

Parents' & New Leaders Guide to a Boy-Led Troop

Introduction

Welcome! Whether you have just crossed over with your son from Cub Scouts or just joined Boy Scouts, we appreciate your enthusiasm and encourage your participation in the troop.

The three Aims of Boy Scouting are character development, citizenship training, and mental and physical fitness. To accomplish these aims, Scouting employs eight Methods: the ideals, the patrol method, the outdoors, advancement, association with adults, personal growth, leadership development, and the uniform. We encourage you to take the Boy Scout training to find out what we are trying to accomplish and how you can help.

One of the major differences between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts is the very important Method: leadership development. In order to teach leadership, you have to let the boys actually, really lead. In fact, one of the more vigorous debates you can have in Scouting is over the feasibility of a boy-led troop. Some adult leaders will argue that while a boy-led troop is the BSA ideal, it is not possible in their particular troop for any or all of the following reasons: the boys are too young, too lazy, too irresponsible, immature or just not interested.

A boy-led troop is more work for the adult leadership, and therein is the problem, and our need for your cooperation and help. It is so much easier for the adults to just take charge themselves than to teach the necessary leadership skills to teenagers.

All Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters are taught the basics of a boy-led troop and patrol as one part of Scoutmaster Specifics. However, putting that training into practice is often difficult without a mentor in the troop. This guide will hopefully bridge the gap between theory and practice. The importance of a boy-led troop and the Patrol Method is emphasized in two chapters of the Scoutmaster's Handbook; chapter 3 "The Boy-Led Troop" starts with this strong statement:

"Empowering boys to be leaders is the core of Scouting. Scouts learn by doing, and what they do is lead their patrols and their troop. The boys themselves develop a troop program, set goals and then take responsibility for figuring out how they will achieve their goals. One of our most important challenges is to train boy leaders to run the troop by providing direction, coaching and support. The boys will make mistakes now and then and will rely upon the Scoutmaster and his Assistant Scoutmasters to guide them. But only through real hands-on experience as leaders can boys learn to really lead."

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As mentioned before, perhaps the most common reason for the existence of adult-led troops is that it is easier for the adults to run things; they still may not run things well but it will be easier for the adults and that is what they care about most. This is typical of the so-called “camping clubs”. Teaching leadership to boys is not easy and so the adults take the easy way out. A second common reason is that the adult leaders may be afraid of failure; more than giving the boys a chance to learn to lead the adults may prefer a smooth-running troop. A boy-led project will occasionally falter, even fall flat on its face, and adults may feel it necessary to take over to ensure success. There is little or no learning when adults do things for the boys. A third reason is that the troop may have adult leaders that do not delegate well, and do not wish to give up control. In fact, many agree the main barriers to a boy-led troop come from the attitudes within the adults around them.

Ideally, the Uniformed Leaders and enthusiastic parents work together

Always Rigidly Flexible

This guide is meant more as guidelines than actual rules. Just as every troop, scout, adult leader, and parent is different, what works best is not always the same. Also what worked yesterday may not work tomorrow. We do not want change for the sake of change, but to meet the changing needs of the troop (i.e., the scouts).

Adults are there for the Boys

The adults need to keep in mind that we are here for the Scouts. In Scouting parents will meet others with similar values and goals for their children. Parents will build good friendships with the others and they can provide support and parenting suggestions. Scouting is a way to become a better parent through association with and the help of like-minded adults. However, adults should keep in mind that they are there for the boys and should try to not let socializing dominate.

The Scoutmaster is in charge of the Troop - - but only to an extent

All parents should understand the structure of the troop. There is a “chain of command” within the youth leadership and also within the adult leadership. Parents must not interfere – or “help” – with the youth chain of command. The whole point of Boy Scouting is that the boys in positions of responsibility are the ones who run the troop.

