



# New Parents Guide

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*Boy Scouts of America – Troop 31, Los Altos, CA*

Welcome to the Boy Scouts of America! By becoming a parent of a Boy Scout, you are setting your son out on the grand adventure of Scouting. This is a tremendously important and rewarding endeavor that you will be able to share with him. This guide has been prepared to help you support your son and describe some of the unique features of Boy Scouts. Your primary source of information should be the Boy Scout Handbook which is a wonderful reference for everything your son will experience. Welcome to the Troop!

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## Introduction

Welcome to Boy Scouts! What is it all about? What will you be expected to do? What do you need to get? We have prepared this booklet to answer these questions.

The following pages describe the philosophy of Scouting, organization of a Troop and the advancement pattern that each boy will follow. Reading this will help you understand how your boy can progress through the ranks with your help. It will help you understand how you can help and what the various adult volunteers are doing to help the Troop.

Please feel free to bring any questions or concerns you may have to the attention of any of our uniformed leadership or Troop committee members. We look forward to working with your son over the coming years, and to your support for Scouting and our Troop.

## A Brief History of Scouting

Scouting was founded by Lord Robert Baden-Powell in England in 1907 (Scouting's sister movement, Girl Scouts, was founded in 1910). As of the end of 2018, there were more than 28 million youth and adults involved in Scouting in 160 countries worldwide. The Boy Scouts of America was founded in 1910 by William D. Boyce, followed by the Girl Scouts of America in 1912. Troop 31 was founded in 1957. Our Troop is part of the Stanford District of the Pacific Skyline Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Over the years, Scouting has seen many Scouts go on to great accomplishments, including in their number a President of the United States, current and a former Supreme Court Justices, current and former Cabinet Secretaries, and numerous astronauts (including 11 of 12 who walked on the moon), highly-decorated soldiers, scientists, congressman, senators, governors, novelists, directors and successful businessmen, as well as 4 Nobel Laureates.

Scouting is non-governmental and non-partisan. Scouting is open to all, regardless of race, creed or national origin. We welcome all interested boys under the age of 18 to consider joining our Troop, whether or not they have any prior experience in Boy Scouts or Cub Scouts.

## Scouting Mission

So what is Scouting? The Boy Scouts of America, specifically, is a non-profit organization which, for over 100 years, has had as its mission to prepare Scouts to make ethical and moral choices throughout their lives by:

- (1) developing good character, including honesty, courage integrity, self-reliance, self-confidence, self-discipline, and self-respect;
- (2) instilling duty to God and country, including an understanding of the Scout's relationship to others in his community and nation, how his local, state, and federal governments work, and his obligation to keep his country strong; and
- (3) promoting physical, mental/emotional and moral fitness.

## Scouting Methods

The Scouting program achieves its mission by the following methods: the ideals of Scouting, the Patrol Method, the outdoor program, advancement, association with adults, personal growth, leadership development, and the uniform. Each of these methods is equally important. Here is a brief summary of each of these methods (you will read more about these later):

**Ideals** — The ideals of Boy Scouting are spelled out in the Scout Oath, the Scout Law, the Scout motto, the Scout slogan and the Outdoor Code.

### Scout Oath

On my honor I will do my best  
To do my duty to God and my country  
and to obey the Scout Law;  
To help other people at all times;  
To keep myself physically strong,  
mentally awake, and morally straight.

### Scout Law

A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful,  
friendly,  
courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful,  
thrifty,  
brave, clean, and reverent.

### Scout Slogan

Do A Good Turn Daily

### Scout Motto

Be Prepared

### Outdoor Code

As an American, I will do my best to-  
Be Clean in my outdoor manners,  
Be Careful with fire,  
Be Considerate in the outdoors, and  
Be Conservation-minded

These ideals are the personal behavior guides and standards that the boy commits to when he joins Scouting. The Scout Oath, Law, Motto, Slogan, and Outdoor Code give the boy guidelines for living. Growth in moral strength

and character is one of the aims of Scouting. By developing his relationship to others, he learns about his obligation to other people, to the society he lives in, and to the government that presides over that society. This accomplishes our aim of having a boy become a participating citizen.

The Boy Scout is expected to learn to live by the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Each Scout must measure himself against these ideals and should continually try to improve. Where discipline issues arise, the Scout Oath and Scout Law form the basic framework within the Scout's behavior is evaluated. Parents are encouraged to remind their Scouts of the various elements of Scouting's ideals, and to praise their Scouts when they demonstrate these ideals in their daily lives whether inside or outside of Scouting.

**Patrol Method** — Patrols are the essential building blocks of a Boy Scout troop. A patrol is a small group of boys who are similar in age, development, and interests. Patrols camp together, cook together, play together, and learn together. Patrols are where Scouts learn citizenship at the most basic level. They also take on responsibilities within the patrol, and learn teamwork and leadership. Working together as a team, patrol members share the responsibility for the patrol's success. They gain confidence by serving in positions of patrol leadership. All patrol members enjoy the friendship, sense of belonging, and achievements of the patrol and of each of its members.

**Outdoor Programs** — Boy Scouting is designed to take place outdoors. Outdoor programs are important because they provide Scouts with the opportunities to practice the skills and activities they learn about in Troop meetings, and to engage in the activities which are required for rank advancement and various merit badges. Being close to nature also helps Scouts gain an appreciation for God's handiwork and our place in it. The outdoor programs also help our Scouts learn about ecology and practice conservation, including the principals of Leave No Trace.

