

A Safe Campfire Lesson Plan

adapted from the Focus on Fire Manual (1998)

A Safe Campfire

Learning Outcomes

Students will understand the nature of fire and know how to safely build, light, maintain and extinguish a campfire.

Summary

Students will learn important fire safety practices through five activity centres.

Activity Information

Grade level: primary/junior

Subject: visual arts, science and technology; dramatic arts

Skills: problem solving, suggesting alternative answers

Group size: any

Duration: 2-3 hours; can be completed in several shorter time periods

Setting: indoors

Vocabulary: fire, burn, campfire, skit, poster, crayons.

Materials: blackboard or chart paper, wood, rocks, matches, activity centre signs and instruction sheets.

Pre-Activity Preparation

- create the five activity centres (see below);
- prepare covered trays which will contain small objects which are common to a campground such as small rocks, twigs, a tent peg, a piece of cloth, etc.;
- have five large pieces of paper for the cartoons activity centre (#4);
- have five large pieces of poster board for the posters activity centre (#5).

Activity Centre #1 - safe and unsafe campfire pictures cut into puzzles, paper and pencils.

Activity Centre #2 – paper and pencils, topic sheets cut and put into a hat, some props which can be used in the skits such as wood, a wool jacket, a sleeping bag.



Activity Centre #3 - three covered trays, two large trays with signs saying "Objects That Burn" and "Objects That Do Not Burn", three blindfolds, assorted items such as twigs, small rocks, tent pegs, pieces of cloth, feathers and shells.

Activity Centre #4 – large pieces of paper, pencils, crayons.

Activity Centre #5 - large pieces of paper, word sheets, scissors, glue, crayons.

Background Information

1. A safe campfire meets all of the following criteria:

- is built on bare rock or sand (mineral soil);
- is located far away from anything flammable, including overhanging tree branches;
- is a small campfire. For example, you can sit within one metre of it comfortably, the flames are not over one metre high and it can be controlled;
- has a responsible person watching it at all times;
- is made and put out with an adult supervising.

2. An unsafe campfire meets one or more of the following criteria:

- is built on a hot, windy day;
- is left without someone watching it;
- is too big. For example, is more than one metre high, is too hot to be within a metre, and cannot be controlled;
- does not have a pile of wood for fuel, which means that the people watching it must leave for more;
- is built on wood soil and close to trees.

3. How to extinguish a campfire

Drown the fire with water. Stir the ashes with a long stick to turn over hot coals and ashes. Move rocks to find hidden embers and coals. Drown the fire with water again. Repeat the procedure until the ashes stop smoking and hissing and everything looks wet.

4. Weather

Weather affects campfires in many ways and generally determines the kind of fire that will be experienced.

Wind - Wind increases the supply of oxygen to the fire. Wind may blow sparks from your campfire to grass and trees around it. The sun heats up grass and trees and the layer of dead leaves, needles and grass and dries them out. This makes it easier for them to catch fire.

Clouds - Clouds can cover the sun to make a day cooler. This means that the trees and grass will not dry as fast as on a sunny day.

Rain - Rain soaks into the grass, trees and layer of dead leaves, needles and grass, which makes it harder for them to catch fire.

Activity

1. Show a picture of a campsite with a campfire. You can use the picture included in this lesson plan or find another more local picture.

2. Have students brainstorm the kinds of things that they would find at a campsite with a campfire. Your list may include the following: tent, woodpile, picnic table, rocks, trees, shovel, sleeping bags, grass, pail, camper's food and water, campfire.

3. Arrange these objects into two lists under the headings "Objects That Burn" and "Objects That Do Not Burn".

4. From the information on these lists, draw a picture on the board or on a felt board of a campsite with a campfire, placing the objects that the children listed where the class feels is the best place.

5. Make another list of the weather conditions that would affect a campfire. Do these conditions make a campfire safer or more dangerous?

6. Discuss how the students and their families put out their campfires. Go through the correct procedure either by drawing it, simulating it or making a real controlled campfire in the yard.

NOTE: Please make sure you have permission from the proper authorities if making a real controlled campfire.

7. Ask why the class thinks it is important to put out their campfires. What might happen if you just left it going, or did not put it out totally?

8. Leave all the information on the board and divide the class into five groups. Each group will start at a different activity centre, and then circulate through the stations until all groups have completed all stations.

