

Troop 55

Handbook

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Troop 55 Mission Statement

Troop 55 is an open organization with exceptional resources dedicated to instilling in boys the values of the Scout Oath and Law. Our Mission is to help boys become responsible, compassionate, self-reliant citizens of God's world.

Sam Houston Area Council Mission Statement

"Leading Youth to Lifelong Values, Service and Achievement."

Boy Scouts of America Mission Statement

The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.

Table of Contents

Welcome / Some Useful Information	1
Getting Started	2
<i>Checklist of Forms to Fill Out.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Uniforms.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Scout Handbook</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Troop Meetings & Activities</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Staying in Touch.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Email; Web Page; Calendar</i>	<i>2</i>
Frequently-Asked Questions and Answers for New-Scout Parents.....	3
<i>Notes</i>	<i>4</i>
Campouts	5
<i>Recommended Personal Gear for Each Scout</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Basic Information.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Medication on Campouts</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Prohibited Items</i>	<i>6</i>
Campout Rules	7
Advancement	8
<i>Some Specific Things to Know About Advancement in Troop 55.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Suggested Advancement Timetable</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Advancement Requirements</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Scoutmaster Conference.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Board of Review</i>	<i>8</i>
Merit Badges.....	9
<i>How to Earn a Merit Badge</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Recommended Merit Badge Sequence</i>	<i>9</i>
Troop Leadership: The Patrol Method.....	10
<i>The Patrol</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Patrol Meetings.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Patrol Spirit.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Patrol Leaders and Assistant Patrol Leaders</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>The Senior Patrol Leader.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>The Patrol Leaders' Council.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Ten Tips for Being a Good Patrol Leader.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Your Duties as Patrol Leader.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Training for Patrol Leaders</i>	<i>11</i>
Adult Leadership in Troop 55.....	12
<i>Chartered Organization</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Troop Committee.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Subcommittees of the Troop Committee.....</i>	<i>12</i>

Adult Leader Training	13
<i>Troop 55 Adult Training Philosophy</i>	13
<i>Who Needs What Training?</i>	13
<i>Fast Start Training</i>	13
<i>New Leader Essentials</i>	13
<i>Leader Specific Training</i>	13
<i>Youth Protection Training</i>	13
<i>Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills</i>	13
<i>Other Skills Requiring Trained Adults</i>	13
<i>University of Scouting</i>	13
<i>Wood Badge</i>	13
Merit Badge Counselors	14
<i>Introduction</i>	14
<i>Requirements to Serve as a Counselor</i>	14
<i>Restrictions on Counseling Badges</i>	14
<i>Merit Badge Requirements</i>	14
<i>Working with Scouts</i>	14
<i>Scout Buddy System</i>	14
<i>Merit Badge Classes</i>	14
Boards of Review	15
<i>Basic Information</i>	15
<i>Conducting a Board of Review</i>	15
<i>Board of Review Deliberations</i>	15
<i>Paperwork: Reporting the Board's Decision</i>	15
<i>What if the Board Says "No"?</i>	15
Summer Camp	16
<i>Merit Badge Camps</i>	16
<i>High-Adventure Camps</i>	16
<i>Adult Participation in Summer Camps</i>	16
Troop Finances	16
<i>Dues</i>	16
<i>Campout Fees</i>	16
<i>Scholarships</i>	16
<i>Scout Fair Ticket Sales</i>	16
<i>Friends of Scouting</i>	16
<i>Expense Reimbursement</i>	16
Other Useful Information	17
<i>Courts of Honor</i>	17
<i>Order of the Arrow</i>	17
<i>Venture Crew 55</i>	17
<i>Service Projects</i>	17
<i>Useful Web Sites</i>	17
Scholarship Award Guidelines	18

Welcome / Some Useful Information

Welcome to Troop 55! We are pleased to have you take part in our long tradition of Scouting. Here are some useful facts.

Membership	About 200 Scouts (organized into small patrols; see below) and 60 registered adult leaders. We are one of the largest troops in the United States, chartered in 1934 and sponsored by St. John the Divine Episcopal Church since 1939. We are part of the Golden Arrow District in the BSA's Sam Houston Area Council.
Troop and adult meetings	<i>Troop meetings:</i> Tuesday nights at 7 pm in the Scout Room at St. John the Divine Episcopal Church (SJD), 2450 River Oaks Blvd, on Westheimer between Kirby and Buffalo Speedway. <i>Troop committee meetings</i> (all adults): First Thursday at 6:30 pm at SJD, usually in Room 208 in the administration building.
Camping during the school year	We camp each month during the school year, including campouts focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Canoeing / kayaking in the Hill Country, lakes, and the San Marcos and Guadalupe Rivers o Backpacking and climbing at Enchanted Rock, plus an in-town lock-in at Texas Rock Gym o Shooting – shotgun, BB gun, .22 rifle
Summer camp	In recent years we have camped and/or backpacked at Yellowstone National Park; the Grand Tetons; the Salmon River in Idaho; Chimayo, New Mexico; Yoho Valley, British Columbia; Philmont; El Rancho Cima on the Blanco River near San Marcos, Texas; Bob Marshall Wilderness in Montana; the Blue Ridge Mountain Scout Reservation near Roanoke, Virginia; and other exciting places.
Troop organization, patrol assignments	<i>Patrols:</i> The Troop is organized into patrols of 6 to 12 Scouts of similar age. Incoming Scouts from the same Webelos den often form their own new-Scout patrol. <i>Patrol Leadership:</i> Each patrol is headed by a Patrol Leader (PL), elected twice per year by the patrol, and overseen by one or two Patrol Assistant Scoutmasters (PASM's or "Possums"). <i>Troop Leadership:</i> The Troop is governed by the Patrol Leader Council (PLC or "Greenbar"). The PLC is chaired by the Senior Patrol Leader (SPL), who is elected twice per year by the Scouts. <i>Adult leadership</i> is provided by the Scoutmaster; Assistant Scoutmasters (ASMs); and the Troop Committee. The Scoutmaster and Troop Committee Chair are selected by the chartered organization, i.e., SJD. Subcommittees of the Troop Committee deal with program, equipment, finances, etc.
Selected leadership contact info	<i>Scoutmaster:</i> Ken Alexander, 713-226-6614 (office), kalexander@porterhedges.com . <i>Troop Committee Chair:</i> Gary Martin, 713-669-0584, martingd@msn.com .
Dues	\$100 per year per Scout (\$75 for second and subsequent Scouts in the same family). Includes Boys Life subscription, Sam Houston Area Council fees, and BSA insurance premium. No adult dues.
Other expenses	In addition to dues, each Scout should expect to pay approximately the following: <i>Uniform:</i> \$80. <i>Campouts:</i> \$12 per campout for food, plus \$5 to \$10 per campout for travel meals and spending money (special activities such as canoeing, boating and shooting will have additional costs). <i>Summer camp:</i> \$125-\$350 for the week of summer camp (excluding transportation).
Scholarships	See the Scholarship Award Guidelines in this Handbook.
Web site, calendar	Our Web site, www.troop55.org , contains a great deal of useful information, including our calendar, contact lists, Scout advancement status, and much more. (Scout and adult personal information is password-protected: The login ID is "scout" and the password is the current SPL's first name.)
Email	The Troop makes extensive use of email to plan and organize its activities. Go to the Troop's Web site to sign up for the Scout and adult mailing lists (scouts@email.troop55.org and goats@email.troop55.org).
Adult involvement	We need YOU! The "official" adult leaders can't do it all for a Troop our size; active parents are the key to our success. <i>We train newcomers, and we work hard to be friendly and supportive. We have both "outdoor" and "indoor" jobs with which you can help.</i> We guarantee a great time!

Getting Started

Checklist of Forms to Fill Out

- BSA Scout registration form – this is a brownish, multi-copy, half-page sized form. These forms are stored in the filing cabinet in the Troop’s closet at St. John the Divine; ask the Scoutmaster or committee chair.
- Health form – required for insurance and safety purposes for, each Scout (and each adult on extended trips). A Class 1 form can be used initially and does not need a doctor’s signature. A Class 3 form is needed prior to summer camp and does require a doctor’s signature. The Class 3 form is good for 12 months. These forms are available at the Troop’s Web site.
- Consent to Treat form and a Waiver of Liability form – required by the Troop; available at the Troop’s Web site. This form must be signed by the parent or guardian.

The above forms must be current and on file with the Troop before the Scout attends any campout, Scout camp or activity.

- Driver information – BSA rules require that each adult driving to a campout provide driver’s license number, make and model of car (including number of seat belts), and insurance coverage.
- BSA adult-leader registration form – this is a bluish, multi-copy, full-page form. These forms are stored in the filing cabinet in the Troop’s closet at St. John the Divine; ask the Scoutmaster or committee chair.
- Adult job sign-up forms

Please assist the Troop by completing and returning all required forms promptly!

