

New Parent Guide

Information regarding our Troop history, meeting times, etc. can be found on our web site. Please explore the site and see what is available. This document is designed to provide some basic information regarding terminology, structure and other such matters. This is far from being all inclusive, but it should answer some of the more common questions.

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I. STRUCTURE

A. Patrol - The smallest unit is the patrol. A patrol consist of 5 to 8 boys. They each have a different name (i.e. Bobcat, Redtail Hawk) and a small patch worn on the right sleeve. Each patrol competes against the others in the Troop, plans its' own menus, and elects its' own patrol leader. They may meet separately from the troop on occasions.

B. Troop - The troop is the unit most adults are familiar with. It consist of one or more patrols. Weekly programs, Courts of Honor, camping trips, etc. are planned on this level.

C. District - The district includes all Scouting units in a geographic area. We are in Mission District which includes, roughly, every unit in eastern Hamilton County. While many things happen at this level, most Scouts never see it. It is mostly a "behind the scenes" administrative unit. The exception is Camporees. Camporees are camping trips involving all troops in the district. There are usually competitive events during weekend and there is always a patch.

D. Council - We are in the Cherokee Area Council. It includes approximately 12 counties in Tennessee and Georgia. The council owns and operates the summer camp, the scout shop and most other major resources available to local units. This also the level were professional Scouters are employed.

E. Other levels - Above the council are areas, regions and national. Some camps and events are held on the national level and policy is also set at the national level. Otherwise, as far as scouts are concerned, these are primarily administrative units.

II. EQUIPMENT

Every boy will need a Boy Scout Handbook immediately. It includes information that must be reviewed before your son can receive his Boy Scout rank.

The troop, with the support of Harrison United Methodist, supplies tents, stoves and other "group" gear. However, individual gear must be acquired by the boys. Purchasing all the gear at once is not usually feasible. Luckily, this gear last for many years and thus can be accumulated a little at a time. Below is a list of some individual gear your son will need/want. The Boy Scout Handbook also includes an equipment list on page 224. These items make excellent Christmas/birthday gifts. We hope this list helps. If you need any guidance in selecting specific items, just ask one of the adult leaders. We will be happy to help.

A. High Priority Needs

These are some of the basic camping items that every scout needs:

1) 30 Degree Sleeping Bag: 30 degrees refers to the bags designed minimum temperature. Eventually, it will be nice to have a summer bag and a winter bag. However, a bag which is rated for 30 to 35 degrees can be made into a winter bag by adding a wool blanket for liner and it can always be unzipped or used as a bed pad if it becomes to warm. This makes it a good starter bag.

2) Mess Kit: A mess kit is usually an aluminum kit which serve as both a personal cook kit and plate/bowl set. Every new scout has one and uses it religiously. While they serve their purpose and young scouts love them, these kits have several short comings. They are small, contain small pieces which are easily lost and include unneeded pieces. Experienced campers usually opt for a plastic plate with a high lip or even a frisbee. A plastic bowl can be brought if the menu calls for soup or cereal.

3) Knife: Every scout loves knives. However, they are not allowed to carry one until they have been trained in their use and care. Troop rules prohibit sheath knives and any knife with a blade exceeding 4 inches. A small pocket knife is sufficient for most purposes. Multi-tools are an increasingly popular alternative to the swiss army knife. While they often do not have as many tools as a swiss army knife, the tools they do have are generally more useful and more durable.

4) Flashlight: Nearly every scout to ever camp brought a flashlight that was too big. Once your eyes adjust to the dark, little additional light is needed to travel safely. A small Mag-Lite which uses two AA batteries can be carried on the belt and provides more than enough light. Another popular option is a head lamp. These are worn like a hat and provide hands free light. They are particularly useful when you need your hands free to setup camp or when hiking extended distances in the dark. They are also useful when caving.

B. Eventual Needs

These are items that a scout will need to participate in and enjoy some of our more advanced outings:

1) Hiking Boots: When backpacking or hiking on rough ground, a good pair of boots is essential. There are several factors to consider including: fit, weight, ankle support and weather proofing. The most important are fit and ankle support. When fitting a boot be sure to wear the same thick boot socks you will wear when hiking. Fitting is an art. If you are not sure about fit, ask a salesman at an outdoors store like Rock Creek or Ocoee Outfitters.

2) Backpack: The most important consideration when purchasing a backpack is comfort. Look for shoulder straps and waist belts which are well padded and contain multiple adjustments. There are two primary types of packs: internal frame and external frame. Each has its own advantages and the best style is often a matter of personal preference.

3) Rain Gear: For their first trip every scout should have a poncho or some other type of rain jacket. However, it is difficult to work in a poncho and the rain jackets most scouts start with are too heavy and do not include pants. A light weight rain jacket with pants can turn a miserable wet weekend into an exciting challenge.