**Advancement** — Boy Scouting has a system of ranks in which Scouts learn progressively more difficult skills and take on progressively greater responsibilities. Boy Scouting provides a series of surmountable obstacles and steps in overcoming them through the advancement method. The Boy Scout plans his advancement and progresses at his own pace as he meets each challenge. The Boy Scout is rewarded for each achievement, which helps him gain self-confidence. The steps in the advancement system help a Boy Scout grow in self-reliance and in the ability to help others.

**Associations with Adults** — Boys learn a great deal by watching how adults conduct themselves. Scout leaders can be positive role models for the members of the Troop. In many cases, a Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmaster, merit badge counselor or other adult volunteer who is willing to listen to boys, encourage them, and take a sincere interest in them can make a profound difference in their lives.

**Personal Growth** — As Boy Scouts plan their activities and progress toward their goals, they experience personal growth. Scouts also grow as they participate in community service projects and do Good Turns for others. The religious emblems program also is a large part of the personal growth method. Frequent personal conferences with his Scoutmaster help each Boy Scout to determine his growth toward Scouting's aims.

**Leadership Development** — The Boy Scout program encourages boys to learn and practice leadership skills, such as planning, organization and decision-making. Every Boy Scout has the opportunity to lead in some way, whether as part of a team, as the leader of his patrol, or as the senior patrol leader or as another youth leader of the Troop.

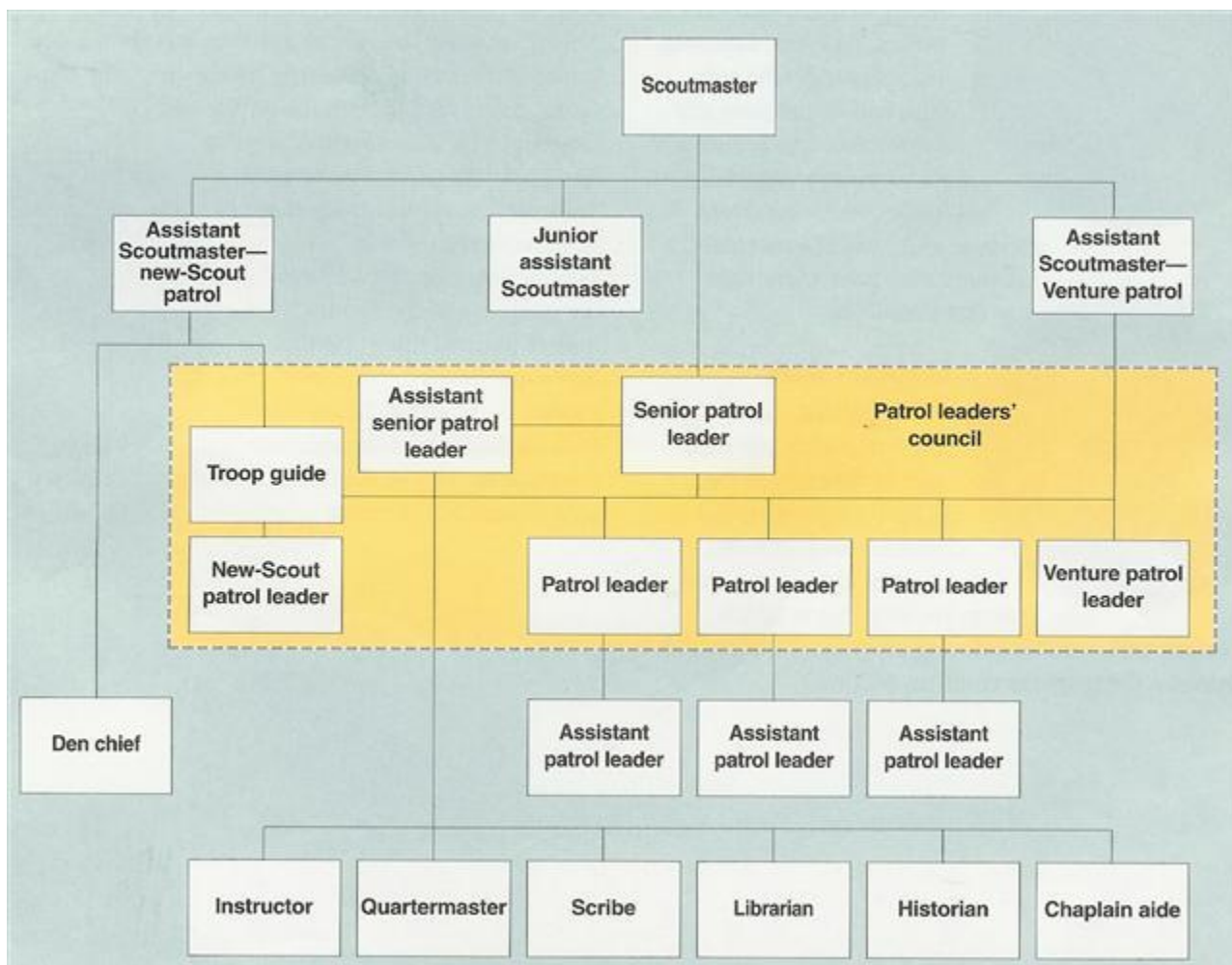
**Uniform** — Like most sports teams, we expect our Scouts to wear the uniform when they are doing Scouting, and to wear it properly. It is a visible symbol in our community at large of who we are and what we do. Accordingly, we expect all Scouts to behave according to the Scout Oath and Law whenever wearing their Scout uniforms.

To delve more deeply into the methods of Scouting, it's important to understand the Troop organization.

