



# MEETING PLANS & IDEAS: SPECIAL NEEDS AWARENESS

[Special Needs](#)

[Information](#)

[Troop Meetings](#)

[Main Event](#)

## OBJECTIVES

This month's activities should:

- Help Scouts understand more about disabilities.
- Coach Scouts on how to interact respectfully with people who have disabilities.
- Demonstrate the importance of person-first language.
- Explain how persons who have disabilities compensate through enabling abilities.
- Introduce Scouts to adaptive sports.
- Introduce Scouts to agencies and professions that serve people with specific disabilities.
- Help Scouts understand accessibility and how it can be achieved.

## LEADERSHIP PLANNING

As a leadership team, you may want to discuss the following items when choosing special needs awareness as your program feature during your planning meetings:

- Who in our unit has taken disabilities awareness training?
- Where is disabilities awareness training available in our community?
- Does anyone in the unit (youth, leader, parent) have a disability?
- Who in the unit has had experience with disabilities?
- What resources are available through local organizations to teach this topic?
- To meet our needs, what should we change in the sample meeting plans?

[Click above for fillable troop meeting planning form.](#)

## PREOPENING IDEAS

### [Preopening Ideas on Troop Program Resources](#)

- Print up sheets of the [American Sign Language Manual Alphabet](#) and distribute them to Scouts as they arrive so they can practice using the sign language to send messages to one another.
- Blindfold participants as they arrive. Challenge them to navigate from the entrance to a designated location. Assign each person a guide to keep them safe.
- As Scouts arrive, show Internet videos of adaptive sports competitions. [Wheelchair Basketball Video](#).

## OPENING IDEAS

### [Opening Ideas on Troop Program Resources](#)

- Conduct the opening ceremonies using Silent Scout Signals
- To simulate the effect of being mute, the Senior Patrol Leader conducts the opening ceremony by speaking with no voice (moving the lips but not making any sound).

## GROUP INSTRUCTION IDEAS

### Getting Started

- A guest speaker, ideally someone well versed in disabilities issues, leads a discussion about disabilities.

### Communicating

- Brainstorm ways we rely on the sense of hearing.
- Discuss ways we can compensate for hearing loss.
- Introduce American Sign Language (ASL).

### Accessibility and Accommodations

- Invite a guest to discuss accessibility and accommodations.
- Discuss how homes and other buildings can be modified to be more accessible for people with a variety of disabilities.

### Adaptive Sports

- Invite someone who is involved in an adaptive sport as a participant or coach to discuss that sport.

## SKILLS INSTRUCTION IDEAS



### Getting Started

- Brainstorm a list of common disabilities.
- Discuss what limitations each poses

- Brainstorm a list of common disabilities.
- Discuss what limitations each poses and how persons with these disabilities could participate in sports and Scouting.

- Brainstorm a list of common disabilities.
- Discuss ways to help others experience what it would be like to have these disabilities.
- If possible, research disability simulations on the Internet.

### Communicating

- Learn to count to 20 in ASL, using a printed or online ASL dictionary as a resource.

- Try to translate the Oath and Law into ASL, using a printed or online ASL dictionary as a resource.



- Brainstorm a list of 25 words commonly used in Scouting. Guess how they might be signed in ASL, then look up the correct signs in a printed or online ASL dictionary.
- Discuss ways to help others experience what it would be like to be deaf or hard of hearing.

### Accessibility and Accommodations



- Complete an accessibility survey of your meeting place using a resource such as the Checklist for Existing Facilities from [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov). If you meet in a large facility, assign groups to different areas of the building.



- Complete an accessibility survey of your meeting place using a resource such as the Checklist for Existing Facilities from [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov). If you meet in a large facility, assign groups to different areas of the building. Make a list of priority improvements that should be made.



- Complete an accessibility survey of your meeting place using a resource such as the checklist from [www.RaleighNC.gov](http://www.RaleighNC.gov). If you meet in a large facility, assign groups to different areas of the building.
- Make a list of priority improvements that should be made.
- Discuss how you could develop and present a plan for improving access.

