

Welcome to BSA Troop 337

We're glad that you have decided to continue your scouting career with us! You are about to start a journey that will see you will shape the foundation on which the rest of your life will be built. It's a foundation that revolves around service, leadership, and adventure, and it's a foundation that focuses on character. We are proud to be on that journey with you, and we're confident that we can help you build a solid foundation.

Troop meetings are held on the first, second, and fourth Tuesdays of the month at the Broomfield United Methodist Church (BUMC). The church is located at the northwest corner of Daphne Street and Eagle Way, just west of Broomfield High School. On the third Tuesday, the **Patrol Leaders' Council (PLC)** meets to plan troop activities and make decisions as to how the troop is run. Should there be a fifth Tuesday in a given month, an activity night will most likely be planned. Activities may be at a site away from BUMC and could be strictly a "fun" outing.

The **troop guide** assigned to your patrol will be a close friend and your chief instructor for your first year in Scouting. He will attend your patrol meetings and outings, helping in any way he can. Think of him as a "big brother." Don't be afraid to ask him questions about anything scouting related.

Within the **New Scout Patrol**, the position of patrol leader will rotate monthly until each of you has had the chance to be the leader. You will then elect one member of your patrol to be your patrol leader for the remainder of the year.

It is important to attend our meetings and outings! Think of your new patrol as a team. The meetings are its "practices" and the outings are the "games." When a team member is missing, the rest of the team needs to work harder to pick up the slack.

We camp! Rain or shine, cold or hot, you will experience all of the things our great outdoors has to offer. Equipment guides and packing lists are included in your handbook. Our basic brand of camping falls in to the glorified car-camping genre, so don't spend a bunch of money on a backpack just yet. Instead, ask your troop guide for advice on purchasing a tote to transport your gear to our campouts.

Troop 337's **New Scout Program** has many activities scheduled that will keep your patrol busy right up to the time we go to summer camp in June. After that, your patrol is encouraged to plan some of its own activities. These could be hikes, campouts, field trips, movies, or rank advancement activities. Patrol activities need to have two adult Scout Leaders present. Also, your patrol activities should not conflict with activities planned for the entire troop.

The **Boy Scout Handbook** is the most important piece of equipment that you will need as you start your Scouting experience. If you don't already have a copy, get one right away. It is the place to keep the "official" record of your achievements toward the different ranks in Scouting including your camping and service activities. The number of nights you camp, under the stars or in a tent, count toward rank advancements and other Scouting awards. **PUT YOUR NAME IN YOUR HANDBOOK**, then bring it to all Scout meetings and rank advancement activities.

Don't be shy about asking for help from your troop guide or other Scouts in the troop. If they can't help, there will always be an assistant Scoutmaster assigned as an advisor to your patrol. He coaches the troop guide, works with your parents, and is there to help you.

Welcome to the Brotherhood of Scouting!

The Troop 337 Handbook

This is your copy of the Troop 337 Handbook. It is not meant to replace the Official Boy Scout Handbook; rather it is a supplement to fill in some of the details about our troop. In this Handbook, you will find equipment lists, some advice about choosing equipment, a little about the Merit Badge program, and a thorough explanation of how a boy led troop runs. (Actually, you should have your parents read that part!) Twice a year we issue a current troop roster; keep the current roster in the handbook for quick reference. Finally, there are plastic sleeves to hold your membership, rank advancement and merit badge cards. Additional sleeves can be found at www.scoutstuff.org.

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Your First Campout

Generally, the first campout with our new scouts happens in April. We usually try to pick a spot close to home, and we usually keep it at a relatively low elevation so that we don't experience low overnight temperatures. The Tuesday before a campout is reserved for menu planning, and before this first campout we will also conduct a gear review.

Dress for the weather! Remember, the weather in Colorado changes in an instant. The best advice is to dress in layers. You can easily remove or add a layer throughout the day to stay comfortable. Tennis-type shoes are not recommended as feet easily get cold. Good, sturdy running shoes or hiking shoes/boots are the best.

We leave for campouts on Fridays after school gets out. Please arrive at the Troop shed & trailer (at the north west corner of the church) by 4:30 PM for a timely departure. You should either eat dinner prior to leaving or bring something that is car-friendly to eat on the road.

All scouts bringing prescription and/or over-the-counter medications MUST check their meds in prior to departure. Place all meds, in the original containers, in a ziploc baggie with the scout's name, medication, and dosage instructions. Inhalers and epi pens may remain in the possession of the scout. If a scout's parent is traveling with us, their medication may be left with the parent for safekeeping and administration.

When it is cold at night, do not use an air mattresses unless it is a 4-season one (which have a special material in them); be sure to have high-density foam mats instead. A sleeping bag with a sleeping bag liner will keep you MUCH warmer at night. A wool blanket is always handy if you get cold easily. Also, plan to have a hat to sleep in that you do not use during the day (so it is dry) to keep your head warm.

Bring a daypack with your 10 essentials. The exception for our new scouts is not to bring a knife or any fire starter equipment. You must first earn your Fireman' Chit and Totin' Chip before you can carry these items.

We typically return to the Troop shed area at the church around 12:30 on Sunday. We try to have the scouts "phone home" when we're about 30 minutes away from the church. Scouts must stay to help unload the trailer. You should check with the SPL before leaving after clean up.

Favorite Recipes

Cooking has to be one of our favorite camping activities! Here are a few recipes that we like. Feel free to modify them any way you like to make them your own.

Tenderfoot French Toast

Vanilla extract and cinnamon bring a richness of flavor to Tenderfoot French toast. Pick your favorite bread - white, Italian, French, or whole wheat. For 4 servings you will need:

- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup milk
- 4 slices bread

Beat egg, vanilla, and cinnamon in shallow dish. Stir in milk. Dip bread in egg mixture, turning to coat both sides evenly. Cook bread slices on lightly greased nonstick griddle over medium heat until browned on both sides. Serve with maple syrup.

Easy Spaghetti

It seems like there's always at least one patrol cooking spaghetti on a Saturday night. Here's an easy, hearty recipe to get you started. To feed 6-8 scouts you will need:

- 1 lb. hamburger
- 1 lb. ground Italian sausage
- 2 jars spaghetti sauce
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 lb. spaghetti noodles

Boil 2 quarts of water. When it is boiling, add the spaghetti noodles. They will cook better if broken in half first. While the water is warming, brown the hamburger & Italian sausage, onion, and garlic powder in the skillet. When the hamburger mixture is cooked, drain, and add the spaghetti sauce. Simmer the spaghetti sauce while the noodles cook.

Dutch Oven Cobbler

This is a universal favorite - no further explanation is necessary! You will need:

- 1 box white or yellow cake mix
- 32 – 48 oz. fruit pie filling
- 1 stick butter

Pour the fruit (with syrup) into a Dutch oven. Sprinkle the cake mix over the fruit. DO NOT STIR. Dot the top of the cake mix with butter. Place the lid on the Dutch oven, then place the Dutch oven on top of 6-8 hot charcoal briquettes. Put 15-18 hot charcoal briquettes on the top of the Dutch oven and bake for about 30 minutes. It's done when you can insert a toothpick into the topping and it comes out clean.

Campfire Skits

It was once said that there are no new skits, just new audiences! While you may have seen one of these before, each performance is different. Try one of these or bring us a new one on your next campout.

The Lightbulb

All scouts are pretending to rake leaves or dig with shovels. Scout 1 stands near them with his arm raised straight as if he were holding a torch. Scout 2 walks in and walks up to Scout 1.

Scout 2: I'm paying you to work, not to just stand around. Why aren't you working?

Scout 1: I'm a lightbulb!

Scout 2: Get to work! When I come back, if you aren't working, you're fired!

Scout 2 leaves, and the scouts continue to work. Scout 2 returns and sees Scout 1 still standing with his arm raised.

Scout 2: That's it! You're fired! Get out!

Scout 1 pouts, drops his arm, and dejectedly leaves. As he is leaving, the other scouts look around, stop working and start to leave too.

Scout 2: Hey, why are you guys leaving? Get back to work!

Scout 3: How? We can't work in the dark!

Brains for Sale

Scout 1 stands in front of the audience and the other scouts stand aside. Scout 1 is wearing a sign that reads "Brains For Sale."

Scout 2 walks up to Scout 1 and asks: Hey, do you have any candy for sale?

