

Young Leaders' Scheme

That's the way to do it!



Module C

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One of the most enjoyable aspects of being a Young Leader, is how often you will have the opportunity to teach a new skill to the young people you work with. You will probably have a good idea yourself of what makes a good teacher – you have your own to compare! So what does make a good leader? Teachers who talk at you all the time are, quite frankly, deadly boring. Teachers who take the time to involve you actively in the work are much more interesting. As a result, they are much more effective at getting their message across.

As a Young Leader, you will be asked to demonstrate and teach various skills to your Section's members. This could be showing Beaver Scouts how to make something from paper and paint; teaching Cub Scouts how to tie simple knots or helping Scouts to successfully pitch a Patrol tent.

This factsheet gives you some tips about how to demonstrate and teach skills to your Section's members. It will also help you ensure that they have fun and that you enjoy the experience.

Seeing, doing or listening?

Let's imagine that you want to know how your new mobile phone works. How might someone teach you?

Perhaps they could read out the instructions from the manual that came with the phone.

- ◆ Would that work, particularly if you did not have the phone to look at while they were talking? Would you remember what to do?

They could give you the instruction manual to read.

- ◆ A little better than reading the instructions out, but only a little. Again this method would not work if you did not have the phone to work with.

Maybe they could give you the phone to work but without any instructions.

- ◆ You might eventually get the hang of things, but something's missing.

They might combine some of the above – give you the phone and the instruction book.

- ◆ We're getting there aren't we?

Best of all, they could give you the phone and personally demonstrate to you how it works.

The same issues will affect how you try to instruct Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. This applies to teaching games, crafts and skills. All of the methods described above have both advantages and disadvantages.

- ◆ Talking something through gets a message across to lots of people at once, but misses out on the detail. Using a diagram, paper copy or instruction book ensures that everyone gets the same message.
- ◆ Demonstrating a skill or technique has visual impact but you can only use this technique in small groups.
- ◆ Demonstrating with material which has additional visual impact might work in a larger group, but the visual aid has to be large enough for everyone to see.

From a learning perspective, demonstrating something by doing is more effective than seeing something, which in turn has more effect than listening to something.

Tailoring your teaching...

...to age groups.

In general, younger Members respond better to activities with coloured bits and pieces. As they get older, written and printed material can be useful. Talking rarely works well for any age group, but may have a place in describing the rules of games (as long as they are simple).

...to different sized groups.

Small groups lend themselves to demonstrations and a hands-on approach to learning. Larger groups require visual aids that everyone can see (e.g. slides, OHP's, Powerpoint presentations) along with a simple and effective verbal message.

...to different situations

The approach that you would use in your meeting hall might not be the same if the activity is taking place outdoors. OHP projectors don't generally work outdoors and instructions written on paper tend to get soggy in the rain!

Winning and keeping their attention

One of the most difficult things you will have to do in your Section is winning and keeping the attention of the young people. This is obviously easier to do in a small group, especially if everyone is involved in doing things. The larger the group, the more difficult it becomes. Boredom and disinterest quickly become issues. Using directed questions to group Members in a random and evenly balanced way can be useful – don't pick on any one Member all the time.

Clearly, if boredom and disinterest are becoming a problem, maybe you need to rethink the method you are using to get your message across!

In general, the younger the age of the person that you are instructing, the shorter their concentration span will be. For this reason, short, snappy activities go down better with Beaver Scouts and Cub Scouts, whereas longer more challenging activities will retain the interest of Scouts.

What have you learned in this module?

Hopefully, you now have a better idea of how you can help teach and instruct the members of your Section in a more effective way. Try out some of the different methods when you next attend your Section's meeting. Discuss how the module has gone with your Beaver Scout, Cub Scout or Scout Leader. You never know, they might learn something!