



# Patrol Leader

*"The patrol system is not one method in which Scouting for boys can be carried on. It is the only method."*

—Lord Baden-Powell, Scouting's founder

## The Patrol

The patrol is a group of Scouts who belong to a troop and who are probably similar in age, development, and interests. The patrol method allows Scouts to interact in a small group outside the larger troop context, working together as a team and sharing the responsibility of making their patrol a success. A patrol takes pride in its identity, and the members strive to make their patrol the best it can be. Patrols will sometimes join with other patrols to learn skills and complete advancement requirements. At other times they will compete against those same patrols in Scout skills and athletic competitions.



The members of each patrol elect one of their own to serve as patrol leader. The troop determines the requirements for patrol leaders, such as rank and age. To give more youths the opportunity to lead, most troops elect patrol leaders twice a year. Some may have elections more often.

Patrol size depends upon a troop's enrollment and the needs of its members, though an ideal patrol size is eight Scouts. Patrols with fewer than eight Scouts should try to recruit new members to get their patrol size up to the ideal number.

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## Types of Patrols

There are three kinds of patrols: new-Scout patrols, regular patrols, and Venture patrols.

**New-Scout patrols** are for 11-year-old Scouts who have recently joined the troop and are together for the first year in the troop. An older, experienced Scout often is assigned as a troop guide to help the new-Scout patrol through the challenges of troop membership. An assistant Scoutmaster should also assist the new-Scout patrol to ensure that each Scout has every opportunity to succeed right from the start.

**Regular patrols** are made up of Scouts who have completed their First Class requirements. They have been around Scouting long enough to be comfortable with the patrol and troop operation and are well-versed in camping, cooking, and Scouting's other basic skills.

A **Venture patrol** is an optional patrol within the troop made up of Scouts age 13 and older. These troop members have the maturity and experience to take part in more challenging high-adventure outings. The Venture patrol elects a patrol leader, who works with an assistant Scoutmaster to put the patrol's plans into action.

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## Patrol Meetings

Patrol meetings may be held at any time and place. Many troops set aside a portion of each troop meeting for its patrols to gather. Others encourage patrols to meet on a different evening at the home of a patrol member. The frequency of patrol meetings is determined by upcoming events and activities that require planning and discussion.

Patrol meetings should be well-planned and businesslike. Typically, the patrol leader calls the meeting to order, the scribe collects dues, and the assistant patrol leader reports on advancement. The patrol leader should report any information from the latest patrol leaders' council meeting. The bulk of the meeting should be devoted to planning upcoming activities, with specific assignments made to each patrol member.



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## Patrol Activities

Most patrol activities take place within the framework of the troop. However, patrols may also conduct day hikes and service projects independent of the troop, as long as they follow two rules:

- The Scoutmaster approves the activity.
- The patrol activity does not interfere with any troop function.



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## Patrol Spirit

Patrol spirit is the glue that holds the patrol together and keeps it going. Building patrol spirit takes time, because it is shaped by a patrol's experiences—good and bad. Often misadventures such as enduring a thunderstorm or getting lost in the woods will contribute much in pulling a patrol together. Many other elements also will help build patrol spirit. Creating a patrol identity and traditions will help build each patrol member's sense of belonging.

Every patrol needs a good name. Usually, the patrol chooses its name from nature, a plant or animal, or something that makes the patrol unique. A patrol might choose an object for its outstanding quality. For example, sharks are strong swimmers and buffaloes love to roam. The patrol may want to add an adjective to spice up the patrol name, such as the Soaring Hawks or the Rambunctious Raccoons.



A patrol flag is the patrol's trademark, and it should be a good one. Have a competition to see who comes up with the best design and who the best artist is. Make the flag out of a heavy canvas and use permanent markers to decorate it. In addition to the patrol name, the patrol flag should have the troop number on it as well as the names of all the patrol members. Mount the flag on a pole, which also can be decorated. Remember, the patrol flag should go wherever the patrol goes.

Every patrol has a patrol yell, which should be short and snappy. Choose words that fit the patrol's goals. Use the yell to announce to other patrols that your patrol is ready to eat or has won a patrol competition. Some patrols also have a patrol song.

Other patrol traditions include printing the patrol logo on the chuck box and other patrol property. Many troops designate patrol corners somewhere in the troop meeting room; patrols may decorate their corner in their own special way. Some patrols like to specialize in doing something extremely well, such as cooking peach cobbler or hobo stew.

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## The Patrol Leaders' Council

As a patrol leader, you are a member of the patrol leaders' council, and you serve as the voice of your patrol members. You should present the ideas and concerns of your patrol and in turn share the decisions of the patrol leaders' council with your patrol members.