The Scoutmaster has to have a final say as the ultimate adult leader of the troop, especially when it comes to matters of safety and the content and quality of the troop's scouting program. He needs to work together with his Assistants and certain other adults on the Troop Committee toward the boy-led goal. Parents who choose not to undertake the requisite training and wear the uniform should not question or contradict the Scoutmaster or one of his Assistants in front of the boys; or try to direct the boys or assign tasks to them, regardless whether or not the Scoutmaster or one

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of his Assistants is present. Guiding the boys is the job of the uniformed leaders who are committed to the boy-led goal. Planning, organizing, assigning tasks and delegating is what the boy leaders do, not the parents.

The well-intentioned but often misguided efforts by uninformed parents to help often break the youth chain of command; and undercuts the authority of the youth(s) who is responsible for assigning tasks and following up to see that they get done.

The boys should understand that they have only as much authority as allowed by the uniformed adult leaders, especially the Scoutmaster; and need to show the appropriate respect for the adults in their lives.

The Parent Involvement

Parent support and involvement is essential. Unlike the full parent involvement in Cub Scouts, parents are asked to become much less involved with their own child and more within the structure of the troop as a committee member or, better yet, an Assistant Scoutmaster. Very few parents come in to Boy Scouting with even a basic understanding of the program. To get all the parents on the same page and working toward the goals of Scouting, the Committee Chairman should ask them to take the on-line **This is Scouting** and **Boy Scout Leader Fast Start training**. Parents who desire direct involvement with the boys (such as going on a campout with the troop) must also take **Youth Protection training** to understand the behavior and commitment to protecting the boys, emotionally and physically, that the BSA requires of all Adults dealing with youths--whether or not they wear the uniform. Committee members should take the **Troop Committee Challenge**.

It may be useful for the Scoutmaster to occasionally meet with ALL parents to share his vision for a successful troop. The Troop Committee Chairman should actively seek to involve the parents in accomplishing the troop's goals so long as those parents understand it is not about their own child—it is all about the troop.

The Troop Committee

From **Fast Start**: "If you haven't been involved in Scouting, you may think that the whole organization is the Scoutmaster and the youth members. The truth is, the success of the troop depends on a lot of adult volunteers who work behind the scenes to make it all happen. The troop committee is like a steering committee—other adult volunteers who actually handle the business end of running the troop."

From the Scoutmaster Handbook: "The most important responsibility of a troop committee is recruiting qualified adult leaders for the troop." "The Scoutmaster should be able to turn to the committee at any time for assistance, support, and encouragement." The troop committee must step back and not try to run the troop. That is for the Scoutmaster (and his Assistants) to train the boys to do.

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Adult-led symptoms and impacts

Adults loudly asserting authority

Adults yelling at the boys in front of the troop is one characteristic of an adult-led troop where the adults have not transferred authority to the youth. Yelling at the boys has a toxic effect on the supportive atmosphere we want to nurture in a troop. Scouting is a put-down free zone. We use the Scout hand sign as a silent way to bring the troop to order for this very reason.

Also, the boys never learn to lead if the adults dominate. The only time an adult should step in is if there is an immediate safety threat. Otherwise, there is time to work through the youth leadership chain of command. The only way for boys to learn leadership is to actually hand them the reins of power, with plenty of instruction of course.

Adults jumping in with more enthusiasm than patience

Volunteers who take charge are usually a good thing except when they preempt the boys' responsibilities. Of course it is hard to wait for a boy to do something that you could do better in much less time. However if you do something for someone, they will not learn the skill. Adults already know how (maybe); boys still need to learn. Scout meetings and outings should provide a hassle-free environment in which to learn and practice real leadership.

Adults operating in Cub Pack mode

Parents crossing over with their boys can often feel more comfortable modifying slightly the structure they know from Cub Scouts than to adopt the changes demanded by a true boy-led Boy Scout program. They continue the parent-child authority structure and don't hand power over to the boys. They may pretend to involve the scouts but in fact try to manipulate the boys' decisions to match the parents' own goals rather than to what the boys wish. This leads to an extension of the parent-child relationship into the teen years when the youth should be starting the transition to independence.

