

Accessibility and Adaptive Scouting

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Version 2.0



Outdoor Service Guides

Scouting for Everybody!

Forward

Inclusivity is essential to our programming in Outdoor Service Guides (OSG) and as such, we strive to include all scouts of all ability levels and with a wide variety of challenges. This leader guide is written to help our scout leaders who are dealing with the challenges of having non-typical scouts in their groups.

Reading through the entire document can give you ideas for how to work with scouts at all levels with a wide range of challenges. This document is broken out with specific ideas for the challenges of having scouts who have certain common issues, food allergies, and some specific learning disabilities. However, many scouts have more than one challenge and it is worth reviewing all of this guide, not just a single page.

A special thank you to Sue Pesznecker who contributed the section on hearing impairments and inspired me to make this guide better in every way.

Thank you to Stephanie Hanson for her advice and suggestions.

Thank you to Jennifer Best and all her work with special needs scouts and her additional support in creating this document.

Thank you to Carrie Davis, SLP who contributed the section on Communication Disorders.

If you face a challenge that is not listed, please feel free to reach out to me at laura.sowdon@osg-us.org to ask for help.

Yours in inclusive scouting,

Laura Sowdon

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Adapting The Program

As scout leaders, we sometimes have scouts in our programs who are not typical. They have a learning challenge, a physical challenge, or other reasons that a program designed for typical kids isn't working as written. As leaders, we are empowered to change our programs and badge requirements to meet the needs of our scouts so that every child can succeed.

If you ever have to choose between the program and the child, always choose the child. Always.

What does that mean? That means that sometimes the book is wrong. If the program as written is causing your scouts excessive stress and taking the joy out of the program, it is time to adapt and put the child first.

Scouting should be challenging, but not so challenging it isn't reasonable. As a leader, you may at times wonder how to make reasonable accommodations. This guide has some examples to help you find that balance. This is by no means an exhaustive list of possible accommodations. Nor is it a complete list of the neurodiversities or special needs that scouts in your group may experience. The goal of this document is to give you ideas of the kinds of things you can do and a framework of the kinds of things you can do implementing those ideas to help every child play the game of scouting.

The first goal of inclusion should always be to have all of your scouts participating in the same way without singling out your special needs scout more than is necessary. This means that if you have an otter who has fine motor delays and can't use small crayons, that you let the entire group color with markers instead of giving the one child markers. If you have a child who can't hike due to mobility issues, your group may need to plan to kayak or canoe so that the scout can experience scouting on an equal footing with their peers. If you have a scout with dyslexia, you may decide to read out loud to the entire group, so that the scout isn't left behind when looking at the handbook.

If one scout needs an accommodation, having all the scouts have access to it, or get to participate in a way that includes the scout equally is best. Games and activities that benefit your special needs scout will benefit your entire group. Playing games that work on social skills, and having scouts introduce themselves and shake hands each meeting can help all of your scouts make a deeper social connection, but is especially helpful for those with learning challenges.

Food can also be a source of stress for some scouts. Try to be inclusive in all of your food choices. Either have all of your scouts bring their own food or offer food safe for everyone. If you have a scout with food allergies, discuss with their parents if there are foods that the scout can have that the entire group could eat. Stew, for example, is easy to make gluten-free and dairy-free to accommodate your group. There is a further section at the end of this guide for food allergies.

Adapting Badge Requirements

If you have a scout who requires an accommodation, you may find you need to adapt badge requirements to make them reasonable for the scout. The first thing to look to change is anything with a number. You can reduce distance, repetitions, and/or speed that something must be done to make it more achievable.

If you have a scout who struggles with reading and writing, some scout skills won't be an issue. For work done with paper and pencil, you can allow scouts to use stamps instead of having to draw or write. You can adapt to accept drawings instead of written assignments. You can allow scouts to copy from a sample you create, instead of having to think of their own words to write.

Some timberwolves worked on the conservation badge a few years ago and wrote to their local government about expanding the county animal shelter. We had an example letter that scouts could copy, but let all scouts know they could write their own letter or even draw a picture. All of their letters would be sent together to our county supervisor. Every scout chose to do what was at the skill level they were capable of without the adults giving them further instructions. Scouts who were able wrote complete letters. Scouts who didn't know what to say, or who struggled mildly with writing, copied the example. A few scouts with more significant learning challenges drew pictures with animals and signed their names. We simply instructed the kids to choose which they felt best about and then do their best.

If a scout has worked hard to learn a skill but you realize that achieving the goal would require professional levels of therapy to accomplish it, replace the task with something else that the scout can achieve. A few years ago, I heard of a timberwolf who had tried and tried to learn a forward roll for their First Star, but despite working at it for months, couldn't do it. Substituting side rolling, or rolling like a log, allowed the child to satisfy the nature of the requirement, and attain their First Star.

Replacing a requirement with something equitable is a good way to accommodate scouts who have specific challenges that make a single requirement unreasonable. If you read the requirement and think "This scout could do this if only they were allowed to do it this way", let them do it "this way." Does your scout need to meet their hiking requirement on a bike? Do it. Do they need to give an oral report instead of a written one (or the other way around)? That is a doable change.

When choosing to create an accommodation, think what is the main goal or spirit of the requirement. Is it to tie a bow, or is it to secure your shoes independently? Our program focuses on both outdoor experiences and independence, so accommodations should lean in those directions when possible. If the goal really is to tie a knot, you can adjust the knot or use a bigger rope. If the goal is to put on their own shoes, Velcro closure shoes may be the best solution.

ADHD, ASD and SPD Scouting

Scouts with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), sensory processing disorder (SPD), and many more, benefit from the game of scouting. However, you may need to adapt some portions of your meetings and activities to support scouts with neurodiversity.

Being neurodivergent means that a person's brain works differently. From a big picture perspective, the challenges of having a brain that works differently gives these scouts a lot in common but the details manifest in different ways for each individual. This means that solutions that work for a person with ADHD often work for an autistic person, just for slightly different reasons.

People think ADHD means a person is active and moving but not paying attention. In truth, the ADHD brain is constantly taking in information and creating thoughts. Sometimes, those thoughts are on the topic they are "supposed to be" and are racing ahead, and sometimes the train of thought goes somewhere else.

It can be a struggle for a person with ADHD to try to "keep the train on the track" of what you want them to think about if there are distractions or they are bored. Helping them focus on what you want them to do, often means having them physically do it. They may also focus better when given a way to move, such as fidget toys, rope to tie, or other ways to move while they listen.

However, if you give them a task that is too big, their brain may not be able to find the starting point, and they may require help to make a plan at the level of someone younger than they are by several years. The ADHD brain appears to have its own developmental pattern, with organizational skills being something that tends to develop in adulthood instead of youth.

An autistic person also has a brain that is taking in so much information they can become overwhelmed and create an escape for themselves. Sometimes this escape is called "stimming" which means they do something over and over to calm and comfort their brain. Sometimes they elope, or run away. This overwhelm is often caused by sensory processing disorder. Their brains like order, rules, and patterns. Those help the world make sense.

People with autism may not understand neurotypical social cues, and may struggle with communication. This means that for those more seriously affected, they may need to use alternative forms of communication, like ASL or a communication board. However, there are many people who have no problem speaking, they just struggle with knowing what to say and how to respond to other people. Unspoken social rules escape them, and they may be inclined to "say whatever they think" without understanding how it makes other people feel. Interestingly, autistic people may have no trouble communicating with other autistic people. They can often have their own set of social rules that they follow together that are different than neurotypical rules.