Uniforms

Each Scout is expected to wear the appropriate Scout uniform to every Scout function. Uniforms can be purchased at the Scout Shop at the southeast corner of Loop 610 and T.C. Jester, 2225 N Loop W, Houston, Texas 77008-1311. A Troop 55 neckerchief is given once to each Scout; each additional neckerchief costs \$20.00.

EVENT	REQUIRED UNIFORM
Troop meetings	Scout uniform shirt
Travel to/from campouts	Same as Troop meetings (do not bring neckerchief)
Travel to/from summer camp	Full “Class A” uniform, including T-55 neckerchief, but do not bring merit badge sash
Boards of review Courts of Honor Scout Sunday	Full “Class A” uniform, including Scout uniform shirt, pants, socks, belt, neckerchief with slide, and (if applicable) merit badge sash

Scout Handbook

The Troop provides each new Scout with a Boy Scout Handbook; if lost, a replacement must be purchased from the Scout Shop at the Scout’s expense. A Scout’s advancement is recorded in the pages at the back of the Scout Handbook. A Scout is responsible for asking the Scoutmaster or his assistants to sign his handbook as soon as he completes any requirement. Each Scout should safeguard his Handbook by clearly marking his name on the outside and protecting it from “the elements” (e.g., with a cover that can be purchased from the Scout Shop).

Troop Meetings & Activities

Regular attendance at Troop meetings and activities is required for advancement. Scouts should let their Patrol Leaders know when they will be unable to attend a meeting or activity. Scouts who miss meetings are responsible for obtaining any information they may have missed.

Scouts sit by patrol at Troop meetings. The Scout sign is used to call for order, quiet, and attention, and should be observed by both Scouts and adults.

Adults who are not assigned as Patrol Assistant Scoutmasters (PASMs) are encouraged to stay out of the Troop meeting per se and instead to mingle with the adults. This helps the Scouts develop more confidence in running their own meetings. (For youth-protection purposes, however, any Scout’s parent may observe any Troop meeting at any time.) Any PASM or other adult who sits in on a Troop meeting should take a seat in the back of the room – don’t stand or walk around in the room – and remain as quiet as possible.

Staying in Touch

Each Scout is expected to keep in touch by telephone or email with his Patrol Leader. The Patrol Leader should know whether the Scout is coming to meetings, going on a campout or participating in one of the other activities. Likewise, the Patrol Leader is a good source of information.

Email; Web Page; Calendar

To a great extent, Troop 55 runs on email. You should sign up as soon as possible for the appropriate email lists (Scout and adult) at the Troop’s Web site.

The Troop’s Web page, www.troop55.org, contains the Troop’s calendar as well as information about advancement status and upcoming events, contact lists, announcements, driving directions, copies of forms, useful links, and fun. Calendar dates, times and locations for Troop meetings and activities change from time-to-time, so be sure to check updates, which also are distributed at meetings or via email announcements.

Frequently-Asked Questions and Answers for New-Scout Parents

[Bracketed notes refer to additional materials listed at the end of this document.]

1. What are my son's obligations as a Boy Scout? As a Boy Scout, your son should:

- Obey the Scout Oath and Law. (If you don't know what that means, ask your son!)
- Come to the meetings, in uniform, as often as possible.
- Participate in Troop and patrol activities (the Troop's calendar is available at www.troop55.org).
- Work on advancement and merit badges – Scouting is self-paced, at age appropriate levels.

2. How can I help my son? You can:

- Support your Scout.
- Offer to lend a hand with the indoor- and/or outdoor adult work that's necessary to keep the Troop running.
- Come to the monthly Troop Committee meetings.
- Sign up to be a merit badge counselor for an area you're interested in – you don't have to be an expert, merely willing to help the boys teach themselves.
- Take the BSA's courses for New Leader Essentials, Youth Protection Training, Outdoor Skills, and Assistant Scoutmaster training.
- Give your Scout some room to make mistakes (except if there's an unsafe situation). Let his Patrol Assistant Scoutmasters (PASM's) decide if more coaching is needed – and then let them do the coaching.
- Recognize that we strive for a boy-run Troop. If you think that the Scouts aren't running things the way they should be, feel free to say something, but (except in an unsafe situation) *say it to the Scoutmaster or PASM.*

3. Can my son be in the same patrol as his buddies?

More than likely, but that's determined by the Scoutmaster on a case-by-case basis. Scouts often change patrols.

4. Who will lead my son's patrol? Each patrol is led by one of its members, the Patrol Leader (PL), who is elected for a six-month term by his patrol-mates. The Patrol Leader appoints an Assistant Patrol Leader (APL). The PL and APL are coached by two designated older-Scout Troop Guides and two designated adult-leader Patrol Assistant Scoutmasters (PASM's), who are appointed by the Scoutmaster.

5. Who runs the Troop? We strive to have the Troop run as much as possible by the Patrol Leaders Council, which is headed by the Senior Patrol Leader (who is elected by the Scouts). See pages 9-10 of the Troop Handbook [a]. The

Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters provide adult supervision. The Scoutmaster is appointed by the chartered organization (St. John the Divine); Assistant Scoutmasters are appointed by the Scoutmaster with the approval of the Troop Committee chair and the chartered organization.

6. What is the role of the Troop Committee? The Troop Committee is much like a board of directors. The Troop Committee chair, who is appointed by the chartered organization, serves as something like a non-executive chairman/woman of the board. All members of the Troop Committee must be approved by the chartered organization (St. John the Divine). All parents are encouraged to attend Troop-committee meetings.

7. How much are dues? Annual dues are \$100 per Scout (\$75 per Scout for the second and subsequent Scouts in the same family). Scholarships are available; contact your son's PASM, the Scoutmaster, or the Troop Committee chair for more details.

8. What does the Troop provide to new members? We provide a Troop 55 neckerchief and a Scout Handbook. All other items are the responsibility of the Scout and his parents.

9. Does my son have to attend all the weekly Troop meetings? No, but more is better -- Scouts who miss a lot of meetings also miss out on the fun; they start falling behind their peers in skill development; and eventually they often drift away from Scouting entirely.

10. What should my Scout do when he has a schedule conflict? He should advise his Patrol Leader of the schedule conflict so that the Patrol Leader can advise the PASM.

11. How often does the Troop go on campouts? Generally once a month during the school year, with occasional special campouts such as the new-Scout campout.

12. What camping equipment will my son need? There's an equipment list on page 5 of the Troop Handbook. [a]

13. How will my Scout get to campouts? If a campout is within an hour or so of Houston, we generally car-pool, with each Scout making arrangements for his own ride. For farther-away campouts, we often charter a bus.

14. Do I have to go on the campouts with my son? Not at all. But if you're willing to pitch in and to follow the Troop's campout rules – see page 6 of the Troop Hand-

book [a] – you’re more than welcome to come along. Try it; you might have what it takes to be an Assistant Scoutmaster!

15. What do I do when my Scout needs help? Quietly let his PASM or Troop Guide know. *Please* resist the natural parental instinct to “make it better” for your son (unless it’s an unsafe situation). Scouting is designed to allow boys to learn by doing for themselves, and to provide them with a safe, recoverable place to foul up.

16. My Scout has special needs. Whom do I talk to? Make sure that the Scoutmaster and your Scout’s PASM are made aware of your son’s special needs. Rest assured that your son will not be the only one in the Troop having special needs.

17. Does my son have to go to summer camp? No, but it's highly encouraged – Scouts have fun, earn advancement and merit badges, and literally grow up at summer camp. In terms of advancement, a week of summer camp is worth a year of other Troop activities.

18. Can I go to summer camp, too? You bet – we welcome adults who are willing to go to summer camp as Assistant Scoutmasters. To do so, you will have to take the Assistant Scoutmaster training courses as well as Youth Protection Training.

19. How will my son advance? By completing the requirements for the applicable rank (see the Scout Handbook for details), and then satisfactorily completing a Scoutmaster conference and a board of review, in that order. See pages 7 and 8 of the Troop Handbook for more details [a].

20. How hard are the merit badges? That depends on the merit badge and the age and experience of the Scout. Backpacking and Environmental Science are pretty challenging. The Basketry badge is pretty easy. The requirements for each merit badge are listed on the Web. [b]

21. What merit badges should my Scout work on? See page 8 of the Troop Handbook [a] for the Troop’s recommendations as to which merit badges are age-appropriate, which are best taken at summer camp, and so on. The Troop offers numerous scheduled merit badge classes each semester, both for Eagle-required badges and for "fun" badges. *Sign up to be one of our merit badge counselors!*

22. Who keeps track of my son’s advancement, merit badges, etc.? When a Scout completes a requirement for rank advancement or a merit badge, it’s his responsibility to make sure that his book (or merit-badge card) is signed off by his PASM (or merit-badge counselor). When a Scout advances to the next rank or completes a merit badge, the

Troop’s Advancement Chair records that in our electronic database. If a Scout completes a “partial” on a merit badge, that too gets recorded in our database. But to repeat, it is the Scout’s responsibility to make sure this happens.

