



Family Activity Topics

1. Learning Through Fun and Adventure
2. Strengthening Family Relationships
3. Developing Personal Strengths
4. Teaching Responsibility
5. Handling Difficult Situations

1. Learning Through Fun and Adventure

Enjoying Family Fun



Families may choose one activity under this topic to count as one of the 10 activities needed for the BSA Family Award.

Purpose: To encourage family members to spend time together having fun and sharing adventures.

Suggested Activities

1. Go on a family camping trip, or camp in the backyard. Let everyone help plan, pack, and set up camp. Cook dinner outside.
2. Visit a historic site.
3. Learn a folk dance.
4. Hold a family game night. Play board games, card games, or other games everyone enjoys.
5. As a family, attend a school, community, or professional concert or musical event, play, or melodrama.
6. Visit a museum, art gallery, or art exhibit. Identify and discuss which exhibit each family member liked best.
7. Go bird-watching. Take along a field guide from the local library to help you learn about the birds you see.
8. Attend a school, community, or professional sporting event.
9. Go on a bike ride or a family hike. Plan the route and establish safety rules ahead of time. Take water and a snack.
10. Make homemade ice cream.
11. Participate in a family sports activity.
12. Attend a fair, festival, or other community celebration.
13. Go to an open area and fly homemade or purchased kites.
14. Visit a planetarium or go stargazing.
15. Have a winter fun day. Activities could include sledding, ice skating, skiing, or building snow forts.
16. Go to a zoo, petting zoo, or county or state fair to see the animals.
17. Plant a family garden. Let everyone help prepare the soil, plant the seeds or seedlings, care for the garden, and harvest the vegetables or fruits.
18. Go fishing, clamming, or crabbing. Learn and follow local fishing regulations.
19. As a family, read aloud a book or story that the whole family will enjoy. It could be an adventure, a mystery, or something funny.
20. Start a family collection, such as of shells, rocks, buttons, restaurant paper place mats, or canceled postage stamps.
21. Go to the beach or community swimming pool.
22. Ride on a bus, train, or ferry to a destination of your choice.
23. Go to an amusement park or carnival.

Knowing It's Make-Believe



Families may choose one activity under this topic to count as one of the 10 activities needed for the BSA Family Award.

Purpose: To teach children to understand the difference between the real world and the make-believe world they encounter through television, movies, video games, and other media.

Note to parents: Recognizing what is real and what is fantasy is an important part of growing up. Technology and special effects have made it harder for children to know the difference. It is not enough to just say that something is not real; we need to prove it. We need to debunk the myth that "we've seen it at the movies, on television, or in the tabloids, so it must be true."

Suggested Activities

1. A movie hero jumps from a building and doesn't break a bone. To show how this is done, get two raw eggs and a large, soft pillow. Have the child drop an egg from a height of three feet onto the pillow. The egg should not break. Explain that it is cushioned just like a stuntman who falls on foam rubber or on a huge air mattress.
2. Watch one of the many "making of" films about a movie, or a program about stunt performers. Explain how the use of "blue or green screen" filming and computer graphics can make the actors appear to be in dangerous situations.
3. Perform magic tricks with your children. First, do the trick, and then teach them to do the trick. Explain how many things they see and hear in movies or on television are just tricks that make them think those things are real. See *Cub Scout Magic*, No. 33210, for ideas for tricks.
4. Play a car racing video game. A video car can travel at speeds exceeding 100 miles per hour. These cars can jump over open expanses and crash into other cars, only to lose points and continue on their way. Take your child to a junkyard to look at real vehicles that have been in accidents.
5. Some publications brandish headlines like "Devil's face seen in cloud over church" or "Alligator man dishes up his weight in fish every day." Explain to your child that imaginative people can make headlines out of almost anything. On a day when the clouds are billowing, have each family member find as many objects or faces as they can in the clouds. Use this to explain some publishers' use of outlandish headlines to get readers to buy their magazines.
6. Casey at the Bat, Johnny Appleseed, and Casey Jones are examples of people who did something special. Through time, their stories were expanded as folk stories and songs. Read a folk story (tall tale) or learn a song about one of these people. Then read the history of what they actually did. Discuss the differences in the stories.
7. A professional wrestler is stomped on and thrown out of the ring. The hero in a martial arts film battles five opponents at once. Neither the wrestler nor the hero gets hurt. Take your family to a ballet or a self-defense demonstration. Talk about how the participants practice specific moves, like in a dance, until they can anticipate each other's every move. They learn to fall so they don't get hurt. The jabs and kicks stop just short of actually hitting the other person. Take turns stomping on a balloon without breaking it. Show how real you can make that stomp look depending on your other body actions and noises.
8. Attend a play or melodrama. Talk about the actors, scenery, and props that were used to suggest real life.
9. Tour a movie or television studio.
10. As a family, read aloud a book about creating make-believe. Suggestions:
 - *The Bionic Bunny Show*, Marc Brown, Little, Brown 1985, also Econo-Clad Books, 1999. An ordinary rabbit is portrayed as a bionic bunny on his television series.
 - *Matilda's Movie Adventures*, Lucy Dahl, Viking, 1996. An inside look at the movie version of Roald Dahl's "Matilda," a story about a little girl who uses her special powers to thwart the bullying headmistress of her school.
 - *The Bunyans*, Audrey Wood, Scholastic, 1996. Paul Bunyan and his family do some (for them) ordinary things that result in the formation of Niagara Falls and other natural monuments.