SPD or sensory processing disorder can co-occur with ASD or ADHD or be a single diagnosis. SPD is basically when the brain takes in and processes information about sight, sound, touch,

and smell in a different way than is typical. This means that sometimes their brain could say “ouch” to a light touch and enjoys the sensation of throwing their body on the ground, which is the reverse of how most of us feel. Their brain can overreact to uncomfortable things, meaning the tag in their clothes is so irritating they can’t stand it. Every individual is different, but the main thing to understand is that their brain is just not feeling, seeing, or experiencing the world the way you are, and this can fuel their behavior.

Our brains need sensory information the way our bodies need food. So, sometimes kids with SPD do something called “sensory seeking” where they run, jump, and move in ways that try to give them more sensory input through their muscles, to feed the part of their brain that is struggling to make sense of the world. Activities that engage more muscles, such as pushing or pulling a big wagon, carrying wood, or squashing play-dough can give their brain what they need so they can participate better. Be sure to add physical activities to your meetings and give those scouts camp chores that engage their muscles.

No matter how your scout is neurodiverse, the best thing you can do is get to know the scout, and ask their parent for advice. Parents can tell you what their child is struggling with and what tasks at scouts might need to be adapted.

Many scouts can fall into more than one category. A child can have both ADHD and autism, or have SPD with a fine motor delay, for example. A lot of accommodations or strategies presented here work for several different neurodiversities. For example, having some play dough to squish during story time will help a child with ADHD and a child with fine motor delay. The following are several ideas for helping your neurodiverse scouts.

Scout Meetings

Create a pattern for your meetings, and do it every time. The rhythm of having an opening and closing are extremely helpful for neurodiverse scouts who struggle with telling time or more subtle cues. Knowing that once you gather together and say the motto or sing a song the meeting starts, and that there is a closing circle and a different song that means the meeting is over, helps scouts who struggle with transitions. This pattern means scouts won’t have to ask “Are we starting now?” Or “Are we done now?” The Timberwolf age level has some very specific opening and closing options, but you can create your own for other age levels. The important part is that you do the same thing each time, or something so similar that it still follows the pattern.

Having a pattern to follow for your meetings can reduce stress for everyone, including you. Your regular pattern may include some of the suggestions below, such as time for a game. If you find a pattern that works very well, and have scouts who still ask “What else are we doing?” You can post a visual schedule of the meeting. There are many ways to make a poster or board that lists things like: Starting circle, story time, game, snack, hike, ending circle. With scouts who struggle with reading, adding simple pictures and colors to your schedule can help them understand it better.

Many neurodiverse scouts also struggle to learn the names of their peers. Making part of your circle everyone introducing themselves and shaking hands can help. So can name tags. There

are many ways to play name games, too. Be sure scouts know your name, or what to call you and the other leaders.

Learning and Moving at the Same Time

Many important lessons of scouting require a scout sit and listen, but this is hard for neurodiverse scouts. This could be a story time for otters, or a lecture on safety for older scouts. Consider having items scouts can hold and use during these listening times. Let otters and timberwolves color during story time or create important story elements from play dough. Consider having blocks out for them to use while listening to you talk. Allow them to stand or move at the back of the group instead of insisting they sit with the group.

You may also want to offer some kind of scout-friendly fidgets during meetings if you realize your scouts struggle with sitting still and listening. Pathfinders might like to practice knots while you talk. Younger scouts may need something simpler like a mascot toy to hold or even actual fidget toys.

When choosing toys or fidgets to have at meetings, consider the nature of your scout's needs. Those with anxiety often benefit from a toy they can squeeze or stretch. Kids who have trouble focusing on one thing, do best with things like tying knots or drawing pictures while you talk so that their minds can do two things at once.

It is ideal to find ways for scouts to move their bodies at every meeting. Balancing physical and mental activities by alternating them helps scouts focus and learn. Add movement to your meetings by playing catch, doing the message game, or playing physical games like hide-and-go-seek or tag. If you are meeting in a big field, you can even have scouts run/walk/hike to another station for the next part of their meeting, just to get them up and moving. Remember, ADHD kids usually need to move to be able to learn.

Working in Rotations

In general, having some stations that the kids move between can be helpful, so they are moving around the room or scouting space in small groups. Stations can be to demonstrate a scout skill or make a craft. Place a leader at each station, which could be a table or sitting on the floor, and have them be in charge of helping scouts do a single simple activity. Once the craft is made or skill done, the scout can move to the next station.

Timberwolf star requirements or Otter Safety Paw requirements are good candidates for this strategy. Each requirement in the badge can become a station where scouts show their skills before moving on to the next station. Otters can demonstrate how to apply a band-aid at this one, and how to call 911 at the next.

Even with older scouts, I like to have them move from one part of the room to another to work on first aid. In this corner we are learning to wrap a sprained ankle, over there we work on using a necker as a sling, etc. This can require more adults to be engaged in teaching but takes the stress off of each one having to know ALL the skills. Leaders can each just show up ready to teach one skill over and over.

The act of physically getting up and moving to a new station engages the brain to do a new thing, so scouts that usually struggle to stay on task often can do more. Their brain engages to sit down and do just one thing, then get up and move on. It creates more structure around the task.

This method can work for a single leader by simply planning to do different parts of your meeting in different spaces. Start with story time over here by the bench, then march over to the field for a game, followed by looking for trees to identify over by the edge of the field. The new activity is “over there” each time, which engages scouts to understand we left the last activity behind and are doing this one now.

Incorporating Free Play

Time for free play, or relaxed youth-led play can be part of your meetings or camp outs. This time allows scouts to build social skills and make friends better than very structured activities and is especially helpful for neurodiverse scouts. This time works well to balance stressful or focused activities, by happening just before or just after them.

Otters of all abilities generally benefit from having open-ended activities and free play time as part of their meetings. Free time before or even during meetings to run around on a playground can help them burn excess energy and play together naturally. Indoor activities that work well for free play include giving them blocks, KEVA planks, DUPLO blocks, or Lincoln logs to build with to work on “making a model.” Older otters can show younger otters and chipmunks how to build more complex structures and scouts who struggle with more structured activities can participate on equal footing.

Older scouts tend to do better with the structure of actual games. The older your scouts are, the more complex the games can generally be. However, simple games like tag are still great for even pathfinders to use to burn off energy. Timberwolves may still be willing to free play like otters, or do structured games, so consider alternating with them, or watch your group to see what works best, as you will probably be deciding for Timberwolves what they will do. Selecting a game to play and leading the troop in it is a great task to give your patrol leader for pathfinders. Neurodiverse scouts may also enjoy helping to select the game, and they can choose one they feel good about playing.

Allowing For Quiet Time

Scouts who are neurodiverse can become overwhelmed either by the activities, their peers, or just their own feelings. Having a space designated for being calm and quiet can help. This can be an actual tent or hammock, or just be a place under a tree. Just some place not too far away but that feels more private where scouts can go when they need to take a few minutes to regroup.

Clues you may need this space include realizing one of your scouts keeps hiding from the group or leaving meetings. Some scouts hide under the tables or behind trees when overwhelmed. Getting overwhelmed can be a result of too much noise, too many people, or feeling unable to complete the task the group is doing. Having a safe way to step away from a specific activity helps sometimes.

It is good to make this space available for all of your scouts so that the ones who most need it aren't singled out. However, it is also important to enforce that this space is used only for quiet and calming time. Even older scouts may need to be reminded that this is not a space for playing and socializing. Parents and caregivers can also help monitor this quiet space and set it up for scouts who need it.

