

# Interest Topic: Derbies

Cub Scout Roundtable			
Time Allotted	Activity	Assigned to	Content
30–40 minutes	General session for all participants	Cub Scout roundtable team and participants	<p>Explain different types of derbies and competitions you can offer at a pack level. Discuss derby events offered at the district or council level.</p> <p>Have an example of a pinewood derby car, a raingutter regatta boat, and a space derby rocket. If possible, have a track, a rain gutter, and a rocket launcher on hand to demonstrate how each will work. Create a display or handout using examples of racing brackets and schedules from several pack sizes.</p> <p>Consider showing short videos of derbies.</p> <p>Guide a discussion with the packs on which derbies they do and how they conduct them. Exchange ideas for what works in one pack and might be the idea another pack needs. Discuss how racing derbies supplement the Cub Scout program and how to conduct a successful event. Share a list of packs that are willing to lend derby track or other equipment.</p> <p>Choose one of the activities in the Resources section that leaders could offer at their pack and/or den meetings leading up to a packwide derby.</p>
10 minutes	Q&A	Cub Scout roundtable team	Opportunity to answer any additional questions
5 minutes	Closing	Cub Scout roundtable team	Present the "Pinewood Derby Conclusion" closing.

**Takeaway:** Racing in a Cub Scout derby is great fun. Each Scout gets to design a racing vehicle, work with a parent or another adult to build it, and see it perform on race day. Win or lose, Scouts can take pride in having done their best. Participants learn craft skills, the rules of fair play, and good sportsmanship—things they will remember all their lives.

## GENERAL SESSION

**Why a derby?** Derbies are a great way for Cub Scouts to create a vehicle and race against their peers. They help the Scouts show creativity, learn new skills, and show they can “take the high road” when things don’t go their way. Derbies are a great tradition for packs to revisit each year. But where do you start?

### Encourage Scouts to build their own vehicle.

Whether building a pinewood derby car, a regatta boat, or a space derby rocket, the task is a bonding experience for parent and Scout. The Cub Scout isn’t—and shouldn’t be—expected to do it all alone. But what about when an adult takes on a little too much of the work? Make the task age-appropriate and let the parent/guardian know what level of effort and skill their Cub Scout should be able to do. Lions and Tigers might need more of a helping hand designing and making while most Webelos Scouts know the science and the skills needed to make a race winner.

Check the rule book. Whether it’s cars, boats, or rockets, does your local council or district have special derby rules and regulations? If so, you should adopt those same rules for your pack’s derby. Following the council’s rule book makes your winners eligible for district- and council-level derbies. And it ensures a level race for all Scouts.

**Plan a workshop for building the vehicles.** How do you ensure the Scouts have a hand in making their car, boat, or rocket? What do you do for parents who don’t have a wood shop at home? Bring them all under one roof! Host a building workshop where parents and Scouts build their project together and adults bring tools to share. It’s fun, and it’s a great way for the less mechanically inclined to learn a thing or two. Some of the best workshops use the assembly line approach. Parents and Scouts go from station to station working on their project. When they’re done, they have a near-finished product ready for painting.

For more tips on planning one of these workshops, check out past articles in *Scouting* magazine.

**Hold side races for parents and other family members.** Try as you might to encourage a Scout-built project, there are still some ultra-competitive adults out there. Harness that competitiveness into a race just for parents (and/or siblings). Some packs call these “outlaw races.” In other packs, the outlaw name is reserved for Scout-built cars that don’t meet the regular race requirements.

In some packs, these parents-only races are used as pack fundraisers. The entry fee—maybe \$5 a race—goes into a pot where the winners get a nice prize and the pack keeps the rest to help offset pack expenses. In other words, everyone wins.

**Schedule wisely.** Create a tournament bracket that gives each Scout several races, even if they lose them all. Try ideas like double elimination, lane rotation, and other formats. Scheduling is a decision for you and other Scouters, but you have several options at your disposal. Elimination-style races, where the first racer across the finish line wins, are the most exciting for live viewers. But these may favor the racers assigned to “fast lanes”—flaws in some tracks or rain gutters where one lane is faster than others. Round-robin formats, where every car or boat races in every lane, are great for those with high-tech timing equipment to determine the first through fourth place winners. Otherwise, it’s hard to tell who’s winning that way. The size of your pack may also influence how you set up your racing schedule. Refer to previous years to find a system that works best for your unit.

**Stagger arrival times.** If you know the Webelos Scout race won’t start until 5 p.m., do the Webelos Scouts and their parents really need to show up at 3:30 with everyone else? Give parents specific, staggered arrival times to minimize waiting around. Also, think about whether the order of races should go from older to younger, or younger to older. Think about how long you can keep a Tiger occupied while they wait versus a Webelos Scout. This comes in handy when determining if you will award trophies per rank. You could even hold several awards ceremonies—one after each division is finished—so that families can leave when their Scout’s racing category has concluded. Finally, do you want to plan a race where a winner takes all—where a Tiger might beat a Webelos Scout?

