

# Troop Handbook

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# Fast Facts About Troop 55

## Introduction

These Fast Facts are from our Troop Handbook, available online at [www.troop55.org](http://www.troop55.org). We strongly encourage you to browse through the Handbook. Underlining indicates links in the on-line version. The Troop's Web site contains a great deal of useful information, including **forms, calendar, contact lists, each Scout's advancement status**, and more. Scout and adult personal information is password-protected; the login ID is "scout" and the password is the current SPL's first name.

## "A game with a purpose"

Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Scouting movement, famously said that "Scouting is a game with a purpose." In the words of Troop 55's [mission statement](#), we view that purpose as helping Scouts (i) grow into "responsible, compassionate, self-reliant citizens of God's world" who live by the [Scout Oath and Scout Law](#), and (ii) have a lot of fun in the process. We place great emphasis on having a "Scout-led" Troop.

Troop 55, first chartered in 1933, is one of the largest Boy Scout troops in the United States. We generally have around 250 registered Scouts organized into small [patrols](#). **Our Scouts attend many different public and private schools and come from a variety of faiths.**

## Email; whom to contact

A Scout's first point of contact with questions, concerns, etc., should always be his [Patrol Leader](#), or failing that, his Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster ("[PASM](#)"). A parent's first point of contact should be his son's PASM or, if a problem persists, the [Scoutmaster](#). (The Scoutmaster is usually **very** busy on Troop meeting nights, so if possible, please pick another time to speak to him about your son's advancement, etc.) If you need further help, contact the [Troop Committee Chair](#).

Troop 55 makes heavy use of email; it's extremely important that you go to the Troop's Web site and sign up for the Scout and adult mailing lists ASAP.

## Uniforms

See generally the [Uniforms](#) section of the online version of the Troop Handbook. Uniform items and other Scouting items can be purchased at the Scout Shop, on the southeast corner of the North Loop (inside the loop) and East T.C. Jester, 2225 N Loop W. For placement of **patches**, see the BSA's official [Insignia Guide](#) on the Web.

## Troop meetings

The Troop's weekly [meetings](#) are on most Tuesday nights during the school year, at 6:30 pm in the Scout Room at The Church of St. John the Divine (Episcopal), our [chartered organization](#) since 1939, at 2450 River Oaks Blvd. Scouts are not required to attend every weekly Troop meeting, but more is better. Our meetings are run by the Scouts themselves, with discreet coaching by adult leaders only when needed; that means meetings may sometimes seem chaotic.

## Campouts

The Troop goes on one weekend [campout](#) each month during the school year, as part of an annual program that is planned and executed by the Scouts themselves. The [equipment list](#) in the online Troop Handbook will give you an idea what you will need to buy for your Scout.

## Summer camp

We go to [summer camp](#) at some awesome places, from merit-badge camps for all Scouts to high-adventure camps for the more-experienced ones. See the online Troop Handbook for examples. Summer camp is not mandatory, but it IS highly encouraged – Scouts have a ton of fun, earn advancement and merit badges, and literally grow up at summer camp. With Scoutmaster ap-

proval, we welcome [adults](#) who are willing to go to summer camp as Assistant Scoutmasters; they must take the required [training](#).

### Advancement; merit badges

Scouts advance in rank at their own pace by completing the requirements for each applicable rank (see the [Boy Scout Handbook](#) for details). The Troop does a lot of organized advancement activities; see generally the [Advancement](#) and [Merit Badge](#) sections of the online Troop Handbook for more information.

### Registering with Troop 55

Boys between the ages of 11 and 17 (inclusive) may join Troop 55. Cub Scouts who have completed the Arrow of Light may join the Troop at age 10½. [See the online Troop Handbook for a list of forms that you and your Scout will need to complete.](#)

### What Troop 55 provides

The Troop provides each new Scout who has paid his dues with an embroidered Troop 55 neckerchief and slide, a [Boy Scout Handbook](#), and a handbook cover. All other personal gear is the responsibility of the Scout and his parents.

The Troop furnishes each patrol with a stove, propane, cooking gear, a dining fly, and a lantern. (The Troop also owns a fleet of canoes and kayaks.)

### Dues and expenses

Dues are \$150 per year per Scout (\$125 for second and subsequent Scouts in the same family). This covers a *Boys Life* subscription, the annual BSA registration fee, and the premium for BSA-provided insurance. The Troop pays the BSA annual fees for adult leaders, but they are encouraged to contribute \$15 per year to offset that cost. In addition to dues, each Scout should expect to pay approximately the following: [Uniform](#): \$80. [Campouts](#): \$15 per campout for food, plus \$10 to \$15 per campout for travel meals, spending money, and sometimes \$20-65 for bus transportation (special activities such as canoeing, boating, shooting, etc., will have additional costs). [Summer camp](#): Typically \$400 to \$600 for a week of merit-badge summer camp (**excluding transportation**). High-adventure camps for older Scouts normally will cost more.

### Financial assistance

Scouts have opportunities to earn some or all of their dues and expenses by participating in Troop [fundraising](#) activities; in addition, partial [scholarships](#) may be available.

### Special-needs Scouts

Make the Scoutmaster and your Scout's [PASM](#) aware of your son's [special needs](#); you can be assured that he will not be the only one.

### Troop Committee

The [Troop Committee](#) meets each second Thursday (except July) at 6:00 pm at St. John the Divine. All Scout parents are encouraged to attend.

### Adult involvement

We need YOU! In a Troop our size, the "official" adult leaders can't possibly do it all. We have both "outdoor" and "indoor" adult jobs. We're friendly and supportive, we'll [train](#) you, and we absolutely, positively guarantee you'll have a great time. Experience shows that, **the more involved a Scout's parent is in the Troop's adult leadership**, the more likely the Scout is to remain in Scouting and someday **earn the rank of Eagle Scout**.

## Active Participation

The advancement requirements for each of the Scout ranks (as set forth in the Boy Scout Handbook) includes some requirement that the Scout be active in his troop and patrol.

The 2013 BSA Guide to Advancement defines that “Active Participation” requires that:

1. The Scout is registered.
2. The Scout is in good standing.
3. The Scout meets the unit’s reasonable expectations; or, if not, a lesser level of activity is explained.

Set forth below are a set of guidelines outlining Troop 55’s reasonable expectations for participation, as adopted by the Troop Committee on November 14, 2013. These guidelines articulate a minimum set of expectations for Active Participation.

As outlined in the Guide to Advancement, if a Scout falls below these minimum expectations, a special Board of Review will decide whether the Scout meets the requirement of participation in order to advance.