The patrol leaders' council is made up of the senior patrol leader, who presides over the meetings; the assistant senior patrol leader, all patrol leaders, and the troop guide. The patrol leaders' council plans the yearly troop program at the annual troop program planning conference. It then meets monthly to fine-tune the plans for the upcoming month.

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## Your Duties as Patrol Leader

When you accepted the position of patrol leader, you agreed to provide service and leadership to your patrol and troop. No doubt you will take this responsibility seriously, but you will also find it fun and rewarding. As a patrol leader, you are expected to do the following:



- Plan and lead patrol meetings and activities.
  - Keep patrol members informed.
  - Assign each patrol member a specific duty.
  - Represent your patrol at all patrol leaders' council meetings and the annual program planning conference.
  - Prepare the patrol to participate in all troop activities.
  - Work with other troop leaders to make the troop run well.
  - Know the abilities of each patrol member.
  - Set a good example.
  - Wear the Scout uniform correctly.
  - Live by the Scout Oath and Law.
  - Show and develop patrol spirit.
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## Ten Tips for Being a Good Patrol Leader

- **Keep Your Word.** Don't make promises you can't keep.
  - **Be Fair to All.** A good leader shows no favorites. Don't allow friendships to keep you from being fair to all members of your patrol. Know who likes to do what, and assign duties to patrol members by what they like to do.
  - **Be a Good Communicator.** You don't need a commanding voice to be a good leader, but you must be willing to step out front with an effective "Let's go." A good leader knows how to get and give information so that everyone understands what's going on.
  - **Be Flexible.** Everything doesn't always go as planned. Be prepared to shift to "plan B" when "plan A" doesn't work.
  - **Be Organized.** The time you spend planning will be repaid many times over. At patrol meetings, record who agrees to do each task, and fill out the duty roster before going camping.
  - **Delegate.** Some leaders assume that the job will not get done unless they do it themselves. Most people like to be challenged with a task. Empower your patrol members to do things they have never tried.
  - **Set an Example.** The most important thing you can do is lead by example. Whatever you do, your patrol members are likely to do the same. A cheerful attitude can keep everyone's spirits up.
  - **Be Consistent.** Nothing is more confusing than a leader who is one way one moment and another way a short time later. If your patrol knows what to expect from you, they will more likely respond positively to your leadership.
  - **Give Praise.** The best way to get credit is to give it away. Often a "Nice job" is all the praise necessary to make a Scout feel he is contributing to the efforts of the patrol.
  - **Ask for Help.** Don't be embarrassed to ask for help. You have many resources at your disposal. When confronted with a situation you don't know how to handle, ask someone with more experience for some advice and direction.
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# Training for Patrol Leaders

Scouting takes pride in giving youth members unique leadership opportunities and training. Patrol leaders may have the opportunity to participate in all or some of the following leadership training.

## **Introduction to Leadership**

This is the first step of leadership training. It is usually conducted by the Scoutmaster within a few days after a troop election. It may last no more than an hour, but it should cover the responsibilities of a patrol leader and the needs for upcoming events within the troop.

## **Troop Junior Leader Training**

This is a daylong training conference conducted by the Scoutmaster and senior patrol leader. Its purpose is to reinforce the patrol method and to allow members of the patrol leaders' council to set goals for themselves, their patrols, and their troop.

## **Council Junior Leader Training**

Many councils offer weeklong junior leader training conferences at their camps for key troop leaders. This course supplements troop training and introduces leadership skills in an outdoor environment.

## **National Junior Leader Instructor Camp**

This program focuses on helping Scouts develop teaching skills that they can use to conduct council junior leader training conferences. It is offered through the Philmont Training Center every summer.

## **National Leadership Seminars**

These Order of the Arrow leadership seminars take place over a weekend and focus primarily on the skills and attributes of leadership. Youth participants should be at least 15 years of age or a lodge officer.



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# Resources for Patrol Leaders

As a patrol leader, you have many resources available, including your Scoutmaster, assistant Scoutmasters, senior patrol leader, and the troop committee. Other resources include your teachers, religious leaders, and community leaders. Literature resources available to you include the following:

- *Boy Scout Handbook*, No. 33105
- *Junior Leader Handbook*, No. 33500A
- *Fieldbook*, No. 33200
- *Boy Scout Songbook*, No. 33224
- *Boy Scout Requirements*, No. 33215C
- *Troop Program Resources*, No. 33588
- *Troop Program Features, Volumes I, II, and III*, Nos. 33110, 33111, 33112
- Worksheets from *Scoutmaster's Junior Leader Training Kit*, No. 34306
- *Boys' Life* magazines
- Copy of troop rules and policies
- Troop and patrol rosters
- Activity calendar (troop, district, council, chartered organization)
- First Class—First Year Tracking Sheet, No. 34118A
- Campfire Program Planner sheet, No. 33696
- Troop Planning Worksheet (from *Troop Program Features*)
- BSA Supply catalog