

## A Future in the Past

Have you ever read a science fiction novel about time travel? Time travel is impossible, of course, but you can experience the next best thing through living history. You can find living history presentations at museums, historic sites, heritage centers, schools, and many other locations. Through the use of clothing styles, pastimes, skills, foods, cooking, music, and handicrafts, interpreters of living history give a sense of everyday life as it was lived during the period they represent.

Living history interpreters seek to demonstrate cultures, including military life, farming, village life, fur trading, and commerce, from a specific time and place in history. Some interpret daily life at museums and sites such as Colonial Williamsburg. Some reenact important events in American history like the Battle of Gettysburg. Some interpret frontier history at backcountry camps such as those at Philmont Scout Ranch.

This month's meetings will introduce you to basic concepts of living history and start you on the road to a future in the past. So jump into your time machine, and let the journey begin!

### Objectives

This month's activities should:

- Show Scouts how to find out about local history.
- Help them understand how the past has impacted how we live today.
- Teach them how to research a time period and place.
- Cover basic life skills from a specific time period.
- Encourage Scouts to create a persona.
- Prompt Scouts to pursue additional activities related to living history.

### RELATED ADVANCEMENT AND AWARDS

Advancement opportunities related to living history are numerous within the Scouting program. Pioneers and frontiersmen used basic Scoutcraft and outdoor skills on a daily basis just to survive. Be creative and look for connections.

- Tenderfoot requirements 1, 2, 3, 4a, 4b, 4c, and 11
- Second Class requirements 1a, 1b, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 3g, and 6
- First Class requirements 1, 2, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, 6, 7a, 7b, 8a, and 10
- American Cultures, American Heritage, Archery, Basketry, Communication, Cooking, Genealogy, Indian Lore, Leatherwork, Metalwork, Music and Bugling, Pioneering, Pottery, Rifle Shooting, Scouting Heritage, Wood Carving, and Woodwork merit badges
- Venturing: Communication, Cooking, Land Navigation, and Wilderness Survival core requirements
- Ranger: Equestrian, Fishing, Hunting, Outdoor Living History, Plants and Wildlife, and Shooting Sports electives





## Leadership Planning

As a leadership team, you may want to discuss the following items when choosing living history as your program feature during your planning meetings.

1. How much do we know about our local history?
2. Do we know a historian, interpreter, or other expert?
3. What do we want to do for a main event?
4. Where do we want to do our main event?
5. Are there any historical sites where we can volunteer?
6. How can our parents get involved?
7. What costs will be involved in the activities we want to do?
8. To meet our needs, what should we change in the sample meeting plans?

### PARENTS CAN HELP WITH THE LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM FEATURE BY:

1. Helping with fundraising
2. Making costumes
3. Providing transportation for the main event
4. Serving as experts
5. Finding resources or experts
6. Documenting family history

## LIVING HISTORY BASICS

### First Person and Third Person

Interpreters vary in the ways they display their knowledge of historical context. Some portray a character in the first person (in character), pretending to be a historical figure. Others stay in the 21st century—even though they may dress in period costumes—and describe historical events in the third person (out of character). Each approach has both advantages and disadvantages.

First-person interpreters use a persona, either a real historical figure or a fictional character. A fictional persona is usually a composite character who represents an average person from the time period.







## Creating a Persona

As you develop a persona, consider these factors:

- You first need to decide what place and period you want to reenact. While you could choose any place and period, you will be better off starting with your local history because more resources will be available to you. You may also have more luck with heavily researched periods such as the Civil War.
- Developing a character can be as simple or as complex as you want to make it. It's best to start simple and build upon the basics. What is your occupation? Are you a civilian or in the military? What year were you born, and where do you live? Are you a Native American, soldier, an immigrant, inventor, or an internment camp resident? Are you wealthy, poor, or somewhere in between? Answering these questions and more will help you determine what to wear, what equipment you may carry and use, and what type of daily activities you may likely do.
- If possible, resist the urge to reenact a historical figure because you will be bound to a much stricter level of accuracy. A fictional persona is far better for the novice reenactor as you have the flexibility to craft your persona into the person you want to be. (You should still strive for historical accuracy, of course.)
- Once you have decided on a character, research that time period and learn more about types of clothing, accoutrements, and occupations. From this information you can form a plan and develop your costume and a backstory.

