

Special Interest Areas in 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 Scout section, this looks like an activity or project that takes approximately **eight 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 Scout is seeking to achieve their peak award, the Australian Scout Award, then **at least three 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. Having goals helps you focus on what you want to do and gives you a plan to make it happen. Goals can be about anything you are interested in. They give you a focus, provide motivation, help display progress and see how much you have achieved, build confidence, and help you feel successful.

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 take steps.

Examples

Goal: *To improve my soccer dribbling skills*

Steps:

1. *Watch tutorial on YouTube for coaching tips*
2. *Practise for 30 minutes each night after school*
3. *Make adjustments based on feedback from a coach*
4. *Practise with another person to add passing to the dribbling techniques*

Goal: *To bake a cake*

Steps:

1. *Select the cake you want to bake – deciding on the flavour is like refining the goal to be specific*
2. *Gather the ingredients – make sure you have everything you need, ready to follow the steps*
3. *Follow the recipe steps – don't skip any step, or the cake won't turn out right*
4. *Bake the cake – feel proud of the work you put in, and enjoy it!*

Just like baking a cake, achieving a goal takes time, effort and following the right steps – it's all worth it in the end! Goals can be fun and reaching them is a great feeling!



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 plant species in ‘Gum Reserve’, and observe and analyse their characteristics while walking on ‘Banksia Trail’.*

Consider how you hope to grow through this activity or project – e.g. what skills are being developed, which SPICES are covered, what will you be able to do after the project that you couldn’t do before?

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 observe and analyse*
3. *Document the plants*
4. *Research and name the plants*
5. *Map the route*
6. *Record and review your adventure*
7. *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?*
 - *Research local flora before you go*
 - *Review a map of the trails and decide on the best route to achieve your goals*
2. *Look at the different leaves and heights of plants*
 - *Compare leaves and plant heights*
 - *Measure the height and width of a few plants*
 - *Note environmental factors affecting the plants (e.g. sunlight, soil, water)*
 - *Hypothesise why certain plants thrive in specific areas*
3. *Identify the five plants that you are going to analyse*
4. *Use photos to document the different plants*
5. *Research and 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. *Record the path on a map, marking spots where the selected plants were found and indicate environmental features that influenced your findings, such as water sources or shaded areas*
7. *Record and review your adventure*
8. *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 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 |
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| Go on a weekend hiking trip and explore a new trail. | Take up a new form of art, such as painting, drawing, or sculpture. | Volunteer at a local charity, food bank, or animal shelter. | Start a composting bin at home to reduce food waste. | Set a personal goal to improve in a subject at school by practicing regularly. | Create a prototype of an invention that solves a simple problem in your life. |
| Learn to rock climb or try bouldering at an indoor climbing gym. | Start a daily sketchbook habit, creating a new piece of art each day. | Organize a community clean-up event in your neighbourhood or park. | Plant a tree or create a garden in your backyard or at school. | Commit to a daily habit of reading for 20 minutes every day. | Research and present a new technology or innovation that you find fascinating. |
| Complete a ropes course or an outdoor obstacle challenge. | Create a piece of digital artwork using design software or a tablet. | Start a recycling program at school, in your neighbourhood or at home. | Organize a carpooling system with friends to reduce the carbon footprint. | Learn a new language by using language learning apps or taking a class. | Try building a model of an energy-efficient home. |
| Go on a camping trip and cook a meal over a campfire. | Write and perform a short play or skit with friends or family. | Fundraise for a cause you care about, like environmental conservation or children's education. | Participate in a "No Plastic Week" and use reusable containers and bags. | Practice self-reflection by journaling about your experiences, feelings, and goals. | Learn basic coding or programming using online resources. |
| Take a day trip to a nearby city and explore historical landmarks. | Try creating an animation or stop-motion video using basic tools. | Write a letter to a politician or community leader about an important issue. | Research endangered species and learn how to protect them. | Set a goal to organize your room or workspace and keep it tidy. | Create a simple mobile app or game to solve a fun problem. |
| Go canoeing, kayaking, or paddleboarding on a nearby lake or river. | Learn how to play a musical instrument (e.g., guitar, piano, drums). | Create a social media campaign to raise awareness about a social or environmental cause. | Create a DIY rainwater collection system to water your garden. | Commit to getting at least 8 hours of sleep every night for a month. | Experiment with 3D printing by designing and printing a basic object. |
| Take a solo walk-in nature and identify 10 different types of plants or animals. | Take part in a local or school art exhibition or talent show. | Visit a nursing home and spend time with the elderly residents. | Reduce water consumption by taking shorter showers and using water-saving devices. | Develop better time-management skills by planning out your day each morning. | Organize a "maker fair" where you showcase projects you've worked on. |
| Organize a scavenger hunt for friends or family. | Try photography and document interesting places or people around you. | Start a kindness challenge where you do something kind for someone every day for a week. | Research sustainable energy sources and how to implement them at home. | Establish a routine for regular exercise and physical activity. | Create a design for an eco-friendly product and present it. |
| Try a new adventure sport like zip-lining, horseback riding, or snowboarding. | Explore printmaking techniques or try your hand at creating your own stamps. | Organize a donation drive to collect clothes, toys, or food for those in need. | Recycle electronics and other materials properly. | Try a new hobby or skill that challenges you (e.g., cooking, coding, or public speaking). | Build a robot or basic machine using robotics kits. |
| Spend a day geocaching with a GPS device or a smartphone. | Learn how to make your own jewellery or DIY craft projects. | Participate in a global youth organization or environmental campaign. | Join or support an environmental organization or movement. | Set a goal to improve your emotional intelligence by practicing empathy and listening skills. | Research space exploration technologies and share your findings with friends or classmates. |

