

**Boy Scouts of America**  
**Troop 7**  
**Brimfield, Massachusetts**



**New Scout Parent Orientation**

## **Orientation for New Scouts BSA Parents**

First, the Scout uniform shirt is a traditional Scouts BSA item. Scouts have been wearing the Scout uniforms for nearly a hundred years. You don't see anyone but Scouts wearing Scout uniforms.

Second, each Scout shirt is a bit different. There is a standard starting place—a blank shirt that you can buy at any Scout shop—but then each boy's shirt starts to look different. There are different sizes, different patches. All Scout shirts have the same basic shape, but beyond that there is endless variety.

Third, Scout shirts are generally decorated on just one side—the outside, the part you show off.

The Scouts BSA program itself is a lot like the Scout shirt.

First, it is a traditional program. Scouts today enjoy many of the same activities that Scouts enjoyed when Baden-Powell first created the program a century ago. There are many other things about Scouting that haven't changed much over time, including things like the Scout Law and the Scout Oath.

The Scouting program has three aims or purposes that shape the program: character development, citizenship training, and physical and mental fitness.

Second, Scouts and Scouting adults each have unique experiences. Everybody's time in Scouting is different. Also, just like patches, Scouts and Scouting adults come in an almost endless variety of colors and shapes and personalities and skills and intelligence and even political persuasions. They aren't all "red." There are lots of "blue," and lots of purple and green and polka dots and stripes. But they are all Scouts, because they all strive toward those same three aims: character development, citizenship training, and physical and mental fitness.

Third, Scouting is like a Scout shirt because it has a "showy" side and a plain side. The showy side of the program is what attracts boys & girls—the fun and outdoor adventure. That is the fun stuff, the colorful stuff, the stuff you look at and point at and say, "That's cool—I want to do that." But the adults like us are concerned about the other side. On that other side, our eyes are not distracted by the colors and designs, by the showy stuff. We look at what the Scout shirt—the Scouting program—is made of. We can feel the fabric. We see the three points clearly—character development, citizenship training, and physical and mental fitness. We're glad that the boys are drawn to the colorful stuff on the outside, but what really matters to us is on the inside.

## **The Scouts BSA Handbook**

In this book is pretty much everything your son will need to know to become a skilled Scout. We encourage you to get a copy, if you don't already have one, and dip into it with your son or daughter. This book will tell you what Scouting is really all about: hiking, camping, cooking, first aid, citizenship, nutrition, health, and fitness.

We would like you to read a little summary. We call it "the promise of Scouting." It is right there up front, on page 1 of the Scout Handbook.

Our kids have an incredible number of activities they can pursue—all kinds of sports, music lessons, before-school activities, after-school activities, in-school activities. And they are great. But none of them have, in one place, the fun and challenge that Scouting offers.

Our kids also have an incredible number of distractions—video games, cell phones, instant messaging, a hundred channels of mindless, tasteless television. We offer your son the chance to swap a few hours of that for a few hours of this.

## **What's In It for Me?**

Have you ever asked yourself: "What would I like my son to grow up to be?"

Maybe you think in terms of his career: a doctor, a big-league baseball player, a teacher, president of the United States.

Maybe you think in terms of what you want him to have: lots of money, a nice wife and beautiful children, happiness.

Those are all wonderful hopes for your sons.

But have you ever thought about the kind of person you want him to be?

Imagine your son walking down the street 30 years from now. When people see him, they say things like: "There goes Tom—he's really been a good friend"; "There's Dan—you can always count on him"; "There's Bill—you'll never find a better man."

Please read the following list of words. Would you like a particular word to describe your son when he grows up:

- Trustworthy
- Loyal
- Helpful
- Friendly
- Courteous
- Kind
- Obedient
- Cheerful
- Thrifty
- Brave
- Clean
- Reverent

You've probably heard that list before. It is the Scout Law. If you are asking yourself, "Why should we get involved with Scouts BSA?" think about what you'd like your son or daughter to be when he or she grows up—and those 12 words.