## Cooking

- One of the joys of Scouting is Dutch oven cooking. Living history lends itself very well to this style as cast iron cookware and Dutch ovens go back hundreds of years.
- Cooking over an open fire is an acquired skill, and learning those skills will further enhance your character presentation. Learn the difference between a cooking fire and a fire strictly for enjoyment and fellowship.

- Once you settle on a time period to reenact, you can research hundreds of period-correct foods and recipes, making your reenactment experience even more enjoyable. Observers will flock to you when you have some tasty foods for sampling.
- Historical cooking resources can be found at the library, online, and even on some television shows.
- Don't be afraid to try foods that may not be the norm today. You may surprise yourself and learn to love those old recipes. They can also be healthful as they emphasize more vegetables and edible plants and rely less on processed ingredients from the grocery store.
- Recipes passed down through generations of families can also be a fun way to reconnect with your family's past.

## Living in the Outdoors

- Living in the outdoors in 1840, for example, is not so different from camping in the 21st century, with the exception of the equipment used.
- Camp life can be as simple as a fur trapper's primitive camp or as elaborate as a military brigade encampment. It all depends on the time period you are trying to represent. Attention to sanitation, storage of food and water, and food preparation was as important 200 years ago as it is today. Do your research and prepare appropriately.
- Put forth the effort to set up an accurate camp. That will further enhance your reenactment experience, as well as educate others as to the lifestyle of a specific time and place. Look at your costume, persona, food, activities, and campsite as a complete package.





## Firearms and Accoutrements

Certain living history time periods require the use of firearms, black powder, and accoutrements in order to accurately recreate that period. Examples include mountain man camps and Civil War reenactments.

Keep in mind that the policies in the *Guide to Safe Scouting* apply to living history activities just as they do for all Scouting activities. Another good resource is the *National Shooting Sports Manual*. Before undertaking any activity that uses firearms (aside from nonfunctioning replicas), consult with your council shooting sports coordinator or a BSA-certified shooting sports director.

## LIVING HISTORY AT PHILMONT

One of the highlights of backpacking treks at Philmont Scout Ranch is hiking into a living history camp. At camps including Metcalf Station, Black Mountain, and Abreu, staff members interpret important periods in the history of the land that is now Philmont. Scouts who visit learn about that history and get the chance to try activities like blacksmithing, spar-pole climbing, and gold panning.







## LIVING HISTORY GAMES

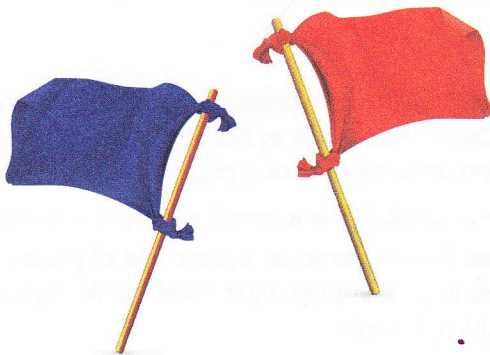
### Capture the Flag

**Equipment:** Two neckerchiefs or pieces of cloth to use as flags

**How to play:** Divide the group into two teams. Each team has a location designated as its goal. Tie one flag loosely at each goal. The object is to get the opposing team's flag without being captured. A player is captured when tagged by a member of the opposing team. Captured players become members of the team that capture them.

**Scoring:** The first team to capture the other team's flag and return to its own home base wins.

**Notes:** This game works best as a wide game, which means you will need a large playing area.



### Stiff

**Equipment:** Two hand-sized blocks of wood

**How to play:** The leader has two blocks of wood. The Scouts move about at will within a specified area. The leader stands where he can observe all action. When he claps the two blocks of wood together loudly, all players freeze, and any player caught moving is out. If the leader doesn't detect any movement, he says, "Mill around," which permits players to move at random around the playing area until he strikes the blocks together again. Continue until time is up or one player is left.

**Scoring:** Last player to be caught wins.

### Predator and Prey

**Equipment:** None

**How to play:** One player is the predator, and the rest are prey. The predator chases the prey and seeks to capture them. Once captured, a player becomes a predator.

