

# Some Activity Ideas



*This and more from our camp program is available on C.D.-R.O.M.*

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## *Strange but true Tales of Camp.*

A recent idea of ours is “Strange but true Tales of Camp”, a collection of fictional short stories created by, and for, our staff members and campers.

Every camp has their stories. We’re not sure how they get started, but they usually draw their inspiration from something at camp. Stories come from a colorful staff member or camper, that old chapel by the edge of the woods, or some real event the facts of which have been obscured over time.

Over the years we’ve accumulated quite a few “Strange but true Tales of Camp”. So, building on our tradition of telling stories around the campfire, we decided to gather some of them together in this collection. “Story telling” campfires of course should be held later in the evening. Keep the fire small to set the mood, and bring snacks.

A collection like this puts these stories at hand to share now and in future years. Then some night all we need to do is gather the campers, light the fire, watch out for animals - and hope it doesn’t rain. Of course, if it does rain, you can always huddle around a flashlight in the cabin. Campers can also read the stories to each other, or on their own.

So far the stories we’ve printed are by staff members. Starting this year we’re going to get the campers to write, or at least outline stories for us. (The best campfire stories are usually suspense and/or ghost tales.) We have a number of creative campers and staff members; this gives them another opportunity to explore and display their talents in a fun way.

Oh, and it’s also a neat way to help nurture the unique spirit of Camp High Hopes, (but don’t tell the campers that).

For a copy of our “Strange but True Tales of Camp”  
ask for our camp program C.D.-R.O.M.

## *The Cabin Challenge Project.*

Our campers are divided by age into 5 cabins of 8 campers each. Being so close in age the campers of a cabin are at similar levels of development, and easier to lead through an activity (or if necessary tailor the activity to them).

In the “Cabin Challenge Project” each cabin group is given a unique project to complete during the week, a project which challenges their individual abilities as well as their ability to work as a cabin team. The project for each cabin is chosen in consultation with the Senior Counselor from that cabin, and geared toward the general ability level of the campers involved.

Cabin B-3: These 7-8 year olds had to make and race pine wood derby cars (a perennial Boy Scout activity, available in kit form from the B.S.A.).

Cabin B-4: Using noodle float toys, 2 sheets of foam board insulation, glue, and duct tape these 9-10 year olds were to make a raft 4 of them could paddle a lap on the lake with. They got all 8 campers on and finished the lap.

Cabin B-5: These 11-12 year olds had 8 inner tubes and a length of rope to make a raft, but they had to use only their hands and feet to get the raft all of the way across the lake and back.

Cabin B-6: Staying with the lake our 13-14 year olds got cardboard, duct tape, shrink wrap, and some Styrofoam to build a boat. 2 of the campers had to paddle the boat for a lap on the lake; they actually got 3 campers to finish 2 laps.

Cabin B-7: Created a waterproof outdoor shelter to spend the night in using only some bed sheets, dirt, rope, and sticks. Luckily the shelter worked, because just after these 15-17 year olds finished it rained.

Time was reserved each day to work on challenge projects; more time was available if needed. (it took an average of 6 hours to complete projects.) Cabin counselors provided supervision and encouragement to their campers, but counselors were only allowed to give limited direction and do little work on the project to leave as much of the challenge as possible for the campers.

We weren't certain the campers could actually make their projects work. The purpose of the projects is to challenge the campers to come together as a team and tackle the problem. It was also meant to give each group something to do no one else got to do. Ideas for projects are mostly limited by imagination, although you need to include the staff in planning projects to accurately gauge which ideas are most practical for your campers.

# GOLD RUSH

This is basically an excuse to run around and get wet. But you can also make it a mentally challenging activity. Originally based on the idea of a Wild West gold rush, it easily lends itself to a variety of thematic variations like “Pirates”, “Lost Treasure”, or “Night at Quark’s Place”, etc.

**MATERIALS:** Gold (inexpensive plastic gold coins are available from party supply sources like Oriental Trading company), something to carry the gold in (pie pans, plastic cups, etc.), and squirt guns or water balloons.

**ACTIVITY AREA:** An open field large enough to run around in. Boundaries can be marked either by existing objects (trees, etc.) chalk lines, or flags.

**ROLES:** Good guys (staff or campers), bad guys (staff or campers, though staff are less likely to cause resentment among the campers), and people (campers).

**GAME PLAY:**

a. You give the people their gold either at some event (campfire) or by having them earn (through various deeds) or find (scavenger hunt) it. Gold should be given to groups/cabins of campers, not individuals.

b. Bad guys “steal” the gold and leave notes. Add wanted posters for fun.

c. The campers and good guys face the bad guys on the field. The campers collect the gold scattered around the field and go to the banker. IF a bad guy gets them wet they must drop the gold and find more. The good guys protect them by getting bad guys wet first. The camper/team with the most gold wins.