### **Troop 55’s minimum expectations for active participation:**

- For advancement to Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class, active participation is specifically defined in the Boy Scout Handbook. For example, for Second Class, a Scout must, “since joining, have participated in five separate troop/patrol activities (other than troop/patrol meetings), two of which included camping overnight.” Possible troop/patrol activities include, e.g., Campouts, Advancement Sessions, Courts of Honor and Service Projects, and are signed off by the Scout’s PASM. Troop Activities does not include a merit badge class, or Cub Scout Pack or Den activity.
- For advancement to Star, Life and Eagle, the Boy Scout Handbook requires more broadly that the Scout “be active in [his] unit (and patrol if [he is] in one) for at least [X number of] months as a [Prior Rank] Scout.”

To satisfy this requirement, a Scout must:

- For each month (or a 30-day period/month equivalent) being counted, attend at least two “Troop Activities” during the month (or 30-day period/month equivalent). Troop Activities can include Troop Meetings, Service Projects, First Class Trail and other Advancement Sessions, or Troop outdoor activities such as a climbing session or canoeing outing; Troop Activities does not include a merit badge class, Court of Honor, or Venture Crew/Cub Scout Pack or Den activity.
- In at least half of the months being counted, attend an Overnight Outdoor Activity. An Overnight Outdoor Activity includes, e.g., the Troop’s monthly weekend campouts but does not include Cub Scout Pack or Venture Crew campouts. Attending an Overnight Outdoor Activity requires the Scout’s presence and participation at the bulk of the activity/campout and must include staying overnight. Camping both Friday and Saturday night on a weekend campout constitutes one event (not two).
  - For Star, this would require 2 Overnight Outdoor Activities, and for Life and Eagle would require 3 Overnight Outdoor Activities each.
- During each rank period (First Class to Star; Star to Life, and Life to Eagle), attend at least one Troop Court of Honor.
- NOTE re: Summer Camp: Participation in a week-long summer camp, NYLT or NAYLE (including participation as Staff) will satisfy both the Troop Activity and Overnight Outdoor Activity for a one-month equivalent. During the period from First Class thru Eagle, at least one of the Overnight Outdoor Activities must include participation in a Troop 55 summer camp, NYLT or NAYLE.
- For Eagle Palms, to satisfy this Active Participation requirement, a Scout must:

- Attend at least 2 Troop Activities during the month (or 30-day month equivalent) he is counting. Troop Activities can include Troop Meetings, Service Projects, First Class Trail and other Advancement Sessions, or Troop outdoor activities such as a weekend campout, climbing session or canoeing outing; Troop Activities does not include a merit badge class, Court of Honor, or Venture Crew/Cub Scout Pack or Den activity.
- NOTES:
  - The months for active participation need not be contiguous.
  - It is the Scout's responsibility to ensure he has signed in with his Patrol Leader, ASPL, or Adult Leader to be counted as participating. The Patrol Leader, ASPL, or Adult Leader is responsible for turning in the attendance roster to the Troop Attendance Chair who will enter the participation into Troopmaster for tracking and advancement.
  - These guidelines do not address the completion of leadership requirements for advancement to Star, Life, and Eagle.

## Adult-leader registration

Adults wishing to serve in any leadership capacity in Troop 55 must register as BSA adult leaders. The BSA registration application is available from the Troop Registrar, the [Troop Committee Chair](#), or the [Scoutmaster](#). The application requires the applicant's Social Security number as well as contact information for three references. It also includes a mandatory authorization for the [Sam Houston Area Council](#) to conduct a criminal background check.

The Troop Committee Chair and the Troop's [Chartered Organization Representative](#) are each required by BSA policy to review and approve all adult-leader registration applications.

As of June 2010, [BSA policy](#) requires that a certification of completion for [Youth Protection Training](#) ("YPT") must be submitted together with each new adult registration application. This means a new adult leader must complete YPT and print out the completion certificate **before** giving his or her registration application to the Troop Committee Chair for processing.

## Adult-leader training

Troop 55 strongly encourages all parents to take the Boy Scout leader basic training courses listed in the BSA document, "[What Makes a Trained Leader](#)." This training helps all parents understand and assist in achieving the Troop's program and goals.

NOTE: Youth Protection Training, which is one of these introductory courses, is **required** for any adult leader having direct contact with Scouts. It can be taken either [online](#) or in person. The BSA's Guide to Safe Scouting has a good summary of its [youth-protection guidelines](#).

(Parents would also benefit from taking the [Troop Committee Challenge](#) online training.)

All but two of these introductory courses can be taken [online](#) in about 30 minutes to 1 hour each. The two exceptions are Leader Specific training and Introduction to Outdoor Skills, which are directed toward, and required for, Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters.

# Advancement

## General advancement information

See the Boy Scout Handbook for the specific requirements to advance to each rank; those requirements are also [available](#) at the MeritBadge.org Web site. See also the BSA Guide to Advancement and the [Advancement Policies handbook](#) at MeritBadge.org.

Scouting's advancement program is a *self-paced* program. 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.

## Advancement: The Scout's responsibility

Each Scout should set a specific target date for a [Scoutmaster conference](#) and then a [board of review](#) for his next rank, then **work backwards** from that final target date to set interim target dates for completing the various 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 and parents will encourage them, but success or failure is up to the Scout himself. Each Scout can check his advancement status through the approvals in his own Scout Handbook and on the Troop Web site, [www.troop55.org](http://www.troop55.org).

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 his Boy Scout Handbook signed by the appropriate adult leader(s). Unlike Cub Scouts, **parents do not sign off on their sons' advancement work.**
2. Make an appointment for a [Scoutmaster conference](#). *The Scout himself should do this, not the parent.*
3. Ask the Advancement Chair or the Troop Committee Chair to schedule a [board of review](#). *The Scout himself should do this, not the parent.*

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 Advancement Chair or Troop Registrar records that in our electronic database. If a Scout completes a "partial" on a merit badge, that too will be recorded in our database. But to repeat, it is the Scout's responsibility to make sure this happens.

## Advancement timetable (suggested)

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 National Youth Leader Training) and one high adventure camp

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

## Boards of review

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, except for his board of review for the Eagle Rank.

*(A board of review for Eagle rank is scheduled by the Troop Eagle Advisor after the Sam Houston Area Council has approved the Scout's Eagle Application. One member of the Eagle board of review must be a representative of the Twin Bayou District from outside the Troop.)*

All parents are encouraged to participate as members of boards of review, and can do so without any training.