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| Plan and lead a camping trip with friends, taking responsibility for navigation, meal planning, and safety. | Take a drawing or painting class to improve your artistic skills. | Volunteer at a local soup kitchen or homeless shelter. | Learn about the environmental impact of your daily choices and make changes to reduce your footprint. | Learn how to meditate or practice mindfulness. | Design and build a simple machine using household materials. |
| Learn advanced wilderness survival skills, such as building different types of shelters, purifying water, and identifying edible plants. | Learn how to play a musical instrument (e.g., piano, guitar, drums). | Participate in a community clean up event. | Participate in a citizen science project to collect data about the local environment. | Set a personal goal each month and work towards achieving it. | Come up with a new invention to solve a problem you have observed. |
| Go on a multi-day backpacking trip, carrying all necessary gear and supplies. | Start a scrapbook or an art journal. | Raise money for a chosen cause through a bake sale, car wash, or other fundraiser. | Plant a tree or garden. | Keep a gratitude journal and write three things you're grateful for each day. | Learn about the design thinking process and use it to create a new product or service. |
| Participate in a challenging outdoor adventure race or obstacle course. | Create a short film or animation. | Learn about a global issue and take action to raise awareness or support a solution. | Learn about composting and start a compost bin at home. | Take a leadership role in a group project or club. | Participate in a science fair or invention competition. |
| Learn to rock climb or kayak, developing technical skills and safety knowledge | Participate in a community talent show. | Write letters to government officials about an issue that is important to you. | Reduce your use of single-use plastics by bringing reusable bags and water bottles. | Learn how to manage your time effectively using a planner. | Learn about emerging technologies and how they are changing the world. |
| Learn to kayak, developing technical skills and safety knowledge | Design and make your own clothing or accessories. | Start a recycling program at school or at home. | Learn about renewable energy sources and how you can support their use. | Get outside your comfort zone by trying something you've always been afraid to do. | Take apart an old electronic device and try to understand how it works. |
| Plan and save for a trip abroad, researching the culture, history, and language of the destination. | Start an art blog or Instagram account to showcase your work. | Help an elderly neighbour with yard work or errands. | Conserve water by taking shorter showers and fixing leaky faucets. | Develop a habit of reading non-fiction to learn new skills or gain knowledge. | Learn basic coding skills and create a simple website or app. |
| Become fluent in a foreign language, taking classes or practicing with native speakers. | Learn to write poetry or short stories. | Create and distribute care packages for people in need. | Educate others about environmental issues and encourage them to take action. | Make a vision board for your personal goals and dreams. | Explore the world of 3D printing and design and print a 3D object. |
| Experience a homestay with a family in another country, immersing yourself in their culture and daily life. | Explore a new form of art, like sculpture, photography, or digital art. | Volunteer at a local shelter or community organization. | Support organizations that are working to protect the environment. | Start a daily routine that includes exercise, study, and relaxation. | Experiment with different materials and techniques to create a new art form. |
| Train for and compete in a triathlon, developing endurance and multi-disciplinary skills. | Volunteer to help organize an art exhibit or show at school or a local gallery. | Organize a charity event for a cause you care about. | Plant a tree or start a small garden at home. | Find a mentor who can offer guidance in an area you're passionate about. | Create your own invention, gadget, or product that solves a small problem. |

