "eye" screw to one end.

Hold the two blocks of wood together with rubber bands (staking the first piece of wood in the middle of your fire lay), and surround with plenty of dry kindling.

Attach a wire to the "eye" screw and, at the appropriate moment, pull. The friction of the sandpaper against the match heads will cause them to ignite, thereby setting the kindling on fire.

2] The "Flaming Arrow" is a traditional favourite. Drive a stake a little beyond the heart of the fire lay, as it is being laid. From this stake run a length of nylon fishing line up to a nearby high point and tie securely so that the line is very taut. The angle should be sufficient to ensure a smooth and fairly rapid descent of the 'arrow' otherwise you run the risk of the flame burning through the fishing line before the arrow reaches the fire.

The arrow is attached to the line through two spools (so make sure you thread the spools onto the line before you tie it off !) To the head of the arrow secure a bundle of dry flammable material. At the appropriate time during the introductory story, an assistant lights the arrow and releases it to slide down to set the fire alight.

One of the benefits of using fishing line for the line to the fire, is that once the fire is alight the fishing line will burn through and the assistant can then retrieve the line without those attending the campfire being aware of it. If you find that the fishing line does not work for you, use wire

Instead, but tie the wire to fishing line where it passes through the fire lay. This piece will burn away when the fire is lit, allowing you to retrieve the length of wire.

3] Variations on the above method include tying the flammable material directly around a weighted spool and sending that down the line to create a 'Tire-ball' effect.

I've also heard of firework sparklers being attached to the arrow to give quite a spectacular Impression.

4] One idea included in several Scouter resource books is to have a candle pre-lit in the fire lay, but covered by a #10 Can. The candle is secured to a wooden base with a line attached to it. At the appropriate moment, pull the candle out from the can and the kindling will catch fire.

### Electrical Fire Starts

When setting up electrical fire starts, the weight of the wire used to generate heat will depend on the size of the battery you intend to use and the distance between the battery and the ignition device. Practice beforehand will enable you to properly rig your fire start, but, as a guide, use fine wire for a 6 volt battery source. If your power source is a 12 volt car battery a heavier wire will be required.

1] Steel Wool and "D" cell batteries are frequently used in survival techniques as an emergency method of starting a fire. Based on this principal, one camp fire start idea is to use steel wool in the fire lay (surrounded by small dry kindling) remotely attached to a car battery. The battery could be disguised by hiding in a box that would double as a seat for the Campfire

Leader. with a switch on the side of the box to complete the electrical circuit and start off your fire.

2] A variation on the above involves a little more creativity with the electrical connections. From the disguised car battery/campfire seat, you'll need 3 electrical circuits and switches. Switch #.1 connects to a yellow taillight secured in the fire and hidden under kindling. Switch # is hooked up to a two more light bulbs. Switch ac hooks up to steel wool, as detailed in the previous method.

As part of your campfire opening, get everyone to assist by blowing towards the fire. As they do so, throw switch #1 and everyone should see a yellow glow coming through the fire. Turn off the switch after a second or two.

Obviously not everyone was helping or blowing hard enough, so get them to blow again. Throw switch #2 and a stronger light will be seen in the fire. Turn the switch off after maybe five seconds.

One last time ! Obviously it was the Scouters who weren't trying hard enough. As everyone blows hard for the last time, trigger the third switch to set the fire alight.

Remember to pull the lights attached to Switches #1 & #2 out of the fire lay before you set the fire going, unless you want to compete with exploding light bulbs!

3] Take a block of scrap 2" x 4" with a saw cut through the centre line. Two nails are driven in at either end of the block on opposite sides of the saw cut. These nails will provide terminals' to hook up to the power source. Insert an uncovered paper match book into the saw cut, and thread a very fine piece of wire through the match heads, connect the wire to the 'terminals'. Attach the wires from your power source also to the 'terminals' after connecting them through some switching mechanism, When a current is passed through the wire, heat will be generated which will ignite the matches and then set off your campfire kindling.

4] Take a bunch of friction type matches and secure with a rubber band. The bigger the bunch, the more spectacular will be the fire start. Then take a metal spring from a spring-loaded pen and stretch this spring to be slightly larger than the diameter of your bundle Of matches. Lay the spring through the matches, so that it is touching the match heads. Place this bundle on kindling in your fire lay.

Remotely attach a battery to the ends of the spring wire, through a switching mechanism. At the correct time, throw the switch and the spring will generate electrical heat which will ignite the matches.

