



Using Reflections

We can make our experiences more meaningful and effective if we reflect upon them. In Scouting, reflection is simply the process of the Scouts talking about their experiences immediately after an exercise or activity with a little bit of wise moderating.

Reflection provides an opportunity for everyone in the group to have input into what happened. Reflection is best accomplished by asking open-ended questions such as “What,” “How,” “When,” and “Where.”

In reflection, there are no right or wrong answers, just ideas, opinions, and insights.

You can use reflections to evaluate troop activities, and it will result in improved engagement by your Scouts in future planning and execution of activities. Leading reflections is a simple process that can greatly enhance the learning process.

Lay the ground rules for discussion

Have the Scouts sit so they can see one another, and ask them to agree not to interrupt or make fun of each other. Let them know they are free to keep silent if they wish.

All participants should be reminded of the basic ground rules of reflections:

- No putdowns allowed; every response is welcome and valid.
- The person conducting the session should not show disapproval of a response or a person, either verbally or nonverbally.

Facilitate the discussion

As the leader, avoid the temptation to talk about your own experiences. Reserve judgment about what the Scouts say to avoid criticizing them. Help the discussion get going, then guide the discussion to the teaching points through effective open-ended questions. You want the teaching points to come from the Scouts, but you want them to get to the key points. If you describe what you saw, be sure that your comments don't stop the participants from adding their own thoughts.

Above all, be positive. Have fun with the activity and with the reflection.



Use thought-provoking questions

Have some questions in mind prior to starting the reflection. Know where you want the reflection to head and what lessons you want to ensure are drawn out of it. The reflection discussion may often head in directions you had not thought of or known about, but ensure it also covers the key concepts that you as the leader saw as important to the training. The following types of questions are useful in reflecting:

- *Open-ended questions.* Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” Ask things like: “What was the purpose of the game?” and “What did you learn about yourself?”
- *Feeling questions* require Scouts to reflect on how they feel about what they did. “How did it feel when you started to pull together?”
- *Judgment questions* ask Scouts to make decisions about things. “What was the best part?” or “Why was it a good idea?”
- *Guiding questions* steer your Scouts toward the purpose of the activity and keep the discussion focused. “What got you all going in the right direction?”
- *Closing questions* help Scouts draw conclusions and end the discussion. “What did you learn?” or “What would you do differently?”

Close the reflection

Wrap up the discussion and briefly summarize the key points and ideas that were raised during the reflection. The reflection facilitator acts as a moderator, initiating conversation by asking questions and encouraging fruitful conversation that leads toward the objective of the teaching segment. When a participant states an important point, it is worth repeating or restating to strengthen its impact on the group, or seeking additional clarification or viewpoints. If the facilitator is successful in getting the participants to state all the reflecting points provided in each game, then little follow-up is needed beyond a summary statement.

This is a very effective method of teaching because the participants learn actively and because the trainer gets to hear the digested learning of the participants and therefore knows if important lessons have been learned.