## **The Scouts BSA Program**

You may recall that the Scouting program has three aims or purposes:

Character development, citizenship training, and physical and mental fitness.

What makes Scouting unique is that it has eight methods it uses to achieve those aims. Those eight methods define Scouting and show how it is different from other programs.

**Ideals**—the ideals of Scouting are spelled out in the Scout Oath, the Scout Law, the Scout motto, and the Scout slogan. The Scout measures himself or herself against these ideals and continually tries to improve.

**Patrol Method**—Patrols are small groups of Scouts who 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. Patrols sort of look like Cub Scout dens, but there is one big difference: Patrols elect their own leaders, and through these patrol leaders, Scouts have a voice in deciding what

activities the troop will put on its calendar. Patrols are one component of what we call youth-run, or youth-led, troop.

**Outdoor Programs**—Scouts BSA is designed to take place outdoors. 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.

**Advancement**—Scouts BSA has a system of ranks in which Scouts learn progressively more difficult skills and take on progressively greater responsibilities. The highest of these ranks is Eagle Scout. Becoming an Eagle Scout is an important achievement that your son can be proud of his entire life. But turning out Eagle Scouts is not what the Scouting program is all about. Advancement is probably the most visible of the Scouting methods, and the easiest to understand, but it is only one of eight methods. We strongly encourage advancement, but we never force it—advancement is the Scout’s choice, and he or she sets his or her own pace. We don’t do “lockstep” or social advancement. And many great Scouts, great men and great women, never became Eagle Scouts.

**Associations with Adults**—Scouts 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, a merit badge counselor, or one of the troop parents who are willing to listen to boys, encourage them, and take a sincere interest in them can make a profound difference in their lives. Adult association is also part of what we call a youth-led troop. Adults understand that their role is to create a safe place where boys can learn and grow and explore and play and take on responsibilities—and fail and get up and try again. If you were involved with Cub Scouting, this is a very different role that can take some time getting used to.

**Personal Growth**—as Scouts plan their activities and progress toward their goals, they experience personal growth. The Good Turn concept is a major part of the personal growth method of Scouting. Scouts grow as they participate in community service projects and do Good Turns for others. Probably no device is as successful in developing a basis for personal growth as the daily Good Turn. The religious emblems program also is a large part of the personal growth method. Frequent personal conferences with his Scoutmaster help each Scout to determine his or her growth toward Scouting’s aims.

**Leadership Development**—the Scouts BSA program encourages boys and girls to learn and practice leadership skills. Every Scout has the opportunity to lead in some way, whether as part of a team, or as the leader of his patrol or as the senior patrol leader of the troop. Leadership development is another component of the youth-led troop.

**Uniform**—like most sports teams, Scouts wear a 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 symbol of who we are and what we do.

## **Youth-Led Troop**

We would like to come back a moment to the youth-led concept of Scouts BSA. As we mentioned before, it is different than how Cub Scouting works, and it is different from the way a lot of youth activities are run, where the adults decide what to do and the youth do it. Scouts BSA is different, and it is sometimes difficult for adults to realize that we have a different role and a different goal. In Cub Scouting and in many other programs, our goal is to have fun activities and generate achievements. Our role is to make sure that the activities happen that the achievements take place.

Scouts BSA is different. In Scouts BSA, the role of the boys and girls is to have fun activities and generate achievements. The role of the adults is not 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 a sharp-looking flag ceremony, but that the Scouts put it together.
- Not who would make the best patrol leader, but that the Scouts elect one.
- Not that Johnny learns first aid, but that Susan teaches him.
- Not that we cover everything on the meeting agenda, but that the senior patrol leader is in charge.