C. Wants

These are things which will never be required gear, but they can make a trip more enjoyable:

1) Ground Pad or Sleeping Pad: These pads go under a sleeping bag. They serve to smooth out small bumps and pad hard ground. In cold weather they also insulate campers from the ground (one of the primary sources of heat loss). They are generally either a thin foam or inflatable pad. Inflatable pads are not the same as air mattress. Primary considerations are weight and size.

2) Winter Sleeping bag: While it may never dip to -20 degrees around here, that does not mean that a bag with such a low rating is not nice to have. It takes time to warmup a cold bag at night and every time you move a little heat escapes from the open end of the bag. If you are using a bag at the lowest temperature for which it is rated, these and other factors, can lead to a chilly night. Having a separate winter bag builds in an extra margin of comfort. Using a blanket as a liner works, but it is often heavy, bulky and shifts during the night causing cold spots. A low temperature bag is not a necessity, but it is nice.

3) Backpacking Stove: Troop stoves are too heavy for backpacking. Sterno can be used to warm some food or it can be eaten cold, so backpacking stoves are not a necessity. However, hot chocolate on a cold morning or a hot cup of soup before bed can make the next big hill look just a little smaller. The variety of styles and fuels is too diverse to discuss here. Ask an adult leader or knowledgeable salesperson if you want more information.

4) Camp Chair: The small collapsible chairs which have become common place at outdoor events can make any campsite much more comfortable. No more standing while eating or sitting in the dirt. These chairs have become so cheap (as low as \$15.00) they are almost a necessity.

D. Stocking Stuffers

These items are relatively small and inexpensive and can be very useful:

- 1) Bungee Cords: Small (1 to 2 feet) elastic cords with a hook at both ends. Nothing holds gear in place better. Especially on backpacks.
- 2) Gloves: Gloves or mittens with an open seam in the palm that allow your fingers to quickly move in out of the glove without the need to remove the glove make work in cold weather much easier. These are often found in the hunting section of sporting goods stores.
- 3) Boot Socks
- 4) Compass
- 5) Compression sack (for sleeping bags)
- 6) Hot Spark (flint and steel kit)

III. UNIFORM

See the Troop Rules for uniform requirements. We understand that, for financial reasons, building a full uniform may take a little time. If you are not certain where any patch should be placed, please ask before sewing it on. A Scout shirt should be your first purchase followed by Scout shorts or pants and Scout socks.

IV. CAMPING

A. Purchasing Food

We participate in at least one activity per month. Most often this is a camping trip. Scouts must each bring \$10.00 to the meeting before a camping trip. Each patrol plans its own menu. One Scout buys all the food for his patrol. The cost must be limited to the amount collected on Monday. Any extra money is deposited into the patrol account.

Responsibility for purchasing the food should rotate between the Scouts, as each Scout is required to purchase the food at least once in order to advance in rank. Parents should not select the food! This is the Scout's responsibility.

It is recommended, but not required, that when small amounts of common perishable items are needed, that these items be "donated" by the Scout purchasing the food to save money. For example, if the patrol is having sandwiches for lunch, buying full jars of mayonnaise and mustard can quickly drive up the cost. Only a small amount of each will be used and the remainder is inconvenient or impossible to keep for the months that may pass before they are needed again. Bringing these from home and returning them after the trip avoids these problems. Because the responsibility for food rotates between members, the small additional cost incurred by one Scout in this process is offset the next time someone else purchases the food and provides the small perishables.

B. Parent Participation

Parents are welcome to attend camping trips. However, please remember that these are not family outings. The patrols cook and clean by themselves and the planned activities are structured only for youth participation. When you attend, your primary role is as an adult leader for the troop, not a partner or chaperone for your son. The adults enjoy each others company, the great outdoors and the opportunity to watch the youth grow and learn (from a distance, to the extent safety allows).

Before you attend a trip, you must register as an adult leader for insurance reasons. Please attend the Monday meeting immediately preceding the trip so you can be included in the planning.

V. COST

A. Dues

Dues are required to pay the troop's operating expenses. These expenses include merit badges, rank, insurance, equipment maintenance and other cost. Dues also include a subscription to Boys Life Magazine.

Upon first joining the Troop, members will pay an equipment fee of \$20.00. This will entitle the new member to a Troop t-shirt, Troop numbers and Boy Scout shoulder loops. The new member will also be responsible for the pro-rata portion of dues charged by B.S.A. for the remainder of the year. No other dues will be required for first year members.

After a member's first year, dues will be \$40.00 per year if paid by February 1st. Dues may also be paid in two installments of \$25.00. This covers Troop dues, National dues and a Boys' Life Subscription. It is our desire to make Scouting available to every boy, regardless of financial means. If this presents a financial hardship please contact the Scoutmaster regarding other arrangements.

