

Which Role in a Troop Is Best for YOU?

by Matthew Rusten

In a world of ever-increasing soccer practices, swim meets, and back-to-school nights, becoming an adult Scouter may seem terrifying. Will Scouting consume your free weeknights and weekends until the end of time? Never fear! Regardless if you are brand-new to Scouting or have been your child's den leader for years, there's a role for you in a Scouts BSA troop.

Parent/guardians with limited availability often serve as merit badge counselors who teach Scouts about skills and career paths, all on a flexible schedule. The Scouts BSA program offers [over 135 merit badges](#), so you can probably find a topic that aligns with one of your areas of expertise, or maybe even with your professional skills. By helping Scouts explore different interests, you can inspire passions that can last a lifetime.

Don't worry – merit badge counselors don't always work alone. Counselors are typically registered at the district level, so you will join a community of experts who can offer tips and support. Leaders within your local unit might be willing to help, too.

Registering as a merit badge counselor can be a great way to learn about the Scouts BSA program with minimal time commitment. Keep in mind, though, that a merit badge counselor [is not eligible](#) to go on an overnight event with a troop without also registering separately as a leader, typically within the unit. Click [here](#) to find more information about how to become a merit badge counselor.

Other parent/guardians get active in Scouting by joining a troop committee. Troop committee members support the troop, but usually don't work with youth directly. Committee members also do not need to attend every troop meeting. Instead, they might coordinate specific events, such as Scouting for Food or summer camp, or serve in administrative positions such as treasurer, membership chair, or training chair.

Depending on the role, time commitments for committee members can be seasonal or year-round. Regardless, committee members rarely work alone – the committee works as a team to preserve the traditions and institutional memory of the troop. A background in Scouting can help you thrive as a committee member, of course, but check out [these resources](#) for a quick overview of the training that's available. Your troop's committee chair would be glad to help you get started, too.

Finally, the most visible, demanding, and rewarding position for new parent/guardians is the assistant Scoutmaster, or ASM. ASMs mentor Scouts directly and guide them through rank advancement, skills practice, and other elements of the Scouting program. Many troops will assign ASMs to specific groups of Scouts, such as new Scouts to the Troop or older Scouts to keep them retained in the program, depending on the ASM's skills, demeanor, and experience.

Assistant Scoutmasters know the Scouting program and serve as role models for living by the Scout Oath and Law. Their energy and attitude set youth leaders up for success and encourage them to learn and grow. Click [here](#) for more information about the role of assistant Scoutmaster.

If you are unsure about where you belong within a specific troop, you can talk to the Scoutmaster, Committee Chair, unit commissioner, or other parent/guardians – they'll find a spot that works best for you!

A thriving troop requires adult volunteers. The more parent/guardians who help with troop activities, the better the troop functions – and the better the troop functions, the better the Scouting experience for your child will be. The best troop meetings and most memorable campouts are not made possible solely by a few rockstar volunteers, but rather a community of parent/guardians all lending a little time. All Scouters, including you, can help Scouts flourish – become a Scouter today!

About Matthew Rusten

Matthew is an Eagle Scout from the National Capital Area Council. He currently studies architecture at the University of Virginia and gives cheerful service to the Order of the Arrow in Amangamek-Wipit Lodge #470.