

Special Interest Areas in **Cub Scouts**



Special Interest Areas (SIAs) are one component of the Achievement Pathways, encouraging Scouts of any age to try new things and pursue their interests by setting goals and designing a project that challenges them.

They are broad, which enables Scouts to pursue a diversity of interests and ensures that any activity a Scout could possibly think of can be included. The six Special Interest Areas are:

- Adventure & Sport
- Arts & Literature
- Creating a Better World
- Environment
- Growth & Development
- STEM & Innovation



In the Cub Scout section, this looks like an activity or project that takes approximately four hours of effort. This could be completed as a Unit, as a Patrol, or individually. The activity or project should have at least one goal that the young people involved are working to achieve.

If a Cub Scout is seeking to achieve their peak award, the Grey Wolf Award, then **at least two of the six required projects must have individual and personalised goals.**

Goals

Goals are something we want to achieve. It can be big or small, something you want to do now, or in the future. To achieve a goal, we can break it into small steps. We should keep trying to achieve our goal, even if we make mistakes or things don't go as planned. When working towards a goal, we should celebrate our successes, no matter how big or small.

To work towards a goal, we can imagine climbing a ladder. At the top is what we are aiming to achieve – our big goal. Each rung of the ladder are steps we will take along the way.

Examples

Goal: *To build a Lego set/creation*

Steps:

1. *Gather all the pieces*
2. *Follow the instructions provided in the set or create your own design*
3. *Each step gets you closer to the finished design*

Goal: *Learn to ride a bike*

Steps:

1. *Practise balancing on the bike*
2. *Practise rolling and balancing with someone assisting you*
3. *Practise pedalling with training wheels*
4. *Try pedalling without training wheel*

Goalsetting is a skill that takes practice – the more you do it, the better you'll get!



Developing a Special Interest Area

Many of our activities have one or more goals that we are working towards.

The first thing we need to do is choose a goal – what is something ‘you’ really want to do? It should be something you are excited about and willing to work for!

If we are looking to complete a Unit-based Special Interest Area, think about a goal or activity that all members in the Unit might want to achieve. If we are looking at a Patrol-based Special Interest Area, the goal or activity should be suited to the interests of the small group.



For example, your goal might be to *explore the plants and trails in our local reserve.*

You need to be clear and specific – this helps you know exactly what you need to do! For example: *Identify 5 different plants in ‘Gum Reserve’ and count how many times we see these same plants on ‘Banksia Trail’.*

Next, identify what the smaller activities might be that are needed to complete this goal or activity. In this case:

1. *Plan a nature walk at ‘Gum Reserve’*
2. *Identify the five plants that you are going to count*
3. *Name the plants*
4. *Map the walk*
5. *Record and review your adventure*
6. *Celebrate what you have learned*

Write down the steps you will take and track your progress against them.

1. *Plan a nature walk at ‘Gum Reserve’*
 - *What equipment do we need for our walk?*
 - *How long will it take us?*

- *What do we need to know before we go on our walk?*
 - *Look at a map of the trails we might walk – is there a direction in which we should walk the trail?*
2. *Look at the different leaves and heights of plants*
 - *What is similar and different?*
 - *What are the patterns on the leaves?*
 - *What are the shapes of the leaves?*
 - *What do the leaves or plant smell like?*
 - *What do the leaves feel like?*
 - *What plants are taller?*
 - *What plants are smaller?*
3. *Identify the five plants that you are going to count*
4. *Take photos of the different plants*
5. *Name the plants*
 - *You can use an app to identify the different plant types, so you might like to also do this when on your walk*
6. *Draw a map of the walk you did*
 - *What do you remember about the turns you took?*
 - *Where did you find each of the plants?*
 - *What do you remember about the areas we walked through?*
 - *Did you use a map and compass on the walk? Does this help with your drawing?*
7. *Create a display to help remember the plants, using the photos and drawings*
8. *Record and review your adventure*
9. *Celebrate what you have learned*

This example can work for individuals, Patrols and a whole Unit. This might occur over multiple weeks and can contribute to other elements of the Achievement Pathways as well. You don’t need to be prescriptive – each of these steps and questions have been identified so that you can be selective about which elements you might use.

This might have been an activity that you already planned in your Unit program, and by identifying and discussing what we wanted to look for and achieve, we have made it a Special Interest Area.

Remember:

- Choose goals that are a challenge but achievable – they shouldn't be so hard that you give up!
- Get support from others so that they can help you stay motivated and cheer you on
- Everyone makes mistakes – don't be afraid to make mistakes, and when you do, learn from them and keep trying!

Scaffolding Special Interest Areas across a year

This way of breaking down a goal for a Special Interest Area can be copied for most activity and goal ideas. As adults become more comfortable with breaking an activity or goal into smaller components, this can be introduced to the Cub Scouts, enabling them to be increasingly involved.

