

Teaching Cub Scouts Using Age-Appropriate Teaching Methodology
and
Child Development Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to *teach* age-appropriate teaching strategies and child development skills for Cub Scout leaders who deal with the five age groups in scouting. In addition, basic information was given about the educational psychologists who developed theories used in today's school systems. Lastly, a practical guide was developed using ***four*** of the Bobcat badge requirements, listing "how to instruct" each of the five age groups in scouting.

It was the hope of the author that cub scout leaders who were taught these educational concepts would be better prepared to *teach* each age group more effectively, thereby, increasing the desire and learning ability of each Cub Scout in the den.

INTRODUCTION

Henry Ford is quoted as saying, “Even when I was young I suspected that much might be done in a better way.”¹ This quotation is the essence of this dissertation. Many Cub Scout leaders, quite frankly, do not know how to *teach* skills to their boys. It is the intention of this author to impart some of this knowledge on the reader of this dissertation. It is said often in scouting that, “Every Scout deserves a trained leader.” But, national BSA publications do not teach Scout leaders ***how to instruct each age group in cub scouting***. It is a known fact that teaching strategies are different for each age group, hence, Tiger Scouts do not learn material in the same way as Bear Cub Scouts.

This dissertation will cover several knowledge levels necessary for the trained cub scout den leader to become familiar with:

- Basic philosophical theorists in educational psychology and how their research affects how different aged children learn;
- Child development skills and age-appropriate methodology for teaching all five educational levels in cub scouting; and
- A practical guide how to teach each of the five educational levels in cub scouting for four “Bobcat” achievements.

It is the goal of this author that each Cub Scout leader who reads this dissertation will learn “how to” teach age-appropriate materials to his or her Scouts. This action will, no doubt, increase the leader’s chances of being a successful teacher with his or her pupils. As Milton Gregory said, “True teaching, then is not that which **gives** knowledge, but that which stimulates pupils to **gain** it.”²

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Developmental Skills by Age

One of the first theories developed was founded by Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849-1936), a Russian physiologist, who experimented with dogs by conditioning them to respond to a ringing of a bell (“stimulus”) which these dogs learned was followed by food being offered to them. His experiments actually made the dogs salivate (“unconditioned response”) when they heard the bell (“conditioned stimulus”).

“Conditioning applies to emotional aspects of behavior.

The learner can, in general, be conditioned to respond favorably or unfavorably to his teacher, the content material, the environmental surrounding, indeed to anything that can function as a stimulus.”³

Pavlov’s experiments showed that undesirable learned behavior can be “extinguished” by withholding the reward (food). Many times in a den meeting, undesirable behavior—like not paying attention—can be stopped by not rewarding the scouts; by scolding them; or by calling their names.

Another educational psychologist who made a contribution based on his theories was Edward L. Thorndike (1874-1949). His writings had an emphasis on learning as a function of getting a reward. To be

effective, rewards given immediately would increase “the probability that the response performed just before the reward was given would be given again in the same situation.”⁴ Hence, many a successful teacher rewards the student immediately after the desired behavior is exhibited, thereby, increasing the chance that the pupil will continue the positive behavior.

The theorist who developed “operant conditioning” is B. F. Skinner (1904-1972). His experiments were based on the subject performing a task to receive an award. He taught chickens to peck at a button to receive food from a dispenser. The problem with his experiments were that sometimes it took a long time before the chicken realized that pushing the button achieved the goal of the food dropping into the dish! Educators and parents make certain reinforcements (are) contingent upon certain responses. This is the only difference between what we consider logical and what is termed “superstitious” ...⁵ Skinner coined the terms of “positive reinforcement” (a verbal or non-verbal reward), “negative reinforcement” (a threat of action to be taken in the future), and “punishment” (carrying-out the threat).

Generally, public schools today rely heavily on the theories of Jean Piaget, the Cognitive-Maturational theorist, which was founded in part by Maria Montessori (1865-1952). Piaget developed several “stages” of child development, which he used as a basis for his theory.⁶ For cub scouting, the stages of Piaget’s theories begin with “Preoperational Theory” (ages 2-

7 years old). This time period is characterized by the development of internalized actions that are reversible, in that the child can think of, or see, an action and then think of what would happen if that action were to be undone. During this period, the child is no longer limited to an overt stimulus/response, or trial-and-error, type of learning, but instead begins to show more and more cognitive (knowledge-based) learning.⁷ Hence, this age group includes Tigers and Wolves den aged children.

