



Adventure Ahead!

Cub Scouting Is Changing. Here's Everything You Need to Know.

By Mark Ray

Scouting

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The Cub Scout motto is “Do Your Best,” but maybe it should be “Embrace Change.” Since Cub Scouting began in 1930, the program has changed more frequently than a fashion-conscious teenager. Age limits have dropped. Tigers have been introduced, while Lions have gone extinct. The Webelos program has appeared and expanded. Den mothers have become den leaders, and men and women alike have served as Cubmasters.

But perhaps the biggest changes lie ahead. Effective June 1, the BSA is making sweeping changes to Cub Scouting, changes that promise to make the program better for boys and easier for leaders. Read on to learn what you need to know about the changes.

Where the Changes Came From

In some organizations, strategic plans are little more than expensive paperweights and dust collectors. Not so in the BSA. The 2011-2015 National Council Strategic Plan laid out more than 100 goals designed to make Scouting's second century as successful as its first.

Perhaps the most important of those goals was to update our programs to “reflect the findings of a thorough program review and assessment that clearly identifies those elements that are appealing, exciting and culturally relevant to today’s youth and families.” Dubbed goal 411—because it was the first goal of the first objective of the plan’s fourth pillar—this goal has led to sweeping changes to the Cub Scout program. Here’s the path from there to here.

- **2010-2011:** Under the leadership of Utah volunteer Russ Hunsaker, a task force of roughly 75 volunteers from across the country evaluated how well Cub Scouting was addressing five desired outcomes: character development, participatory citizenship, personal fitness, outdoor skills and awareness and leadership development. The report card was mixed. While Cub Scouting offered plenty of fun, there were too many disconnects between the program and the desired outcomes, lots of passive learning and inadequate tools for den leaders.
- **2012-2013:** The 14-member Cub Adventure Team, led by volunteers Nancy Farrell from Colorado and Ken King from Illinois, began building a revised Cub Scout program around the desired outcomes. The team, which included active Cub Scout leaders with special expertise in education, curriculum design and Scout-leader training, totally overhauled the advancement program. Separately, in October 2012, the National Executive Board approved a resolution to use the Scout Oath and Scout Law in the Cub Scout and Venturing programs.
- **2013:** Den leaders in 11 councils across the country tested the new advancement program, offering feedback that the Cub Adventure Team incorporated in its final product. The team continued tweaking the program and wrote new youth handbooks and den leader guides.
- **2014:** Sessions at the National Annual Meeting and the Philmont Training Center let volunteers give the revised program a test drive. (More than 230 Cub Scouters attended six PTC sessions over the summer.) Participants received booklets that included sample chapters from the new youth and adult publications. Additional feedback led to a final set of requirements in September.
- **2015:** New publications and awards began appearing in Scout shops ahead of the official June 1 launch of the revised program.

Desired Outcomes

Here are the five desired outcomes the new advancement program strives to attain.

Desired Outcome	Components
Character Development	Scout Oath and Scout Law Duty to God
Participatory Citizenship	Civic Awareness and Patriotism Service Stewardship
Personal Fitness	Physical Fitness Healthy Eating Wellness and Healthy Habits
Outdoor Skills and Awareness	Comfort, Safety and Adventure in the Outdoors Nature and Outdoor Ethics Emergency Skills
Leadership	Supporting Leaders Leadership Thinking Leading Others

What's not Changing

Earlier this year, rumors flew around the internet that the Cub Scout uniform was changing. It's not.

In fact, most things about Cub Scouting are staying the same, including den and pack structures, age and gender requirements and the emphasis on fun and doing your best.

Cub Scouting will now have seven methods: Living the Ideals (which incorporates the former Making Character Connections method), Belonging to a Den, Using Advancement, Involving Family and Home, Participating in Activities, Serving Home and Neighborhood and Wearing the Uniform. All that's really changing is how the ideals and advancement methods are implemented.

Updated Ideals

Cub Scouting has come a long way from the 1930s, when Cub Scouts pledged to be square (a good thing at the time!). Back then, the Cub Scout Promise simply read, "I (name) promise to do my best to be square and to obey the Law of the Pack."

As part of the revised Cub Scout program, the Cub Scout Promise and the Law of the Pack have been retired, and boys will now learn the Scout Oath and Scout Law. This change emphasizes the unity of the Scouting movement and makes it a bit easier for Cub Scouting to live out Scouting's mission and vision statements, both of which refer to the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

The Cub Scout motto, sign, salute and handshake are not changing.

Advancement

The old advancement program included a dizzying array of beads, badges, belt loops, arrow points, compass points and activity pins. In fact, the only thing that stayed consistent from Tiger Cubs to Webelos was inconsistency.

Now, each rank will follow the same format. To earn a rank, a boy must complete a mix of seven required and elective adventures.

Rank	Required Adventures*	Elective Adventures	Total Adventures
Tiger	6	1	7
Wolf	6	1	7
Bear	6	1	7
Webelos	5	2	7
Arrow of Light	4	3	7

* Including a family-based duty-to-God adventure

To maintain consistency across ranks, the Webelos badge is no longer a prerequisite for Arrow of Light.

Boys receive an adventure (belt) loop for each adventure at the Tiger, Wolf and Bear levels and an activity pin (worn on the Webelos colors or Webelos cap) for each adventure at the Webelos and Arrow of Light levels. (The recognition items for required adventures are full color, while the ones for elective adventures are monochromatic.) Once a boy completes all seven adventures for a given rank, he receives the pocket patch.