Be sure any scouts who have moved to this space are invited to join the group again when the activity changes.

Neurodiverse Patrol Leaders

Create space for your scouts to share their strengths and abilities and to stretch themselves. A scout who struggles with school, may excel in scouting with a little support, even being a patrol leader for pathfinders. Remember that these scouts may struggle some with organizing their thoughts and plans, so you can support them with coaching, and giving them tools to help them be more organized. This scout might not be able to plan a weekend's activities when just asked to do it, but can fill in a table or timeline that you've created with an hour by hour break down, based on replicating past trips. The same goes for assigning chores. As the leader, you can provide a chart for them to fill in with the names of the scouts who are assigned each one. Step in and coach as needed.

Remember that leadership skills are complex, and building them takes time for most people. If you presume competence, your scouts will have the chance to thrive and fulfill their own potential. Having your neurodiverse scout lead a hike or instruct everyone in a game helps them build those skills. You will need to step in and teach more advanced skills until your patrol leader knows them well enough to teach them, but if your scout wants to try teaching, step back.

Working with neurodiverse scouts can be full of surprises. You can't predict when they will suddenly blossom and display skills you had no clue they could do. Just be sure when that day comes, that you get out of the way so they can lead!



Mobility Issues

Mobility, or the ability to walk and run, can affect how a scout participates in many ways. Scouts can have minor impairments that limit how far they can walk, or major ones that mean they can't walk at all. The age of the scout and the severity of the challenge will determine the best way to adapt to meet their needs. However, the most important thing to do before making an accommodation is to speak to the parent and then the scout to make sure everyone is comfortable with your plans. In this case, what works great for one scout, can make another feel singled out or uncomfortable. And an idea that worked great for an otter-age child, can be embarrassing for a pathfinder.

Mobility issues can affect scouts of any age, from the chipmunk with developmental delays to the Rover with knee problems. Just like other suggestions, if you can make something work for the whole group, that is best. However, meeting everyone's needs can also mean that some scouts do things differently and that is okay too.

Hiking Tips

If you have a scout with balance issues and they are likely to fall, have all scouts hike holding hands with a buddy, and ask that scout to be the leader's buddy. This buddy would help that child to balance, but they don't feel singled out due to everyone having a buddy. This tends to work best with younger scouts who are not self-conscious about hand holding. Another choice is using a rope for the entire troop to hold onto for safety and balance. However, you may need adults at the ends and middle to make sure the kids are not going too fast or swinging the rope.

For a scout who needs more help but does not use a walker or wheel chair, bringing them along in a wagon or in a backpack/child carrier may work. You can also bring those options so the scout can use them as needed. If a scout uses a rolling walker or wheel chair, be sure to choose hiking paths that are smooth and wide enough. Discuss with parents specific needs for these, as some wheel chairs are good for "off-roading" and others are not.

If the scout specifically struggles with certain terrain, look for ways to hike that are flatter. For example, instead of hiking up a hillside, use a Rails to Trails path that is flatter. This also works better for anything with wheels: bikes, wheelchairs, wagons, etc. These trails often have campsites, too.

For all scouts, insist the entire group take frequent breaks to look at the view, have a snack or water, or pause to discuss the trees near you. Resting before the child becomes too fatigued can help them go much farther.

Alternatives to Hiking

Kayaking or canoing instead of always hiking can lead to successes where the scout doesn't feel different and can keep up with their peers. Short day trips or even longer camping trips can be done by boat, with some adjustments. Just be sure everyone wears a life vest.

Regular or adaptive bicycles might be an option for the scout, and a way to take the entire group on a journey together. Biking instead of hiking opens up a variety of options for your group. Cycling can also create a way for scouts to carry gear that they could not shoulder for backpacking for longer trips.

Consider doing activities like fishing, making crafts, or other things that don't require you to move far to be "scouting."

Camping

Choose campsites with less uneven ground and accessible bathrooms. If you have a choice, the campsite closest to the bathroom is preferred and should make the trip easier for your scout, as they will probably have to go several times over the weekend. Just like all of us.

Make sure the scout has a campsite/tent/chair closer to the restroom, kitchen area, and any other area they need to frequent. Fewer steps for each activity means less fatigue and less risk of injury.

Assign camp chores to this scout that they can be successful at. For example, washing dishes doesn't require much walking once the washing station is set up. Assign your less mobile Rover or Pathfinder camp jobs that can be done while sitting, such as leading campfire songs or checking scouts in and out of camp as groups leave and return from hiking.

Pay attention to setting up your campfire and give scouts who need it support to make sure they don't fall into the fire due to balance issues. Also, be sure your scout with mobility issues has an adult leader assigned specifically to make sure they can get to and from activities like evening campfire or morning flags. If those activities are not inside a small camp space, they can present special challenges.

While your less mobile scout may be comfortable not doing every activity in camp, make sure there will be activities they can participate in fully. Games like "I Spy" work on observation skills and don't require moving at all. Brain storm ideas your group can do together.



Fine Motor Control Issues

What is fine motor control? It means having good coordination in the fingers for things like fastening buttons, writing, drawing, and shoe tying. Having good fine motor control makes many parts of scouting easier and more enjoyable. However, there are many reasons that a scout can struggle with fine motor control. Problems with this often co-occur with neurodiversity, developmental delays and various medical diagnosis. So what can you do if your scout struggles with this?

First, remember the rule of allowing all scouts to do any adaptation you come up with. Working with larger items is usually easier than smaller ones, and team work is great. Encouraging scouts to help each other in general can reduce everyone's frustration. Below are some specific tips that work for many scouts.

Generally, fat markers are easier to draw with than crayons or colored pencils for scouts with hand weakness and the entire group can use those. Appoint a parent to make sure lids get back on tightly at the end of the meeting.

Making something larger often makes it easier to hold and manipulate. This means that working on knot tying with a larger rope instead of a thin string is the better choice for adapting knot tying activities. Bracing and holding one end of the rope, or being sure that if you are tying a knot that goes around an object, that you help brace the rope on a solid object, can also help a scout struggling with a knot. Using huge rope and working on trying the knot around a tree instead of working on smaller projects is a fun way to adapt the activity for the whole group.

For holiday crafting, I like both crafts with stickers and the kind that are the magic black scratch-off art paper projects. Both can be done with success by scouts with poor motor control or short attention spans. Stringing pony beads on pipe cleaners is far easier than putting smaller beads on string and a good way to adapt many scout crafts. The pipe cleaner is stiff and doesn't bend away, and the pony beads are easier to hold. The smaller the beads or craft items, the harder the project will be for your scout, so consider that when shopping for any craft items.

If your group will do a lot of cutting with scissors, be sure to have a pair for left-handed scissors, if your group has any lefties. Asking a left-handed child to cut with right-handed scissors makes crafts much harder and less enjoyable. If your scouts struggle with using scissors, encourage parents to let them practice at home. Learning to cut with scissors before having a pocket knife is ideal.

Dyslexia and Dysgraphia

Dyslexia is a neurodiversity that affects a person's ability to read. Those with dyslexia may struggle in a variety of ways which can include reading below grade level, struggling with sounding out new words, or following written directions. In general, reading is harder for them than others. Dysgraphia is a neurodiversity that affects a person's ability to write. People with dysgraphia struggle with handwriting, spelling, putting their thoughts on paper, and may even struggle with drawing or coloring, too. Some scouts have only one of these and some have both. If you are unclear on what specific things your scout struggles with, ask their parent in private, so as to not embarrass them.

