

Activities — Risk Assessment



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This provides guidance for leaders on how to conduct a risk assessment both before and during an activity together with other safety information.

Introduction

In the many activities we can offer, we provide challenges that seek to encourage the development of young people. These are often ones they do not face every day and they can experience a great sense of achievement in completing them. Some degree of risk is unavoidable if the sense of adventure and excitement is to be achieved, but it is - and should be - much less than the participant perceives. We seek to provide:

EXCITEMENT but not DANGER

ADVENTURE but not HAZARD

There is a clear distinction between perceived risk (in the eyes of young people) and actual danger. We have to minimise the latter.

Accordingly we need to assess and control the risks associated with activities in order to minimise the chance of injury.

Hazards and risks

Two terms are frequently used during a risk assessment:

- A **hazard** is anything that could cause harm. In the context of activities, a hazard could be weather, equipment or many other elements.
- A **risk** is the chance - high or low - that someone will be harmed by the hazard.

What is a risk assessment?

Risk assessment can perhaps best be described as disciplined, common sense applied to everyday life. Whether descending a staircase, crossing the road, or frying an egg, we all do risk assessment or, *safety checks* in one way or another every day. With activities we do in Scouting we need to step back and think about assessing risk and, safety management in more detail since we are often dealing with groups of adults and young people in situations we do not encounter every day. So, a structured approach makes the task easier and helps us to spot all the potential risks. There are just five steps to a proper risk assessment...

1. Look for the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed, and how
3. Evaluate the risks
4. Record your findings
5. Review and revise

One - Look for the hazards (*how can people be hurt or damage caused*): stand back from the situation, and assess it. Identify all the hazards, and list them, concentrating on the significant ones e.g. a slippery surface, an arrow, or very high piece of equipment.

Two - Decide who might be harmed, and how: think particularly about participants who might have become accustomed to the presence of the hazard; about visitors who might not know that the hazard is present; and about young people, especially those with special needs, who simply might not appreciate the hazard.

Three – Evaluate the risks (what controls exist already? What additional controls are needed?): consider the likelihood of the hazards causing harm to someone. If a surface is always slippery, perhaps it needs 'roughing up' as a precaution – and certainly it is no place for physically active games!

Your responsibility is to do whatever is reasonably practicable to make the situation safe and your aim is to minimise all the risks by maintaining or adding to the precautions as necessary.

Four – Record your findings you will always need to tell those involved in the activity what action they should take – and what actions they must not take!

Where the risk is one which regularly occurs (a particular activity / game), your record should be a permanent one, such as an instruction sheet (rules) or card for users, who should be required to read it before leading the activity. Regular users should be required to re-read it from time to time.

In some cases a written record is particularly useful. For example

- If it relates to the managing of a premises (see FS320010 – Managing a Safe Scout Premises).
- If there are any control actions that need to take place prior to or during an activity that are over and above what would normally happen.
- Where a significant hazard has been identified – this would be a hazard with the potential for substantial harm, where there is a strong likelihood of that happening without any controls put in place.
- Trips away from your normal meeting place – new or infrequent activities away from the HQ may need you to step back and consider a more rigorous approach rather than relying on a simple checklist.
- Where transport is involved.

The most important thing to remember is that, whatever the format of your risk assessment, it should be 'fit for purpose'. It should clearly identify any hazards, risks and controls but must also be

able to be effectively communicated to those involved in running the activity.

Date your risk assessment and put on it a date for reviewing it.

Five – Review and revise: you cannot assume that the hazards, and the risks, will stay the same for all time. So you must review your risk assessment from time to time, and revise it where necessary. This will almost certainly mean a revised record e.g. a new instruction sheet. It is good practice to fix a maximum time between reviews, even if you do not think that a review is actually needed. You may need to create a process to ensure this happens.

Changing Conditions

Whether the risk assessment is written as a full five step process (for things like new activities or events) or a simple checklist for regular weekly activities there is a possibly that these are treated as 'tick box' exercises.

Apart from looking at these before an activity, there must be a system in place for on-going monitoring understood by both adults and young people. Such systems will vary between age groups and activities. For example, a Beaver outing could involve a buddy-system with agreed times for head-counts whereas a supervised remote area hike for Explorers could have agreed meeting-up points along a known route.