## **Troop 31 Organization**

Troop 31 is composed of both youth and adults. All youth within Troop 31 join as Scouts. Other Scouting programs include Venture and Varsity Crews, and Sea Scouts. Troop 31 is not currently affiliated with a Venture or Varsity Crew or Sea Scout ship. Troop adults can generally be classified as either uniformed Scouters (Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmasters, etc.) or volunteers.

The following chart provides a generic description of the uniformed members of the Troop organization. A more detailed description of our Troop organization appears below.



## I. Youth Organization

### A. Patrols

Scouts are organized into patrols, generally groups of between 6-10 Scouts, which serve as the basic building block of Scouting. Patrol members experience Scouting together as a “family unit” within the larger Troop structure, helping each other to advance and performing many activities as a team.

New Scouts that join are placed into first year patrols where they can be led by a First Year Patrol Leader who is an experienced Scout appointed to this position. Other patrols are led by patrol leaders elected by the Scouts. The Troop elects new patrol leaders (PL) twice a year. Currently, their terms of office begin on Jan. 1 and July 1. Patrol Leaders may also designate an assistant Patrol Leader or an acting Patrol Leader.

For Patrol and Troop activities, the Patrol Leader will generally ask for volunteers or designate individual Scouts for specialized jobs such as quartermaster (responsible for drawing camping gear for the Patrol) and grubmaster (responsible for menu planning, shopping and cooking for



the Patrol) on a rotating basis. These jobs give Scouts a good first opportunity to learn responsibility and leadership, and help to integrate them within the Patrol team.

Whether his Patrol Leader is elected or appointed, your Scout's Patrol Leader acts as your Scout's mentor and coach, and gives your Scout a voice in Troop activities. In the first instance your Scout should address any questions or concerns he has about rank advancement, merit badges, camp-outs or other Scouting issues to his Patrol Leader.

## **B. Senior Youth Leaders**

The Troop also elects one older Scout as the Senior Patrol Leader (SPL), who then chooses one or more Assistant Senior Patrol Leaders (ASPL) to assist him. When the SPL is not present at an event, another Scout is designated the acting SPL (usually an ASPL or the highest ranking Scout present).

The SPL serves as the overall youth leader of the Troop, and runs the Troop meetings and directs the Scouts on camp outs. The SPL mentors and coaches the PL's and other youth leaders. If your Scout has a question or concern that can't be or isn't being addressed by his Patrol Leader, you should encourage your Scout to discuss the matter with the SPL or an ASPL.

Other Troop officers include the Quartermaster (manages Troop equipment), Librarian (manages merit badge books), Scribe (keeps Troop records), Chaplain's Aide (prepares and leads Interfaith Services), and various other positions. All leadership positions and their responsibilities are described in detail on the Troop website: [www.Troop31.org](http://www.Troop31.org).

## **C. Patrol Leaders' Council**

Together, the SPL, ASPL's and PL's form the Patrol Leaders' Council (PLC). The PLC meets annually to map out the program activities for the coming year, and then meet once a month to review the result of the last Troop outing and to plan the Troop activities for the next month. PLC meetings are chaired by the SPL. The Scoutmaster or ASMs may attend and address PLC meetings but, like Troop meetings, the PLC meetings are run by the Scouts.

Like all BSA meetings, the PLC meetings are open to all (although the Order of the Arrow, the honor society of Scouting, is limited to elected members, there are no secret meetings or societies within BSA). However, please bear in mind that these meetings are run by the Scouts and are primarily for planning purposes.

## **II. Adults**

The adults involved in the Troop consist of the Chartered Organization, the Troop Committee, the Troop's uniformed adult leaders, and non-uniformed parent volunteers (such as merit badge counselors).

### **A. Chartered Organization (Sponsor)**

Every Troop is created by a sponsoring organization; this Chartered Organization for Troop 31 is the Los Altos Lutheran Church. The Chartered Organization shares our objectives for the boys. A Chartered Organization Representative acts a liaison between us and the Church. Most Troop meetings and non-camping events are held at Los Altos Lutheran Church.



## B. Troop Committee

The Troop Committee functions as the Board of Directors for the Troop, overseeing the adult leadership. At the same time, the Troop Committee acts as an administration and support organization for the Troop (for instance, securing our meeting facilities, obtaining activity permits, ensuring adequate Troop equipment, and maintaining advancement records). The Troop committee also and takes care of a variety of non-program issues surrounding the Troop, such as community newsletter articles, accounting for Troop funds, and coordinating membership drives. Troop committee members also conduct Scout board of reviews for all rank advancements other than for Eagle Scout, and may become involved in resolving serious disciplinary problems.

## C. Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters

The Scoutmaster and ASMs have the responsibility to assist the boys in planning and running the program. All questions from adults regarding the program need to be addressed to these trained, uniformed leaders. As a new parent trying to help your son, the uniformed leaders encourage and are happy to any answer any of your questions, so long as this does not act as a substitute for your Scout to work with his PL and SPL to answer any questions he may have, or to becoming comfortable in speaking with adults about what he needs. We understand your desire to help your son and secure the answers to your questions. However questions about your son's advancement, camping, merit badges or any other subjects are best when they come directly from him to his PL or SPL (or SM/ASM if necessary). This is part of the growth process with which Scouting will assist him.

The Scoutmaster is the key adult leader in the Troop. He does not usually provide direct leadership to the Scouts, but rather serves as a mentor to the SPL and the PLC and ensures that the patrol method is functioning. The SM's role is to provide guidance, training, coaching and support, rather than to "take charge." He is assisted by multiple Assistant Scoutmasters (ASMs). The Scoutmaster or ASM meets with each Scout individually at each rank advancement for a "Scoutmaster's conference," and may provide words of wisdom as a "Scoutmaster's Minute" at the end of each meeting. Perhaps most importantly, the SM and ASMs provide positive role models for the Scouts; as such, they are similarly expected to emulate the Scout Oath and Law.