Scout 1: Nope, I'm only selling brains.

Scout 3 walks up to Scout 1 and asks: Hey, do you have any Pepsi for sale?

Scout 1: Nope, I'm only selling brains.

Scout 4 walks up to Scout 1 and asks: Hey, do you have any brains for sale?

Scout 1: Why yes, yes I do.

Scout 1 shows him the first brain and says: This is a regular Boy Scout brain. I'll sell it to you for \$5.00.

Scout 1 shows him the second brain and says: This is a Patrol Leader brain. I'll sell it to you for \$10.00.

Scout 1 shows him the third brain and says: This is a Senior Patrol Leader brain. I'll sell it to you for \$1,000,000.00.

Scout 4: WOW! Why is this one so much?

Scout 1: This one has never been used!

The Fishing Skit

A patrol of scouts is fishing and having no luck. They see another scout fishing a few feet away and he keeps catching fish one after another.

Scout 1, to his patrol: Are any of you guys having any luck?

Scout 2: Nope, none at all.

Scout 3: This spot just isn't any good.

Scout 4: What about that guy over there? [points to other scout, everyone looks over]

Scout 5: I wonder why he's having so much luck. I'm going to go ask him. [walks over to other scout]
Hey buddy, we've been fishing all day and we haven't caught anything! What's your secret?

Scout 6: [mumble with mouth closed]

Scout 4: What did you say?

Scout 6: [mumble with mouth closed]

Scout 4: Come on, buddy! You can tell me! [slaps him on the back]

Scout 6: [swallows hard] I said - you have to keep the worms warm!

The Emergency Alert System

All scouts but one stand in line. Lead scout is in front or to one side.

Leader: For the next ten seconds, we will conduct a test of the emergency broadcast system.

(line of scouts all make Beeeeeeeeeeep sound until the leader raises his hand.)

Leader: Thank you. This concludes the test of the emergency broadcast system. Had this been an actual emergency, you would have heard...

(line of scouts scream in panic and run around)

Dirty Socks

Need: You will need 4 scouts, one large pot with water placed in the center of the stage.

Scout 1 walks to the large pot carrying his mug. He dips his mug in and brings it up to his lips for a drink and says "This camp coffee is terrible!"

Scout 2 walks to the large pot carrying his mug. He dips his mug in and brings it up to his lips for a drink and says "This camp tea is getting awful!"

Scout 3 walks to the large pot carrying his mug. He dips his mug in and brings it up to his lips for a drink and says "This camp hot chocolate is disgusting!"

Scout 4 walks to the large pot, dips his hands in and takes out a pair of wet socks. As he wrings them out he says "Ahhhh, nice and clean!"

Scouting Songs

Bear in Tennis Shoes

The other day, (the other day)
I met a bear, (I met a bear)
In tennis shoes, (in tennis shoes)
A dandy pair, (a dandy pair)

(repeat Together)

The other day I met a bear,
in tennis shoes, a dandy pair.

Continue in a similar fashion with:
He looked at me, I looked at him,
He sized up me, I sized up him

He said to me, why don't you run,
I see you ain't, got any gun.

And so I ran, away from there,
but right behind, me was that bear.

Ahead of me, there was a tree,
a great big tree, oh glory me.

The nearest branch, was ten feet up,
I'd have to jump, and trust my luck.

And so I jumped, into the air,
but I missed that branch, oh way up there.

Now don't you fret, now don't you frown,
'cause I caught that branch, on the way back
down.

The moral of, this story is,
Don't talk to bears, in tennis shoes.

That is the end, there ain't no more,
unless I meet, that bear once more.

On Top of Spaghetti

On top of spaghetti,
All covered with cheese,
I lost my poor meatball,
When somebody sneezed.

It rolled off the table,
And on to the floor,
And then my poor meatball,
Rolled out of the door.

It rolled in the garden,
And under a bush,
And then my poor meatball,
Was nothing but mush.

The mush was as tasty
As tasty could be,
And then the next summer,
It grew into a tree.

The tree was all covered,
All covered with moss,
And on it grew meatballs,
And tomato sauce.

So if you eat spaghetti,
All covered with cheese,
Hold on to your meatball,
Whenever you sneeze.

The Grand Old Duke of York

The Grand old Duke of York,
He had ten thousand men.
He marched them up the hill and then
[Everyone stands up]
He marched them down again.
[Everyone sits down]
And when you're up, you're up;
[Everyone stands up]
And when you're down, you're down.
[Everyone sits down]
And when you're only halfway up,
[Everyone crouch stand]
You're neither up nor down!

Scout Vespers is a traditional Scouting song. The tune is that of "O, Christmas Tree." The song is usually sung at the end of the evening campfire, often as people are filing out of the fire circle.

Softly falls the light of day,
As our campfire fades away.
Silently each Scout should ask,
"Have I done my daily task?
Have I kept my honor bright?
Can I guiltless sleep tonight?
Have I done and have I dared,
Everything to Be Prepared?"

Day Hiking Checklist

Intentionally comprehensive so you don't forget anything, the REI checklist for day hikers starts with the required Ten Essentials. Adapt those and the remaining items on the list based on weather and the remoteness of destination, as well as the experience and preferences of your group.

THE TEN ESSENTIALS For safety, survival, and basic comfort:

1. Navigation

- Map (with protective case)
- Compass
- GPS (optional)
- Altimeter (optional)

2. Sun Protection

- Sunscreen
- Lip balm
- Sunglasses

3. Insulation

- Jacket, vest, pants, gloves, hat (see Clothing)

4. Illumination

- Headlamp or flashlight
- Extra batteries

5. First-Aid Supplies

- First-aid kit (see the First-Aid Checklist)

6. Fire

- Matches or lighter
- Waterproof container
- Fire starter (for emergency survival fire)

7. Repair Kit and Tools

- Knife or multi-tool
- Repair kits for stove, mattress; duct tape strips

8. Nutrition

- Extra day's supply of food

9. Hydration

- Water bottles or hydration reservoirs
- Water filter or other treatment system

10. Emergency shelter

- Tent, tarp, bivy or reflective blanket

CLOTHING

Avoid cotton and adjust each layer based on the forecast; always prepare, too, for the chance that conditions will turn colder, wetter, and windier.

- Wicking T-shirt or long-sleeve top
- Wicking short or long underwear bottoms
- Socks
- Quick-drying pants or shorts
- UPF-rated shirt
- Sun hat and/or rain hat
- Insulating hat or headband
- Fleece or soft-shell jacket or vest
- Bandana or Buff
- Mosquito net clothing
- Rain Jacket
- Rain Pants
- Fleece Pants

FOOTWEAR

- Hiking boots or shoes
- Watersport sandals
- Gaiters

TOILETRIES

- Toilet paper
- Sanitation trowel
- Waste bags

ELECTRONICS

- Multifunction watch
- Camera and accessories
- Cellphone and waterproof case
- Two-way radios
- GPS
- Satellite messenger

OTHER RECOMMENDED ESSENTIALS

- Daypack
- Whistle
- Energy beverages or drink mixes
- Binoculars
- Lunch utensils
- Trekking poles
- Drinking cup
- Route description or guidebook
- Quick-dry towel
- Interpretive field guide(s)
- Insect repellent
- Outdoor journal
- Rain jacket o Rain pants
- Fleece pants
- Hand sanitizer
- Personal locator beacon
- Bag for collecting trash
- Post-hike snacks, water, towel, clothing
- Itineraries: 1 left with friend; 1 under car seat

Winter/Snow Camping Checklist

Note: This is the REI Winter Camping checklist. It is intentionally extensive; not every person will bring every item on every trip. Use it for packing for all of our campouts but cut back on the cold weather gear for Summer camping.