The Troop 55 board of review report form has sample 'interview' questions on the back.

Another excellent source of questions is "[A Guide to Conducting Boards of Review](#)" by Ray Klaus. This is a good way for you meet other parents, and find out things that are going on at campouts and troop meetings.

*(Some parents complain that the extent of dialogue following a campout is something like this: Q: "How was the campout?" A: "Fine." Participating in boards of review will help you know what is happening. )*

For an overview of how to conduct a board of review, see "[Boards of Review](#)" at MeritBadge.org, based on the BSA publication Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures, #33088B.

Some key points:

A board of review cannot be conducted until the [Scoutmaster conference](#) for that rank 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 *with his Scout Handbook properly signed* for the requirements for rank to which he is advancing.

The Scout should be *in full "Class A" uniform* except when the board of review is conducted "in the field" (e.g., on a campout or at summer camp).

*The review is not an examination; the board does not re-test the candidate.* The Scout should be asked where he learned his skill, who taught him, and the value he gained from passing this requirement.

The Scoutmaster, the Scout's [PASM](#)s, and the Scout's relatives and guardians *may not serve* as members of his board of review.

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

## Boy Scout Handbook

The Troop provides each new Scout with a [Boy Scout Handbook](#); if it gets lost, the Scout must purchase a replacement at the [Scout Shop](#) at his own expense.

Each Scout should safeguard his Handbook by (i) clearly marking his name on the outside, and (ii) protecting it from "the elements," for example, with a cover available for purchase at the Scout Shop.

The Handbook contains a wealth of practical information needed for advancement. Each Scout should carefully study the relevant section(s) of the Handbook when working on rank advancement.

A Scout's [advancement](#) is recorded in the pages at the back of the his Handbook.

*Each Scout is responsible* for asking the Scoutmaster or his assistants to sign his Handbook as soon as he completes any requirement.

Even though advancement data is entered into the Troop's electronic database, **the Scout's Handbook is the official and primary advancement record** and should be safeguarded in case of database problems.

Before each campout or advancement session a Scout should photocopy all signed advancement pages of his Handbook in case the Handbook gets lost.

## Buddy system (activities)

The buddy system for Scout activities 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 should be used:

- for all water activities;
- when outside immediate camp area; or
- 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 you and your buddy will have to get out of the water for a while.

The buddy system for [merit badge work](#) is slightly different; see that section for more details.

# Campouts

## Troop 55's weekend campout program

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, for example:

- Canoeing and kayaking in the Hill Country, lakes, and the San Marcos and Guadalupe Rivers.
- Backpacking and climbing at Enchanted Rock, plus an in-town lock-in at Texas Rock Gym.
- Shooting with shotguns, BB guns, .22 rifles.

## Campout transportation

The Troop usually travels to all campouts via buses leaving from St John's on Friday around 4:45 pm. For campouts that are one to two hours away we will usually take school buses. For longer trips, such as Enchanted Rock, we often charter a bus. The cost for transportation is included in the campout signup.

*Adult drivers are strongly encouraged to take as many Scouts with them as possible (always observing the two-deep rule for youth protection).*

Per the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#), we do not travel in convoys.

The Troop trailers are pulled by an adult driver.

## Campout food ("grub")

Both Scouts and adults (the "[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.

Goats should plan to model good camping practices by cooking foods that Scouts could cook with their standard patrol gear.

If a Scout or adult signs up for a campout and food is purchased, the Scout or adult is responsible for the grub fee even if he or she ends up not attending the campout.

**TIP:** Before your new Scout's first campout, have him do some cooking **and clean-up** at home (ideally, together with his patrol); that will make it easier for him (or them) to cook and clean up at their first campout.

## Campout jobs

Everyone works at a campout, Scouts and adults alike.

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 covering the entire campout weekend.

## Campout schedule

The typical schedule for campouts is approximately 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. Scout's Own chapel service. Break camp: clean up patrol equipment; inspection and stowage of patrol equipment. Clean sweep of the campsite. Depart for home.

## Camping equipment

Each Scout is responsible for his personal gear; see the list of [recommended personal gear](#).

Troop 55 provides shared patrol gear, including lanterns, stoves and cooking equipment, for each patrol.

A Patrol Quartermaster (a Scout) is responsible for his patrol's cooking gear (action packer) on each campout. Generally, that Scout will bring home this gear from the Tuesday Scout meeting before the campout.

The Patrol QM should check for missing items, and clean the gear if needed.

The Patrol QM will also return home with this gear after the campout. He should clean it thoroughly and restock the action packer before returning it to the Scout closet at the following meeting. (*Patrol members should help clean up patrol gear **before** leaving the campout.*)

No food should be left in the patrol equipment box between campouts.

## Campout rules

The following rules apply to all Scouts and adults. The [Scout Oath and Scout Law](#) govern everyone in camp, including both Scouts and adults, at all times.

**Sign-ups:** Everyone, Scouts and Adults, must be signed up in advance to attend any campout. (How to sign up will be announced at Troop meetings or by Troop newsletter or e-mail.) **Just showing up at camp or at the departure point is never acceptable.**

**Uniform requirements:** Scout and adult leaders are to 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 "[Goat Patrol](#)") ordinarily will camp in their own designated campsite. On some occasions, two to four adults ([PASMs](#)) will be assigned to camp with each Scout patrol, but not with the patrols of their own sons.

**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 (except that patrol's PASMs, who camp with the patrol). 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:** 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 campers are to continually keep shipshape their tents, personal gear, and patrol- and troop gear. 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 liquid fuels or other prohibited items.** 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. (See also the list of [prohibited items](#).)

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

**Buddy system.** The [buddy system](#) is simple: Never leave your buddy nor let him leave you.

**Vehicle rules.** Keep vehicles out of the campsite at all times, including when loading and unloading Scouts, adults and their personal gear, except as specifically authorized by the Campmaster. Leave cars in the designated parking areas.

**Water-safety rules.** Scouts and Goats are to follow [Safety Afloat](#) and [Safe Swim Defense](#) procedures and policies at all times for all water activities. All Scouts and adults must take the standard BSA [swim test](#) to determine how they can participate in aquatic activities.

**Lights out:** All Scouts are to be inside their tents at 10 pm (or otherwise at the Scoutmaster's or Campmaster's discretion). Lights will be out and talking will stop by 10:30 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 to remain in camp until dismissed by their Patrol Leader after the Troop's "clean sweep" of the campsite.

