

Parts of a Roundtable

Roundtables have distinct program elements that help organize the event and manage time effectively. The parts listed below correlate with the program outlines provided in the 60-, 90-, 120-, and 180-minute roundtable program outlines. These may be adapted to fit local needs, but each program portion works together to build a diverse, useful, and relevant roundtable meeting that will engage the audience, convey important information, and add to the knowledge and skills of the attendees.

PRE-OPENING and MIDWAY

The pre-opening activities and the time spent visiting the midway is a definite part of the roundtable program, and not just a time filler for early arrivals. Make your gathering time interesting and active. Set up great resources for your leaders to examine and visit before the formal opening. It's a way to get people to the meeting on time, and it sets the tone for the roundtable that follows.

Organize an interactive, easy-to-join opener such as a get-acquainted game. Ideas for these activities may be found in *Group Meeting Sparklers* (No. 33122) and under the [Pre-Opening Gathering Period Activities](#) section on the Troop Program Resources website

The Midway

The Midway is the place where all the activities outside of running your general session and the program specific roundtable session should be located. By moving these outside of your roundtable space, you can eliminate distractions from other Scouters engaging in fellowship and conversation; and, allow those interested in more details about a topic or event to have a place to ask specific questions.

Displays, Information Tables and Parking Lot

Information tables - The majority of interesting materials on national, district or council events and announcements are available here. Have copies of all relevant resources on hand, and if possible invite the appropriate persons representing that activity to discuss and share with your roundtable participants. When done properly, this should relieve the rest of the roundtable from the need for lengthy announcements. Scouters can go to these tables before and during the roundtable when they are easily located in the midway.

Displays - If the resources are available, set out displays that give leaders ideas for their meetings. Encourage leaders to use similar displays at parents' nights or special unit events. The possibilities are endless.

- Craft/activity ideas, including take-away instructions
- Outing destinations with pictures of boys having fun
- Vendor tables, where units can get planning information and resources for activities in your area.

- BSA programs such as World Friendship Fund, Messengers of Peace, Nova, Adopt-a-School, and religious emblems
- Local events such as details on camporees, day camps, council camp programs, district activities, and local service opportunities
- Neckerchief slide ideas
- Games that can be made and shared

Parking Lot - There will be time later in the roundtable to answer any questions your participants may have. Make it easy for them to share their thoughts by creating a "parking lot"—a container, a bulletin board, or any method of collecting written suggestions or questions. Be sure to have plenty of blank cards or sticky notes and pens available.

Supplies

Keep a supply of commonly used forms and literature on hand. These could include recruiting fliers, handbooks, leader guides, registration forms, etc.

Registration and Mailboxes

A roundtable team member or potential team member should be assigned to greet participants individually as they arrive, help them sign in at the registration table, give them a name tag, and get them involved in the gathering activity. Getting detailed contact information from attendees is important to following up and extending invitations to future roundtables. Pay particular attention to newcomers. Perhaps you can identify them with a special name tag. Explain the format of your roundtable, including the use of the "parking lot," and make them feel comfortable and welcomed.

While many roundtables distribute information electronically, there will always be paper last-minute updates that need to go out. There also needs to be a place to distribute items from the district and council, such as registrations, awards to be presented in a unit meeting, etc. A "mailbox" allows those items to be sorted to each unit. File folders with Unit Numbers in a crate works really well and allows for easy transport.

A wise unit commissioner attending roundtable can check those "mailboxes" during the meeting, and if no one from the unit has emptied the mailbox, the unit commissioner can visit the unit and review them with the leaders, turning that into a quality unit contact in commissioner tools.

GENERAL OPENING

(ALL SCOUTING PROGRAMS)

Welcome

A program-specific roundtable commissioner or assistant

district commissioner for roundtables calls the meeting to order and starts welcoming all participants to the meeting. Start on time. It is unfair to those who arrived on time to have to wait. Beginning with an enthusiastic greeting will set the tone for a fun evening of learning and fellowship.

Prayer

In keeping with the Scout's duty to God, include a nonsectarian prayer in the general opening session. As some people aren't comfortable praying in public, ensure success by asking a team member or participant in advance to offer the prayer. Begin with an appropriate introduction such as "prepare yourself for prayer as is your custom."