THE TEN ESSENTIALS For safety, survival, and basic comfort:

1. Navigation

- Map (with protective case)
- Compass
- GPS (optional)
- Altimeter (optional)

2. Sun Protection

- Sunscreen
- Lip balm
- Sunglasses

3. Insulation

- Jacket, vest, pants, gloves, hat (see Clothing)

4. Illumination

- Headlamp or flashlight
- Extra batteries

5. First-Aid Supplies

- First-aid kit (see the First-Aid Checklist)

6. Fire

- Matches or lighter
- Waterproof container
- Fire starter (for emergency survival fire)

7. Repair Kit and Tools

- Knife or multi-tool
- Repair kits for stove, mattress; duct tape strips

8. Nutrition

- Extra day's supply of food

9. Hydration

- Water bottles or hydration system (insulated)
- Water filter or other treatment system

10. Emergency shelter

- Tent, tarp, bivy or reflective blanket

Beyond the Ten Essentials

- 2 sleeping pads per person (+ optional chair kit)
- 4-season tent or tarp or bivy sack
- 50' nylon cord
- Avalanche probe (1 per person)
- Avalanche transceiver (1 per person)
- Backpack
- Backup water treatment (e.g., halogens)
- Cookset with large pot (for melting snow)
- Crampons
- Cups (measuring cups)
- Daypack or summit pack
- Dishes or bowls
- Energy beverages or drink mixes
- Energy food (bars, gels, chews, trail mix)
- Food-storage sacks or canister
- Footprint (if needed for tent)
- Fuel
- Ice axe
- Meals
- Multifunction watch with altimeter
- Packable lantern
- Personal locator beacon (PLB)
- Pillow or stuffable pillowcase
- Pot grabber
- Signaling mirror (often on compass)
- Skis (with skins)
- Sleeping bag (liner optional)
- Slope shovel (1 per person)

- Snow meter
- Snow or tent stakes and guylines
- Snow saw
- Snowshoes
- Stove

- Stuff sack or compression sack
- Tent-pole repair sleeve
- Trekking poles (with snow baskets)
- Utensils
- Whistle

Clothing

- Base layer: wicking underwear
- Insulating hat, cap or headband
- Mid layer: insulating jacket/vest/pants
- Balaclava and/or face mask
- Shell: rain jacket (or soft-shell jacket)
- Goggles
- Rain pants (or soft-shell pants)
- Gloves and/or mittens
- Dry clothing for camp
- Waterproof overmitts

Footwear; Assorted Personal Items

- Bandana or Buff
- Camera Binoculars
- Camp booties
- Cell or satellite phone
- Gaiters
- Guidebook; interpretive field guide(s)
- Hand sanitizer + quick-dry towel
- Insulated Boots
- Main socks, liner socks, spare socks
- Music player with headphones
- Notebook and pen or pencil
- Permits
- Small amount of cash or credit card
- Toilet paper + sanitation trowel
- Toothbrush and/or toiletry kit
- Trip itinerary left with friend + under car seat
- Two-way radios

Backpacking Checklist

NOTE: This is the REI backpacking checklist. It is a tried-and-true guide to packing smart. The list is intentionally comprehensive so you don't forget anything important.

THE TEN ESSENTIALS For safety, survival, and basic comfort:

1. Navigation

- Map (with protective case)
- Compass
- GPS (optional)
- Altimeter (optional)

2. Sun Protection

- Sunscreen
- Lip balm
- Sunglasses

3. Insulation

- Jacket, vest, pants, gloves, hat (see Clothing)

4. Illumination

- Headlamp or flashlight
- Extra batteries

5. First-Aid Supplies

- First-aid kit (see the First-Aid Checklist)

6. Fire

- Matches or lighter
- Waterproof container
- Fire starter (for emergency survival fire)

7. Repair Kit and Tools

- Knife or multi-tool
- Repair kits for stove, mattress; duct tape strips

8. Nutrition

- Extra day's supply of food

9. Hydration

- Water bottles or hydration reservoirs
- Water filter or other treatment system

10. Emergency shelter

- Tent, tarp, bivy or reflective blanket

Beyond the ten essentials

- Backpack
- Backup water treatment
- Bear canister (or hang bags for food)
- Collapsible sink or container
- Cookset (with pot grabber)
- Cups (measuring cups)
- Daypack or summit pack
- Dishes or bowls
- Energy beverages or drink mixes
- Energy food (bars, gels, chews, trail mix)
- Footprint (if desired for tent)
- Fuel
- Ice axe
- Meals
- Multifunction watch with altimeter

- Nylon cord (50' for hanging food)
- Pack cover
- Packable lantern
- Pillow or stuffable pillow case
- Sleeping bag
- Sleeping pad
- Stove
- Stuff sack or compression sack
- Tent, tarp or bivy sack (with stakes, guylines)
- Tent-pole repair sleeve
- Trekking poles
- Utensils
- Whistle (plus signaling mirror)

Clothing: Warm Weather

- Bandana or Buff
- Long-sleeve shirt (for sun, bugs)

Quick-drying pants or shorts
Sun-shielding hat
Wicking T-shirt (synthetic or wool)
Wicking underwear

Clothing: Cool Weather

Fleece jacket or vest, and pants
Gloves or mittens
Hat, cap, skullcap, balaclava or headband
Rainwear (jacket, pants)
Wicking long underwear (good sleepwear)
Wicking long-sleeve T-shirt

Footwear; Assorted Personal Items

Bear spray
Binoculars
Biodegradable soap (and shower bag)
Camera or helmet cam
Cell phone/satellite communicator/2-way radios
Credit card; small amount of cash
Earplugs and eye shade
Extra memory cards
Field guide(s); star identifier
Gaiters
Hand sanitizer
Hiking Boots or hiking shoes suited to terrain
Insect repellent
Outdoor journal and pen or pencil
Permits
Personal locator beacon
Post-hike snacks, water, towel, clothing change
Quick-dry towel
Route description or guidebook
Sandals (for fording, in camp)
Sanitation trowel
Socks (synthetic or wool) plus spares
Toilet paper
Trip itinerary left with friend and under car seat

How to Choose a Mess Kit

A few words about Mess Kits:

Troop 337 will not tell you to buy or endorse a specific type of equipment to meet your needs since everyone has different needs and equipment choice is a matter of personal preference. However, when it comes to mess kits, we feel that there are certain things that you should consider.

Our experience with young scouts has revealed a couple of things:

1. They don't like to do dishes
2. They have a tendency to misplace things
3. They have a tendency to burn their meals (on occasion)
4. They don't like to clean up after themselves
5. They don't like to do dishes!

For the above reasons, we urge you not to purchase the standard aluminum mess kits that are available at a number of different camping equipment stores. These kits provide you with eating ware that also substitutes as cookware. They bend easily, and if you burn your meal, can be quite difficult to clean. (Scouring pads and kitchen sinks are not always available on campouts!) They conduct heat very well and make eating hot meals a little difficult! (Think burnt hands!) The utensils are only good for one person as it is difficult to prepare food for two using these kits. Instead, campers must "share" the cooking stove, which means that everyone eats at a different time and not together as a group. Meal times are also extended due to the "sharing" of the stove, unless of course everyone has their own cook stove and fuel.

Instead, consider the following:

Rarely will you ever cook your own meals with your own utensils. Instead, most campouts will be group cooking on patrol cookware and stoves. Ideally, this should be limited to "one pot meals" that only require you to boil water, add the food, stir, serve and eat. Therefore, having utensils that substitute as cooking utensils is rarely ever needed.

You will be required to cook your meals and you will be required to clean up after yourself.

To eliminate excess equipment taken on campouts, which often gets misplaced, patrols should minimize the amount of equipment taken. All should eat the same meal at the same time.

The ideal mess kit for scouts in a patrol should include the following:

- A ditty sack that has a drawstring, which is to hold all your mess supplies and even some seasonings.
- Lexan or heavy-duty plastic eating utensils. A spoon is all that is really needed. A fork should be considered a luxury item, and a knife is already available with your pocketknife. Eating utensils do not have to be purchased if you are clever enough. Good heavy-duty plastic eating utensils are often provided with 'take-out' meals. Just wash them and put them in your mess kit bag.
- Lexan bowl or plate. A bowl is preferable since it can be used for anything. A plate can only be used for solid foods and should be considered a 'luxury item'. (Ever try eating breakfast cereal on a plate?) Lexan or heavy-duty plastic does not conduct heat very well and as a result, hot foods stay hot longer without burning your hands while you eating them.

- Lexan or heavy-duty plastic cup. This can be used for hot drinks (that stay hot) or cold drinks (that stay cold). It can be used for water, hot chocolate, or soups. It could replace the bowl and plate, and should be considered the most important item in your mess kit.

With the above items, all different combinations of meals can be eaten with a minimum of clean up. When you are camping, meals should be simple and nutritious using a minimum amount of cooking and eating supplies. The less you pack in, the less you pack out. The less you dirty up, the less you have to clean up.

