

International Evenings



Item Code FS260005 May 2006 Edition no 4 (103651)

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Scouting is international! With more than 28 million members in 211 countries, the worldwide Scout Movement has many opportunities to help young people learn about the world in attractive and enjoyable ways. One way in which this "international dimension" is often expressed is by holding International Evenings for Beaver Scouts, Cub Scouts, Scouts, Explorer Scouts or Scout Network. This factsheet aims to give you some ideas for International Evenings as well as details of resources available.

But Why International Evenings?

Scouting offers activities with a purpose - which is "to promote the development of young people ... as members of their local, national and international communities." By encouraging international understanding and co-operation, Scouting has a role to play in promoting worldwide peace and development. International activities need to broaden the young person's outlook to the point where they see themselves not only as a member of a community in the home, Scout Group, school, church, town and country, but also in the world. Some international activities may of course be purely for fun, but all activities should be progressive and appropriate to the age range.

International activities should not be just once-in-a-while novelties or convenient, exciting gap-fillers. The flame of international awareness needs to be fanned in a variety of ways throughout the year and not just through occasional international evenings. Nonetheless, special international evenings or days are an important opportunity to focus on this area of our programme.

Deciding on Your Aim

The first stage is to decide what you want to achieve. Those who aim at nothing usually achieve it! Here are some possible aims:

- To learn about a particular country that the Pack/Troop/Unit is planning to visit.
- To focus on a country where you have Scouting links; for example, through pen pals.
- To focus on a particular international theme or issue.
- To focus on a particular international event; for example, the Olympics, a World Scout Jamboree, Commonwealth Day, or a World or European Year.
- To support an international community project, such as a current national project, or through an agency such as Oxfam or Friends of the Earth.
- To contribute to the Group's involvement in the International Friendship Award.
- To tackle a particular international project from the training scheme.

The important thing is to have a specific purpose behind our activities. Otherwise, we may find that the activity is fun, but does not actually help us to achieve anything.

A few do's and don'ts may be useful here:

DO involve the Pack or Troop Leadership Forum or Explorer Scout Committee as appropriate.

DO look wide - don't worry if you have limited knowledge of a particular subject; there are probably many resources which you can draw upon.

DO allow plenty of time to prepare for a special evening of this sort - it cannot be done overnight!

DO let the International Office know of any ideas that you find successful so that they can be shared with others.

DON'T trivialise other cultures or be too simplistic. For example, if we put over the view of Africa as only mud huts and poverty, we will miss the richness of its culture and community life.

We must be balanced in presenting views and issues in a way that will help to build 'solidarity'.

The Scout Association

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This means simply that we see others as people and see that we all have something to learn from co-operating together.

Developing a Tree

One way to develop a programme is to 'brainstorm' around a theme and see what creative ideas for programmes this suggests. Some of the themes which you could start from are:

The Continents..... Europe ... handicrafts ... languages... transport ... food stories, legends and proverbscustoms and ceremonies ... religions ... festivals.... animals, birds, trees or flowers ... airlines...international travel ... World Scout Jamboree/Join in Jamboree ... stamps, postcards, badges and coins ... climates (hot and cold)... schools ... industries/trade.... films ... the Commonwealth.. communications ... houses.... clothing ... world cruises... history ... toys and games national sports ... news: royal families/government ... disasters.... international organisations ... the environment... particular countries or international issues ... dance, music and arts...

The list is endless and each theme will suggest many different activities. Start with a large blank piece of paper and write down everyone's ideas as they occur. It can be helpful to draw this as a 'tree', with branches leading from a starting point. An outline for your programme will begin to form, and will lead you to further research and planning of specific activities.

Some Activity Ideas

Here are a few starter ideas. We have not indicated which Section they might be suitable for, but in many cases the idea could be developed or simplified to suit Beaver Scouts, Cub Scouts, Scouts or Explorer Scouts or Scout Network. The most effective activities are those which young people can relate to everyday life. So, for example, a film on the typical day of a child in Nepal can be of very high value. Much can then be learnt by comparing this with our lifestyle. Actual contact with other cultures is very valuable for the same reason. This might be achieved through pen pals/link ups, involving foreign nationals or other ethnic groups living locally, or Scouts, Explorer Scouts or members of Scout Network who have been abroad.