Scouts with dyslexia and dysgraphia are often embarrassed by their struggles to read and write and are reluctant to discuss those with their group of friends. Here are some easy tips to help you as a leader make scouting more fun for your dyslexic and/or dysgraphic scout.

Don't call on the dyslexic scout to read out loud from the book. But do call on them for other things, so they don't feel left out. Dyslexic kids are often very observant and can point out details about the pictures or your surroundings not noticed by others.

Use labels and lists that also include pictures. These can be helpful for loading your patrol box or packing for a camping trip. The image on the next page could have a list of words on the back and be laminated to use for checking off with a dry erase marker to go with your patrol box. Having scouts check gear in and out during a camping trip shouldn't be limited to readers.

Read all directions to all of your scouts out loud, instead of asking them to read directions for themselves, or asking another scout to read to them. While it can be nice for one scout to read to another as needed, this should not be officially a job and can create resentment between scouts.

Adapt badge work as needed and include the scout's input. Most kids want to do the spirit of the badge, they just need room to work with their own skills. This might mean giving an oral report instead of a written one, or drawing a picture instead of writing a letter.

When giving handouts, don't skip this scout. Consider using ones that include pictures, not just words, as on the example of the 10 Essentials below. Just because they probably won't read it, or write on it, doesn't mean they won't want a paper to hold like the other scouts. They may in fact doodle on it and remember the material better than the scouts who read and write better than they do. Scouts with dyslexia and dysgraphia sometimes excel at reading maps and graphic representations. It is the actual letters and words that trip them up, not the information

You can give other information to scouts in the form of pictures instead of just words. Things to remember like the 10 essentials or what to pack on a camping trip can all be represented with pictures and not just words. These can help all of your scouts be more independent and remember them better.

While some fonts may be easier to read for those with dyslexia, how well those work is very individual. Don't assume this scout will read fine if you just use a different font.

For scouts with these challenges, learning semaphore, ASL, or Morse Code can be more challenging than they are for typical scouts. With this in mind, adapt those requirements to be achievable for them as needed. This does not mean you should skip those completely, but realize that these scouts may need more time to process how to create and read words.

Once again, it is important to remember that if you have to choose between doing what the book says and what the scout needs, always choose the scout.



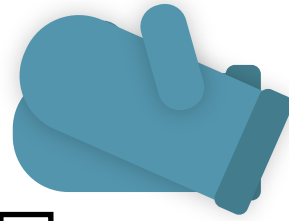
Camp Kitchen Checklist



☐ Stove



☐ Fuel



☐ Fire Safe Gloves



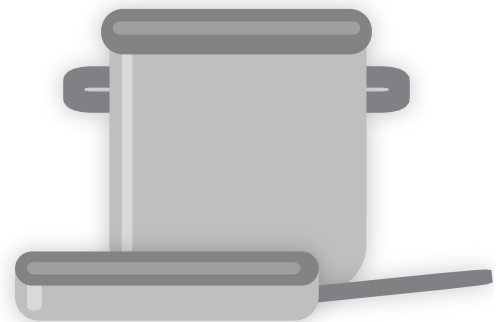
☐ Plates and Bowls



☐ Mugs



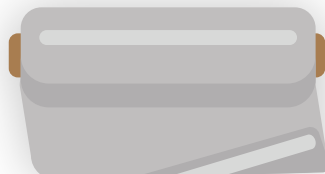
☐ Eating Utensils



☐ Pots and Pans



☐ Matches



☐ Foil



☐ Kettle



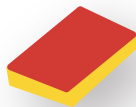
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☐ Cooking Tools



☐ Soap



☐ Sponge

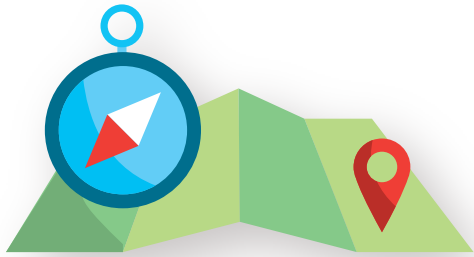


☐ Dish Towel

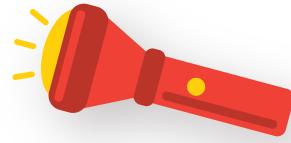


☐ Dutch Oven

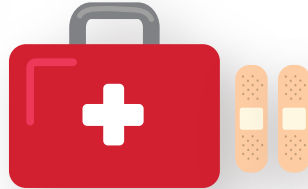
The 10 Essentials



Navigation



Flashlight



First Aid Kit



Sun Protection



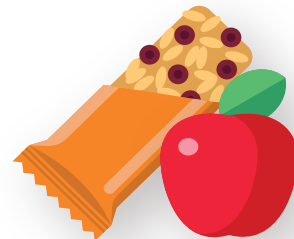
Knife



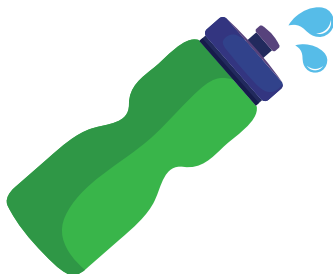
Fire



Shelter



Food



Water



Extra Clothes

Communication Disorders

Communication differences in children and adults can be complicated and vary widely. Some differences are developmental and change as the scout grows. It is impossible to describe every communication challenge a person might have, but leaders can support any scout who wants to play the game!

Producing speech is incredibly complicated. It involves breath, brain, tongue, teeth and more to work together to create the right sounds. It involves gross and fine motor skills. It involves developing vocabulary, grammar, narratives, and social pragmatic skills. It involves neurological and emotional development. Each of these systems or components develop at different rates. People can experience differences in any of these areas impacting how well they pronounce words, choose words to express themselves, or choose when and how to use words in context to deliver their messages. Further, people can experience variety in how much language they understand in contrast to what they can produce.

It is not expected that leaders are experts in understanding all of these components of communication, but understanding your scout's needs will help you adapt your program to make it more accessible for everyone. You can use the Individualize Scouting Plan at the end of this document to thoroughly discuss the scout's challenges and strategies to support them with caregivers. In general, make sure you know any strategies to support their understanding when you are teaching as well as ways to ensure their messages are understood when it's their turn to communicate. Communication challenges often co-occur with ADHD, autism, dyslexia and other diagnoses, each of which influences the best way to handle communication challenges.

Often, scouts with communication disorders have Individualized Education Plans at school that include suggestions for supporting their learning in the classroom. If a caregiver is comfortable sharing parts of it, review those with the caregivers and think how you might incorporate them into your programming. For example, a common strategy is to provide "word lists" for tests. This is a list of the important vocabulary of the section that can help a scout with word finding difficulties to be reminded of words they are familiar with. Display a diagram that labels the bite, standing end, working end, etc. as you teach a new knot or practicing already taught knots. There is an example diagram for knots below. You can also draw your own.

As mentioned in other sections, use several formats to share information: verbally explain a new skill, enact the skill, write about the skill, provide diagrams about the skill, encourage scouts to pretend to do the skill, prompt scouts to do the skill. Remember that the best method for each scout may be different, but offering the information in a variety of ways to all of your scouts will be most inclusive and help them all.