23. How long does it take for a new Scout to become an Eagle Scout? Each Scout advances at his own pace; most Troop 55 Eagle Scouts are between 15 and 17 years old when they reach Eagle. (Note that, per national BSA policy, a Scout must complete all Eagle requirements *before* his 18th birthday.) If a Scout participates regularly in the Troop’s activities and takes reasonable advantage of the advancement and merit badge opportunities that are offered, then he should have no trouble making Eagle in 9th or 10th grade — if that’s what he wants to do.

24. How do I get trained as an adult leader? See page 12 of the Troop Handbook [a] and on www.troop55.org for more information about adult-leader training. We always need more trained adult leaders who can help teach outdoor- and other skills.

25. Where can I get uniform items and other Scouting items? At the Scout Shop, a big new building on the southeast corner of the North Loop (inside the loop) and East T.C. Jester. The building has a green roof.

26. Where do all those patches go? The BSA’s *Official Guide to Placement of Insignia* is available on the Web. [c]

27. How do I keep my son interested? Experience shows that, the more involved a Scout’s parent is in the adult leadership of the Troop, the more likely the Scout is to remain in Scouting and someday to make Eagle Scout.

28. Where do I get info when I forget all this stuff? Look in the Troop Handbook, [a] or ask the Scoutmaster or any PASM.

Notes

[a] The Troop Handbook can be found at:

<http://www.troop55.org/documents/documents.htm>.

[b] See <http://www.meritbadge.com/bsa/mb/index.htm>.

[c] See <http://www.scoutstuff.org/misc/isheets/34283.pdf>.

Campouts

Recommended Personal Gear for Scouts & Adults

Copy this page and use it as a checklist for each campout.

- Scout uniform (at least the shirt; wear it to and from the campout, but best not to bring the Troop neckerchief)
- Sleeping bag (should be sufficient for occasional below-freezing temperatures)
- Ground pad for sleeping bag, or inflatable Thermarest®
- Backpack (preferred) or duffel bag
- Tent (no larger than 2- or 3-man size). May be shared, but only with a Scout in the same patrol. *Scouts do not tent with adults, including their parents.*
- Groundcloth for tent
- Water bottle(s) or platypus-type water sack with drinking tube (sized to carry a minimum of 2 liters of water)
- Reusable cup, plate/bowl, knife, fork and spoon – the Troop does not use paper plates, plastic utensils, etc., except on rare occasions
- Folding knife (up to 4" blade – *no sheath knives*)
- Sturdy rain jacket and pants (ponchos do not provide sufficient protection, especially in wet winter weather)
- Small 2 AAA battery head lamp (preferred) or flashlight (head lamps are handy for hands-free work in camp)
- Waterproof or water resistant boots (not typical athletic shoes or sneakers)
- Scout Handbook, pen, notebook
- Small towel, toiletries (soap, toothbrush, non-aerosol insect repellent and sunscreen)
- All synthetic or wool hiking socks *
- Synthetic t-shirts or shirts *
- Synthetic fleece jacket or pullover *
- Synthetic pants, either fleece or nylon, with pockets *
- Synthetic walking shorts with good pockets *
- A warm hat (not just a baseball cap) that will shed water
- Extra underwear
- Swim trunks

** Parents please note:* Cotton clothes are a very poor choice for camping, as cotton is bulky, cold and slow to dry when wet. When possible, one or two light layers, made of quick-drying synthetic materials, such as Supplex®, should be used. Polartec®, or a similar synthetic fleece, is excellent for layering and remains warm even when wet. More information on gear is available at Troop meetings and at www.troop55.org.

Basic Information

The Troop camps once per month from September through May (in addition to summer camps). Each campout is organized around that month's program theme, e.g., canoeing, shooting, climbing, pioneering, etc.

Transportation: We usually drive to campouts that are one to two hours away; for longer trips such as Enchanted Rock, we often charter a bus. *Adult drivers are strongly encouraged to take as many Scouts with them as possible* (always observing the two-deep rule for youth protection). The Troop trailer is pulled by an adult driver.

Food: Both Scouts and adults (the "Old Goat Patrol") cook by patrols. Each patrol's designated grubmaster for the campout is responsible for planning the weekend menu, buying food, and supervising the cooking.

Jobs: Everyone works at a campout. Each patrol has a duty roster where jobs are assigned.

Schedule: The basic schedule for campouts is as follows:

Friday night: Arrive at the campsite, set up camp, have a snack ("cracker barrel"). *Saturday:* Breakfast; morning activities; lunch; afternoon activities; free time / advancement work; dinner; campfire. *Sunday:* Breakfast; chapel service; break camp; clean up patrol equipment; inspection and stowage of patrol equipment; clean sweep of the campsite; depart for home.

Equipment: Troop 55 provides shared patrol gear, including lanterns, stoves and cooking equipment, for each patrol. Each Scout is responsible for his personal gear; see the checklist at left on this page. Scouts should strive to bring the minimum gear necessary, and to pack it so that all gear can be carried by the Scout to his patrol's campsite in a single trip. The Boy Scout Handbook has helpful information on camping and camping gear.

Medication on Campouts

If a Scout is taking medication during a campout, the Scout's parent should advise the Health and Safety Officer for the campout if the parent wishes an adult at the campout to supervise this.

Prohibited Items

The following items are prohibited on campouts and at meetings unless specifically authorized by the Scoutmaster:

- × Fireworks or explosives of any kind
- × Stoves
- × Liquid-fuel lanterns, or other liquid fuels of any kind
- × Cigarette lighters
- × Aerosol cans (of any kind)
- × Sheath knives (of any kind or length)
- × Folding knives with blade longer than four inches
- × Radios, televisions, video games, MP3 or CD players, or electronic games (such as Walkmans, Gameboys, etc.)
- × Tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs
- × Firearms or ammunition of any kind (including BB guns)
- × Slingshots, nunchuks, clubs, spears, etc.
- × Hatchets or axes
- × Glass bottles

Campout Rules

The following rules apply to all Scouts and adults regardless whether the Scout and/or his parents have signed them below.

The Scout Oath and Scout Law govern everyone in camp, including both Scouts and adults, at all times.

Uniform requirements: Scout and adult leaders will wear their uniform shirt to and from the campout and at chapel on Sunday. The uniform pants, belt & scout socks are optional.

Camping is by patrols: At campouts, patrol members camp together in the location designated for their patrol. Sharing of tents by Scouts within a patrol is encouraged. *Adults do not share tents with Scouts, including their own sons, and generally avoid the area of their own son's patrol.* Adults (the "[Old] Goat Patrol") ordinarily will camp in their own designated campsite. On some occasions, two to four adults will be assigned to camp with each Scout patrol, but not with the patrol of the adult's own son.

Stay out of other patrols' areas: Scouts should request permission before entering another patrol's campsite. Adults should request permission before entering any Scout patrol site. Adults should discourage Scouts from being in the Goat area unless they have a specific need to be there.

Hands off: Don't touch someone else's equipment, tent, or belongings, unless you have the owner's prior permission.

Everyone works: Each Patrol Leader designates individual Scouts to be in charge of planning patrol menus, collecting money, arranging transportation, preparing equipment, buying food ("grubmaster"), cooking and clean up. Every patrol, including the Goats, should have a duty roster. All Scouts and adults are expected to do their share of patrol duties in accordance with the duty roster.

Keep the campsite squared away: All Scouts and adults are to maintain their tents and gear (both personal gear and patrol- and troop gear) in a clean and neat condition on an on-going basis. The entire Troop assembles for a "clean sweep" of the camping area at the end of each campout.

Fire safety: Scouts may build and light ground fires (cooking and campfires) only *when* and *where* authorized by the Scoutmaster, Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster, or the campmaster. No unauthorized fires are permitted. Fire safety rules will be strictly enforced. *A fire must never be left unattended.*

No flames in or near tents. No fires or open flames (including stoves, lanterns or propane bottles) are allowed in or near tents.

No liquid fuels. The use of liquid fuels by Scouts or Goats for starting any type of fire is *prohibited*. *Exception:* If the Scoutmaster has previously authorized the use of backpacking stoves at a campout, liquid fuel will be dispensed and re-collected by the quartermaster (or his/her designee) at the campout. No Scout or Goat (except the quartermaster or his designee) shall travel to or from a campout with liquid fuel in a backpacking stove tank.

The buddy system. The buddy system is very simple: Never leave your buddy nor let him leave you. (If the buddy system is good enough for Navy SEALs, it's good enough for us.) The buddy system is in force (a) for all water activities;

(b) when outside immediate camp area; or (c) if separating from the main group when traveling. If you get caught without your buddy at a "buddy check," there will be consequences (for example, if you are swimming, both of you will have to get out of the water for awhile).

