

1988

Family Outdoor Recreation Workshops: Seven Easy Steps

Charles M. Chase
University of Mississippi

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/visions>

Recommended Citation

Chase, Charles M. (1988) "Family Outdoor Recreation Workshops: Seven Easy Steps," *Visions in Leisure and Business*: Vol. 7 : No. 3 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/visions/vol7/iss3/14>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at ScholarWorks@BGSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Visions in Leisure and Business by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@BGSU.

FAMILY OUTDOOR RECREATION WORKSHOPS
SEVEN EASY STEPS

BY

DR. CHARLES M. CHASE, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

RECREATION DEGREE PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECREATION
UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 39205

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to provide a methodology detailing the operational basics of designing, promoting, and implementing family recreation workshops.

There are seven steps to effectuate these workshops. The steps are:

1. Develop instructional materials for workshop participants.
2. Employ instructional presentation techniques to accommodate all levels of participation.
3. Rotate workshops to bring back prior participants.
4. Make a dedicated effort to make exclusive use of the local resources.
5. Do efficacious marketing of workshops and minimize workshop fees.
6. Emphasize the learn-by-doing approach in all workshops in order to provide evaluative criteria for you, and the best experience for participants.
7. Provide culminating competitive events so that prior participants have opportunities to use their learned skills.

FAMILY-ORIENTED OUTDOOR SKILLS WORKSHOPS
SEVEN EASY STEPS

Look through most any brochure or catalog of recreation offerings distributed by a park and recreation agency and you will often find a rather comprehensive and impressive program of activities. Typically you will find recreational opportunities for children, for youth, for young

adults, for middle-age adults, and there will usually be opportunities for senior adults as well. Unfortunately, what is not always available are activity opportunities designed specifically for families in an interacting or intergenerational format. Reasons for this programmatic void are varied and numerous, but the singular most common reason is likely to be that a credible effort simply was never made. No one can argue the fact that this type of programming takes a little extra work, after all you are dealing with different participant levels and their corresponding capabilities and need, all at the same time. This situation, however, is not reason enough to not provide recreational offerings for the family as a unit.

An especially appropriate setting in which to provide for family recreation is the outdoor environment. It seems to have its own unique charisma and unit bonding potential. It is simply a great place to provide for family recreation. All that remains then is for the recreation professional to provide appropriate opportunities.

No matter what specific activity or skill workshop is being offered as a family recreation opportunity, to ensure a positive experience for participants, and a professionally done process and product for the agency, there does exist a need for adherence to selected fundamental elements for quality program development and implementation. With this in mind, the following steps are provided as a guide for the conducting of family-oriented outdoor skills workshop.

1. Develop Instructional Materials for Workshop Participants.

These are materials that the participants will be able to put to use during the workshop and as a take-home item for future reference. These materials can range from single sheet instructions to tri-fold brochures to a relatively in-depth how-to skills booklet. These items need not be four color professional publications but they should be useful and field-oriented.

In addition to being a workshop complement, these instructional materials will give the participants "something for their money" and perhaps more importantly, they will be your business card and their souvenir, all rolled up in one!

2. Employ Instructional Presentation Techniques to Accommodate All Levels of Participation.

Necessarily, based on the very intent of family-oriented workshops, there will probably be a significant and understandable difference within the participants' learning capabilities. What needs to be done of course, is to present all material at a level which will be comprehensible to each and every participant. Keeping in mind that participants may well range from seven years old to eighty-seven years old, it at times may be absolutely impossible to instructionally accommodate everyone before you in a single effort. When the situation demands such, take whatever time and effort is necessary to present the material again at a distinctly different level. When you do so, it is usually best to present your repeat instruction at a level which will accommodate your youngest group. Interestingly, what happens is that

your second presentation also serves as a reinforcer and a remediating procedure for the initial presentation which was delivered at the "mature" level. Also, now having been schooled in the subject matter at hand, it is not unusual to have the adult participants voluntarily take on an assistant role and total group instruction is thereby accomplished.

3. Rotate Workshops to Bring Back Prior Participants.

The providers of family-oriented outdoor skills workshops would do well to take a lesson from the theater and the movie industry. There are a great many of us who excitedly return to view a movie or other theatrical performance that we have already seen earlier. Since the advent of home video we now even purchase our own copy of our favorite shows so that we can view them when the mood hits us. It is obvious that people do not mind repeating an enjoyable educational, cultural, or recreational experience, in fact, they will frequently go out of their way to do so. Family-oriented outdoor skills workshops are no exception. There are several reasons why it makes good sense to rotate skills workshops. First off, it provides an opportunity to bring back a previous and valuable customer. Additionally that previous participant may well bring a friend or another family member in which case you are enhancing both program enrollment and participant retention. Perhaps most importantly, from a family recreation standpoint, rotating skills workshops provides a supporting element for the continuation of family-oriented recreation. This support includes reinforcing or advancing existing skills and increasing the family's number of skills--their skills repertoire.