New Cub Scouts will continue to earn the Bobcat badge before working on other requirements. To earn Bobcat, boys must learn about the Scout Oath and Scout Law and the Cub Scout sign, handshake, motto and salute; they must also complete the exercises in the pamphlet *How to Protect Your Children From Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide*.

Adventures

Perhaps the most important word in the revised Cub Scout program is “adventure.” In Cub Scout terms, an adventure is a collection of themed, multidisciplinary activities representing approximately three den meetings’ worth of engaging content—about a month’s worth of programming, in other words.

The word “adventure” emphasizes that Cub Scout activities should be fun and should take boys places they’ve never been. The adventures focus on learning by doing instead of learning by listening. Requirements are full of words like build, play, go, find, demonstrate and discover, not words like discuss, learn and share.

The Tiger, Wolf and Bear books contain 19 adventures each, while the Webelos Handbook (which covers two years) contains 27. That means there will be plenty of material for year-round fun, even in the second year of the Webelos program.

Putting Principles in Action (infographic)

Here’s how one adventure, Webelos Walkabout, supports all five desired outcomes.

- **Character Development:** Character Compass items in the *Webelos Handbook* connect Scout Law values with the activities boys are doing.
- **Participating Citizenship:** Boys complete a service project as part of a den hike.
- **Personal Fitness:** Boys plan a nutritious lunch and complete a den hike.
- **Outdoor Skills and Awareness:** Boys discuss outdoor ethics, create a hike plan and assemble a hiking first-aid kit.
- **Leadership:** During the den hike, each boy serves in a leadership role like trail leader or lunch leader.

The Academic and Sports Program

Cub Scouts have been earning belt loops for individual and team sports since 1985 and for academic subjects since 1991, and it’s no doubt they enjoyed the bling. Oftentimes, however, earning belt loops detracted from the advancement program as some boys (and leaders) focused on easy belt loops over more challenging—and meaningful—achievements.

With the introduction of the new advancement program, the Academic and Sports Program has been retired. However, many of its best elements have been

incorporated into the new adventures, and the new adventure loops ensure that boys' belts will be as jangly as ever.

New for 2015: Den Leader Guides

The revised program comes complete with four printed den leader guides that complement the youth handbooks. More comprehensive than the old *Den & Pack Meeting Resource Guide*, these books offer the following resources for each adventure:

- The rationale for the adventure
- Takeaways for Cub Scouts (learning objectives)
- A list of the adventure requirements
- Planning and implementation notes
- Detailed meeting plans (including supply lists and handouts)

Meeting preparation should be easier because the guides are self-contained—there's no need to search through other publications for games or song lyrics, for example. Leaders who pilot-tested the adventures found that it took them about 45 minutes to prepare for an hour-long meeting.

Transitioning to the Revised Program

The revised program goes into effect on June 1. Boys who join on or after that date will complete the new Bobcat requirements and then start on the appropriate rank for their age group (Tiger, Wolf, Bear, Webelos or Arrow of Light). Similarly, returning Scouts will move to the next rank in the revised program when their program year starts. (The transition may take a little longer in packs chartered to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where boys move up based on birthdate not school grade.)

Boys who have earned the Webelos badge and are moving to Arrow of Light this summer or fall have two options: 1) they may continue to work out of the current handbook and complete the old Arrow of Light requirements, or 2) they may begin using the new *Webelos Handbook* for Arrow of Light. If they choose option 2, they must complete the four required adventures; their three electives may come from the new adventures or from activity badges they earned under the old program but did not use to fulfill Webelos rank requirements.

Introducing Ethan

Boys are aspirational by nature. They long to become like their big brothers, their older cousins and the kids who are a grade or two ahead of them in school.

Starting this year, many Cub Scouts will aspire to be Ethan.

Ethan is a new character who appears in all four Cub Scout handbooks and speaks directly to the reader about what he's been doing in Scouting. In each handbook, Ethan is a year or two older than the boys he's addressing. (In the Tiger handbook, he's a Wolf, while in the Webelos handbook, he's a Boy Scout.)

Ethan introduces each of the required adventures, shares tips from his own experiences and previews what boys can look forward to as they progress in Scouting. While Ethan is a good Scout, he's not a perfect one. He struggles to master the square knot, he gets scared by a spooky ghost story and he forgets the jelly for PB&J sandwiches. But he always has fun and is always ready for his next adventure.

What About Akela?

In the revised Cub Scout program, Akela will still be a special term for any leader, and the Cub Scout sign will still resemble the attentive ears of a wolf. Cub Scouting's use of characters from *The Jungle Book* will be mentioned in the youth handbooks, but, beyond that, the TC, Akela and Baloo characters won't show up. (Keep in mind that *The Jungle Book* was published in 1894 and that most people's frame of reference is the Disney movie that came out 48 years ago.)

Back to the Future

As the first Wolf handbook proclaimed, Cub Scouting was born at a time of adventure: "where we read in the morning papers what was done at the South Pole yesterday—where music and speech circle the globe 'on the air'—where airplanes wing their swift flight." The adventure has only increased in the ensuing 85 years, but the hope described in that long-ago book remains the same: that Cub Scouts "find fun and joy in doing and ... give back to the world a life useful and worthy."

The revised Cub Scout program promises to make that hope a reality for millions of boys.