Scouts with more profound communication challenges may use an Augmentative or Alternative Communication (AAC) system. These range in complexity from picture cards on a key ring to computerized devices that can generate speech for the user. There are many reasons someone might use an AAC system, for example a person with Autism may be nonverbal in groups and use the picture cards to express their needs, or a person has

muscular dystrophy and struggles to control their mouth to create speech. Having a scout in your group who uses AAC can be an opportunity to support learning and communication with peers in a fun setting for people who are often otherwise excluded, but it can also be daunting for leaders. If a scout uses any AAC system, consider using the ISP with the scout's full team of caregivers including their AAC specialist and/or SLP if you are able. These people are extremely knowledgeable in the scout's communication needs and could be involved in either training you how to edit the device to support the scout's participation or can gather from you information about scouting to add that information to their devices. In some cases parents may be able to make adjustments themselves or will need to act as a go between with their team if your scout does not have support for after school activities. Ask about the scout's level of independence with the device, or for other strategies to ensure they can successfully use the device in activities. Be honest with yourself and the team about your level of comfort using the device directly.

An AAC device with one of your scouts can be an exciting addition to your program! Some devices work like an iPad and you can install a variety of ways for the scout to participate. Install a map on their device. Which direction shall we go? The scout can now direct the group. Install a simple tree identification key that the raft has to use together. When approached as a team with the goal of maximum inclusion for your scout, an AAC device can be an enriching experience for everyone.

Of note, not all scouts may have access to an amazing IEP team or appropriate AAC devices. While it is important to use all the resources a scout has available to them, it is important to be sensitive to parents and caregivers who have frustrations and lack of access to those.

Below are some common strategies that support most people with communication differences. Even if your scouts don't have trouble communicating, these are great tips for working with scouts and getting the most out of your interactions with them.

Ask a question or make a comment and then wait! Count 5-10 seconds before you start talking again. Leave room for scouts to consider, construct, and generate a response.

Use more 'open' than 'closed' questions. Open questions encourage scouts to think in bigger concepts and helps their understanding. An example of an open question is "What do you think we should do at our next meeting?" Every scout could have a different, and correct answer, as this is what they would like to do. Fast paced, group answer/chant to a series of easy, closed questions can be fun and engage neurodiverse scouts. Closed questions have one word answers like Yes or No, or simple answers to questions like "What color is this sign?" Asking every scout a quick closed question can allow scouts who struggle to find enough words for longer sentences to participate.

Use your "big words", but add simpler synonyms after. Kids won't learn new vocabulary if you don't use it, but they need the synonyms to understand you right now. If it is hard for you to remember to slow down and do this, appoint an assistant leader to interrupt you at meetings and ask questions or add definitions as you go.

For some scouts, it helps when leaders directly state what is happening. "I can tell you are excited and I want to share that, but your words were too fast, so I missed it! Would you say

that again, slowly?" Sensitive scouts may be embarrassed by this approach, so if this goes poorly the first time, don't repeat your mistake and instead try something else.

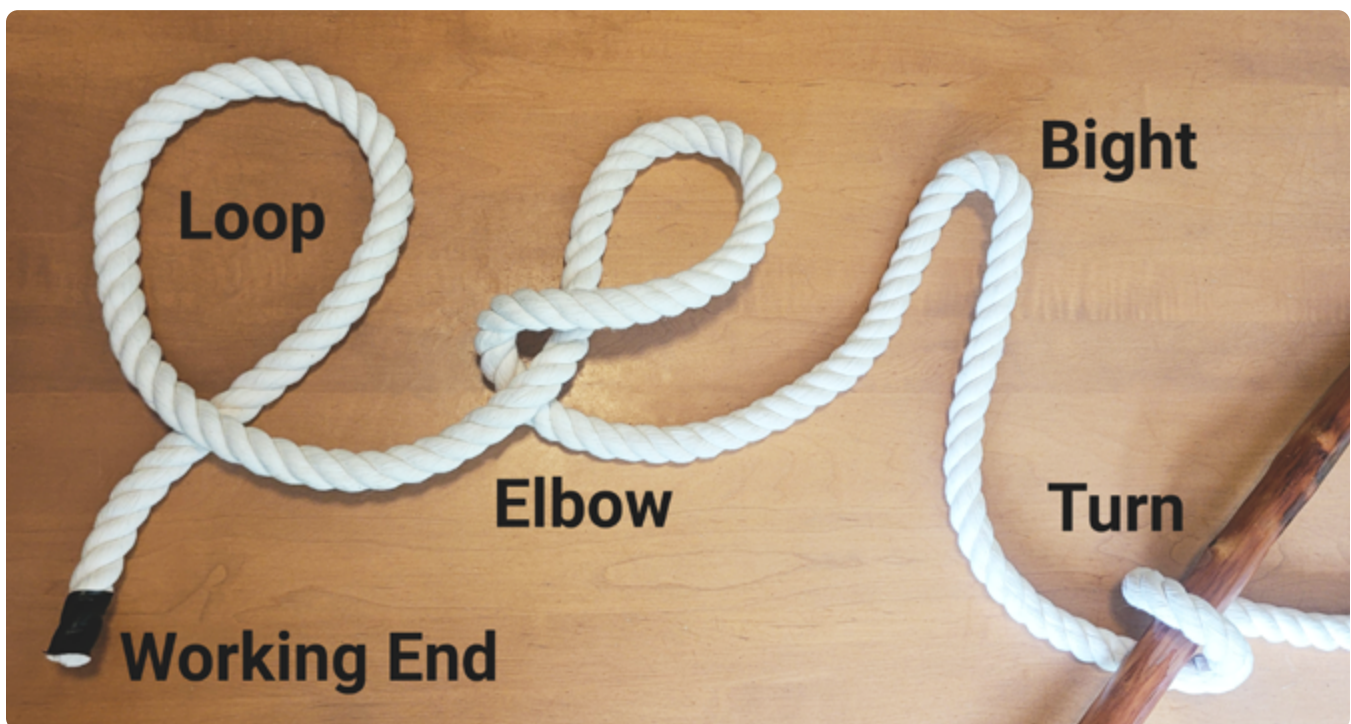
Be mindful of articulation errors. Does this scout have a hard time making the sound for "r"s? How does that inform what they just said? "I need a woowoo" is a common struggle! It's "I need a ruler." Looking at what tasks the scouts are doing may give you clues if you aren't sure what they are saying.

Use context clues or ask for new information if the message is vague. "What is it used for? Who had it last?" Pointing and gesturing can also be helpful.

Narrate what is happening to help your scout communicate complex situations. Here is an example: "Wow, you were over there, building a tripod with your pack. I heard you laughing, but now you're here and upset. What made you laugh? What happened next?"

Most communication breaks down when people are upset and rushed. It can be hard, but try to help regulate the emotion before trying to communicate about the cause or solutions. Providing first aid and/or emotional support before you ask for an explanation is always a good idea.

Overall, let scouts know that what they have to say is important, and that you want to understand them. Take time when they are hard to understand to discover what they are trying to communicate. Often, scouts (kindergarten and up) with communication differences know that they have differences. If treated respectfully and directly, but discreetly, they are often eager to be understood. On the other hand, some people with communication differences are very sensitive to having their errors pointed out. In some cases (like stuttering), challenges can become worse when listeners 'notice' their disfluencies. Caregivers are great resources for understanding a scout's feelings about their differences and how to support their successful communication.



Deafness and Hearing Impairment

Like any scouts, those with hearing deficits are excited to play the game of scouting. However, several considerations apply to their participation, and in some cases, accommodations will be helpful.

