

# Roundtable Mechanics

## UNIT PARTICIPATION

Roundtables should be presented as learning experiences. Leaders watch demonstrations and then practice what they just learned. Because people learn best by active involvement rather than by observation, leaders attending a roundtable should have as much opportunity as possible to participate. Participation can be in the form of a role-play, a panel discussion, or a hands-on experience with a skill being taught. Roundtables may also engage leaders by making assignments to individuals or a troop in advance so they have time to prepare. This makes roundtables a more satisfying experience and convinces Boy Scout leaders that these are their roundtables. Pride in doing a task well can help Scouters develop their leadership skills.

### Unit Assignments

Set up a schedule that allows units or individuals to volunteer in advance to be responsible for presenting a song, skit, game, or ceremony at upcoming roundtable meetings. Designate a roundtable team member to preview all original presentations for suitability, making sure they meet the aims of the Boy Scouts of America. Prior to the meeting, have a team member check on the unit's progress in preparing the presentation, and also send a reminder about the roundtable assignment. Ask this team member to be prepared as a backup should the person or unit fail to deliver on the assignment. Do not leave an embarrassing gap in the evening's program.

Encourage units or individuals that present preapproved, original material to make the information available to all roundtable participants as a handout. This will enable all leaders attending to readily use these ideas in their own meetings.

### Show and Tell

Roundtables are most successful when Scout leaders have the opportunity to share information and ideas with other leaders. For example, ask pack leaders to bring examples of their yells and songs, newsletters, flags, and meeting and ceremony props. A special area may be set up to display these items during the preopening.

### Publicity and Promotion

Promotion is a major key to increasing roundtable attendance. If a roundtable is fun and exciting and meets the needs of the unit leaders, the current participants will keep coming back. But it all begins with getting the leaders to attend their very first meeting.

Promoting roundtable is more than just letting leaders know when and where the roundtable is happening. Your goal is to make them want to come because of the contacts they can make, the help they will receive in planning and running a meeting, and the fun they will have.

Any of your roundtable promotional materials should include the following information:

- **Purpose**—Let leaders know how roundtable meetings will help them in their leadership positions.
- **Involvement**—Roundtables are interactive, hands-on meetings in which participants are actively involved.
- **Contact**—Include the name and telephone number of a contact person who can answer leaders' questions about roundtables.

Tools that can help with promotion include:

**Fliers.** Informational fliers that detail what roundtable is about should be distributed to new leaders and at basic leader training courses. Continue the distribution throughout the year wherever you find Scout leaders.

**Invitations.** Computer-generated invitations are easily created and are impressive to the new leader. Have the roundtable team attend training events to hand-deliver invitations and invite new leaders to roundtable. This could be done at the closing of the training.

**Mailed announcements.** This method can be expensive and time-consuming, but it might be worth the effort and expense for special events.

**Chartered organization publicity.** If chartered organizations produce online or printed bulletins, place stories in them. Try church bulletins and company newsletters. This method can be especially helpful for geographically large areas.

**District or council newsletters.** Be sure all roundtable dates and meeting places are listed on the district and council calendars. Be sure all roundtable dates and meeting places are listed on the district and council calendars. Include relevant information in each month's newsletter article detailing the agenda for that month.

**District or council websites.** Many districts and councils maintain websites. Keep up-to-date information on these sites about plans for upcoming roundtable events. Highlight last month's meeting to get people excited about future roundtables. We are in the age of instant information and digital presence; be sure the roundtable is part of this. Be sure the location information, start time, and contact information is current and accurate.

**Local news media.** Submit brief announcements to the local news section of your community newspaper or create public service radio announcements. Local cable television stations may have a community bulletin board that allows posting information about the monthly roundtable.

**Telephone trees.** Telephone campaigns can take time, but the entire roundtable team can cover a phone list in one evening. Try to keep the conversation to roundtable matters and set a time limit for each call. Be sure to place calls at a time that is convenient to the recipient. Messages on voicemail can also be effective.

**Email/social media messages.** Establish a roundtable email directory of district BSA leaders. Reminders of meetings and special events can be sent efficiently to many people through this avenue of communication. One best practice is to send notes about a completed roundtable to participants a few weeks before the upcoming roundtable. This reminds them of the information they gathered and the fun they had, and lets them know the planned topics for next time. Make sure to invite them to bring a friend. Also send materials about the last roundtable to those leaders who did not attend. This shows that they were missed and provides them with needed information despite their absence.