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| Master a challenging skill in a chosen sport, such as a perfect tennis serve or a complex skateboarding trick. | Set a goal to read 20 books over the course of the year. | Fundraise for a global cause (e.g., water for villages, education, or medical supplies). | Learn about the impact of climate change and start an eco-friendly habit (e.g., composting). | Learn how to manage your money by budgeting for small purchases. | Start learning how to code by making a simple game or app. |
| Become a certified instructor or coach in a favourite sport, sharing their expertise with others. | Read a novel in a genre you've never explored before, like sci-fi, mystery, or fantasy. | Promote kindness by doing a good deed every day for a month. | Organize a community garden or help clean up a local park. | Take part in a leadership program or course to develop leadership skills. | Experiment with different materials to design something creative (e.g., building a model from recycled materials). |
| Lead a team to victory in a championship, demonstrating strong teamwork and leadership skills. | Write a short story or novel and share it with friends or family. | Advocate for animal rights by volunteering or raising awareness. | Reduce your use of single-use plastics by using reusable bags and containers. | Practice public speaking by giving a short speech or presentation in front of friends or family. | Start a project to create a website or blog on a topic that interests you. |
| Develop a deep understanding of sports strategy and tactics, becoming a valuable asset to the team. | Start a book club with friends or classmates to read and discuss books together. | Make care packages for people in need, such as the homeless or elderly. | Start a nature journal to document plants, animals, and ecosystems. | Learn how to use a calendar or planner to keep track of assignments and activities. | Learn about famous innovators and their inventions, and create your own vision for the future. |
| Mentor younger athletes, helping them develop their skills and passion for the sport. | Keep a reading journal where you write down thoughts or summaries after each book. | Start a petition for a social cause you believe in.. | Educate yourself on local wildlife and help protect endangered species. | Set a goal to improve your study habits by creating a quiet, focused study space. | Participate in a hackathon or coding competition for kids. |
| Train for a half marathon, building endurance and pushing their physical limits. | Memorize and perform a poem or excerpt from a favourite book. | Reduce your own carbon footprint by switching to eco-friendly habits | Participate in a beach clean-up or forest restoration project. | Take responsibility for a household task, like doing your own laundry or preparing a meal. | Write down ideas for a new technology or product that could help people. |
| Develop a personalized workout plan and stick to it consistently, focusing on strength training, cardio, and flexibility. | Write a letter to an author whose work you admire. | Create a prototype of a solution to an everyday problem using engineering tools. | Learn about sustainable living and try to implement some eco-friendly practices at home. | Learn basic first aid and CPR skills. | Learn how to use 3D printing to make your own designs. |
| Learn about nutrition and healthy eating habits, making informed choices to fuel their body for optimal performance. | Read and review a book online or on a blog. | | Reduce water consumption by making small changes (e.g., taking shorter showers). | Volunteer to help a younger sibling or friend learn something new. | Teach someone else how to use a new technology skill. |
| Join a sports team, such as soccer, basketball, or swimming. | Set a goal to read at least one nonfiction book each month to learn about new topics. | | Organize an event to raise awareness about environmental issues. | Practice decision-making by making choices for your daily schedule or activities. | Start a club at school where students can work on innovative projects together. |
| Set a personal fitness goal, like running 2 km without stopping. | Create your own comic book or graphic novel. | | | Set a goal to improve your handwriting by practicing writing neatly. | Set up a simple science experiment at home, such as a plant growth experiment. |