Hearing loss occurs on a spectrum from mild, frequency-related loss to complete deafness. Hearing loss and deafness may be present at birth, may follow illness or injury (including noise exposure, which is considered an acoustic injury), or may be related to normal aging. Many people born deaf often view their hearing loss as an aspect of “deaf culture” and do not view it as a handicap or disability, while others who are deaf from birth seek aggressive remediation. In contrast, people who previously have normal hearing and then become hearing impaired through a secondary occurrence must suddenly deal with a new and different world and surroundings and may need a lot of support as they adapt.

Hearing loss related to occupational or intentional causes (e.g., loud music via ear pods) may occur at any age. With today’s digital era and omnipresent ear pods, hearing professionals are seeing hearing loss in much younger people and at a much more severe level than expected in years past. This is important because often, adults will have hearing loss they are unaware of. As for expected age-related hearing loss, it most often occurs after age fifty and in the higher frequencies, and it may be so gradual that it is unnoticed for years.

Hearing loss is one of those “invisible disabilities.” The hearing impaired or deaf person looks normal, and the challenges they face may go unnoticed—particularly if the person is easygoing and a quick adapter. In the case where a leader might survey their members or gather medical/emergency information, asking about hearing loss would be a great idea.

How Is Hearing Loss Helped?

Modern hearing aids can be beneficial in treating hearing loss. But these aids tend to be quite expensive and are not well supported by insurance companies or Medicare—therefore, many people cannot afford them. Also, some people hearing loss is not aid-able, either based on the configuration of the loss or because of auditory sensitivity and limited dynamic range, e.g., in some people, if the hearing aid amplification is loud enough to provide benefit, it may cause nausea and vertigo, which most people don’t find tolerable.

Most with hearing loss find they are good speech readers i.e. “lip readers”, either because they have had some actual training in the skill or because, most commonly, they have developed the skill over time. Some people with significant loss or deafness may use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate with family and friends.

A pinnacle of treating deafness today is the cochlear implant, which can actually restore a great deal of hearing. But the process is very expensive, requires intracranial surgery and hospitalization, and involves extensive post-implant auditory training. It also requires the person to wear (and be careful of) an external received component.

It is important to understand that no hearing aid or cochlear implant restores hearing to normal. Even with ultimate and optimal treatment of a hearing impairment, the person will still find many situations challenging. The ease of digital communication via text, email, and social media has broadened the world for many hearing-impaired persons.

Considerations for Scouts with Hearing Loss

Hearing-impaired people (HIP) will find hearing very difficult, if not impossible, in crowded and noisy settings—even with the best hearing aids or cochlear implants. To account for this, hold meetings and sit-down sessions in quiet settings without background noise.

HIPs often have a “better ear”; and their ability to hear and participate may be very dependent on placing themselves in the optimal setting—for instance, which corner of a table they need, etc. Let the HIP have the first choice of where they want to sit in a group sit-down setting.

For many HIPs, successful communication is affected by distance from and visual relationship to the speaker. For effective speech reading, they need to sit where they have a full-face view of the speaker, and for those who have residual hearing, they need to be as close to the speaker as possible. Again, let HIPs have the first choice of seating in meetings and group activities. Keep them as close to the speaker/action as well. Create priority front-and-center seating at events.

It is important to remember that if you are talking to a Hearing-impaired person and they can't see your face, they didn't hear you. Likewise, be aware that in low-light settings where HIPs cannot easily see faces, they will have a harder time as speech-reading will be more difficult.

One important thing to consider is that evening campfire programs are a disaster for hearing impaired persons. Campfires are typically poorly lit, or basically unlit, wiping out the ability to speech-read and making it tremendously challenging for them to hear, let alone to participate or to feel included. The darkness also removes any partial-hearing benefit they may have as residual hearing is supported by speech-reading. They may have trouble hearing and following music and often cannot understand song lyrics without seeing them written. This can create sadness, frustration, and even anger, as well as not feeling part of the group.

As an option, consider rethinking the traditional evening campfire. Hold the big group “campfire”—with skits, songs, etc.—in the afternoon when the site is well-lit. Then maybe save the evening for a quiet campfire with casual music and songs but without a formal program. This also allows younger children to be quietly put to bed in advance.

Because of their hearing loss, HIPs regularly miss a lot of spoken content—and a lot of what they hear ends up being contextual. This can be a problem in terms of group discussions. Be aware of this reality during face-to-face group discussions. Restating key points or giving the entire group a final recap of what was covered will help the HIP without them feeling singled out.

Using a whiteboard or other visual or providing handouts are also helpful strategies (provided the scouts can read easily). Also, use care in asking HIPs questions—be sure they have heard

you and are following the conversation; if they aren't up to speed, they may not be able to respond, may give an incorrect reply, and could feel awkward and uncomfortable.

Likewise, HIPs may have trouble playing games or doing activities that require hearing or speaking, both because they may not hear instructions or because they'll be unable to follow the action, e.g., Duck, Duck, Goose, campfire games, etc. Also, the voices of some deaf people are different from those of many HIPs. Some deaf people and HIPs may feel uncomfortable speaking.

Be thoughtful and sensitive about creating these kinds of situations. Talk to the HIP and find out what they are comfortable with. Also, be aware that many HIPs want the kid gloves off—they want to plunge in and do their best, and rough spots don't bother them at all. It helps to know your scout.

Phone calls are a real challenge for HIPs unless they have a voice-to-text service or software, which many don't. Video calling works better as the HIP can see a face and be assisted by speech reading. Email and texting are even better in terms of being certain the HIP won't miss content.

Any sort of film or video that is uncaptioned will be tremendously difficult for HIPs to follow. Don't show or expect HIPs to watch a film or video that isn't correctly and fully captioned. And note, the auto-generated captioning provided by YouTube is typically awful.

Be aware that HIPs may not hear warnings, bells, alarms, etc. Also, if the measurable hearing is significantly different in the two ears, the HIP won't be able to identify where a sound is coming from. For example, they could hear a whistle, siren, trumpet, etc., and have no idea of its origin. Establish a buddy system in camp settings, pairing a HIP with a normal-hearing person. Use notification systems that aren't based on sound (e.g., visual schedules, the patrol method, etc.). Also, don't expect a HIP to carry out any activity that requires using sound for reference or finding direction.

HIPs may wear hearing aids or cochlear implants, which may need special care. For Hearing-impaired youths, be sure that the parents have provided full information on the care of the devices, any restrictions, etc.

Some children—especially young ones (Chipmunk and Otter age)—may have a problem with recurrent ear infections and may have had tubes placed in their eardrums. These usually require no special care in terms of scouting activities, but it will be important to keep water out of the child's ears. These tubes usually fall out on their own after a few weeks. The tubes may affect their hearing during this time. Temporarily avoid any activities in or around water.

Teaching Others about Hearing Loss

If a group has a scout—youth or adult—with hearing loss, it's a great time for education.

1. Practice the sign language alphabet.
2. Teach the group some basic words in ASL: bathroom, hungry, tired, etc.
3. Pass out foam earplugs and conduct a meeting. Good foam plugs simulate a mild bilateral hearing loss. The scouts can try out different sounds, practice talking to each other with backs turned, etc., and in these ways understand a little more about the experience of hearing loss.
4. Talk about how to handle an emergency—something like a fire drill—with fellow scouts who cannot see, hear, or move easily or who might be frightened or uneasy in that kind of situation.