The “Concrete Operations Period” includes children aged 7 to 11 years old. “During this period, the child’s thinking becomes decentred (sic) and truly reversible.”⁸ There is one important limitation to this ability; that is the child’s need to see the operation or perform it in order to reverse it mentally. While the child in the period of concrete operations may correctly solve “conservation” problems (changing the appearance of something may not change its other properties), his thinking is labeled concrete because it still requires direct sensory experience.⁹ The thinking of a child in this stage is orderly, and it is based upon thinking of only one physical parameter—weight, for instance. In Cub Scouting, boys in the Wolf, Bear, and Webelos I category usually exhibit behavior in this period of development.

Lastly, “Formal Operations Period” for children aged 11 to 15 years old is “(t)he final stage of logical development...or the ability to use internalized abstract operations based on general principles or equations to predict the effects of operations upon objects.”¹⁰ In this stage, the

thinking of a child is based upon two physical parameters—weight and volume, for instance, as inferred by the volume of water displaced by the floating object’s weight. This type of thinking reflects the ability to think conceptually, or to perform operations on operations, which Piaget defined as “second-order operations,” rather than just one operation with an object, as in the concrete-operations period. Here, Cub Scouts in the Webelos II den would exhibit these behaviors.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Teaching Strategies

Students learn in various ways, and (the teacher) should vary the use of instructional strategies so that the teacher can relate to the (students') learning styles and needs. One way to vary instruction is to use ... deductive strategies (which) are more direct and straightforward (which) lend themselves to direct instructional approaches, whereas inductive strategies are intended to tap into the interests and thinking abilities of the students.¹¹ Instructional approaches that start with a known principle and then attention is directed to the unknown is called deductive strategies. Whereas, instructional approaches that start with the unknown principle and then attention moves to the known is called inductive strategies.¹²

Deductive Instructional Approaches which the leader can use are:

- Presentations;
- Demonstrations;
- Questions;
- Recitations;
- Drill and Practice;
- Reviews;
- Guided Practice; and
- Homework.

Deductive or direct instruction has four key components: (1) Clear determination and articulation of goals; (2) Teacher-directive instruction; (3) Careful monitoring of student's outcomes; and (4) Consistent use of effective classroom organization and management methods.

Also, direct instruction is effective because it is based on behavioral learning principles, such as obtaining students' attention; reinforcing correct responses, providing corrective feedback; and practicing correct responses. ¹³

Inductive instructional strategies often begin with exploratory activities, and then lead to students discovering a concept or generalization. There are various ways to use inductive approaches: (1) Concept attainment; (2) Inquiry lessons; (3) Discussions; (4) Cooperative learning; (5) panels and debates; (6) Role playing, simulations, and games; (7) Learning centers; and (8) Projects, reports, and problem solving activities. ¹⁴ Since concept attainment is essential in any learning exercise, students tend to use this method when pursuing higher-order thinking skills to categorize and differentiate information. Consequently, concepts are central to the curriculum in every classroom environment. ¹⁵

In reviewing age-appropriate strategies that the successful Cub Scout leader **must** consider, it should be remembered that the mental activity of young children lies close to the senses. Their knowledge of the lesson will be largely confined to the facts which appeal to the eye, or

which can be illustrated to the senses. As maturity is approached, however, young people think more and more about reasons. Hence, the lessons which will appeal the most to them, will be the ones which ask reasons and which give conclusions.¹⁶

The Cub Scout leader **must** vary the teaching approach often for the den. Some methods are easier to use as an instructional approach by the den leader than others; but using the same strategy can be boring and a distraction for any group of children. Hence, varying the instructional approach can add to the environment and ultimately increase the Cub Scout's mastery of the cognitive or physical skills quicker. It is the den leader who must develop new and useful approaches to teaching the Cub Scouts new concepts in the cognitive and/or physical domains.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Four Bobcat Achievements

For each age group in cub scouting (Tiger, Wolf, Bear, Webelos 1, and Webelos 2), the chart below will list:

- the Bobcat activity to be taught; and
- the specific age-appropriate strategies to teach the lesson to be mastered by the Cub Scouts.