Please remember to put your name and troop number on all items in your mess kit with a permanent marker on the non-eating surfaces. That way, we'll know to whom it belongs when we find it, and we'll know who really doesn't like to do dishes!

How to Choose Sleeping Bags for Camping

While backpacking bags focus on minimizing weight, sleeping bags for car or family camping are all about comfort. What's the best sleeping bag for you? The online article at <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/sleeping-bag.html> discusses what features to look for when shopping for a sleeping bag for car camping. What follows is only a synopsis of that article.

Sleeping Bag Temperature Rating

A sleeping bag's temperature rating identifies the lowest temperature at which a bag is intended to keep the average sleeper warm. When a bag is described as a "20-degree bag," it means that most users should remain comfortable if the air temperature drops no lower than 20°F. These ratings assume that the sleeper is wearing a layer of long underwear and using a sleeping pad under the bag.

Metabolism varies from person to person, and sleeping bag temperature ratings vary from one manufacturer to the next. Use these ratings as a guide only—not a guarantee.

Sleeping bags are typically categorized like this:

Bag Type	Temperature Rating (°F)
Summer Season	+35° and higher
3-Season	+10° to +35°
Winter	+10° and lower

Note: Most camping bags feature a temperature rating between +15°F and +50°F.

Select a sleeping bag with a temperature rating a bit lower than the lowest temperature you expect to encounter. If you're headed for near-freezing temperatures, then choose a 20°F bag instead of a 35°F bag. If temperatures remain higher than expected, you can easily vent the bag to provide more air circulation.

Sleeping Bag Shape

Sleeping bags keep you warm by trapping and holding a layer of "dead" (non-circulating) air next to your body. Your body heat warms this dead air, and the bag forms a barrier between it and the colder ground or outside air. The less air space there is to heat, the faster you warm up and stay warm. Camping bags are roomier than backpacking bags for greater comfort, with the tradeoff being less efficient warming of this dead space.

Rectangular

Most camping bags are designed with a rectangular shape for maximum comfort and roominess. If you choose two bags with compatible zippers, it's easy to mate them and create a double bed. You can mate bags if one bag has a "right-hand" zipper and the other a "left-hand" zipper. (Note: A right-hand zip means the bag opens and closes to your right when you are lying in the bag on your back.) The zippers also need to be the same size, style and roughly the same length. You can lay two bags on a queen-size air mattress for the utmost in outdoor sleeping comfort.

Semi-rectangular (or barrel-shaped)

These can be used for both camping and backpacking. Their tapered design offers greater warmth and efficiency than rectangular bags, but they're still plenty roomy for a comfortable night's sleep. They are popular with larger-frame backpackers or restless sleepers who don't like the tight fit of a mummy bag.

Mummy

If you think you'll be doing some backpacking as well as car camping, you may want to choose a mummy bag. Mummy-shaped bags have narrow shoulder and hip widths in order to maximize warmth and reduce weight. However, some people have trouble getting comfortable in these more restrictive bags. For more information about choosing a bag for backpacking, see our Expert Advice Article, [Sleeping Bags for Backpacking: How to Choose](#).

Sleeping Bag Insulation Type

Synthetic Insulation

Most campers choose synthetic insulation (versus down insulation) for its strong overall performance and friendly price tag. Typically made of polyester, a synthetic fill has many advantages: It's quick-drying and insulates even if it gets wet. It's less expensive than down-filled bags, it's durable (stands up to roughhousing kids and dogs) and it's nonallergenic. However, synthetic insulation doesn't pack down as small as down, so it's less versatile if you plan to use your bag for backpacking also.

Goose-Down Insulation

Offered in some camping bags, it provides a more durable and compressible alternative to synthetic fill but features a slightly higher price tag.

Water-Resistant Down Insulation

The downside of down is that it loses its insulating power when it gets wet. To help alleviate the problem, some sleeping bags feature down that has been treated to protect the feathers from moisture.

How to Choose Tents for Camping

Car camping with family or friends is a summer pastime for many of us. Whether the campground itself is the main attraction or it's simply your base camp for nearby activities, the online article at <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/family-base-camping-tent.html> will help you find the right camping tent—your home away from home. Below is a portion of the article.

Important Note: our troop has a handful of tents that are available for our scouts to use. If you want to use one of these prior to buying your own, please make arrangements with the quartermaster.

Tent Sleeping Capacity

When choosing your tent, first choose a model based on your group's size and whether or not you might need additional space for extra friends, gear, or dogs. When evaluating tent capacity ratings, our general advice is this: Assume a close fit. Keep in mind that no industry standard exists that defines per-person tent dimensions.

Tents Seasonality

3-Season Tents

By far the most popular choice of tents, 3-season tents are lightweight shelters designed for the relatively temperate conditions of spring, summer, and fall. They are usually equipped with ample mesh panels to boost air flow. Mesh panels keep out insects (but can still let in powdery blowing sand). Properly pitched with a taut rainfly, 3-season tents can withstand downpours but are not the best choice for sustained exposure to harsh storms, violent winds, or heavy snow.

The primary functions of 3-season tents:

- Keep you dry during rain or light snow.
- Shield you from bugs.
- Provide privacy.

3- 4-Season Tents

Extended-season (3+ season) tents are engineered for prolonged 3-season usage, suitable for summer use but also trips in early spring and late fall when moderate snow may be encountered. Their goal: offer a balance of ventilation, strength, and warmth-retention.

Typically, they include one or two more poles and fewer mesh panels than pure 3-season models. This makes them sturdier and warmer than their 3-season cousins. Extended-season tents are a good choice for those who make frequent trips to exposed, high-elevation destinations. While very sturdy, they are not as fully fortified for harsh winter weather as 4-season tents.

4-Season Tents

Engineered to withstand fierce winds and substantial snow loads, mountaineering tents can be used in any season. Their chief function, though, is to stand firm in the face of seriously inhospitable weather, principally in winter or above treeline.

They use more poles and heavier fabrics than 3-season tents. Their rounded dome designs eliminate flat roof spaces where snow can collect. They offer few mesh panels and rainflies that extend close to the ground. This hinders ventilation and can make them feel warm and stuffy in mild weather. But, when foul winds begin to howl, a 4-season tent provides a reassuring place of refuge.

How to Choose a Compass

The ability to navigate with map and compass is a crucial skill, one that can literally save your life. Your compass and map can also do other helpful tasks like telling you where you are, what's around you, and the best way to get where you want to go.

In the Ten Essentials, the compass and map are both mandatory gear, while a GPS receiver is optional. The quick explanation for this is the adage "never trust your life to a battery." Dedicated GPS receivers and cellphone apps are amazing tools, but should never be solely relied upon to find your way out of the wilderness.

The source for this short guide is <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/compass.html>. Check out the full article for an in-depth look at choosing a compass.

There are four main features to look at when choosing a compass:

- Declination adjustment: A capable compass for hikers and other trail users should have this.
- Sighting mirror: Move up to a model with both declination adjustment and this feature if you plan to travel off trail or want more precise navigation
- Clinometer: For mountaineering and backcountry skiing, a compass with a clinometer can help you assess avalanche hazards. Field scientists and search-and-rescue professionals also like to have a clinometer.
- Global needle: If you're a world traveler or simply going on a trip that takes you south of the Equator, get a model with a global needle.

While all compasses point in their designated direction, they can also have a wide array of additional features. Generally, a more feature-rich compass costs more, though the build quality (precision and durability) also factors into the price you pay.

How to Choose First Aid Kits

Source: <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/firstaid-kits.html>

A first-aid kit, as well as the training to use it, is one of the Ten Essentials that's universally known yet rarely thought about. When you need to reach for yours, though, you'll be grateful for the time you spent to ensure yours is up to the task.

Even if you pack only a small first-aid kit, you'll have a great resource for treating minor issues and for preventing them from becoming major ones. Managing aches and pains also makes any trip more enjoyable.

You can buy a premade kit or make your own. This article offers tips on both approaches to getting a first-aid kit for the outdoors.

Remember: Assess kit contents before every season. Regardless of the size of your kit, its medications have expiration dates and its bandages and ointments will get used up.

Premade First-Aid Kits

Most people get premade first-aid kits to save time and money compared to buying individual supplies and assembling a kit. Another reason to choose a premade kit is to ensure you don't overlook any important supplies or tools.

