

CEREMONIES IN SCOUTING

The life of a person has been traditionally interwoven with ceremonies from the time he is born to the time he is buried. Such events as births, baptisms, birthdays, graduations, weddings, and funerals are given marked significance and meaning through appropriate ceremonies.

So it is in Scouting. Scouts are persons, too. They will always appreciate good and meaningful traditions and ceremonies....ceremonies which are relevant to the occasion and to the times.

Ceremonies that are well planned and executed are colorful, dramatic, and leave a lasting impression. These rituals briefly focus the attention of the Scouts to the basic ideals of the Patrol, the Troop, and the Scouting Movement. An impressive ceremony always gives an excellent opportunity for publicity both for the Troop and the BSP as well.

Ceremonies may be conducted for the following purposes:

1. To open and close formal meetings and activities.
2. To induct/invest new members
3. To install officers.
4. To present recognition and awards

Kinds of Ceremonies in Scouting

Traditionally, these are the ceremonies conducted in Scouting:

1. **Investiture Ceremony** – This is one of the most important ceremonies in Scouting. It marks the formal acceptance of the boy into Boy Scouting. It gives him the thrill of belonging to a group and makes him feel ready to face new responsibilities.
2. **Court of Honor** - This is the ceremony where a Scout who has rendered exemplary service, has performed honorably, or has achieved the advancement requirements is given due recognition.
3. **Installation Ceremony** – This marks the formal organization of a Scout unit tied up with the presentation of the unit charter and the induction of the unit officers, both boy and adult.
4. **Opening and Closing Ceremonies** – These are ceremonies that mark the formal Opening and Closing of a meeting or an activity. These ceremonies range from the simple to the more elaborate depending on the activity. These ceremonies as that of the Troop and the Patrol meetings are very short and simple, while campfire ceremonies may be a little longer and more elaborate.

Making Your Own Ceremony

Many Troop Leaders have encountered the problem looking for “How to” scripts. They are unable to conduct ceremonies due to the absence of any pre-prepared manuscript. No need. There are no fixed and permanent procedures. Be creative. Make your own.

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Following are a few hints on writing and conducting your own ceremonies. It is work, but it is fun and self-fulfilling.

1. Your aim is to inspire with worthy ideals such as the Scout Oath and Law, or Patriotism, or Leadership, or pride in the institution, the Troop, the Patrol, the Filipino way of life, or the love of GOD, etc.
2. Select a theme or setting as background....for example, the Philippine revolution of 1898 or the Philippines of the 1500s even the mountains, the forest and the seas will make a wonderful setting.
3. Write a continuity or script that puts your ideals in logical order to bring their meaning.
4. Be dramatic even sentimental. Appeal to the emotions. Strive to move the participants and your audience.
5. Prevent your ceremonies from becoming common place. Come up with a variety of ceremonies each time you need to conduct one. Let every ceremony be a surprise.
6. Provide only a few leading parts. Have some action which all members participate. Member participation need not mean moving parts. They can only be speaking parts of single line or phrase even a simple 'Yes.'
7. Perform ceremonies smoothly with dignity, with solemnity and thought as to their meaning, but above all, with sincerity.
8. Avoid discomforts such as long standing, poor lighting, poor ventilation or even poor sound system. This destroys the concentration of the participants and voids whatever dramatic or emotional effect you wish to achieve.

The KISS Formula

Keep your ceremonies as short as possible. A long one may take more time in rehearsals than the members care to spend on it. Make it fast moving with a punch at the end where a punch will count most.

Short easy to memorize lines mixed with action put movement in a ceremony and make it more impressive. If the participants, for instance, continually refers to a script, the ceremony goes slower and seems less natural than if he speaks smoothly from memory.

A part need not be recited word for word but the thoughts in it should be given in a reasonable order. In writing lines, you may put down either the exact text or just the outline of the ideals to be covered. In either case, the participant may use his own words providing he thinks through beforehand how he is to express himself so he will not stumble through his part. Whether you write out the lines or leave the wording up to your participants, avoid high sounding words. It may have a grand sound, but it will not have a clear meaning to the boys in your Troop.

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Since, ceremonies must inspire and get quick emotional reactions, the symbolism of all spoken parts, actions, and props must be clear and therefore simple. It is like the standard railroad crossing sign on the highway on your way to Bicol. The sign does not read, "You are about to cross a railroad and a train may come along any minute. Look both ways and you may have a bad accident." Instead, a well-known symbol is used – a round sign lettered **R.R.** – which tells the story at a glance.