

Also known as:

'Mistakes I made and why you should do it differently' or 'How to make a huge mess' or 'Why? Why? Why?'

Following on from my last, slightly bragging, blog about all the fantastic activities I've done with Rainbows I thought I ought to share some of my less brilliant ideas with you. So pour yourself a cup of tea and prepare to feel slightly better about yourself as you read about my mistakes, miscalculations and misguided ideas:

1. Ramadan countdown calendar

If you don't know what a Ramadan countdown calendar is, don't worry, neither did I before we made one. They're a great idea. A bit like an advent calendar but counting down the 30 days of Ramadan until the Eid celebrations. The thing that wasn't a great idea was trying to make the one pictured with a group of 15 Rainbows.

I made sure we had paper plates.
I worked out how many pegs I would need.

30 (pegs each) x 15 (Rainbows) = 450 (total pegs needed)

For some reason, even in my experienced Rainbow leader mind, this number did not ring alarm bells. Off I went and happily bought 500 pegs.

Monday night came along and I roll up to the Rainbow hall with my paper plates, 'Ramadan Mubarak' labels and 500 pegs. We haven't done painting in ages, so I think 'why not? Get the plates painted as soon as the Rainbows arrive then we can write the numbers on the pegs while the plates dry.'

There were two things I severely underestimated:

- How much paint a four year old can physically manage to pile on a paper plate. I don't think some of them would have been dry after a week, let alone an hour. If you were a parent of one of my rainbows, I sincerely apologise for the wobbly soft and soggy masterpieces you had to take home and the inevitable mess they made in your car.
- How long it takes to peg 450 pegs onto paper plates. A Brownie leader had come along to do me a favour and help out (making it even more embarrassing) and she spent the ENTIRE EVENING sitting pegging pegs on.

Surprisingly, the Rainbows managed writing numbers up to 30 easier than expected!

What to do instead:

By all means mark Ramadan and Eid with your unit, even making a countdown calendar isn't a bad idea in itself, just don't choose one with so many pegs! You could try printing one with doors that open like the advent calendars we are all familiar with, or make a list of 30 good deeds the Rainbows could do to reflect the importance put on charitable work during Ramadan.

Ramadan Countdown Craft



2. Cornflour and water

I would like to start by saying that this activity was really well received by my Rainbow unit. It links to the Express myself UMA 'What is that'. I am not a leader that is easily put off my messy activities, and the Rainbows were very sensible. The cornflour and water was in a bowl on a mat and was kept there. After the activity they then walked to the toilet to wash their hands.

5:45 came along, the activity was finished, and whilst other leaders ran a game I mopped up the expected drizzles or cornflour mixture between the mat and the toilet and around the sink area.

6:00 everything had gone well. The Rainbows had thoroughly enjoyed the evening and the hall was clean and tidy ready for Brownies.

6:15 I return inside to begin Brownies and am met with cornflour streaks all over the floor. This I did not anticipate. Like toothpaste it dries back. Round two of mopping.

7:15 The Brownies have had a good evening (I can't remember now what they were doing). We begin packing up and horror of horrors, what do I see? You guessed it - the cornflour again! Round 3 of mopping.

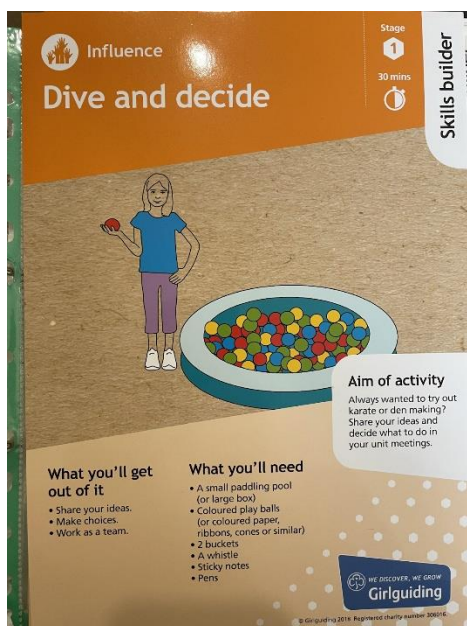
7:30 We dismiss the Brownies and after quickly telling the Guide leaders that I have mopped up, I get out of there before more cornflour can appear!