Which kit should you get? Consider the following:

- **Group size:** Kit-makers usually estimate the number of people a kit will serve. Your results, of course, may vary. Kits for bigger groups simply include more of supplies you use up, like bandages and pain meds. Medical tools like thermometers, tweezers, or splints remain fairly constant from kit to kit.
- **Trip length/distance:** Same thing; you'll usually find an estimated number of days in a kit's product description.
- **Trip activity:** Kit-makers might include, for example, a fully waterproof pouch that makes a kit suited to paddling. Smaller, lighter kits are appropriate when you're planning light-and-fast pursuits like trail running. Bigger, more comprehensive kits make sense for activities like car camping.
- **Comprehensive kits:** Even if you don't know how to use everything, it can be valuable to get a kit with advanced tools and supplies because others in your group or area might have greater medical knowledge. You can also grow into your kit by getting medical training.

Next, consider the following additions, regardless of the kit you choose:

- **Trip risks:** Example: If you're headed where poison ivy and ticks are concerns, consider adding a poison ivy treatment and tick-specific tool to your kit.
- **Special needs:** Example: If you require prescription meds or an EpiPen in town, you should add them to your outdoor first-aid kit. On group trips, survey members so that everyone is aware of special supplies in each person's kit.

How many kits should you get? Consider the following:

- **Always pack an individual kit:** Even if someone else has a big kit for your group, you still need to be able to treat personal nicks and scratches. Moreover, the person carrying the group kit might not always be nearby.
- **Consider multiple kits:** You don't use the same pack for day hiking, backpacking, and cycling. The same strategy makes sense for first-aid kits.

Build Your Own First-Aid Kit

You'll need a water-resistant bag or pouch to hold everything. You might also need an assortment of zip-lock plastic bags, plastic pill bottles and a waterproof marker and tape to label things. After that, it's a matter of buying or gathering the supplies to fill your kit.

We highlight some basic essentials below. For a more comprehensive supply list, see the REI first-aid checklist online.

First-Aid Kit Basics

Bandages

- Assorted adhesive bandages
- Gauze
- Athletic tape
- Blister treatments (such as moleskin)

Medication and ointments/lotions

- Ibuprofen
- Antibiotic ointments
- Antacid tablets
- Antidiarrheal pills
- Rehydration salts
- Prescription medicines

Basic tools

- Tweezers
- Small mirror
- Blunt tip scissors
- Razor blade or knife

Miscellaneous items

- Bee-sting kit
- Tick remover
- Antiseptic towelettes
- Burn dressing
- Splints and elastic wraps

First-Aid Kit Instructions

Always include a quick-reference guide or more comprehensive booklet that explains how to administer first aid. Kit-makers pay close attention to the quality of their guides, so you should do the same.

Trip-Specific First-Aid Supplies

Just as you would with a premade kit, you should supplement your home-assembled kit with extra supplies for a longer trip or special supplies for your destination, activity, and group members.

Additional Outdoor Safety Essentials

Some essentials are closely related to first aid: A heat-reflecting blanket (to stave off hypothermia or help treat shock), sunscreen, bug repellent, and hand sanitizer might all be carried in or near your kit.

If you ever experience a truly life-threatening medical emergency in the backcountry, a personal locator beacon or satellite messenger can be a lifesaver. Signal strengths and operational details differ, but each can convey your need for rescue and your location to emergency responders.

First-Aid Training

Even though quality kits come with reference materials, getting first-aid training before your trip is a wise move.

A first-aid guide does not convey the true nature of a medical trauma. Training will help you overcome the initial fear and shock of responding to an emergency. Being fully prepared to deal with a serious incident beforehand can make all the difference.

You can also supplement your training by reading wilderness first-aid books.

How to Choose a Backpack

A backpack is a great piece of gear, but it is more of a specialty item when it comes to camping with our troop. This guide is included as a reference; your backpack purchase will come some time down the road. A better investment for this point in your scouting career is in a good daypack! The full online article can be found at <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/backpack.html>. Below are some highlights from that article.

There are three main areas where you'll need to make choices:

- Backpack capacity: The size pack you'll need is tied to the length of your trip and how much weight and bulk you want to carry.
- Backpack features: These refinements affect how the pack works for you.
- Backpack fit: Torso length, not your height, matters most.

Types of Backpacks

Weekend (1-3 nights; 30-50 liters)

Efficient packers using newer, less-bulky gear can really keep things light on 1- to 3-night trips by using a pack in this range. Be aware that packing light requires self-discipline and careful planning. If you can pull it off, though, the light-on-your-feet rewards are fantastic.

Multiday (3-5 nights; 50-80 liters)

These are the most popular backpacking packs sold at REI and they're an excellent choice for warm-weather trips lasting three or more days. 50-80 liter packs are also used for backcountry skiing, for day trips, overnights and sometimes 2-night trips.

Extended-trip (5+ nights; 70 liters or larger)

Extended trips of 5 days or more usually call for packs of 70 liters or larger. These are also usually the preferred choice for winter treks lasting more than 1 night and adults taking young children backpacking.

Backpack Frame Type

Internal-frame backpacks: The majority of packs sold today are body-hugging internal frame packs that are designed to keep a hiker stable on uneven, off-trail terrain. They may incorporate a variety of load-support technologies that all function to transfer the load to the hips.

External-frame backpacks: An external-frame pack may be an appropriate choice if you're carrying a heavy, irregular load, like toting an inflatable kayak to the lake

Frameless backpacks: Ultralight devotees who like to hike fast and light might choose a frameless pack or a climbing pack where the frame is removable for weight savings.

Backpack Fit

The right fit is one that offers a size appropriate for your torso length (not your overall height) and a comfortably snug grip on your hips.

The Merit Badge Program

Paraphrased from <https://www.scouting.org/resources/guide-to-advancement/the-merit-badge-program/>

Merit Badge descriptions and requirements can be found at www.meritbadge.org

There is more to merit badges than simply providing opportunities to learn skills. There is more to them than an introduction to lifetime hobbies, or the inspiration to pursue a career—though these invaluable results occur regularly. It all begins with a Scout's initial interest and effort in a merit badge subject, followed by a discussion with the unit leader or designated assistant, continues through meetings with a counselor, and culminates in advancement and recognition. It is an uncomplicated process that gives a Scout the confidence achieved through overcoming obstacles. Social skills improve. Self-reliance develops. Examples are set and followed. And fields of study and interest are explored beyond the limits of the school classroom.

It is important to note the "blue card" is the nationally recognized merit badge record. It has been updated from time to time and carries the information needed for proper posting and for evidence and reference as needed later. The card has three parts: the actual "Application for Merit Badge" portion, the "Applicant's Record," and the "Counselor's Record." It requires four signatures—two each from the unit leader and a merit badge counselor. The unit leader signs first on the front of the Application for Merit Badge portion and gives the entire blue card to the Scout.

Typically after the unit leader signs the blue card, the Scout contacts the merit badge counselor and sets an appointment. Even though Scouts may benefit from reviewing requirements with a counselor before pursuing them, a boy may begin working on a merit badge at any time after he is registered. It is the counselor's decision whether to accept work or activities completed prior to the issuing of the signed blue card. Common sense should prevail, however. For example, nights already camped as a Boy Scout, or coins or stamps already collected, would count toward their respective badges.

A merit badge counselor—once he or she is satisfied a Scout has met all the requirements—signs in two places: on the reverse of the Application for Merit Badge (to the left) and on the Applicant's Record (in the middle). These two parts are returned to the Scout, and then the Scout meets with his unit leader to discuss his experience. The unit leader then signs the Applicant's Record portion and returns it to the young man, who should retain it in his personal permanent records.

Recap: The Recommended Merit Badge Process

- The Scout develops an interest in a merit badge and may begin working on the requirements.
- The Scout discusses his interest in the merit badge with his unit leader.
- The unit leader signs a blue card and provides the Scout with at least one counselor contact.
- The Scout contacts the counselor.
- The counselor considers any work toward requirements completed prior to the initial discussion with the unit leader.
- The Scout, his friend, and the counselor meet (often several times).
- The Scout finishes the requirements.
- The counselor approves completion.
- The Scout returns the signed blue card to his unit leader, who signs the applicant record section of the blue card.
- The unit leader gives the Scout the applicant record.
- The unit reports the merit badge to the council.

SAMPLE MERIT BADGE APPLICATION

- Print the Scout's name, address, city, unit type & number, District, Council & Merit Badge legibly.