### Adaptive Sports



- Watch an Internet video of wheelchair basketball.
- Review the rules and compare with regular basketball. Is the court the same size? Do players dribble the ball? How do players travel? What happens if a player falls out of his chair? What is a physical advantage foul?



- Review the above information.
- Discuss how strategy in wheelchair basketball is similar to or different from strategy in regular basketball.



- Review the above information.
- Learn how some teams integrate players who use wheelchairs and nondisabled players. How do they keep the competition fair?

## **BREAKOUT GROUPS**

### **Discussion Topics**

- Discuss plans for participation in the main event.
- Review and work on [requirements of the Disabilities Awareness merit badge](#).

### **Getting Ready for the Main Event**

- Menu Plans (if applicable)
- Duties Roster (if applicable)
- What to bring

### **Preparation for the meeting's game or challenge**

## GAME AND CHALLENGE IDEAS

- [Blindfolded Discoveries](#)
- [Blindfolded Soccer](#)
- [Blindfolded Steal the Bacon](#)
- [Blind Tent Pitch](#)
- [Blind Train](#)
- [Handicap Obstacle Course](#)
- [Identifying Sounds](#)
  
- **One-Armed Volleyball**
  - *Materials:* A volleyball net and volleyball
  - *Method:* Scouts form two troop teams. Each Scout immobilizes his dominant arm by either holding the back of his belt or placing his arm inside his T-shirt. Play a regulation volleyball game.
  - *Scoring:* The first team with 15 points (or the team with the highest score when time is called) wins. Have a discussion afterward about the experience.
  - Note: Having limited use of limbs and being off balance will be a new challenge for the participants.
  
- **Say What?**
  - *Materials:* American Sign Language dictionaries or computers/tablets/smartphones with Internet access
  - *Method:* Form two troop teams. Give each team a few minutes to learn five simple ASL phrases (like “What is your name?” or “How old are you?”). Teams take turns making those signs for the other team, which tries to guess their meaning.
  - *Scoring:* Teams score one point each time they correctly guess a sign. The team with the most points wins.
  - *Variation:* If you have access to someone proficient in ASL, have that person make the signs for both teams.
  - The first team to correctly guess a sign earns a point. Be sure to have the signer sign more slowly than usual.
  
- **Cane Maze**
  - *Materials:* Tapping cane or equivalent (such as a fiberglass wand), maze constructed of PVC tubing (or something similar), blindfolds
  - *Method:* Blindfold participants. Have them walk one at a time through the maze using the cane to stay on the path. If desired, have other Scouts stand in the maze as obstacles.
  - *Scoring:* The Scout with the fastest time wins. Add penalties for running into obstacles.
  - *Variation:* Instead of setting up a maze, you could designate a course through your meeting place, such as from your meeting place to the restroom or front door.
  
- **Disabled Tent Pitching**
  - *Materials:* Tents, poles and stakes, crutches, wheelchairs, arm slings, blindfolds, heavy gloves, and other materials that let Scouts simulate disabilities
  - *Method:* Patrol members are assigned a variety of disabilities. On a signal, each patrol tries to set up its tent. All members must be involved in some way.
  - *Scoring:* The team that sets up its tent correctly and most quickly wins.
  - Note: Thicker gloves help Scouts understand what it’s like to have dexterity impairments.

## CLOSING IDEAS

- [Leader’s Minutes](#)
- [Ceremony](#)

– [Back to top of page](#) –

---

## TROOP LEADER RESOURCE LINKS

[Advancement Resources](#)

[Awards Central](#)

[Boy Scouts](#)

[Guide to Safe Scouting](#)

[SCOUTBOOK](#)

[Scouting Forms from the National Council](#)

[ScoutCast](#)

[Scouting Magazine](#)

[ScoutStuff.org \(Retail Site\)](#)

[ScoutingWire](#)

[Sign in to MyScouting.org](#)

[Take Youth Protection Training](#)

[The Outdoor Adventure Planning Guide](#)

[Troop Leader Guidebook Appendix](#)

[Uniforms](#)