**No alcoholic beverages** (it's [BSA policy](#)) **or illegal drugs** (it's the law). **Tobacco use** by adults is strongly discouraged (it's [BSA policy](#)), and 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** of failing to abide by the camp and Troop rules may include time-outs, 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.

## Campout personal gear

Scouts should strive to bring the **minimum** gear necessary to a campout, and to pack it so that all gear can be carried by the Scout to his patrol's campsite in a **single** trip. [Print out](#) the list below and use it as a checklist for each campout. The [Boy Scout Handbook](#) also has helpful information on camping and camping gear, especially its list of [Outdoor Essentials](#) that should be taken on any hike or other activity.

- Boy Scout Handbook for advancement work (make a photocopy of all advancement pages that have signatures; leave the photocopy home in case the Handbook gets lost)
- Scout uniform – at least the shirt; wear it to and from the campout, but it's usually best not to bring the Troop neckerchief on weekend campouts
- Sleeping bag — should be "backpackable," with a stuff sack, and sufficient for 20-degree weather, e.g., at Enchanted Rock
- Ground pad for sleeping bag, or inflatable Thermarest®
- Backpack (internal- or external frame)
- Tent (no larger than 2- or 3-man size). May be shared, but only with a Scout in the same patrol.
- Groundcloth for tent
- Water bottle(s) or Camelbak®-type water sack with drinking tube (sized to carry a minimum of 2 liters)
- 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
- Head lamp using small 2 AAA batteries (preferred) or small flashlight (head lamps are very handy for after-dark work in camp, e.g., pitching tents, cooking, dishes, etc.)
- Waterproof or water resistant boots (not typical athletic shoes or sneakers)
- Boy Scout Handbook, pen, notebook
- Small towel, toiletries (soap, toothbrush, non-aerosol insect repellent and sunscreen)
- Synthetic or wool hiking socks \*
- Synthetic t-shirts or shirts \*
- Extra underwear, including synthetic "long johns" for cold-weather camping.\*
- Synthetic fleece jacket or pullover \*
- Synthetic pants, either fleece or nylon, with good pockets — zip-offs are best \*
- A warm hat (not a baseball cap) that will shed water
- Swim trunks

*\* Parents please note:* Cotton clothing is a very poor choice for camping; it's bulky, cold and slow to dry when wet, which can contribute to hypothermia. Layers of quick-drying synthetics such as Supplex®, are much better. Polartec®, or a similar synthetic fleece, is excellent for layering and remains warm even when wet.

Certain dangerous or disruptive items are prohibited at campouts; see the list of [prohibited items](#) for details.

## Chartered organization

Boy Scout troops do not exist in a vacuum. Every troop is sponsored by a church or other community organization that has been granted a one-year charter by the Boy Scouts of America ("BSA").

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.

**NOTE: Troop 55 Scouts are of many different faiths, and membership in the Troop is not restricted to SJD parishioners.**

The **Chartered Organization Representative** is a member of the chartered organization designated by its head to serve as a liaison between the chartered organization and its Scouting units.

## 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.

At a Court of Honor, each advancing Scout will receive a card for each rank advancement and merit badge. This proves receipt of the award — if other records are lost or incorrect, these cards could be the Scout's last-resort way of verifying his advancement. It's a good idea to collect and store these cards in a safe place in the unlikely event of other records being lost or incomplete.

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.

## 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. Campmasters for summer camps are expected to create a budget and collect sufficient assessments from the participants so that the entire activity will be self-supporting.

Otherwise, those who spend personal funds on Troop programs do so at the risk that they might not be fully reimbursed.

## **Fundraising**

### **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 annual campaign**

Troop 55 participates in this fundraising campaign each winter to support the Sam Houston Area Council ("SHAC"). Contributions are entirely voluntary but strongly encouraged. None of a Scout's troop dues goes to SHAC. For many years, parents and friends of Troop 55 have generated larger contributions than any other troop in the Twin Bayou District. Troop 55 is justly proud of its philanthropic culture of supporting Scouting in the Houston area.

## Goat Patrol

At [campouts](#) and Troop meetings, all adults present, other than the Scoutmaster and Patrol Assistant Scoutmasters, comprise the "Old Goats" Patrol, which is headed by the Troop Committee Chair or his or her designee (at campouts, that will often be the Goat Grubmaster).

The Goats are expected to operate by the [patrol method](#), in part to serve as a model for Scout patrols, and in part because the patrol method works very well.

See also the discussion in the "[Troop meetings](#)" section of this Handbook about the need for the Goats to stay out of the Troop meeting per se.

## Medications

Scouts who take medications should do so during Troop activities, including campouts and summer camp. We know from experience that Scouts who don't take their meds may well cause problems for themselves as well as for other Scouts and adult leaders.

Parents should regularly update their Scouts' medical forms with all meds being taken or prescribed.

Before departure for a campout, etc., each such Scout's parent should give the Scout's meds to the duty Health and Safety Officer in a plastic bottle clearly labeled with the Scout's name and dosage information ("HSO").

(The duty HSO might, but might not, be a physician, nurse, etc.)

The HSO, in consultation with the campmaster and [PASM](#)s, will decide how best to administer the meds. For example:

- At Enchanted Rock, where patrols (except new Scouts) backpack out to different sites in "the back country," the HSO likely will give a Scout's meds to one of the [PASM](#)s who will be with that Scout's patrol.
- At a merit-badge summer camp where the whole Troop contingent camps together, the HSO might decide to administer all meds him- or herself at a series of Troop-wide "pill calls."

No Scout should share any prescription medication with any other person (*it's against the law*), nor any other medication without permission of both Scouts' parents.

## Meetings (Troop)

Scouts who miss a lot of meetings also miss out on the fun; they start falling behind their peers in skill development; and often they eventually drift away from Scouting entirely.

**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 (ask your son to show it to you) is used to call for order, quiet, and attention, and should be observed by both Scouts and adults.

The [Senior Patrol Leader](#) or one of his assistants might schedule different patrols to act as "service patrols" for Troop meetings. The service patrol typically sets up the Scout Room for the meeting; conducts the flag ceremony at the beginning of the meeting; and puts gear away after the meeting.

While any parent may observe the parent's Scout at any Troop activity, our Scouts have consistently expressed the view that **adults should stay out of the Troop meeting per se**. The Troop strongly encourages parents who are not Patrol Assistant Scoutmasters ([PASM](#)s) to instead attend adult information and training sessions and visit with other adults outside the Scout Room.

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 quiet**.

## Merit badges

[See also the "[Merit badge counselors](#)" and [Scout responsibilities for advancement](#) sections of this Handbook.]