Our 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 them do it. It can be a very messy business, and painful to watch. Meetings where the Scout leaders are in charge can be very chaotic. And it can be very tempting for adults to jump in and sort things out, because that is what adults do. But we have to remember that that is the process of Scouting. That is how they learn—even from disorganization and failure. We just have to remember that our business as adults is not the same as the business of the Scouts. It is up to them to get things done. It is up to us to make sure they have what they need, but (within the bounds of health and safety) not what they do with it.

### **Now, a word about Youth Protection.**

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. We require all of our leaders to be trained in Youth Protection, and to refresh that training at regular intervals. There are some rules we follow that you will hear about, such as two-deep leadership and no one-on-ones. That means that there should not be a situation where a Scout leader is alone with a single Scout. There are other rules and policies as well, and we encourage you to take the training and learn about Scouts BSA Youth Protection. It is available on line at <https://www.scouting.org/Training/YouthProtection.aspx>

### **What You Need to Know About Our Troop**

**Meetings:** Wednesday evenings 6:30 - 8:00 The First Congregational Church of Brimfield.

**Activities:** Troop 7 is a very active Troop. You will be given a Troop calendar to track all events.

**Charter Organization:** First Congregational Church of Brimfield

**Leaders:** All adult leaders are B.S.A. trained for their positions and have completed Youth Protection Training . Many leaders have additional training in Safe Swim Defense, Safety Afloat, Climb On Safely, Trek Safely, Hazardous Weather Training, Wood Badge Training, High Adventure Trek Planning , CPR , Basic First Aid and Wilderness First Aid.

**Finances:** Troop yearly dues / registration fees are \$ 100.00.  
If you need assistance paying your Scout's dues please contact the Scoutmaster or the Committee Chairman.  
Dues are used to pay National BSA registration fees, for advancement awards and other troop activities.

Boys Life subscriptions: Boys life magazine is \$12.00 a year. This is paid at the time dues/registration fees are paid.

Campouts - Campouts are paid for by the Scouts that attend. The cost for each depends on where the Campout is and the activities planned. Costs for each campout are announced at sign up.  
Patrol food is an additional cost above the activity cost.

**Fundraising:** The Troop is currently working on several Fund Raiser activities (Community Dinners, Christmas Wreaths, Car Parking, etc.)

Popcorn: We encourage the Scouts to sell the Scouts BSA popcorn.  
The sale is NOT mandatory.

Proceeds from all fundraising activities are split between the Troop and the Scouts & Leaders that participated.

Each Scout and Leader has a “Troop Account” that the funds are deposited in and may be used for any Scouting related expense.

## Activities

- **Yearly Planning meeting** – the Scouts have an annual planning meeting in June to plan the next year’s activities. All Patrol leaders are expected to attend and they get input from the Scouts in their patrol to bring to the meeting. All the activities are put on the board and the Scouts vote on which ones to do. The adults are here to guide and not to lead (not always easy). Troop 7 is a youth run troop and we expect the Scouts to assume all the leadership responsibilities.
- **Scoutmaster Conferences / Board of Review** – when your Scout has completed the requirements for the next rank he will meet with the Scoutmaster and talk about his experience so far in the Troop. At the Board of Review he will then meet with a small group (3) of adults and they ask him or her some more of the same type of questions. This is not something your Scout should get worried about. It is a time for him or her to express his or her ideas about the Troop and their scouting experience.
- **District events** – run by the District committee and are an up-scaled Gold Rush. The Scouts will work on Scout skills and experience things they might never have seen before. We usually campout on these.
- **5-mile hike** – at some point in the spring we will be doing an advancement required 5-mile hike. We will be doing the required map and compass work at the same time.
- **Winter camping** – in most cases we have a cabin rented but your Scout will have the option to sleep outside in a tent. If the temperature goes below freezing then he or her will earn a special award (Patch). We will ask you to bring his or her sleeping bag to the troop meeting before the campout to make sure it is temperature rated for winter camping if he decides to sleep outdoors.
- Our Troop plans monthly campouts throughout the entire year. The Scouts safety is very important while we are on our campouts. Please keep this in mind and encourage your Scout(s) to attend as many Troop campouts as possible, especially during the winter months. They will have fun and work towards their rank advancement quicker.
- Our camping trips take us too many different places. Herkimer Diamond Mines – Herkimer, NY, Mt. Norris Scout Reservation – Eden, VT., Gettysburg, PA. Sometimes we camp at our local Scout camps in Western Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut.
- **Any parent can attend our Troop activities and camping events.**  
Drivers are always needed to transport scouts. So, if you are interested in spending a weekend with your Scout, join us!