## D. Parents

The role of parents within Troop 31 is to be supportive of the Troop's efforts and to provide the atmosphere Scouts need to learn and excel. Parents should:

- 1. Read their Scout's handbook and understand the purpose and methods of Scouting.**
2. Actively follow their Scout's progress (or lack thereof) and offer gentle encouragement and a push when needed.
3. Show support to both the individual Scout and the Troop by attending all Troop Courts of Honor.
4. Assist, as requested, in all Troop activities. Be involved.
5. Be aware of the Troop program and annual calendar.

Please direct any questions you may have to the uniformed adult leaders so that we can ensure you obtain correct information and can also use your questions to identify any potential issues that need to be addressed by uniformed leadership with the Troop's youth leaders.

### III. The Boy Led Troop

**“Train Scouts to do a job, then let them do it. Never do anything a boy can do.”  
– Lord Robert Baden-Powell, founder of Boy Scouts**

Implicit in our Troop organization is the basic concept that our Troop is a “boy-led” Troop. Many boys join Boy Scouts after participating in Cub Scouts. One of the major differences between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts is in the Boy Scout method of leadership development. In order to teach leadership, you have to let the boys lead. If you were involved with Cub Scouting, this is a very different role that can take some time getting used to.

Unlike Cub Scouts, where Cub Scouts come in as boys and leave as boys where parents plan and lead Cub Scout activities, Boy Scouting is different. In Boy Scouts:

- Scouts come in as boys, and leave as young men.
- Scouts plan and lead their activities.
- Parents focus on maintaining safety and providing logistical support.



In Boy Scouting, it is often said that Scouting is a game with a purpose: fun is the game, values are the purpose, and learning is the process. At Troop 31, the Scouts plan and decide on the program, run the meetings, manage the equipment, plan and execute the trips, and become self-motivated to advance.

In contrast, the role of the adults in Scouting focuses not on the destination, but the journey. That is, our responsibility as adults is to promote the “process” of Scouting.

What is important for us is:

- Not the food on the campout, but that the boys cooked it.
- Not that the Scout had all the right gear for the campout but that he packed it.
- Not who would make the best patrol leader, but that the boys elect one.
- Not that a Scout learns to perform first aid perfectly, but that another Scout teaches him.
- Not that we cover everything on the meeting agenda, but that the senior patrol leader is in charge.

The parents’ goal is not to get things done, but to create a safe and healthy environment with the training and resources that the Scouts need, and then let the Scouts have the responsibility and distance to do things on their own. The Scouting environment necessarily means that sometimes the boys will fail, but will learn from their mistakes and help others to learn with them. This can make meetings and campouts seem pretty chaotic. Sometimes the boys have tremendous success and sometimes it isn’t pretty. What we typically find is that the most challenging situations tend to be the ones remembered most vividly.

It is naturally very tempting for adults to jump in and sort things out, but we have to remember the process of Scouting. Scouts learn by doing—even if that means learning from disorganization

and sometimes failure. It is up to the Scouts to get things done; it is up to us to make sure the Scouts have what they need, but (within the bounds of health and safety) not what they do with it. The uniformed leaders are there to praise the successes and help the boys reflect and analyze things that didn't work. The uniformed adult leaders thus act as coaches and mentors to the youth leaders, then step back and let them lead.

While parents must resist the urge to “take charge” when the boys seem disorganized, at the same time experience shows that the more involved the parents, the more likely their son is to succeed in Scouting. The Troop also depends on involved adults to ensure the continued operation of the Troop, and to support the Scouting method of having Scouts

associate with adult role models. Ask any adult leader how you can get involved.

### Advantages of a Boy Led Troop

- Boys learn critical planning skills.
- Boys learn to lead in a safe environment.
- Boys learn from mistakes.
- Boys learn to lead others and work in teams.
- Boys learn respect when treated with respect.

### Advancement



There are many definitions of advancement, but the Scouting definition might well be, simply, "the art of meeting a challenge." For that is exactly what the Boy Scout advancement program asks the boys to do. The Boy Scout advancement program provides a ladder of skills that a Scout climbs at his own pace. As he acquires these skills he moves up through a series of ranks, for which he is awarded badges, starting as a Scout and then progressing to Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, Life, and Eagle Scout. The higher he climbs the more challenging his tasks -- and the more rewarding. Achievements include:

- Learning skills that qualify for Scouting's more rugged and exciting outdoor challenges.
- Developing body and mind, growing self-confidence, and helping younger Scouts climb the advancement ladder.
- Discovering how it feels to go further -- in so many ways -- than he ever thought he could.

Parents must understand that ranks are simply a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Everything boys do to advance and earn these ranks, from the day they join until the day they

leave the program, should be a reflection of the Scout's personal goals – not his parents. We strongly encourage advancement, but we never force it—advancement is the Scout's choice, and he sets his own pace. We don't do "lockstep" advancement.

