

Falls Church Virginia
Troop

349

Boy Scout Primer

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Purpose: For new Scouts and Parents looking to learn more about Scouting

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This book and its contents have been compiled from documents from other troops, scouting web sites, and the common sense of the leaders in Troop 349. It represents a lifetime of knowledge gleaned from years of first hand scouting experiences and is a good start for anyone who is interested in joining scouting or who is wishing to learn more about the movement. The content of this manual should not take the place of your own research and it is not meant as a promise for individual success.

This manual is not meant for resale and its content are based on a good faith understanding of scouting.

Please make sure that you have the latest version: Version 1 March 8th 2009 Troop 349.

Introduction

Welcome, you've come a long way with scouting. Now, as the saying goes, the best is yet to come.

With that in mind we are sure that you have a lot of questions and hopefully this primer will help to answer them. If you read through this and yet you still have more questions or concerns ask the Scout Master or the Committee Chair and they'll be happy to try and answer them for you.

This manual is broken down into 5 parts:

1. Webelo transition
2. Troop structure
3. Equipment
4. Activities
5. Parent involvement

As with all of the manuals for this troop, they are a work in progress and will be updated from time-to-time. Please make sure you have the latest version. You can do that by checking the front lower cover to see the version number and issue date.

Again, welcome to the Troop. We hope that you and your son(s) have a great time and accumulate a lifetime of experiences and memories.

Webelos to Boy Scout Orientation

The Patrol Method

In 1888, Lord Baden Powell wrote, “The formation of the boys into Patrols of from six to eight and training them as separate units each under its own responsible leader is the key to a good Troop.”

Patrols

Patrols is the building blocks of Scouting. As a member of a patrol, you plan together, learn together, and all pitch in to turn exciting plans into action. Patrols are such an important part of Scouting that a part of each troop meeting is usually set aside for each patrol to meet by itself. Every patrol has a name and every Scout in the patrol wears a patch on his right sleeve with the patrol’s emblem. Each patrol has a flag they make that they carry at troop meetings and campouts. Every patrol has a yell, too. You give the yell when your patrol wins a contest or performs well at any other event.

Your patrol will elect one of its members to serve as **patrol leader**. The patrol leader is in charge of the patrol at troop meetings and during outdoor adventures, and he represents the patrol on the Patrol Leaders’ Council. While there is only one patrol leader, every member of a patrol shares the duties of leadership. You could be the one who finds the way on a hike, is the chief cook in camp, or who teaches other Scouts how to tie a knot.

New scouts will be placed into a patrol with at least one senior scout who will serve as a **troop guide**. The troop guide functions as both a mentor and a patrol leader for the first year of this patrol. During this time, new scouts will learn the basic skills they need in order to enjoy hiking, camping, and other Scout adventures. Before long, members of a new-Scout patrol will discover that they are passing many of the requirements for the ranks of Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class. After this time this patrol will be able to function without the mentoring of an older scout who will either become a troop guide for another new patrol or go onto another, more senior leadership position. Once this transition is complete, this patrol will begin the process discussed previously in which scouts periodically elect a member of their patrol as the patrol leader.

SPL

The Senior Patrol Leader is the top boy leader of a troop who is elected by all Scouts. With guidance from the Scoutmaster, he is in charge of troop meetings and the Patrol Leaders’ Council, and does all he can to see that the patrols succeed.

Patrol Leader Council

The activities of your troop are planned by a Patrol Leaders’ Council (PLC) made up of your patrol leaders, Senior Patrol Leader, Scoutmaster, and other troop leaders. The PLC discusses future meetings and outings for the whole troop. Your patrol leader’s responsibility is to share the ideas that have come from you and other Scouts in your patrol to the PLC and to report back decisions made by the PLC back to you and the patrol

Scoutmaster

The Scoutmaster is the main adult leader of your troop. He is responsible for training the Senior Patrol Leader, meeting with each boy as he is ready for advancement (Scoutmaster Conference), and directing the activities of the various assistant scoutmasters.