Activity Centre #1 - Puzzles

Have the students sort and assemble the two puzzles included as black line masters for this activity. When finished, students will decide which picture is the safe campfire, and which is the unsafe campfire. Have the students write down or tell the teacher the reasons they think the picture shows a safe campfire.

Activity Centre #2 - Skits

Have some groups write and perform a skit about where and how to build a campfire. Have other groups develop a skit, play-acting the proper way to extinguish a campfire.

Activity Centre #3 – What Am I?

Have enough prepared, covered trays to provide one tray for each pair of children in the group,

with the trays containing small objects that are common to a campground (for example, a small rock, a twig, a tent peg, a piece of cloth, a feather, a shell). Place a blindfold on one student per pair. With the "sighted" partner helping, have the blindfolded student feel the objects on the covered tray one at a time and try to identify each object.

When the first partner is finished, have the pair trade trays with another pair within their group. The second partner is then blindfolded, and tries to guess the objects on the tray. When the pairs are finished, have them classify the objects as "Objects That Burn" or "Objects That Do Not Burn". Have the two empty trays available for this classification.

Activity Centre #4 - Cartoons

Have the students fold a large piece of paper in half three times so that there are about eight squares showing. The students will draw a picture in each square to tell a story. The story could be about an unsafe fire or a fire that looked like it was out, but had some hidden embers that turned into a forest fire.

Activity Centre #5 – Posters

Have the students create a poster teaching other students in the school how to make and extinguish a safe campfire. What words should be on the poster? What is the easiest way to get the message to the rest of the school?

For younger grades, have the students draw a picture of a safe campfire site. Provide a list of vocabulary words and have the students cut and paste or copy these words and place them on the appropriate item in their picture. The words are: water, woodpile, small campfire, bare rock, sand, adult watching, ashes, out.

When all groups have been through the cycle of activities sit them down in a large group and have all the small groups perform the skits that they made in activity #2.

Evaluation

Have the students list and/or draw what makes a campfire safe and unsafe.

Extensions

1. Change the setting to a fireplace in the home, or brush burning in the back yard. All of the activities can be changed to this new setting.
2. Make the safe campfire demonstration a whole school event DURING Wildfire Prevention Week (third week of April) or National Forest Week (first week of May). Have your students travel to the other classes performing their skits. Put the student's posters up on the walls in the school.

Resources

Focus on Forests, primary/junior, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

Saving the Forests: A Rabbit's Story, by Janet Riehecky, ISBN 0-516-08119-5.

Instruction Sheets For Activity Centres

Activity Centre #1 - Puzzles

1. There are two puzzles at this centre. As a group, sort the pieces into the two puzzles and put them together.
2. When the two puzzles are complete, decide which picture shows the safe campfire. Write down the reasons why you think this is the picture that shows the safe campfire.

Activity Centre #2 – Skits

1. Pick a topic sheet out of the hat. Make up a skit on this topic. You will perform this skit in front of the class after you have gone through all the activity centres.
2. HINT: If you are not sure of the proper way to make or put out a fire, look on the board.

Activity Centre #3 – What Am I?

1. Find a partner.
2. Blindfold one of the two of you.
3. Each pair pick a tray. The partner that is not blindfolded will help the blindfolded one by giving him or her objects from the tray.
4. The blindfolded partner will guess what the objects are by feeling them or

smelling them. The other partner will tell you if you are right.

5. When the blindfolded partner is finished, take the blindfold off, cover the tray, and trade trays with another group. It is now the other partner's turn to be blindfolded and guess the objects.
6. When both partners have had a turn, sort the objects into two groups: "Things That Burn", and "Things That Do Not Burn".

Activity Centre #4 - Cartoons

1. Fold a piece of paper in half three times then unfold it. There should be eight squares on the sheet.
2. Draw a picture in each of the squares to make a story about an unsafe campfire or a campfire that looked like it was out, but was still hot in some places.

Activity Centre #5 - Posters

1. Make a poster to put in the school hallways teaching other students about safe campfires.
2. Copy or cut out the words from the word sheet and glue or write them on the poster near the object.

Words for Poster Activity Centre

water	small	campfire
watching	out	wood
ashes	bare	rock
pile	adult	sand

Topics for Skits

1. Where and how to build a safe campfire.
2. How to put out a campfire.