Water-safety rules. Scouts and Goats will follow Safety Afloat and Safe Swim Defense procedures and policies at all times for all water activities.

Lights out: All Scouts will be inside their tents at 11 pm (or otherwise at the Scoutmaster's discretion). Lights will be out and talking will stop by 11:30 pm. No Scout should leave his tent (except for brief trips to the latrine or to report illness or other emergency) until reveille the next morning.

No fighting, hazing, harassment, or excessive roughhousing: There will be no hazing or harassing (physical or verbal) of any kind. Fighting, hitting, wrestling, or rough horseplay are not permitted. A Scout will not put himself or another Scout in physical danger.

No early departures unless excused: Scouts are strongly encouraged to attend the entire campout. *Scouts may not leave the immediate camp area without the express permission of the Scoutmaster or campmaster, and must check out with the campmaster just before departure.* Unless a Scout has an urgent need to leave early, and has been excused by the SPL and Scoutmaster, all Scouts are expected to remain in camp until dismissed by their Patrol Leader after the Troop's "clean sweep" of the campsite just prior to departure.

No alcoholic beverages (it's BSA policy) or illegal drugs (it's the law).

Tobacco use by adults on campouts is strongly discouraged (it's BSA policy). Tobacco use by Scouts is *prohibited* (it's the law).

No non-Scout siblings: Non-Scout siblings are not welcome on campouts. Their presence tends to detract from the program focus and undermine enforcement of campout rules.

Consequences: The consequences of failing to abide by the camp and Troop rules may include quiet time isolation, extra work detail, calls home, *being sent home*, or in severe cases being suspended or even expelled from the Troop. Parents may be required to travel to camp at their expense and take a Scout home who fails to abide by the Troop and camp rules. A warning system will be in effect for minor inappropriate behavior problems. Consequences will be assigned as warranted. The most severe consequences may be assigned directly without assignment of less-severe consequences first.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THESE RULES AND WILL ABIDE BY THEM:

Scout signature

Parent signature

Date signed

Date signed

Advancement

Adapted from <http://www.meritbadge.com/bsa/info/policy2.htm>, which is based on the BSA publication Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures, #33088B.

Some Specific Things to Know About Advancement in Troop 55

Scouting's advancement program is a *self-paced* program of early ranks (basic Scouting skills like first aid, camping and hiking), merit badges (specialized skills like canoeing, fishing and archery) and advanced ranks.

A Scout should follow these basic procedures for advancing in rank:

1. Meet the requirements for the advancement or award; have all required spaces in your Scout Handbook signed by the appropriate adult leader(s).
2. Make an appointment for a Scoutmaster conference (see below for details). *The Scout himself should do this, not the parent.*
3. Ask the Troop Committee Chair or Advancement Chair to schedule a board of review. *The Scout himself should do this, not the parent.*

Parents should familiarize themselves with the advancement program, but *it is essential that parents step back and allow their sons to experience and learn from the safe failures, recoveries, and successes of the advancement program.*

Each Scout should set a specific target date for a board of review for his next rank, then work backwards from that date to set target dates for completing the necessary requirements.

Scouts are responsible for keeping track of their own progress, setting their advancement goals, and designing their own course and pace. The adult leaders will encourage them, but success or failure is theirs to control. A Scout can check his advancement status through the postings on the Troop Web site, www.troop55.org, or by consulting with the Advancement Chair.

Suggested Advancement Timetable

Although the Boy Scout advancement program is self-paced, the following is Troop 55's suggested time frame for minimum time and experience for rank advancement.

- *First Class:* 9 to 12 months active; one summer camp.
- *Star:* 12-36 months active; two camps (summer camp or Junior Leader Training Camp)
- *Life:* 3+ years active; two camps (summer camp or Junior Leader Training Camp) and one high adventure camp

A Scout who regularly and actively participates in Troop 55 functions should be able to advance to First Class rank during his first 9 to 12 months in the Troop.

Advancement Requirements

The advancement program is designed to provide the Boy Scout with a chance to achieve the aims of Scouting. As a Scout advances, he is measured and grows in confidence and self-reliance.

When a badge and certificate are awarded to a Boy Scout to recognize that he has achieved a rank, they represent that the young man has:

- Been an active participant in his troop and patrol.
- Demonstrated living the Scout Oath (Promise) and Law in his daily life.
- Met the other requirements and/or earned the merit badges for the rank.
- Participated in a Scoutmaster conference.
- Satisfactorily appeared before a board of review.

In the advanced ranks (Star, Life, and Eagle), the badge represents that the young man has also:

- Served in a position of responsibility in the troop.
- Performed service to others.

Scoutmaster Conference

In Troop 55, a Scout seeking to advance to Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, or First Class should obtain his Scoutmaster's conference from the Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster assigned to his patrol.

A Scout seeking to advance to Star, Life, or Eagle should first review his preparation with his Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster, and then seek a conference with the Scoutmaster or an Assistant Scoutmaster specifically designated for this purpose.

Board of Review

After a Scout has completed a Scoutmaster conference, he will appear before a board of review (BOR), comprising three to six Troop Committee members, for final approval of his advancement. Scouts are responsible for contacting the Troop Committee Chair or Advancement Chair to schedule a board of review. (See also the separate section of this Handbook concerning boards of review.)

Merit Badges

Adapted from <http://www.meritbadge.com/bsa/info/policy2.htm>, which is based on the BSA publication Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures, #33088B.

Each Boy Scout rank above First Class requires that a Scout earn a minimum number of merit badges, including a specified minimum number of Eagle-required merit badges, in order to earn the rank. Many of these are offered by Troop 55 merit-badge counselors on a scheduled basis during the year. Announcements and sign ups for merit badge activities generally take place at Troop meetings. Other merit badges can be earned at summer camp, merit badge fairs, or on an individual basis from BSA merit badge counselors.

There are more than 100 merit badges. Some merit badges are designed to be of interest to younger Scouts and others to older Scouts. Scoutmaster approval is required before enrolling in Eagle-required merit badges. A Scout does not need to have had rank advancement to be eligible.

The BSA changes the requirements of approximately 10% of the merit badges each year. The BSA publishes an annual book ("Boy Scout Requirements 2003"), available at the Scout Shop, listing the requirements for all merit badges.

How to Earn a Merit Badge

Pick a Subject. Talk to your Scoutmaster about your interests. Read the requirements of the merit badges you think might interest you. Pick one to earn. Your Scoutmaster or Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster (PASM) will give you the name of a person with whom to work from a list of counselors.

Scout Buddy System. You must have another person with you at each meeting with the merit badge counselor. This person can be another Scout, your parents or guardian, a brother or sister, a relative, or a friend.

Get Ready. Get a signed merit badge application from your Scoutmaster or PASM (this is not needed for non-Eagle required merit badges offered through Troop 55). Get in touch with the merit badge counselor and tell him or her that you want to earn the merit badge. Get a copy of the merit-badge pamphlet; Troop 55 maintains a library of merit badge pamphlets in the Scout Room closet.

Requirements. You are expected to do exactly what is stated in the merit badge pamphlet – no more and no less. If it says "show or demonstrate," that is what you must do. Just telling about it isn't enough. The same thing holds true for such words as "make," "list," "in the field," and "collect," "identify," and "label." If you participate in a merit badge class, you must do these things, not just watch others do them.

Show Your Stuff. When you are ready, call the counselor again to make an appointment to meet the requirements. When you go, bring the things you have made to meet the requirements. If they are too big to move, take pictures or have an adult tell in writing what you have done. The counselor will ask you to do each requirement to make sure that you know your stuff and have done or can do what's required.

Get the Badge – and Don't Lose Your Paperwork! When the counselor is satisfied that you have met each requirement, he or she will sign your application. Give the signed application to your Scoutmaster or the Troop's Merit Badge Coordinator. At the next appropriate Court of Honor, you will receive the merit badge and an achievement card.

Note: Troop 55 strongly recommends that a Scout not earn (i) more than three Eagle-required merit badges with any one counselor, nor (ii) more than five total merit badges with the same counselor, nor (iii) any merit badge with the Scout's parent unless the Scout is part of a merit badge class of five or more Scouts being counseled by the parent.

Recommended Merit Badge Sequence

Here is a recommended, age-appropriate sequence for earning the Eagle-required merit badges and certain age-appropriate non-Eagle required merit badges. (This is not an exclusive list of the non-Eagle required badges.)