## I. Advancement Process

Advancement in Boy Scouting is a four step process:

1. **The Boy Scout learns.** A Scout learns by doing. As he learns, he grows in ability to do his part as a member of the patrol and the Troop. As he develops knowledge and skill, he is asked to teach others. In this way, he begins to develop leadership.
2. **The Boy Scout is tested.** A Scout may be tested on requirements by his patrol leader, Scoutmaster, assistant Scoutmaster or a member of his Troop with the rank of Star or higher.
3. **The Boy Scout is reviewed.** After a Scout has completed all requirements for a rank, he generally has a Scoutmaster Conference followed by a Board of Review as discussed below. However, no board of review is required for the Scout badge. For Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, Life and Eagle Palms, the review is conducted by members of the Troop committee. The Eagle board of review is conducted by members of the district advancement committee and other selected leaders.
4. **The Boy Scout is recognized.** When the board of review has certified a Scout's advancement, his rank will be presented to him at the next Troop Court of Honor.

### Troop Tip:

The Troop uses a minimum rank of First Class for most leadership positions, but ranks are not used to determine any other leadership or seniority position. For example, a Life Scout is not the "superior" of a Star or any other scout. All Scouts are entitled to equal respect. Rank badges are Badges of Honor and Personal Achievement.

## II. Scout Handbook

It is important for your Scout to bring his Scout handbook to all Scout meetings and camping events for two reasons. First, the Scout handbook is the primary reference source for rank advancement requirements. It identifies and explains everything needed for all ranks advancements up through first class, and lists the requirements for higher ranks.

The handbook also serves as the tangible record for completion of these requirements, as your Scout's PL and SM/ASMs sign-off in the handbook as rank advancement requirements are completed. After his Board of Review, the Scout needs to turn in his Scout Handbook with the approved requirements for the rank to the Advancement Chair. If your Scout does not have his book, no one can sign him off on rank requirements!

It is highly recommended that your son's last name be written in wide black marker on the three sides of his handbook which are comprised of the actual pages. Doing so will allow him and leaders to quickly see who's handbook it is when it is lying on a table.

### III. Rank Requirements

Details for advancement are contained in the Boy Scout Handbook, which every Scout should obtain as soon as possible after joining the Troop. Take a look at Chapter 1. This short chapter has an advancement summary through First Class. The ranks up through First Class generally involve reading material in the Scout Handbook, then demonstrating skills and knowledge. Requirements for these early ranks are signed off by the Scout's Patrol Leader or other youth leader (Star rank or above preferred), or by the SM or an ASM. Parents do not sign off on rank requirements (other than those specifically required to be signed by the parent for joining as a Scout), but may assist Scouts by teaching and demonstrating skills.

During the process of earning these ranks your Scout will learn many things that will stay with him his entire life. *Each rank requires progressively more knowledge, but individual requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class may be worked in any order. The ranks themselves must still be earned in order.* Requirements for Star, Life and Eagle (other than required merit badges) may only be worked on once the preceding rank has been earned.

#### A. Advancement through First Class

From the time the Scout enters the Troop through the time he earns advancement to First Class, he is learning basic Scouting skills to enable him to camp, hike, swim, cook, tie knots, administer first aid, and perform other tasks in the outdoors and to work as a member of a team. With those first steps the Scout begins to build themselves physically, mentally, and morally. The Scout's First Year Patrol Leader will be instrumental in helping provide training and encouragement for advancing to First Class. A typical goal is for the Scout to achieve the rank of First Class within his first year in the Troop. This is a sign that the Scout has mastered the fundamentals of Scouting. Scouts that earn First Class within their first year also tend to remain in Scouting much longer than those that do not, but there is no stigma associated with advancing at a slower pace.

#### B. Advancement from First Class to Eagle

From the achievement of First Class through Eagle, the Scout will be demonstrating leadership, performing service projects, earning merit badges and using the skills learned while achieving the rank of First Class. The next ranks he will earn are Star and Life. These ranks are harder to obtain than the earlier ranks, but are also more interesting for the older Scouts. These are the first ranks which require merit badges (discussed separately below).

Upon completion of all the requirements for Star and Life, the Scout will be eligible to work for Eagle. The original principals, the Scout Oath and Law now have fuller meaning for the Scout and their understanding of them is much greater. The final steps towards Eagle are filled with leadership experiences. Becoming an Eagle Scout is an important achievement of which your son will be proud his entire life. But turning out Eagle Scouts is not what the Boy Scouting program is all about. Indeed, in 2018 only about 2% of Scouts nationwide achieved the rank of Eagle Scout.

As your Scout progresses through Scouting, we recommend that you retain all records to support his ultimate application for Eagle Scout. All blue cards and rank cards (which are returned/handed out at the Courts of Honor) should be retained. A binder with plastic pages for



collecting baseball cards works great for this purpose. Additionally, we recommend taking a photocopy of all completed rank advancement pages in the Scout handbook and putting them in a plastic binder sleeve just in case the handbook gets severely damaged or fails to return from a campout. Note that advancement is ultimately entered into Scoutbook online for tracking advancement.

### C. Scoutmaster Conference

When all other requirements for a rank are completed and signed off in the Scout's handbook, the Scout must meet with the Scoutmaster or an ASM for a Scoutmaster's conference. During the Scoutmaster's Conference, the Scoutmaster will verify that all requirements for Rank have been completed, discuss their Troop and Patrol participation, how Scouting influences their life, and how they are doing in general. When this is completed, the Scoutmaster will sign this requirement and the "demonstrate Scout spirit" requirement.

### D. Boards of Review

When a Scout has completed all the requirements for his next rank (other than Eagle Scout), he appears before a Board of Review composed of members of the Troop committee. The purpose of the review is not an examination. Instead, the Board seeks to determine the Scout's attitude and acceptance of Scouting's ideals; to ensure that the requirements have been met for advancement, to discuss the Scout's experiences in the Troop and the Troop's program, and to encourage him to keep working towards advancement. A Board of Review may also be held to counsel a boy about his lack of progress toward advancement. Note: the Scout Badge (described on page 17 of the Scout handbook) does not require a Board of Review. It is considered to be part of the joining process of Boy Scouts with a Scoutmaster Conference in order to help him get to know the Troop and the adult leadership.