**Scoring:** None.

**Notes:** Establish boundaries for the playing area before starting the game.

### Colonial and Pioneer Games

**Equipment:** Varies

**How to play:** Set up a variety of simple period-appropriate games that require minimal equipment. Possibilities include sack races, three-legged races, lawn bowling, horseshoes, marbles, and draughts (checkers). Use a round-robin format to let Scouts try different games.

**Scoring:** Varies by game.







## E.D.G.E. Ideas

*Explain* how it is done—Tell them.

*Demonstrate* the steps—Show them.

*Guide* learners as they practice—Watch them do it.

*Enable* them to succeed on their own—Have them practice/teach it.

### EXPLAIN

- Discuss the process of persona development.
- Discuss different forms of living history.
- Explain the difference between first-person and third-person historical interpretations.
- Talk about cooking methods used at different points in history.
- Discuss how BSA safety standards apply to living history activities like black-powder shooting.

### DEMONSTRATE

- Demonstrate how an interpreter would talk about his or her persona in the first and third persons.
- Demonstrate different types of period cooking techniques.
- Show a variety of tents or shelters used throughout history.
- Show the evolution of commonly used items over time (e.g., firearms, candles, writing tools).
- Show a video of a historical reenactment.

### GUIDE

- Discuss your persona with another person (use first person and third person).
- Have Scouts use different fire-starting techniques to start a fire.
- Have Scouts write a message using three different writing techniques from three different living history periods (e.g., medieval scrolls, wax tablets, calligraphy, charcoal, quill).
- Guide Scouts in cooking a period-appropriate meal.
- Provide resources to allow Scouts to research the historical period you are studying.

### ENABLE

- Have Scouts give a presentation of their personas to Cub Scouts; another patrol, troop, or crew; or a community member or group.
- Have Scouts make a period-appropriate campsite.
- Have Scouts demonstrate the use of period tools (e.g., camping equipment, cooking gear, bedding layout).
- Have Scouts create a poster about their chosen time period.
- Create a living history area or demonstration at a local festival.

## MAIN EVENT SUMMARIES

### ● ESSENTIAL

#### Day Activity

History on parade—Set up a display at a local festival, or march in a local parade wearing period clothing. Explain your persona and backstory to those who are interested.

### ■ CHALLENGING

#### Overnight Activity

Rendezvous or reenactment—Participate in a rendezvous or historical reenactment in your area. Try to be as authentic as possible. Visit with reenactors to learn more about their hobby. Provide Good Turns at the event, such as picking up trash or helping with crowd control.

### ◆ ADVANCED

#### Weekend Activity

Living history weekend—Spend a weekend in your persona. Use only period clothing and equipment. Cook period meals using period utensils. This activity requires a lot of research, but it is the ultimate in living history.








# LIVING HISTORY

## Meeting Plan: Choosing Your Character



Week 1 Date \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
<b>Preopening</b> 15 minutes before meeting	Show a YouTube video that depicts living history such as this <i>Time</i> magazine feature on Civil War reenactors: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DajfoNBkD4Q">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DajfoNBkD4Q</a> .		6:45 p.m.
<b>Opening Ceremony</b> 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
<b>Group Instruction</b> 10 minutes	Do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain what living history is.</li><li>• Discuss what era and setting the unit will focus on this month.</li><li>• Explain the process of choosing a persona.</li></ul>		7:10 p.m.
<b>Skills Instruction</b> 35 minutes	 Make an item for your persona, such as a scroll, paper, a tin lantern, a basket, or a leather pouch.		7:20 p.m.
	 Begin making a costume using modern-day items for your persona, such as a cape from a wool blanket or a hat or tunic from cotton.		
	 Begin making a costume using original material for your persona, such as hand-sewn buckskins, chain mail, or beaded adornments.		
<b>Breakout Groups</b> 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Select a living history time period.</li><li>• Begin an outline of persona basics (name, age, birthplace, etc.). Have Internet access or appropriate books on hand to facilitate this process.</li></ul>		7:55 p.m.
<b>Game</b> 15 minutes	Play Capture the Flag (described earlier).		8:10 p.m.
<b>Closing</b> 5 minutes	Announcements • Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
<b>Total 90 minutes of meeting</b>			
<b>After the Meeting</b> 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

\*All times are suggested.





