

One of the things I love most about attending county training days or other Leader events is getting great new ideas for activities to do from other leaders, so I decided to share a few of my all-time most successful Rainbow activities with you. These are all activities that can be done within a normal unit meeting with items that are easily available and they all went really well. To be honest, this is a bit of a boast as well, because it feels great to plan and run activities that go down so well with the girls.

Disclaimer: some of these I haven't run since we had 4 year old Rainbows, so they may need a little adjustment for a younger group.

1. Den building.

I have run this activity a few times now, and it has always been very well received. It does fit into the Rainbow programme as part of the 'Be a Brownie' UMA from the Know Myself theme. However, it can be run under various guises, such as building princess castles, caves for explorers, or, as we most recently did, lairs for dragons.



I usually bring all the resources for this myself, but you could ask parents to bring some bits if you are short. There isn't very much you need, just a variety of sheets, blankets, cushions and pillows, pegs (read my blog 'My Rainbow activity nightmares and how to be more successful than I was!' to find out why I have so many of these) plus we have some child sized chairs at our meeting place which are brilliant as they are light enough for the Rainbows to move safely and easily by themselves.

The fantastic part of this activity is that the meeting basically runs itself. You begin by setting the scene e.g. telling them that we've got a lost dragon who needs them to make him a new home, get the Rainbows into groups, and then dump out the resources and leave them to it! Keep an eye on groups to make sure they are being safe, happy and getting along but I have found that most groups prefer to work pretty independently and surprise you when they are done. They can then spend the rest of the meeting playing in each other's dens and using their imagination to make up stories. We always struggle to get the Rainbows to go home after this activity and often end up having to take the dens down ourselves as they didn't want to stop playing!

2. Teddy Travels

This is the activity on this list that takes the most preparation, but in my opinion, it is well worth it. Teddy Travels is one of the Explore stage 1 skills builder activities, which I adapted to make more engaging for my unit.

Things to prepare:

- Teddy passport print-outs
- 3-4 SHORT activities, each based around a different country
- Email parents to ask them to bring a teddy

At our Rainbow meetings, we always begin with an activity as the girls arrive, so I set the teddy passports out for them to begin with. This is just a sheet folded in half with room for them to draw their teddy and write their name. We also look at a leader's passport. This also gives me time to set up the activities around the room.



When we are ready to begin we arrange our carpet squares (you could use chairs) into rows like airplane seats. I welcome them on board, checking each teddy passport as they board the plane. I do a cabin crew speech and we all make plane noises while we fly to our first destination.

We then all get off the plane, do an activity, rinse and repeat until all the activities (or as many as you have time for are done). We like doing things such as food tasting, quick crafts, colouring a flag, or photograph jigsaws as our activities.

This is quite a fast-paced evening with lots of short activities which keeps the Rainbow's attention, and they love listening to a leader pretend to be a pilot and making airplane noises themselves. Bonus points if you make them bounce around for turbulence.

3. Pretend sleepovers

This is a great option if you have a young/less confident group or noone in your unit has done their 'going away with' training. It's basically a Rainbow sleepover, just without the actual sleeping bit. Another bonus is that this activity takes very little prep from you, as parents have to get everything ready!

Begin by sending an email to parents the week before. Ask them to wear Rainbow uniform but bring:

- Pyjamas or nightdress
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Hairbrush

- Blanket and pillow or sleeping bag
- And of course, a teddy to cuddle

The only things you need to bring yourself are hot chocolate and biscuits or other snacks, milk, a children's book and cups if your meeting place doesn't have them.

On the night be prepared for a lot of excited Rainbows. We usually start the meeting with a couple of games for about 15 minutes before sitting in a circle to have hot chocolate and a biscuit. Then it's time to start getting ready for bed (don't underestimate how long this takes). The toilets in our hall are quite small, so we generally have half the rainbows getting changed into their pyjamas and brushing their hair in the hall while the others brush their teeth and then swap. Once everyone is ready, they choose somewhere in the hall to lie down in their sleeping bags, and we read a story. For bonus excitement and giggles, we get the Rainbows to pretend to be asleep and then jump up and surprise their parents when they come in to collect them.