## IV. Merit Badges

Scouts are required to earn merit badges in order to attain the ranks of Star and above. Some of these merit badges must be from the list of Eagle required merit badges, others the Scouts may choose from any of the over 120 available. The goal of the merit badge program is to expand a Scout's areas of interest and to encourage the Scout to meet and work with adults in a chosen subject.

Merit badges are earned by a Scout working under the periodic supervision of a registered merit badge counselor, who will sign off as the merit badge requirements are completed. Merit badges may be earned at any time during the Boy Scout experience even though they are only required for the ranks of Star, Life and Eagle. Scouts may (and frequently do) work on multiple merit badges at the same time, and sometimes focus more on earning merit badges than rank advancement. Some merit badges are "required for Eagle" and are bordered in white. They are more time and information intensive to earn.





To complete a merit badge, a Scout:

1. Chooses the merit badge to work on.
2. Checks out a merit badge book from the Troop library or at the Scout store.
3. Obtains a signed “blue card” from the Scoutmaster or ASM (signifying the SM’s approval for the Scout to start working on the merit badge). **[Note: Since merit badge requirements change periodically, it is very important to obtain a dated blue card to establish the date upon which the Scout starts the merit badge, since this identifies the requirements which that Scout must complete to earn the merit badge.]**
4. Speaks with a counselor to discuss the requirements for the badge.
5. Works on the badge requirements.
6. Meets with the counselor one or more times to be signed off on the blue card.
7. Turns in the completed blue card (returned by the counselor to the Scout, minus the counselor’s portion) to the Advancement Chairperson.

When a merit badge is taught in a group setting (such as at summer camp or in a Scout meeting), the counselor may choose to keep requirements on a separate sign off sheet and transfer to the blue card when all requirements are complete.

The list of all merit badges and their current requirements is available at [www.meritbadge.org](http://www.meritbadge.org) and also in a reference book available at the Scout store. A list of Merit Badge Counselors in our troop is available from the troop website. Parents are encouraged to sign up as counselors for badges they are qualified to teach; the Troopmaster Coordinator can provide necessary forms to register as a counselor.

When your Scout is meeting with a merit badge counselor, or you are acting as a merit badge counselor for another Scout, you must ensure that Youth Protection rules (discussed below) are followed at all times.

## V. Courts of Honor

Troop 31 typically conducts a Court of Honor three times each year (usually in September, January and May). The Court of Honor recognizes all Scout advancements, merit badges and other awards since the last Court of Honor. Each Scout is presented with the rank badge, merit badge or other award, at Troop expense (parents do not buy these for their Scout). Adult recognition may be presented as well. It is the responsibility of the Patrol Leaders Council to plan and conduct the Court of Honor. The Troop Committee will support the Courts of Honor as requested. The Court of Honor is a public ceremony, and is a chance for the Scouts to be publicly recognized for their achievements. Parents and all other interested individuals are strongly encouraged to attend. *Parents are especially encouraged to attend when their son is earning a rank advancement as the Scout will place a small pin for the rank earned on a ribbon that Scout parents should wear to all Courts of Honor.* This is the Scout’s way of recognizing that their advancements are supported by their parents.

## Training and Child Safety

The Boy Scouts of America has had a very strong program in place for many years to protect our youth from abuse of all kinds. Hazing, bullying, harassment, name-calling or any other sort of physical or emotional abuse will not be tolerated and Scouts engaging in such behavior may be asked to leave the Troop. Similarly, no corporal punishment by adults is allowed.

We require all of our leaders to be trained in Youth Protection, and to refresh that training at regular intervals. At present, such training is done on-line through a short, interactive training program. There are some rules we follow that you will hear about, such as two-deep leadership. That means that there should not be a situation where a Scout leader is alone with a single Scout. Ever. There are other rules and policies as well, and we encourage all adults to take the training and learn about Boy Scout Youth Protection Training (YPT). **This training is required of any adult that will be attending, or driving Scouts to, a Troop event (other than Troop meetings), or acting as a merit badge counselor.** A copy of the training completion certificate (cut and paste into an e-mail) must be sent to the Troop Training Coordinator. YPT training is valid for two years. If such training expires without renewal, the adult in question will not be allowed to participate in on or drive to the event, or act as a merit badge counselor, until such training is updated.

Uniformed leaders are also required to obtain additional training regarding outdoor skills to be taught to the Scouts, as well as hazardous weather training. Further training may also be required depending on the nature of the activities in which the Troop is engaged (e.g., wilderness first aid, CPR, Safe Swimming/Safety Afloat, etc.).

## General Information

### A. Communications

The Troop Troop Web Host for email communication. The Troop website ([www.Troop31.org](http://www.Troop31.org)) is the primary source of information including the Troop calendar. Remember that the calendar will be updated throughout the year and new events are frequently added. Regularly attending the Troop meetings and hearing the announcements during them from adult leadership is the best source of up to date information. Note that all emails should be send through TroopWebHost. This is to ensure compliance with Youth Protection Training rules by ensuring that a boys parents are always copied on emails.

### B. Meetings

Meetings are generally held every Wednesday from 7:30-9:00pm in the meeting hall of the church, or outdoors due to Covid restrictions.

The Troop calendar can be found on the website at [www.Troop31.org](http://www.Troop31.org). Parents are encouraged to attend the meetings, but not to interrupt. Please take conversations outside or talk quietly.

