



BSA Ceremonies and Campfire Guidance

(National Camping School)

Ceremonies and campfires are fun and exciting parts of any camping experience! They give youth the ability to perform, but runons, stories, skits and songs must also fit within the program guidelines of the BSA. There are numerous things that are inappropriate and unacceptable. While the following is not an exhaustive list, it will help you begin the discussion about ensuring only appropriate material is portrayed:

- No name Calling, put-downs, Hazing
- No references to undergarments, nudity or bodily functions
- No derogatory references to or stereotyping of ethnic or cultural backgrounds, economic situations, or disabilities
- No portrayal of sensitive social issues such as alcohol, drugs, gangs, guns, suicide, etc. – *be mindful of this in song lyrics as well.*
- Wasteful, ill-mannered, or improper use of food or water including wasting food in ANY way for comedic purpose is not allowed. *You may not know the current situation of youth and adults who are in the audience. Many may not have adequate food at home and the wasting of food in any way would further point out this disparity. Additionally there are parts of the world where water is not potable therefore the wasting of water is not appropriate.*
- No inside jokes that exclude some of those present
- Do not change lyrics to patriotic songs (“America”, “America the Beautiful”, “God Bless America”, “The Star-Spangled Banner”) or hymns and other spiritual songs
- Do not embarrass anyone – including staff or audience members (even if they are “in on it”) - *just because the staff member is in on it, everyone in the audience is not aware of that fact and the appearance is that you are making fun of someone.*
- Do not portray violent behavior or any behavior not in line with the Guide to Safe Scouting (ex. pointing “guns” at each other)
- No bathroom humor or skits/songs where a toilet is the punchline or a part of the skit or song.
- No water skits – NO ONE gets wet in any way (includes staff, and even if they are “in on it”)
- No material with sexual overtones
- **Do not include anything that is not in keeping with the ideals of the Boy Scouts of America.**

Best motto to have is, “If in doubt, take it out!”

All material should be vetted by the camp leadership team. Be sure you understand all aspects of the performance and what will happen. For example, a unit may have the same name for a skit and have a different interpretation of it than you expected.

Each of us has a role to help ensure our ceremonies and campfires represent the BSA ideals and brand. Thank you for communicating this material to your short-term camps so that they can help us all represent the best in Scouting.