THE UNIT LEADER:

- Selects an approved counselor
- Signs and dates to start blue card.

THE SCOUT:

- Reads the merit badge pamphlet.
- Calls counselor for appointment.
- Always bring along a buddy (a Scout, friend, or parent).

Information for Applicant

- A merit badge application can be approved only by a registered merit badge counselor.
- You must have a buddy with you (Scout buddy system) at each meeting with the merit badge counselor.
- Turn in your approved application to your unit leader. You will be awarded the merit badge emblem and certified as a suitable occasion.

Information for Counselor

- Merit Badge applications must be signed in advance by the applicant's unit leader.
- The Scout must have a buddy (Scout buddy system) in attendance at all instructional sessions.
- You may not change any requirement but you may share your knowledge or experience that will make the counseling more interesting and valuable.

#34124A

Requirement No. and letter	Date of Approval	Counselor Initial
1 a	1/5/2	BP
1 b	1/5/2	BP
1 c	1/5/2	BP
1 d	4/1/2	BP
1 e	4/1/2	BP
2	4/1/2	BP
3	6/4/2	BP
4 a	1/3/2	BP
4 b	4/1/2	BP
4 c	9/1/2	BP
5	9/1/2	BP

APPLICATION FOR MERIT BADGE

Name Joseph D Scout
 Address 12345 Scout Drive
 City Boy Scout City
 is a registered Boy Scout Varsity Scout Venturer
 of Troop No. 1000
Troop, team, crew, ship
 District Greater Five Rivers
 Council Rainbow Council #702
 and is qualified to begin working for this merit badge
12/30/02 X William D Boyce
Date Signature of unit leader

(back)

The applicant has personally appeared before me and demonstrated to my satisfaction that he has met all requirements for the (please print)

Citizenship in the Nation
Merit badge

Robert Baden-Powell
Name of counselor

2002 Gilwell Ln
Address of counselor

Brownsa Island 60450
City Zip code

(000)000-0000
Telephone number of counselor

X R Baden-Powell 12/30/03
Signature of counselor Date Completed

Checked and recorded: 09/1/02 JW
Date Initials

Certificate and badge presented 9/30/02
Date

Applicant will turn in this portion to his unit leader for record posting.

APPLICANT'S RECORD

Name Joseph D Scout
12345 Scout Drive
Boy Scout City

Has given me his completed application for the

Citizenship in the Nation
 Merit Badge

Completed on 09/01/02 by
Date

R Baden-Powell
Signature of Counselor

William D Boyce
Signature of Unit Leader

Note to Scout: Retain this copy for your permanent records.

COUNSELOR'S RECORD

Applicant Joseph D Scout
12345 Scout Drive
Boy Scout City

Troop Unit number 1000
Troop, team, crew, ship

Citizenship in the Nation
 Merit Badge

Date completed 09/01/02
 Remarks:

It is suggested that the counselor keep this record for at least 1 year in case any question is raised later in regard to this award.

INSTRUCTIONS TO COUNSELOR:

- Never meet alone with a Scout.
- Verify all info & merit badge name.
- Verify your name, address, & ph. #
- Date/initial requirements when done
- A 2nd counselor can finish card.
- Note each name, address & phone.
- If merit badge is completed in one meeting, sign, initial & write "Completed" across sign-off area.
- Sign sections and date in 3 places.
- Retain your counselor's record.
- Return 2 sections to the Scout.

UPON COMPLETION:

- Unit leader signs off completion.
- Advancement Chairperson: date, initial & record, then submit with advancement report to council.
- Council verifies counselor & Scout.

Parents' and New Leaders' Guide to a Boy-Led Troop

Introduction

Welcome! Whether you have just crossed over with your son from Cub Scouts or just joined Boy Scouts, we appreciate your enthusiasm and encourage your participation in the troop. The three aims of Boy Scouting are character development, citizenship training, and mental and physical fitness. To accomplish these aims, Scouting employs eight methods: the ideals, the patrol method, the outdoors, advancement, association with adults, personal growth, leadership development, and the uniform. We encourage you to take the Boy Scout training offered on-line and by the District to find out what we are trying to accomplish and how you can help.

One of the major differences between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts is the very important method, leadership development. In order to teach leadership, you have to let the boys lead. In fact, one of the more vigorous debates you can have in Scouting is over the feasibility of a boy-led troop. Some adult leaders will argue that while a boy-led troop is the BSA ideal, it's not possible in their particular troop for any or all of the following reasons: the boys are too young, too lazy, too irresponsible, or just not interested. A boy-led troop is more work for the adult leadership, and therein is the problem, and our need for your cooperation and help. It is so much easier for the adults just to take charge themselves than to teach the necessary leadership skills to the boys.

All Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters are taught the basics of a boy-led troop and patrol in Scoutmaster Specifics. However putting that training into practice is often difficult without a mentor in the troop. It is the intent of this guide to bridge the gap between theory and practice. It covers some of the common pitfalls and offers suggestions for getting a working boy-led troop. The importance of a boy-led troop and patrol is emphasized in two chapters of the Scoutmaster's Handbook; chapter 3 "The Boy-Led Troop" starts with this strong statement:

"Empowering boys to be leaders is the core of Scouting. Scouts learn by doing, and what they do is lead their patrols and their troop. The boys themselves develop a troop program, and then take responsibility for figuring out how they will achieve the goals. One of our most important challenges is to train boy leaders to run the troop by providing direction, coaching, and support. The boys will make mistakes now and then and will rely upon the adult leaders to guide them. But only through real hands-on experience as leaders can boys learn to lead."

As mentioned before, perhaps the most common reason for the existence of adult-led troops is that it is easier for the experienced adult leaders to run things; teaching leadership to boys is not easy. A second common reason is that the adult leaders may be afraid of failure; they want a smooth running troop. A boy-led project will occasionally falter, and adults may feel it necessary to take over to ensure success. A third is that the troop may have adult leaders that do not delegate well, and do not wish to give up control. In fact, many consider that the main barriers to a boy-led troop come from the attitudes within the adult leadership.

Adult Leaders and Parents Work Together

Always Rigidly Flexible

This guide is meant more as guidelines than actual rules. Just as every troop, scout, adult leader, and parent is different, what works best is not always the same. Also, what worked yesterday may not work

tomorrow. We do not want change for the sake of change, but to meet the changing needs of the troop.

Adults Are There For the Boys

The adults need to keep in mind that we are here for the Scouts. In Scouting, parents will meet others with similar values and goals for their children. Parents will build good friendships with the others and they can provide support and parenting suggestions. Scouting is a way to become a better parent through association with and the help of like-minded adults. However, adults should keep in mind that they are there for the boys and should try not to let socializing dominate.

The Scoutmaster Is In Charge Of the Troop

All parents should understand the structure of the troop. There is a "chain of command" both within the youth leadership and within the adult leadership. The Scoutmaster has to have a final say as the ultimate leader of the troop. He needs to work together with the parents and the other leaders toward the boy-led goal. The boys should understand that they have only as much authority as allowed by the adults, especially the Scoutmaster, and need to show the appropriate respect for the adults in their lives.

The Parent Involvement

Parent support and involvement is essential. Unlike the full parent involvement in Cub Scouts, parents are asked to become much less involved with their own child and more within the structure of the troop as a committee member or assistant Scoutmaster. Unfortunately, few parents come in to Scouting with a good understanding of the program. To get all the parents on the same page and working toward the goals of Scouting, we ask them to take the on-line Fast Start training. Parents coming on outings should work through the on-line Youth Protection training to understand the behavior that BSA asks of all adults. Committee members should take the on-line Troop Committee Challenge. It is useful for the Scoutmaster occasionally to meet with ALL parents to share his vision for a successful troop and to involve the parents in accomplishing the troop's goals.

The Troop Committee

From Fast Start: "If you haven't been involved in Scouting, you may think that the whole organization is the Scoutmaster and the youth members. The truth is, the success of the troop depends on many adult volunteers who work behind the scenes to make it all happen. The troop committee is like a steering committee—volunteers who actually handle the business end of running the troop." From the Scoutmaster Handbook: "The most important responsibility of a troop committee is recruiting qualified adult leaders for the troop." "The Scoutmaster should be able to turn to the committee at any time for assistance, support, and encouragement." The troop committee must then step back and not try to run the troop. That is for the Scoutmaster to train the boys to do."