Adults enabling co-dependency

Parents of scouting age boys are often comfortable with the roles they have established with their young children; and they feel they have control to a measurable extent and do not wish that dynamic to change. They organize the program and the boys follow along. But the boys remain in a dependent role. Very young Scouts may be comfortable with a dependent role for a while. Adults feel useful and boys don't have to put out much effort; in the short-term it is convenient for both. In these cases the troop probably operates like an adult-run camping club. But as the boys grow older, their lack of control of what is supposed to be their program begins to chafe. Inevitably they will turn away to other interests where they feel they have more freedom or more of a say.

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Adults contributing to older boy attrition

Boys can stay as dependents only so long before they rebel from imposed adult authority. Adults giving the boys more control over activities and outings can help solve an older boy attrition problem. Venture patrols or similar older boy patrols allow them to plan high adventure outings that increase retention.

Scouting trains boys in life skills. Removing "boy-led" from the program removes an extremely important aspect of Scouting: leadership and teamwork. Boys need to practice team leadership in the safe environment that Scouting provides. Without this practice, they are less prepared to enter "real life" where mistakes may have significant consequences.

Boy-led advantages

Boys learn critical planning and organizational skills

Boys need to learn how to set achievable goals. For example, planning a canoe trip can start with "Safety Afloat" training by an adult as an outline to make the boys aware of safety concerns. Including the boys in the process of planning the outing allows the adults to teach the logistics of planning: setting goals and objectives; breaking the project into smaller tasks and determine deadlines when they need to get done; assigning responsibilities to individual team members; putting the plan into action and tracking progress; evaluating the outcome and modifying the plan. There is always the need to check in with others on the project to see if all is going well.

Boys learn to lead in a safe environment.

Leadership is not only knowing what you need to do to succeed but also knowing what to do if things go wrong. Before each boy-led activity, an adult leader should sit down with the boy leadership and go over their plan, to make sure that the boys are not set up for abject failure. The adult leaders are responsible for maintaining a non-confrontational environment by letting the boys know the adults support them, and will be available if needed. Adults minimize the fear of failure by maintaining a supportive environment.

Boys learn from mistakes

It is hard to watch a process get done poorly, but if a boy-led troop meeting does not go as planned, there is no great loss. If a meal on a camp-out does not work out, it becomes a learning experience, a teachable moment to show how one responds to mistakes and still shows respect for others. It is very important to meet after each activity and outing with the boy leadership to help them conduct a Start, Stop, Continue evaluation (SPL Handbook p. 97). How could this activity have been done better? Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from learning from your mistakes.

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Boys learn to lead others and work in teams.

Working well with others is perhaps the most important life skill that youth can learn. Boys gain confidence by being entrusted with power and in leading their peers. Section Six in the Senior Patrol Leader's Handbook talks about leadership styles and developing your team. The youth leader learns that their leadership style needs to change from Explaining, to Demonstrating, to Guiding, and finally to Enabling as the group develops into a working team (the Leading EDGE in SPL Handbook page 88-89).

Boys learn respect when treated with respect

Adults should show respect by not interrupting or criticizing the youth leadership during a troop meeting, no matter how badly things may be going. Instead, the adults should praise youth leaders in public when they do well, which helps boost both their confidence and the troop's faith in them. If the troop believes in their Senior Patrol Leader, they will treat him with respect and listen to him more readily, which in turn makes the troop run more smoothly. The time for critique is after the meeting, in private. Sadly, it is much more difficult to build up confidence in others than to tear it down. The adults will earn the respect of the boys by their actions and example, not by demand.

Role of the Adult Leaders in a Boy-led Troop

Follow the lead of the Scoutmaster

Just as the Scouts need to know that their SPL is in charge of the troop, and the members of a Patrol need to look to their Patrol Leader for guidance and direction, all adults need to know that the Scoutmaster is in charge! Scouts will follow the example of the adults, good or bad. Please criticize only when you can give a suggestion to correct the problem, i.e., a practical solution consistent with the goal of a boy-led troop. Otherwise it is nothing more than whining. This is crucial for the adults to follow as well as the Scouts. Adults should stand behind the Scoutmaster, not in front of him.

