SCOUTS BUSHCRAFT

Bushcraft Survival Challenge
Activity Risk Assessment

60-minute practical session • Shelter • Equipment • Fire and water awareness • Navigation • Woodland skills

Activity	Bushcraft Survival Challenge – 60-minute session	**Venue**	To be completed by the leader
Date / time	_____	**Assessor**	_____
Group	Scouts (adapt to age, needs and experience)	**Review date**	_____

Scope and activity description

Scouts work in small supervised teams through short bushcraft tasks: selecting survival equipment, pitching a small tarp shelter, discussing tinder and fire safety, learning safe water-treatment principles, following a short marked navigation route, observing woodland features and completing a teamwork challenge. This assessment covers the planned session as written. Any live fire, tool use, food preparation, actual foraging or drinking-water collection requires separate planning and controls before it is introduced.

People who may be affected

Scouts, leaders, helpers, site staff and members of the public who may be near the activity area. Consider individual medical needs, allergies, mobility, sensory needs, confidence, relevant experience and additional support requirements before the session.

Risk rating guide

Likelihood (L): 1 Rare, 2 Unlikely, 3 Possible, 4 Likely, 5 Almost certain. **Severity (S):** 1 Minor, 2 Moderate, 3 Serious, 4 Major, 5 Critical. **Risk score:** L × S. Ratings below are indicative and must be checked against the actual site, group and controls.

Risk register – hazards and control measures

Hazard / potential harm	Who may be harmed	Initial L×S	Control measures	Residual L×S
Uneven ground, roots, holes, wet leaves or slippery surfaces – slips, trips and falls.	All participants	**3×3 9**	Inspect the activity area beforehand; remove or mark avoidable trip hazards where appropriate; set clear boundaries and safe walking routes; require suitable footwear; no running between stations; adapt or relocate if ground is unsafe.	**2×2 4**
Weather exposure – cold, heat, sunburn, dehydration or sudden weather change.	All participants	**3×4 12**	Check forecast and conditions; provide suitable clothing, sun protection, drinking water and rest breaks; monitor participants; shorten, adapt or stop the session in unsuitable weather; identify a sheltered area.	**2×3 6**
Trees, branches and woodland hazards – falling branches, sharp vegetation or unstable deadwood.	All participants	**3×4 12**	Check overhead and ground hazards before use; avoid dead or storm-damaged trees and hanging branches; do not climb trees or use unstable structures; keep activity stations away from hazardous areas; follow site instructions.	**2×3 6**
Tarp shelter and ropes – trips, entanglement, falling poles or unstable shelter.	Scouts and leaders	**3×3 9**	Use a clear, level site; keep guy lines visible and outside walkways; use suitable poles and sound attachment points; keep the structure low and stable; do not climb or hang from it; leader checks before use and dismantling.	**2×2 4**
Compass route and navigation – becoming lost, crossing hazards or entering restricted areas.	Scouts	**3×4 12**	Leader plans and checks a short route; set clear boundaries and control points; use pairs or teams with suitable supervision; establish headcounts, check-in points and a stop signal; no road crossings or water-edge routes; stop and contact the leader if unsure.	**1×4 4**
Natural materials and plant identification – contact irritation, allergic reaction or mistaken identification.	Scouts and leaders	**3×3 9**	Use photographs, cards or leader-provided samples where possible; do not taste or eat wild plants, berries or fungi; avoid touching unknown plants; wash hands after handling natural materials; check known allergies and provide alternatives.	**1×3 3**
Wildlife signs and animal encounters – bites, stings, scratches or disturbance of wildlife.	Scouts and leaders	**2×3 6**	Observe from a distance; do not handle animals, droppings, nests or dens; do not put hands into holes or under logs; supervise observation; wash hands; follow site wildlife guidance.	**1×3 3**
Fire and ignition equipment – burns, fire spread or smoke inhalation.	All participants and site users	**3×5 15**	This session uses discussion and cold demonstrations only unless a separate fire activity is authorised and risk assessed. No ignition by Scouts in this session. If a live fire is added, obtain required permission, use an approved fire area, appoint competent supervision, maintain a safe exclusion zone, have water/fire-control equipment ready, manage smoke and fully extinguish before leaving.	**1×5 5**
Water collection and purification – illness from untreated or contaminated water.	Scouts	**3×4 12**	Use clean demonstration water or sealed potable water. No drinking from streams, ponds or collected water. Explain that improvised filters remove some visible particles but do not reliably remove pathogens or chemicals. Use approved treatment only under competent instruction and manufacturer guidance.	**1×4 4**
Tools or sharp equipment – cuts or puncture injuries.	Scouts and leaders	**3×4 12**	No knife, saw, axe or other cutting-tool use is included in this lesson. Keep sharp tools out of the activity area. If tool work is added, plan it as a separate activity with appropriate authorisation, competent supervision, age-appropriate controls, tool inspection and safe working distances.	**1×4 4**

Hazard / potential harm	Who may be harmed	Initial L×S	Control measures	Residual L×S
Manual handling and lifting poles or equipment – strains, trapped fingers or dropped loads.	Scouts and leaders	**2×3 6**	Use lightweight equipment; demonstrate safe carrying; team-lift longer items where appropriate; do not lift beyond ability; keep fingers clear of joints and pinch points; leaders handle awkward or heavy items.	**1×2 2**
First aid, illness or emergency – delayed treatment or difficulty summoning help.	All participants	**2×5 10**	Identify a suitably trained first aider; carry a stocked first aid kit; collect relevant medical and emergency information through appropriate procedures; know the exact site location and access point; maintain a charged phone and emergency contact plan; record and report incidents.	**1×5 5**
Public access and group separation – collision, interference or missing participant.	Scouts and public	**2×4 8**	Choose a suitable activity area; explain boundaries and behaviour expectations; maintain supervision and regular headcounts; use a buddy system; keep public routes clear; have a missing-person procedure and stop signal.	**1×4 4**
Leave No Trace and site damage – damaged vegetation, litter or unsafe remains.	Environment and site users	**3×3 9**	Use only permitted areas and materials; do not cut live trees or strip bark; use dead, fallen material only where site rules allow; avoid disturbing habitats; remove all litter and equipment; restore the site and check for hazards before departure.	**1×2 2**

Pre-activity and on-site checks

- Confirm site permission, boundaries, access and emergency vehicle arrangements.
- Check weather forecast and inspect the actual ground, trees, shelter location and route immediately before the activity.
- Confirm leader/helper roles, supervision arrangements, first aider and headcount procedure.
- Check participants' relevant medical needs, allergies, additional support requirements and suitable clothing/footwear.
- Check all equipment; remove damaged, unsuitable or unnecessary items.
- Brief Scouts on boundaries, stop signal, buddy system, safe behaviour and what to do if separated.
- Confirm no live fire, eating of wild foods, untreated-water drinking or cutting-tool use is included unless separately authorised and assessed.
- At the end, account for everyone, check the area, remove equipment and litter, and leave the site safe.

Emergency arrangements

Nearest suitable access point / site address: _____

Emergency services access instructions / grid reference: _____

First aider: _____ **Mobile:** _____

Meeting point: _____ **Emergency contact process:** _____

Approval and review

Assessor name		**Signature**	
Date		**Leader in charge**	
Review after activity / incident / change			

Important: This is a planning template, not a substitute for the leader's own assessment. The responsible leader must adapt it to the actual venue, participants, weather, equipment, current Scouts UK guidance and local site rules before the activity takes place. Residual ratings assume the listed controls are in place and effective.