Meetings

Unlike Cub Scout packs, troops meet every week of the year, including summer. In addition, some troops even have separate patrol meetings (1 to 2) a month and most troops will have planned a monthly outdoor activity.

How to visit a troop

Who to call

Many troops will designate one person to be their main contact point for arranging visits. This could be the Scoutmaster or one of his assistants acting as the Webelos coordinator. While any troop would welcome you at any time, it is best to call ahead especially if more than one Webelo will be visiting.

When to visit

Most troops hold an Open House where they gear their program for that night specifically to visiting Webelos. While these are definitely great events and worth attending you should be aware of two things. First, these are usually not held until February and you really want to start looking at troops before then. Second, with all the special things that they are doing for you at the meeting you don't get to see how the troop behaves normally. Try to visit a troop at one of its regular meetings. If a troop looks interesting, visit them more than once. Don't wait until February to start visiting. Start now and visit as many troops as you can.

Deciding on a Troop

Every troop has its own personality. Find one with whom you will be comfortable and can grow with for the next few years. Some of the factors that give each troop its character are:

Meeting Time and Place

When looking at troops, don't limit yourself to those in the same town. Unlike Cub Scout packs that are often based around an elementary school, troops usually have members that come from a very wide geographical area. Though you may not want to pick a troop clear across the county (though some Scouts do), don't be afraid of an extra 15 or 20 minute drive if you find a troop that really meets your goals. The only real consideration for this factor is what day of the week the troop meets. If the troop meets on a day that you will have conflicts, look for another troop.

Size of the Troop

With more Scouts and more adult leadership, large troops often support a more varied list of activities. On the other hand, large troops often have more competition for leadership positions and new Scouts can sometimes feel

overlooked. Small troops will often have a closer bonding of Scouts but may sometimes have trouble getting some activities going because of fewer adult leaders. Try to decide what size troop fits your needs best and when looking at troops find out what size they plan to grow to. It is not uncommon to decide that you want to be in a small troop, find one of about 20 Scouts that you would like to join, and then discover that 30 other Scouts have decided to do the same.

Age Distribution of Scouts

When visiting a troop look to see how many older Scouts are present. Older Scouts help to provide more experienced boy leadership to the troop. Try to find out what “challenges” the troop offers the older Scouts to keep them interested in Scouting. This is important because soon you will be one of the older Scouts and will want to do more than just basic camping.

Chartering Organization

The Chartering Organization is the group that “owns” the troop you are visiting. Try to find out what they do to support the troop (leadership, funding, events). Some Chartering Organizations may help by emphasizing certain programs, for example, a church may help its Scouts earn the Religious Emblem.

Camping (how often, where, what type)

All troops camp. Try to find out how often they go, whether they just camp locally or travel a bit, and what types of camping they do. Some may do special yearly events such as a beach campout or a canoeing expedition. Find out what the costs of a camping trip are what the transportation issues are. Ask about what summer camps they go to and when and where they are planning to go to this year. Also ask what fund raisers the Scouts do to earn money for camping.

Troop “specialties”

Over time troops develop programs on one or more types of activities that they may do more often, or with more proficiency, than other troops. These could be such things as hiking, canoeing, rock climbing, or spelunking (caving). If you find a troop whose “specialty” matches your own interests, you may want to look more seriously into joining them.

Quality Unit

There are a number of requirements (advancements, adult leader training, on time re-chartering) a troop must meet in order to earn their Quality Unit patch. If you don't see the Scouts in the troop you're visiting wearing the Quality Unit patch try to find out why and what steps they have done to make sure that they get it next year.

Crossovers

The Crossover is a special ceremony where the troop you've joined recognizes that you have crossed over from Cub Scouting into Boy Scouting. This can be done either by the troop visiting your pack and doing the ceremony in front of the entire pack or by the troop having all its new members come to one location where they will do the ceremony for all. You do not have to wait for this ceremony to start attending troop meetings. As soon as you decide on a troop and have earned your Arrow of Light, start attending the meetings. If you wait for the

crossover, you have missed a month's worth of information about summer camp and may have missed that first campout the troop holds specifically designed for the new Scouts.