A suggested method might be:

- **Term 1:**
 - Adult chosen/led activity or goal based on interests/suggested activities for the term program
 - Adult will break activity idea into steps, and add to the term program as suitable
 - Youth members may lead or assist in components as they are being experienced
- **Term 2:**
 - Unit Council nominate the activity or goal based on interests/suggested activities for the term program
 - Unit Council members may be involved in identifying the steps and when they might fit in the term program
 - Youth members from the Unit Council will lead or assist in components as they are being planned and experienced
 - Youth members will be involved in the review, as part of the program cycle feedback and review process
- **Term 3:**
 - Unit Council nominate the activity or goal based on interests/suggested activities for the term program
 - Unit Council members are involved in identifying the steps and when they might fit in the term program
 - Youth members from the Unit will lead or assist in components as they are being planned and experienced
 - Youth members will be involved in the review, as part of the program cycle feedback and review process
- **Term 4:**
 - Youth member nominates the activity or goal based on personal interests or suggested activities for the term program
 - Youth member is involved in identifying the steps and when they might fit in the term program
 - Youth member will lead or assist in components as they are being planned and experienced
 - Youth member will lead or assist in the review of the experience

Ideas that can become Special Interest Areas

The ideas that follow are not an exhaustive list but instead might provide inspiration. They could be the base for a Special Interest Area or a complete project.

Adventure & Sport	Arts & Literature	Creating a Better World	Environment	Growth & Development	STEM & Innovation
Go on a nature hike and identify at least 10 different plants or animals.	Create a self-portrait using different art materials.	Volunteer at a local food bank.	Start a composting project at home.	Set a goal to improve in one subject at school by practicing for 30 minutes a day.	Build a model of a house using recycled materials.
Spend a weekend camping and try setting up your own tent.	Learn to draw basic cartoons or comic strips.	Organize a clean-up day at a local park or beach.	Recycle 100% of paper, plastic, and glass at home for a month.	Try learning a new language for 10 minutes a day.	Create a gadget or simple machine to solve a problem in your daily life.
Take a trip to a new city or town and explore landmarks.	Paint a landscape with watercolor paints.	Collect clothes and toys to donate to those in need.	Plant a tree or garden to help support local wildlife.	Set a daily habit of brushing your teeth and washing your hands properly.	Design and create a new board game to play with family and friends.
Try a new outdoor activity like rock climbing or zip-lining.	Try learning how to play a musical instrument (e.g., piano, guitar, or violin).	Create a recycling project at home or school.	Learn how to make eco-friendly cleaning products.	Learn how to make a healthy snack for yourself.	Learn to use basic coding or computer programming.
Go on a scavenger hunt in a local park.	Write and illustrate your own storybook.	Write letters to thank community workers like firefighters, police officers, or teachers.	Reduce water waste by taking shorter showers or turning off the tap while brushing teeth.	Set a goal to read 15 minutes every day before bed.	Create a DIY invention, like a robot or a weather station.
Learn to use a compass and navigate with a map.	Learn how to make origami.	Help raise awareness for an important cause (e.g., animal rights, climate change).	Create a wildlife habitat in your backyard or local park.	Set a goal to save a small amount of money each week and keep track of it.	Build a Rube Goldberg machine that performs a simple task in a fun way.
Ride a bike to a nearby location you've never been before.	Take part in a school or community art exhibition.	Donate books to a local library or school.	Collect plastic waste for recycling and create a piece of art out of it.	Help with household chores every week to contribute to your family.	Learn how to make a digital animation or video.
Take a road trip with your family and explore new places.	Create a sculpture out of clay or recycled materials.	Start a kindness project by doing something kind every day for a week.	Organize a family eco-challenge (e.g., go plastic-free for a week).	Write down three things you are grateful for each day.	Use basic electronics to make a simple circuit or light-up project.
Try a new sport or activity, such as kayaking or paddleboarding.	Start a daily sketchbook habit, drawing something new every day.	Organize a fundraiser for a charity or cause you care about.	Start using reusable bags instead of plastic bags.	Learn how to make a decision on your own (e.g., choosing what to wear or what to eat).	Research an innovative invention that changed the world and present it to your Unit.
Spend a day exploring a nearby national park or forest preserve.	Try sewing or knitting a simple project like a pillow or scarf.	Plant a tree or start a garden to help the environment.	Learn about endangered species and what you can do to help protect them.	Practice mindfulness by taking 5 minutes each day to breathe deeply and relax.	Start your own project to improve something in your home or neighbourhood.

