

Getting Into Shape

Fitness is essential to many Scouting activities and a major contributor to a long, healthy life. The Scout Oath proclaims that a Scout is physically strong, but many Scouts (and leaders) aren't as fit as they'd like to be.

We all know we should eat nutritious meals and get plenty of exercise, but how do you get started if you have developed some bad habits? Living a fit life requires balance in your mind and spirit as well, but how can you find balance if you are stressed out by the demands of school and other activities?

The best way to start is by figuring out where you stand. In this program feature, Scouts will begin by determining their own fitness levels, learn some of the building blocks of fitness and nutrition, and then apply that learning in a challenging main event. This program feature won't turn you and your fellow Scouts into elite athletes, but it will put you on the road toward a healthier, more satisfying lifestyle.

Note: Increased fitness and good nutrition don't happen overnight. While most program features are designed to be done in about a month's time, you might get more out of this module if you do it over several months. Consider using parts of this module to fill in planning gaps throughout the year. If your main event is going to be a race or competition, you will need more than a month to train properly.

Before beginning this program feature, it's a good idea for all participants to have an annual medical evaluation by a certified and licensed health-care provider: a physician (MD or DO), nurse practitioner, or physician assistant. Use the BSA Annual Health and Medical Record, No. 680-001.

Objectives

This month's activities should:

- Define the importance of fitness.
- Teach Scouts about good nutrition.
- Explain how wellness is related to fitness.
- Emphasize the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Teach positive ways to reduce stress.
- Show Scouts how to work toward lifetime fitness.

RELATED ADVANCEMENT AND AWARDS

- Tenderfoot requirements 6a, 6b, and 6c
- Second Class requirements 2e, 7a, 7b, and 7c
- First Class requirement 2a
- Athletics, Cooking, Personal Fitness, Public Health, and Sports merit badges
- Quest Award
- Presidential Active Lifestyle Award
- Presidential Youth Fitness Award
- Ranger: Physical Fitness elective



Leadership Planning

As a leadership team, you may want to discuss the following items during your planning meetings when choosing fitness and nutrition as your program feature.

1. Should we spread this program feature out over several months?
2. Do we know any personal trainers?
3. Do we know anyone who teaches yoga or tai chi?
4. What activity will we do for the “Get Out and Play” meeting plan (week 4)?
5. What type of race should we participate in for our main event?
6. What other skills and training are needed to participate in our chosen race?
7. How might we include a camping or overnight component for the main event?
8. To meet our needs, what should we change in the sample meeting plans?

PARENTS CAN HELP WITH THE FITNESS AND NUTRITION PROGRAM FEATURE BY:

1. Sharing their expertise
2. Recruiting fitness coaches to teach during meetings
3. Furnishing equipment and other supplies
4. Serving as support by providing water and snacks
5. Providing transportation for the main event
6. Maintaining current Youth Protection certification, which is required of all adults providing transportation for or participating in outings.

GET FITT

You can improve your fitness by changing the frequency, intensity, time, and type of exercises you do. Remember the FITT principle:

Frequency: How many times do you exercise each week or month? For example, you might walk seven days a week and lift weights three times a week.

Intensity: How strenuous is the exercise in terms of weight lifted, speed of movement, or effort exerted? For example, you might start out walking at 3.5 miles an hour and lifting weights at 50 percent of your maximum potential, and slowly increase the intensity as you become more fit.

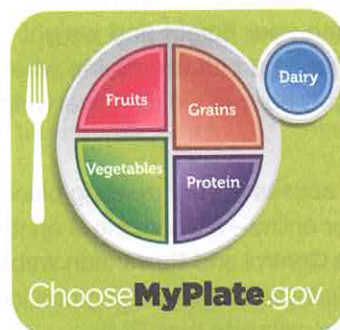
Time: How long do you do an exercise per session? For example, you might walk for 30 minutes and lift weights in two sets with a one-minute rest in between.

Type: What kinds of exercise do you do? For example, you might choose between cycling and walking or lifting weights and doing push-ups.