5] This next Idea builds on the previous one, but requires a little more creative electrical and carpentry skills. Once you've set it up, however, it could be either your primary fire start method or a backup method if "plan A" fails.

Take a piece of deadwood about 5-6 feet in length and at least 1 1/2 inches in diameter at the base. Carefully drill a hole vertically into the base, of a sufficient depth/breadth to hold your battery power source. Run wires (covered where exposure is not necessary) from the battery up the outside of the staff, with one of the wires going through a simple switch set at about the 4 foot mark. The ends of the wires should be stripped and terminate about 8-10 inches below the top end of the staff. Wrap several layers Of dry flammable material around the first 8-10 inches from the top of the staff, secure with wire.

Just below the flammable material, tape an open book of matches and run a fine wire, from the wires attached to the battery/switch, through the match heads.

Hold the staff away from your body -yeh, really this is a good idea I -and trigger the switch to light the match heads which will then catch the flammable material. Your flaming torch can then light the campfire. Since you always keep a bucket of water near your fire, extinguish the torch after use and it'll be able to be used again.

### **Chemical Fire Starts**

In the fire lay, place a pro-prepared piece of 2 x 4 wood, with four 6 inch nails driven partially into it. Between the nails, on the wood, place a small aluminum tart cup with at least two tablespoons of Potassium Permanganate (available from most pharmacy's) in it. Supported on the heads Of the 4 nails place a second aluminum cup that has had three or four small holes punched in the base. Tilt this cup to one side by placing a twig across two of the nails and then balance the cup so it is supported. In this cup place a quantity of Glycerine (also available from Pharmacy's) - but not enough so that it trickles through the holes. The twig should have a length of fishing line tied to it, with the line stretching away from the fire lay.

By pulling on (he fishing line and removing the supporting twig, the cup containing Glycerin will drop to rest horizontally and the glycerin will spread out over the cup's base. A couple of drops will then fall through the pre-punched holes and onto the Potassium Permanganate.

After a short pause the glycerin will react with the Potassium Permanganate and create a flame which will need to catch your kindling thereby setting the fire lay ablaze.

2] Take a model rocket igniter (available at most hobby shops) and pass the igniter through the inside of a paper baggy leaving two little wires sticking out. Then carefully remove the contents of a "Coloured Flower Bloom" or "Giant Fountain" firework (use only one) and place into the paper baggy.

Attach the clips from a model rocket firing device to the two wires coming out of the baggy. Prepare the mechanism by pulling the safety pin. Then, when you're ready, press the firing button and POOF!, another magic fire start.

The next two ideas are particularly clever, and I'll quote from training material prepared by Bill Clover, DRC (Training), Southern Alberta Region, as he explains them excellently ....

3] Crush 1 teaspoon of iodine crystals to a very fine powder, then mix with 2 teaspoons of powdered aluminum. IT IS CRITICAL THAT THIS MIXTURE REMAINS ABSOLUTELY DRY.

Place this mixture in the fire lay on a piece Of plywood, forming a volcano Shaped mound. When the participants are gathered around the campfire, ask if anyone has a canteen of water in case the fire 'gets out of hand' (you may want to set this up before hand). Pat your pockets as if looking for a match, but finding none, ask to borrow some water. Sprinkle it on the fire lay (ensure a Tow drops hit the iodine/aluminum mixture) and you will be greeted by billowing purple smoke, followed by deep red flames. Someone is bound to ask, "OK. So how do you put it out ?" Simply tell them you'll throw matches on it!

Note: The powdered Iodine "evaporates" very quickly. As a result this mixture must be used within about 10 minutes of preparation.

A teaspoon Of Pinesol or Pine Oil is placed in a shallow container within the fire lay. The story that Bill uses to Introduce this magic fire start is based on the ashes from a previous campfire. The "Ashes" are a half a cup of HTH Granulated chlorine. When the two are combined, they produce a large quantity Of white smoke, followed by flames. This is a relatively slow reaction, so Bill opens the campfire with the following story.

•As we gather here tonight, for our formal campfire, I think back to the closing campfire from last year. It was such a great fire, and the feelings of love and friendship so strong. In order to try and rekindle those feelings for our fire tonight, I would like to add some of the ashes from last years fire. Now, before I light the fire tonight, I would like you all to look at this pile of wood, and think about your own feelings about last year's fire, and what made it special for you."

### **SPECIAL EFFECTS.**

Once your camp fire is nicely roaring, it may be appropriate to add 'special effect' flames to enhance a story or just close down the camp fire ceremony with a little more magic.

