

Trails

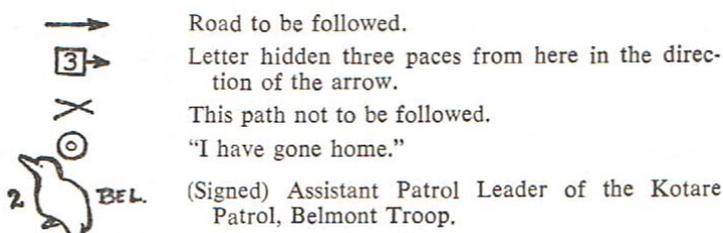
Introduction

Tracking develops observation and deduction skills as well as being good fun for the youth members.

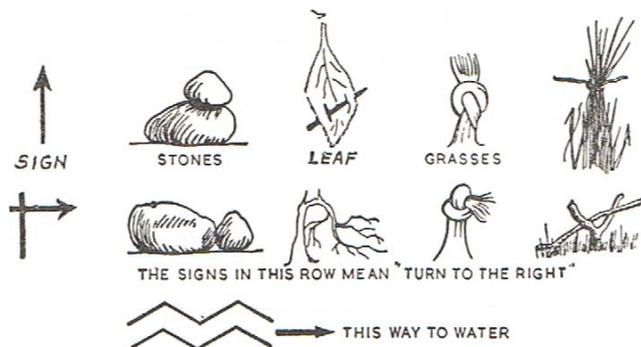
Tracking skills can be utilised for daylight games for Keas and Cubs and for night time games for Scouts which has the added advantage of familiarising them with working and travelling in the dark without losing their way. Some Scouts find this very nerve wracking. If you don't believe this, watch how closely some younger Scouts stick to their Patrol Leaders when playing wide games in the dark.

Setting a trail

Lord Baden-Powell devised a set of trail signs in about 1910 that leaders can use for setting a trail for youth members to follow. We see no reason to change them so they are listed below. We really don't need to explain them further.



Here are some variations:



At Scout level, leaders should be appointing a Patrol to set a trail for the other Patrols to follow. This gives the Scouts responsibility, awareness of their surroundings and fun, all while learning to be observant.

Kim's Game

This is an observation and memory training game where the leader gathers a number of objects and puts them on a tray, covered by a cloth. **Keas might have 10 objects, Cubs 15 objects, and Scouts 20+.**

The leader gathers the youth members around and removes the cloth for 1 or two minutes before replacing it. The youth members then sit down and record as many of the items that they can remember.

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Trails, continued

Kim's Game *continued*

Hints:

It would pay to run the game each meeting night for several weeks so that constant practice brings about an improvement in their recall ability.

Another hint:

Want to impress people with your memory recall? Look at the items and make up a story that incorporates as many of the items you can. Then when you have to recall the items, your brain will generally follow the logic of the story and you can list the items as the story unfolds in your mind. Test this by reading the following story several times and then write down the highlighted items without looking at this page.

"Joe was off to camp and he needed the **knife** to cut the **rope** and the **string**. He then used the **scissors** to cut the **cloth** in half so he could use it to polish the **glass tumbler**. When finished, he used the **whistle** to call everyone for a drink using the **mug** and then used the **compass** and **map** to find his way home".

A third hint:

Be aware of dyslexic children in the group who will have difficulty writing things down but most likely have excellent memories. At the start of Kim's game, work the youth members in a Posse, Six or Patrol who compete with one another, with one member doing the writing (use a leader for the Keas perhaps). Then move to pairs for subsequent games, making sure you pair up the dyslexic members with a good writer.

Tracking

Tracking is an advanced version of trails in that instead of following arrow and crosses etc, the youth members interpret tracks made by people birds and animals as they travel across the countryside. It's taking observation to another level.

The easiest place to teach these skills are on beaches, both sea and river, or in mud on a farm or farm track.

Hints on tracking

Note the two sets of foot prints below. See how the foot prints and the toes differ. This is one way of identifying one person's path from amongst several set of foot prints.



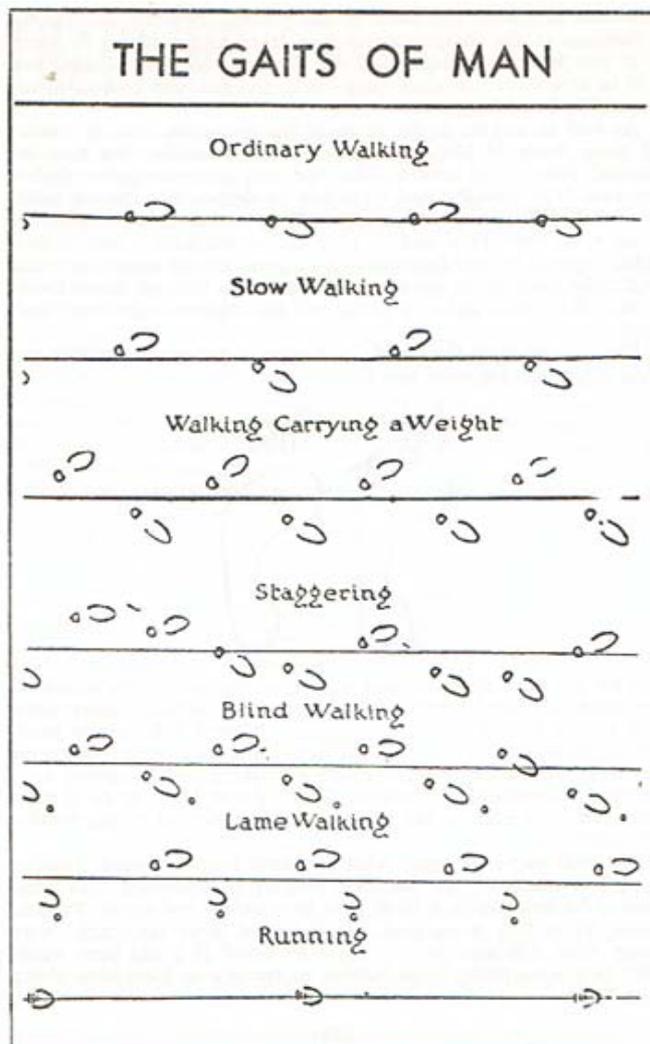
You can do exactly the same with shoes. In fact with so many varieties of footwear on the market today, following a person by their foot prints if wearing shoes or trainers is relatively easy compared to the say the early and mid 1900s when nearly all shoes had plain leather soles.

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Trails, continued, Continued

The Gaits of Man

The following chart drawn by Baden-Powell in about 1910 is as valid today as it was then.



A fun exercise for the Scout Section would be to:

- Take them to a stretch of sand or mud where several leaders have set up various styles of walking, running, carrying a load and so on.
- Let the Patrols examine the prints and then work out what they think the person who made the footprints was doing.
- Once again, not only can it be challenging, it's developing the Scouts observation, and deduction skills as well as providing an opportunity for team work.

This doesn't have to be a special trip. Work it in as part of a visit to the beach, or farm for a BBQ, or an overnight camp.

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