An organised and agreed approach to monitoring activities is just as important as a pre-activity risk assessment.

1. Where do I start?

The activity examples in the table at the end of the factsheet are not exhaustive but suggest some possible hazards, some of their associated risks and suggestions for appropriate control measures. In some cases they draw on incidents reported to Unity Insurance in Lancing.

Every activity will be different but the best way to discover your hazards is to go and have a look. Then identify the associated risks and decide on

the appropriate control measures you need to put into place.

2. Who should do the risk assessment?

The responsibility for ensuring that a risk assessment has been conducted and a monitoring system is in place rests with the leader in charge. The leader in charge co-ordinates the work of all the adults involved in the activity.

The actual work of conducting a risk assessment can be done by someone with a reasonable ability to recognize some of the risks that may prevail for the activity. It may be a leader or parent with relevant experience in the activity or just a friend of the Group with some time to give. In older sections it could be the young people themselves (for example Explorers planning an expedition should do their own risk assessment, although the leader in charge would need to check it). More than one person is a good idea. It spreads the workload and helps to spot things that one might miss.

3. What do I do with the risk assessment?

Any risk assessment that is simply a written exercise is almost worthless unless the information is used. The important thing is that identified concerns are acted upon and safety points communicated.

In some cases, the activity going ahead in the original format might need to be changed or stopped, and we should never be afraid of doing this. Stepping back and looking at what the activity is trying to achieve in the programme could lead to doing it a different way.

This might be a change in route, venue, additional training, an increased adult/participant ratio and properly equipped participants.

The recording of the assessment should be in a format which is easily read. Long, wordy risk assessments can be as dangerous as no risk assessment. If they cannot be communicated, they are worthless.

Dynamic risk assessments

This is the term used for assessing risks during an activity. Sometimes things change (such as the weather) or you are trying to manage a group moving from one terrain to another (for example from a field across a bridge to another field). You should be prepared at stop at certain points and ask yourself things like: Should I continue with this activity or, when do I need to do headcounts?

Risk assessment - In practice

A risk assessment, whether a discussion leading to a checklist for common evening activities, or a full written five-step approach for a new activity or event, is simply one tool that sits within how we manage safety overall. Some other key points to consider are:

Competence

Adults and young people should have an appropriate level of training and experience for the activity they are undertaking.

Control

There is a leader in charge and both adults and young people understand how things are going to be monitored and controlled.

Co-operation

There should be a recognition and understanding that Scouting has Rules that apply to certain activities.

Both adults and young people have a role to play in managing safety and it is very much a team effort.

Communication

As well as giving safety instructions for each activity, an approach to safety is discussed more generally, for example at programme planning meetings.