Boy Scout Advancements

Joining Requirements

All Scouts, when joining a troop, must pass the Joining Requirements listed on page 4 of the Scout Handbook. This is much like earning the Bobcat badge when you joined your pack.

1st year Program (Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class)

The first year program, with the ranks of Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class, is designed to teach the camping, first aid, and safety skills needed to go camping. Though called the 1st year program, there is no time requirement on when the advancements must be completed.

Some Scouts can do all of the requirements for Tenderfoot in less than a year, and some will take longer. Unlike Cub Scouts there are no age-determined advancements. All Scouts go through the same advancement program no matter how old they are or when they join. You may pass any of the requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class at any time. For example, if you fulfill a First Class requirement before you are a Second Class Scout, you may check off the First Class requirement as completed. You may not receive a rank, however, until you have earned the one before it.

Handbook

The Scout Handbook is the Scout "Bible". It explains all the requirements and lists out all of the information Scouts need to know in order to reach First Class. This is also the place where requirements get signed off. Most Scoutmasters expect this book to always be with you at troop meetings and campouts.

Scoutmaster Conference

One requirement that Boy Scouts have for rank advancement that Cub Scouting doesn't have is that whenever you complete the requirements for a rank you need to have a Scoutmaster Conference. At this meeting the Scoutmaster will review the requirements with you to make sure that they have been learned correctly, he will help you to set up the goals for the next advancement, and he will have you share your ideas about the troop (how it is going from your viewpoint, what you would like the troop to do more of, problems you see occurring...)

Board of Review

Another difference in Boy Scout requirements is that all rank advancements (except the Joining Requirements) require a Board of Review. The members of a Board of Review can be any adult in the troop except for the Scoutmaster or any of his assistants. The main purpose of the Board of Review is not to retest the skills a Scout has learned, but to see what the Scout's spirit is and how the troop is doing helping the Scout along and meeting Boy Scout objectives.

Court of Honor

When you complete a rank advancement you will usually be given the badge at the next troop meeting. About four times a year, the troop will hold a special meeting called a Court of Honor. This is a formal ceremony to recognize you and your fellow Scouts for rank advancement and other Scouting achievements. This event is held with an audience of family, friends, chartered organization officials, and troop leaders.

The Path to Eagle

Once a Scout has reached First Class and learned the basic skills of Scouting, he is ready for the challenge of becoming an Eagle Scout. The Path to Eagle has three ranks, Star Scout, Life Scout, and Eagle Scout. Here the requirements for advancement consist of earning merit badges, doing service projects to help the community, showing that you can lead other Scouts as a patrol leader or some other leadership position, and demonstrating to others that you have Scout spirit.

Merit Badges

A merit badge is an invitation to explore an exciting subject. With more than a hundred to choose from, some merit badges encourage you to increase your skill in subjects you already like, while others challenge you to learn about new areas of knowledge. Many of the merit badges are designed to help you increase your ability to be of service to others, to take part in outdoor adventures, to better understand the environment, and to play a valuable role in your family and community. Earning a merit badge can even lead you toward a lifelong hobby or set you on the way to a rewarding career.

The requirements for each merit badge appear in the current BSA merit badge pamphlet for that award, and in the book *Boy Scout Requirements*, available at Scout shops and council service centers. When you have decided on a merit badge you would like to earn, follow these steps:

1. Obtain from your Scoutmaster a signed merit badge application (blue card) and the name of a qualified counselor for that merit badge.
2. Along with another Scout, a relative, or a friend, set up and attend your first appointment with the merit badge counselor.
3. Complete the requirements, meeting with the counselor whenever necessary until you have completed the merit badge.

Some important facts to know about merit badges:

1. Any Scout, regardless of rank, can earn merit badges.
2. Though there are over a hundred merit badges there are required merit badges (pages 188 – 189 of the Scout Handbook) that must be earned in order to become an Eagle Scout. These are referred to as the Eagle Required Badges and have a silver instead of a green border.

