NATURAL TINDER & FIRECRAFT

60-Minute Scouts Bushcraft Lesson Plan

Duration 60 minutes	**Group** Scouts / young people; adapt to age and experience	**Setting** Approved outdoor fire area

Lesson aim

Introduce Scouts to common natural tinder, how to assess and prepare it, and how tinder fits into traditional and modern fire-lighting methods. The session prioritises safe decision-making, responsible woodland practice and supervised learning.

Learning outcomes

- Explain the difference between tinder, kindling and fuel.
- Identify a range of suitable natural tinder materials and describe when they may be useful.
- Prepare a small, loose tinder bundle that allows air to circulate.
- Describe how a spark or ember is transferred to tinder and developed into a flame.
- State the essential controls for a safe, authorised fire-lighting activity and for extinguishing a fire.

Equipment and preparation

FOR THE LEADER	FOR DEMONSTRATION / SMALL GROUPS
Approved fire site and permission; current risk assessment; first-aid kit; water and suitable fire-control equipment; fire blanket/extinguisher where required; handwashing supplies.	Examples of dry natural tinder (dry grass, fine bark fibres, birch bark where lawfully available, seed-head down, fine wood shavings); damp samples for comparison; tinder bundle; kindling; fire lay materials; ferrocerium rod or chosen ignition tool.

BEFORE THE SESSION: Check weather, fire restrictions, ground conditions and site rules; obtain landowner/site permission; inspect materials; set a clear boundary; brief helpers; and ensure the fire area is separated from tents, vegetation and other combustibles in line with local rules.

Session delivery – 60 minutes

Time	Activity	Leader guidance	Check for learning
0–5 min	**Welcome and safety briefing**	Explain the aim, boundaries, stop signal and expected behaviour. Confirm that no one lights anything until instructed. Identify the water/fire-control point and emergency arrangements.	Scouts can state the boundary and stop signal.
5–12 min	**What makes good tinder?**	Explain tinder, kindling and fuel. Introduce the fire triangle: heat, fuel and oxygen. Compare fine, dry, fibrous material with damp or compacted material.	Ask Scouts to sort examples into tinder, kindling or fuel.
12–22 min	**Natural tinder identification**	Show samples or photographs: dry grass, fine bark fibres, birch bark (only where responsibly and lawfully obtained), seed-head down, dry fern material and fine dead-wood shavings. Discuss dryness, texture, availability and habitat protection.	Each Scout names two materials and one limitation.
22–32 min	**Prepare a tinder bundle**	Demonstrate teasing, shredding and separating fibres. Build a loose nest with a fine centre and progressively coarser outer material. Keep it airy; avoid taking live or excessive material.	Scouts make or describe a suitable bundle.
32–45 min	**Ignition demonstration**	Leader demonstrates one age-appropriate ignition method (for example, ferrocerium rod with prepared tinder) from a stable position. Show spark placement, ember/flame development and gradual addition of kindling. Practical ignition is only undertaken if authorised by the risk assessment and supervised directly.	Scouts explain where the spark should land and what to add next.
45–53 min	**Fire lay and control**	Show how tinder, kindling and larger fuel are arranged for airflow. Explain keeping the fire small and controlled, maintaining a safe distance, and never leaving it unattended. If lighting is not permitted, use a cold demonstration layout.	Ask Scouts to identify two safe-fire controls.
53–60 min	**Extinguish, review and close**	Demonstrate the site-approved extinguishing method. Douse, stir and re-check as appropriate until no heat or embers remain; follow site procedures. Review learning and leave the area tidy.	Exit question: name one tinder, one ignition principle and one safety rule.

Key teaching points

• **Dryness matters:** tinder must be dry enough to catch and sustain a spark or ember; feel and compare samples.

• **Fine to coarse:** use the finest fibres at the ignition point, then slightly coarser material to help the flame grow.

• **Airflow:** a tinder bundle should be loose rather than tightly packed.

• **Build gradually:** add small kindling first; do not smother a new flame with large fuel.

• **Responsible collection:** use permitted, dead and fallen material; take only what is needed and avoid disturbing nests, habitats or living trees.

Safety and risk controls

• **Permission and conditions:** only use a designated/approved fire area with landowner or site permission. Do not light during fire bans, high winds, drought conditions or where the risk assessment says conditions are unsuitable.

• **Supervision:** a competent adult leads the activity and maintains direct supervision. Young people do not independently use ignition tools, matches or fire unless explicitly permitted by the organisation's rules and the assessed activity.

• **Safe area:** establish a clear exclusion zone appropriate to the site and activity; keep spectators back and keep hair, loose clothing and equipment away from flames.

• **Fire control:** have water and suitable fire-control equipment immediately available. Never leave a fire unattended. Do not use flammable liquids or accelerants.

• **Tools and materials:** inspect ignition tools; demonstrate one at a time; keep sparks directed into the prepared tinder and away from people, dry vegetation and equipment. Use knives only if separately authorised, risk assessed and supervised.

• **Extinguishing:** follow the site procedure. Ensure the fire, ash and surrounding ground are fully cold before leaving; do not bury hot embers.

Assessment and inclusion

Assessment: observe material sorting and tinder-bundle preparation; use questioning during the demonstration; ask each Scout to give one example of tinder, explain the spark-to-flame sequence and state one safety control.

Adaptations: offer labelled samples or picture cards; allow Scouts to work in pairs; provide pre-prepared fibres for anyone who finds fine motor tasks difficult; use a cold demonstration or photos if weather, site rules or individual needs prevent a live fire; provide verbal, written or practical ways to show learning.

Leader’s close-down checklist

- ■ All ignition sources accounted for and secured.
- ■ Fire and surrounding area checked cold in accordance with site procedure.
- ■ Materials and equipment packed away; site left clean and undamaged.
- ■ Any incidents, near misses or learning points recorded and shared as required.

Important: This is a session plan, not a substitute for the organisation’s current rules, local fire restrictions, landowner requirements or a site-specific risk assessment. Adapt the activity to the age, competence and needs of the group.