Try adding a spray of chemicals to the fire. The following can either be sprinkled on the logs as you build the fire lay or added to the fire itself to enhance a story or activity. They all create a flare of coloured flame that can be really effective if not overdone.

Coloured Flames

Yellow: potassium nitrate (salt Peter), sodium chloride (table salt);

Green: borax, barium nitrate, copper sulphate;

Purple: lithium chloride

Red: strontium nitrate

Orange: calcium chloride (road salt)

SPARKLES:

Silver: powdered aluminum

Gold: iron filings

FLASHES

Red : -strontium nitrate & powdered magnesium (equal parts by weight.)

Green: - potassium nitrate, boric acid, powdered magnesium & powdered sulphur (equal parts by weight.)

SMOKE -black gunpowder & powdered magnesium (equal parts by weight.)

Where the above chemicals or compounds are not readily available from Hardware/ Grocery Stores or the local Pharmacy, check the Yellow Pages' for a chemical supply company.

In talking to your pharmacist (for example) please ensure that you have developed some sort Of level Of comfort with the owner before you Start asking for a variety of chemicals. Let them know the purpose for the chemicals, and that you are a registered Scouter not some closet pyromaniac.

One method of adding chemicals to a campfire without anyone being aware that it was done is to use a photographer's air-bulb release. These use a tiny black air-hose attached to a squeeze-bulb trigger. The air-hose can be buried so as to remain unseen, and the simple act of stepping on the air-bulb (perhaps further hidden under a piece of bark) will blow the spray Of chemicals onto the fire.

Another method is to take a six inch long piece Of 1" copper pipe and stuff 4" pieces Of good quality lawn soaker hose into both ends (don't use the clear type of hose). Placed in the fire you'll have an abundance of coloured flames. Using 2 or 3 of these can create a super effect.

A third option is to pre-make "shots" that can be flipped into the fire. A "shot" is made by Creating a tightly rolled ball Of paper, dipped in wood glue and the roll in a tray of the chosen chemical. The chemical will coat the outside Of the ball and react when thrown into the fire. Store these '.shots" in an egg carton until needed - one "shot" per egg carton section l

Here's another 'sparkling thought' from the pages of The Leader. You need enough sugar to give everyone a small handful. After closing the campfire, have everyone walk past the fire embers and tosstheirsugarontothefire.Youcancomparetheflashingsparksandqujckflarestohappythoug hts,or simply enjoy these thoughts in silence.

## PHYSICAL LOCATION.

If you want to make your campfire even more memorable (is this possible? -you ask) consider the actual location of your campfire. Anyone can light a fire in the middle of an open field-why don't you try something different ?

if you are camping by a lake, why not construct a solid raft and have the fire burning on it? Lighting it out of sight of your assembled audience, then allowing it to drift into position behind the camp fire leader will create a very special image. Remember to suitably anchor the raft so that it doesn't keep drifting past you!

An alternative may be to have the fire towed in by canoe (two towing with a third canoe to provide a trailing anchor). The canoeist's can bring the fire raft in and beach it on the shore in front of the assembly.

Back on dry land, why not Construct your fire lay a couple Of feet above the ground on a lashed frame? More tricky yet would be to have the fire lay built on a secure frame and then hoisted (using rope and pulley's) some distance above the ground. Once the fire is lit, using a "magic fire start" idea, the campfire could then be lowered to the ground to create another memorable opening.

When you have a particularly large group Of participants at a campfire, instead on one central fire why not consider having three or four fires in the circle ? In addition to giving a greater illusion Of warmth to participants, a 'stage' is naturally famed between the fires for the campfire leader and any groups doing skits, etc..

## CONCLUSION.

As the flames from the fire burn down, and participants slowly walk away in wonderment and appreciation, reflect on your achievement. A campfire can be a memorable occasion for youth and adult alike. but it doesn't happen by accident.

The day was long, we've worked and played.

And round this fire, we've good friends made;

We've shared a friendship fine and deep,

And now this circle leaves, to sleep.

As Campfire Leader you have put a lot of time and effort into planning, setting the scene, and stage- managing the evenings activities. Now it is time for you to walk away from the dying embers, reflect on your success, enjoy a time of friendship and fellowship with the scouts and Scouters.

Sit back, relax, and start to figure out how you're going to lead your next magic campfire so that it's even more memorable than this one !

Good Luck, have fun, and let me know how it goes.

Scouter Stewart.