### **C. Service Projects**

Some rank advancements, such as Star and Life Scout, require service hours to be performed, as do some merit badges. Throughout the year your son will be invited to participate in service projects specific to the Troop as well as being made aware of opportunities outside of the Troop. The Troop will conduct a Scouting for Food project in the fall each year (the Cub Scout Pack will distribute bags one weekend and the Troop will pick up the food donations the following weekend). Additionally, Scouts working on their Eagle Scout rank need to organize and conduct a large service project. The Eagle candidate will very much appreciate your Scout's assistance with his project – think of it as a down payment on the request for service hours your Scout will make when he is working on his Eagle Scout project.

### **D. Finances**

Our Troop has traditionally elected to sell Popcorn as a fundraiser, and scouts can choose to participate or not. Annual dues will range between \$150 to \$250 per year.

For camp outs, fees are displayed on the event in TroopWebHost. Patrols plan and buy their own food and the amount varies depending on the menu, but \$10-\$25 is typical. The ASM leading each campout will include this cost when communicating information about upcoming campouts.

Summer camp at Oljato or Wente are usually \$550 to \$600 for camping fees. Remote camps such as Emerald Bay on Catalina Island, or Cherry Creek in Southern California range from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per week including travel costs. High adventure expeditions will run \$2,000 to \$2,500 depending on airfare.

### **E. Uniforms**

In addition to providing a positive youth image in our community, the uniform creates a sense of belonging for your Scout. Information on the Scout uniform is on the inside cover of the Boy Scout hand book. Adult leaders and Scout shop staff can answer any question regarding the Scout uniform. Uniform inspections may occur during Troop meetings and your son's patrol's

inspection performance may be compared to others. There are 3 basic types uniform requirements:

- **CLASS A DRESS** – Required in ceremonies and to participate in courts of honor. It includes Scout shirt (button down), all insignia, merit badge sash or OA sash (if applicable), neckerchief, and slide. *Note: only one sash may be worn at any time.* Scout pants are encouraged but not required; when wearing Scout pants, brown shoes are preferred.
- **CLASS A** – Required for Troop meetings, flag ceremonies- This is the class A shirt, neckerchief and slide. Sashes should not be worn to regular troop activities.
- **CLASS B** – Required for campout activities, projects, and other outings. This is an approved Scouting related t-shirt. Any Scout related t-shirt is ok. However, Troop 31 generally orders and sells new Troop t-shirts each year just before summer camp.

Insignia placement is very important to Boy Scouts and guidelines on the Troop website and on the inside cover of the Scout Handbook should be followed carefully. We believe that the uniform should be worn proudly and appear consistent. *Note: only an Order of the Arrow flap should be worn on the right pocket flap and the main area of the right pocket is the only location for one optional patch to be worn.* Many parents find the use of Badge Magic (available from the Scout Shops) to ease the chore of attaching the many patches and badges.

#### **Troop Tip:**

What to Buy: to get your new scout started you should acquire:

- Class A uniform pieces
- Scout Handbook
- Outdoor Equipment

## **F. Equipment**

The Troop's uniformed adult leaders can discuss your son's outdoor equipment needs with you. Typical items your Scout will need include: a backpack, sleeping bag, sleeping mat, mess kit, rain gear, hiking boots (please ensure these are broken in and well-fitting before sending your Scout hiking in them!), water bottle or hydration system, and personal first aid kit. The Troop has tents, cooking gear, and stoves available for loan. Adults who attend campouts must supply their own tents and other equipment.

All Scouts should carry the ten essentials whenever hiking. Some campouts will require Scouts to backpack into the camping area. Please consider weather conditions for campouts – we have a least one night each year below freezing though we can't predict when it will be.

If you and your Scout do not have camping gear, don't feel like you need to buy it all at once. More experienced Scouts and adults can provide plenty of solid advice on what you really need and the best sources. This is an area where it pays to wait for sales, and to pay close attention to details about equipment capabilities and quality. Inexpensive is not necessarily a bargain, and expensive is not necessarily high quality.

## G. Camping

We camp. We hike. We get dirty. We get up close and personal with bugs and spiders. There's no way around it. Our program is largely built around outdoor activities. So, expect to have more laundry after a campout and to hear some interesting stories about wild things. Most boys enjoy being outdoors and chose to participate in Scouting because of this. And, most boys learn best in hands-on situations which the outdoors provides. The outdoors is also the best place for boys to employ the patrol method, which is another one of Scouting's eight tools.

Participation in campouts is vital for rank advancement, as a large portion of early rank advancement is related to camping skills. Many of our Scouts participate in soccer, football, basketball, baseball, band and other activities which may preclude attending some of our meetings or campouts. Other Scouts may choose to forego a camping trip due to anxiety about the activity (e.g., heights involved in climbing; or fear of water in canoeing or whitewater rafting events). While Scouts are encouraged to participate in all meetings and events, we recognize this is unlikely, and Scouts are not penalized for failing to attend.



Nevertheless, it is important for Scouts to attend Troop meetings and outings whenever possible, for several reasons. First, participation in campouts is vital for rank advancement, as a large portion of early rank advancement is related to camping and Scoutcraft skills. The outdoors provide adventure and opportunities to immediately use what the Scouts are learning. These outings also provide opportunities to work on a variety of merit badges, such as fishing, nature study, camping and hiking. Second, participation in meetings and campouts demonstrates that the Scout is active in the Troop, a rank advancement requirement for higher ranks. Third, and perhaps more importantly, a significant degree of involvement in Troop activities is essential for your Scout to cement his relationships with other Scouts, particularly those he did not know before joining, and to give him a sense of belonging.