Level 1 (New Scouts / Ages 11-12 / 5th-6th Grades)

First Aid *
Swimming ** (best at Scout summer camp)
Family Life *
Emergency Preparedness ** (First Aid MB required)
Cooking (recommended by Troop for Star rank)
Basketry/Woodcarving/Leatherwork
Fishing
Climbing
Mammal Study
Pets / Dog Care

Level 2 (First Class & Star / Ages 12+ / 6th- 7th Grade+)

Camping * (7th Grade)
Citizenship in the Nation *
Citizenship in the Community * (7th Grade+)
Environmental Science * (7th grade+)
Hiking **
Personal Fitness *
Pioneering (recommended by Troop for Life rank)
Canoeing
Geology/Nature
Golf/Sports
Home Repairs/Collections
Medicine/Law/Scholarship/Reading
Photography/Radio

Level 3 (Star & Life / Ages 14+ / 8th –12th Grade)

Communications *
Citizenship in the World *
Personal Management *
Lifesaving ** (Swimming MB required)
Cycling **
Backpacking /Wilderness Survival
Rowing /Whitewater
BSA Lifeguard/Auto Mechanics

An asterisk () indicates an Eagle-required merit badge; a double-asterisk (**) indicates a merit badge that is one of several choices in an Eagle-required merit-badge group.*

Troop Leadership: The Patrol Method

Portions adapted from a BSA Web page; see <http://www.scouting.org/nav/enter.jsp?s=ba>

The patrol method is at the heart of Boy Scouting. The boy leadership and responsibility inherent in the patrol method creates the fundamental difference between Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts. Parents should make an effort to meet their Scout's Patrol Leader and troop guide (if applicable) and the Troop's Senior Patrol Leader (SPL).

The Patrol

The patrol is a group of Scouts who belong to a troop and who are probably similar in age, development, and interests. The patrol method allows Scouts to interact in a small group outside the larger troop context, working together as a team and sharing the responsibility of making their patrol a success. A patrol takes pride in its identity, and the members strive to make their patrol the best it can be.

Patrols will sometimes join with other patrols to learn skills and complete advancement requirements. At other times they will compete against those same patrols in Scout skills and athletic competitions.

The members of each patrol elect one of their own to serve as Patrol Leader. The troop determines the requirements for Patrol Leaders, such as rank and age. To give more youths the opportunity to lead, most troops, including Troop 55, elect Patrol Leaders twice a year.

Patrol size depends upon a troop's enrollment and the needs of its members, though an ideal patrol size is eight Scouts. Patrols with fewer than eight Scouts should try to recruit new members to get their patrol size up to the ideal number.

Patrol Meetings

Patrol meetings may be held at any time and place. Many troops (including Troop 55) set aside a portion of each troop meeting for its patrols to gather. Patrols can also meet at a different time at the home of a patrol member. The frequency of patrol meetings is determined by upcoming events and activities that require planning and discussion.

Patrol meetings should be well-planned and businesslike. Typically, the Patrol Leader calls the meeting to order, the scribe collects dues, and the Assistant Patrol Leader reports on advancement. The Patrol Leader should report any information from the latest Patrol Leaders' council meeting.

The bulk of each patrol meeting should be devoted to planning upcoming activities, with specific assignments made to each patrol member.

Patrol Spirit

Patrol spirit is the glue that holds the patrol together and keeps it going. Building patrol spirit takes time, because it is shaped by a patrol's experiences—good and bad. Often misadventures such as enduring a thunderstorm or getting lost in the woods will contribute much in pulling a patrol together. Many other elements also will help build patrol spirit. Creating a patrol identity and traditions will help build each patrol member's sense of belonging.

Some patrols like to specialize in doing something extremely well, such as cooking peach cobbler or hobo stew.

Patrol Leaders and Assistant Patrol Leaders

The Patrol Leader for each patrol is elected by, and from the ranks of, the Scouts in that patrol. Assistant Patrol Leaders are appointed by the Patrol Leaders, with the advice and consent of the Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster (PASM).

The Patrol Leader (or in his absence, the Assistant Patrol Leader) is responsible for organizing and leading all activities of his patrol. This includes, for example, the preparation and implementation of duty rosters for campout or program activities. It allows each boy to assume responsibility for and take part in successfully implementing the Troop's program.

The Senior Patrol Leader

The Troop's Senior Patrol Leader (SPL) is elected by all Scouts in the Troop. Senior Patrol Leader candidates must be at least Life Scouts and must have completed both the Troop's and the council's youth-leader training courses. Assistant SPLs and other Troop-wide positions are appointed by the SPL with the advice and consent of the Scoutmaster.

The Patrol Leaders' Council

The Troop is governed by a Patrol Leaders' Council or "PLC." The PLC is sometimes known as the "Greenbar," referring to the green bars on the uniform sleeve patches worn by the SPL, assistant SPLs, Patrol Leaders, and Assistant Patrol Leaders. The PLC comprises the SPL, the Patrol Leaders from each patrol, troop guides, and certain other Troop officers, such as the assistant Senior Patrol Leaders and Troop quartermasters.

The PLC plans the yearly Troop program at the annual Troop program planning conference. It then meets monthly to fine-tune the plans for the upcoming month.

Ten Tips for Being a Good Patrol Leader

1. *Keep Your Word.* Don't make promises you can't keep.
2. *Be Fair to All.* A good leader shows no favorites. Don't allow friendships to keep you from being fair to all members of your patrol. Know who likes to do what, and assign duties to patrol members by what they like to do.
3. *Be a Good Communicator.* You don't need a commanding voice to be a good leader, but you must be willing to step out front with an effective "Let's go." A good leader knows how to get and give information so that everyone understands what's going on.
4. *Be Flexible.* Everything doesn't always go as planned. Be prepared to shift to "plan B" when "plan A" doesn't work.
5. *Be Organized.* The time you spend planning will be repaid many times over. At patrol meetings, record who agrees to do each task, and fill out the duty roster before going camping.
6. *Delegate.* Some leaders assume that the job will not get done unless they do it themselves. Most people like to be challenged with a task. Empower your patrol members to do things they have never tried.
7. *Set an Example.* The most important thing you can do is lead by example. Whatever you do, your patrol members are likely to do the same. A cheerful attitude can keep everyone's spirits up.
8. *Be Consistent.* Nothing is more confusing than a leader who is one way one moment and another way a short time later. If your patrol knows what to expect from you, they will more likely respond positively to your leadership.
9. *Give Praise.* The best way to get credit is to give it away. Often a "Nice job" is all the praise necessary to make a Scout feel he is contributing to the efforts of the patrol.
10. *Ask for Help.* Don't be embarrassed to ask for help. You have many resources at your disposal. When confronted with a situation you don't know how to handle, ask someone with more experience for some advice and direction.

Your Duties as Patrol Leader

When you accepted the position of Patrol Leader, you agreed to provide service and leadership to your patrol and Troop. No doubt you will take this responsibility seriously, but you will also find it fun and rewarding. As a Patrol Leader, you are expected to do the following:

- Plan and lead patrol meetings and activities.
- Keep patrol members informed.
- Assign each patrol member a specific duty.
- Represent your patrol at all Patrol Leaders' council meetings and the annual program planning conference.
- Prepare the patrol to participate in all Troop activities.
- Work with other Troop leaders to make the Troop run well.
- Know the abilities of each patrol member.
- Set a good example.

- Wear the Scout uniform correctly.
- Live by the Scout Oath and Law.
- Show and develop patrol spirit.

Training for Patrol Leaders

Scouting takes pride in giving youth members unique leadership opportunities and training. Patrol leaders may have the opportunity to participate in all or some of the following leadership training.

Introduction to Leadership: This is the first step of leadership training. It is usually conducted by the Scoutmaster within a few days after a troop election. It may last no more than an hour, but it should cover the responsibilities of a Patrol Leader and the needs for upcoming events within the troop.

Troop Leadership Training ("TLT"): This is a two-hour training conference conducted by the Scoutmaster and Senior Patrol Leader. Its purpose is to reinforce the patrol method and to allow members of the Patrol Leaders' council to set goals for themselves, their patrols, and their troop.

National Youth Leadership Training ("NYLT"): The Sam Houston Area Council offers weeklong leadership training conferences, usually in June and the week after Christmas, for key troop leaders. This course supplements troop training and introduces leadership skills in an outdoor environment.

National Youth Leader Instructor Camp: Often referred to as "NJ", this program focuses on helping Scouts develop teaching skills that they can use to serve on the NYLT staff in their local council. This course has been offered by the Philmont Training Center each summer. Starting in 2006 or 2007, this course may be offered by the Sam Houston Area Council.

National Leadership Seminars: These Order of the Arrow leadership seminars take place over a weekend and focus primarily on the skills and attributes of leadership. Youth participants should be at least 15 years of age or a lodge officer.

National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience: NAYLE will be offered at Philmont beginning in 2006. NAYLE is a scenario-based wilderness encounter that will motivate Scouts to follow a life of servant leadership. The TLT and NYLT courses are prerequisites for this course.