A family may bypass involvement in a given workshop because of a lack of what is or what is perceived to be a prerequisite skill. If workshop rotation is never effectuated, that particular skill acquisition opportunity may never become a reality.

4. Make a Dedicated Effort to Make Exclusive Use of Local Resources

There are two important elements contained in this step. They are human resources and natural resources. The most important of the two being the natural resources.

Attempting to make exclusive use of local human resources simply assures you that within your workshop rotation schedule, when the need for a given resource person presents itself, access to that person is, for the most part, relatively dependable.

Undoubtedly more important than the human resource is the use of local natural resources. One of your key concerns as a skills workshop provider is that once you have a family build its repertoire of outdoor skills, you want them to be able to take their new found skills into "the field" on their own and continue to put them to use. Using local natural resources such as woods, fields, water, rocks and whatever else can be used, will develop a familiarity on the part of the participants with that particular resource and they can then comfortably continue to make use of the new skill--locally. It is no secret that people will be more inclined to make an effort to learn and gain command of a new skill if they have reason to believe that they will be able to put it to use.

Thus the case for the exclusive use of local natural resources.

5. Do Efficacious Marketing of Workshops and Minimize Workshop Fees

There is marketing and there is efficacious marketing. Efficacious marketing simply means that you do some appropriate target marketing for workshop participants. Different from the focus of the general marketing that typically goes out of an agency, in the area of family-oriented outdoor skills workshops, there are two very important market niches to not only address but to ultimately combine--family and outdoor. Market accordingly, efficaciously, and your workshops will have a much better chance of success.

Minimizing workshop fees, if in fact a fee must exist at all, creates a condition that is much more palatable to potential family participation than high fee situations. In recreation, at least as far as the delivery system is concerned, there is probably no greater good and service to community than to enhance and increase the level of family-oriented recreation. Minimizing workshop fees alone won't totally accomplish such, but it is certainly a step in the right direction.

6. Emphasize the Learn-by-Doing Approach in all Workshops in Order to Provide Evaluative Criteria for You, and the Best Experience for Participants

A primary mandate in the design of outdoor skill workshops is to provide for the hands-on, learn-by-doing involvement of the participants. That is what participants come to workshops for and that is what they expect to receive. When you provide them such, you will have given them the best possible workshop experience.

Additionally, the participants' hands-on, learn-by-doing involvement gives you the opportunity to accomplish some very important evaluation. If your workshop was designed correctly to begin with you would have established a given number of selected behavioral or performance objectives for the workshop. Having such a place allows you to literally test the quality of your workshop. Did your participants in fact learn the skills you purported to provide for them at the workshop? Simply comparing participants' performance to the pre-established objectives will give the answer.

Evaluation of the worth of your skills workshops can be taken one step further in the form of longitudinal research. In part, this effort could actually function as a needs assessment as well as an evaluation. In essence, what you are doing is a follow-up on workshop participants so as to ascertain the degree to which, if any, they are continuing to use the skills they initially acquired in earlier workshops. Concomitantly, you can easily discover why they are not using the skills, if such be the case. This all can be accomplished by way of a simple survey from which the tabulated results might dictate your next move--offering new workshops or perhaps rotating old workshops.

7. Provide Culminating Competitive Events so that Prior Participants Have Opportunities to use their Learned Skills

There is really a two-fold purpose to this final step. One is to do as stated, give the participants a chance to test their new outdoor skills. These "competitive" events are not intended to be hard-core, pre-Olympian tests. They are, instead, meant to be pleasant and convenient settings in which one and all are given an opportunity to put their skills to actual use in a realistic setting. There are many options available to the workshop programmer concerning the competition provided. Depending on the particular skill(s) involved, the competition could be against the environment, against the clock, against previously set accomplishments, or against on-site participants. Make one or more of these competitive designs available, as a program in itself, and you will have done all that is expected of you insofar as outdoor skills workshops are concerned.

The other purpose to providing these competitive events as a culmination to your workshops is to assist you in workshop evaluations and to assist you in the design of your on-going program. This is really an extension of the hands-on, learn-by-doing that was discussed in Step Six, but in this case you will be able to generate a feeling for two things; first, is there enough interest in this particular skill to bring your participants back to this event, and second, did your participants really learn the skill in the earlier workshop(s) to the extent that they feel comfortable coming back to this event. Use this information to your advantage and develop your next workshops accordingly.

Do not take the matter of family-oriented outdoor skills workshops lightly. Family recreation is probably one of those things there can never be too much of. Providing outdoor skills for the family, as a unit, is one way to help increase family recreation. With outdoor skills a family has another vehicle by which to further its self-interaction and as a result of that interaction, it has the distinct potential to become more enriched. Therein lies the challenge to the professional recreator and the recreation profession.