## Lighting the Fire

An idea is to have a wire strung from a tree or something else high, in such a way that it couldn't be seen. Then when the command comes for the fire to be lit, something comes shooting down the wire into the fire and lights it. Like lightning or a big fire ball or something. Use a "flaming arrow" which is guided on a piano wire into the fire.

Bury an outdoor extension cord just a couple inches underground. Plug an old, thin extension cord into the end of the outdoor one and make sure the junction is secure and buried. Then run the loose end of the cheap cord into the fire and attach a model rocket igniter on the end. Put that in a bundle of matches, being sure the igniter touches at least one match. Then build the fire around that (and used a bit of kerosene to be sure it lit). Then all you have to do is use a 6V lantern battery and touch the two prongs on the outdoor extension cord to the battery terminals (the person doing this should be well hidden behind trees or whatever). Then, on command, the fire would light. It was VERY impressive the first few times we used it. but now it is getting a bit old. I am thinking about just lighting it with a torch for a while. and then in a couple years, using the wire/igniter method again...

One thing our OA group did once was use matches. No kerosene, nothing like that. Only matches to start the fire. It went up very quickly. Let me explain:

[illegible]

## Matchoooks More Match heads

## I Other Brick! I

A string is tied to the matchbooks, and so when it is pulled, a flame is started. This

igniter contraption should take about 1-2 boxes of matches. all the others spread them out loosely around the contraption. This is a lot of matches, and should go up quickly. The big advantage of this is that it is safe, and can be used at sites that prohibit kerosene and other GS water. Practice it first though, so you know how hard to pull the igniter. You only get one shot. One important thing with all of this is to have a decent accompanying open ceremony. Having a guy walk up and throw a lit match into the fire can be just as impressive if it is accompanied by the right words.

### Black powder Ignition

Put a small pile (about 2 or 3 inches around) of black powder in the centre of the firewood to be lit. Run a small line of black powder from this pile and out to a small (1 inch in diameter) pile located on a flat rock. Put a firing cap (used in a muzzleloader) on the edge of the 1 inch pile. Have another "fuse" running to another pile of black powder in the second fire to be lit (we had 2 fires).

At the proper point in the ceremony, have someone strike the ground (the firing cap, actually) with a tomahawk" or other hammer like item. This would cause 2 strips of fire to ignite the wood (of course, the wood would have kerosene or other ignitable liquid on it). The only problem would be if someone steps on (and breaks) a "fuse".

### Flash Bulb Ignitor

When I worked on camp staff we regularly came up with innovative ways to start the campfire. At one camp we used a car battery, flash bulb filaments and some kind of quickly combustible material (dryer lint soaked in lighter fluid, dry tinder, etc.). There was a couple of wires buried in the ground leading from the campfire to a point out of sight behind some bushes. A staffer would touch the wires to the battery terminals causing the filaments to flash and ignite the combustible material, thus starting the fire as if by "magic". Now, this was coupled with a pseudo-native American "ritual" to light the fire by calling on the "spirits."

Here are some nifty little chemical additions you can use to add a little magic to our next campfire. please remember! Leaders only should be handling these materials!

### Colourful Flames

There are several chemicals that can be placed in a fire to make the flame different colours. They are as follows:

Calcium - red flame Copper - green flame Sodium- orange flame Lithium - pink flame  
Potassium - purple flame Barium - light green flame Lead - blue flame

### Magic Wishing Powder

"It is tradition in our unit to use Magic Wishing Powder to close a special campfire. I have a special container and we stand and pass it around the campfire circle. Everyone takes a small handful and holds it until everyone is ready. We make a wish, and on the count of 3, we all throw our powder into the fire. If there is magic present, we will see a sign. The wishing powder is just white granulated sugar. It creates many beautiful

sparks for just a few seconds. We make sure everyone is standing back from the fire when we toss!"

### Spell Fire

When telling a particularly ghostly or magical story, throw a handful of powdered coffee creamer over the fire as a "spell" is being cast in the story. The particles are very fine, and being an "edible oil product" the powder catches fire in a myriad of sparkly bits that are quickly gone. Kinda cool...neat-o special effect.

### Wint-o-green Lifesavers

If you crunch down hard on a Wint-o-green Lifesaver after dark, your friends will see blue sparks jumping around in your mouth. (Note: they Must be Wint-o- green Lifesavers, as opposed to another brand name of candy, the sparks are made by an ingredient which are only found in the Lifesavers.) This could be incorporated into campfire as part of a skit, or just as a silly thing for everyone to do.