### Basic information

A Scout wishing to advance in rank above First Class must earn a specified minimum number of merit badges for each rank. For practical advice about earning a merit badge, see the [BSA guidance](#) at MeritBadge.org. Here are some useful things to know:

Merit badges work differently than Cub Scout activity badges and pins. [BSA policy](#) requires that the Scout must hold a discussion with the Scoutmaster to identify an approved counselor for the merit badge work. That discussion is documented through the Scoutmaster signature on the Application for Merit Badge blue card. Due to the nature of some merit badges, attending a merit badge class at a merit badge fair, or museum, may only complete a portion of the requirements for a merit badge. Under these circumstances, the Scout should also identify the counselor he plans to use to complete the requirements. Because of Troop 55's size, the Scoutmaster has delegated the authority to sign blue cards for non-eagle required badges to the Scout's PASM.

A Scout should obtain and read the current pamphlet published by BSA (available at the Scout Shop) for the merit badge he wishes to earn. Troop 55 maintains a library of some Merit Badge pamphlets available for use. The Troop Librarian should be contacted for access to the pamphlets. The [latest requirements and worksheets \(highly recommended\)](#) usually are also available at the MeritBadge.com.

Youth Protection Principles must be followed during all merit badge activities. As a registered scouter, the merit badge counselor must be current in YPT, and adhere to all policies of the BSA.

There are more than 100 merit badges covering a range of hobbies and careers; some are designed to be of interest to younger Scouts and others to older Scouts. How hard a merit badge is will depend on the badge and on the age and experience of the Scout; Backpacking and Environmental Science are quite challenging, while the Fingerprinting and other craft badges are very easy.

Many Troop 55 merit badge counselors work with groups of Scouts (nicknamed "merit badge classes") on a scheduled basis during the year. Announcements and signups 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 registered BSA merit badge counselors, qualified for that merit badge.

Troop 55 recommends that Scouts work on merit badges appropriate to their ages and experience, as described in the "[Recommended merit badge sequence](#)" section.

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.

When the counselor is satisfied that the Scout has met each requirement, the Scout should be sure to remind the counselor to sign the blue merit badge card. The Scout is then accountable to turn the Application for Merit Badge portion of the blue card in to the Troop Advancement Chair. At the next [Court of Honor](#), the Scout will receive the merit badge and an achievement card.

## Meeting merit-badge requirements

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 can often be difficult to do in a class-type setting.

Each Scout is expected to do exactly what is stated in the merit badge pamphlet – no more and no less. If it says "show" or "demonstrate," then just telling about it isn't enough, nor is watching someone else do it. The same thing is true for such words as "make," "list," "in the field," and "collect," "identify," and "label."

Neither the counselor nor the Troop may add or delete requirements for a merit badge. On the other hand, it is always acceptable for a Scout on his own initiative to do more than the requirements call for.

There is no time limit for completion of merit badge requirements, as long as the requirements are completed before the Scout's 18th birthday.

## Recommended merit badge sequence

Troop 55's longstanding experience is that Eagle-required merit badges and certain non-Eagle required badges are best earned in the following age-appropriate sequence. 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. (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)

Basketry/Woodcarving/Leatherwork

Fishing

Climbing

Mammal Study

Pets / Dog Care

### Level 2 - First Class & Star, ages 12+, 6th-7th grade up

Camping \* (7<sup>th</sup> Grade)

Citizenship in the Nation \*

Citizenship in the Community \* (7<sup>th</sup> Grade+)

Cooking \*

Environmental Science \* (7th grade+)

Personal Fitness \*

Sustainability (after 2013 Jamboree)

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)

Hiking \*\*

Cycling \*\*

Backpacking /Wilderness Survival

Rowing /Whitewater

BSA Lifeguard/Auto Mechanics

High Adventure camp (Philmont if possible)

## Merit badge counselors

Portions adapted from various BSA publications; see generally [www.meritbadge.org](http://www.meritbadge.org).

### 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 about steps to take to fulfill the badge's requirements. 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 must complete the Youth Protection Training course, either online or in person, and should also complete the "This is Scouting" online training; see the "[Training for adult leaders](#)" section 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. The adult counselor, however, 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.

Under [BSA policy](#), 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.

### 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.")

Encourage 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 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.

## Mission statements

**Troop 55:** 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:** Leading Youth to Lifelong Values, Service and Achievement.

**Boy Scouts of America:** 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.

## 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 [Sam Houston Area Council](#), the [Colonneh Lodge](#)) under the jurisdiction of the local BSA executive.

Scouts are nominated and elected to OA 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 have experienced 15 days and nights of Boy Scout camping during the two-year period prior to the election. The 15 days and nights must include one, but no more than one, long-term camp consisting of six consecutive days and five nights of resident camping, approved and under the auspices and standards of the Boy Scouts of America. The balance of the camping must be overnight, weekend, or other short-term camps.. More information on the OA can be obtained by contacting the Troop's OA advisor or liaison, or by visiting the lodge website at [www.colonneh.org](http://www.colonneh.org).

## "Org charts"

### Troop 55 org chart

- **Scouts** are organized into [patrols](#), each headed by a **Patrol Leader** ("PL"), a Scout who is elected by the other Scouts in the patrol. New-Scout patrols are coached by two older-Scout **Troop Guides** appointed by the Scoutmaster.
- The **Senior Patrol Leader** ("SPL"), a senior Scout, is the "head Scout" of the Troop. He is elected at-large by all Scouts in the Troop. With the Scoutmaster's approval, he appoints one or more **Assistant Senior Patrol Leaders** ("ASPLs").
- The [Patrol Leaders' Council](#) ("Greenbar") consists of the SPL; the ASPLs; the PLs; and other Scout officers such as the Troop Quartermaster, Librarian, etc.
- **Adult oversight** is provided by the [Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters](#), especially the [Patrol Assistant Scoutmasters](#), all of whom are appointed by the Troop's [chartered organization](#) with input from the [Troop Committee](#).

### BSA org chart

- [Troop 55](#), chartered to St. John the Divine Episcopal Church ("SJD"), the [chartered organization](#), is part of ...
- The [Twin Bayou District](#), which is part of ...
- The [Sam Houston Area Council](#) ("SHAC"), which is part of ...
- The [Southern Region](#), which is part of ...
- The BSA [National office](#).

## Patrol Assistant Scoutmasters ("PASM")

[See also [Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters](#).]

Most patrols in Troop 55, especially those with younger Scouts, have one or two specially-designated "Patrol Assistant Scoutmasters" or "PASM" assigned to work with them.