Cultivating Talents

Families may choose one activity under this topic to count as one of the 10 activities needed for the BSA Family Award.

Purpose: To encourage family members to reach their full potential as they develop their talents.

Suggested Activities

1. Show the family an unlit, wooden match. Ask family members what power lies within this little piece of wood. The discussion should lead to the idea that it can start a fire that, if controlled, can be a great benefit to people by bringing warmth and light. Strike the match and let someone blow it out. Point out that at the beginning stage the flame is delicate and easily destroyed. Point out that people's feelings are delicate. Most of us have many inner fears. Perhaps one of the greatest fears is that we will be laughed at or ridiculed. Our talents are small in the beginning and, like a little flame, they can be blown out easily by laughter or unkind words.
Discuss what family members can do to help others develop their talents. Select one or two specific ideas or activities that the family can do to encourage all family members to develop their talents.
2. As a family, attend an activity where a family member's talents are used or displayed, such as a sports event, school program, recital, or science fair. Try to attend an activity for every child in the family.
3. As a family, attend a college, community, or professional concert, art show, play, or exhibit where people perform or display works. Talk about how the people involved with the event practiced and trained to develop their talents.
4. Ask: "A person with a 'green thumb' has what talent?" (Answer: The person is a good gardener.) Point out that sports, music, and art are not the only talents a person can have. With the family, make a list of other talents a person can develop. Examples might include writing, working on cars, building things, sewing, solving problems, or caring for animals.
5. Visit a craft- or art-supply store. Select one inexpensive activity for the whole family to try at home. Complete the project.
6. As a family, visit a dance, art, or music studio that gives lessons. Encourage family members to learn more about the arts, and to practice a creative outlet of their own choosing.
7. Offer to help others develop their talents. Family members could teach younger children to ride a two-wheel bike, bat a ball, or cut with scissors.
8. Encourage children to develop cooking talents by letting them decorate plain cookies or by helping to prepare meals.
9. Start a new family hobby of your choice. Encourage family members to develop their own individual hobbies, too.
10. Plan a "Talent Night." This can be elaborate or simple, with everyone participating. Someone might make tickets. Another family member could videotape the show. Another could be the announcer. Have each member perform or display a talent.
11. Plan a "Talent Scout Week." An envelope labeled for each family member is placed on the bulletin board or refrigerator. Each family member is to be a "talent scout" and recognize special skills and abilities in others. Each talent discovered is written on a small card and placed in the individual's envelope. Small children can draw a picture or ask someone to write for them.
12. As a family, read aloud a book about people discovering or developing their talents. Suggestions:
 - *Arturo's Baton*, Syd Hoff, Clarion Books, 1995. Houghton Mifflin, 1995. When an orchestra conductor misplaces his baton, he learns that it is his own talents, not a little stick, that make him famous.
 - *Frida Maria: A Story of the Old Southwest*, Deborah Nourse Lattimore, Harcourt Brace, 1997. (Also available in Spanish: *Frida Maria: un Cuento Del Sudoeste De Antes*, Aida E. Marcuse (translator), 1997.) Because she does not sew, cook, or dance like a "proper señorita," Frida cannot please her mother until she saves the day at the fiesta with her special talent.

Being Patriotic

Families may choose one activity under this topic to count as one of the 10 activities needed for the BSA Family Award.

Purpose: To help family members recognize feelings of patriotism and encourage expression of those feelings.

Note to parents: Patriotism is more than being a good citizen. Citizenship is enjoying the rights and participating in the responsibilities that you have in your country. Patriotism is the willingness to preserve, protect, defend, and respect those rights and responsibilities. Patriotism is a feeling. It is the tear in your eye when you hear the national anthem or the lump in your throat when you talk to a war hero.

Children can recognize the pride they have in their school and favorite sports team. Relate that feeling to our country and how we should cheer for our country and want to protect it from harm.