### Scouts Vespers (Oh Christmas Tree)

Softly falls the light of day, as our campfire fades away, Silently each. Beaver asks, have I done my daily tasks?

Did I give the world my care, remembered to smile and share? Beavers turn to God in prayer, knowing He will always care.

Softly fall the light of day, as our campfire fades away, Silently each Cub shall ask, have I done my daily tasks?

Have I kept my Cub laws too, taught to me by Old Baloo? Have I tried to do my best:? God grand me a quiet rest.

Softly falls the light of day, as our campfire fades away, Silently each Scout shall ask, have I done my dally tasks? Have I kept my honour bright? Can I guiltless sleep tonight? Have I done and have I dared, everything t@ be prepared?

### Openings and Closings

#### Opening

This is my favourite campfire opening be cause it's the easiest for me to remember. But it's effective. For this one, try to determine which ways are North, South, East and West then face each direction as you say it. Even if you don't know the correct directions, it's still effective.

From the North

From the South

From the East and the West,

Let all the spirits of peace come and join us.

#### Closing

(Again on this one, face the direction that you mention.)

Our Spirit from the North

And our Spirit from the South have left;

Those from the East and the West have also withdrawn; Now let us slumber quietly until the dawn.

### Opening

Before hand, organize your program and write it out however you please-then roll it up and tie it to the end of along string, say 15 feet long. Lay out the string on the ground, out of the way from tripping feet, with the program on the far end.

Getting the attention of the crowd, ask, "I hope that there is a program for this evening?" at which point, a pro-chosen participant ceremoniously responds, "Yes, Skip, here it is." Skip pulls the string and in comes the program. Short and cute.

Vary your entries by folding the program and stuffing it in a film can equipped with a parachute (and therefore from a distance, throw it in the air and let it drop in). Or present a sandwich with the program in it to Skip. By having a few standard, easy to put together things (ie. always use the same string, film canister and whatever else pre-made and kept in a small box or bag and carry it with you, therefore always being able to choose the appropriate opening depending on the location and the the mood you want to set).

### Campfire Cheers

"Good Cheers"

Let's give them a BigHand! (Put your hand in the air)

Let's give them a Round of Applause! (Applaud in a circle or make a circle and hit hands together)

Is it a 4? (no!) 3? (no!) 2? (no!) 1? Yes! It's Wonderful!

Seal Of Approval (stretch out arms, clap and make quick seal barks)

### Examples of Bad and Inappropriate Cheers

There are many culturally insensitive cheers - do not use them. They can be very offensive.

Watermelon cheer

What happens when you sharpen a pencil too long? There's no point!

Big deal! deal cards)

Is it a 1? (no!) 2? (no!) 3? (no!) 4? Yes! It's for the birds!

Ghost Cheer Boooooooooooooo ! )

Cookie Cheer (Crumby)

One-handed Round of Applause (Shady-fast sweeping motion with one arm)

Home Alone cheer (Slap your face lightly with both hands at the same time, keep them there, then scream in "pain")

General Yaaaaaaaay! (in a circle)

Ogy Ogy Ogy! (Oi Oi Oi!) X 2 Ogy! 01! Ogy! Oi! Ogy Ogy Ogy! (Oi Oi Oi!)

Clap to a rhythm dictated by a head clapper. The Mouse Clap (Clap only by opening & closing fingers together)

Turtle Cheer pantomime a turtle coming out of shell, and say "oirrrrrr")

Penguin Cheer (move like a penguin)

GREAT (Tony the Tiger cheer)

Leader starts quietly starting with GRRR and goes around circle to complete word.

Ziggy

Ziggy, ziggy, hoy, hoy, hoy

Ziggy, ziggy, hoy, hoy, hoy

Watermelon

Take up watermelon in both hands, chomp up one way and Spit out seeds, in a Bronx cheer. (or those of you who are purists, the proper terminology is a 'bi-labial fricative' .)

Note: this cheer could be considered 'poor taste'.

Skyrocket

In pantomime, the group following the yell leader, plant imaginary rockets in the ground, light a match (on seat of their pants) and apply it to the rocket fuse. As the rocket rises, the group begins to whistle (softly at first and then louder) and after a short pause, all shout BANG!

Flower cheer

Imitating a flower growing, you rise up slowly, pausing part way. You look around, then quickly stand erect yelling 'sprooooooong'.

Round of applause

You clap your hands while holding your arms straight and moving your hands around in a wide circular motion.