However, the strategies may be changed by the Cub Scout den leader based on the background; educational learning styles; and if one or more of the cub scouts in the den have a learning disability. It is also recommended that the way the information is provided to the Scout is modeled for him by the den leader, usually using a role-playing scenario, or discussion led by the leader, then asking questions in a “how to” discussion with the boys in the den. It may also be performed in a question (by the den leader) and answer (by the Scout), or for that matter, in a “game” to be played (like “Jeopardy”) by the den. As any good teacher knows, the method of the presentation is not as important as how it is done by the group. Most Scouts—no matter what their age—like to have fun and entertaining presentations, rather than being told with a lecture method of teaching these skills. The den leader needs to mix-up the teaching strategies so that the Scouts look forward to the den

meetings, and often ask, “Mr. Den Leader, what are we doing today?” with excitement and enthusiasm. It is the den leader’s **imagination** that makes the den lesson enjoyable, fun, and interesting; **not** the Scouts who come to learn! The teaching approach should be changed often to keep the Scouts interested. Many of the younger Scouts have short attention spans, and to be an effective leader, using inductive instructional strategies would help make the experience for the Scouts fun and elevate their motivation to learn the material.

To begin the teaching strategies, the reader has to remember that teaching approaches are presented in either of two ways: deductive (also called “direct”); and inductive (also called “indirect”). As previously explained Deductive Instructional Approaches which the leader can use are: presentations; demonstrations; questions; recitations; drill and practice; reviews; guided practice; and homework. Inductive Instructional Approaches are: concept attainment; inquiry lessons; discussions; cooperative learning; panel and debates; role-playing; simulations; games; learning centers; projects; reports; and problem solving activities (see the “Glossary of Terms” for an explanation of each of these strategies). It is the responsibility of the den leader to change these approaches, **not** just use the same **one** each-and-every den meeting. Pre-plan the den meetings using a one-to-one ratio: that is, for every hour in the den meeting, plan one hour of preparation time before the scheduled den meeting. Use your imagination and constantly be

aware of Piaget's stages of development, so that your plan is not beyond your Scouts' abilities in your den.

TABLE 1

Table of Age-Appropriate Strategies In Teaching Bobcat Achievement:

Pledge of Allegiance

Bobcat Achievement	Den	Teaching Strategy D=DEDUCTIVE/I=INDUCTIVE
Pledge of Allegiance	TIGERS	I = Rhyming song/clapping
	WOLF	I = Guided Practice w/ Rewards
	BEAR	I = Game w/ Rewards
	WEBELOS I	I = Role Playing
	WEBELOS II	D = Presentations

The first “Bobcat” achievement used by this author that is age-appropriate is one which **most** school aged children will recognize. However, do not confuse “recognition” with cognitive mastery of this skill. Probably, the Tigers in your den will not **know** the Pledge, and require a creative, innovative teaching strategy to **learn** the Pledge quickly. Hence, use an inductive teaching approach to accomplish this task to mastery level and the Tigers will have fun in attaining this goal.

As the reader can see, each of the five age groups in cub scouting are taught the skills with an age-appropriate strategy. The younger groups will react more to games and strategies that involve activity. Since the Pledge of Allegiance is a set group of words that have to be learned without deletions to the content, it can be learned with **soft** patriotic music playing in the background. The clapping by the Tigers would make the activity more fun, while the scouts learn the words.

Since the Pledge requires a physical motor skill, namely the Cub Scout Salute, also, demonstrate, or Role-Play this right-handed movement, not facing these Scouts, but facing the direction they are facing. This will keep them from using their left-hand for the salute. Explain that those Scouts in dress uniforms use the Cub Scout salute; but those Scouts in other attire place their right hand over their heart—except Jehovah Witnesses who just stand at attention.