Food Allergies

OSG is all about inclusive scouting and making everyone feel welcome. One way my group works to be inclusive is in meal planning. My children have celiac disease, which means they cannot eat gluten or anything with wheat in it. My oldest had many situations where she was asked to bring her own food or ate separately from the other kids before we started our group. Even if she was having similar food, forcing her to have all separate food kept her apart from the other kids in a way that wasn't inclusive. I didn't want any child who was in my scouting group to feel like that ever again. As a result, we have made plans to feed our group to accommodate all food allergies, as best we can.

For your group, you will need to know what food allergies you need to accommodate. Some allergies are so dangerous, the entire group may need to abide by the restriction. Tree nut and peanut allergies are often like that. The more allergies and issues your group has, the more challenging it can be to figure out how to feed everyone.

Know Your Scouts Needs

It is important to understand the difference between levels of severity with food allergies and sensitivities. Allergies are typically categorized as conditions that trigger immune responses, such as a runny nose or swelling. Intestinal distress is also a sign of an allergy and is harder to recognize. Food sensitivities can cause mood changes, sleep disturbances, brain fog, and intestinal issues. And kids who typically avoid eating a specific food, even if they aren't allergic or sensitive to it, may encounter these symptoms when they eat it. To make sure everyone has the best time possible on your trip, you want to respect allergies, sensitivities, and avoidances as much as is reasonable. Serious allergies are to be prioritized, but a child spending the trip in the latrine because they aren't used to eating meat is important to avoid too.

Another important part of planning meals for scouts with allergies is checking to see what they are actually going to want to eat ahead of time. Just because something accommodates a child's allergies, that doesn't mean they like it. Some "allergy-free" foods are not yummy. Food allergy parents are label readers and will understand their child's allergies best. Ask for help so you don't end up in a situation with hungry kids who can't eat the food you cooked.

As a general rule, go for things that are single-ingredient, whole foods. Allergens can sneak into ingredient labels and be hard to recognize. Things that say "and other spices" could be a real problem for someone allergic to nightshades, the family of plants that include potatoes and tomatoes as well as chili powder and paprika.

Lunch

Lunch is the most common meal needed at scouts, as part of a camping trip, day hike, or other events. The easiest way to accommodate allergies for this is to ask everyone to bring a sack lunch. However, that isn't always practical.

A sandwich bar can often accommodate a wide range of food allergies given a little thought. The general idea being that the kids can pick their own food and steer clear of things they cannot eat. A small variety of lunch meat and cheeses, along with peanut butter and jelly make up the bulk of the meal. Then you can round it out with some veggies and ranch dressing and some potato chips.

Kids with gluten/wheat allergies need to go through the line first so that nothing is contaminated by the bread everyone else uses. Even small particles can make them sick. So, let them get their gluten-free bread, meat, cheese, and jam first. This keeps cross-contamination from being an issue. If you are camping for multiple days and plan to serve sandwiches again, make sure to keep a portion of the food sealed and separate for the second meal, to guarantee it is not cross-contaminated.

If you choose to grill hot dogs or hamburgers for a meal, be sure to keep meat safe and far from any wheat/buns until after your gluten-free scouts have gotten theirs. Gluten-free buns can make this meal easy to accommodate more scouts.

You can also shop for chicken or turkey-based hot dogs for scouts who have allergies to mammal products, often caused by Alpha-Gal, a tick-borne disease. And cooking soy or meatless sausages is also an option for this meal.

My scout with Alpha-Gal also cannot eat foods with gelatin and most marshmallows are a no-go. So, we've had to think carefully about the food choices that we used to have often.

Keep cross-contamination in mind. Vegetarian sausages and meat alternatives often contain soy and gluten and will need to be kept separate from or cooked after the food for the gluten-free children. It is possible to have what seems like competing allergies in your group and still feed everyone. It just takes some planning.

Dinner

Dinner while camping can be challenging enough to figure out how to feed a large group. Throwing in food allergies can be overwhelming. Here are some tried and true meals we have done.

Tacos or Walking Tacos are great because scouts can each make their own, and add only what they like and can eat. You can serve with corn tortillas for wheat allergies, make it with turkey for beef allergies, or even offer heated refried beans for vegetarians. Cheese, also a common allergen, is easy to avoid with this meal. Just have it available for scouts who can eat it, but not on everything. If you tend to use a seasoning packet, be sure to check it for allergens before cooking. Making your own spice blend is an easy way to avoid dubious ingredients like "natural flavorings" that can be a hidden allergen.

Chicken foil packets also work well to accommodate a wide range of tastes. Scouts can add vegetables, chicken, and seasoning to their foil packet and cook in the coals until done. We like to offer interesting seasoning choices like salad dressings and jam, too. This meal lets each scout customize their meal so that no one feels left out. Food allergies are less obvious, as each scout builds their unique meal. If your group is large, have scouts write their names on the foil packets with a sharpie before cooking.

Beef stew or chili are foods that can feed a large group and accommodate many food allergies. Just be sure to not add flour as a thickener if your scouts are gluten-free. If you add pre-made bullion cubes or broth, that also needs to be checked for allergens. Vegetarian chili is another good option to feed scouts with food allergies, and there are many recipes to choose from.

Breakfast

A hot breakfast is also possible with food allergies. Here are some of our favorites.

Oatmeal works with most food allergies. If scouts have celiac, make sure the package is marked gluten-free. Flavored varieties can also add allergies you may not expect, so consider bringing safe toppings like sugar, raisins, and honey and skipping the flavored varieties.

Scrambled eggs are a crowd favorite. Make sure to leave out the milk or cheese to accommodate dairy allergies.

Sausage also works for most scouts. If you have vegetarians or vegans, sausage substitutes can be used so that those scouts don't stand out. Just remember to check for competing allergies as some sausage substitutes contain wheat or dairy. For letting scouts cook, I prefer to get the precooked kind, so they just need to heat and eat.

Fresh Fruit can be part of any snack or meal and is typically low-allergy. A bag of apples and a few bunches of grapes are part of almost every trip we take.

Cleaning Up

Keep in mind that some scouts have food allergies severe enough that it may mean they have to avoid touching certain foods, and that includes doing dishes. Dishes for scouts with food allergies may need to be washed first, so they can't be contaminated by food crumbs on the plates of other scouts.

Plan your camp chores accordingly, encouraging scouts with allergies to start eating first, and start cleaning their dishes first. If your scout with food allergies needs to be left out of the dish washing chores, make sure they have other camp chores to do that are safe for them.

Emergencies

If any of your scouts use an EpiPen or may need medication for allergies while camping, be sure all scout leaders know what proper procedure is for that situation before you go and where the medication will be stored during the trip. Always be prepared.

Zoom and Social Distance Scouting

Zoom meetings can be extra challenging for some scouts. Things that can help, are having a routine, such as every scout stating something good that happened during their week at the start of the meeting or ending with each scout saying “good night.”

Zoom meeting are good for talking, but not ideal for long periods of watching or listening. Minimize these times and focus on discussions, letting the scouts demonstrate their skills, or enjoy interactive social exchanges. Let Zoom be the format where questions are asked of both scouts and leaders. Send video links or activity written instructions a day or two before, so scouts can watch/read before the group meets. This gives the scout an opportunity to explore the new content with fewer distractions and more time to process the information. Leaders can include questions they’ll be asking so those who need time to develop answers will be ready. They can even specify to each scout “I’ll be asking you this question, so be ready to answer it!” Although, check before if that’s something they want to do!