THE MYPLATE WAY



The U.S. government created MyPlate to help Americans learn better eating habits. Each food group is represented by a space on the plate, so you can figure out what and how much you should consume each day. Here are 10 tips from the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

1. **Find your healthy eating style.** Creating a healthy style means regularly eating a variety of foods to get the nutrients and calories you need.
2. **Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.** Eating colorful fruits and vegetables is important because they provide vitamins and minerals and most are low in calories.
3. **Focus on whole fruits.** Choose whole fruits—fresh, frozen, dried, or canned in 100 percent juice.
4. **Vary your veggies.** Choose a variety of colorful vegetables prepared in healthful ways: steamed, sauteed, roasted, or raw.
5. **Make half your grains whole grains.** Look for whole grains listed first or second on the ingredients list—try oatmeal, popcorn, whole-grain bread, and brown rice. Limit grain-based desserts and snacks, such as cakes, cookies, and pastries.
6. **Move to low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt.** Choose low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt, and soy beverages (soymilk) to cut back on saturated fat.
7. **Vary your protein routine.** Mix up your protein foods to include seafood, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, soy products, eggs, and lean meats and poultry.
8. **Drink and eat beverages and food with less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.** Use the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients list to limit items high in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.
9. **Drink water instead of sugary drinks.** Water is calorie-free. Non-diet soda, energy or sports drinks, and other sugar-sweetened drinks contain a lot of calories from added sugars and have few nutrients.
10. **Everything you eat and drink matters.** The right mix of foods can help you be healthier now and into the future.

DRUGS, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO

Junk food is bad, but drugs, alcohol, and tobacco are even worse.

Visit <https://drugfree.org/> and www.tobaccofreekids.org to learn more.



BODY MASS INDEX

Body mass index, or BMI, is a quick tool for determining how much body fat you are carrying. By entering your height and weight into a BMI calculator, you can determine whether you are underweight, normal weight, overweight, or obese.

If you have internet access at your meeting place, find a BMI calculator online—a good one is on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/index.html—and let Scouts calculate their BMIs.



You can also estimate body fat using a caliper, bio-electrical impedance testing, or hydrostatic weighing.



Keep an accurate record of your fitness program.

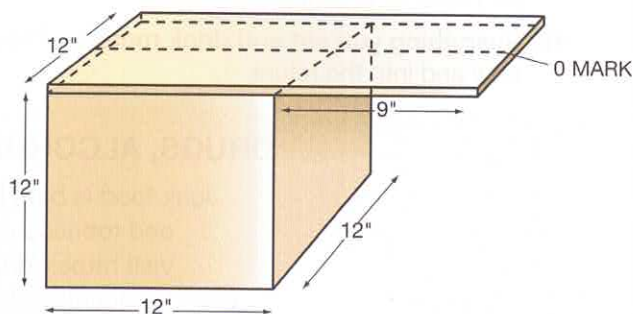
MEASURING FLEXIBILITY



The sit-and-reach test is an easy way to measure flexibility of areas such as the lower back and the back of the thighs. This test uses a special “sit-and-reach” box, shown here, or similar improvised device such as a yardstick taped to a bench. This stretch works many joints and muscles, including the hips, shoulders, and ankles.

To assume the starting position, remove your shoes and sit facing the sit-and-reach box. Keep your knees fully extended and flat on the floor, and place your feet against the end board. You might need to have someone gently hold your knees flat on the floor. Extend your arms forward with your hands placed on top of each other, palms down. Bend at the hips (not curling the shoulders), reach forward along the measuring scale four times, and hold your hands at the maximum position on the measuring scale for the fourth reach. Record the measurement of the fourth reach.

See the *Personal Fitness* merit badge pamphlet for plans for a sit-and-reach box.





FITNESS AND NUTRITION GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

Body Composition and Fitness Evaluation

Equipment: Measuring tape, stopwatch, sit-and-reach box (described earlier), scale, skin fold calipers (optional), bioelectrical impedance device (optional)

How to play: Evaluate each Scout's fitness and body composition for the appropriate advancement that they are working on (Tenderfoot, Personal Fitness merit badge, Quest Award, or Presidential Youth Fitness Award). Test body composition, aerobic function, strength, and flexibility. Set up several testing stations, and do tests round-robin style.

Record: Record the results to be used for comparison at later dates as appropriate to the advancement being worked on.