## Suggested Scout Camping Equipment

Troop 7 provides most of the camping equipment the scout’s need which includes tents, cookware, stoves, lanterns, dining flies, water cans, and camping tools. Still, there is some personal equipment that Scouts will need to purchase. Most items are inexpensive. But a few items, such as a good sleeping bag, are more expensive and is needed in the colder months. Some items, such as a mess kit, will be needed right away, but other items can be purchased over time as the scout gains interest in camping. Scouts can use money from their Scout Accounts to offset the cost.

- **Mess Kit:** A Scout will need his mess kit at each camping trip. There are some fancy mess kits out there, but I recommend keeping it simple. A cup, plate, bowl and set of silverware in a mesh bag are all you will need.



- **Water Bottle:** A good water bottle will last your Scout for a long time and is essential. They come in so many sizes, shapes and colors. The bottle can be either metal or plastic. It shall be capable of holding either hot or cold liquids. The bottle should have a closed loop on it so a carabineer clip could be added so the bottle can be clip to the side of your Scout or his back pack / gear bag.



- **Flashlight:** LED flashlights, with a red night light, are bright and have a long battery life. A headlamp is great for working in the dark.



- **Raincoat or Poncho:** The outdoor fun continues in the rain. Staying dry is important when you don't have a warm house to retreat to.



- **Sleeping Pad and Sleeping Bag:** A Scout will need a sleeping pad for comfort, and, more importantly, for insulation from the ground. A simple foam pad is best. A sleeping bag is the most expensive and most important piece of equipment a scout will need. An inexpensive summer bag (left) will work fine in the warmer months and for cabin camping in the winter. Eventually, for comfort in the colder months, a Scout should invest in a mummy style bag. A bag with a 15-20 degree rating is a good balance of affordability and comfort. A sleeping bag liner or fleece sleeping bag will add about 10 degrees to the rating. A down bag packs smaller, but a synthetic bag is less expensive and will keep you warm even if it gets wet.



- **Hiking Boots:** Sturdy shoes or boots are best on camping trips, especially in the cooler months. Synthetic boots are popular, but leather boots hold up better around campfires. If a Scout wears sneakers on a trip, he or she should try to bring an extra pair. Wool or synthetic blend socks will keep your feet dryer than cotton.



- **Backpack:** A backpack is not needed but is encouraged (A duffle bag will work on most trips). An external back pack frame is recommended for the younger Scouts for the external frame is adjustable which can be adjusted to meet the Scout's height as he or she grows. Internal frame packs are popular and are recommended as the Scout gets older.



- **Camp Trunk:** For summer camp only, Scouts will need a trunk or plastic tote. (plastic tote works best for it will fit under the cots) A mosquito net can come in handy too!



## **Your role in Scouts BSA**

You may be wondering—even a little nervous—about what your role is in Scouts BSA.

Well, your first role in Scouting is simply to continue what you are doing: Be a parent. Help your son and/or daughter succeed. Be supportive. Follow through. You're here because you see value in the Scouting program.

Help that value come through. There will always be times when your Scout doesn't want to go the weekly meeting or seems to be losing interest in advancing and doing his or her best in Scouting.

That's when he or she needs a parent's encouragement.

Scouting works best when the whole family is behind it.

And you're probably dreading the standard call for volunteers that you hear from school and every other organization you are associated with. Well, don't get us wrong -- Scouting operates only because we have great volunteers. And yes, we hope that you will offer to help out the troop in some way. We have volunteer roles of every size and every type. Even if you only have a few minutes a month to help us out, we can use you.

