

Roundtable Scouts BSA Breakout

Empowering Youth-Led Recruitment

The Scouts BSA program is built on being youth-led and youth-driven. Amazing things happen when we extend this philosophy to recruitment. When youth leaders take ownership of recruitment, it changes how they think about their troop's future. They start seeing themselves as responsible for building something that will last. Youth are far more likely to join—and stay—when invited by their peers rather than through adult-led recruitment efforts.



There are two approaches to recruitment:

1. Static recruitment relies on singular events like back to school nights.
2. Dynamic recruitment is continuous, intentional and happens through everyday interactions that produce results over time.

About 70% of potential members are 'Maybe Joiners' - they need a personal connection to make the decision. They might have never been invited, don't know much about Scouting, or have misconceptions about what we do. Our Scouts are the perfect ambassadors to reach them.

The **MAPS** model helps our Scouts become effective recruiters:

- Motivation to grow their troop based on a shared vision
- Audience awareness of who might join
- Product knowledge about Scouting benefits
- Skills to communicate effectively

Here are four ways to empower youth-led recruitment:

1. Ask powerful questions. Instead of telling Scouts what to do, ask: 'What would make your friends want to join? What activities would excite them?' Also ask: 'What is our unit's big dream? What could we accomplish with more active members?'
2. Provide structure and support. Dedicate one PLC meeting per quarter to recruitment planning. Help Scouts understand and communicate Scouting's unique values.
3. Recognize and incentivize. Create special recognition for Scouts who bring in new members.
4. Create leadership pathways. Encourage Scouts to serve as Den Chiefs and Troop Guides. These roles build leadership skills while creating natural bridges for Arrow of Light Scouts who cross over into the troop.



Discuss strategies for youth-led recruitment

Discuss strategies such as friend campouts, service, social media and friends lists to aid in recruitment.

- Ask troop leaders to share successful strategies troops have used with youth-led recruitment.

THE THREE SIMPLE STEPS

Dynamic recruitment can be simplified to three steps: Know It, Do It, and Study It.

- Know It - Understand Scouting values and set ambitious recruitment goals based on your unit's shared vision. Focus your energy on the 'Maybe Joiners' who need personal connection and information.
- Do It - Have every Scout personally invite five friends over a year and follow up with Normal Friend Activities. Remember that personal invitations are far more effective than any flyer or public event.
- Study It - review your results, get feedback, and refine your approach. Ask what's working and what's not. Make continuous improvement part of your culture.

Peer recruitment is just the beginning. The key to retention is active programming with frequent and varied opportunities. If a Scout misses an event, they shouldn't have to wait months for the next one.

New members should participate in a Scouting activity within a few weeks of joining. What sets Scouting apart is the youth-led structure. When Scouts have a voice in the program and can shape their own adventures, they develop ownership. That ownership creates community, and community drives retention.

By empowering your Scouts to recruit peers and shape their own adventures, you're not just building a troop—you're building future leaders. And that's what Scouting is all about!

Discussion Questions:

1. How can your troop structure give Scouts more ownership of both recruitment and program planning? What specific leadership roles or responsibilities could you create to empower youth in attracting and retaining their peers?
2. What's your troop's "big dream" that would motivate Scouts to grow their membership? How can you work with your youth leaders to develop a compelling vision that inspires them to invite friends and build a stronger troop?
3. Which "Normal Friend Activities" would appeal most to your Scouts' peer groups? How can you incorporate these into your annual program planning to create natural recruitment opportunities throughout the year?

Additional Resources:

- Scouts BSA Dynamic Recruitment Playbook: Available at [ScoutingWire.org](https://www.scoutingwire.org)
- BSA Brand Center: Access customizable marketing templates (login required)
- Digital Marketing Guide: Find search engine optimization tips, geofencing information, and social media best practices
- BeAScout.org: Update your unit pin to help families find your troop online"