



Session One

Troop Organization

Time Allowed

15 minutes

Teaching Objectives

- Lay out the structure of a Boy Scout troop.
 - Describe the roles of a troop's key boy leaders.
 - Explain the supportive functions of the troop's adult leaders, including the Scoutmaster and assistant Scoutmasters and the members of committees and of district and council staffs.
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Materials Needed

- Flipchart, chalkboard, or other format for writing and displaying notes
 - *The Scoutmaster Handbook*, No. 33009
 - *The Boy Scout Handbook*, No. 33105
 - PowerPoint slides or overheads from CD, if desired
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Recommended Facility Layout

- Session meeting area. Each participant should have a comfortable place to sit, take notes, and organize written materials. That setting most often consists of tables, each accommodating six to eight participants forming a patrol, and enough chairs for all participants.
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Delivery Method

- Instructor-led discussion
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Presentation Procedure

Ask participants to turn in their *Scoutmaster Handbooks* to the opening page of Chapter 3, "The Boy-Led Troop." Ask a participant to read aloud the sentences highlighted in the box:

One of your most important challenges as Scoutmaster is to train boy leaders to run the troop by providing direction, coaching, and support. They will make mistakes now and then and will rely upon you to guide them. But only through real hands-on experience as leaders can boys learn to lead.

—*The Scoutmaster Handbook*,
Chapter 3, "The Boy-Led Troop"

Explain that frequent reference has been made during this training to the idea of a boy-led troop. Among the roles of a Scoutmaster, we discussed the fact that a Scoutmaster should allow boys the freedom and the guidance to assume leadership of their own troop. Throughout the rest of this training, we will often make reference to *the boy-led troop*. Let's take the time now to figure out exactly what that means, beginning with the structure of a Boy Scout troop.

Structure of a Boy Scout Troop

Instructors' Note

Ask participants to turn to the chart titled "Sample Junior Leader Organizational Chart for a Small Troop" at the end of Chapter 3 in *The Scoutmaster Handbook*.

During the discussion of troop structure, recreate the chart using a flipchart or other visual aid. By highlighting the chart for a small troop, instructors can more easily lay out the basic organization of a troop. With that established, they can then reference the "Sample Junior Leader Organizational Chart for a Large Troop" on the facing page to illustrate how the structure of a troop can expand to accommodate more members.

Sample Junior Leader
Org Chart for
Small Troop

The basic structure of a Boy Scout troop has served Scouting well since 1910. Its success and longevity can be traced to a variety of factors:

- It provides a place for every troop member to feel a sense of belonging.
- It offers a framework for boys to take on leadership roles that are appropriate for their skills and experience.
- It encourages boys to lead the troop with the guidance and support of adults.

The building blocks of a Scout troop are its patrols.

Patrols

A patrol is the basic organizational unit of a Scout troop. Composed of up to eight boys, it is a good size for Scouts to plan and carry out projects, to hike and camp together, to take part in troop games and events, and to practice leadership on a manageable scale.

There are three kinds of patrols:

- *New-Scout patrols* (for youth just joining the troop)
- *Regular patrols* (usually for boys who have earned at least the First Class award)
- *Venture patrols* (made up of older Scouts)

The number and the kinds of patrols a troop has depends upon the age of the Scouts, their interests, and their needs. Patrols are also sometimes organized according to the neighborhoods in which boys live.

Instructors' Note

Draw the framework of a troop on a flipchart or present it via PowerPoint, overhead projections, or a felt board. The sample troop should have one new-Scout patrol, two regular patrols, and one Venture patrol. Explain that, for the sake of clarity, the example you have chosen is of a small troop with a simple structure. As the discussion of troop structure continues, add the subsequent troop leaders to the chart.

Descriptions of Patrols

Ask participants to turn to the discussion of patrols in *The Scoutmaster Handbook*, Chapter 4, "The Boy-Led Patrol." Summarize the descriptions and answer any questions participants may have about patrols.

REGULAR PATROLS

Regular patrols are usually composed of Scouts who have completed the First Class requirements or who are in at least the seventh grade. They are made up of boys similar in age, achievement, and interests. Most of the boys have been around Scouting long enough to be comfortable with patrol and troop routines, and they are well versed in camping, hiking, cooking, and Scouting's other basic skills. On the other hand, lots of troops have regular patrols composed of boys of various ages.