Timber cheer

When you point to one half of the group, they yell, CHIP! When you point to the other half, they yell, CHOP! Then alternate CHIP! CHOP! CHIP! CHOP! faster and faster, ending with a loud TIMBER!"

Stomp and slap

When you raise your right hand. everyone stomps feet rapidly. When you raise your left hand, everyone slaps thighs rapidly. When you raise both hands, everyone stomps and slaps.

Rain clap

Everyone starts by tapping their right thumbs on the palms of their left hands to represent the first few drops of rain. Then use two fingers, three fingers, four, five and



wow ! wow ! wow !

Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo !

Fireworks (For a good performance)

One half of circle: Place the palm of your hand in front of your mouth and keep it moving in a circular motion while hissing. Second half of circle: Starting a couple of seconds after the first half, the rest of the circle whistles down the scale. Doh, Te, La, So, Fah, Me, Ray, Doh.)

When the whistlers get to the bottom of the scale, everybody responds with a well rounded Boom! Repeat all and Boom twice, repeat all and Boom three times,

For Goodness Sake (For a really corny skit)

Cheer Leader: Give me an OFER ! Circle: OFER !

Cheer Leader: Give me an OFER ! Circle: OFER !

Cheer Leader: Give me an OFER! Circle: OFER!

Cheer Leader What have we got ? Circle: OH FER GOODNESS SAKE !

For the Birds (For a 'dumb' skit)

Cheer Leader: That calls for a High Flying Cheer. Was it a ONE ? Circle: NO !

Cheer Leader: Was it a TWO ?

Circle: NO !

Cheer Leader: Was it a THREE ? Circle: NO !

Cheer Leader: Was it a FOUR ? Circle: YES ! FOR THE BIRDS !

Good Heavens (For an unusual skit)

The Cheer Leader says: "Let's give this something really GOOD. Repeat after me."

Cheer Leader: Good.

Circle: Good.

Cheer Leader: Good

Circle: Good

Cheer Leader: Good Heavens! What next??

Circle: Good Heavens ! What next ??

Relay Applause

Start at one side. have each row slap the hand of the person next to them, so on down the line.

Misc

Match Applause... Pretend to light a match on the Seat of your pants, say Yecoooooooooww!

Round of applause... Clap in a circle

Give a big hand... Hold up hand

Ketchup bottle. . . slap back of other hand  
politician applause... pat your self on the back  
Seal of approval... put elbows together, clap, and Arf Arf Arf  
Cheese applause... Grate, grate, grate,,  
Leaky tire applause... HISS...  
Cookie,,. Crumby, crumby, crumby.,  
Ghost applause... Boo.  
Arizona applause,, Yucca, yucca, yucca,, .  
Oil refinery applause... Crude, crude, crude...  
Good Turn Cheer... Stand up, turn around, and sit back down.  
Rattlesnake Applause... Hisssssssssss...  
Canned Laughter... Laugh when lid is removed from a can, and stop when lid is closed.  
Flea Clap... Applaud by clicking the nails of the thumb and finger together.  
Doctor... Open mouth, stick out tongue, say Ahhhhhhhhhh!  
Hand and Foot... Applaud with striking hand on foot.  
Mosquito... Rapidly slap face, neck, shoulders.  
Slow Motion Applause... Cheer and applaud in slow motion.  
The Uncoordinated Applause... Clap hands, but miss completely.

### 1 ) Ghost catchers

Two guys start a ghost catching business. They go to this house and can't get rid of the ghost. The ghost finally leaves because one of the guys sings very badly and off key. The ghost cant stand it and leaves.

### 2) Hairy Hamburger

A man sits down in a restaurant and orders a hamburger. The waiter bring out his hamburger. The man starts eating his hamburger and finds a hair in it; complains to waiter and another one is brought out. The second hamburger has a hair in it and-is taken back. The third hamburger also has a hair in it. The man gets upset and demands to see the cook. The cook comes out and the man asks him how he makes his hamburgers. The cook says that all he does is roll the meat and demonstrates making patties by placing the meat under his arm and squeezes,

### 3) Fishin'

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.

Passerby: "What are you doing there then?"

Fisher: "I`m fishing, what does it look as though i`m doing?" Passerby: "Fishing eh!, what are you fishing for."

Fisher. "I'm fishing for suckers."



Passerby: "Have you caught any?"

Fisher: "Yes you're the third today"

#### 4) Balloon Orchestra

The players in the orchestra each hold a balloon. They blow up their balloons in unison, then let out the air in a squeak at a time to the rhythm of some easily recognized rhythm such as "Blue Danube" or "Jingle Bells". To end the skit all fill their balloons with air and let go at the directors signal.