Train the Patrol Leader

This is especially necessary if the troop does not participate in District or Council youth training. The boys need to know what is expected of them. Often a troop will do BSA's **Troop Leadership Training** (BSA publication #34306A) which has four sections. First is a section on how the Scoutmaster should train the Senior Patrol Leader. Then, ideally, the Scoutmaster and the SPL jointly train the rest of the boy leadership in three modules:

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Module One - Introduction to Troop Leadership (**Know**). The boy-led troop and boy-led patrol chapters in the Scoutmaster Handbook is discussed. The troop organization and overview of each position is next.

Module Two - How to Do Your Job (**Be**). The Scoutmaster shares his vision of success. This is followed by a discussion of the teaching EDGE (Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, and Enable) as the method used for teaching skills. Finally a troop progress discussion is held using the Start, Stop, Continue assessment tool.

Module Three - What is Expected of me (**Do**). This section focuses first on the position descriptions and expectations. The Scoutmaster then leads a discussion on Servant Leadership. It closes with defining success in your position, the scout setting between 3 and 5 mutually-agreed personal goals and, eventually, a Scoutmaster Conference during which the scout's leadership is discussed and assessed.

Mentor the Patrol Leader

Leadership mentoring must continue beyond the initial training. An important rule to remember is to praise publicly and criticize privately. It is best to start with simple leadership tasks first, so the boys are not set up to fail. An adult should always meet with the Patrol Leader before the activity to go over preparation. The youth leadership should be able to rely on the adults to provide the skills and resources for them to succeed. The Senior Patrol Leader Handbook and the Patrol Leader Handbook are excellent resources.

Robert Baden-Powell in the Scoutmaster Handbook said, "Training boy leaders to run their troop is the Scoutmaster's most important job."

Back up youth authority

Your youth leaders will have to learn how to deal with problem people (SPL Handbook p. 95-96). Managing conflict is an extremely valuable skill for both youth and adults to master. Managing conflict is a core topic in both National Youth Leadership Training and Wood Badge. If the Patrol Leader can't resolve the issue then it goes to the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader and the Senior Patrol Leader. In a well-run boy-led troop, if the disciplinary problem has to be brought to the adult leadership, some feel that it is serious enough that the offending boy should go home.

All things are taught best by example. Just as there is a chain of command in the Scouts, there is a chain of command with adults. The better we follow this chain of command, the better example the boys have to follow. We can not expect the boys to follow a chain of command if what they witness with adults is chaotic and controversial. The adult chain of command should be similar to the Scout chain of command. This is why it is crucial that the Senior Patrol Leader be the leader of the youth and the Scoutmaster be the leader of the other uniformed adult leaders and the Committee Chairman the leader of the non-uniformed parents.

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Everyone has a defined role and should stick to it. Parents who do not take training or who insist on directing things are the responsibility of the Committee Chairman and other members of the Committee, never the uniformed leaders. However well-intentioned it may be, it is the responsibility of the troop committee to insulate the leadership and protect the boys from such interference.

Step back and delegate

Often an adult will get asked a question from a boy in a patrol because the adult is viewed as the authority. It is best if the adult does not give the answer. One of the most important things an adult can say is "Did you ask your Patrol Leader?" By respecting the chain of command in this simple manner, you build the authority of your boy leaders.

Two relevant quotes from Robert Baden-Powell in the Scoutmaster Handbook are, "**Train Scouts to do a job, then let them do it.**" and "**Never do anything a boy can do.**"

Set the supportive tone

Adults should not be yelling at kids, except in safety emergencies. A major part of creating a supportive environment is training the adults how to respond to the youth with patience and respect. The boys need to know that they will not be yelled at if they fail. Notice one way we set the tone is by silently raising the Scout sign and patiently waiting when we want order, rather than losing our patience and yelling for them to "shut up." Adult behavior should follow the Scout Oath and Law: teach good behavior by example. The adults need to know how to operate within themselves before they can function with the Scouts. Every adult should refer back to the Scout chain of command whenever possible. If the adults do not know how to operate within their own chain of command, they will not know how to respond to the boys appropriately.

