

PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN RECREATION

Many alluring amusements surround youth today. The Pathfinder program offers a positive alternative by encouraging wholesome Christian recreation. Inspired instruction from Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White provide principles for helping today's leaders provide viable alternatives. Notice the following:

“There is a distinction between recreation and amusement. Recreation, when true to its name, re-creation, tends to strengthen and build up. Calling us aside from our ordinary cares and occupations, it affords refreshment for mind and body, and thus enables us to return with new vigor to the earnest work of life. Amusement, on the other hand, is sought for the sake of pleasure and is often carried to excess; it absorbs the energies that are required for useful work, and thus proves a hindrance to life's success” – *Education*, p. 207.

Pathfinders need guidance in learning to distinguish between recreation and amusement. Pathfinder leaders need guidance, too. They should study such materials as *Education* (p. 207-222); *Counsels to Parents and Teachers and Students* (p. 321-354); *Testimonies for the Church Volume 1* (p. 514-520); and *The Adventist Home* (p. 293-350).

It is not always easy to explain what is wrong with a particular activity or to determine when a thing ceases to be a worth while recreation and becomes a worthless amusement. For example, Ellen White says, “I do not condemn the simple exercise of playing ball; but this, even in its simplicity, may be overdone.” – *The Adventist Home*, p. 499.

Game activity is overdone when it glorifies the individual star, or when teams play more for the sake of winning than for the joy of group recreation. In such cases, the boy or girl who is less adept in a particular sport is left out. For most games it is good for Pathfinder leaders to make up teams or sides irrespective of units and to reorganize frequently. And “work-up” games can often be just as enjoyable as team games. The important thing to remember is that the activity includes the whole club —leader, counselors, and all the Pathfinders.

*Whether, then, you
eat or drink or
whatever you do, do
all to the glory of
God.”*

1Corinthians 10:31 NASB

The Pathfinder recreation program must offer something specific that can't be found in just any corner of a gymnasium. It must be magnetic enough to pull the “screen addict” out of the house into the fresh air and sunshine. It must appeal to the short or tall, the heavy or lean, the weak or strong. And that is where group field games come in — they include everyone.

Are activities such as field games worth the extra planning and supervision required? This is like asking whether our boys and girls are worth saving. “While sinful amusements are condemned, as they should be, let parents, teachers, and guardians of youth [Pathfinder leaders] provide in their stead innocent pleasures, which will not taint or corrupt the morals” – *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 355.

GUIDELINES FOR GAME LEADERSHIP

- Make sure the game is suitable for the age group.
- Know the rules thoroughly.
- Get the players into formation quickly and without confusion.
- Explain the game, but be brief.
- Demonstrate any difficult part if necessary.
- Play along with the Pathfinders — your presence makes it more fun. In some games you will need to act as umpire, referee, time keeper, etc.
- Select at least twice as many games as you'll probably use. It gives you a chance to pick and choose.
- Play a game only as long as interest is high. Don't be afraid to repeat games if the Pathfinders want to. It may be old to you, but remember that it may be new to them.
- Emphasize the dramatic element that exists in all games.
- Teach good playing techniques, but do it unobtrusively. For example: "Matt, try holding your elbows like this. I think you'll make more speed."
- In a singing game, keep the music sweet. Discourage screaming; encourage singing.
- Insist on fair play. Keep the rules simple, but follow the rules.
- Encourage having a good time, friendliness, good sportsmanship, and cooperation rather than intense competition.

GUIDELINES FOR GAME FORMATION

In many games the players must get into a certain formation. Getting them into the proper formation without confusion and delay is a sign of skillful game leadership. An easy way to get your Pathfinders into several teams is to have them form a circle. Starting with one Pathfinder have them count off, using as many numbers as there should be teams. For example: for four teams in a relay race the Pathfinders would count 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on until each had a number. Then say, “All number ones line up behind Bill; number twos line up behind Mary,” and so on.

The major game formations are described and pictured below.

File: Players are in a single line, one behind the other.

Rank: Players are in a single line, side by side.

Single circle: Players stand or sit in a ring. For various games they may face out, or face in, or face clockwise or counterclockwise, depending upon the direction they will move in the game.

Double circle: Two rings, one inside the other.

Zigzag: Players are in two ranks, each player usually an arm’s length away, in such a way that the players in any rank are not directly behind those in the rank before or behind them.

Informal: Players stand around the counselor or “It” in an informal grouping, usually fairly semicircular in shape. They are near enough to see, to hear, and usually to touch each other and the counselor. This formation is often used while giving instructions, or for questions and answers prior to a chase or hunt.