B. Uniforms

Every Scout is required to obtain a "Class A" uniform. This includes a shirt, shorts or pants, socks and a belt. These may be purchased over the period of a few months. The complete uniform cost approximately \$60.00. If this presents a financial difficulty, please see the Scoutmaster. A Troop t-shirt, Troop numbers and Boy Scout shoulder loops are provided.

VI. ADVANCEMENT

Eagle Scout is the ultimate goal for Scouts. Nearly everyone in America knows that it represents the highest of standards. The meeting programs and camping trip activities are designed to meet many advancement requirements. However, each rank requires the Scout to take a little more responsibility for his advancement. Ultimately, advancement is the responsibility of each individual Scout.

A. Boy Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class

A Scout may work on all of these ranks simultaneously and earn more than one at a time. However, they must be earned in order. For example, to earn the Boy Scout rank the Scout must review the pamphlet found in the front of Boy Scout Handbooks with his parents. A Scout could put this off while he works on the knots, first aid and other requirements for more advance ranks. In ten months he may have met all the requirements for every rank through First Class, but he would not receive any of those until he completed the pamphlet for his Boy Scout rank. He would then receive all four ranks at one time. This is an extreme example that we have never actually seen, but it makes the point and it is not unusual for a Scout to receive two ranks at one time.

The requirements for these ranks must be signed off in the Scout's handbook. The Troop's youth leaders (Patrol Leaders and the Senior Patrol Leader) sign off the requirements for these early ranks. Once all the requirements for a rank are signed off, the Scout presents his handbook to the Troop Advancement Chair (an adult) who reviews the book to insure everything is complete and then arranges for a Scoutmaster's Conference and a Board of Review.

The Scoutmaster's Conference is a meeting between a Scout and the Scoutmaster. It is a time for the Scoutmaster to get to know the Scout better and for the Scout to plan his next move in Scouting. Topics for discussion usually include school, sports, likes and dislikes in Scouting, and the Scouts next rank.

A Board of Review consists of three to five adults asking the Scout questions. The questions range from how to tie a knot to how they apply the Scout Law in their daily lives. Scouts should know the answers to the technical questions before they have their Board of Review and there is generally no right or wrong answer to the more abstract questions. The Board teaches Scouts to deal professionally with adults they don't, forces them to think about the real purposes of Scouting and insures that they know the requirements signed off in their handbooks.

B. Star, Life and Eagle

Boy Scout through First Class emphasized basic knowledge of several basic skills (knots, first aid, camping, etc.). Star, Life and Eagle requires a more advanced knowledge of these skills. It also requires that Scouts explore hobbies and career opportunities. Merit Badges are earned for each skill mastered or opportunity explored. Over 120 merit badges are available. A total of 21 must be earned for Eagle. 12 of those 21 are specified or "required". The remaining 9 are the Scout's choice.

Merit Badges are the core of the advancement program for Star, Life and Eagle. A set number must be earned for each rank. However, Scout must also demonstrate leadership by holding a Troop office and give back to the community by participating in service projects. Service hours and leadership positions for Star can only be earned while a First Class Scout. For Life they can only be completed while a Star Scout. There is also a "time in rank" requirement that prevents Scouts from earning more than one rank at a time.

As with the earlier ranks, Scouts must complete a Scoutmaster's Conference and Board of Review for each rank.

Star and Life only require that a Scout participate in service projects. Eagle requires that the Scout plan and carry out the project. This is the culmination of everything the Scout has learned. It must be substantial and will put his leadership skills to the test.

C. Earning Merit Badges

Many merit badges are earned at summer camp and troop meetings. Usually enough to make it to Life Scout. But if a Scout hopes to make Eagle, he must earn some on his own. Once a Scout has selected a merit badge that interest him, he should ask the Troop Advancement Chair for permission to pursue the badge. He will receive a "blue card" with contact information for an adult who is knowledgeable in the field and who has agreed to serve as a merit badge counselor. After familiarizing himself with the requirements, the Scout should contact the counselor and discuss who to proceed. Some counselors will want to meet first to go over everything before starting, others will ask that certain requirements be met before a meeting is scheduled. **A SCOUT SHOULD NEVER MEET ALONE WITH AN ADULT!** The Scout should bring a friend or a parent should stay for, but not participate in, the meeting. When the counselor is satisfied that the requirements are met, he will sign the blue card. The Scout returns the blue card to Troop Advancement Chair as proof of completion.

Scouts can only earn merit badges if we have counselors for them. For this reason, every parent completes a merit badge counselor form listing the badges he or she is qualified in. With over 120 badges, everyone is qualified for something.