Other Awards

There are two other Scout awards that are usually of interest to first year Scouts: The Totin' Chip and the Firem'n Chit.

When a Scout demonstrates that he knows how to handle woods tools (knife, axe, saw) he may be granted totin' rights. Until a Scout has earned his Totin' Chit he is not allowed to carry a pocketknife. If found handling wood tools incorrectly, a corner of the Totin' Chip card is often cut off. When all four corners are gone, so are the Scouts totin' rights.

The owner of a Firem'n Chit has demonstrated knowledge of safety rules in building, maintaining, and putting out camp and cooking fires. Until a Scout has earned his Firem'n Chit he is not allowed to carry matches.

Camping and Equipment

Overall

In general the first year of camping will be pretty tame. New Scouts need time to learn camping skills and what is expected of them from the Troop and their patrol. Parents may, or may not, be invited to attend campouts, depending on Troop policy. Once a Scout has reached First Class he may start participating in more "fun" campouts. When Scouts become 14 years old they may start participating in Venture campouts.

Summer Camp

This is a weeklong campout usually focused on earning merit badges. New Scouts may be enrolled in a "Brownsea" program that is focused on learning their First Class camping skill. As soon as you decide on a troop begin going to their meetings and find out where they are going for summer camp, how much it will cost, and what forms you need to start filling out.

Equipment

There is a lot of equipment you need to go camping, but that does not mean that you have to go out and immediately buy a lot of expensive gear. When looking for camping equipment keep in mind two things: (1) new Scouts start off small and grow rapidly (a sleeping bag that fits today will be too small tomorrow) and (2) new Scouts will not be doing major hiking or extreme weather camping their first year.

Troop and Patrol Gear

Most troops have their own tents and cooking gear that are supplied to the patrols. Patrols will supplement this with purchases of their own for such things as potholders, paper towels, etc. Parents, however, usually have to supply their own tent.

Backpacks

When you pack more than 25% of your body weight in a pack you have over packed. Those great big packs that you see older Scouts and adults use are much too big for new Scouts. Look for a small, inexpensive backpack for the first year (borrow one preferably) and wait for them to reach their growth before buying a bigger, better one. Also since the distance most first year Scouts have to travel is from the back of the car to the tent, a duffle bag is often sufficient. Until a Scout learns how to properly pack, an external frame pack is usually best. They are

cheaper, allow for more freedom in packing, and the frame helps keep the lumps in the pack away from the back.

Sleeping bags

A 25° (F) sleeping bag is more than adequate for the type of camping a new Scout will do in the first two years (including winter camping). Even when the temperature goes down to zero the Scouts will be sleeping inside tents with other Scouts, dressed, and with a bag liner or blanket inside the bag. Sleeping bags filled with down are to be avoided. Though they are the “warmest and lightest” they lose almost all of their insulating ability when they get wet (a common occurrence for new Scouts) and cannot be dried out on a camping trip. The new synthetics are almost as good as down, retain most of their insulating capability when wet, and can be dried on a camping trip. Mummy bags are good because they heat up faster, are lighter and easier, and usually come with a hood to keep the head warm. They can sometimes be uncomfortable for new Scouts, however, because they feel constrictive.

Boots

Boots are an essential for camping. Sneakers do not provide any ankle support and quickly get wet with a little rain. Boots should go above the ankle and should have a gusseted tongue (the tongue has extra material to the sides that attach to the boot) so that water and dirt are kept out. Look for a minimum number of sewn seams (because they all have to be waterproofed) and a cemented or sewn sole. Get a good foot liner to help wick moisture out of the boot. See pages 200-201 of the Scout Handbook for more information about boots and socks.

Flashlights

The preferred flashlight for a Scout is the MagLite, with a belt holder. They are small, easily carried, always with you, and have a spare bulb inside. You can also buy a headband so that you can use them hand free. Headbands with attached lights are also good. The rule here is the flashlight is too big if it takes a D cell battery. Also remember that having spare batteries is often as important as having the flashlight.