#### 5) Fish Market

Two people, one a fisherman and the other a fish market manager come on stage and hold a long cord between them. The fish market man attempts to call the fisherman on the telephone to see if he has any fish today, the fisherman acts as if he can't hear him. Volunteers are brought out of the audience and hold the cord between the fish market man and the fisherman one or two at a time with the market man attempting to call each time. When several people are holding the line, the market man is able to communicate with the fisherman. The fisherman says that he doesn't have any trout but he does have a lot of suckers hanging on a line Showing the line the volunteers are holding up.

#### 6) Camp Coffee Sketch

You need a large dixie or billy [a large pot that's kept on the fire for coffee, tea, etc.] in the centre of the stage and four scouts.

In England we have nesting sets of aluminium cooking pots with a steel wire handle. They look like a small straight sided bucket or paint pot. These are called Billys or Billycans. We also have larger cast iron or steel cooking pots usually oval in shape. Most of these are army surplus and are known as Dixies.

1st Scout (Walks to billy carrying his mug. He dips his mug in and brings it up to his lips for a drink.) "This camp coffee is getting worse!"

2nd Scout (Walks to billy carrying his mug. He dips his mug in and brings it up to his lips for a drink.) "This camp tea is getting worse!"

3rd Scout (Walks to billy carrying his mug. He dips his mug in and brings it up to his lips for a drink.) "This camp chocolate is getting worse!"

4th Scout (Walks to billy, dips his hands in and takes out a pair of wet socks. As he wrings them out he says.) "I thought that would get them clean!"

#### 7) Offensive Bus Passenger

Players are pretending that they are riding a bus. There is a bus driver and several passengers. Every time the bus stops, the passengers holds their nose, coughs, etc. looking at a specific passenger as they get off the bus. The bus driver complains to the offensive passenger that he is driving everyone off his bus. The passenger says that it isn't his fault. The driver accuses him of a peculiar smell and asks if he has taken a bath, washed his shirt, socks, feet, etc. The passenger claims that he has. Irritated the passenger pulls a pair of dirty, smelly. socks out of his back pocket, as proof.

## 8) A Crying Skit

The first person of the team comes on stage crying, The next person comes out, asks the first one what's the matter and the first one whispers in his ear. Then they both start crying, long and loud. Several others come out on stage, one at a time and repeat the same action. When everyone is on stage, crying. moaning. howling, sniffing and so on (using large handkerchiefs that were dipped in water before their entrance and wringing them out splashily) the last person comes out and asks aloud: "Why is everyone crying?" They all answer in unison: "Because we haven't got a skit!"

## 9) New Saw

Announcer: This scene takes place in a hardware store in a small north woods lumber town.

Lumberjack: (Enters) My old crosscut saw is worn out, and I need something that will let me cut more wood, or I'm going to go broke!

Owner : Yes, sir! For only one hundred bucks you can be the proud owner of this chain saw. I guarantee that it will cut twice as much wood in a day as your own crosscut.

Lumberjack: (Handing over money) O.K. great ! (Exits)

Announcer: The next day.

Lumberjack: (Enters tiredly) There's something wrong with this saw. I worked very hard yesterday, and only cut half as much wood.

Owner : Well, sir, I have a lot of faith in this product. Here, I'll put a new chain on it and you give it another try.

Lumberjack: O.K but if it doesn't do any better, I'll be back ! (Exits)

Announcer: The next day.

Lumberjack: (Enters exhausted) This darned saw is no good. I worked even harder, and still it won't cut half the wood of my old saw ! I want my money back!

Owner : Yes, sir ! Just let me check it out here. (Pulls starter rope) Announcer: (Makes sound effects of saw running.)

Lumberjack: Oh. my gosh ! What on earth is all that noise ?

## 10) Sap Running Through the Trees

DIRECTOR: As I was wandering through the woods the other day I saw a beautiful scene, and I wanted to recreate it for you tonight.

First, I need some trees. [selects four tall people, to stand in a line] There were birds twittering around the branches. [selects two birds] There you are, just move around twittering as the trees move their branches, thank you. There was also a little rabbit hopping through the grass. [selects rabbit] Just hop about amongst the grass, thanks. It looked so beautiful, but then along came this Scouter [picks a Scouter] who ran in and out amongst the trees looking for his Scouts. [Scouter runs in and out, around trees] He made so much noise that the rabbit hopped off [rabbit exits] and the birds flew away. [birds exit] In fact there was nothing left, but the Sap running through the trees!