Adult-Led Symptoms and Impacts

Adults Loudly Asserting Authority

Adults yelling at the boys in front of the troop is one characteristic of an adult-led troop where the adults have not transferred authority to the youth. Yelling at the boys has a toxic effect on the supportive atmosphere we want to nurture in a troop. Scouting is a put-down free zone. We use the Scout hand sign as a silent way to bring the troop to order for this very reason.

In addition, the boys never learn to lead if the adults dominate. The only time an adult should step in is if there is an immediate safety threat. Otherwise, there is time to work through the youth leadership chain of command. The only way for boys to learn leadership is actually to hand them the reins of power, with plenty of instruction of course.

Adults Jumping In With More Enthusiasm Than Patience

Volunteers who take charge are usually a good thing except when they preempt the boys' responsibilities. It is hard to wait for a boy to do something that you could do better in much less time. However if you do something for someone, they will not learn the skill. Adults already know how; boys still need to learn. Scout meetings and outings should provide a hassle-free environment in which to learn leadership.

Adults Operating In Cub Scout Pack Mode

Parents crossing over with their boys can often feel more comfortable modifying slightly the structure they know from Cub Scouts than to adopt the changes demanded by a boy-led Boy Scout program. They continue the parent-child authority structure and don't hand power over to the boys. This leads to an extension of the parent-child relationship into the teen years when the youth should be transitioning to independence.

Adults Enabling Codependency

Parents of scouting age boys are often comfortable with the roles they have established with their young children. They organize the program and the boys follow along. However, the boys remain in a dependent role. Very young Scouts may be comfortable with a dependent role for a while. Adults feel useful and boys don't have to put out much effort. The troop operates like an adult-run outing club. But as the boys grow older, their lack of control of the program begins to chafe.

Adults Contributing To Older Boy Attrition

Boys can stay dependents only so long before they rebel from imposed adult authority. Adults giving the boys more control over outings can help solve an older boy attrition problem. Venture patrols or similar older boy patrols allow them to plan high adventure outings that increase retention.

Scouting trains boys in life skills. Removing "boy-led" from the program removes an extremely important aspect of Scouting: leadership and teamwork. Boys need to practice team leadership in the safe environment that Scouting provides. Without this practice, they are less prepared to enter the workforce, where mistakes have significant consequences.

Boy-Led Advantages

Boys Learn Critical Planning Skills

Adults should involve the boys in the process of planning an outing. Boys need to learn how to set achievable goals. For example, planning a canoe trip can start with "Safety Afloat" as an outline to make them aware of safety concerns. Including the boys in the process allows the adults to teach the logistics of planning: setting goals and objectives; breaking the project into smaller tasks and determine deadlines when they need to get done; assigning responsibilities to individual team members; putting the plan into action and tracking progress; evaluating the outcome and modifying the plan. There is always the need to check in with others on the project to see if all is going well.

Boys Learn To Lead In a Safe Environment

Leadership is not only knowing what you need to do to succeed but also knowing what to do if things go wrong. Before each boy-led activity, an adult leader should sit down with the boy leadership and go over their plan, to make sure that the boys are not set up to fail. The adult leaders are responsible for maintaining a non-confrontational environment by letting the boys know the adults support them, and will be available if needed. Adults minimize the fear of failure by maintaining a supportive environment.

Boys Learn From Mistakes

It is hard to watch a process be done poorly, but if a boy-led troop meeting does not go as planned, there is no great loss. If a meal on a camp-out does not work out, it becomes a learning experience, a teachable moment to show how one responds to mistakes and still shows respect for others. It is very important to meet after each activity with the boy leadership to help them conduct a Start, Stop, Continue evaluation (SPL Handbook p. 97). How could this activity have been done better? Good judgement comes from experience, and experience comes from learning from your mistakes.

Boys Learn To Lead Others and Work In Teams

Working well with others is perhaps the most important life skill that youth can learn. Boys gain confidence by being entrusted with power and in leading their peers. Section Six in the Senior Patrol Leader's Handbook talks about leadership styles and developing your team. The youth leader learns that their leadership style needs to change from Explaining, to Demonstrating, to Guiding, and finally to Enabling as the group develops into a working team (the Leading EDGE in SPL Handbook page 88-89).

Boys Learn Respect When Treated With Respect

Adults should show respect by not interrupting or criticizing the youth leadership during a troop meeting, no matter how badly things may be going. Instead, the adults should praise youth leaders in public when they do well, which helps boost both their confidence and the troop's faith in them. If the troop believes in their Senior Patrol Leader, they will treat him with respect and listen to him more readily, which in turn makes the troop run more smoothly. The time for critique is after the meeting, in private. Sadly, it is much more difficult to build up confidence in others than to tear it down. The adults will earn the respect of the boys by their actions and example, not by demand.

Role of the Adult Leaders in a Boy-Led Troop

Follow the Lead of the Scoutmaster

Just as the Scouts need to know that their SPL is in charge, the adults need to know that the Scoutmaster is in charge! Scouts will follow the example of the adults, good or bad. Please criticize only when you can give a suggestion to correct the problem, otherwise it is nothing more than whining. This is crucial for the adults to follow as well as the Scouts.

Train Patrol Leader and Assistant

This is especially necessary if the troop does not participate in district or council youth training. The boys need to know what is expected of them. Often a troop will do BSA's Troop Leadership Training (BSA publication #34306A) which has four sections. First is a section on how the Scoutmaster should train the senior patrol leader. Then Scoutmaster and the senior patrol leader jointly train the rest of the boy leadership in three modules:

Module One - Introduction to Troop Leadership (Know). The boy-led troop and boy-led patrol chapters in the Scoutmaster Handbook is discussed. The troop organization and overview of each position is next.

Module Two - How to Do Your Job (Be). The Scoutmaster shares his vision of success. This is followed by a discussion of the teaching EDGE (Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, and Enable) as the method used for teaching skills. Finally, a troop progress discussion is held using the Start, Stop, Continue assessment tool.

Module Three - What is Expected of me (Do)? This section focusses first on the position descriptions and expectations. The Scoutmaster then leads a discussion on servant leadership. It closes with defining success in your position and a Scoutmaster conference.

Mentor the Patrol Leader and Assistant

Leadership mentoring must continue beyond the initial training. An important rule to remember is to praise publicly and criticize privately. It is best to start with simple leadership tasks first, so the boys are not set up to fail. An adult should always meet with the Patrol Leader before the activity to go over preparation. The youth leadership should be able to rely on the adults to provide the skills and resources for them to succeed. The Senior Patrol Leader Handbook and the Patrol Leader Handbook are excellent resources. Robert Baden-Powell in the Scoutmaster Handbook said, "Training boy leaders to run their troop is the Scoutmaster's most important job."

Back Up Youth Authority

Your youth leaders will have to learn how to deal with problem people (SPL Handbook p. 95-96). Managing conflict is an extremely valuable skill for both youth and adults to master, that is why it is included in both National Youth Leadership Training and Wood Badge. If the Patrol Leader can't resolve the issue then it goes to the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader and the Senior Patrol Leader. In a well-run boy-led troop, if the disciplinary problem has to be brought to the adult leadership, some feel that it is serious enough that the offending boy should go home.

All things are taught best by example. Just as there is a chain of command in the Scouts, there is a chain of command with adults. The better we follow this chain of command, the better example the boys have to follow. We cannot expect the boys to follow a chain of command if what they witness with adults is chaotic and controversial. The adult chain of command should be similar to the Scout chain of command. This is why it is crucial that the Senior Patrol Leader be the leader of the youth and the Scoutmaster be the leader of the adults.

Step Back and Delegate

Often an adult will be asked a question from a boy in a patrol because the adult is viewed as the authority. It is best if the adult does not give the answer. One of the most important things a Patrol Advisor can say is "Did you ask your patrol leader?" By respecting the chain of command, you build the authority of your boy leaders. Some relevant quotes from Robert Baden-Powell in the Scoutmaster Handbook are, "Train Scouts to do a job, then let them do it." and "Never do anything a boy can do."