Mess kits

Don't go out and buy those army style mess kits where everything fits inside everything else. They are made of metal, which lets the food get cold quickly and easily gets bent out of shape. What you want is a good sturdy plastic plate and bowl that will not break when dropped or stuffed into a pack on the way home. Utensils can be any old mismatched set of knife, fork, and spoon that you won't worry about if it doesn't come home. For drinks use a good plastic mug. Don't get a collapsible cup.

Raingear –

Almost everyone goes through what we call an “evolution” in raingear. First year Scouts usually wear a poncho. It's easy to pack, quick to put on, and works for about five minutes in a downpour, unless you're hiking. By the second year they've switched to a plastic or rubber coated rainsuit. While this offers more protection, Scouts eventually realize that they are sweating inside as much as it is raining outside. Finally they end up in a nylon or Gore-tex rainsuit that lets the body breath and also serves as a jacket when it is cooler.

10 Essentials –

Page 207 of the Scout Handbook lists the “10 essentials” that a Scout should always have with him when outdoors.

Who packs –

Never let someone else pack for you, even your parents. You are the one going camping and in the middle of the night when your flashlight dies and you need your spare batteries, you are the one who needs to know in what pocket of the backpack they are in. Your patrol leader should be inspecting your pack for the first campout or two to show you how it should be packed and to make sure that you haven't forgotten anything. Also, if it has a battery in it and it is not your flashlight, leave it home. Never bring anything camping that you're not afraid of losing or breaking.

What Adults Do on Campouts

Here is some information we try to give parents on their first campout with the troop.

Camping is the heart of Boy Scouting, so please take a few minutes to read this sheet.

Boy Scouting is absolutely different from Cub Scouting or Webelos! And while parents (and sometimes whole families) often accompany the Scouts on campouts, the Scouts camp with their patrol and not with their parents and family members.

Policy Summary

Here is a summary of our troop (and BSA) policies, followed by the reasoning for the policies. There are exceptions, but these policies are in effect on most outings.

Scout Tenting & Meals

Scouts tent with their patrol in a patrol site separate from the other patrols. Patrols plan their own menus and cook and eat together as a team. In general, adults do not eat or tent with a boy patrol.

Adult Tenting & Meals

Adults tent with the adult patrol in a patrol site separate from the other patrols. We plan our own menu and cook and eat together as a team. In general, adults do not eat or tent with a boy patrol.

Adult/Boy Tenting

BSA youth protection policies forbid an adult and a boy sharing the same tent. While youth protection policies may not apply to a father and son tenting together, it is troop policy that boys tent with boys and adults with adults. If a father tents with his son, it has been our experience that the boy will lose out on many opportunities to make decisions and be part of the patrol team! [Yes, you are probably the rare exception, but it wouldn't be fair to the other adults to single you out.]

Smoking/Drinking

Drivers may not smoke while Scouts are in the car. Adults may not smoke or use tobacco products, nor drink alcoholic beverages during a Scout activity. Adults who must smoke or chew must do so discretely out of sight of the Scouts.

Boy Leadership

Boys will lead the Patrols and Adults will help in guiding their decisions. Adults will try not to interfere with the functioning of the boy leaders, and will do so only to ensure success not failure. Adults will always be present when scouting activities are taking place and will definitely step in when it is a matter of immediate safety or when the mistake will be costly. When possible and practical, adults in the troop will seek to involve a senior scout to ensure continuity.

Boy Growth

Never do anything for a boy he can do himself. Let him make decisions without adult interference, and let him make non-costly mistakes.

Adult Training & Resources

The Boy Scouts of America provides an outstanding handbook for adults, and an excellent training course to help us understand the goals of Scouting and how to attain them. The adult manual is called the Scoutmaster Handbook, and it's worth your time to read it. The training is called Scout Leader Basic Training, and is offered in our area twice a year. It's also a good investment of your time.

Rationale

Boy Scout camping activities center on the patrol, where boys learn teamwork, leadership, and most camping skills. It is important that adults not be in the middle of patrol activities such as site selection, tent pitching, meal preparation, and anything else where boys get to practice decision-making.