## 11) Echo #1 (Baloney)

(Before the skit begins, one player hides a few feet into the woods behind the campfire circle, and plays the part of the ECHO.)

[PETER AND TIM enter]

PETER: Here we are, Tim, at the famous Echo Mountain. Why don't you give it a try?

TIM: Sure, might as well. [raises his voice] Hello!

ECHO: Hellooooo.

PETER: That's fantastic! I'm gonna try it. [raises voice] Hi there. ECHO: Hi there ....

[ROBIN and GARRY enter]

ROBIN: Hi, what are you guys up to?

TIM: We're trying out famous echo mountain. Shout something and hear it come back.

GARRY: OK, here I go. [raises voice] Baloney.

[Pause, waiting for ECHO, which does not come back]

ROBIN: Hmmm, it's not working. Let me try. [raises voice] Scouter John's a great guy!

ECHO: Baloney! [All exit quickly]

## 12) lawnmower

(One boy is on his hands and knees as the mower.) OWNER: [yanking imaginary rope, while mower splutters] This darned old mower, I cant get it going. I need some help.

[gets help from another Six member]

1ST HELPER: So, you just want me to yank on this rope, and get it started, easy!  
[yanking rope]

MOWER: [splutters, bobs up and down]

1 ST HELPER: I'm sorry can't seem to go it. Have you checked the gas?

OWNER: Yes, I have. Thanks anyway. Well, let's see who else has a strong arm.

[selects another Six member] What I need you to do is give a real good yank on the starting rope and make it run.

2ND HELPER: Sure thing. [yanks rope a couple of times]

MOWER: [bobs up and down, splutters. coughs]

2ND HELPER: Sony, I can't do it either.

OWNER: What I need is someone big and strong. [selects Leader] (Leader will probably make some comments to throw you, but let him talk and get him to pull the rope.)

MOWER: [splutters, coughs, starts to vibrate and run] OWNER: There, all it needed was a good jerk.

## 14) Bad Breath

One blanket-covered player is the terrible dragon with the terrible breath. Plant three or four "volunteers" in the audience who come up, one by one, to say hello to the dragon. Each time the dragon replies, "Hello!", the "volunteer falls over dead (lots of scope for

hams, here). Then, ask for a real volunteer to say hello to the dragon. When he says, "Hello, Dragon", the dragon falls over dead.

#### 15 )Campfire Conference

Six or eight weary-looking campers enter the campfire circle, silently circle the campfire once, and sit in a ring around the fire. After a pause, the first camper sighs and says "What a day!" There's another pause for deliberation before the second camper sighs and says, "What a day!", and yet another before the third repeats, and so on around the circle until they reach the last camper. He sighs and says, "Yes sirree!" (or You betcha, or something similar).

After a long silence, the first camper says in disgust, "If you can't stick to the subject, I'm getting out of here!" Then he rises and leaves the campfire, followed by all the others.

Note: this is an older document so some of the references below may not be available any longer.

Most of the information in this manual has been compiled from these Online Resources as well as books and collected materials.

[www.globalserve.net/~codvak/carmfire/maeicfire](http://www.globalserve.net/~codvak/carmfire/maeicfire)

[www.netwoods.com/d-campfire](http://www.netwoods.com/d-campfire)

[www.macscouter.com/Campfire](http://www.macscouter.com/Campfire)

[www.inauirv.net/outdoor/campfire/stunts](http://www.inauirv.net/outdoor/campfire/stunts) "The Leader" magazines and CD

Leader Handbooks

Best of the Leader

Other Scouting Resource books

# Campfire Schedule

Opening - Campfire Chief

Welcome Song - Campfire Chief

	Leading/Doing	Name/Description
Action Song -	_____	_____
Skit -	_____	_____
Cheer/Yell -	_____	_____
Action Song -	_____	_____
Skit -	_____	_____
Cheer/ Yell -	_____	_____
Lively Song -	_____	_____
Skit -	_____	_____
Cheer/Yell -	_____	_____
Fun Song -	_____	_____
Skit -	_____	_____
Cheer/Yell -	_____	_____
General Song -	_____	_____
Presentation -	(Campfire Chief) _____	_____
Quiet Song -	_____	_____
Scouters' Five -	(Campfire Chief) _____	_____
Spirituals -	(Campfire Chief) _____	_____
Closing Song -	(Campfire Chief) _____	_____
Closing - Campfire Chief		

