

LEADERSHIP!

GOOD RULES MAKE A FRIENDLY CLUB

Every Camp Fire leader dreams of having a club where the youngsters are always willing to cooperate. And every leader has probably had this dream shattered at least once. Nothing can guarantee good behavior in your club but you can create a friendly climate by having good group rules.

Good rules show youngsters how to cooperate. A simple formula can help you and your club members create a set of good rules. The formula is called the "Five P's." It was created by Myra Nagel in her Book, *What to Do Instead of Screaming!* She says that good rules are: Partnerships, Purposeful, Possible, Plain, and Positive.

Good rules are partnerships.

Your club's rules should be the youngsters' rules, not just yours. When children create their own rules, they also accept the responsibility for following them.

Even the youngest children can help decide their own rules. Young children may even make more rules than you think are necessary. That's when you can help them apply some of the other P's to decide what is really needed.

Of course, you may add some of your own rules, too. For example, you may want a rule about where children can go in your home during club meetings.

Good rules are purposeful. The question is, "Why?" If the youngsters can't find a good reason for a rule, then don't make it. A rule that is purposeful at one time may become unnecessary at a later time. And new rules may need to be added. So, your club rules are not "cast in stone." Let them change with the times.

Good rules are possible. Good rules can be enforced. Help the children decide on the consequences of breaking a rule. Knowing the consequences may encourage the children to follow their rules.

Good rules are plain. Write the rules out on a large sheet of paper or make a poster for everyone to see. Be sure that everyone understands what they mean. Talk about some "for instances."

Good rules are positive. Rules should emphasize desired behavior rather than what is prohibited. A good rule is "Listen when others are talking." A bad rule is "Don't interrupt."

A special leader rule. Every leader should establish at least one rule

for the club. That rule has to do with having a quiet signal. As you probably well know, shouting for quiet seldom works. Shouting only adds to the confusion.

Your quiet signal may be holding up your hand for everyone to see. Ask the youngsters to put up one hand when they see your hand up. You'll be amazed at how fast this quiet sign gets the attention of the whole group. Be sure you are patient. Don't do anything until everybody has given his or her attention to you.

Some leaders use an actual sign on a stick as their quiet signal. Others start to sing a quieting song and the youngsters join in until everybody is singing.

Remember that rules which fit this simple formula won't guarantee a more cooperate club. But they will help to set a friendly climate for all of your fun together.

*Editor's note: Ideas in this article were adapted from the book **What to do Instead of Screaming!** by Myra Nagel. Available from My Books, PO Box 175, Dunn Loring, VA 22027.*

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RULES ON RULES

Work on this sheet in the coming week. Then, compare what you've done with other teachers who work on your age level.

1. KEEP THE LIST SHORT.

List the rules you have. The fewer rules the better.

2. MAKE THE RULES RELEVANT.

A wise teacher doesn't get caught up in establishing regulations or classroom prohibitions that are attempts to counter temporary conditions. Usually, the rules will go on when the need for them is over.

Examine the rules above. Are they all needed? If not, cross out those that are outdated.

3. MAKE THE RULES MEANINGFUL.

Try to think like a student in your class. What would he or she say was the logical reason for each rule? Try to capture the reasoning for each rule in a sentence.

4. MAKE THE LIST POSITIVE.

Try to state the rules in terms of objectives to work toward, rather than transgressions to be avoided. Look over your list again. Could any of the rules be stated in a more positive way?