Adult Leadership in Troop 55

Portions adapted from various BSA publications.

The Troop is actually run *by its boy leaders* to the greatest extent possible. With the guidance of the Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters, the Scouts are expected to plan the program, conduct Troop meetings, and provide leadership among their peers. Even so, all Troop 55 parents are encouraged and expected to be actively involved in the Troop. *Everyone's* help is needed. Volunteer opportunities (and appropriate training) exist to match the level of interest and available time of every adult.

Chartered Organization

Boy Scout troops do not exist in a vacuum. Every troop is actually a youth program of a specific church or other community organization that has been granted a one-year charter by the Boy Scouts of American ("BSA") to use the Scouting program in its youth work.

Troop 55's chartered organization is The (Episcopal) Church of St. John the Divine, often referred to as "SJD." The church received its first BSA charter for Troop 55 shortly after the parish was established in 1939 – the Troop itself actually pre-dates the parish – and has been continuously rechartered since that time.

Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters

The Scoutmaster is the adult leader responsible for the image and program of the Troop. The *Scoutmaster* is appointed by the head of the chartered organization with input from the Troop Committee. The Scoutmaster's job is crucial, because the quality of the Scoutmaster's guidance will affect every youth and adult involved in the Troop.

Assistant Scoutmasters are appointed by the Scoutmaster and must be approved by the chartered organization representative.

Most patrols have one or two specially-designated "*Patrol Assistant Scoutmasters*" or "PASMs" assigned to work with them.

The Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters normally must successfully complete the required BSA training; see the Adult Leader Training section of this Handbook.

Troop Committee

The Troop Committee may be seen as the "board of directors" of the Troop. The *Troop Committee Chair* is appointed by the head of the chartered organization with input from the Troop Committee. The Troop Committee's primary responsibilities are (i) supporting the Scoutmaster in delivering quality Troop programs, and (ii) handling Troop administration. Troop 55 has a very active committee, almost all of whom are parents of current or former Troop 55 Scouts.

The Troop Committee meets monthly, normally on the first Thursday of each month. *All* parents are invited to participate in the Troop Committee. Please feel free to call the committee chair or any committee member for more information.

For insurance purposes, participating parents should register with the BSA as committee members. Registrations must be approved by the chartered organization representative.

The *Troop Committee secretary's* duties include keeping minutes of Troop Committee meetings; preparing and mailing out annual dues statements; and conducting an annual Troop resource survey.

The *Troop Committee treasurer's* duties include handling all Troop funds and maintaining the Troop's bank account; paying bills on the recommendation of the Scoutmaster and authorization of Troop Committee (either via the approved budget or approval for specific major expenditures); and leading the preparation of the annual Troop budget.

Subcommittees of the Troop Committee

The work of the Troop Committee is divided up among several subcommittees, each of which typically reports to the Troop Committee at each monthly committee meeting.

The *adult-training committee* ensures that the troop has sufficient adults who are certified as having met specific BSA and Council training requirements for activities such as canoeing, rock climbing, etc. (see the Adult Leader Training section of this Handbook).

The *advancement committee* works with the (Scout) troop scribe to maintain advancement records; arranges boards of review for Scouts who are ready to advance to the next rank; files advancement reports with the Council after Scouts successfully complete their boards of review; and obtains rank badges and certificates for advancing Scouts.

The *Court of Honor committee* coordinates the troop's courts of honor and recruits and guides the Scouts who actually conduct the courts of honor.

The *equipment committee* supervises and helps the troop procure camping and other outdoor equipment; works with the (Scout) troop quartermaster(s) on inventory and proper storage and maintenance of all troop equipment; makes periodic safety checks on all troop camping gear.

The *merit-badge committee* recruits merit badge counselors; coordinates the troop's participation in local merit badge fairs (twice per year); plans and organizes a program of troop-sponsored merit badge classes each semester (often including a mini-merit badge fair for "fun" merit badges); and works with the (Scout) troop librarian in building and maintaining a troop library of merit badge pamphlets and other advancement literature.

The *program committee* oversees the year-long outdoor program and promotes attendance at campouts.

The *recruiting committee* handles troop publicity; conducts a parent orientation for new families; arranges for proper welcome of Webelos Scouts graduating into the troop; and coordinates the troop's participation in Pack 55's annual Webelos Woods campout.

The *summer-camp committee* coordinates the troop's selection of and attendance at summer camps.

Adult Leader Training

Portions adapted from various BSA publications.

Troop 55 Adult Training Philosophy

Troop 55 strongly encourages all parents to take the Boy Scout leader basic training courses described on this page. This helps all parents understand and assist in achieving the troop's program and goals.

Who Needs What Training?

Scoutmaster / Assistant Scoutmaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New Leader Essentials ○ Youth Protection Training ○ Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills ○ Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training
Troop committee member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New Leader Essentials ○ Troop Committee Specific Training ○ Youth Protection Training
Merit badge counselor, or <i>Any parent desiring to attend</i> (i) more than two weekend campouts during the year, or (ii) any summer camp. Ex-ceptions may be granted only by the Scoutmaster, under conditions he may set.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New Leader Essentials ○ Youth Protection Training

Fast Start Training

Fast Start training is the first step for any new volunteer. The Boy Scout Fast Start video includes segments on how to run a troop meeting; how to plan, organize, and execute outdoor activities; and how a Scout troop is organized.

New Leader Essentials

New Leader Essentials is a 90-minute introductory session that highlights the values, aims, history, funding, and methods of Scouting. Videos, discussions, and hands-on reinforcement are presented during the training. Each leader completes New Leader Essentials training only once.

Leader Specific Training

Once a volunteer has a solid overview of the BSA's values-based program, s/he can begin training for a specific Scouting position. Leader-Specific Training provides the specialized knowledge a new leader needs to assume a leadership role. Training time varies because each course is designed for a specific leadership position.

For Troop Committee members, Leader Specific training includes the Troop Committee Challenge, requiring approximately 2.5 to 3 hours. Troop committee members are considered trained when they have completed New Leader Essentials and the Troop Committee Challenge as their Leader Specific training

For Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters, Leader-Specific Training is divided into four parts. The first three parts concentrate on troop operation and can be completed in one full day or three evenings. The fourth part, which focuses on outdoor skills, is covered during a weekend campout (Fri-Sun). The Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster is considered trained upon completion of New Leader Essentials, YPT, Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training, and Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills.

Youth Protection Training

Youth Protection Training is a video with discussion periods; the total time is approximately 45 minutes. The YPT course is also offered on-line at the SHAC website. The YPT certification is valid for three years.

Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills

The Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills weekend campout, preceded by an introductory meeting, is for any Scout leader who wants to help lead troop outdoor activities.

Other Skills Requiring Trained Adults

The Troop also needs as many adults as possible to be trained in the following skills to support our outdoor program:

- Safe Swim Defense / Safety Afloat
- Flatwater / Whitewater Canoe Certifications
- BSA Lifeguard or American Red Cross Lifesaving
- CPR / defibrillator
- First Aid

University of Scouting

The Golden Arrow District conducts an annual University of Scouting, generally on the first Saturday in February. Topics presented are selected to cover all phases of Scouting and assist leaders in broadening their knowledge of Scouting.

Wood Badge

Wood Badge is the most advanced training available for adult leaders of the Boy Scouts of America. Wood Badge graduates will be able to view Scouting as a family of interrelated, values-based programs that provide age-appropriate activities for youth; to recognize the contemporary leadership concepts utilized in corporate America that are relevant to our values-based movement; to apply the skills they learn from their participation as a member of a successful working team; and to revitalize their commitment by sharing in an overall inspirational experience that helps provide Scouting with the leadership it needs to accomplish its mission on an ongoing basis.

Merit Badge Counselors

Portions adapted from various BSA publications; see www.meritbadge.com.

Introduction

Every parent can help the Scouts by serving as a merit-badge counselor for one, several, or many merit badges. As a “coach” the counselor advises the Scout concerning steps to take to fulfill the requirements for the merit badge. As a “counselor” he or she evaluates the Scout’s performance and determines whether or not the Scout has met the prescribed objectives in the requirements.

Requirements to Serve as a Counselor

Merit badge counselors must be men and women of good character, age 18 or older, who are recognized as having the skills and education in the subjects for which they are to serve as merit badge counselors, as well as the ability to work with Scout-age boys.

Merit badge counselors must be registered for that position with the Boy Scouts of America (using the basic adult leader registration form). All merit badge counselors must be approved by the council advancement committee.

Merit badge counselors are not required to pay a registration fee if they are only registered as merit badge counselors.

Merit badge counselors should complete the New Leader Essentials and Youth Protection Training classes; see the “Adult Leader Training” page of this Handbook for more details.

An older Scout (who by definition is not yet 18 years old) may assist an adult merit badge counselor in teaching a merit badge subject, but the adult counselor must verify that each Scout who works on the badge has completed all requirements for the badge.