PASMs are not assigned to their own sons' patrols; this is so Scouts can learn from other adults, and to maximize *Scout* (rather than adult) leadership.

Typically, there is a "lead" experienced PASM, with other PASM's working as a team. The role of the PASM's is described below.

### PASM duties with the patrol

1. Supervise Patrol Leader elections, and encourage a democratic election of a Patrol Leader.
2. Advise the Patrol Leader and hold him accountable.
  - a. Help him to remember to attend all Greenbar meetings. If he cannot attend, help him assure that the Assistant Patrol Leader or another patrol Scout attends.
  - b. Help him to establish a telephone tree for contacting all Scouts in the patrol.
3. Assist the Patrol Leader in holding accountable the other Scouts in the patrol, including advising him on his appointments of Assistant Patrol Leaders, etc.
4. For patrols of inexperienced Scouts, make use of Troop Guides to advise the Patrol Leader, and advise the Scoutmaster regarding the Troop Guide's performance in this important leadership position.
5. Help the Patrol to prepare meaningful and interesting programs for the Troop whenever the Patrol is assigned to be the program patrol.
6. Help the Patrol to carry out its duties when assigned as the service patrol. Remember:
  - a. cleanup of Scout Room after troop meetings;
  - b. assuring all Scouts in the Troop have rides home from the meeting. (Get a parent of a Scout in the Patrol to help with this.)
7. Help the Patrol organize to conduct flag ceremonies and meeting openings.
8. Establish a fixed location for the patrol to hold its patrol meetings during Troop meetings.
9. Conduct, or help prepare for, Scoutmaster conferences as a critical part of the [advancement](#) process:
  - a. *Scout through First Class Ranks*: Under the direction of the "lead" PASM, a patrol's PASM's conduct all Scoutmaster conferences for Scouts in the Patrol seeking advancement up through rank of First Class. Use the Scoutmaster conference to motivate Scouts for advancement, praise and critique their performance, hold them accountable for showing patrol participation and Scout Spirit, and assure satisfaction of rank advancement requirements, including regular troop and patrol activities, and active participation requirements.
  - b. *Star through Eagle Ranks*: Conduct a "pre-conference" with Scouts in your patrol seeking advancement to Star- through Eagle ranks. Review with them the requirements for advancement – particularly fulfillment of their leadership position, Scout Spirit, and compliance with and knowledge of the Scout Law and Scout Oath. Then send them for their Scoutmaster conference to the Scoutmaster or his designee.

10. When necessary, help the Patrol Leader maintain sufficient order during Patrol- and Troop meetings.
11. Sit with the Patrol during Troop meetings, and encourage other ASM's assigned to the Patrol to do likewise.
12. Encourage Patrol activities independent of the Troop, to build Patrol spirit (e.g. a movie, game, or other activity).
13. Using advanced Scouts and Troop Guides, teach First Class Advancement to Scouts not yet First Class.
14. Teach the Troop Camping Rules to patrol members, and encourage compliance with those rules.
15. Privately discuss advancement, medical, and any disciplinary issues with parents of patrol Scouts, the Troop's Health and Safety Officer, and/or the Scoutmaster.
16. Assist in selection of other Assistant Scoutmasters to work with your Patrol. Help train these adults to take over your job by next year! Encourage other adults to enroll in Boy Scout Adult Leader Training.
17. Inform the Scoutmaster of problems and successes of the patrol and its leadership.
18. Preserve the authority of Scouts in the patrol, especially the Patrol Leader, against the intrusions of adults not assigned to the patrol. Direct parents of Scouts in the patrol toward instructing Scouts that are not in the patrol.
19. Recruit parents of Patrol members to assist in organizing "fun" patrol activities away from the Troop, aid you with record keeping, and to act as hall monitors at the Church and assuring that all Troop Scouts have gotten rides home when your patrol is the service patrol.
20. Attempt to maintain some uniformity of approach with other PASM's.

### **The PASM job: On campouts**

21. Personally attend as many campouts as possible.
22. Maintain two deep leadership.
23. Ensure that an ASM assigned to the patrol attends every campout, and is present each night of the campout. If no ASM assigned to the patrol is available, recruit another ASM not committed to another patrol for that campout.
24. Require Patrol Leader to complete a duty roster in advance of all campouts, and provide you with a copy, with definite assignments of all patrol members attending.
25. Require Patrol Leader to post the duty roster at the campout, and assist him in assuring its implementation.
26. Ensure that an adult assigned to the patrol eats with the patrol on campouts.
27. Help make sure patrol members camp and tent together.
28. Encourage proper cooking and cleaning methods.
29. Using Troop Guides and more-senior Scouts, teach safe and efficient patrol campsite setup.

## Patrol method

*"The patrol method is not a way to operate a Boy Scout troop, it is the only way. Unless the patrol method is in operation, you don't really have a Boy Scout troop." —Robert S. S. Baden-Powell*

[See also "[Org Charts](#)" in this Handbook.]

**Parents and Scouts alike should carefully read** the BSA's discussion of the [patrol method](#) on the Web.

A fundamental difference between Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts is the greater responsibility given to the Scouts, vice their parents. The Troop is governed by a Patrol Leaders' Council or "PLC." 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.\* Guided by the [Scoutmaster](#) and Assistant Scoutmasters, the PLC plans the yearly Troop program at the annual Troop program planning conference. It then meets monthly, or more often if necessary, to fine-tune the plans for upcoming events.

(All Troop 55 parents are still encouraged and expected to be actively involved in the Troop. *Everyone's* help is needed, because a Scout-led troop actually requires *more* work by adults. Volunteer opportunities and appropriate [training](#) exist to match the interest and available time of every adult.)

Parents should also make an effort to meet their Scout's Patrol Leader and Troop Guides (if applicable) and the Troop's Senior Patrol Leader ("SPL").

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\* 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.

## Prohibited items

The following items are prohibited on campouts, at summer camp, and at meetings unless specifically authorized by the Scoutmaster on a case-by-case basis:

- 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, **cell phones**, MP3 players, electronic games (Gameboys, etc.)
- Tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs
- Firearms or ammunition of any kind (including BB guns)
- Slingshots, clubs, spears, etc.
- Hatchets or axes
- Glass bottles

# Scholarships

## Scholarship Committee

The Scholarship Committee consists of (i) the current Troop Committee Chair, Scoutmaster, and Troop Treasurer; (ii) one past holder of each of these positions, each approved by the Chartered Organization; and (iii) the Chartered Organization Representative.