- Make a poster saying "Welcome" in as many languages as possible. Can you meet people who speak these languages?

- Devise a wide game on an international theme, or on an historical event in another country.
- Play some co-operative games or a simulation game (such as those available from Christian Aid). What do they teach us about world interdependence?
- Ask each Patrol or team to find out as much as possible about a country of their choice. Other teams can try to discover which country they have chosen by asking questions, which can be answered only by a 'yes' or 'no'. For example, they might ask 'Is it in Africa?' or 'Is the climate hot or cold?' There could be a limit on the number of questions asked. As a clue, teams might be asked to draw the outline of the physical shape of the country, or to dress in an appropriate costume!
- Have an international campfire and encourage everyone to come dressed in a traditional costume from another country.
- Read stories or folk tales from other countries. Your local children's library probably have some suitable material.
- Watch the video or tape/slide presentation 'Together', which is about Scouting in Developing Countries.
- Play a Kim's game or 'call my bluff with a collection of items from other countries.'
- Devise a 'word square' puzzle or crossword with the names of countries which have Scouts. See which team can find the most of these in a set time.
- Follow the television coverage of a royal visit abroad - this may give you many ideas for activities about another country. It can also be interesting to follow media coverage of a particular world event.
- Ask your Assistant County/Area Commissioner (International) to put you in touch with a group who have been abroad recently and could help you to run an evening based on the country they visited.
- Hold an inter-team quiz on international topics.
- Do you have a twin town in another country? The International Office can try to put you in touch with Scouting there.
- Invite somebody of a different ethnic background to demonstrate cooking from another culture or attempt it yourselves!
- Complete part of the evening in a foreign language, with or without warning!
- Show slides or films on other countries - these are often available from national tourist offices or film libraries.

- Attempt some activities from the training scheme. For example, a Scout meeting might focus on the development of world-wide Scouting (the Scout Membership Badge), national costumes and food (Beaver Scout Friendship Challenge and Cub Scout Global Challenge), find out what different things can be recycled and show how they have recycled things in their homes (Cub Scout Global Challenge) or play a trading game and learn about trade around the world (Scout Global Challenge or if organized by Explorers Chief Scout's Platinum Award)
- Scouts could attempt some activities from the Global Conservation Activity Badge, World Faiths Activity Badge, Interpreter Badge or International Friendship Award. Use prayers or readings from other countries, religions and faiths
- Hold a poster competition. For example, you could ask for designs showing how Scouting can help to make a better world.
- Make a permanent reminder of International Scouting to display in your meeting place. For example, you could mount a World Scout Map, with stickers or mapping pins marking the countries your members have visited or have links with, or those you have learnt about.
- Obtain some World Scout Maps, mount onto card, and cut into squares. See which team can put the world back together first.
- Give each group a newspaper and ask them to produce a collage showing three categories of news story: (1) international, (2) international, but with some domestic content, or (3) United Kingdom only. Discuss the results. How do international events affect us?

Most Scout Counties/Areas have an Assistant County/ Area Commissioner (International). His or her role is to promote and support international activities. ACCs/ AACs(I) are able to help groups organising international activities, and can give advice on resources available and people who may be able to help. If you do not already know your ACC/AAC(I), the International Office will be pleased to put you in touch.

Resources Available

The resources available will, of course, depend on your chosen theme. Meetings on specific countries tend to involve more research than following themes such as 'water' or 'health' because educational material on such themes is normally available from the relevant specialist agencies.

Fact sheet FS 260003, Sources of Information (available from the Information Centre) lists addresses of national tourist offices and other sources of information. Fact sheet FS 260009, International Resource Material, gives details of current resources available from the Information Centre.