Remember that scouts may struggle with instructions and complex tasks over Zoom. Keep meetings moving, ask questions they can think about and respond to, and play games to help your scouts participate better. You may also want to spend half of each meeting doing a game or something easy, like a show and tell, that every scout can engage in, before moving on to more challenging scouting activities like tying knots. You may also choose to rotate meetings and have one serious meeting alternating with a more playful meeting.

Good zoom games include using the white board feature to play Pictionary. Another is pulling up a picture to look at for one minute, then remove and ask scouts to tell you what was there. For this one, a poster of the birds of your state is a good option, as they learn local wildlife while they remember. There are also websites like puzzle.org that will let you set up your own games and more. Explore your options.

For younger scouts, meetings with a story time or puppet show you provide should be enjoyable for all scouts. For older scouts, you may find that some of them do best “talking” over chat instead of out loud, and enjoy instructions from videos that you can also send out links to, so they can watch them again for a deeper understanding. You can even video yourself before the meeting demonstrating the skill you want to teach, and let scouts watch during the meeting. This also lets them review it on their own time to practice further.

Some scouting skills don’t translate well over zoom, so think hard about complex activities. If you choose to send out craft kits, be sure the scout has an adult to help, or that the craft is easy enough for them to complete on their own. Pre-cutting and measuring out items may turn a very complicated craft into a doable one.

More Extensive Accommodations

Some scouts need more accommodations than others. It is always best to consider all the ways a scout may need assistance before creating a plan. Inviting parents and caregivers to become trained leaders and attend a BTC can be one way to make sure these scouts have the support they need. Even if the parent only has the goal of helping their own scout participate, understanding the philosophy of scouting and how the program is designed to work will help them work better inside your group.

Some scouts can work at their age level program if they have constant assistance as needed. Scouts who need this level of help may be the ones with significant challenges with motor skills or difficulty following directions. However, scouts who are prone to elope (meaning they run away from the group in a dangerous way) also should have an official assistant. Parents and caregivers often make the best assistants, but older siblings or other Rovers may step into this role. If you are using a Rover from your group to do this job, you may want to create an orange armband for leaders to wear when they are assigned to a scout and cannot leave their scout unattended. Having a silent signal like this can help other adults and leaders know not to ask for assistance from a Rover who may look like they are just sitting there.

Scouts with more significant mental disabilities may benefit from working on badges at a different level of our program than their age indicates. In these cases, it is acceptable for the GSM to accommodate those scouts by allowing them to earn badges at the appropriate level. In some cases, this may mean a scout simply stays in their current age level for extra time. Having a scout of 8 in an otter raft, or a scout of 12 in a Timberwolf pack may be the easiest accommodation in some cases, as the scout may have friends or siblings in that age level, which makes it easier for them to just have more than the typical number of years in that level before moving up to another level.

However, in some cases, a scout may join your program, who should be uniformed for their age level but will need to work on earning badges for a younger level. In this case, it may be appropriate to have a scout wear the uniform for their age level but earn badges for a younger level. If that is the case, badges that the scout earns may be placed upon their uniform in the same location as it would be placed on the uniform for the level of program it corresponds to, provided this does not displace other insignia. For example, a pathfinder or rover earning otter level badges may place those badges on their gray or green uniform shirt in the location it would be worn on the otter uniform.

Deciding how to badge and work with scouts of significant special needs should be made with the scout leaders and the parents or caregivers of that scout. If the scout is able to give input to how they will feel best accommodated, it is ideal to weigh that heavily.

Completing an Individualized Scouting Plan from the end of this document may help you create a coherent plan for these scouts who have more complex needs. Writing down how and when you will change the program to meet their needs can help all of your leaders feel confident in how to meet this scout's needs.

Individualized Scouting Plan

It is important to remember that scouting is a game. No matter what struggles a scout has, we want them to have fun and enjoy the process of learning scouting skills. As a scout leader, you are empowered to create an ISP, Individualized Scouting Plan, so that you can meet your scout's needs. Look at the suggestions in this document, and talk to parents, and figure out how to meet your scout's needs.

You can write out a plan for your scout that lists what you are going to do to help them succeed. You can list which badges you will need to change to accommodate them and note the changes. You can write out any special instructions or needs they have for camping, hiking, or other events. This plan should be approved by their parent or guardian and shared with all of your leaders. A plan like this can help leaders who do not have experience with neurodiverse or adaptive scouting to be more comfortable. Being able to read a plan and refer back to it can reduce everyone's anxiety. Planning ahead for the entire scouting year which badges you plan to adjust how, may be easier than making decisions on the fly.

Unlike an IEP, Individualized Education Program created at school, an Individual Scouting Plan is not legally binding and you are not required to write one if it isn't necessary for your group to meet the scout's needs. For example, if a parent is also a child's leader, they may feel comfortable adjusting the program themselves for their child. However, even in that case, writing out a plan can ensure all leaders understand how to meet the scout's needs if the parent or caregiver isn't present. It can also make parents and leaders more comfortable with changes to badge work to have them officially "approved" by the GSM.

If you want to write an Individualized Scouting Plan, there is a form at the end of this document you can print and fill out. Have the appropriate parent or guardian and leaders weigh in and discuss the plan with the GSM so everyone understands how to meet the needs of the scout. The plan has several spaces to write down the scout's needs and abilities, to make this easier for you. Sharing copies of this plan with appropriate leadership is up to you, but essential for its success. You may also choose to have the scout themselves involved in making their plan. Teaching youth scouts to advocate for themselves is wonderful when it is appropriate.

If your group has a separate person who coordinates camping trips or other events, they also need to be aware if there are specific requirements to meet the needs of your scouts. From shopping for allergy free food to selecting a safe and accessible campsite, be sure you have a way to communicate with your adults the changing needs of your group. Adding a child with special needs may mean that the details of how you did the camping trip last year, won't work this year. If your group has a Slack or Google Doc, or other way to share digital information, adding columns for current food allergies or accessibility issues can help leaders and volunteers gather information quickly. If your group is accommodating several food allergies, for example, being able to see all the allergies in a single list is helpful for meal planning.

Scouting with special needs, neurodiverse and learning disabled scouts is extremely rewarding for all involved. If you are unsure how to meet the needs of your scout, reach out to other leaders and ask for advice. We are all working to meet the needs of our scouts and more experienced leaders are happy to share what has worked in their groups.

Individualized Scouting Plan

Scout's Name _____ Age _____ Date of Birth _____ Plan Creation Date _____

Group Name _____ Group Scout Master _____

Section / Patrol _____ Section Leader _____

Strengths and skills the scout does well.

Diagnosis, challenges, and weaknesses the scout needs accommodations for.

Ways to support the scout. Measures that can be taken to support inclusion and appropriate participation in scouting activities.



Individualized Scouting Plan (cont.)

Scout's Name _____

Group Name _____

Date _____

Camping accommodations.

Hiking accommodations.

Behavior correction plan.

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Parents Initials _____

GSM Initials _____



Individualized Scouting Plan (cont.)

Scout's Name _____

Group Name _____

Date _____

Badge Adjustments

Section / Patrol _____

Badge Name	Original Requirements	Adjusted Requirements

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Parents Initials _____

GSM Initials _____



Individualized Scouting Plan (cont.)

Scout's Name _____

Group Name _____

Date _____

Badge Adjustments

Section / Patrol _____

Badge Name	Original Requirements	Adjusted Requirements

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Parents Initials _____

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Individualized Scouting Plan (cont.)

Scout's Name _____

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Badge Adjustments

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