## Troop scholarships

- 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 [PASM](#)s should make a positive effort, for each weekend campout and each summer camp, to identify Scouts who cannot afford to attend such event. If a Scout indicates that he will not be attending, and the Scoutmaster or PASM suspects that the cost might be the main reason, they should ask the Scout if he would be interested in being *considered* for a scholarship.
- 3. Adult leader input.** 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. Other means of paying for camps.** All Scouts are encouraged to participate in the Troop's [fundraising opportunities](#), including the sale of popcorn and Scout Fair tickets. Many of our Scouts have raised hundreds of dollars from these sales that they could apply toward the cost of summer camp.
- 8. Adult scholarships.** Adult leaders will normally not be eligible for scholarships.
- 9. 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 Advanced Youth Leadership Experience conducted at Philmont 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.

**10. Troop dues scholarships.** The Scholarship Committee may award scholarships for Troop dues on the same general basis as provided above.

**11. 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.

**12. 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.

**13. 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.

### **HALO Fund outreach scholarships**

Troop 55 has established and raised money for a special scholarship fund for Scouts from other units, namely the High Adventure & Leadership Outreach (HALO) Fund, administered by the [Scholarship Committee](#).

**Program eligibility:** Based on lessons learned from successful past outreach experiences, the Scholarship Committee will give due weight to the following factors (possibly among others) in determining whether to authorize HALO Fund support for a given high-adventure or leadership program:

1. Participation in the high-adventure or leadership program by Troop 55 Scouts and adult leaders is strongly preferred.
2. The program in question should offer significant leadership opportunities for Scouts and physical and mental challenges.
3. Participation by scholarship Scouts from other troops should be integrated with the crews of Troop 55 Scouts and adults.

**Scout eligibility :** Again based on lessons learned from successful past experience, the Scholarship Committee will give due weight to the following factors (possibly among others) in determining whether to authorize HALO Fund support for a given Scout:

1. HALO Fund scholarships are intended to be need-based. Candidate Scouts, their families, and/or their units should be expected to contribute to the financial cost of the program.
2. The candidate Scouts should be at least 13, have finished the 7th grade, have previous Scout summer camp experience, and be at least First Class.
3. The candidate Scouts must be recommended by appropriate adult leaders from their respective units.
4. There should be a reasonable case that participation by the candidate Scouts will strengthen their individual units, and further their own participation and leadership in Scouting beyond the particular program for which a scholarship is sought.
5. The candidate Scouts must demonstrate that they are physically and mentally prepared for the program.

6. Participation by the candidate Scouts in high adventure programs will require appropriate participation in "shakedown" events with Troop 55 Scouts participating in the program toward the goals of familiarizing the Scouts with one another, Troop 55 rules, and preparation for the particular challenges of the selected program. This will often best be done in conjunction with Troop 55 weekend campouts.

7. Because of the lead time necessary to maximize both the experience and the quality of this program, selection of candidate Scouts for a high-adventure program should take place at least several months before the program. It should be a goal to select candidates by the fall preceding a summer high adventure program.

## Scout Shop

The nearest [Scout Shop](#) operated by the Sam Houston Area Council ("SHAC") is at 2225 North Loop West, on the southeast corner of the North Loop (inside the loop) and East T.C. Jester. ([Google Map](#))

## 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 with the approval of both the Troop Committee Chair and the Chartered Organization Representative.

Per BSA policy, the Scoutmaster and all Assistant Scoutmasters must successfully complete the required BSA [training for adult leaders](#).

*See also the "[Patrol Assistant Scoutmasters \('PASMs'\)](#)" section of this Handbook.*

## Scoutmaster conferences

A "**Scoutmaster conference**" is a scheduled meeting between a Scout with the Scoutmaster (or an Assistant Scoutmaster designated by the Scoutmaster) to review a Scout's participation in the Troop. Scoutmaster conferences are required for rank advancement, and are in the Scoutmaster's discretion for other reasons.

### Procedure:

- The Scout, not his parents, should arrange all Scoutmaster conferences.
- The Scout should appear in full Class A uniform, including neckerchief, slide, socks, belt, and merit badge sash if applicable.
- **Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class rank:** Scoutmaster conferences are conducted by a [PASM](#) assigned to the Scout's patrol.
- **Star or Life rank:** The Scout should first review his preparation with his PASM, and then seek a conference with the Scoutmaster or, if authorized by the Scoutmaster, a designated Scoutmaster Emeritus or other Assistant Scoutmaster.
- **Eagle rank:** The Scout should first review his preparation with an Eagle Advisor, then seek a conference with the Scoutmaster.
- If the Scoutmaster agrees that the Scout has completed the advancement requirements, he will sign the Scout's Handbook in the place provided, and the **Scout** should then promptly seek a [Board of Review](#)

## Service projects

Community service is an integral part of the Scouting program, designed primarily to aid development of character and citizenship. Scouts are required to take part in service projects for at least a specified number of hours for advancement to 2nd Class, Star and Life ranks. Scouts can earn creditable service hours for these ranks by taking part in any the following:

- Troop service projects;
- Patrol good turns approved in advance by the Patrol Leaders' Council to help qualify a patrol for the National Honor Patrol Award;
- Eagle leadership service projects organized by Scouts who are working on their Eagle rank **(participation in Eagle projects is particularly encouraged)**;
- Order of the Arrow service projects, other than those as part of a Scout's Ordeal, and
- Other service projects, which **must be approved in advance** by the Scoutmaster.

Service to the Troop itself, such as cleaning the Troop storage shed, do not qualify as service hours for rank advancement. Scouts should not double count service hours for rank advancement, such as those used for merit badge requirements, 50-mile awards, school requirements, or church requirements.

Announcement of and sign-ups for service projects generally happen at Troop meetings, by email or Troop newsletter, or via the Troop Website.

## Summer camp

Summer camp is a great time for advancement and practicing the patrol method. Often our Scouts have their greatest leadership experiences and earn memories for a lifetime at our summer camps.

- Troop 55 sponsored summer camps are those approved in advance by the Troop Committee.
- Registration for summer camps is open to all Troop 55 Scouts who meet the age and experience eligibility requirements for the particular program.
- Registration is sometimes limited in number, in which case it is "first-come, first-served" among Troop 55 Scouts who are eligible.

### "Merit badge" camps

The Troop generally attempts to schedule at least two summer camps at a "residence" camp geared toward First Class advancement and merit badge work. An example of such a camp is 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, the other in July.