Adventure & Sport	Arts & Literature	Creating a Better World	Environment	Growth & Development	STEM & Innovation
Plan and go on a camping trip with family or friends.	Learn to draw portraits or landscapes.	Volunteer at a local charity or non-profit organization.	Reduce their carbon footprint by walking, biking, or using public transportation.	Manage time effectively and prioritize tasks.	Design and build a prototype for a new invention using recycled materials.
Learn basic navigation skills using a compass and map.	Experiment with different art mediums like charcoal, pastels, or acrylics.	Organize a fundraising event for a cause they care about.	Choose eco-friendly products and reduce waste.	Develop a budget and learn to save money.	Participate in a science fair or invention competition.
Identify different constellations in the night sky.	Take an art class or workshop to develop specific skills.	Help out with community events or projects.	Participate in a "clean up" campaign.	Take responsibility for completing chores and homework.	Develop a business plan for a small venture, like selling handmade crafts or offering a service.
Go on a geocaching adventure.	Create a portfolio of artwork.	Research and learn about a social justice issue they're passionate about.	Research endangered species and support conservation organizations.	Improve public speaking skills by joining a debate club or giving presentations.	Engage in brainstorming sessions to generate new ideas.
Participate in a challenging hike or climb suitable for their age and experience level.	Enter an art contest.	Write a letter to a government official about an issue of concern.	Participate in citizen science projects to collect data on local wildlife.	Practice active listening and effective communication in conversations.	Explore creative problem-solving techniques.
Learn survival skills like building a fire or finding shelter.	Audition for a play or musical.	Participate in a peaceful protest or demonstration.	Help plant trees or create a wildlife-friendly garden.	Learn to write persuasive essays or letters.	Grow crystals from a DIY science kit.
Plan and save for a dream vacation to a new country.	Learn to play a new musical instrument.	Learn about different cultures and global issues.	Learn about environmental policies and advocate for change.	Develop healthy coping mechanisms for stress and anxiety.	Create a volcano eruption with baking soda and vinegar.
Learn basic navigation skills using a compass and map.	Experiment with different art mediums like charcoal, pastels, or acrylics.	Organize a fundraising event for a cause they care about.	Choose eco-friendly products and reduce waste.	Develop a budget and learn to save money.	Participate in a science fair or invention competition.
Learn basic phrases in a foreign language.	Join a choir or dance group.	Support fair trade practices and ethical consumerism.	Educate others about environmental issues.	Practice mindfulness and gratitude.	Learn about the solar system and create a model of the planets.
Try a new type of cuisine.	Write and perform an original song or skit.	Connect with children from other countries through pen pals or online programs.	Reduce plastic consumption and encourage others to do the same.	Cultivate a positive self-image and self-esteem.	Try an experiment to test which materials conduct heat the best.
Attend a cultural event or festival.	Learn to use graphic design software to create digital art or logos.	Work on the Impact Innovators Challenge (Scouts4SDGs)	Start observing the weather daily and track the changes in a journal.	Start a gratitude journal and write three things you're thankful for each day.	Study the lifecycle of a butterfly or frog by observing them in nature.
Research and learn about a different historical period.	Create a stop-motion animation film.	Be involved in a project at your school to reduce plastic waste.	Build nesting boxes.	Learn how to set and keep track of personal goals.	Build a simple birdhouse and observe local birds.

Adventure & Sport	Arts & Literature	Creating a Better World	Environment	Growth & Development	STEM & Innovation
Learn how to play a new sport, like tennis or soccer.	Edit and produce a short video.	Investigate social or environmental issues in your local community.	Go spotlighting for wild animals.	Try learning how to tie your own shoes or buttons.	Create a simple website or game.
Improve your swimming skills by learning new strokes.	Read 12 books in a year (1 book per month).	Learn about and raise money to help address a social or environmental issue.	Learn about a natural disaster and how you should prepare.	Learn how to manage time by creating a daily schedule.	Learn how to use a magnifying glass to examine tiny objects.
Complete a 1-km run or walk without stopping.	Write a short story and share it with friends or family.	Participate in a community event that raises money for a cause.	Investigate and talk with a key member of your local community about an environmental issue.	Set a goal to make a new friend each month and learn about them.	Take part in a science fair and present a cool science project.
Learn how to ride a skateboard or scooter.	Create your own book of poems.	Engage with and learn more about your local Indigenous community.	Investigate what your house, school or Scout hall could do to reduce their negative environmental impact.	Practice good listening skills by being fully focused during conversations.	Explore the concept of gravity by building and testing different types of ramps.
Join a sports team (e.g., soccer, basketball, or baseball).	Read a book in a genre you've never tried before (mystery, fantasy, biography).	Learn about issues effecting a community in another country and what you could do to have a positive impact.		Try doing something independently that you've never done before (e.g., ordering food at a restaurant).	Conduct experiments to test hypotheses.
Practice yoga for 10 minutes a day for a month.	Start a book club with friends or family and meet to discuss your reading.	Learn another language that's well used in your local community.		Develop a routine for organizing your school materials and personal space.	Learn about different branches of science and their applications.
Try a team-building exercise, like playing an outdoor group game.	Write a letter to your favourite author.	Learn Auslan.		Read a self-help or motivational book designed for kids.	Build a model of the solar system or a volcano.
Set a personal goal to do 10 push-ups or sit-ups in a row.	Memorize and perform a poem or passage from a book.			Learn how to handle frustration or disappointment in a calm manner.	Read science books and articles.
Learn to ride a bike without training wheels.	Keep a journal and write in it at least once a week.				Watch documentaries about scientific discoveries.
Participate in a charity walk, run, or cycling event.	Read a book from a different culture to learn about new traditions and perspectives.				Conduct research online or at the library.
Participate in a race or sporting event like a fun run or swim meet.	Learn how to use a dictionary and thesaurus to improve vocabulary.				Start observing the weather daily and track the changes in a journal.