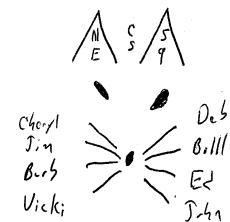


# Safety Moment

# Gray Areas

Ed Vasold



# Things to avoid when putting on a campfire program

- Embarrassing, insulting, or demeaning skits
- Violence/Suicide skits
- Toilet Humor:
  - references to
    - bodily functions
    - underwear
    - toilet paper
- Water Skits
- Alcohol/Drunkenness
- Sexual Innuendo and Cross Gender Impersonation
- Inside Jokes

# The Gray Areas

## \*\*\*Some things to think about when putting on a campfire program\*\*\*

- As with everything else in Scouting, it is our responsibility to maintain the highest standards of character and positive moral values.
- For some reason, many leaders who would not tolerate their Scouts telling off-color or offensive jokes, drinking, throwing water on each other, or other “un-Scoutlike gutter entertainment” behavior, find it appropriate to glorify this type of unacceptable behavior at campfires.
- Every element of the campfires should support character development, citizenship, and moral fitness.
- You may say, “Things are said worse in daily conversation at school.”  
Response, “All the more reason Scouting should maintain its safe haven from such behavior.”
- All skits will be screened for appropriate content in advance, and adults should not be afraid to jump in and stop an offensive skit in a tactful way. One example of interrupting a skit is by yelling, “Spam Check! Everyone check your seats for wild spasm!” In the confusion, the offensive performers will be cleared from the stage and the next act will be introduced.
- Oftentimes, just changing a word or two of a song or skit can make it acceptable. For example, instead of having a gang of blood thirsty “Injuns” or motorcycle riders attack the two sleeping Scouts in that popular skit, make it a swarm of “mosquitoes.”
- The following “Grey Areas” should send up a red flag for leaders to rethink. Remember, if an act is the least bit questionable, it is probably best to forego it.

### 1). Embarrassing, insulting, demeaning skits:

**Examples:** the big jerk skit, sucker on a stick skit, ugliest man in the world skit. These can be OK if the “target” has given permission in advance.

**Concerns:** self-esteem, social approval, loss of respect, rudeness.

### 2). Violence/Suicide skits:

**Examples:** reporter looking for a story skit; any skit where someone gets beat up or killed.

**Concerns:** making light of violence or suicide in an area where both are escalating concerns.

### 3). Water skits:

**Examples:** any skit where water, in any amount, is thrown on people

**Concerns:** self-worth and self-esteem; teaches that this behavior is acceptable; may be too cold to be wet; may damage clothing or personal belongings.

### 4). Toilet Humor: skits where any references to bodily functions (urination, defecation, vomiting), or underwear and/or toilet paper

**Examples:** elephant, horse, dog skit where animal urinates on ‘victim,’ skits where participant eats what is to be dog waste, papers for the movement skit, JC Penny skit (OK if done in shorts).

**Concerns:** none of these things contributes to developing Scouting’s ideals and values.

### 5). Alcohol/Drunkness:

**Examples:** Lily the Pink, Mountain Dew (OK if done with a Mountain Dew can), other obvious drinking songs.

**Concerns:** BSA stance is that alcohol is the most abused drug in the age group we serve and should not be condoned nor glorified.

### 6). Sexual Innuendo and “Over the Edge” Female Impersonations:

**Examples:** over-accentuating certain body parts or any reference to sexual behavior of any type.

**Concerns:** sexual harassment, embarrassment, disrespect of females; not in keeping with the Scout Oath/Law.

# The Gray Areas

## By Douglas C. Fullman

Scouting's program is designed to develop boys in character, citizenship, and fitness including mental, moral, spiritual, and physical fitness. Activities, meetings, camp programs, and campfires all contribute to Scouting's aims. Therefore, some items that may be acceptable in other segments of society are not part of the Scouting program.

One of the important elements of Scouting is FUN. In our attempt to use humor and fun activities, we must continually remind ourselves that these amusing and entertaining programs are excellent opportunities to teach the values of Scouting, and must not detract from, nor contradict the philosophy expressed in the Scout Oath and Law.

Although many leaders are able to determine the appropriateness of most program choices, there are certainly numerous songs, stories, skits, and stunts that force the leader to make decisions. To add to the complexity of the decision is that in many cases it is not so much what is done, but how it is done that makes the difference. The areas that fall between the inappropriate and the absolutely acceptable, we call the gray area.

Just because a skit, song, or story falls in one of the gray area categories does not, in itself, establish that it may not be done. At the same time, if an item is in the gray area, then a leader must exercise his judgment concerning not only the subject matter, but also the performers and their sensitivity to the values and ideals of Scouting. The final decision must be the impact the item has on developing character, fitness, and citizenship or setting the wrong example of what Scouting is all about.

The following "Gray Areas" should alert leaders to exercise their best judgment:

### 1. Underwear

- **Concerns:** Nudity, natural modesty of Scouts, mental fitness, and cleanliness.
- **Judgment Note:** The J. C. Penney Skit can be done in Swimsuits as an example.

### 2. Water

- **Concerns:**
  - Victims (self-worth and self-esteem)
  - Persons may be hurt physically and emotionally. Equipment/clothing damaged.
  - Bodily Functions - Skits, etc., portraying urination, sexual acts, or defecation do not contribute to developing Scouting's Ideals and Values.

### 3. Toilet Paper

- ▣ **Concerns:** Bodily Functions (see above) and Toilet Humor.
- ▣ **Judgment Note:** "The Viper is Coming" can have a person with Paper Towels and Windex to clean someone else's eyeglasses.

### 4. Inside Jokes

- ▣ **Concerns:** Only the participants or those in the "KNOW" can appreciate the humor, etc. Don't bore, or even worse, ignore the rest of us in the audience.
- ▣ **Judgment Note:** Staff Banquets, and Last Wills and Testaments, are great uses of inside jokes and most, if not all, of the participants are "in."

### 5. Alcohol/Drunkenness

- ▣ **Concerns:**
  - ▣ BSA's Unacceptables - Alcohol is the most abused drug especially within the age group Scouting is trying to serve.
  - ▣ Drunkenness - Making fun of people. Courtesy. Self-esteem and self-worth.

### 6. Cross Gender Impersonation

- ▣ **Concerns:**
  - ▣ Bodily Functions and excessive, inappropriate exaggeration of body parts.
  - ▣ Embarrassments.
  - ▣ May become a form of sexual harassment.
- ▣ **Judgment Note:** Can be great fun. Area that most probably fits into the "not what is done, but how it's done" category.

This guide has been prepared with the sincere desire for wholesome fun, recreation, and enjoyment for all at Scouting activities, especially campfires. Hopefully, you the leader, find these guidelines helpful as you thoughtfully approve these activities, guide boys in making the right decisions, and personally set the example for Scouting at its best.