# LIVING HISTORY

## Meeting Plan: Finalizing Your Persona



Week 2 Date \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
<b>Preopening</b> 15 minutes before meeting	Create a collection of index cards with artifacts or items from different time periods, and have Scouts who arrive early match them to their correct time periods.		6:45 p.m.
<b>Opening Ceremony</b> 5 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law		7 p.m.
<b>Group Instruction</b> 10 minutes	Lead a group discussion during which participants explain their personas.		7:05 p.m.
<b>Skills Instruction</b> 45 minutes	Continue working on persona research.		7:15 p.m.
	Continue working on persona development, and begin costume design.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Continue working on persona development and costume design.</li><li>Make a list of persona-appropriate accessories.</li></ul>		
<b>Breakout Groups</b> 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Discuss plans for the main event.</li><li>Review what personal and group equipment will be needed.</li></ul>		8 p.m.
<b>Game</b> 10 minutes	Play Stiff (described earlier).		8:15 p.m.
<b>Closing</b> 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
<b>Total 90 minutes of meeting</b>			
<b>After the Meeting</b> 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

\*All times are suggested.





# LIVING HISTORY

## Meeting Plan: Period Cooking



Week 3 Date \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
<b>Preopening</b> 15 minutes before meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Have Scouts research living history sites and museums within driving distance of your city.</li><li>Provide laptops or tablets with Internet access.</li></ul>		6:45 p.m.
<b>Opening Ceremony</b> 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
<b>Group Instruction</b> 5 minutes	Discuss how to clean and maintain cooking equipment and utensils properly.		7:10 p.m.
<b>Skills Instruction</b> 45 minutes	Create a list of period-appropriate recipes, and develop a menu for the main event. Include a shopping list.		7:15 p.m.
	Create a meal plan using only Dutch oven cooking techniques. Include a shopping list.		
	Make a menu using cooking practices that don't require the use of utensils. Be sure to include different styles of cooking (stick, rock, spit, etc.).		
<b>Breakout Groups</b> 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Finalize plans for main event.</li><li>Work on advancement requirements as needed.</li></ul>		8 p.m.
<b>Game</b> 10 minutes	Play Predator and Prey (described earlier).		8:15 p.m.
<b>Closing</b> 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
<b>Total 90 minutes of meeting</b>			
<b>After the Meeting</b> 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

\*All times are suggested.








# LIVING HISTORY

## Meeting Plan: Everyday Skills



Week 4 Date \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
<b>Preopening</b> 15 minutes before meeting	Invite a local living history reenactor to display his or her gear.		6:45 p.m.
<b>Opening Ceremony</b> 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
<b>Group Instruction</b> 15 minutes	Have a local living reenactor discuss his or her hobby and the research he or she has done.		7:10 p.m.
<b>Skills Instruction</b> 30 minutes	 Learn candle making, fire starting, or another period-appropriate activity.		7:25 p.m.
	 Learn about weapons used during the period you are interpreting, such as muskets, crossbows, Civil War arms, or bows and arrows.		
	 Learn about lodging during the period you are interpreting, such as teepees, lean-tos, or canvas tents.		
<b>Breakout Groups</b> 15 minutes	Finalize persona, costume, and cooking menu.		7:55 p.m.
<b>Game</b> 15 minutes	Set up a round-robin of period-appropriate colonial or pioneer games (described earlier). Your guest reenactor may be able to provide guidance.		8:10 p.m.
<b>Closing</b> 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
<b>Total 90 minutes of meeting</b>			
<b>After the Meeting</b> 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

\*All times are suggested.





# LIVING HISTORY

## Main Event: History on Parade



Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Logistics

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Departure time: \_\_\_\_\_

Return time: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration of activity: Four to six hours

Budget: Completed \_\_\_\_\_ Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Camping: Duty roster \_\_\_\_\_ Menu \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation: Group \_\_\_\_\_ Self \_\_\_\_\_

Tour and activity plan: Completed \_\_\_\_\_ Submitted \_\_\_\_\_

### Essential (Tier I)

Set up a display at a local festival, or march in a local parade wearing period clothing. Explain your persona and backstory to those who are interested.