NEW-SCOUT PATROLS

Many troops have a *new-Scout patrol* for 11-year-old boys who are just joining. The new Scouts function together as a patrol during their first year in the troop, working toward their goal of completing the requirements for the First Class rank. Some troops phase their new Scouts into regular patrols after three to six months. (A new-Scout patrol may hold frequent patrol leader elections so that each boy has the opportunity to serve for one or two months.)

An older, experienced Scout will be appointed by the senior patrol leader, with the advice of the Scoutmaster, to serve as troop guide for the new-Scout patrol. The guide helps new Scouts through the early challenges of troop membership. An assistant Scoutmaster should work closely with the troop guide and the new-Scout patrol to ensure that each Scout has every opportunity to succeed right from the start.

VENTURE PATROLS

A *Venture patrol* is an *optional* older-boy patrol within a troop. These boys (ages 13 through 17) have the maturity and experience to plan and take part in more challenging high-adventure outings and sports activities. An assistant Scoutmaster assigned to the Venture patrol can help the Venture patrol leader and other patrol members transform their plans into action.

A Venture patrol can be instrumental in keeping older boys interested and active in Scouting. About half of all troops currently incorporate one or more Venture patrols in their programs. Every troop with older boys should strongly consider establishing a Venture patrol.

Patrol Leaders

Each patrol in a troop elects a patrol leader. The patrol leader takes a leading role in planning and conducting patrol meetings and activities, and represents the patrol at meetings of the patrol leaders' council. Each patrol leader can appoint an assistant patrol leader to serve with him.

(Participants can find more information on patrol leaders in *The Scoutmaster Handbook*, Chapter 4, "The Boy-Led Patrol.")

SENIOR PATROL LEADER

The senior patrol leader assumes the most leadership responsibility of any Scout in the troop. Elected by all troop members, the senior patrol leader does not belong to a patrol, but rather provides leadership for everyone in the troop. Depending on the size and needs of the troop, the senior patrol leader can appoint one or more assistant senior patrol leaders to take on some of the obligations of troop leadership.

The senior patrol leader is the troop member with whom the Scoutmaster works most directly. By helping the senior patrol leader prepare to lead troop meetings and activities, and by being on the sidelines to coach and support the senior patrol leader during those events, a Scoutmaster can ensure that the senior patrol leader succeeds, has fun, acquires leadership skills, and enables the troop to be boy-led.

Patrol Leaders' Council

The patrol leaders' council is the primary leadership body of the troop. It is composed of the senior patrol leader, assistant senior patrol leader, the patrol leaders, and any troop guides.

Important functions of the patrol leaders' council are planning the troop's overall program, leading the preparations for troop meetings and campouts, and ensuring that all troop events are efficient, interesting, and well run.

(The responsibilities and activities of the patrol leaders' council will be discussed more fully at the end of Session One.)

Other Troop Leadership Positions

As a troop grows in size, the Scoutmaster may expand the organizational chart to include other positions of leadership—quartermaster, scribe, historian, librarian, instructor, chaplain aide, and junior assistant Scoutmaster. Den chiefs and Webelos den chiefs may also be appointed to provide leadership opportunities and to strengthen the relationship between a Cub Scout pack and the troop.

Adding some or all of these positions can open up leadership opportunities to more Scouts and can spread the tasks of the troop among a larger number of its members.

Troop Elections

Elections for patrol leaders and senior patrol leader are conducted by many troops once every six months. This calendar allows boys time to learn their new roles and to develop

as leaders in the troop. Other troop leadership posts are appointed positions that can be used to offer other Scouts leadership opportunities that match their current skills and potential.

Adult Leadership Positions in a Scout Troop

So far in this presentation, we've discussed the troop leadership positions held by the Scouts themselves. There's a good reason for this. We always want to keep the idea of a boy-run troop in the forefront of our consideration of the job of a Scoutmaster. It is through the troop structure and through the boy leaders themselves that we can most effectively deliver the promise of Scouting.

Of course adults have vital roles to play in the continued growth and success of a Boy Scout troop. However, adults' roles are designed to allow the boys to learn and practice effective leadership skills, and to have the satisfaction of knowing that with the guidance, coaching, and support of adults, they did it themselves.

The adults most immediately involved with a troop are the Scoutmaster, assistant Scoutmaster, and troop committee.

