

Skits, Songs, & Storytelling Guidelines

Skits

Skits are a great opportunity for you to show your dramatic, silly or strange flair. They don't even have to be confined to campfires – they can be performed at lots of other times throughout the day!

Skit Times

- Campfires – Opening / Closing / Boys / Girls / Storytelling
- Talent shows (during the two-week sessions)
- During rest hour, with the rest of the counselors in the village.
- Before Playstation selling (try not to upstage the MF&G J)
- Snack
- At meal times

If you would like to perform your skit at opening or closing campfire, you will need to talk to one of the PDs or just sign up on the campfire signup sheet located on the magic board. If you would like to perform it at boys/girls campfire, then talk to your VL, or sign up on the boys/girls campfire signup sheet located on the magic board. If you are doing it before Playstation, talk to the MF&G. Any other time just go ahead and perform!

Thespians!

In order to perform a good skit you will probably need some other people. Campers LOVE being in skits!!!! You can ask anyone at camp to help you with a skit though. Most will be happy to help; remember the office folks too, they all love to perform.

Creative Thespians!

Augustans strive for both creativity and tradition. Improv skits can be done again, as they aren't really the same twice. Other skits lose something when you already know what's going to happen. Fear not though! They do get repeated after six years here at Camp Augusta, and elsewhere every year as we spread our Camp Augusta magic.

Camp appropriate

Any skits performed need to be appropriate to camp. Keeping the age of your audience in mind is also helpful . . . 8-16, or a specific village? There are some subjects, or actions, that are not appropriate for camp, no matter what the age group is. Even though some of these things could be made incredibly funny, leave them alone. Suggested not appropriate topics for skits . . .

- Violence
- Sex
- Swearing
- Relationships
- Sexual orientation
- Attacks on members of staff, or Campers
- Media based skits (for example a skit based on Transformers)
- Inappropriate icons (Michael Jackson, OJ Simpson, R Kelly)
- Cultural or Language slurs (pretending to speak another language that you don't speak)
- Death
- Disabilities
- Animal Cruelty
- Social Cruelty
- Racism
- Sexism
- Stereotypes
- Religion
- Social/Political issues

These are very broad suggestions of inappropriate subjects. However, we have had skits in the past that involved death, we also had one that was based on an advertisement for a cereal. The list is a guide; it is not set in stone. The community takes each skit on an individual basis. Just because your skit may contain one of the above subjects, doesn't necessarily mean that it is inappropriate. If you have an idea of a skit but are unsure of whether it is appropriate or not, tell a few people and see what their reaction is. If you are still not sure ask either Randy, a VL, an AD or a PD; they will be able to tell you.

Improv!

Be careful about improvisational skits. We have had many good ones but probably just as many bad ones. The ability to improvise is a skill and everyone involved with the skit must have this skill for it to be a success. You also need to make sure that it doesn't spiral out of control and last for 20 minutes. We usually try to have the skits last less than five minutes; any longer and you will begin to lose the attention of your audience. Improv skits last longer, but they aren't the focus of the activity, so they need to make room for other events as well. Also, keep in mind camp appropriate content, on the fly.

Special note on violence

There are songs and skits that involve a level of violence that the community has deemed acceptable, because they are done in an absurd way that doesn't actually convey any real violence (e.g., Cat Came Back song, argument skit, raisin skit). Some guidelines to consider are:

- If you were to project potential violent actions into the future by some frame of time, does the skit infer that some real violence might actually take place?
- Is the violence so absurd and comical that it leaves the realm of violence?
- Is the intent clearly playful and silly to all who view it?

Songs:

All cultures, currently and throughout time, have song as part of their experience. However, children in America rarely sing, because it isn't cool, or because they heard at some point they were not any good, maybe they told themselves that. To enliven song in the human hearts that beat in children and ourselves, we love songs to be sung! Silly songs, serious songs, sad songs, happy songs, crazy songs alike. Songs can be sung at anytime, such as during campfire, in the cabin, on the trails, as you are belaying, anytime. If you want to perform a song at one of the campfires, you can sign up in the same way as with skits. However, songs are so versatile that they can be sung anywhere. We always like to hear new songs, but as with skits we want them to be appropriate for camp and for the ages of campers that we have. There is a three-page philosophy document about songs at camp developed by the community; please reference that if you'd like to bring new songs to camp. The nutshell of it is:

- Ü What goal/intention am I hoping to serve by using music / this song?
 - How is this goal balanced against the goals of anti-buzz, focus on nature?
- Ü Is the intention of the group/audience unified? How do I know that?
- Ü Order of preference
 1. Singing
 2. Live music
 3. Recorded music

Story Telling

Stories serve so many purposes!!! Because of that, they are usually told during boys/girls campfire and at story-telling evening program. There are many other times when stories can be told, and they are great for adding wish, wonder and surprise to your cabin life. You can tell a story to wake your campers up, send them to sleep, entertain them during rest hour, as you are doing arts and crafts or woodworking, as you are eating meals . . . just about anytime can be a story time. You can tell made up stories or ones from books that you have read, or real-life stories that have happened to you. Whichever kind you choose to tell, you need to make sure it is appropriate; the guidelines above will help. The story about how you ended up duct-taped naked to a flagpole and then covered in mustard is not camp appropriate. Also, make sure that the story topic will captivate the age of the campers that you are telling it to. No stories about congressional gridlock for the seven-year-olds and no stories about huggy bears for the teenagers. Some stories are also more relevant for a specific gender; these are great stories to tell at overnight campfire.

It is much better if you can remember the story gist (not exact) instead of reading it; this makes for a much more dramatic performance. If you have a chilled out cabin, you may want to split a longer story over the session's rest hours and bed times. This can be really fun if the kids are into it.

If you would like some great stories to tell, check out the binders in the staff house. Randy has read over 6000 short stories and selected his favorite 100 for use in a camp setting. ***Please note that some stories included in that anthology are for adults and are intended for your enjoyment*** – screen the story, or ask Randy about it. Ask him to suggest a particular story, or to come and tell a story to your cabin personally! Randy also has a host of stories not yet added to the anthology. Tell him what kind of story you're wanting and he'll probably have one for you! He can also help you with ways to learn stories that anyone can pick up. If you're telling a story to the whole camp, you can have time off to learn that story; the more notice the better for that.