What to do instead:

This blog is not meant to put you off doing messy activities, in fact the opposite. I love doing messy stuff and Rainbows is the perfect opportunity, I just want to share with you ways to make it easier and more manageable. And hopefully involve less mopping.

My top tip for this activity is exceedingly simple. Keep the activity on a large mat and **BRING A BOWL OF WATER TO THE MAT FOR HANDWASHING**. This eliminates the need for Rainbows to walk around with cornflour goop dripping from their hands and therefore eliminates (or at least reduces) the amount of mopping needed.





3. 'Dive and Decide' from Influence stage 1

The original resources for the new Guiding programme came out before Rainbows allowed four year olds to join and I know that, particularly since having four year olds, lots of leaders have struggles with the 'sit down and chat' type activities due to both the attention span and understanding of these younger members.

I am among those that have struggled, as you will be able to tell from the following story. However, hopefully the story of the next time I ran the activity will persuade you to give those activities you dread another go.

We've all been there. You've done four activities for a skills builder but one girl missed a week so you're forced to do the fifth activity, the one you were trying to avoid for whatever reason. For me, this was 'Dive and Decide'.

After a few lucky grabs on my local facebook Free-Recycle group I arrive at the meeting and run the activity as stated on the card. For those of you that don't know the Rainbow programme off by heart yet (really, what have you been doing with your time?!) here's a quick run-down along with the things that went wrong.

- All the balls go in a paddling pool at one end of the hall. Split the girls into two teams that each line up behind a bucket at the other end of the hall. *What went wrong: the normal problems of wanting to be on a particular team, wanting to go first and not being able to stand in a line, but nothing major at this point.*
- Girls take turns to run, get a ball and put it in their bucket for two minutes (or until you get bored). *What went wrong: The balls were many colours on purpose. One team decided to collect all of one colour. This did not work. Everyone wanted there to be a winner. This is not an activity with a winner. We also ended up with balls everywhere.*
- Each colour ball has a different meaning. One is something they've done at Rainbows and would like to do again, one is something they've done at Rainbows and don't want to do again, another is something to do outdoors and the last is something messy. They are meant to sit in their teams picking out a ball at a time and discussing ideas relating to that colour. *What went wrong: Can you remember what each colour stood for? Neither could the Rainbows. Or me. This is where things really started to fall apart. Shy girls were not wanting to give ideas in front of their*

peers and there was a tendency for someone to give an idea and everyone else just to say the same. Balls were rolling everywhere. I was sweating from the number of times I had to run back to the activity card to check what each colour meant and one team only had red balls so were just discussing things they didn't want to do! Lots struggled to sit and talk for long.

What to do instead:

Luckily for you, I have actually run this activity again more successfully. Also luckily for you, Girlguiding allows and even encourages you to adapt the programme to suit your unit.

These are the changes I made:

- Before the meeting we separated the balls into their different colours and put each in a box.
- The starter activity as girls came in was to think of as many activities that we have done at Rainbows as we could. Top tip - have an adult or Rainbow helper write these down.
- Next, we all sat at one end of the hall and put an empty box at the other end.
- I chose a colour to start. We told the Rainbows what that colour represented e.g. activities to do outdoors.
- I picked a Rainbow to give an idea for that topic. Anyone who thought that would be a good idea grabbed a ball and ran to drop it in the other bucket.
- Here you can make use of helper again to count the balls.
- Repeat for more ideas and more topics.

This approach might not work for all units, but we found that the Rainbows listened to ideas better because the running gave them a break from just sitting and talking. It also allowed more shy Rainbows to share their opinions without having to talk in front of the whole group and counting the balls gave us a clear idea of how popular each choice was.

We then spent the rest of the evening playing of course. We did still end up with balls everywhere,

So, I hope you enjoyed reading about my Rainbow mishaps and maybe learned a thing or two in the process. I always think it's important not to take ourselves too seriously or let mistakes get you down, so I hope you had a little laugh. You can thank me later (for the tips and the laughs).