Note: Since most awards require multiple tests over time, this activity could be repeated at several meetings or offered as a preopening activity.

Know Your Food Groups

Equipment: None

How to play: Have the group stand in a large circle, and have one Scout stand in the middle and be "It." That Scout points to anyone in the circle and names a food group. In order to remain in the game, the person selected must name a food in that food group within three seconds, or else he or she must sit down. The last person standing becomes "It" for the next round.

Note: For an added challenge, impose a rule that one food cannot be named twice in the same round.

Izzy-Dizzy Relay

Equipment: None

How to play: Have the teams line up in relay formation. In turn, each member runs to a designated turning point, touches one finger to the ground or floor, walks around his or her finger six times, then runs back to tag the next Scout.

Scoring: The winning team is the first one to have all members complete the activity and return to the starting line.

Note: Beware of falls! It's a good idea to assign each group a spotter to run alongside players for a few yards in case they fall.

Team Sports

Dodge Ball

Equipment: Several rubber dodge balls

How to play: In an appropriate setting, divide into two teams. Identify the play boundaries with a center line. Upon signal, each side attempts to throw a ball at players on the other side. A player hit below the shoulders is out. The team of the last player standing wins. (There are many variations of this game, so choose the rules that work best for you.)



Ultimate

Equipment: Flying disc

How to play: In an appropriate setting, divide into two teams. Identify the play boundaries. This game is played by passing the disc from player to player until it reaches a team member in the scoring zone. Focus on team play.



Lacrosse

Equipment: Lacrosse sticks, ball, goals, and protective equipment.

How to play: In an appropriate playing area, divide into two teams. Identify the play boundaries. This game is played by passing and throwing the lacrosse ball with lacrosse sticks between players and into a goal. Focus on team play.





E.D.G.E. Ideas

Explain how it is done—Tell them.

Demonstrate the steps—Show them.

Guide learners as they practice—Watch them do it.

Enable them to succeed on their own—Have them practice/teach it.

EXPLAIN

- Explain what it means to be in shape.
- Discuss how fitness and body composition are evaluated.
- Discuss what makes a nutritious diet.
- List causes of stress and positive and negative ways to help reduce stress.
- Show a video on the consequences of using drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

GUIDE

- Walk Scouts through fitness and body composition evaluations.
- Guide Scouts in using diet logs and activity tracking software.
- Teach basic breathing, stretching, yoga, and tai chi techniques.
- Help Scouts research local walks, runs, and adventure races.

DEMONSTRATE

- Demonstrate proper exercise techniques.
- Show how to create a balanced menu using the MyPlate concept.
- Demonstrate relaxation techniques.
- Show how to use the sit-and-reach box.

ENABLE

- Have Scouts run a fitness clinic for Webelos Scouts.
- Encourage Scouts to recruit accountability partners to monitor each other's fitness activities.
- Give Scouts the resources they need to pursue the SCOUTStrong PALA Challenge.
- Create unit awards to encourage Scouts to meet fitness goals.

MAIN EVENT SUMMARIES

● ESSENTIAL	■ CHALLENGING	◆ ADVANCED
Day Activity	Day or Overnight Activity	Day or Overnight Activity
Community walk or run—Participate in or create your own community race. Consider a 5K or 10K race. These events often correspond with local holidays or are sponsored by local or national charities. Depending on the fitness levels of your participants, they may be able to walk or run this race. Compare times among your group, and give recognitions and awards.	Orienteering meet—Participate in a public orienteering meet. Compete against other orienteering enthusiasts as well as other teams from your unit. Not only will you need good orienteering skills, but you will need to be fit for the race. If possible, combine this event with an overnight camping trip.	Adventure race—Find an adventure race in your area and participate as a team. These competitions combine several competitive events such as cycling, running, orienteering, paddling, climbing, rappelling, zip-lining, etc. Make sure the team has the appropriate training and skills to participate safely. A race like this makes a good option for a superactivity if you have covered all other topics earlier in the year.



FITNESS AND NUTRITION

Meeting Plan: Getting Into Shape



Week 1 Date _____

Note: This meeting may be repeated as needed for advancement.

