

Webelos to Boy Scout Orientation

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Troop Organization

- **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 are the building blocks of Scouting. As a member of a patrol, you plan together, learn together, and all of you 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 their right sleeve with their patrol’s emblem. Each patrol has a flag they make that they carry at troop meetings a 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 a **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, who is the chief cook in camp, or who teaches other Scouts how to tie a knot.

The **new-Scout patrol** is a group of boys who have just become Scouts. They are helped by a **troop guide** – an older, experienced Scout who can show the way. Members of a new-Scout patrol choose their patrol leader, plan what they want to do, and take part in outings and troop meetings just like any patrol. They also 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.

- **SPL** – Senior Patrol Leader. This is the top boy leader of a troop and is elected by all of the 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 you 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 signing for rank advancements, training the Senior Patrol Leader, meeting with each boy as they are ready for advancement (Scoutmaster Conference), and directing the activities of the various assistant scoutmasters.
- **Meetings** – Unlike Cub Scout packs, most troops meet every week of the year, including summer. In addition, there are usually separate patrol meetings (1 to 2) a month, a monthly outdoor activity such as a campout, and a number of service projects.

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. Goose Creek District maintains a web site (www.goosecreekdistrict.org) where all the troops in the district are listed along with their meeting place and contact points.

While any troop would welcome you at any time, it is best to call ahead especially if more than one Webelos 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 going to 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 their 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 and what you need to do is to find one that you will be comfortable with and will 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 you know you will have conflicts with, look for another troop.
 - **Size of the Troop** – With more Scouts and more adult support, large troops often have 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 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. These 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're going to be one of those older Scouts and will want to do more than just your 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.

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- **Camping (how often, where, what type)** – All troops camp. Try to find out how often they go out, 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. If they do a lot of hiking you may want to plan on getting better boots than you normally would. Find out what the costs of a camping trip are and how do they work out the transportation issues. 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”** – Many troops over time 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 rechartering) 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.

The main to know here is that you don’t 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 going to the meetings. If you wait for the crossover then you’ve missed a month’s worth of information about summer camp and may have missed that first campout that the troop holds that is specifically designed for the new Scouts.

Webelos to Boy Scout Orientation

National
Capital
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Council



Boy Scout Advancements

- **Scout Badge** – All Scouts when joining a troop must pass the requirements listed on page 4 of the Scout Handbook for the Scout Badge. 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 to new Scouts. 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 in less than a year, some will take longer. Unlike Cub Scouts there is 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** - This is the Scout “Bible”. It explains all the requirements and lists out all of the information you need to know in order to reach First Class. This is also the place where your requirements get signed off. Most Scoutmasters expect this book to be always 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 its 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 is 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 finished working on the 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 fifteen special ones (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 is 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.

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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 week long 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 pot holders, 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’ve overpacked. 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 uncomfortably 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 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 for them so that you can use them hand free. Headbands with attached lights are also good. The rule here is that if it takes a D cell, its too big. 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 get 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 its 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.
- **Water Bottle** – A water bottle is essential for camping. This can be either a canteen or a plastic water bottle. Either way, it should have a strap or holder to allow for easy carrying.
- **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 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.

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 leadership training for boys

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