A key difference between Boy Scouting and Cub Scouting/Webelos is leadership. Look for the word "leader" in a job title, and you will begin to appreciate the difference. The responsible person for a Cub/Webelos den is the adult Den Leader. The responsible person for a Boy Scout patrol is the boy Patrol Leader.

This isn't token leadership (like a Denner). A Patrol Leader has real authority and genuine responsibilities. Much of the success, safety, and happiness of six to ten other boys depends directly on him.

Boy Scouting teaches leadership, and boys learn leadership by practicing leadership, not by watching adults lead.

So what do we adults do, now that we've surrendered so much direct authority to boys? Here are our troop's guidelines on the indirect, advisory role you now enjoy (no kidding, you should enjoy watching your son take progressively mature and significant responsibilities as he zooms toward adulthood.)

Adults ensure that the senior scout leadership has provided the necessary training so the scouts have both the skill sets and know what is expected of them. This is a crucial point because turning scouts loose without proper guidance and training is not a path to successful leadership development. When properly trained. The underlying principle then becomes never do anything for a boy that he can do himself. We allow boys to grow by practicing leadership and, yes, quite often by making mistakes. These mistakes, however, are not looked upon as failures. Rather, our mentoring program uses these moments as opportunities for self assessment and learning, And while Scout skills are an important part of the program, what ultimately matters when our Scouts become adults whether they can offer leadership to others in tough situations and can live by a code that centers on honest, honorable, and ethical behavior.

Boys need to learn to make decisions without adult intervention (except when it's a matter of immediate safety). Boys are in a patrol so they can learn leadership and teamwork without adult interference.

Being an adult advisor is a difficult role, especially when we are advising kids (even worse, our own sons). Twice each year, the Boy Scouts of America offers special training on how to do this, which we expect our uniformed adults to take. Every adult is welcome and encouraged to take the training (see the Scoutmaster; dates are in the annual calendar).

Your job is tough, challenging, and ultimately rewarding, because your son will be a man tomorrow.

—end—

Scout Glossary

- 10 Essentials** – The list of basic equipment that a Scout should have ready for any outdoor activity.
- APL** – Assistant Patrol Leader
- ASM** – Assistant Scoutmaster
- ASPL** – Assistant Senior Patrol Leader
- Blue Card** – card showing that you're working on a merit badge
- Breakout** – to dissolve into smaller groups for a meeting, i.e. patrols
- Buddy System** – to have another Scout with you at all times
- Camporee** – a District campout with many troops
- Cracker Barrel** – an informal meeting for leaders with snacks held During a campout
- COH** – Court of Honor
- Firem'n Chit** – a card showing that the Scout has earned the right to use matches and build cooking and campfires
- Freezoree** – a District campout with many troops held during the winter
- Green Bar** – a meeting for the SPL, ASPLs, Patrol Leaders, and Assistant Patrol Leaders (those whose leadership badge has a Green Bar in it)
- Grubmaster** – the person responsible for buying food for a campout
- Guide** – Troop Guide. A Scout designated to help other Scouts with their advancements
- IMPEESA** – Council level training for boys to be leaders
- JLT** – Junior Leader Training (conducted by the Troop) for the Scouts
- KP** – Kitchen Patrol. The person who cleans the dishes
- Merit Badge Counselor** – an adult who helps a Scout earn a merit badge
- OA** – Order of the Arrow.
- PL** – Patrol Leader
- SPL** – Senior Patrol Leader
- SM** – Scoutmaster
- PLC** – Patrol Leader Council
- Quartermaster** – the person in charge of equipment
- Resident Camp** – summer camp
- Scribe** – the Scout who takes notes for a meeting
- Signoffs** – signatures on advancement requirements
- SMF** – Scoutmaster Fundamentals. Basic training for adult leaders
- Totin' Chip** – a card showing that the Scout has earned the right to use a knife, ax, and saw
- Treasurer** – the Scout in charge of a patrol's money
- Venture** – advanced Scouting activities for older Scouts
- Woggle** – neckerchief slide
- Wood Badge** – advance training for adult scouters