**NOTES:**

a. Campers can collect gold fast, so start with plenty (or put it out incrementally.) Arrange for a bank robbery during the finale if you want to extend play.

b. Keep the identity of bad guys a mystery until after the finale (younger kids especially can take this game to heart, so the bad guys can catch some flack); Guessing the identity of the bad guys can be another part of the game. Do let campers know at least who the head good guy is to reassure them.

c. The gold can be incorporated into other activities - “spending” at carnival night.

d. Extra gold can be earned by doing good deeds, or answering questions.

e. If playing by teams, have mixed age teams to make things more sporting.

f. Solving the gold theft can be an activity - crime scene investigation.

## the “Mr. (your camp name here) Pageant”

For us this is a perennial addition to our “Talent Show”, though it can also function as a stand alone activity. It offers the campers the chance to have some fun at the expense of the staff (while giving staff members a chance to entertain the campers with their talent - or lack thereof).

**PARTICIPANTS:** Male staff members and female judges. Of course you can have co-ed participants and co-ed judges as well. Campers can be judges, though we only have one or two guest camper judges.

**CONTEST:** Participants enter at the beginning of the week, and are introduced over time to build suspense. At the pageant they compete in four categories: 1) Dress for success, 2) Swimsuit, 3) Talent Act, and 4) the all important final question (different questions of any kind, posed by the judges, which contestants have 20 seconds or so to think up an answer to. Our nurses, who judge for us, swear they write out the questions in advance, but we have our doubts).

**JUDGING:** Winners are chosen based on whatever criteria the judges have set and announced ahead of time, as well as audience reaction to the efforts of the contestants. You can a first and second runner up as well. The winner should get a crown (or other such item), along with “special privileges” unique to your camp (breakfast in bed, extra desserts, their choice of infusion times, etc.).

### **NOTES:**

a. Have costume items for contestants to use in the dress for success and talent portions, or warn them before camp to bring things. You can limit contestants to using the costume items you provide as an additional challenge. Making them chose between “swimsuits” you provide can be an amusing alternative as well.

b. It’s best to space the four segments of the pageant out - say, between other acts at the Talent Show - to give contestants time to get ready for the next segment while the audience digests what they just saw. But don’t space the segments out too much or they lose their context.

c. You can have someone “backstage” to help contestants with costume changes and such, although it’s more fun if the contestants have to help each other.

### ***VARIATION:***

You can have a version of this just for camper contestants. An idea for their talent act is impersonating staff members, or staging skits on how the think camp really should be run.

## WALKING STICKS

Dead, dry wood is easier to carve and finish than live wood. Sticks should be tall enough to reach between the campers elbow and shoulder, and be from 1 to 3 inches thick (so when they grasp it their thumb and forefinger touch).

An ordinary vegetable peeler can remove most bark. Knots or branches may require a hacksaw. Use coarse sandpaper to bare the wood. Hand carving tools of different sized points are inexpensive and safe, but take some hand/arm strength. Ordinary items like large nails and small screwdrivers may suffice.

Use fine sand paper to smooth the stick. Decorate with permanent markers, acrylic paint; glue or copper tack on beads, leather strips, and feathers. Neutral wax shoe polish rubbed in with a soft paper towel will shine and preserve the stick. (Polyurethane gives a nicer finish, but is toxic and more involved.)

## SOAPSTONE CARVING

Soapstone (actually an imperfect form of talc) is relatively inexpensive and easy to carve in both small and large forms. It comes in limited colors (green, gray, black, pink) with a varying, marble like appearance. You may have to buy large chunks and use a hacksaw to cut the chunks into more manageable pieces.

Use coarse (60 grit) sandpaper to take rough edges and deep mars off the stone. Then draw the outline of a design on the stone with a #2 pencil (letters, a logo, - small cookie cutters make nice stencils).

Small saws and coarse files remove more stone fast; use them to make the rough shape and deep cuts. Small shapes and finer detail require smaller and less coarse files. Ordinary metal or wood files are all you need. Common items like nails, wire, silverware, and screwdrivers can be used.

Soapstone carving generates a great amount of stone dust; the dust is slippery, and should not be inhaled or ingested in large quantities, (plastic/latex gloves and paper breathing masks can be used). You'll need a toothbrush to clean the dust off of files and sandpaper as they quickly fill with stone dust.

Once the final design is done being carved, use progressively finer grade sandpaper to finish the stone. Wet sanding with 600 grit produces the nicest look. Wipe the stone dry and clean with a soft cloth. Permanent markers or colored shoe polish used sparingly can color stone. Apply neutral wax shoe polish or bees wax with a soft cloth to give the finished carving a glossy finish.

FOR MATERIALS AND ADVICE try contacting a nearby Gem and Mineral Club or other Crafters Association (most are on the internet by now).