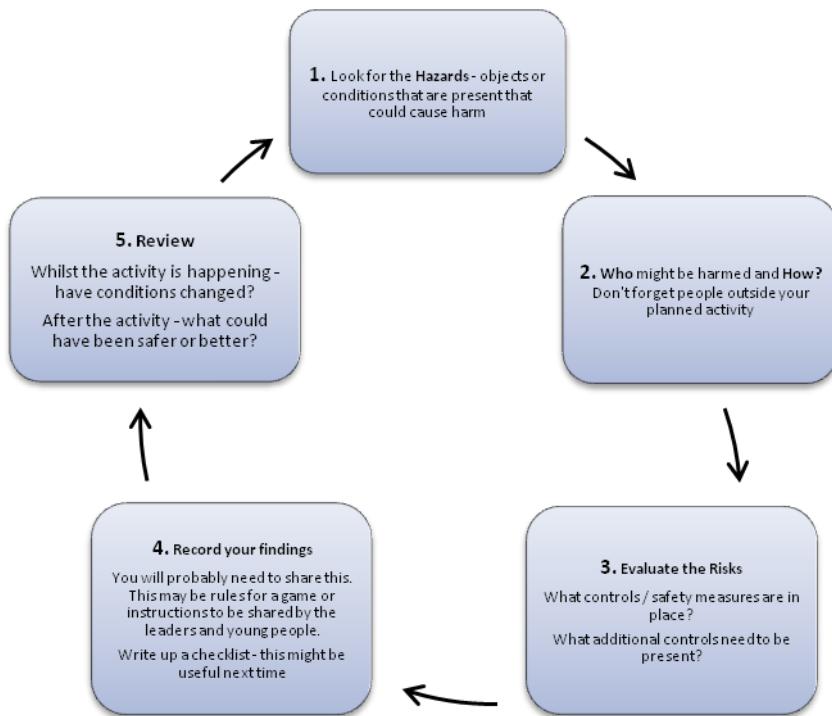
Other methods

The approaches described above, for conducting risk assessments, are not the only ones that exist. Use whichever one you are comfortable with. Remember, it is important that you conduct the assessment and modify your plans accordingly, to minimise the risks to an acceptable level.

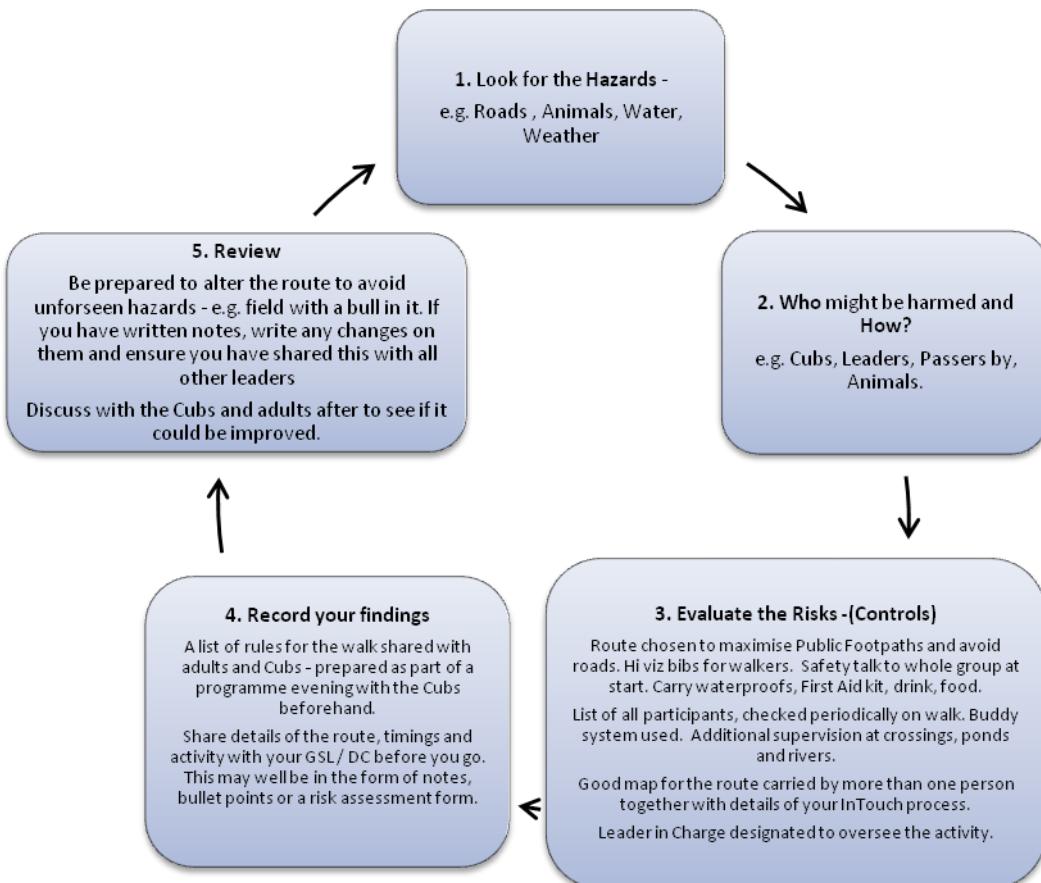
Additional Information

www.scouts.org.uk/a-z

www.scouts.org.uk/safety



An Example – (a walk with Cubs in the countryside)



EXAMPLE OF A SIMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT – Taking A Group Cycling