**Road shows.** Develop a slide show or video presentation about roundtable. Make arrangements for roundtable team members to visit troop committee meetings around the district to show leaders what they are missing. You can also post this slide show on your district or council website to encourage attendance.

### Attendance Incentives

Participation is an important part of building roundtable attendance and motivating leaders. A system that has worked well in many districts is to award points to those units that prepare and present a portion of the roundtable program. When a certain number of points are earned, the unit gets an award. Competition for assignments is usually keen, because even adults are eager to work toward an award.

Once leaders are attending roundtable, what keeps them coming back? A well-planned roundtable program will inspire leaders to try the program ideas they see, and they will want to come back next month for more ideas, fun, and fellowship.

With the many demands on leaders' time, however, roundtable commissioners may want to consider using additional incentives to ensure continued attendance. These could include special recognitions or awards for regular attendance, most meetings attended in a row, or milestones. Sometimes fun items tied to the roundtable theme, corporate logo items donated by local businesses or leaders, or even gag gifts from the local dollar store can be enjoyable incentives that leaders look forward to at the end of the planned program. That little something extra might make the difference between a leader attending roundtable or staying home after a busy day.

### Attendance Awards

Name tags and beads are popular attendance awards. They provide immediate recognition to all those attending. As an example, string a blue bead on a vinyl lace to hand out at the roundtable, and then pass out a different color of bead at registration each month. After the leader has attended a set number of roundtables, you can present a leather name tag on which to hang the lace and beads. Scouters can wear this totem with their uniforms when attending the roundtable each month. (Note: These awards are not official insignia and should not be permanently attached to the uniform or worn outside your council. They are inappropriate at any meeting that Scouts attend.)

Other attendance awards might include:

- **Slide of the Month**—A simple, easy-to-duplicate neckerchief slide can be presented to all leaders attending.
- **Certificate**—Award a thank-you certificate to packs and leaders who help with the program.
- **Pins**—Give special pins or insignia for a year's perfect attendance.
- **First-Timer**—A first-timer award for new attendees will make them feel welcome and important.
- **Traveling Totem**—A totem may be an unfinished ceremonial prop that is awarded to the unit with the highest percentage of attendance. The winning unit brings the prop back the next month with something new done or added to it. At the end of the year, the unit with the greatest average attendance receives the prop as an award.
- **Scout Bucks**—Scout leaders earn bucks through attendance at or participation in the roundtable. Leaders can use these bucks to purchase personal or unit items at an auction held once a year. Real money is never used. The only way to earn bucks is through roundtable attendance. Auction items are donated and collected throughout the year. (Note: Be sure to have solicitations of local businesses preapproved by your district or council before you ask a business for a donation.)
- **Door Prizes or Special Drawings**—These awards should be useful to unit leaders. Use program-oriented handicraft items or kits. If you have built a special piece of equipment to demonstrate a game or ceremony, give it away as a prize. The lucky recipients can use it in their unit activities. You may want to choose your winners in different ways each month—draw names of those attending from a hat, mark name tags in a special way, or randomly place a tag under the participants' chairs. Don't forget to post an announcement and pictures of the winning item on your district or council website as promotion and encouragement for others to see.

# GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Welcome to our district's Cub Scout roundtable. Congratulations on taking that extra step to be an informed Cub Scout leader. Please fill out this form and return it to a roundtable team member tonight. This information will help the roundtable team to get to know you and better meet your needs.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Home address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (B) \_\_\_\_\_ (C) \_\_\_\_\_

Email (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (B) \_\_\_\_\_

Unit No. \_\_\_\_\_ of (town) \_\_\_\_\_

Chartered organization \_\_\_\_\_

Registered Scouting position \_\_\_\_\_

What Scouting training have you attended? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Previous Scouting experience \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you an Eagle Scout?  Yes or have earned the Girl Scout Gold Award?  Yes

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse \_\_\_\_\_ Scouting experience \_\_\_\_\_

Children (Please list their Scouting experience) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about roundtable? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you come to roundtable? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

With whom did you come, or did you come by yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

How can roundtable help your unit program?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## ROUNDTABLE PROGRAM EVALUATION

Please complete this evaluation form on tonight's program. Be honest! Tell us what you liked and did not like. The goal of your roundtable is to plan a program that meets the needs of our district's leaders.

Did you feel welcome and warmly received?  Yes  No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you feel comfortable participating in the program?  Yes  No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you plan on returning to next roundtable?  Yes  No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you encourage other leaders to attend?  Yes  No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to leave your name and email address for one of the roundtable commissioners to contact you regarding roundtable program?

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