

Scout Skills Wide Games



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INFORMATION SHEET

A wide game is an outdoor activity, usually between two or more teams which have to achieve specific objectives in order to win the game. This might be simply preventing the other team(s) from finishing or collecting certain items. Wide games are organised within a given geographical area and can be played either on a Troop night, or at camp and at night (or at least, in the dark) as well as daytime.

Wide games usually have a theme or storyline which helps set the scene and can provide the highpoint to a camp. Apart from having fun, wide games provide an opportunity for the participants to develop teamwork, planning skills, endurance, resourcefulness, initiative, and physical fitness!

As you can see, there are no hard and fast rules to wide games which is what makes them flexible and allows you to be as creative as you like.

Objectives of the game

There may be one or more different objectives (or purposes) within in any wide game for the teams taking part.

These might include:

- To get to a given place
- To get from a given place
- To obtain or collect a specific object(s)
- To protect a specific object or property
- To achieve a particular task
- To obtain certain information
- To prevent the other team(s) from doing any of the above!

It is important to make sure that the purposes or objectives are realistic, understandable and challenging.

Instructions

These should be well-defined and care taken that all participants (and any staff) understand them and accept any rules before the wide game takes place. Keep the instructions as simple as

possible - too many can complicate things and lead to misunderstandings. It is also important to ensure that participants do not take 'the law into their own hands', that is, that they know of any penalties or disqualification if they don't abide by the rules!

Teams

The size of the teams will depend upon the wide game, its purpose and the activities involved, and possibly vice versa: that is, the game may need to be tailored to the number of participants that will be taking part.

Again depending upon the game, it may be necessary (or not) for a leader to be selected for each team from within its members. This might be a nomination by the staff or organiser, or elected from within the group by the members themselves. The number of teams will depend on the type of game and the number of participants involved. It is possible to have just one team with the 'public' being the opposition!

Scoring

This can become the most complicated aspect if not carefully considered and thought through.

The 'count' may be due to:

- The number of opposing team members eliminated;
- The number of items collected;
- Time penalties given.

There may be no necessity for any scoring as simply achieving the objective of the game is sufficient (for example the team arriving back at base having completed their task).

Location and Area

If the game requires participants to hide, then an area such as a wood would obviously be desirable, but whatever area you have available, the game must be appropriate and adapted if necessary. Check that the size of the area is appropriate and that it is not too large to 'lose' people. Make sure that if you are using privately

owned land at any point, that you have obtained permission to cross it or use it.

Themes

The one thing which makes wide games different from other activities, is the storyline or theme which is attached to the game. This sets the scene and gives a framework, which can be built upon in whatever way is appropriate. The theme can be linked to the surrounding area, an overall theme of the camp, historical events, or any unusual story-lines. For example, a scenario about UFOs and aliens landing, the protection of the crown jewels or being stranded on a desert island with hostile natives, will all allow the participant's fertile imagination to run wild!

Safety

Consideration must be given to

- The area used for hazards, such as cliffs, roads, rivers and so on.
- The size of area being used. Ensure that the area can be marked appropriately so that everyone knows the boundaries and precautions taken so that participants can be recalled if necessary.
- Ensuring that the participants know how to get help if required. Over very large areas, it may be appropriate to use a 'buddy system' where a pair of Scouts are responsible for each other at any time.
- 'End of game' signals. If a whistle can mean more than one thing, make sure that the whistle blasts are clear enough to be heard and understood.

Tricks of the trade

- Keep it simple! However tempted you may be to devise a wickedly devious scenario, too many rules or pieces of equipment can lead to confusion and a disappointing wide game for all concerned.
- Using a piece of wool tied around the outside of a jacket sleeve can act as a 'life' which can be removed when caught. Different colours can also identify teams. Other methods for losing a life might include 'flour' or 'water' bombs! But these methods require cleaning up afterwards - so make sure you have the facilities and time to do so!
- If your game requires participants to 'find something', it is worth checking that it is still there immediately prior to the game.
- Ensure that the participants are involved most of the time. If they are 'caught', they should be reinstated, join another team or in some way be involved. No one should be out - sitting around waiting for everyone else is

likely to cause frustration and will do nothing for that individual.

- Ensure that there is a time limit on the whole game which is appropriate to the age of the participants. If the game goes on for too long, it is likely that the participants will start to get bored.
- It could provide an opportunity to practise some Scouting skills; mapping, compass work, tracking, knotting, first aid and so on. But ensure that it does not just become a series of bases - this would become more of an incident hike.
- The game should be devised to suit all participants - not just the fastest, strongest and biggest ones!

Further information

Wide Games by Read: David Saint. (Published by Printforce and available from the Scout Information Centre code - 0948834358.)

TEACH YOURSELF

Designing an effective and imaginative wide game can be difficult, especially with all the different aspects that need to be thought about and that can be included. You will need to have read the Information part of this factsheet which outlines the different factors which need to be considered.

Time

It is difficult to quantify the time required to design a wide game. It will depend upon all the factors that we have looked at. It can take between 30 and 60 minutes to outline a relatively simple wide game but obviously more time will be required to work out the finer details. Indeed, to plan one from square one to making it happen could take days! But don't let this put you off - if you start off with a simple game you can make it more complicated as time (and resources) permit.

Equipment

This will vary from game to game but your basic requirements are:

- A suitable area (field, wood, local park and so on.);
- Some form of identification for each team and its members;
- A whistle or means of attracting everyone's attention;
- If dark, lamps and/or torches;
- First aid kit;
- Tent or other type of shelter, tables and chairs for organisers and the 'base';
- Stopwatch.