TABLE 2

Table of Age-Appropriate Strategies In Teaching Bobcat Achievement:

Cub Scout Salute

The second “Bobcat” requirement to be illustrated is the Cub Scout Salute. Since this is a physical/motor activity, the teaching strategies can be more group oriented. For illustrative purposes, the strategies used have been varied to promote team building and cooperation among the Cub Scouts.

Bobcat Achievement	Den	Teaching Approach D=DEDUCTIVE/I=INDUCTIVE
Cub Scout Salute	TIGER	D = Demonstration & Practice
	WOLF	I = Guided Practice w/ Reward
	BEAR	D = Drill & Practice
	WEBELOS I	I = Game (by Teams)
	WEBELOS II	D = Drill & Practice w/ Rewards

In this teaching activity, the Scouts can learn from each other. Caution should be used, however, because some of the Cub Scouts may call the other Scouts derogatory names when mistakes are shown—as when scouts use their left hand for the salute, instead of the right hand. The den leader should be prepared to intervene at the *first* sign of trouble, since this type of negative interaction can lead to hurt feelings and/or Scouts withdrawing from the den. Several of the “I” strategies (meaning “Inductive Teaching Strategies”) can be fun for the Cub Scouts and can be mixed-up to use with the other age groups. Just be certain that if the strategies are

used with older or younger scouts, that den is mature enough to handle either the formal or informal thought exercises: in other words, be certain that the den leader is not asking the cub scouts to perform or think at a level above or below their maturity level. Keep all teaching strategies within the age-appropriate guidelines that Jean Piaget used in his “stages” listed in the “Developmental Skills by Grade Level” listed in this dissertation.

TABLE 3

Table of Age-Appropriate Strategies In Teaching Bobcat Achievement:

Cub Scout Promise

The next teaching skill is a combination of a physical skill and a cognitive skill. Here the Cub Scout is expected to not only know how to use the Cub Scout Sign, but also recite a specific group of words to be read in order.

Bobcat Achievement	Den	Teaching Approach D=DEDUCTIVE/I=INDUCTIVE
Cub Scout Promise	TIGERS	I= Rhyming song/clapping
	WOLF	I = Role Playing
	BEAR	I = Game w/ Rewards
	WEBELOS I	D = Repeat as Group
	WEBELOS II	D = Recitations

This activity is also a rhyming song, with a beat, and tempo. Hence, the Tigers can really have fun learning this “Bobcat” achievement! Of course, the inductive teaching strategy used with the Tigers can be adapted for the older Scouts by having the Scouts **lightly** tap the table to the “beat” and rhythm of the “Promise.” The den leader can have the Scouts recite the Promise over-and-over again, giving each cub Scout a chance to do the rhyme himself, or lead the group in the indirect teaching activity. For Scouts who are shy or “non-verbal,” this strategy works well in a small group—as a dyad: two Scouts working together. This is a great way for Scouts who have learning disabilities to use this cooperative learning strategy.

Many cub scout leaders have used this strategy when “testing” the cub scout for mastery of this Bobcat achievement. This can be completed at the beginning of each den meeting, by rotating the task among the cub scouts over several den meetings, to determine their degree of mastery of the Cub Scout Promise and Cub Scout Sign.

TABLE 4

Table of Age-Appropriate Strategies In Teaching Bobcat Achievement:

The Law of the Pack

Much like the previous table, this Bobcat Achievement uses both a cognitive skill and a physical skill. Not only does the skill require a motor function—the Cub Scout Sign—but it also requires the Cub Scout to use a series of words to be learned in order. The wise leader should use the stages of development to choose activities that would increase the Scout’s mastery of the content quickly. The table lists several age-appropriate teaching strategies that would be fun and exciting for the Scouts to learn this exercise to the mastery level.