Opening Ceremony

Use a simple opening ceremony that leaders will be able to duplicate in their units. You may wish to delegate this opportunity to a particular unit or use participants if appropriate. Use the U.S. flag to emphasize citizenship, respect for the flag, and character development. Other options, such as reciting the Scout Oath, Baden-Powell words of wisdom, celebrating the birthday of Scouting, or demonstrating alternate flag ceremonies, will provide ideas that unit leaders can use to liven up their unit programs.

Introductions and Announcements

Although you have already welcomed those in attendance, extend a special welcome to newcomers. You may wish to present them with special recognition or a certificate. Make them feel welcome so they'll bring additional unit leaders with them to the next roundtable.

Be sure to explain the flow of the evening's activities. Point out the various program groups and where they will be gathering. Take care of housekeeping items such as the location of restrooms and any policies specific to the building in which you are meeting. This is especially important for your newcomers—do not assume everyone already knows.

Next, the chairs or committee members responsible for upcoming events give **brief** promotional announcements. **(It is a commercial not an infomercial!)** Limit each announcement to a short introductory statement about the event and where more information can be found, such as fliers and websites. Something along the lines of "Hi I am here to promote "X" my flyer is (whatever color paper it is printed on) I will be in the back of the room if you would like more information after Roundtable".

Do not let announcements hijack the time and program needs of units! Keep them to a minute or less and emphasize that the fliers contain detailed information.

Big Rock Training Topic

The Big Rock topic is information relevant to all Scout leaders across BSA programs. It is important to include a Big Rock topic as part of each month's opening activity. Big Rocks are aimed at reminding unit leaders of basic information that helps them execute a better program. While a number of Big Rocks are provided in this guide, their use is flexible based on the needs of the council or district. If a topic that is not covered needs to be addressed, use the template provided at

the end of the Big Rock section to design a local Big Rock topic. Big Rocks from previous roundtable guides are archived on the [Roundtable Support](#) page, near the bottom of the page.

Commissioner's Minute

This is the chance for the assistant district commissioner for roundtable, or others as appropriate, to give a meaningful thought regarding a point of the Scout Law, or other significant and uplifting message. The Commissioner's Minute helps bring the general session to a close and transition to the program-specific breakouts. Explain that the next session will begin in a few minutes and be sure to point out the locations.

Scouts BSA LEADER BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Icebreaker

A brief exercise can help get people settled into the room and focused on the roundtable theme. It also provides a couple of minutes to ensure that everyone has made it to the breakout session and to start building excitement around the program topics.

Sample Ceremony/Skit

A sample ceremony or skit is presented to show leaders how Scouts BSA purposes and ideals can be symbolized in a variety of fun activities. When you have awards to be presented use the opportunity to hand them out using a ceremony. If some troops are noted for excellent ceremonies and skits, the roundtable commissioner might ask those leaders to perform one for the group. Be sure to involve as many participants as possible.

Tips for Troop Meetings

Unit leaders can always use a new idea or approach to keep troop meetings interesting, diverse, and exciting.

Roundtable is a great place to share these tips, whether they are pulled from training resources, shared among participants, collected from commissioner observations during unit visits or found in the "Tips for Troops" section of this guide

Many books and media resources developed by the BSA are listed throughout this guide. These resources may offer tips, or one or two of them could be introduced at this time. Explain how these materials can be obtained, and how they might help the units deliver a better program for Scouts. Often, leaders are looking for new resources but are simply unaware of where to find them.

Keep in mind that there are also many great books, periodicals, and other media tools produced by knowledgeable groups and experts outside the BSA. Feel free to highlight these as well; but, remember to point out any BSA policies that may be in conflict with the materials referenced.

Scouts BSA Interest Topic

The interest topic is a feature designed to add variety to roundtable programming. Examples might include a training highlight, a review of an upcoming annual event, advancement information, or any of a number of topics

related to Scouts BSA issues.

Several interest topics are provided in this guide and can be used as appropriate, based on council or district priorities. The topics are written as suggested outlines for a discussion or presentation, and each may be customized if desired to fit the needs and interests of the local roundtable audience.

The interest topics include a number of recommended presentation styles designed to create more variety in how roundtable is presented. Varying the presentation style from month to month can encourage greater participation by units and help keep roundtable exciting.

Four basic presentation formats are used for the interest topics. Different formats can be used throughout the program year to create greater interaction and idea sharing among units. A good suggestion is to mix the topics in a way that provides a variety of roundtable formats and increases audience engagement.