Encourage the Patrol Method

The Scoutmaster Handbook states, "Patrols are the building blocks of a Boy Scout troop." It quotes Robert Baden-Powell: "**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.**"

The patrol is the team that you train your patrol leader to build. This may be that Patrol Leader's first leadership experience, so he will need plenty of training and coaching. Patrol spirit, respect, and cooperation will help build that team.

Make sure the rules and regulations are followed

Safety is the primary adult responsibility. Uniformed adult leaders are responsible for the troop following the rules found in the Guide to Safe Scouting and in the Youth Protection training. The adult leadership takes numerous training regimens on a wide variety of topics and in turn trains the youth leadership to stay within the boundaries set by BSA, and is ultimately responsible to see the rules are

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followed. The better the youth understand the reasons for BSA's safety rules the more likely they are to cooperate and comply. Explain that the safety rules apply to everyone, boys and adults alike.

Transitioning to a Boy-Led Troop

Watch out for Adult Saboteurs

The cooperation of the adults can make or break the troop. The Scoutmaster needs to have all the adults on board with what he is trying to accomplish. The safe, nurturing environment that the Scouting program hopes will be established in a troop can be ruined by one cranky adult. One take-charge adult can strip the boy leadership of the opportunity to lead. Basically, the boys can't lead if the adults are treating them as if they have no power. Even if your Senior Patrol Leader is fully trained, he cannot be effective with the boys unless he is empowered by the adult leadership. Any leader who is denied any actual power is set up to be ignored and eventually fail.

The Troop Committee is charged with the responsibility to fully support the Scoutmaster and see that no adult(s) attempt to usurp the boys' opportunities to learn and practice real leadership.

Train the adult leadership

Adults need to see the "big picture" of Scouting and there is no better way to do this than by taking full advantage of the available training. Your troop-level adult leader training can be as simple as a small group working through the Scoutmaster Handbook. A simple Start, Stop, Continue assessment can compare the troop to the ideals set in the Scoutmaster Handbook. If it has been a while since your adult leaders have taken **Scoutmaster Specifics**, maybe it would be a good for them to sit through this one-day training again. Also check to see if your Council conducts the annual **University of Scouting** that covers many areas of Scouting.

By far the best training available for adult leaders and committee members is **Wood Badge**, which merges some of the best corporate and military leadership training with Scouting. If possible, the Scoutmaster should be Wood Badge trained.

Train the boy leaders

This can be as simple as BSA's Troop Level Training. One of the best boy leader training is NYLT, **National Youth Leadership Training**. If possible your Senior Patrol Leader should be NYLT trained. However you do training, realize that youth leader training is a continual process. Taking Troop Level Training or NYLT once is not enough. TLT should be taken annually and NYLT at least every other year (if not annually). Often the boys will not succeed the first time they try to lead. Or the second. And maybe not the third time either. The adult leadership may need to continually encourage and remind them until good leadership habits form. Good habits will not form if they aren't provided with regular opportunities. This continuing training may take quite a while, so the adult leader must have patience with the process.

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Get the adults out of the Patrol Leaders' Council

"The Patrol Leaders' Council, not the adult leaders, is responsible for planning and organizing troop activities." - **Fast Start:** Boy Scouting.

