

Tips for Troop Meetings

Troop meeting plan:

The BSA has developed a [Troop Meeting Plan](#) that lays out the major segments of a troop meeting. By using a troop meeting plan, troops can avoid unstructured meetings that leave Scout BSA members feeling like they didn't get anything by attending the meeting and didn't miss anything by staying home.

- The Scoutmaster may need to train his senior patrol leader (SPL) in the use of the troop meeting plan using the EDGE Method, and then have the SPL train the Patrol Leaders Council (PLC) in the use of the troop meeting plan.
- The SPL and PLC should complete a troop meeting plan for every meeting to prevent confusion over the order of activities and who leads them. The Scoutmaster should review the troop meeting plan with the SPL before the meeting.
- In an effort to improve planning in all aspects of Scouting, the BSA has released the [Scout Planning Worksheet](#), a new tool that Scout BSA members can use to plan patrol or troop activities and that may be helpful in planning troop meetings as well. The goal is to build project-planning practice that will benefit Scout BSA members in their Eagle projects, at school, and in life. The more often Scout BSA members use this planning tool the better they will become at planning.

Troop meeting resources:

The BSA has created several important resources that the PLC can use when planning troop meetings. When using these resources, the Scoutmaster should ensure that the Scout BSA members themselves lead the activities chosen for each troop meeting, to reinforce the ideal of Scout BSA member-led troops.

- [Troopleader.org](#) is filled with videos, action photos, useful information and practical ideas, to help make it easier for youth and adult troop leaders to present Scout BSA meetings that are fun with positive outcomes.
- [Programresources.org](#) is designed to serve as a planning tool for troop leaders. It provides games, activities and other resources that help make parts of the troop meeting more meaningful, engaging, and fun.
- [The 3 volume Program Features for Troops, Teams and Crews](#) contain troop meeting and outings plans for 48 Scout BSA-related topics. The PLC should be able to build several of these topics into the troop's annual plan and use the material in the Program Features to create troop meeting plans. An on-line

version, with videos for some Program Features can be found on the [troopleader.org](#) website.

Senior patrol leader involvement:

Adults should remember Baden-Powell's teaching that adults should never do for a boy what he can do for himself. The SPL should use a troop meeting plan worksheet to help him as a reminder of what will take place during the meeting.

- The SPL should be the person who brings unruly Scout BSA members back into order, not an adult, and should do so with the patrol leader.
- Adults should refrain from stepping in to run things if the SPL falters, and coach the SPL instead.
- When asked questions by boys other than the SPL, adults should urge the boys to ask their patrol leader or their SPL, depending on the question.

Patrol method in troop meetings:

Since the backbone of Scouts BSA is the patrol rather than the troop, all troop meetings should involve the boys operating as patrols as much as possible.

- Each part of the troop meeting plan should be conducted with boys clustered with their patrol mates.
- If older boys tend to abandon the rest of their patrol members to hang out with each other, the senior patrol leader and Scoutmaster need to assess whether those boys should be a patrol of their own, or reinforce to them the need to be active within their respective patrols as part of their "Scout spirit" obligation.
- If older Scout BSA members who are patrol leaders start abandoning their patrols to hang out with each other, the SPL and Scoutmaster should remind them of their duties to their patrol. The Scoutmaster also should have a Scoutmaster conference at which these patrol leaders individually are coached that tenure in their leadership position requires that they lead the patrol.

Troop meeting activities:

Scout BSA members often need to burn off extra energy at some point during the meeting. Activities and games that involve inter-patrol competition will reinforce the patrol method.

- Patrol competition activities involving Scout BSA skills will help younger Scout BSA members become proficient while reinforcing the same skills in older Scout BSA members who had learned them years ago.

- Time can be allotted during the troop meeting to learn and/or practice the Scout BSA skill before the activity.
- See the troop meeting activities section of the Troop Program Resources. Counsel the patrol leaders' council to select an activity from Scout BSA Skill Challenges that will put various Scout BSA skills into action, or to select one from Team Building Activities that will help patrol members work together as a patrol.

Every Scout BSA member with a purpose:

How often are meetings disrupted by Scout BSA members who seem bored or without a purpose? Part of the solution is the rigorous use of a troop meeting plan that doesn't leave time for Scout BSA members to "fool around." Another part of the solution is making sure every Scout BSA member has a role at every meeting.

- If an older Scout BSA member isn't learning a particular skill because he already knows it, he should be challenged to teach another Scout BSA member in his patrol and ensure that Scout BSA member becomes proficient in the skill.
- For troops that use the new-Scout BSA patrol method—with all first-year Scout BSA members in their own patrol—older boys from other patrols can be assigned to them as instructors.
- An instructor may be assigned to mentor a new Scout BSA member to First Class, or he may be assigned only to teach a few skills at which he excels.