Bobcat Achievement	DEN	Teaching Strategy D=DEDUCTIVE/I=INDUCTIVE
Law of the Pack	Tigers	I = Game w/ Rewards
	Wolf	D = Reciting w/ Rewards
	Bear	D = Demonstration
	Webelos I	D = Drill and Practice
	Webelos II	D = Homework

Several Direct Instructional Approaches are given in this table, since both a motor and cognitive skill has to be mastered. Remember, as

previously stated, direct teaching approaches are very effective because this approach is based on behavioral learning principles.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this research was to teach age-appropriate teaching strategies and child development skills for Cub Scout leaders who deal with the five age groups in cub scouting. In addition, basic information was given about the educational psychologists who developed theories used in today's school systems. Lastly, a practical guide was developed using four of the "Bobcat" badge achievements, listing how to instruct each of the five age groups—Tiger, Wolf, Bear, Webelos I, and Webelos II—which leaders often teach in their dens. Each teaching strategy listed was based on either deductive or inductive teaching strategies. Emphasis was placed on those strategies which would interest the Scouts based on age-appropriate curriculum standards. In this way, the boys would have interesting, and fun lessons, while learning in their den meetings.

The typical BSA leader uses an ineffective teaching strategy: the lecture method. In this dissertation, group strategies are used more often and are a reliable technique to gain understanding and interest in the Cub Scout curricula. Leaders must be trained to deviate from the teacher-centered presentation for their lessons in order to retain Cub Scout membership. To often, the lecture method of teaching, bores the Scout who is willing to complete the achievements, **if** the leader would use more interesting and age-appropriate materials and strategies. It is the goal of the author of this dissertation to increase the knowledge level

of Cub Scouts by stirring-up interest in the typical den cub meetings.
This would ensure more interest in achievement by the den children, and
ultimately, lead to better educated and prepared Scouts.

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¹ Bob Phillips. *Phillips Book of Great Thoughts and Funny Sayings* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), p. 172.

² Phillips, p. 307.

³ B. R. Bugelski. *The Psychology of Learning Applied to Teaching* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1975), p. 51.

⁴ Bugelski, p. 61.

⁵ Bugelski, p. 95.

⁶ Leland C. Swenson. *Theories of Learning: Traditional Perspectives/Contemporary Developments* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1980), p. 324.

⁷ Swenson, p. 329.

⁸ Swenson, p. 330.

⁹ Swenson, p. 331.

¹⁰ Swenson, p. 332.

¹¹ Paul R. Burden and David M. Byrd. *Methods for Effective Teaching: Promoting K-12 Student Understanding* (Boston: Pearson Publishing Co., 1985), p. 117.

¹² Burden, p.332.

¹³ Burden, p. 120.

¹⁴ Burden, p. 137.

¹⁵ Burden, p. 138.

¹⁶ John Milton Gregory. *The Seven Laws of Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p.110.

APPENDIX A

Autobiography

In writing this dissertation, the author considered that the reader should possess “trust” in the ideals presented in this paper. The majority of the Scout leaders have earned their credentials through their background and experiences. Hence, the following passages are the author’s vocational background and scouting experiences, which should add validity to the “trust” ideal.

I have been in scouting for just 2 ½-years. However, in that short time period, I have volunteered for many district and local scouting activities that many Scouts who are affiliated with scouting for 40-years have not. I first joined scouting to help my grandson as a Tiger Cub. I didn’t realize it, but at the recruitment day at Pinecrest Elementary School in Greenwood, SC was the beginning of my “career” as a volunteer in scouting! Since no other parent at the meeting was able to “volunteer” as the den leader, I did. During that first year in scouting, I took it upon myself to be BSA trained in 12-different sessions: from Youth Protection all the way to earning a Bachelor in Commissioner Science. Most training was for my work as a Tiger den leader in Cub Scouts, but some training was Boy Scout oriented, since I felt my grandson, Vincent, would eventually get to “graduate” from Cub Scouts and pursue his future in Boy Scouts.

Of course, I knew education and training is the key to being a good leader. As in the motto of the volunteer leaders: “Every Scout deserves a trained leader.” Hence, my road to being the **best volunteer** possible began. However, I already spent most of my life pursuing education through post-secondary levels. I have earned **four** college degrees: Associate in Engineering Technology (Piedmont Technical College, 1981); Bachelor of Science in Communications (University of Tennessee, 1971); Master of Science in Vocational Education (University of Tennessee, 1975); and Master of Arts in Teaching (University of South Carolina, 1977). I’ve taken many classes in education beyond the master’s level at the University of South Carolina, and Clemson University since living these last 36-years in South Carolina. In fact, I have earned a teaching credential in Elementary Education, Secondary Principal, and Learning Disabilities from the SC Department of Education, which classified my abilities at their highest level: “highly qualified.”