But being a Scouting volunteer isn't just another chore you take on because you have to. Let's hear some typical experiences of Scouting volunteers:

"When I first got into Scouting, it was because of my son. I thought it would be a great program for him. What I didn't realize then was what a great program Scouting has been for me. I have met so many great people in Scouting and have made some great friends. It is something I wasn't looking for and didn't expect. I know I'll always be with friends at a Scout meeting or event."

"When I first got into Scouting, I expected to just drive my son to meetings and drop him off. I'm not an outdoor person. I work in an office all day. But when the committee chairman announced that they were looking for a new treasurer, I figured that would be a small way that I could contribute, so I put my hand up. Well, I was surprised to find that even my skills were needed by the troop. Everyone really appreciates what I do, and I've even started taking an interest in the outdoor stuff—I went on my first campout last month, and it was a blast!"

"With my job, I don't really have a lot of free time, and I don't have a regular schedule, so I can't really go to Scout meetings or on campouts. But they told me that as a merit badge counselor, I could meet with Scouts whenever it was convenient for me. This way I get a chance to share my woodworking hobby with these great boys & girls, and can do it on my schedule."

"One of the things that surprised me, after I had been an assistant Scoutmaster for a year or so, was that I had starting applying things to my job that I learned in Scouting. The training for Scouting adults is excellent and has a lot of practical applications. It's a lot more than learning to tie knots."

"I don't have a lot of time I can contribute to the troop. But one thing I did sign up for is to be a troop committee member so I can sit on boards of review. Boards of review are like little job interviews, where adult committee members ask the Scouts about their experiences in the troop and what they have learned. It is so rewarding to have a real conversation with those boys."

Regardless of your skills or interests, there is something you share with all Scouting volunteers that makes your involvement priceless—your interest in having your son in the best possible Scouting program.

## **The Hiking Stick**

We would like to introduce you to an item that is a good friend to many hikers—the hiking stick. Hiking sticks come in many different styles, from the plain dead branch you just found in the woods to carved and decorated staffs to high-tech aluminum models with spring-loaded tips.

A good hiking stick can be a pretty handy thing to have with you when you're out walking in the country. Regardless of the type of stick or what they look like, they all do pretty much the same three things.

When you are going uphill, particularly if it is steep and rocky, the hiking stick can be a big help. You plant that stick in front of you, and you can use your arms to help pull you up the hill—you don't have to rely on just your legs.

When you are going downhill, particularly if it is steep and rocky, the hiking stick can really help you. You plant that stick in front of you, and it helps you keep your balance, takes a little of the weight off your knees, and gives you that little bit of extra support you need.

And when you're walking on the flat, well, the hiking stick is just a welcome companion on the trail.

Yep, many Scouts and especially old Scout leaders have a hiking stick.

And just as a Scout should have a hiking stick to help support him on his journey, he must have adults who support him on his journey through Scouting.

When he or she is on his or her way up, advancing, taking in new experiences, facing new challenges, it's nice to have something sturdy he can grab onto to help pull himself or herself up, and the encouragement of those who have gone before him or her to help him or her along.

When he or she is on a bit of a downhill, trying to keep his or her balance and stay upright, he or she needs that extra support and stability.

And when he or she has a smooth, flat trail in front of him or her, it's just nice to have a companion to talk to, or just to share the silence with.

One of the most rewarding things in our lives is to be a "hiking stick" for Scouts, to be there when needed, not just for your own Scout, but more often for other Scouts who need the help and friendship of an adult from time to time. We invite each of you to share that experience—whether you think of yourself as a shiny, spring-loaded model or an old dead branch, you have something to contribute.

Thank you for giving Troop 7 the opportunity to help your son or daughter grow into one of tomorrow's leaders.

Please feel free to contact us anytime with questions or concerns.

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