**It is particularly important for new Scouts 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, including a doctor's exam for the BSA Medical Form Part C.

### High-adventure camps

The Troop routinely schedules several outstanding high-adventure programs every summer, including backpacking treks and often sailing, kayaking, climbing, and other wilderness trips. For Scouts who are 14 years of age and older, the Troop routinely attempts to organize trips to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico for a two-week wilderness backpacking experience. Other camping adventures for older Scouts may involve the BSA Sea Base in Florida; Northern Tier High Adventure Base; canoeing for ten days in Maine; or backpacking in Colorado and Montana; or even Alaska above the Arctic Circle. Troop 55 tries to engage in a variety of these programs every year. For a list of recent programs, see [www.troop55.org](http://www.troop55.org).

The age minimum for high-adventure 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 the program start date.

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

### Adult participation in summer camps

New adult leaders are always needed for summer camps. Merit badge camps are a great opportunity for adults new to the Troop who have completed the required training to "break in" by spending a week camping with the Troop.

Adult registration for summer camps works differently than for our Scouts. Adults who wish to attend summer camps with the Troop should be aware of the following:

1. All adults attending summer camp are required to complete [adult leader training](#).
2. Selection of adult leaders for our summer-camp programs is up to the Scoutmaster, with the advice and consent of the Troop Committee Chair.
3. We try to staff our summer programs with adults who understand and accept responsibility for the well-being and safety of our Scouts; who can discreetly guide a **Scout-led** contingent;

who can teach Scouts the necessary skills; who can respond effectively to emergencies; and who know the applicable BSA standards and commit to follow them.

4. The Troop usually receives a limited number of slots for high-adventure programs. We try to fill those slots with the maximum number of Scouts and the minimum number of qualified adults needed for a safe outing.
5. Payment of deposits is required for adults, as it is for Scouts. Payment of a deposit does **not** guarantee a slot for a particular adult (if the adult is not selected to participate, the Troop will refund the deposit).
6. Adult participation in summer camps is **not** first-come, first-served; it is a privilege, not a right. Especially, but not exclusively, for high-adventure programs, adult-leader selection takes into account such factors as the following:
  - a. Completion of all [training](#) required to be an Assistant Scoutmaster;
  - b. Active and regular participation in the Troop's monthly camping program;
  - c. Any prior participation in Troop 55 summer camps;
  - d. Demonstrated competence and training in skills desirable for the particular high-adventure program, for example, Wilderness First Aid; Leave No Trace; BSA or American Red Cross Lifeguard; whitewater canoeing;
  - e. Regular, successful prior experience as a [Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster](#);
  - f. Demonstrated success in working with our Scouts and promoting a Scout-led outdoor experience by all Scouts (including their own sons);
  - g. Other needs of the Troop and of the particular program.
7. In addition to the BSA required on-line Youth Protection Training, some summer camps, such as all those in Texas, may required an in-person YPT class.

## Troop Committee

The Troop Committee could be thought of as the "board of directors" of the Troop. Its main responsibilities are (i) supporting the Scoutmaster in delivering quality Troop programs, and (ii) handling Troop administration.

The Chair of the Troop Committee serves as something like a non-executive chairman/woman of the board. He or she is appointed by the [chartered organization](#) with input from the Troop Committee.

Troop 55 has a very active Troop Committee, essentially all of whom are parents and even grandparents of current or former Troop 55 Scouts. All Troop 55 Scouts' parents are encouraged to participate in the Troop Committee. (Participating parents should register with the BSA as committee members.)

See the MeritBadge.org "[Troop Committee](#)" Web page for a helpful discussion of the role of a troop committee and its various subcommittees and positions.

You may also wish to take the [Troop Committee Challenge](#) online training.

## Uniforms

Each Scout is expected to wear the appropriate Scout uniform to every Scout function. Uniforms can be purchased at the [Scout Shop](#). The Troop provides one embroidered Troop 55 neckerchief and one sew-on name strip to each Scout; each additional neckerchief costs \$25.00, while each additional name strip is \$5.00. BSA uniform guidelines state that the scout uniform shirt must be tucked in.

EVENT	UNIFORM
Troop meetings	Scout uniform shirt
Travel to/from campouts	Same as Troop meetings (leave the neckerchief home)
Travel to/from summer camp	Full "Class A" uniform, including T-55 neckerchief (so we can identify <i>our</i> Scouts), but do not bring merit badge sash
Scoutmaster conferences; Boards of review; Courts of Honor; Scout Sunday	Full "Class A" uniform, including Scout uniform shirt, pants or shorts, socks, belt, neckerchief with slide, and (if applicable) merit badge sash

## Venturing Crew 55

[Venturing Crew 55](#) is a separate Scouting unit for older youths. It also sponsored by SJD as the chartered organization, and has traditionally had significant overlap with the Troop in both membership and adult leadership. Crew membership is open to young men and women ages 14 through 20 who have completed 8th grade. Scouts may and often do have dual registration in the Troop and the Crew, but no dues discount is available.

For [advancement](#) purposes:

- Dual-registered Scouts who seek to complete regular Scout advancement in the Troop (instead of in the Crew) will be subject to Troop oversight and requirements.
- Members of the Crew who seek regular Scout advancement in the Troop must fulfill in the Troop at least the six months of leadership necessary for advancement from Life Scout to Eagle Scout.
- All other regular Scout advancement requirements in Crew 55 members will be fulfilled as established by the Crew Advisor (the equivalent of the Scoutmaster), and overseen by the 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, Crew members will have the opportunity to participate in Troop-administered [Courts of Honor](#), should they so desire.

Venturing Crew members who are not also current dues paying Troop members may be directly assessed incremental costs associated with their participation.

## Revision history

The dates below are those of approval by the [Troop Committee](#) unless otherwise indicated.

2002-11-07: Initial document (adapted from earlier versions)

2003-03-06: FAQ document (since superseded by [Fast Facts](#))

2003-10-02: Added [Scholarships](#) section

2003-12-09: Minor updates

2004-09-01: Minor updates

2005-12-01: Revised names of youth leadership courses

2006-09-07: [Merit badges](#) section revisions

2010-09-02: Conversion to e-book; revisions to [Medications](#) section; added [HALO Fund](#) subsection to [Scholarships](#) section

2010-10-07: Minor revisions in the [Fast Facts](#), [Chartered Organization](#), [Campout Rules](#), [Adult Participation in Summer Camp](#), and [Uniforms](#) sections.

2014-09-08: General updates to document, added in Active Participation, updated Merit Badge blue card process, and updated Service.