You will probably require other equipment specifically for your wide game. This may include tape or string for marking out areas, items which might be used for bartering, costumes, other means of communication, balloons, water and so on.

Learning all about it

Here we look at an example, which can be used as a basic outline for a wide game. The secret of an effective wide game is to be creative; adapt to the surroundings, the people involved, the resources that you have available at the time, and convince the participants, if not to believe the story itself, to become part of the story or plot.

The first consideration is the area or location that we are going to use. For this example, we are using a wooded area with a clearing and for safety, the outer limit for our game is the edge of the woods.

When marking out the area, try to use natural features (trees, clearings and so on) rather than marking it with tape or string. However, if this is necessary, you will preferably need high visibility tape and place it where it is least likely to cause harm when approached at speed. That is, not so low on the ground as to trip people up or at a height which could strangle someone! Ensure that there are no areas of danger which would be unexpected (such as roads, lakes, cliffs and so on).

Next, consider the purpose or objective of the game. In this instance, we have enough participants for two teams of which one (the attacking team) must return an object to a safe area. The other (defending) team must try to stop them. This can be done by touching a player on the attacking team. This player must then become one of the defenders. The attackers may pass the object from person to person but if the attacker holding the object is caught, then the defenders have won. If the attackers manage to return the object to the safe area, then the attackers have won.

Once the game has been designed, the actual use of the area or location can be determined. That is, the safe area and the teams' bases can be allocated. The clearing that we have is the minimum distance that the defending team can lie in wait!

Giving clear signals in order to let the participants know what stage the game is at, is important.. In this example, the whistle will be blown once to say that the defenders are being let out, then another single blast to allow the attackers to start attacking, and subsequent long blasts signify that the game is over.

The theme or story-line is then added. If you are using, for example, an historical event which occurred near to the locality of your camp, it may be appropriate to consider this first and then work out the game's objective.

For example, the story may go like this:

The Norse God, Thor, has entrusted his Hammer of Power to his soldiers who are responsible for keeping it safe from Bytor, the King of the Underworld. Their mission is to get the Hammer to Valhalla without being caught by one of Bytor's soldiers.

Thor's soldiers are the attacking team trying to get the Hammer (a mallet, perhaps?) to Valhalla, (the safe area) whilst Bytor's soldiers are the defenders trying to prevent the attackers from achieving their task.

So what are you waiting for? As you can see there is plenty of opportunity to change, adapt, and come up with your own wide game. In the How To Train Others section, there is a list of questions to be considered when planning a wide game. You may find this useful for your own preparations.

Can I do it?

When you feel confident about wide games, check how you are doing and see which of the following you can tick off:

- State the reasons for playing wide games
- List the factors to be considered when planning a wide game under the headings of;
 - area
 - game objective
 - scoring
 - safety
 - theme and storyline

So you want more?

Have a go at designing wide games using:

- No equipment - just people!
- A pack of cards
- An empty field
- A wooded area

Have a go at designing wide games specifically for:

- Team building
- Integrating new members
- Developing self-reliance and initiative

HOW TO TRAIN OTHERS

This section is designed to provide some ideas about how you can help other people to plan wide games. This might be Leaders or Scouts - either in an informal way on a Troop night or more

formally on a skills workshop, training course or something similar.

Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- State the reasons for playing wide games;
- List the factors to be considered when planning a wide game under the headings of;
Area
game objective
scoring
theme and storyline
- State the safety factors to be considered for wide games.

Time

30 to 60 minutes will be required to plan an outline of a wide game but this will need to be followed up at a later date to work through the details.

Equipment

For the purposes of planning a wide game, not much more than paper and pencil is required! It may be useful to obtain notes or ideas from other people who have designed and implemented wide games.

TRAINING METHOD

Planning

A wide game is mainly an individual task, although obviously there are benefits of talking things through with other people. So, start by getting the participants to think through some ideas on their own and then after some time, ask them to discuss in pairs what they have done. This will provide the opportunity for someone to comment objectively and ask the questions that may not have been considered. It may then be appropriate for everyone to discuss their plans to further share ideas and maybe come up with the ultimate in wide games!

There is, of course, only one way to test out the plans and that is to put the wide game into practice. It is then important to review and note how things went and be ready to adapt, change and listen to alternative ideas. Record all details for future reference.

There is no right or wrong way of planning a wide game, but there are certain factors which should be taken into consideration to make sure they are as effective as possible. Therefore, it is important to make others aware of these factors. Details to cover these aspects are contained in the Information Sheet and Teach Yourself sections.

Ask participants to consider planning for a wide game under these headings:

- Area or location
- Game and its objective
- Scoring
- Theme and story-line
- Safety

The following questions may help with the planning:

- What sort of area or location will you have available to you?
size of area
open land
wooded area
- What is the game trying to achieve?
teamwork
develop planning skills
energy release
develop sense training
test and develop initiative
- What equipment and resources do you have available or can you obtain?
- What is the team's objective?
get from A to B
obtain a specific object
achieve a particular task
gather certain information
- What is the theme or storyline?
historical events
fictional stories
'Cowboys and Indians'
'Cops and Robbers'
- What are the rules and instructions?
- What is the system for scoring?
- What are the safety factors to be considered?

Checking their progress

Ask participants whether they can answer the following questions:

- Why do we play wide games?
- What should be considered when planning a wide game, under the headings of
Area or location
game objective?
scoring?
theme and story-line?
What are the safety factors to be considered prior to running wide games?

So they want to know more?

Have a go at designing wide games for:

- individuals
- more than two teams
- implementation in the dark
- participants with special needs
- unusual locations.