Hazard Identified & Risks Arising	Persons at Risk	How Is The Risk Controlled? What Further Controls Are Needed?	Person Responsible for controls	Review Date & Revisions Made?
Hazard – anything that could cause harm. E.g. equipment or conditions. Risk – the chance that someone will be harmed by the hazard.		Control – an action, equipment or procedure that will help to reduce the potential for harm from a particular hazard.		
Equipment Hazard: Bike may have faults Risk: mechanical failure at a dangerous moment.	All cyclists and others nearby	Bike Maintenance Evening for the Scouts, run by a competent person (maybe an experienced parent or friend). Bike checks before setting off on the trip. Daily checks if trip is more than one day.	Leader with competent person. Leaders	
Roads and Traffic Hazard: Collision with other traffic, Risk: Inexperience of road use and equipment.	Inexperienced riders, particularly the young	Instruction and training of riders PLUS careful supervision on the trip itself. Use of High Visibility jackets/vests. Avoid cycling at night or dusk Compulsory and proper use of cycle helmets Use dedicated Cycle Paths away from other traffic.	Leader with a competent person (police officer?)	
Group Risks Riding as a group and potential for losing members.	All cyclists	Ride in single file or pairs (according to the road) using Leaders at the front and back of the Group. Occasionally stop and have a head count – use a list or register if necessary.	Leaders Event Leader	

		Use a 'shepherd' at the rear of the group. Have mobile phones available.		
Weather Conditions Hazard: Heat / cold / wet Risk: Sunburn/Heatstroke/Hyperthermia	All cyclists	Ensure the correct clothing, including waterproofs are advised and carried on the day. Check before setting off. Drinks.	Leaders	
Hazard: Dangerous / slippery road conditions due to rain or ice Risk: Falling off bikes. Collision with traffic	All cyclists	Check condition of tyres and brakes. Consider & control the speed of the group. Postpone the event if necessary.	Event Leader	
<p style="text-align: center;">The items above are just an example of some things to consider.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Your risk assessment should reflect any localised conditions or timings that apply</p>				

Risk Assessment – Should I write it down? – some examples of typical activities or situations

Situation	Hazards (some examples)	Do I need to create a written risk assessment?	Examples of controls that might need documenting
Beaver Colony - game	Furniture in the hall Collisions Flying objects Excitement	If this is a game you play regularly then it is a good idea to write up some notes about the risks you have identified. Have a folder to put this in. If you are not there and someone new (and less experienced) needs to run the game, they have a ready-made guide. Include a set of rules for the game. Remember that both adults supervising and Beavers that haven't played before will find this very valuable.	Pack away the furniture or move it away from the area of the game. If you can't, then position an adult in front of it. Ensure you have enough adults to safely run the game and supervise it. If needed, change the rules slightly because of increased numbers or perhaps play another game. Does it suit all abilities present? Explain the rules each time and start with a dummy run of the game for the benefit of new Beavers and new adults. If it is a ball game, why not use a soft foam ball. Insist balls are below waist height. Will children be 'Out' in an elimination game? What are they going to do while the game continues and who will supervise that?
Cub Pack - trip to Police Station	Travelling Roads Vehicles Sickness	This kind of activity requires some careful thought as it is a little outside our normal comfort zone of the meeting place we are used to. A written risk assessment is a good idea as it will help us to identify hazards and have a record that we can easily share with the other leaders involved. Consider how you will be getting there. Meeting there is often the easiest option as the responsibility for travelling remains with the parents, but consider the importance of meeting in one place and	Make a pre-trip visit to get an understanding of the environment you will be in and to identify any further hazards you hadn't already considered. Find out whether the Police Station has any requirements which you will need to abide by. Have a register for all the Cubs with a contact number adopting some sort of InTouch process. Use this to check them off from time to time. Put them in smaller groups with an adult in charge. It is much