The Patrol Leader's Council, or PLC, is run by the Senior Patrol Leader and not the adult leadership. If your PLC has kibitzing adults, try to have a separate meeting for them at the same time, so that the boys can lead their own meeting independent of adult interference and distraction. If there are behavior problems by the boys, the mere presence of just one or at most two uniformed adult leaders should be enough to remind the boys that their Senior Patrol Leader is in charge, and is backed up by the adult leadership. In a nutshell, the only adult that should attend the PLC is the Scoutmaster or his designate! The adult may begin and end a PLC meeting with the boys but should quickly excuse himself and remain nearby, perhaps in an adjacent room within earshot, so the boys can run their own meeting. The Scoutmaster is an advisor and mentor to the PLC. Although he or an Assistant Scoutmaster may be present, he does not run the meeting—that is the job of the Senior Patrol Leader or his ASPL.

Check that the boy leaders are prepared.

It is very important that your Senior Patrol Leader or one of the Patrol Leaders make up an agenda for each activity; and a duty roster for each outing. The Scoutmaster should meet before the PLC and the troop meeting to go over their agenda and planning material to make sure the youth leaders are as prepared as they think they are. The Scoutmaster handbook says, "The Senior Patrol Leader or his ASPL is in charge of every troop-level meeting. Help him plan ahead, coach him along the way, but stay in the background and let him be the leader."

Do not expect rapid change!

It may take 3 or more years before a fully functional boy-led troop is operating. There will always be boy leader turnover and new boys coming in. Every troop election requires a new set of boy leaders to be trained (or whose training needs to be refreshed). One cannot allow setbacks to trigger a reversion to an adult-led troop. Good patrol leaders should be encouraged to move up to troop level leadership as an Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL). The Assistant Senior Patrol Leader can be a training position for Senior Patrol Leader, that way each SPL has had 6 months of troop-level leader training as ASPL before taking office and running the whole troop.

The speed of the change to a fully boy-led troop also greatly depends on how fast the adults can change to a Scoutmaster lead organization! Without this, the boys do not have a proper example to follow.

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Treat your Senior Patrol Leader very well

The Senior Patrol Leader is the leader of a boy-led troop, and you want other boys in the troop to really want that position because it carries status, power and respect. You want the troop to respect and work hard for your SPL. The SPL has the best job in the troop! The adult leadership showing respect for the SPL and his decisions and input reinforces his status. If possible defer always to your SPL.

Allow failure to be a learning experience – up to a point

Within the bounds of a safe scouting experience, the adult leadership should allow the boy leadership to make and learn from their mistakes. If the SPL shows up unprepared for the troop meeting, he will have to wing it and do the best he can. The adults should not bail him out by taking over and running the meeting themselves.

If a boy repeatedly comes unprepared or fails to perform the responsibilities expected of him eventually it may be necessary for the good of the troop or his patrol to have him step aside and take a “breather”. When the time is right he should be allowed to run for election again; or request he be appointed to a new position.

To the extent possible the Scoutmaster should let the boys work things out for themselves. In the absence of safety or youth protection issues, until the boys who elected or appointed the scout decide to remove him from his position of responsibility the Scoutmaster should follow their lead, not vice versa. Of course, the Scoutmaster has the ultimate say whether a scout has met the requirements and earned credit towards Advancement via his position of responsibility.

Plan B is *not* Adult-led. The Patrol Method is the only method.

A teachable moment becomes Plan B. Keep other adults (well-intentioned but ill-advised parents) from interrupting the troop meeting or giving instructions to the boys. No matter how badly the parents think it is going; it is the SPL's show, not theirs. The Scoutmaster should talk with the boy leader(s) after the activity to evaluate what they can learn from the experience (“What went well”? “What could be done differently next time to make it better”?). Keep these meetings short and to the point. Set an encouraging tone if something did not go well, and keep the boys from placing blame. Failure often can be a better teacher than success.

Encourage Patrol Activities

The only way a Patrol Leader will get experience is if the patrol actually does things that require his leadership. Patrol Leaders should hold two or even three patrol meetings every month. There should be an opportunity for one of those patrol meetings to be held within the troop meeting each month. Patrol activities should be planned within troop outings also. Patrols can even plan outings independent of the troop. (See Chapter 4 “The Boy-Led Patrol” in the Scoutmaster Handbook). It is important Patrol Leaders and other scouts in positions of responsibility understand they are expected to set goals for themselves and their patrol; and then carry them out. A sense of accomplishment only comes from actually accomplishing something.