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	As Scouts arrive, invite them to play hacky sack. Challenge them to see how long they can keep the beanbag in the air.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define what it means to be in shape. Explain the components of personal fitness. Discuss reasons for becoming fit. Explain body composition and how it is measured. 		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 15 minutes	Learn the proper techniques and advancement requirements for the following exercises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength: push-ups, sit-ups, and pull-ups Flexibility: hurdler's stretch Endurance: standing long jump, 1/4-mile run or walk 		7:25 p.m.
	Learn the proper techniques and advancement requirements for the following exercises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength: push-ups, sit-ups, and pull-ups Flexibility: sit and reach Endurance: 9-minute or 1-mile run or walk 		
	Learn the proper techniques and advancement requirements for the following exercises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength: push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups, and squats Flexibility: sit and reach Endurance: 9-minute or 1-mile run or walk 		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin making plans for the main event. Work on advancement and Scout skills as needed. 		7:40 p.m.
Activity 30 minutes	Do body composition and fitness evaluations (described earlier).		7:55 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



FITNESS AND NUTRITION

Meeting Plan: Nutrition and Diet



Week 2 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Set out a display of food packages. Have Scouts study the labels and list the strange ingredients they find. Challenge them to find the longest, scariest-sounding ingredient names.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss what makes up a nutritious diet.• Learn about the MyPlate approach to eating.• Discuss how good nutrition is related to the other components of personal fitness.• Define calories and explain three macro-nutrients (proteins, carbohydrates, and fats).• Discuss the importance of water.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 30 minutes	List what you ate for the last two days. Evaluate how that fits into the MyPlate concept and whether it represents a balanced diet.		7:30 p.m.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do the activity above.• Learn how to read food labels.• Compare the calories of similar products.• Discuss how to lose weight.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do the activity above.• Learn about nutrition software and smartphone apps.• Keep track of foods you eat with an online diet tracker.• Set goals and track them for the next month.		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan food for the upcoming main event.• Work on Scout skills as needed.		8 p.m.
Game 10 minutes	Play Know Your Food Group (described earlier).		8:15 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



FITNESS AND NUTRITION

Meeting Plan: Stress Management and Relaxation



Week 3 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Show internet videos illustrating relaxation techniques.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Discuss the causes of stress, problems stress can cause, and positive and negative ways people try to reduce stress.Discuss the negative effects of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 40 minutes	Practice stretching and breathing.		7:25 p.m.
	Under the direction of a trained instructor, learn basic yoga.		
	Under the direction of a trained instructor, learn basic tai chi.		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	Review the requirements for the SCOUTStrong PALA Challenge. Find out how your group could take advantage of this opportunity to get more fit.		8:05 p.m.
Game 10 minutes	Play Izzy Dizzy Relay (described earlier).		8:15 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.






FITNESS AND NUTRITION

Meeting Plan: Get Out and Play



Week 4 Date _____

Note: This meeting may be repeated any time you need a fun activity.

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Set up game space, and do warm-up and stretching exercises.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 5 minutes	Discuss guidelines for playing your chosen sport safely and fairly. Discuss how to balance teamwork and individual effort.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 5 minutes   	Explain the rules of dodge ball.		7:15 p.m.
	Explain the rules of ultimate.		
	Explain the rules of lacrosse.		
Breakout Groups 10 minutes	Finalize plans for participating in the main event.		7:20 p.m.
Activity/Game 55 minutes	Spend the majority of the meeting time with a friendly sports competition. Choose one game for the entire group. Or, if you have space, enough participants, and the required equipment, you could have more than one sport happening at the same time. Any other team sport can be substituted according to interest and size of group. Possibilities include basketball, soccer, roller hockey, etc.		7:30 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



FITNESS AND NUTRITION

Main Event: Community Walk or Run



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: 4 to 6 hours

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Essential (Tier I)

Participate in or create your own community race. Consider a 5K or 10K race. These events often correspond with local holidays or are organized by local or national charities. Depending on the fitness levels of your participants, they may be able to walk or run this race. Compare times among your group, and give recognitions and awards.