Suggested Activities

1. Learn a patriotic song and the history behind its meaning. Some suggestions are "The Star-Spangled Banner," "God Bless America," "America," "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," "Yankee Doodle," "Yankee Doodle Dandy," "Over There," and "Stars and Stripes Forever." Some members of the family may learn the song by playing it on an instrument.
2. As a family, read about a special event in American history and about some American heroes. Talk about what made that event special or what made the people heroes. How were people or events honored at that time in history? How do we honor them today?
3. Help your children create a puppet show or skit about an event in American history or about the life of an American hero. Perform the show or skit at a family gathering.
4. Visit a national park or national historic site. Talk with a ranger or historian about preservation of natural and historic sites.
5. Have members in the family participate in the Junior Ranger Program or a youth community service group. Have those members teach the entire family some of the ideas they have learned.
6. Make and distribute "Remember to Vote" cards to your neighbors the day before a local, state, or national election.
7. Participate in or watch a community parade on a national holiday.
8. Learn about the history of American flags, including your state flag. Look at the evolution of the design and have each person make a paper place mat of his or her favorite historical flag. If possible, laminate the place mats and use them on patriotic days.
9. Learn proper flag etiquette. Display an American flag at your home on holidays.
10. Celebrate a patriotic holiday. Watch the fireworks on Independence Day, for instance, or attend the parade on Veteran's Day, prepare your own ceremony for Flag Day, or make holiday cards for veterans.
11. Talk to two veterans of military service. They could be relatives, neighbors, teachers, or friends. Were they in any wars? What kind of service have they given this country? Imagine with them how life would have been different had Americans not served in the military. Thank them for what they did to make your life what it is today.
12. Hike or drive a historic trail or route such as a section of the Santa Fe Trail or the route followed by the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Learn about the people who blazed the trail.
13. Research your family history and why they, or their ethnic group, came to America. Were they looking for freedom? Were they forced out of their former country? How did they get established in America? How did they get involved with building our country? Discuss how this makes you feel. Are you proud of what they did?
14. Visit a citizenship class for immigrants. Find out what they must learn to become citizens. Talk to people in the class and ask them why they want to become citizens.
15. Talk to someone from another country and ask why he or she came to the United States. Find out about the person's loyalty and pride in his or her country. Does this person want to become a U.S. citizen? Why or why not?
16. Visit the nation's Capitol in Washington, D.C., or visit your state capitol.
17. Pantomime an event in American history. Divide your family into two teams. Each team picks an event and in turn acts it out without words. The other team guesses the event.

18. Prepare a trivia game about American history. You could put each question in a red, white, or blue balloon and have family members take turns popping a balloon and answering the question.
19. Have each family member memorize a patriotic poem or learn a historical story and repeat it to the family.
20. Encourage family members to make up rhymes, songs, or poems about our country. Do this activity while you are working together or traveling by car.
21. Visit a military cemetery or military section of a local cemetery. Place flags, flowers, or personal notes on graves. Read the names and information on the headstones out loud. How old were the deceased when they died? Did they die during a war? Did they receive any medals or awards? Try to imagine who they were. You may want to "adopt" some of these heroes and visit their graves occasionally.
22. Cook a "traditional" American Thanksgiving Day dinner. Let every family member prepare part of the meal. Learn about the history of the holiday. Talk about the Pilgrims and discuss why they came to America, the hardships they faced, and how they survived.
23. If your family likes to travel, start a collection of miniature state flags or state flag pins from every state you visit.
24. Get a book from the library of paintings by Norman Rockwell. Find illustrations of his famous "Four Freedoms" series: Freedom of Speech, Freedom from Fear, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom from Want. Look at the pictures and talk about how Rockwell expressed these freedoms in his artwork.
25. Have family members draw or paint a picture showing one of the freedoms they enjoy by living in America. Instead of individual pictures, the family could work jointly on a mural on a large sheet of butcher paper.
26. Make a calendar of dates in American history. Have each family member research events and add them to the calendar in different-colored pens or pencils. This project could last for one month, several months, or a full year.
27. As a family, read aloud a book about people or events in our nation's history. Suggestions:
 - *The Star-Spangled Banner*, Francis Scott Key; Peter Spier (illustrator). Dell Books for Young Readers, 1992. Illustrates for young children the words of our national anthem. Also has information on the battle that inspired Francis Scott Key to write his poem.
 - *Hurray for the Fourth of July*, Wendy Watson, Houghton Mifflin, 1992. A small-town family celebrates the Fourth of July by attending a parade, having a picnic, and watching fireworks. Interspersed throughout the pages are patriotic songs and traditional rhymes.
 - *A Picture Book of Paul Revere*, David A. Adler; John and Alexandra Wallner (illustrators), Holiday House, 1997. A biography of the great Boston silversmith and patriot of the American Revolution, who helped his country win independence.
 - *The National Anthem*, Patricia Ryon Quiri, Children's Press, 1998, also a paper edition, True Books, America Symbols, 1998. Describes how a patriotic and eloquent attorney was inspired to write "The Star-Spangled Banner" after witnessing the British attack on Fort McHenry during the War of 1812.