- **Expert presentation** features a speaker, often someone with special training or from an outside group, who imparts knowledge to the audience.
- **Open forum** allows participants to share information or ideas, such as possible camping locations or program themes.
- **Directed discussion** blends a presentation and an open forum, as the presenter guides a conversation on the topic and interacts with the audience to achieve certain goals.
- **Roundtable fair or round-robin** is a multi-station event, such as a district program preview night, where participants move between various stations and topics.

Sometimes the interest topic itself and the participants' skill levels will suggest the style to use. For example, a back-packing interest topic directed toward leaders who are not experts might be best presented as a training session.

If the participants are mostly experienced back-packers, an open forum sharing ideas and trails may be more valuable to them.

No matter what presentation format you select, look for ways to help everyone actively engage in the roundtable instead of just being an audience. As in a troop meeting, a fun activity, some hands-on experience, and a good Q&A will create a more enjoyable event and enhance the learning opportunity.

Several topics are provided in this guide as outlines that can be adapted for each roundtable environment.

Councils or districts should use the included template to design local topics for additional program needs. Interest topics from previous roundtable guides are archived at www.scouting.org/scoutsources/Commissioners/roundtable.aspx.

Program Feature of the Month

Scouts are looking for an action-packed program full of fun activities. In this section, roundtable commissioners delve into various program features for ideas to help units deliver quality programs.

[Program Features for Troops, Teams, and Crews](#) (volumes 1, 2, and 3) provides units with complete monthly meeting plans, outing ideas, and resources. Additional features include recommendations for related advancement and awards, leadership applications, and references to other materials and web resources.

The council roundtable plan should help establish the month in which to present each feature based upon what is most appropriate to the local area. Councils and roundtable commissioners may also choose to come up with program ideas of their own to meet the needs of local units.

Ensure that each feature is presented at roundtable at least three to six months before that program will be used at the unit level. This gives the unit leaders time to gather resources, get training, and work with the youth leaders to present the program in an effective manner.

Consider reaching out to local experts to present this portion of the roundtable. Many subject matter experts, whether or not they have a Scouting background, are eager to share their knowledge of a particular activity.

Cultivating relationships with them will help in gaining community support for the Scouting program. Make sure to provide the experts with any BSA materials they may need in advance; for example, they should come to the roundtable knowing what the *Guide to Safe Scouting* says about their particular area of expertise.

Also, be sure to offer an appropriate thank you for their assistance. If possible, a gift of some sort that is personalized by the district can serve as an expression of gratitude to their time and effort on behalf of Scouting.

Open Forum (Q&A)

As time permits, roundtable personnel should answer questions posted on the "parking lot" or any other questions that have come up as a result of the roundtable discussions. For unique, unit-specific questions, ask for a way to get in touch with the individual after the meeting to provide the information needed.

Closing and Commissioner's Minute

This is done in each breakout group, so it is not necessary to reconvene all the Cub Scouting groups. The content should be thought-provoking and inspirational. It offers encouragement to the participants to use the skills they learned at the roundtable to provide a better program for their youth.

The Commissioner's Minute can serve as a model for the Scoutmaster's Minute at the end of their unit meetings.

Be sure to end the roundtable program on time as a courtesy to your attendees and presenters.

AFTER THE MEETING

Fellowship (Cracker Barrel)

Knowing that a healthy snack or refreshing beverage awaits may be just the incentive one needs to attend the roundtable. Sometimes simple is best. This fellowship time following the scheduled portion of the roundtable meeting is often a super

opportunity for Scouters to connect with each other. However, time constraints must be respected for those needing to clean up. Checking with the venue ahead of time that no food restrictions exist on use of the facility is critical. Scouters should feel free to leave at their convenience.

This is a good time to collect Getting to Know You surveys or Roundtable Program Evaluation forms. These completed forms may give you ideas for planning next month's program and help ensure you are addressing the needs of the leaders in your district.

Note: In some of the planning outlines, this function is slated for a different time, rather than the end of the meeting.

Team Meeting

At the close of each roundtable, conduct a short team session to evaluate the meeting, and review the plans for next month's meeting. Make sure everyone involved is ready, and ensure the availability of all necessary materials.

The roundtable commissioner and assistant roundtable commissioners should brainstorm and discuss ideas for a follow-up plan for units whose leaders are not attending roundtable. Read and review the Getting to Know You surveys and the Roundtable Program Evaluations. The key to new ideas that will pull in new units and maintain leaders' attendance may be found in these forms.

It is acceptable to perform this function another day to better serve the roundtable team as long as these after meeting functions take place.