Restrictions on Counseling Badges

There is no restriction or limit on the number of merit badges for which an individual may be approved as a counselor.

There is no limit on the number of merit badges a Scout may earn from one counselor. However, Troop 55 strongly encourages Scouts to earn no more than three Eagle-required badges and five total badges from any one counselor.

A registered merit badge counselor may counsel any Scout, including his or her own son, ward, or relative. However, Troop 55 strongly encourages adults not to counsel their own sons except as part of a class of at least five Scouts.

Scoutmaster approval is required for Troop 55 Eagle required merit badge class registration.

Merit Badge Requirements

The current *Boy Scout Requirements* booklet lists the requirements a Scout meets to earn each of the more than 100 merit badges that are available. The requirements are also available at <http://www.meritbadge.com/bsa/mb/index2.htm>.

Each Scout must be tested individually to confirm that he has met the requirements for a merit badge.

A Scout must meet all requirements for a merit badge – no more and no less. Neither the counselor nor the troop may add or delete requirements. On the other hand, it is always acceptable for a Scout on his own initiative to do more than the requirements call for.

Troop 55 recommends that Scouts work on age appropriate badges as described in more detail in the “Merit Badge” section of this Handbook.

There is no time limit for completion of merit badge requirements other than age 18.

A merit badge cannot be taken away once earned, provided the counselor is a registered counselor for that badge.

Working with Scouts

Follow the Scout Buddy System, discussed below.

The Scout should teach himself the necessary knowledge to the greatest extent possible, using the merit badge pamphlet and other resources. One of the benefits of the merit-badge program is teaching Scouts to teach themselves. (“Give a man a fish and he’ll eat today; teach him to fish and he’ll eat for his whole life.”)

Get the *Scout* to develop a timetable of short- and long-term goals for completing the merit badge. An important objective of Scouting is to teach Scouts to set goals for themselves and to plan and execute the tasks required to reach those goals.

You may find that a Scout needs help in learning particular skills that are required for the merit badge. One of your jobs in that situation is to help teach the Scout the required skills.

If you stop hearing from a Scout who has started but not finished a merit badge, follow up periodically (e.g., once a month or so) to check on his progress and on his plans for completing the requirements. Again, the *Scout* should be setting goals; the counselor’s job is simply to help the Scout achieve those goals and confirm that he has done so.

Be supportive, not critical – but make sure the Scout has indeed satisfactorily completed each requirement.

Scout Buddy System

To protect both the Scout and the merit badge counselor, a Scout must have a buddy with him at each meeting with the counselor. A Scout's buddy can be another Scout, a parent or guardian, a brother or sister, or a relative or friend.

Merit Badge Classes

Troop 55 offers various merit badge classes during the year. The Troop’s merit badge counselors often teach such classes in teams.

Remember that a Scout cannot earn a merit badge merely by sitting through a class. Each Scout must *individually* demonstrate to the counselor that he has met each requirement for the badge. This is often difficult (or impossible) to do in a class-type setting.

Boards of Review

Adapted from <http://www.meritbadge.com/bsa/info/policy2.htm>, which is based on the BSA publication Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures, #33088B.

Basic Information

A periodic review of the progress of a Scout is vital in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Scouting program in the unit. The unit committee can judge how well the Scout being reviewed is benefiting from the program. The unit leader can measure the effectiveness of his or her leadership. The Scout can sense that he is, or is not, advancing properly and can be encouraged to make the most of his Scouting experience.

A board of review cannot be conducted until the Scoutmaster conference has been completed.

A board of review is made up of at least three and not more than six members of the Troop Committee.

The Scout must present himself at the scheduled time *in full "Class A" uniform with his Scout Handbook properly signed* for the requirements for rank to which he is advancing.

The review is not an examination; the board does not retest the candidate. The Scout has learned his skill and has been examined; this is a review. The Scout should be asked where he learned his skill, who taught him, and the value he gained from passing this requirement.

Unit leaders, assistant unit leaders, relatives, or guardians *may not serve* as members of a Scout's board of review.

The decision of the board of review is arrived at through discussion and must be unanimous.

In Troop 55, each Scout must personally contact the Troop Committee Chair or the Advancement Chair to arrange a time for a board of review.

Not only is it important to review those Scouts who have learned and been tested for a rank, but also to review those Scouts who have shown no progress in their advancement over the past few months.

Conducting a Board of Review

A board of review should take approximately fifteen minutes. The board members should have the following objectives in mind when they conduct the review:

- To make sure that the Scoutmaster and ASMs have confirmed that the Scout did what he was supposed to do for the rank.
- To see how good an experience the Scout is having in the unit.
- To encourage the Scout to progress further.

The board should attempt to determine the Scout's attitude and his acceptance of Scouting ideals. *Scout spirit is defined as living the Scout Oath (Promise) and Scout Law in a*

Scout's everyday life. The board should make sure that good standards have been met in all phases of the Scout's life. A discussion of the Scout Oath and Scout Law is in keeping with the purpose of the review, to make sure that the candidate recognizes and understands the value of Scouting in his home, unit, school, and community.

The board of review members should feel free to refer to the *Boy Scout Handbook*, *Scoutmaster Handbook*, or any other references during the review.

The *Troop Committee Guidebook* contains examples of questions that could be asked during a review. The Troop 55 board of review report form has sample questions on the back.

Because many boys are ill at ease when talking to adults, it is important that the board be held in a relaxed atmosphere. A certain amount of formality and meaningful questioning should be used during the review.

The Scout should be neat in appearance and his uniform should be as correct as possible, with the badges worn properly. It should be the desire of the board to encourage the Scout to talk so that the review can be a learning experience for the candidate and the members of the board.

The Scout reviews what he did for his rank. From this review, it can be determined whether he did what he was supposed to do. The review also reveals what kind of experience the Scout is having in the troop. With that knowledge, the troop leaders can shape the program to meet the needs and interests of the Scouts.

Board of Review Deliberations

At the conclusion of the review, the board should know whether a boy is qualified for the rank or Palm. *The Scout is asked to leave the room* while the board members discuss his achievements. If members are satisfied that the Scout is ready to advance, he is called in, congratulated, notified as to when he will receive his recognition, and encouraged to continue his advancement or earn the next Palm.

Paperwork: Reporting the Board's Decision

The chair of the board of review fills out a Board of Review Report Form and gives it to the Troop Committee Chair or Advancement Chair.

What if the Board Says "No"?

If the board decides that the Scout is not ready to advance, the candidate should be informed and told what he has not done satisfactorily. Most Scouts accept responsibility for not completing the requirements properly. Should the Scout disagree with the board's decision, the appeal procedures should be explained to him (see the Web site at the top of this page).

The members of the board of review should specify what must be done to rework the candidate's weaknesses and schedule another board of review for him. A follow-up letter must be sent to a Scout who is turned down for rank advancement, confirming the agreements reached on the actions necessary for advancement.

Summer Camp

Summer camp is a great time for advancement and practicing the patrol method.

Merit Badge Camps

The Troop generally attempts to schedule at least two merit badge camps at a residence camp geared toward First Class advancement and merit badge work, such as the Sam Houston Area Council's El Rancho Cima on the Blanco River near San Marcos, Texas. To take into account family vacation schedules and other activities such as baseball, one merit badge camp is generally scheduled in mid- to late June and the other in July.

It is particularly important for the new Scout to attend a merit badge summer camp, although any Scout can benefit. Excellent facilities are provided for difficult-to-obtain merit badges such as Swimming, Canoeing, Rowing, Lifesaving, Environmental Science and several others.

Attendance at summer camp may require additional or updated medical forms.

Trained adult leaders are always needed for summer camps. This is a great opportunity for new Scout parents (who have completed the required training as discussed on the "Adult Training" page of this Handbook) to "break in" by spending a week camping with the Troop.

High-Adventure Camps

The Boy Scouts of America (National) offers outstanding high adventure programs in which our Troop has participated. Our Troop routinely attempts to organize trips for Scouts who are 14 years of age and older to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico for a two-week wilderness backpacking experience. Other camping adventures for the older Scouts may involve the BSA Sea Base in Florida or South Padre Island; canoeing for ten days in Maine; backpacking in Colorado and Montana; or even Alaska! Troop 55 endeavors to engage in a variety of these programs every year.

The age minimum for these camps is generally 13 or 14 (for Philmont it is 14). Many of these camps require that the Scout meet the relevant age limit by January 1 of the year in which the camp will occur.

Attendance at high adventure camp may require new or additional medical forms.

Adult Participation in Summer Camps

Adults who wish to attend summer camps with the Troop are required to complete adult training as indicated on the "Adult Training" page of this Handbook. Space is limited for adults, particularly in high adventure camps. Ordinarily, only adults who have both completed the required training and actively participated in the outdoor program for Scouts are eligible for participation in high adventure camps.