Set the Supportive Tone

Adults should not be yelling at kids, except in safety emergencies. A major part of creating a supportive environment is training the adults how to respond to the youth with patience and respect. The boys need to know that they will not be yelled at if they fail. Notice one way we set the tone is by silently raising the Scout sign and patiently waiting when we want order, rather than losing our patience and yelling for them to 'shut up.' Adult behavior should follow the Scout Oath and Law: teach good behavior by example. The adults need to know how to operate within themselves before they can function with the Scouts. Any adult should refer back to the Scout chain of command whenever possible. If the adults

do not know how to operate within their own chain of command, they will not know how to respond to the boys appropriately.

Encourage the Patrol Method

The Scoutmaster Handbook states, "Patrols are the building blocks of a Boy Scout troop." It quotes Robert Baden-Powell: "The patrol method is not a way to operate a Boy Scout troop, it is the only way. Unless the patrol method is in operation you don't really have a Boy Scout troop." The patrol is the team that you train your patrol leader to build. This may be that Patrol Leader's first leadership experience, so he will need plenty of training and coaching. Patrol spirit, respect, and cooperation will help build that team.

Make Sure the Rules and Regulations Are Followed

Safety is the primary adult responsibility. Adult leaders are responsible for the troop following the rules found in the Guide to Safe Scouting and in the Youth Protection training. The adult leadership trains the youth leadership to stay within the boundaries set by BSA, and is ultimately responsible to see the rules are followed. The better the youth understand the reasons for BSA's safety rules the more likely they are to cooperate and comply. Explain that the safety rules apply to everyone, boys and adults alike.

Transitioning To a Boy-Led Troop

Get Adult Buy-In First

The cooperation of the adults can make or break the troop. The scoutmaster needs to have all the adults on board with what he is trying to accomplish. The safe, nurturing environment that Scouting hopes will be established in a troop can be ruined by one cranky adult. One take-charge adult can strip the boy leadership of the opportunity to lead. Basically, the boys can't lead if the adults are treating them as if they have no power. Even if your Senior Patrol Leader is fully trained, he cannot be effective with the boys unless he is empowered by the adult leadership. Any leader who is denied any actual power is set up to be ignored and eventually fail.

Train the Adult Leadership

Adults need to see the "big picture" of Scouting and there is no better way to do this than by taking more training. Your troop level adult leader training can be as simple as a small group working through the Scoutmaster Handbook. A simple start, stop, continue assessment can compare the troop to the ideals set in the Scoutmaster Handbook. If it has been a while since your adult leaders have taken New Leader Essentials and Scoutmaster Specifics, maybe it would be a good for them to sit through this one day training again. In addition, our Council presents a 'University of Scouting' annually that covers many areas of Scouting. By far the best Scout training available is Wood Badge, which merges some of the best corporate leadership training with Scouting. If possible, the Scoutmaster should be Wood Badge trained.

Train the Boy Leadership

This can be as simple as BSA's Troop Level Training. One of the best boy leader training is NYLT, National Youth Leadership Training. It is essentially a Wood Badge course for youth. If possible, your Senior Patrol Leader should be NYLT trained. However you do training, realize that youth leader training is a continual process. Often they will not succeed the first time they try to lead. The adult leadership may need to continually encourage and remind them until good leadership habits form. This continuing training may take quite a while, so the adult leader must have patience with the process.

Get the Adults Out Of the Patrol Leader's Council

"Patrol leaders' council, not the adult leaders, is responsible for planning troop activities." - Fast Start: Boy Scouting. The PLC, Patrol Leader's Council, is run by the Senior Patrol Leader and not the adult leadership. If your PLC has kibitzing adults, try to have a separate meeting for them at the same time, so that the boys can lead their own meeting independent of adult interference. If there are behavior problems, the presence of just one or two adult leaders should be enough to remind the boys that their Senior Patrol Leader is in charge, and is backed up by the adult leadership. In a nutshell, the only adult that should attend the PLC is the Scoutmaster or his designee!

Check That the Boy Leaders Are Prepared

It is very important that your Senior Patrol Leader make up an agenda for each activity. The Scoutmaster should meet before the PLC and the troop meeting to go over the agenda and make sure the youth leaders are prepared. The Scoutmaster handbook says, 'The senior patrol leader is in charge of every troop meeting. Help him plan ahead, coach him along the way, but stay in the background and let him be the leader.'

Don't Expect Rapid Change

It may take years before a fully functional boy-led troop is operating. There will always be boy leader turnover and new boys coming in. Every troop election requires a new set of boy leaders to be trained. One cannot allow setbacks to trigger a reversion to an adult-led troop. Good patrol leaders should be encouraged to move up to troop level leadership as Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL). The Assistant Senior Patrol Leader can be a training position for Senior Patrol Leader, that way each SPL has had 6 months of troop-level leader training as ASPL before taking office. The speed of the change to a fully boy-led troop greatly depends on how fast the adults can change to a Scoutmaster lead organization! Without this, the boys do not have a proper example to follow!

Treat Your Senior Patrol Leader Very Well

The Senior Patrol Leader is the leader of a boy-led troop, and you want other boys in the troop really to want that position because it carries status and power. You want the troop to respect and work hard for your SPL. The SPL has the best job in the troop! The adult leadership showing respect for the SPL and his decisions and input reinforces his status. If possible, defer to your SPL.

Allow Failure to Be a Learning Experience

Within the bounds of a safe scouting experience, the adult leadership should allow the boy leadership to make, and learn from their mistakes. If the SPL shows up unprepared for the troop meeting, he will have to wing it and do the best he can. The adults should not bail him out by taking over and running the meeting themselves. Adult-led is not plan B. A teachable moment becomes plan B. Keep other adult leaders from interrupting the troop meeting, no matter how badly they think it is going; it is the SPL's show, not theirs. The Scoutmaster should talk with the boy leadership after the activity to evaluate what they can learn from the experience. Keep these meetings short and to the point. Set an encouraging tone if something did not go well, and keep the boys place from blaming anyone. Failure can be a better teacher than success.

Encourage Patrol Activities

The only way the Patrol Leader will get experience is if the patrol actually does something that requires his leadership. There should be a patrol meeting within the troop meeting. Patrol activities should be planned within troop outings also. Patrols can even plan outings independent of the troop. (See Chapter 4 "The Boy-Led Patrol" in the Scoutmaster Handbook.)

Ideas for Mentoring Leadership

Use the Senior Patrol Leader Handbook

The Senior Patrol Leader Handbook should be read by not only your SPL and ASPL but also by the adult leadership. This new handbook incorporates important new material from National Youth Leadership Training (and by derivation from Wood Badge).

Leadership Tips to Get You Started (excerpted from SPL Handbook page 20-21)

Keep your word. Don't make promises you can't keep.

Be fair to all. A good leader shows no favorites.

Communicate. A good leader knows how to get and give information so that everyone understands.

Be flexible. Meetings, campouts, and other patrol events will not always go as planned.

Be organized. Time spent preparing for troop meetings and events will be repaid many times over.

Delegate. Among the greatest strengths of a good leader is the willingness to empower others to accomplish all they can.

Set the example. Whatever you do, Scouts in the troop are likely to do the same.

Be consistent. When the troop members know what to expect from you, they will be more likely to respond positively to your leadership.

Give Praise. Offer honest complements whenever you can.

Ask for help. Do not be embarrassed to draw on the many resources available to you.

Criticize in private. Pull the Scout aside and quietly explain what he is doing wrong. Add a suggestion on how it should have been done correctly.

Have Fun. Most of all, have fun learning to be a leader. Your joy and enthusiasm will spread to other Scouts and will help energize the troop.

Use Scenarios

First aid courses like Wilderness First Responder spend a lot of time in running scenarios in addition to lectures. Boy Scouts uses scenarios to teach youth protection. This is primarily because people learn by doing. Leadership can also be taught that way. The National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience at Philmont uses scenarios like search and rescue to teach leadership. Closer to home, the SPL Handbook has five example scenarios (page 90-91) but any seasoned adult leader probably has many more real-life examples to use. Consider taking time with your boy leadership to work through known challenges, so that they will feel prepared if a similar situation arises. Discussing alternatives ahead of time with an adult leader will help build a youth's confidence that their responses would be correct. Scenarios can also allow the Scoutmaster to train the adult leadership in the proper responses to boy-led challenges.

Conclusion

Like many things, working on a functional boy-led troop is a journey to be enjoyed and not necessarily a destination that will be achieved. Troop turnover guarantees that it will always be a work in progress. Working toward a boy-led troop will give you a platform to teach leadership and the satisfaction of watching boys mature into good leaders.