It's important for parents to know how Boy Scout campouts are run, so here is a brief overview of some of the important points for our campouts:

- The Scouts plan and run the campout, using the patrol method. That means that few outings will run perfectly smoothly. That's okay, as long as the boys learn from the experience.
- The boys are grouped into patrols for each campout. Ideally the patrols for the campout have the same composition as the Troop's regular patrols, but sometimes campout attendance requires that existing patrols are combined into "ad hoc" campout patrols. The composition of patrols for the campout will be determined by the campout's Senior Patrol Leader and Scoutmaster at the Tuesday Troop meeting prior to the campout.
- At the campout, the boys are under the leadership of a fellow Scout designated as the Senior Patrol Leader (SPL) for the event who may not be the actual Troop SPL. The SPL reports to the ASM in charge of the campout. All campouts are planned by the SPL and PLC with the assistance of one of the Troop's ASMs. The organizing ASM will serve as the "Scoutmaster" for the duration of the campout if the SM isn't present. If you have questions regarding an upcoming campout, they should be addressed to the designated ASM for that event.



- Just like in other Scouting events, each boy reports to his patrol leader (PL); all PLs in turn report to the SPL. All boys should follow this reporting structure during the campout. If a boy has a question about the campout agenda or needs permission to do something, he should ask his PL. If the PL does not know, he should ask the SPL. If the SPL does not know, he should ask the SM/ASM. If a Scout asks

you for instructions or permissions the answer should always be, "What did your patrol leader tell you when you asked him that question." They'll get the hang of it eventually – and so will you. If you are a parent joining the campout and are not an ASM, you should always refer Scouts to the Troop leadership structure for all questions and concerns.

- At the campout, the boys will camp, cook, and eat as patrols. Your Scout's patrol will typically create a duty roster/menu for the campout and select a "grubmaster". It is important for you to know if your son has been selected for a role for the upcoming campout, such as acting as the patrol quartermaster (responsible for requisitioning equipment from the Troop quartermaster for his patrol) or grubmaster (planning the menu, shopping for food, and organizing cooking activities for his patrol). **We strongly urge you to confirm what, if any, role has been assigned to your Scout before leaving the pre-campout meeting.**



- The Scoutmaster-in-charge is the ultimate authority at a campout. Our SM and ASMs are trained in BSA methods, and they know how to run campouts in accordance with BSA policies. Sometimes BSA policies may not be popular (e.g. the requirements for safe swimming can be very restrictive), but we are required to adhere to them. Never do anything to undermine the authority of a SM/ASM at a campout. Adults should address their questions to the designated SM/ASM for the event.
- When you camp with the Troop, you are an adult leader. As such we require you to have YPT training and to act as an adult role model. You are not Mom or Dad. We welcome all adults to join us for the campouts, but you are asked to carefully not to fulfill your traditional parent role which may interfere with your Scout engaging with the Troop leadership structure. Please raise concerns quietly with the designated SM/ASM, who can address it within the leadership structure. However, if immediate action is required to address a health or safety issue, and a uniformed leader is not immediately available, you should take such action as is reasonably required by the circumstances.
- Subject to the immediately preceding exception, all significant adult direction should originate from the designated SM/ASM, to the SPL, to the PLs, to the rest of the boys. It confuses the boys – and, more significantly, compromises the integrity of the patrol method – when multiple adults are giving multiple orders or making multiple suggestions to multiple boys. Of course, that’s not to say that there is no communication between adults and boys on a campout. But the communication and approval of instructions and permissions should follow the patrol method.
- The adults are a separate patrol in a separate (but not distant) part of our designated camping area and eat as a separate “adult” patrol. Adults attending typically coordinate food and cooking gear for communal adult meals. There will rarely be a reason for an adult to venture into a boys’ patrol campsite other than periodic check-ins by the SM/ASM. The one exception to this will be if something dangerous is imminent or if behavior is becoming un-Scout-like. Don’t helicopter over your son while he’s hanging out with his friends. There will be disagreements among patrol mates, the food will be overcooked, and tents will occasionally collapse. No problem – as long as it’s safe, the Scouts will be learning.
- You may not want to attend your son’s **FIRST** Troop campout as a Boy Scout. It will be good for both of you. Your Scout will be well taken care of. Come to his second campout and see what he learned to do at the first one. Likewise, don’t attend **every** campout with your son. You both need to learn that you can, in fact, survive without each other for a weekend.

## H. Transportation

All transportation is provided by adults associated with the Troop, utilizing private vehicles. Due to the typically high level of Scout participation, we often require transportation assistance beyond what the adults attending the event alone can provide. All adults providing transportation must have taken Youth Protection Training as described above in the section on Training and Child Safety. Please be on time for departures for events so the Troop is not waiting for you. Your son will either be dropped off at the school at the end of an event or at your house. Expect a phone call from your Scout's driver when they are en route to let you know the game plan (make sure you are at or close to home/school when you get the call so your Scout is dropped off with supervision present).

### Useful Internet References

(Note: No endorsements implied; not responsible for any website content other than our Troop website)

Boy Scouts of America: [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org)

BSA Pacific Skyline Council: [www.pacsky.org](http://www.pacsky.org)

Guide to Safe Scouting: [www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34416.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34416.pdf)

Merit Badges: [www.meritbadge.org](http://www.meritbadge.org); [www.usscouts.org](http://www.usscouts.org)

Troop 31 Website: [www.troop31.org](http://www.troop31.org)

Leave No Trace: [www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org)