Troop Finances

Dues

One of the most significant sources of Troop income is the annual dues of the Scouts. See the "Welcome" page of this Handbook for the current dues levels.

Campout Fees

The Troop requires Scouts and adults attending Troop campouts to pay for their own food and for any third-party activity charges. See the "Welcome" page of this Handbook for more details.

Scholarships

Confidential scholarships are available on the basis of financial need in accordance with the Scholarship Policy. Contact the Scoutmaster or Troop Committee Chair for more information.

Popcorn Sales and Scout Fair Ticket Sales

The sale of BSA popcorn in the fall and Scout Fair tickets in the spring provides important fundraising for the Scouting program. Troop 55 receives approximately 30% of the proceeds of such sales. Troop 55 then credits the funds back to the Scout who sold the popcorn or tickets, and such credits are used to offset future fees for summer camps. Thus, participation in the popcorn and ticket sales provides each Scout with a way to earn some or all of his camp expenses.

Friends of Scouting

Troop 55 participates in this fundraising campaign each winter. Contributions are entirely voluntary but strongly encouraged. For many years, parents and friends of Troop 55 have generated larger contributions than any other troop in the Golden Arrow District. Troop 55 is justly proud of its philanthropic culture of supporting Scouting in the Houston area.

Expense Reimbursement

The Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmaster, Troop Committee members, and others who have or will extend personal funds for Scout activities, and expect to receive reimbursement for those funds, must know that such funds are: 1) to be within the established budget which is approved in the fall of each year or; 2) approved by the Troop treasurer, Scoutmaster and/or Troop Committee Chairman as funds which are available, but which are not so budgeted. This means that campmasters who have responsibility for monthly camping activities, summer camps, or other such activities must project costs and assess participants for the expenses associated with that specific activity in order to not exceed any budgeted funds which may be available from the Troop Committee. Otherwise, those who spend personal funds on Troop programs do so at the risk that they may not be fully reimbursed.

Other Useful Information

Courts of Honor

Advancement is recognized at a formal Troop Court of Honor held periodically throughout the year. The Court of Honor provides an opportunity for Scouts to be acknowledged for their work. *Families are strongly encouraged to attend as the Court of Honor is a special occasion. In the case of higher ranks, parents are asked to stand with their Scout as he receives his rank award.*

Order of the Arrow

The Order of the Arrow (OA) is a national brotherhood of Scout honor campers, based on brotherhood with fellow Scouts and cheerful service to others. Its purpose is to (1) recognize those Scout campers who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives; (2) develop and maintain camping traditions and spirit; (3) promote Scout camping; (4) crystallize the Scout habit of helpfulness into a life purpose of leadership in cheerful service to others.

The Order of the Arrow program is conducted through a separate lodge (in Houston, the Colonneh Lodge) under the jurisdiction of the local Boy Scouts of America executive.

Troop members are nominated and elected to membership by their fellow Scouts in their own troops. They must meet certain entry qualifications, which include: hold a rank of First Class or higher, and spend at least 15 days and nights of camping within the preceding 24 months (6 nights of which must be at no more than one long-term Scout summer camp, and the remainder of which should be weekend trips).

More information on the OA can be obtained by contacting the Troop's OA advisor or liaison.

Venture Crew 55

Venture Crew 55 is a separate Scouting organization, sponsored by SJD as the chartered organization. The crew is open to young men and women ages 14 and older, who have completed 8th grade.

Scouts may have dual registration in the Troop and the crew, but no dues discount is available.

Dual-registered Scouts who seek to complete regular Scout advancement through the Troop (rather than crew) will be subject to Troop oversight and requirements. Members of the venture crew who seek regular Scout advancement will be required for advancement purposes to fulfill a minimum of the six months of leadership required for advancement from Life Scout to Eagle Scout through leadership in the Troop. All other regular scout advancement requirements of Venture Crew members will be fulfilled as established by the Venture Crew Advisor, and overseen by the Venture Crew Advisor or his designee. Assuming completion of the foregoing, Troop approval of the Eagle Scout project and an Eagle Scout board of review at the Troop level, Venture Crew members will have the opportunity to participate in Troop-administered Courts of Honor, should they so desire. Venture Crew members who are not also current dues paying Troop members

may be directly assessed incremental costs associated with their participation.

Service Projects

Service projects, which include Troop projects and projects organized by Scouts who are working on their Eagle rank, are an integral part of the Scouting program designed to aid the development of character and citizenship. Hours (outside Troop meetings) working on approved Troop and Eagle Scout projects are required for advancement to most ranks. Announcements and sign-ups for service projects generally take place at Troop meetings.

Useful Web Sites

Some useful Web sites containing a plethora of additional information include:

Troop 55 home page	www.troop55.org
Golden Arrow District home page	www.goldenarrow.org
Merit badge information	www.meritbadge.com – includes on-line copies of merit badge requirements, worksheets, and related information
Boy Scouts of America home page	www.scouting.org – includes links to many useful on-line publications
US Scouting Service Project	www.usscouts.org – links to Scouting-related materials provided by various Scouters
The MacScouter	www.macscouter.com - Scouting resources online.

Scholarship Award Guidelines

1. **General Scholarship Philosophy.** Troop 55 will provide scholarships, in accordance with these Guidelines, for Scouts with a genuine financial need, who could not participate in a particular event without the Troop's financial assistance.
2. **Identifying Scholarship Candidates.** The Scoutmaster and all PASM's should make a positive effort, for each weekend campout and each summer camp, to identify Scouts who cannot afford to attend the campout or summer camp. If a Scout indicates that he will not be coming on a campout or summer camp, and the Scoutmaster or PASM suspects that the cost might be the main reason, ask the Scout if he would be interested in being *considered* for a scholarship.
3. **Scholarship Committee; Adult Leader Input.** The Scholarship Committee consists of the Troop Committee chair, the Scoutmaster, and the Troop treasurer. The PASM or campmaster should advise the Scholarship Committee of his or her recommendations concerning each Scout who requests a scholarship. The Scholarship Committee may also solicit input from other adult leaders to the extent it deems appropriate.
4. **Dollar Amount of Scholarships.** Scholarships will normally be provided for 50% (or on occasion 90%) of the cost of the event in question.
5. **Scholarships for Weekend Campouts.**
 - (a) Scholarships for weekend campouts, in cases of financial need, may be awarded for the cost of campsite fees, activity fees, and the like, along with the cost of transportation if applicable (for example, charter-bus fees).
 - (b) Grub fees for weekend campouts will normally not be eligible for scholarships (because the Scout's family likely would have to spend at least that much to feed the Scout anyway).
6. **Summer-Camp Scholarships.** Scouts will normally be considered for summer-camp scholarships as follows:
 - (a) *Merit-badge camps:* Any Scout who has a financial need will normally be awarded a scholarship for one merit-badge camp per summer at the geographically-closest camp that the Troop attends.
 - (b) *High-adventure camps:* If a Scout who has a financial need has consistently been active in the Troop and demonstrated Scout spirit, then on a case-by-case basis the Scout may be awarded a scholarship for one high-adventure camp per summer. Scholarships normally will not be awarded for high-adventure camps that are unusually costly; for example, Blue Ridge or Packard likely would qualify for a scholarship but Alaska probably would not.
7. **Adult Scholarships.** Adult leaders will normally not be eligible for scholarships.
8. **National Youth Leadership Training.**
 - (a) Any Scout, regardless of financial need, who attends SHAC's one-week National Youth Leadership Training course ("NYLT") shall be reimbursed by the Troop for the NYLT fee upon request, because of the benefit of NYLT to the Troop. Parents not having a financial need are encouraged to have their sons apply for reimbursement anyway (to reinforce the message that NYLT is important to the Troop) and then to make whatever donation to the Troop they feel is appropriate.
 - (b) Scholarships to the National Youth Leader Instructor Camp conducted at Philmont or by SHAC may be awarded on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the Scout's level of consistent participation in the Troop and demonstrated Scout spirit.
9. **Troop Dues Scholarships.** The Scholarship Committee may award scholarships for Troop dues on the same general basis as provided in paragraphs 3 and 4.
10. **Other Scholarships.** The Scholarship Committee may award other scholarships, consistent with prudent use of Troop funds, when it deems such awards to be in the best interests of the Troop.
11. **Confidentiality.** A Scout's request for a scholarship, and the Scholarship Committee's consideration of and decision on the request, should not be disclosed to other Scouts, and should be disclosed to other adult leaders only on a need-to-know basis.
12. **Leadership / Service Projects.** The PASM of a Scout who receives a scholarship should privately, informally, and tactfully encourage the Scout to "do something extra" for the Troop as a way of giving back. This should not be done in a way that might discourage Scouts from seeking scholarship help.

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