SCOUTS BUSHCRAFT

60-MINUTE PRACTICAL SESSION

SHELTER BUILDING

Planning • Construction • Weather protection • Teamwork

Audience	Duration	Group size	Location
Scouts / young people	60 minutes	Teams of 3–5	Approved outdoor site

1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Explain the purpose of a shelter: protection from wind, rain, ground damp and heat loss.
- ✓ Choose a suitable shelter location by checking ground conditions, drainage, wind direction and overhead hazards.
- ✓ Identify the main parts of a simple shelter: ridge pole, supports, framework, covering and ground insulation.
- ✓ Work as a team to construct a small, stable shelter using only authorised materials.
- ✓ Inspect, safely dismantle and leave the site tidy in line with Leave No Trace principles.

2. EQUIPMENT & LEADER PREPARATION

Leader preparation

- Confirm landowner/site permission and the activity is authorised.
- Inspect the site for dead or hanging branches, unstable trees, slopes, holes, water, wildlife and access.
- Check forecast and wind; identify a safe alternative/indoor option.
- Prepare a simple demonstration frame or pre-selected materials.
- Set boundaries, meeting point, supervision positions and emergency arrangements.

Suggested equipment

- Suitable poles and framework pieces prepared in advance.
- Tarpaulin or other approved covering.
- Soft cordage and pre-cut lashings.
- Groundsheet / insulation demonstration materials.
- Gloves if appropriate, boundary markers and litter bag.
- First-aid kit and charged phone/radio.

3. 60-MINUTE SESSION PLAN

TIME	STAGE	LEADER ACTIONS & ACTIVITIES
0–5 min	**Welcome & challenge**	Show examples or pictures of a lean-to and an A-frame. Ask: “What does a good shelter protect us from?” Explain that teams will plan, build and inspect a small shelter.
5–12 min	**Shelter basics**	Explain the five key elements: **location** (safe, level and well-drained); **ridge pole** (main support); **framework** (ribs or side supports); **covering** (sheds rain); **ground layer** (reduces contact with cold, damp ground). Compare a lean-to and A-frame.
12–18 min	**Site selection & safety**	Teams inspect the designated build area from the boundary. Look for overhead hazards, deadwood, uneven or wet ground, run-off, wind direction, paths and signs of wildlife. Each team explains why its chosen spot is suitable. Leader approves the location before construction.
18–23 min	**Plan & allocate roles**	Teams of 3–5 assign roles: team leader/planner, materials manager, framework builders, lashing/covering lead and safety checker. Agree the shelter shape and sketch a quick plan. Explain that only supplied or specifically authorised materials may be used.
23–43 min	**Practical build**	Build a small lean-to or A-frame using the prepared poles, soft cordage and covering. Establish a stable ridge support, add ribs/framework at safe spacing, secure lashings and overlap the covering so water can run off. Keep the entrance clear. The leader supervises all lifting and tying; no climbing, throwing poles or cutting live vegetation.
43–50 min	**Shelter inspection**	Teams check: Is the frame stable? Are poles secure and not likely to roll? Is the covering overlapped? Is the entrance clear? Could wind lift the covering? Is the ground suitable? Test only by gentle hand checks—do not climb on or crawl under an unstable structure. Teams identify one improvement.
50–57 min	**Dismantle & site check**	Take down the shelter in reverse order under supervision. Remove every piece of cordage, tape and equipment. Return supplied materials to the correct place. Check for litter, disturbed ground, damaged plants or hazards; do not rake or strip the site.
57–60 min	**Review & close**	Ask each team: “What made your shelter stable?” “What would you change in rain or wind?” “How did you minimise impact?” Reinforce that a good bushcraft shelter is safe, suitable and temporary—and the site must be left as agreed.

4. ASSESSMENT & SUCCESS CRITERIA

Knowledge	Scout can name at least three purposes of a shelter and identify its main structural parts.
Site choice	Team can give two reasons why its selected location is suitable and safe.
Practical skills	Team builds a simple frame with secure supports and an appropriately arranged covering.
Teamwork	Everyone has a role and contributes safely.
Environmental care	Team uses only permitted materials, avoids damage and removes all introduced items.

5. SAFETY & ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS

- **Permission & materials:** Use an approved site. Do not cut, snap, pull or damage living trees. Use supplied poles or fallen materials only where collection and use have been explicitly permitted.
- **Overhead hazards:** Do not build beneath dead, hanging or unstable branches. Stop if wind makes trees or structures unsafe.
- **Manual handling:** Use manageable poles, lift together where needed, keep fingers clear of pinch points and never throw or swing poles.

• **Lashings & trip hazards:** Keep cordage tidy, avoid loops across walkways, do not wrap rope around hands or bodies, and supervise knots and tensioning.

• **Structure safety:** Keep shelters low and simple. Do not climb on, hang from or crawl beneath an unapproved structure. Leader checks stability before anyone approaches.

• **Tools & fire:** No cutting tools or fire are needed for this lesson. If either is added, it requires separate authorisation, training and risk assessment.

• **Weather, wildlife & emergencies:** Check conditions, avoid nests and habitats, maintain headcounts and boundaries, carry first aid/communication and have a clear stop-and-evacuate plan.

6. DIFFERENTIATION & EXTENSION

Support	Challenge	Extension
Use a partly assembled frame, picture sequence, pre-tied lashings and clearly allocated roles. Pair Scouts and demonstrate one step at a time.	Compare lean-to and A-frame designs. Ask teams to explain how pitch, overlap, bracing and wind direction affect performance.	Plan a shelter for a different weather condition or create a materials list and annotated design for a future session.

LEADER'S REMINDER: The goal is not the biggest shelter. It is a safe, stable design, good teamwork and responsible use of the site.