Equipment List

- Appropriate race clothing
- Supportive running shoes
- Whistles
- Good nutritious meals (preferably prepared by the group)
- Water
- First-aid kit

Activity

- Meet for transportation to the event.
- Check in at an appropriate time.
- Have fun running or walking the race.
- Meet for lunch after the race.

Safety

- Use the buddy system.
- Always train before a race.
- Have cellphones in case of an emergency.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes

Charity events like walkathons offer Scouts a way to do a Good Turn while participating in a fitness activity. Encourage friendly competition between Scouts to see who can recruit the most sponsors.



FITNESS AND NUTRITION

Main Event: Orienteering Meet



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: 4 to 6 hours or overnight

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Challenging (Tier II)

Participate in a public orienteering meet. Compete against other orienteering enthusiasts as well as other teams from your unit. Not only will you need good orienteering skills, but you will need to be fit for the race. If possible, combine this event with an overnight camping trip.

Equipment List

- Compasses
- Appropriate race clothing
- Supportive running shoes
- Whistles
- Good nutritious meals (preferably prepared by the group)
- Water
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)
- If the race includes an overnight stay, appropriate camping equipment

Activity

- Contact a local orienteering club and find out when it holds public meets.
- Make arrangements to participate in one of those meets.
- If multiple races are available, decide which one is appropriate for your group's fitness level.
- Preregister for the meet as required.
- Participate in the meet.
- After the event, hold a debriefing session. Make plans to work on needed skills.
- Review results of your different teams and present your own awards.

Safety

- Spend an appropriate amount of time training for this event.
- Use the buddy system.
- Have a first-aid kit available.
- Cellphones are a good idea.
- Take caution to avoid tripping and falling while running across uneven surfaces.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes

It would be best to do this event after the unit has completed the Orienteering program feature. It might also take months of fitness training in order to properly prepare.



FITNESS AND NUTRITION

Main Event: Adventure Race



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: 4 to 6 hours or overnight

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____



Advanced (Tier III)

Find an adventure race in your area and participate as a team. These competitions combine several competitive events such as cycling, running, orienteering, paddling, climbing, rappelling, zip-lining, etc. Make sure the team has the appropriate training and skills to participate safely. A race like this makes a good option for a superactivity if you have covered all other topics earlier in the year.

Equipment List

- Appropriate race clothing
- Supportive running shoes
- Equipment as needed for the different events
- Good nutritious meals (preferably prepared by the group)
- Water
- If the race includes an overnight stay, appropriate camping equipment

Activity

- Locate an appropriate adventure race in your area.
- Become proficient in the skills needed for the different events.
- Register for, transport to, and check in at the adventure race.
- Have fun racing.
- Camp as appropriate.
- Demonstrate good outdoor ethics.

Safety

- Spend an appropriate amount of time training for this event.
- Use the buddy system.
- Have a first-aid kit available.
- Cellphones are a good idea.
- Make sure you have appropriate training and skill in order to compete in all events.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes



RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Books

Athletics, Cooking, Personal Fitness, Public Health, and Sports merit badge pamphlets

American College of Sports Medicine, ed. *ACSM's Complete Guide to Fitness & Health*. Human Kinetics, 2011.

Chryssicas, Mary Kaye. *Breathe: Yoga for Teens*. DK Children, 2007.

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Faigenbaum, Avery, and Wayne Westcott. *Youth Strength Training: Programs for Health, Fitness, and Sport*. Human Kinetics, 2009.

KidsPeace. *I've Got This Friend Who: Advice for Teens and Their Friends on Alcohol, Drugs, Eating Disorders, Risky Behavior, and More*. Hazelden, 2007.

Websites

ChooseMyPlate.gov

Website: www.choosemyplate.gov

FitnessGram

Website: www.cooperinstitute.org/fitnessgram

Human Kinetics

Website: www.humankinetics.com

Nourish Interactive

Website: www.nourishinteractive.com

Presidential Youth Fitness Program

Website: <https://pyfp.org/>

The SCOUTStrong Presidential Active Lifestyle Award Challenge

Website: www.scouting.org/resources/bsa-fit/scout-strong/

Related Program Features

Backpacking, Climbing and Rappelling, Cooking, Cycling, Hiking, Orienteering, Paddle Sports, Soccer

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