**Giving siblings plenty to do.** Families who have other children often bring siblings to the event. To avoid chaos, it’s best to have something to help keep the siblings occupied. Set out a big container of Legos for the siblings of racers to enjoy during the derby. Distribute racing-themed coloring pages and colored pencils. Set up a game room with board games or maybe a TV with a video game system. Invite someone to run a face-painting station or make balloon animals. Whatever you do, be sure to offer something to keep those non-racers occupied.

**Make an event out of it.** A maximum of four Scouts will be racing at any one time. So what will Scouts and parents do

between races? They can cheer on their fellow Scouts. They can purchase food at a concession stand operated, perhaps, by a local Scout troop or Venturing crew. They can race their cars on a designated secondary track for practice and fun. If your event does not allow the car or boat to be touched once checked in, a secondary track could be used to allow participants who are not advancing to another round to continue the fun.

**Make memories, take pictures.** A derby will be over in a couple of hours, but the memories will last forever. That’s especially true if you take official race day photos of Scouts and their families. First, create a fun backdrop. It should include your pack flag, some racing imagery, and the current year. Next, assign a volunteer to take the photos of the Cub Scouts with their racers and parents. You could even do close-ups of each Scout’s racer. You can make the photos available on a website like Flickr for parents to download and post to Facebook for all the world to see. However, be mindful of the BSA guidelines regarding social media, posted at [www.scouting.org/Home/Marketing/Resources/SocialMedia.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/Home/Marketing/Resources/SocialMedia.aspx).

**Judges/Officials.** Find a racetrack judge from outside the pack. Ask someone from the Chartered Partner, the school principal, local Scoutmaster or someone from the Order of the Arrow.

## RESOURCES

Cub Scout Derbies: [www.scouting.org/CubScouts/Activities/Adults/derbies.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/CubScouts/Activities/Adults/derbies.aspx)

*Cub Scout Grand Prix Pinewood Derby Guidebook*, No. 33721

### Clothespin Racer Neckerchief Slide

- Slide Materials
- Spring-type clothes pins
- PVC pipe cut into 1/8-inch lengths, or chenille stems; if using PVC pipe, 3/4-inch diameter pipe works well
- Small black beads (smaller than the normal bead size)
- Markers
- Hot glue gun

### Directions

- Take apart the spring-type clothespin.
- If using a chenille stem, fold it in half and insert it between the two halves, where the spring was. Both ends of the chenille stem should be equal length and should come out of the back side of the car. No chenille stem should show on the front side of the car. Glue the stem in place. Glue the fat sides of the clothes pin together. The stem can be wound around the neckerchief to form a slide.
- Use small black beads as the wheels and glue them on one side of the car, toward front and back.
- Glue on a colored round bead for a helmeted driver’s head.

- If using the PVC pipe instead of the chenille stem, attach the ring on the back of the car to form the neckerchief slide.
- Use markers to decorate the car.

## Pinewood Derby Racing Song

*Tune: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"*

Take me out to the pinewood,  
Take me out to the crowd.  
Buy me some graphite and a sanding block,  
I don't care if I ever get back.

We will root, root, root for my racer.  
If I don't win, you can say  
That I cut, sanded, and designed it myself  
in the Cub Scout way!

B'gosh, they're starting the race now.  
I see my friend's in the heat.  
They're standing there biting their fingernails,  
But I am sure that they'll never be beat!

For, we'll root, root, root for my den mate.  
If they don't win, we can say  
That they cut, sanded, and designed it themselves  
In the Cub Scout way!

The Scouts have declared a winner.  
And I am proud to say  
My racer, it got to the end of the track.  
And my den leader let me bring it back

For a second heat in consolation  
Was my decision today.  
But I cut, sanded, and designed it myself  
in the Cub Scout way!

## Race Day Jokes

**Scout #1:** What words would you write on an old jalopy's headstone?

**Scout #2:** Rust in peace.

**Scout #1:** Did you hear about the wooden car with the wooden wheels and the wooden engine?

**Scout #2:** No, I didn't. What happened?

**Scout #1:** It wooden go.

**Scout #1:** I've come to buy a car but I don't remember the name. It starts with a "T."

**Scout #2:** Sorry we don't have any cars that run on tea. All our cars run on gasoline.

**Scout #1:** Here are the keys to my magic car.

**Scout #2:** Is it really magic?

**Scout #1:** Yes, one speeding ticket and it will disappear.

**Scout #1:** This is a ticket for speeding.

**Scout #2:** Great! When do I get to use it?

**Scout #1:** What kind of shot do you give a sick car?

**Scout #2:** A fuel injection.

## Closing: Pinewood Derby Conclusion

**Cubmaster:** At the conclusion of our pinewood derby, I would like to point out that we were all winners here tonight.

- Parents have more respect for their Scout, whether a humble winner or a graceful loser.
- Parents were proud of their Scout, whether they gave a hug of congratulations or comfort.
- The Scouts gained a better knowledge of competition: how to win, how to lose, how to be happy for a friend who is taking home the trophy that we might have wanted for ourselves.
- The leaders, in the pride they feel knowing that all of their Scouts have done their best.
- Building the car helped bring parent and Scout closer together.

Yes, there are only winners here tonight. Thank you all for helping to make the pack go and the Cub Scouts grow. Good night, and congratulations to all of us winners!