SCOUTMASTER AND ASSISTANT SCOUTMASTERS

We've already discussed the role of Scoutmaster. Here we will continue to explore the ways in which a Scoutmaster can succeed.

Assistant Scoutmasters are adult troop leaders who assist the Scoutmaster in providing supportive, coaching guidance to Scouts in a troop. An assistant Scoutmaster can also step in if the Scoutmaster must be absent from a meeting or troop activity.

Ideally, an assistant Scoutmaster can be assigned primary responsibility for the troop's new-Scout patrol while another assistant Scoutmaster takes on a similar role with the troop's Venture patrol. Assistant Scoutmasters may also be assigned primary responsibility for coaching and supporting boys holding other troop leadership positions—quartermaster, scribe, etc.

The presence of one or more assistant Scoutmasters at troop meetings and Scouting events can enrich these experiences for troop members and other adult leaders. Their presence can also fulfill the BSA's safety standard of two-deep adult leadership at all Scouting activities.

Troop Committee

The troop committee is an important part of a troop's support team. The committee may be seen as the "board of directors"

of a troop. Members are often parents of boys in the troop and chartered organization members who are interested in youth programs. The committee is composed of a minimum of three members, one who serves as committee chair. There is no maximum number of committee members.

The relationship between the Scoutmaster and the troop committee should be one of friendship and trust. Difficult issues are sure to confront troop leaders now and then. The Scoutmaster should be able to turn to the committee at any time for assistance, support, and encouragement.

Troop committee members new to their positions attend the Troop Committee Challenge, a three-hour training course. Scoutmasters are encouraged to go through that training, too, especially in the company of members of their own troops' committee members. The training is designed to help the committee become a team that effectively supports the troop and the Scoutmaster.

(For a listing of some of the responsibilities of a troop committee, see *The Scoutmaster Handbook*, Chapter 16, "Chartered Organizations and Troop Committees.")

Scoutmasters should never feel that they must go it alone. The troop committee is there to shoulder much of the weight of making a troop a success, freeing Scoutmasters to invest their time and energy in areas of leadership where they can be most effective.

Where Boy Scouts Come From and Where They Go

Many boys joining a Boy Scout troop have had good experiences as members of Cub Scout packs and Webelos dens. When they are old enough, the transition into a Boy Scout troop can be a natural step in their progression through the Scouting program.

Older Boy Scouts can maintain their interest in a troop's program by forming a Venture patrol that will allow them to embark on high-adventure activities designed to recognize their levels of skill and maturity.

Where these units exist, older Scouts may make the transition from a Scout troop into a Varsity team or a Venturing crew.

VARSITY SCOUTING

Varsity Scouting is an exciting program of the Boy Scouts of America for boys ages 14 to 17. Unlike a Venture patrol, which is part of a Boy Scout troop, a Varsity Scout team stands alone, meeting and conducting activities apart from any troop. The chartered organization sponsoring a Varsity team may also sponsor a Cub Scout pack and a Boy Scout

troop, allowing boys to move up through the units as they become older. Using the formats of participatory sports and high adventure pursuits, Varsity Scouting is structured around five areas of emphasis:

- Advancement
- High Adventure/Sports
- Personal Development
- Service
- Special Programs and Events

VENTURING

Venturing is the BSA's youth development program for young men and women ages 14 to 20 who subscribe to the Venturing Code.

Many Venturing crews focus their attention on activities that encourage members to learn and practice advanced outdoor skills. Whitewater kayaking, rock climbing, sailing, scuba diving—the list is as long as the imaginations and dedication of the Venturers themselves. A Venturing crew may be formed by and for older members in a Scout troop or Varsity team who are seeking further Scouting opportunities and challenges.

Summary

The organization of a Boy Scout troop provides a framework in which members can achieve the most possible from the Scouting program. It gives boys opportunities to learn and grow, and it offers a variety of challenges that can match their interests and their stages of development. It also involves adults in support of Scoutmasters, freeing them to do what they do best—help Scouts become effective troop leaders.

Scoutmasters fully utilizing the troop structure will find it to be an effective vehicle for delivering the promise of Scouting. They will also find that the driving force behind that structure are the concepts of the boy-led patrol and the boy-led troop.

The next presentation of this session will detail the troop meeting—one of the most visible ways that boys can plan and carry out the program of their troop.

Open the discussion to questions and comments relating specifically to the material covered in this presentation.

Announce a five-minute break.