Situation	Hazards (some examples)	Do I need to create a written risk assessment?	Examples of controls that might need documenting
		<p>recording those present.</p> <p>If you are walking, look at the route and think how you will manage the Cubs along the way. Write down those significant hazards that will need controlling, such as crossing roads or heavy traffic.</p> <p>If you are arranging for parents to take the Cubs by car collectively, their car insurance should be appropriate and there may be a need for booster seats to be used appropriately. Record this and share it with the parents in the form of a letter about the activity.</p>	<p>easier to count five heads than 15.</p> <p>If walking, good supervision is vital and aids such as Hi Viz jackets for some or all of the party may be suitable.</p>
Scout Hike	Roads Weather Terrain Lakes & Rivers Cooking food	<p>The key to this activity being controlled lies in the form of a written plan for the event to help identify the hazards and risks present. The controls become part of your programme for delivering troop activities building up to the hike.</p> <p>Consider the differing approach to hazards between groups accompanied by adults and those where the young people are acting on their own.</p> <p>Scouts perception of risk is very different to adults due to their life experience and therefore, short, written bullet points (based on your risk assessment) might be an answer. Better still – get them to do the risk assessment themselves with some adult support.</p> <p>Consider the hazards arising from the terrain in which the hike will take place – rocks, water, woods. A set of agreed rules about these might prove useful.</p> <p>A detailed kit list, put together with the input of the</p>	<p>Plan carefully the areas and possible routes being used.</p> <p>Any written risk assessment for the activity should include the pre-event training given to the Scouts as one of the controls in place. It is simply part of the learning by doing method which is a natural part of Scouting.</p> <p>Discuss their plans for changing weather conditions, escape routes and have a kit check before they leave to ensure they are properly equipped.</p> <p>Agreed emergency procedures.</p> <p>There is a factsheet FS320004 – Camp Food Safety which provides easy to use guidelines about preparation and cooking.</p> <p>It is important that the safe use of stoves or fires is established and safe cooking methods understood by the Scouts. Practise makes perfect.</p>

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		<p>Scouts, will ensure they are prepared for most expected weather conditions. This process is a simple form of risk assessment but introduces this to them.</p> <p>Clear written instructions for the use of stoves will assist when training the Scouts how to use them.</p>	
Care of Premises	Asbestos Electricity Gas Fire Storage Water	<p>Written risk assessments are essential for the efficient running of any premises, whether a Scout HQ, campsite or activity centre. It is important to keep records of the regular checks made and a system for reviewing the risk assessments to ensure the controls remain current.</p> <p>All non-domestic premises must have a record of asbestos and a system for managing it. Likewise, fire risk also has to be assessed and managed.</p> <p>Storage is one area that gets easily overlooked, but consider the risks from dangerous items such as gas or cleaning materials and about the manual handling issues related to heavy tents or other equipment.</p> <p>For further information refer to the factsheet <i>FS320010 – Managing a Safe Scout Premises</i>.</p>	<p>Regular fire drills by each of the sections each term.</p> <p>Periodically test portable appliances (in the first instance this may be as simple as a visual inspection each time they are used) to ensure they are safe. Typically this is done annually.</p> <p>Annual testing of gas appliances such as cookers or boilers.</p> <p>Regularly flushing through taps or showers on a campsite toilet block.</p> <p>Shelving in stores so that items don't get stacked dangerously. Suitable steps to allow access to higher items.</p> <p>Using two people, if needed, to move heavy items. Ensuring items are easy to hold. Have them in a container or bag with handles.</p> <p>Keep a written record of all testing and servicing.</p>
District Camp	Travelling Handling heavy items Gas Fires Food	<p>As organiser of the overall event, a written risk assessment will help the important messages to be easily communicated to all the Groups taking part. This may, in turn take the form of a number of rules for those hazards identified as significantly dangerous.</p> <p>If you are organising coach travel, written risk assessment will help identify hazards such as getting on and off, what to do in the event of an accident, using</p>	<p>Specify suitable distances between tents. For example, it is usually recommended to have a mess tent / kitchen tent at least 5 meters from any sleeping tents</p> <p>Plan to brief all the passengers, young people and adults, with any agreed safety rules for travelling.</p> <p>Have sufficient adults to ensure large or awkward kit can be moved safely.</p>

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		<p>seat belts on board. The coach company should be able to help you with this and a reputable one will have existing risk assessments themselves.</p> <p>A written plan for organising the camp will help identify the sort of equipment needed, how it is to be handled and transported.</p> <p>There are often a large number of adults involved with this type of event, some of which may have less experience in setting up and operating in this way. It will be helpful to have a written list of controlling factors for the significant risks identified.</p>	<p>Set up gas stoves in a mess tent that is fire retardant. Ensure that the gas hoses are long enough to reach outside the tent so that the gas cylinders remain out there.</p>