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Ideas for Mentoring Leadership

Use The Senior Patrol Leader Handbook

The Senior Patrol Leader Handbook should be read by not only your SPL and ASPL but also by the adult leadership. This handbook incorporates important new material from National Youth Leadership Training (and by derivation from Wood Badge) and is updated regularly.

Leadership Tips to Get You Started (excerpted from SPL Handbook page 20-21)

Keep your word. Don't make promises you can't keep.

Be fair to all. A good leader shows no favorites.

Communicate. A good leader knows how to get and give information so that everyone understands.

Be flexible. Meetings, campouts, and other patrol events will not always go as planned.

Be organized. Time spent preparing for troop meetings and events will be repaid many times over.

Delegate. Among the greatest strengths of a good leader is the willingness to empower others to accomplish all they can. Delegate but follow-up: follow-up to see if the other scout needs help, and to see if he completed the assigned task (partially or at all).

Set the example. Whatever you do, Scouts in the troop are likely to do the same. Be a role model always.

Be consistent. When the troop members know what to expect from you, they will be more likely to respond positively to your leadership.

Give Praise. Offer honest complements whenever you can.

Ask for help. Do not be embarrassed to draw on the many resources available to you.

Criticize in private. Pull the Scout aside and quietly explain what he is doing wrong. Add a suggestion on how it should have been done correctly.

Have Fun. Most of all, have fun learning to be a leader. Your joy and enthusiasm will spread to other Scouts and will help energize the troop.

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Use Scenarios

First aid courses like Wilderness First Responder spend a lot of time in running scenarios in addition to lectures. Boy Scouts uses scenarios to teach youth protection. This is primarily because people learn by doing. Leadership can also be taught that way. The **National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience (NAYLE)** at Philmont uses scenarios like search and rescue to teach leadership. Closer to home, the SPL Handbook has five example scenarios (page 90-91) but any seasoned adult leader probably has many more real-life examples to use. Consider taking time with your boy leadership to work through known challenges, so that they will feel prepared if a similar situation arises. Discussing alternatives ahead of time with an adult leader will help build a Youth's confidence that their responses would be correct. Scenarios can also allow the Scoutmaster to train the adult leadership in the proper responses to boy-led challenges.

Conclusion

Like many things, working on a functional boy-led troop is a journey to be enjoyed and not necessarily a destination that will be achieved. Troop turnover guarantees that it will always be a work in progress. Working toward a boy-led troop will give you a platform to teach leadership and the satisfaction of watching boys mature into good leaders.

Resources:

In print from BSA:

- Senior Patrol Leader's Handbook
- Patrol Leader's Handbook
- Scoutmaster's Handbook
- Troop Leadership Training
- The Boy Scout Handbook
- Guide to Safe Scouting
- Fieldbook

Other books and magazines:

- Scouting Magazine
- "The Scoutmaster's Other Handbook" by Mark A. Ray

Additional training

- District Roundtable
- University of Scouting
- Wood Badge

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BSA web-based training:

This is Scouting – required for all new adult leaders entering Boy Scouting

Fast Start: Boy Scouting - an excellent overview of the Scouting program

Youth Protection Training – required for all adults in contact with youths

Hazardous Weather – required for SM/ ASM and Tour Leaders

Trek Safely – required for SM/ ASM and Tour Leaders (any hikes)

Safety Afloat – required for SM/ ASM and Tour Leaders

(all aquatics/water activities incl. boating)

Safe Swim Defense – required for SM/ ASM and Tour Leaders

(all aquatics/water activities incl. boating)

Scouting Magazine article

Nov-Dec 2000 “Front Line Stuff”

“Some strategies for realizing the important goal of boy-led troop Leadership”

<http://www.scoutingmagazine.org/issues/0011/d-flin.html>

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