Campout Planning Guide

For large-scale regional campouts, check out the Hullabaloo Planning Guide

Organizing a group campout can be a lot of work, but it is also very rewarding and fun. This guide will walk you through planning, from date and site selection to recruiting volunteers.

Camping Considerations

Before you plan out your camping schedule for the year, there are some questions to consider:

- What are the best times of year to camp where you are?
- What is your group's scouting year like and how do you want camping to fit into that?
- Do you want to do more all ages campouts or do you want to camp by section?
- How is your group going to pay for campouts (is it built into your yearly fees or is there a separate charge?)
- Are there activities that your group would like to do that may lend themselves to a campout?

Some groups opt for quarterly campouts year round, others pack monthly campouts into the summer. Groups located in hot areas may camp more in the winter and skip the summer months.

Types of Campouts

Depending on the type of campout your group is looking to do, there are different considerations to take into account.

Campout at an Established Campground

The biggest difficulty camping at an established campground is often securing a site. Group sites can range in size from 12 people (probably too small for a scout group) up through 250. Amenities (potable water, bathrooms, etc.) can also vary considerably. Depending on who who manages the site, reservations generally open between 6 and 12 months beforehand, and can often go quickly, especially during weekends in the high season.

Some options to look into for group sites:

- recreation.gov: Federally managed sites (national parks, USFS)
- reserveamerica.com: A variety of campgrounds, including some state parks and private campgrounds
- State Park Systems: some do their reservations through Reserve America, but many have their own reservation systems.

- County/Regional Parks: reservation systems for these vary widely.
- Private Campgrounds: reservation systems for these vary widely.

Another possibility if you can't secure a group site is to try to get multiple individual sites within a campground, but this can be difficult, both in terms of being able to get enough sites and in terms of conflicts with camping neighbors. Those in sites adjacent to yours may not appreciate the hubbub that comes with a scout group, and your group may not want to be dealing with groups of rowdy adults partying into the night.

Dispersed Camping

Dispersed camping (or camping outside of a designated campground) may be an option for your group depending on where you are located. This type of camping involves having to bring in or filter your own water and figure out a privy solution, but can also give you more flexibility when it comes to dates and timing. Do your research ahead of time to make sure that you are allowed to camp there and keep in mind that not all families will have high clearance vehicles, so you will want to ensure that the roads to the location are traversable.

Backpacking

If you are doing a backpacking trip, you will want to follow guidelines for group size (generally less than 12) and ensure you have proper permits for the place you are going. Some areas are more competitive when it comes to permits than others. You may have to split into smaller groups and camp separately to follow wilderness guidelines. If permits are required for the area you are visiting, they can generally be obtained through recreation.gov. Backpacking trips require different logistics from larger group campouts. More information can be found on the Backpacking Guide page.

Lodge/Cabin Trip

Some groups do a winter lodge visit. These generally require a good deal of preplanning and must be booked well in advance. They are also usually more expensive than a typical campout and must be arranged with the owner of the property.

Campout Volunteer Roles

Campouts involve extra volunteer needs! Here's a list of campout-specific roles that may be helpful. Your group may have slightly different needs, but this will hopefully get you thinking about everything that goes into running a group campout. Having a SignUpGenius as part of your registration process helps with getting enough volunteers for each role. Volunteers can certainly sign up for more than one job over the course of the weekend, as well. Remind your families that many hands make light work!

Grocery Shoppers (2 - 3)

Shop for groceries ahead of time (save receipts for reimbursement)

Pack Group Gear (2)

Meet ahead of the camping trip to help pack all the group gear

Transport Group Gear (1)

Tow the group trailer or offer to haul gear in a large vehicle. If you are dividing gear between multiple cars, you may need more than one volunteer for this.

Unload Group Gear (2)

Help unload group gear and set up camp kitchen

Camp Warden (1)

Welcome families, check them in, and confirm volunteer assignments. Answer questions and provide introductions to new families.

Lost and Found (1)

Keep track of lost items during the weekend

Grubmaster (1)

Oversee camp kitchen for the weekend

Hand Washing Station (1)

Set up and monitor the handwashing station over the weekend

Garbage & Compost Duty (1)

Oversee garbage and compost for the weekend

Saturday Breakfast (4)

Oversee meal prep and clean up for Saturday Breakfast, including dish washing set up.

Saturday Lunch (4)

Oversee meal prep and clean up for Saturday Lunch, including dish washing set up.