As such, I have taught in six public and private school systems in South Carolina for over 25-years: from teaching fifth-graders to teaching twelfth-graders, and all the grades in-between!

APPENDIX B

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Behavior: A physical, emotional, social, or cognitive action learned by the subject.

“Bobcat”: A beginning Cub Scout set of eight achievements that each new Scout must accomplish before working on the grade-level based achievements for Tiger, Wolf, Bear, Webelos I, or Webelos II.

Classical Conditioning: To change behavior by introducing a reward with a bodily response that the subject cannot control. Then, introducing a sight or sound device which triggers the same bodily response. Eventually, the bodily response is exhibited by the subject seeing or hearing the device, which leads to the new desirable behavior.

Cognitive: A knowledge thought or skill which is learned.

Concept Attainment: An inductive teaching approach to mastering a thought, skill, or motor activity. Usually, teaching concepts using similarities and differences utilizes this method.

Conditioned Response: Tying the bodily response by the subject to a reward, thereby, eliciting the response.

Conditioned Stimulus: Introducing a picture or sound that causes the subject to react in a positive or negative way.

Conditioning: To change behavior by presenting a reward coupled with the target behavior.

Cooperative Learning: The subject is working with others to accomplish the goal.

Deductive Instructional Approach: A *direct* teaching strategy which is based on learning a cognitive thought, or physical motion with the teacher as leader, working one-on-one, or teacher to a group of subjects.

Demonstration: A deductive teaching approach which involves the subject to model his behavior after another person’s actions.

Discussions: An inductive teaching strategy where the subjects collaborate with others in the same peer group to analyze and solve problems.

Drill and Practice: A repetitive, but direct teaching approach where the subject is consistently performing the same behavior in multiple successions.

Dyad: A group of two subjects working together to accomplish a goal.

Games: An inductive approach where the subjects play a competitive simulation either individually, or in teams.

Guided Practice: Similar to Drill and Practice, but an evaluator is modeling the target behavior to the subject, and correcting the mistakes, or giving encouragement to the subject. A deductive teaching approach.

Homework: Usually an “at home activity” which reinforces the cognitive or physical behavior previously presented in a classroom situation. It is used for reinforcing the material learned and getting the subject to use the techniques learned when the teacher or leader was present. A deductive teaching approach.

Inductive Instructional Approach: An *indirect* teaching strategy which is based on learning a cognitive thought, or physical motion while working with the subject’s peers.

Inquiry Lessons: An inductive teaching approach which an open-ended and creative way of seeking knowledge by following John Dewey’s Model of Reflective Thinking, which is similar to the “Scientific Method.”

Learning Centers: An inductive teaching strategy where students rotate around a room to different experiments, exhibits, activities, etc. designed to increase cognitive or motor skills by participating in a set schedule of events to increase knowledge levels.

Panels and Debates: An inductive teaching approach where the subjects participate among their peers to discuss the target goals of the lesson or problem.

Presentations: An effective direct teaching approach where the subject performs to a group.

Projects, Reports, Problem Solving: Inductive approaches designed to increase the learning skills of students by actually performing a specific task or goal within a specific time period.

Questions: A direct instructional approach where the subject and leader alternates asking questions and answering them. Designed to increase interaction and master a set of objectives and goals.

Recitations: A direct instructional approach where the subject must perform repetitive actions, usually verbal, usually in a group to master the targeted behavior or cognitive task.

Reviews: A direct instructional technique used to redefine material already presented for mastery.

Role-Playing: An inductive instructional approach where the teacher and student play roles—as in a “play”—and act like the participants in real life. Can also involve students, instead of the teacher or leader.

Simulations: An inductive approach where the participants play different roles, or play a game to solve a problem.

Unconditioned Response: an action that is independent of previous known conditioning processes, and is elicited involuntarily by the stimulus presented.

Unconditioned Stimulus: an action that becomes associated with a new cue presented just prior to the occurrence of the action. The new cue is the conditioned stimulus.

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