Role of committee members at troop meetings:

In keeping with the premise that boys should lead troop meetings rather than the adults and that boys should be guided by the Scoutmaster and his assistants, what role exists for committee members at troop meetings? Boards of review, of course.

- Wise committee chairs and Scoutmasters will ensure that there are at least three committee members at every troop meeting to hold a board of review on the spot if a Scout BSA member has completed the requirements for his rank.
- Troops should consider making sure that all committee members are trained on that part of the Guide to Advancement, so that any of them can be part of a board of review when a Scout BSA member needs one.

Dead time:

Sometimes there are "open spaces" in meetings by accident or due to poor planning. Use of a well thought out troop meeting plan will identify potential "dead time" spots in advance and increase the PLC's awareness of them so the PLC can adjust the troop meeting plan to reduce the amount of dead time. These can be covered in the following ways:

- Have materials ready for a "hunker down" activity appropriate for indoor use; and, use the activity to fill in moments between meeting segments.
- Have materials ready for an indoor "hitching race" and use this activity for the same purpose.

Feed the troop:

If you have the resources, assign one of the troop camp cooks to cook a choice Dutch oven recipe. After that meeting's activity session and before the closing ceremony, serve up a taste for patrols to sample, along with a copy of the recipe.

Gathering time activity:

As boys gather for the troop meeting there should be something prepared for them to do to prevent "unexpected exuberance."

- Procure a supply of charred cloth, flint rock, and steel strikers, and provide opportunities to learn and practice igniting a tinder bundle during pre-ceremony gathering periods.
- Ensure that the PLC has a rewarding gathering activity prepared for each meeting.

Monthly patrol contest:

Assign the troop Scribe to keep track of patrol points in various categories (e.g., attendance, uniforming, responsiveness, spirit, ability to complete challenges). At the end of each month, give the winning patrol a pizza or other reward. Having the Scribe keep track of the points gives him something to do during the meeting and reinforces that the Scribe has real duties to the troop.

Troop practice:

This is a simple activity that can be done at any time during a meeting.

- Present the "Class A clap" (Class B and C, too) and feature it periodically at a meeting so the troop can perform it with finesse.
- Periodically practice some "silent Scout BSA signals" until the troop wide response time is awesome.

Ceremonies:

Provide the opportunity for patrols to come up with, practice, and present impressive opening or closing ceremonies to represent the troop.

Plan B activities:

Organize and have ready a repertoire of Plan B activities that may substitute for cancelled activities and require only a few materials to set up.

Assign duties to patrols:

The SPL and PLC should review the routine duties inherent in every troop meeting and assign them to

patrols on a rotating basis. A patrol may be assigned a specific duty for one week or an entire month, but each patrol should have a turn at each duty during the troop's program year. Examples include:

- **Service patrol:** Before the meeting starts, the service patrol for the week (or month) is responsible for arranging the room for the meeting, including the proper number of chairs for Scout BSA members to sit on, and doing so by patrol. At the end of the meeting, the service patrol should return chairs and other furnishings to their normal place.
- **Serving as flag detail:** A patrol is assigned to the flag ceremony for the week or month. Don't forget the closing flag ceremony, which should serve as the official end of the meeting. The SPL should plan time at the end of the meeting, ideally just after the Scoutmaster minute, for the closing flag ceremony.
- **Leading games:** A patrol is assigned to choose and lead a game. The game could be related to the monthly outing; or, could be just for fun. The goal is two-fold: reinforcing the patrol method by having the patrol work together to choose and lead a game; and, introducing new games to the troop members. Check out the [Game Section](#) of troopresource.org

Post-meeting review with PLC:

At the end of each troop meeting, the SPL, PLC should have

a brief, five-to-10-minute meeting to review the next meeting, make sure patrol assignments are understood, and review aspects of the just-ended meeting that should be improved at the next meeting. This review should be led by the SPL.

Scoutmaster conferences:

By allowing the Scout BSA members to conduct their meeting, the Scoutmaster should have time at every meeting to conduct Scoutmaster conferences for rank advancement or to have a discussion with a Scout BSA member who seems to need coaching.

- After the opening session, the SPL could ask, "Who needs a Scoutmaster conference for rank advancement? Raise your hands." The Scoutmaster could make note and ask to speak with each of the boys during the meeting.
- If a youth leader is not performing his duties adequately, the Scoutmaster should have a brief conference (or two) with that Scout BSA member to review the position duties and provide coaching to the Scout BSA member. No Scout BSA member should be surprised at his Scoutmaster conference for rank advancement with the statement, "You haven't performed well enough in your leadership position so you can't advance."