Saturday Dinner (4)

Oversee meal prep and clean up for Saturday Dinner, including dish washing set up.

Sunday Breakfast/Lunch (4)

Oversee meal prep and clean up for Sunday Breakfast and Lunch, including dish washing set up.

Fire Duty (1)

Oversee the campfire, gather wood, supervise scouts starting the fire, make sure the fire is extinguished

S'mores (2)

Oversee campfire dessert on Saturday evening

Kitchen Tear Down (2)

Help pack up equipment and clean up camp kitchen on Sunday morning during section activity time.

Pack Up Camp (2)

Help repack the group trailer on Sunday morning

Camp Sweep (1)

Oversee final sweep of campground before departure

Schedule

Having a schedule keeps things on track and lets everyone know what is going on during the weekend. A sample weekend campout schedule may look something like this:

Friday

- Arrival throughout the afternoon/evening
- Set up camp.
- Families on their own for dinner.
- Possibly an informal campfire.

Saturday

- 7:30 AM: Reveille/Wake Up
- 8:00 AM: Flag Ceremony, Morning Announcements
- 8:30 - 9:30 AM: Breakfast
- 10:00 - 10:30 AM: Stretching/All Scout Game
- 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM: Section Time
- 12:00 - 1:00 PM: Lunch
- 1:00 - 3:00 PM: Section Time
- 3:00 - 5:00 PM: Free Time
- 5:00 - 6:30 PM: Dinner
- 7:00 PM: Flag Ceremony, Evening Announcements
- 8:00 PM: Campfire
- 9:00 PM: Night Hike
- 10:00 PM: Quiet Camp

Sunday

- 7:30 AM: Reveille/Wake Up
- 8:00 AM: Flag Ceremony, Morning Announcements
- 8:30 - 9:30 AM: Breakfast & Prep Sack Lunches
- 10:00 - 11:00 AM: Section Time (Scouts Own), Parents Start Packing Kitchen
- 11:00 AM: Flag Ceremony, Final Announcements
- 11:15 AM - 12:30 PM: Pack up and clean
- 1:00 PM: Close Camp

Meal Planning

Cooking for a large group involves a number of considerations. You will need to take into account any food allergies or dietary restrictions. Generally for a weekend campout, families are on their own for Friday dinner, so you will need to plan Saturday breakfast, lunch, and dinner, as well as Sunday breakfast and possibly a sack lunch that folks can take with them when they leave.

Meals that involve individual components like taco bowls or foil packets can be a good option to accommodate allergies. Chili can be made in large quantities (you can do a veggie version and a meat version if you have vegetarians) and you can have different toppings out. Oatmeal and scrambled eggs with sausages (veggie or meat) are big hits for breakfast. Yogurt and granola is also easy and popular. Make sure to have plenty of coffee for the grown ups.

Once you decide what you are going to cook, you will want to calculate how much of each ingredient you'll need. You can divide recipes by serving size then multiply by the number of attendees registered for your trip. You can assign a couple of volunteers to grocery shop ahead of the trip so it's not just one person trying to do it all.

On site, you will want to assign a grubmaster to be in charge of the kitchen, as well as adult volunteers to help oversee meal prep. Meal times are a great way to get scouts of all ages involved in cooking. The otters love to chop vegetables (with supervision), timberwolves can do more advanced prep work, pathfinders can run the stove.

Flag Ceremonies

Flag ceremonies are a traditional part of scout campouts, but it is important to be aware that the flag can also be triggering to some scouts and families. Those who do not wish to participate in a flag ceremony may opt to stand quietly without saluting, or may decide to opt out of the ceremony altogether. The flag ceremony is also a good opportunity to discuss the flag with scouts and talk about why the American flag can be a difficult symbol for those who have not always felt welcome in the US.

Some groups may elect to bring a collapsible flagpole with them to their campsite. Others may improvise a flagpole using a tree or structure. You could also have the Pathfinders create a flagpole using pioneering techniques/lashings.

The raising and lowering of the colors is good practice for Timberwolves, although in some cases Pathfinders or Rovers may act as the colorguard. Some groups may opt to fly additional flags alongside the American Flag, such as a progress or pride flag, a state flag, a WFIS flag, or an OSG Flag. In that case, the American flag should go on top, with the other flag(s) below it. You could also display those flags elsewhere at the campsite.

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