### Equipment List

- Costumes
- Period accessories
- Poster or display boards
- Food
- Water
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

### Activity

- Identify a local parade or festival that you could participate in.
- Call the organizers and find out what is required in order to participate.
- Develop a display or parade float as appropriate.
- Strive to wear complete period-appropriate outfits.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of your persona and the time period you are studying.

### Safety

- Always use the buddy system, or stay in a group.
- If marching in a parade, decide on a meeting place at the end of the route.
- Have a cell phone and numbers available for emergencies.

### Notes





# LIVING HISTORY

## Main Event: Rendezvous or Reenactment



Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Logistics

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Departure time: \_\_\_\_\_

Return time: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration of activity: Overnight

Budget: Completed \_\_\_\_\_ Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Camping: Duty roster \_\_\_\_\_ Menu \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation: Group \_\_\_\_\_ Self \_\_\_\_\_

Tour and activity plan: Completed \_\_\_\_\_ Submitted \_\_\_\_\_

### Challenging (Tier II)

Participate in a rendezvous or historical reenactment in your area. Try to be as authentic as possible. Visit with reenactors to learn more about their hobby. Provide a Good Turn at the event, such as picking up trash or helping with crowd control.

### Equipment List

- Period-appropriate tent or lodging, if possible
- Costume- and persona-appropriate accessories or Scout uniform
- Cooking gear
- Food
- Water
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

### Activity

- Research living history events in your area, and pick one that is appropriate to the period you are studying.
- Make arrangements or reservations for camping location.
- Collect the admission fee, if applicable.
- Meet and introduce yourself to other participants in character.
- Provide a Good Turn to improve the experience for visitors.
- Enjoy the experience.

### Safety

Follow the *Guide to Safe Scouting* (go to <http://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/GSS.aspx>), as well as the policies of the event organizers. Remember that Scouting policies must be followed when they are more restrictive than event policies.

### Notes

Supplement period camping gear with modern equipment to allow a safe camping experience.





# LIVING HISTORY

## Main Event: Living History Weekend



Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Logistics

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Departure time: \_\_\_\_\_

Return time: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration of activity: Weekend

Budget: Completed \_\_\_\_\_ Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Camping: Duty roster \_\_\_\_\_ Menu \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation: Group \_\_\_\_\_ Self \_\_\_\_\_

Tour and activity plan: Completed \_\_\_\_\_ Submitted \_\_\_\_\_



### Advanced (Tier III)

Spend a weekend as your persona. Use only period clothing and equipment. Cook period meals using period utensils. This activity requires a lot of research, but it is the ultimate in living history.

### Equipment List

- Period-appropriate tent or lodging
- Costume- and persona-appropriate accessories
- Cooking gear
- Persona information
- Food
- Water
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

### Activity

- Research living history events in your area, and pick one that is appropriate to the period you are studying.
- Make arrangements or reservations for camping location.
- Collect admission fee, if applicable.
- Spend the entire weekend in character.
- Enjoy the experience.

### Safety

Follow the *Guide to Safe Scouting* (go to <http://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/GSS.aspx>), as well as the policies of the event organizers. Remember that Scouting policies must be followed when they are more restrictive than event policies.

### Notes

Supplement period camping gear with modern equipment to allow a safe camping experience.





## REFERENCES

### Books

*American Cultures, American Heritage, Archery, Basketry, Communication, Cooking, Genealogy, Indian Lore, Leatherwork, Metalwork, Music and Bugling, Pioneering, Pottery, Rifle Shooting, Scouting Heritage, Wood Carving, and Woodwork* merit badge pamphlets

### Magazines

*Skirmish: The Living History Magazine*  
Website: <http://www.skirmishmagazine.com>

### Websites

#### Living History Resources

Website: <http://livinghistoryresources.webs.com>

#### Living History Worldwide

Website: <http://www.livinghistoryworldwide.com>

#### Buckskinning.org

Website: <http://www.buckskinning.org>

#### Ancient Celtic Clans

Website: <http://www.celticclans.org>

#### The Civil War Reenactors

Website: <http://www.cwreenactors.com>

#### The Medieval Combat Society

Website: <http://www.themcs.org>

#### The Society for Creative Anachronism (Medieval)

Website: <http://www.sca.org>

### Related Program Features

Camping, Communication, Cooking, and  
Project Planning

### Photo and Illustration Credits

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