



The Get-Started Guide for New Scouting Leaders

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Welcome to Scouting! You're joining a force of volunteers a million strong, some of whom have been in Scouting since before you were even born (see tip #38). Yet you—yes, you—may be uniquely qualified to have a powerful positive impact on the young people in your unit (see tip #43). No pressure, huh?

We at *Scouting* magazine have been where you are, and we understand just how intimidating the job can be. So we created this handy guide to help you through the first months of your Scouting career. Half the tips below stem from our own experience; the other half come from Scouters around the country who responded to survey questions on our Facebook page (see tip #20). We appreciate their input and look forward to the day that you, too, start sharing your wisdom with Scouting's next crop of rookie leaders.

1. **Log on to MyScouting.** MyScouting (<http://myscouting.scouting.org>) is the entry point on the BSA website for all sorts of web-based activities, including training, internet advancement, and registration for national events. Signing up is simple, and there's a tutorial if you get stuck. As soon as possible, add your member ID to your profile so you get credit for online training.
2. **Become an alum.** Even if you've just joined Scouting, you qualify for the BSA Alumni program (www.bsaalumni.org). Why sign up? Four words: free bugle-call ringtones!

3. **Update your calendar.** Get all your Scouting dates on your family calendar and fix any conflicts. Nothing's worse than having to cancel a den meeting on your wedding anniversary (except *not* cancelling a den meeting on your wedding anniversary!).
4. **Earn your stripes—or at least your Trained patch.** Every Scout deserves a trained leader, and every leader deserves to be trained. The basic-training sequence has four phases: Fast Start, Youth Protection (child-abuse prevention and detection), This Is Scouting (a quick overview of Scouting), and position-specific training. Learn more—including which courses are available online—at <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/Adults/Training/Trained%20Leader.aspx>. Note that you must complete Youth Protection training before you can register as a leader.
5. **Track your progress.** As a volunteer, you can earn all sorts of awards, most of which are represented by those knots you see on veteran leaders' uniforms. Find out what awards are available for your position and start tracking your progress.
6. **Get a uniform.** When you're properly uniformed, you set an example for your Scouts and have a handy place to display the awards you receive. (Patches aren't just for the boys!) Yes, uniforms can be expensive, but many packs and troops have closets of "experienced" uniforms that are yours for the asking. Before you start sewing on patches, grab a uniform inspection sheet from www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34048.pdf and get things in the right place the first time. Don't like to sew? Try Badge Magic® (<http://www.scoutstuff.org/badge-magic-patch-adhesive-kits.html>) or check pricing at a local alterations shop.
7. **Get to know your Scouts.** You'll be spending lots of time with them, so find out where they go to school, what they like and dislike, and how you can best contact them (phone, email, Facebook, etc.).
8. **Get to know your Scouts' parents.** What are their hobbies and talents? Who can haul the boys to camp? Any Eagle Scouts in the group? Give every parent a little job, and your job won't seem so big.
9. **Check out ScoutParents.** Speaking of parents, surf over to www.scoutparents.org for extensive information on how Scouting benefits parents and families, not just kids. There's even a free e-book on the subject at the site.
10. **Go to roundtable.** You won't find King Arthur and his knights at this monthly training event. Instead, you'll find a bunch of Scouters who've been in your shoes

and are eager to help you be successful. Some of the best discussions happen after the closing, so plan to stay late and kick rocks in the parking lot. Check with your unit leader (Cubmaster, Scoutmaster, Advisor, etc.) or council office for dates and locations.

11. **Get connected online.** Another great source for Scouting information is the internet. Ask people in your unit or district for their favorite online discussion groups, blogs, and podcasts. And be sure to bookmark *Scouting's* own blog: <http://blog.scoutingmagazine.org>.
12. **Meet and greet, part 1.** Seek out your chartered organization representative, the volunteer who oversees Scouting at your chartered organization (the school, community group, or religious institution that sponsors your unit). Ask how Scouting supports the organization's mission and what your unit can do to help. This is especially important if you're the unit leader or committee chair.
13. **Meet and greet, part 2.** Seek out your district executive and unit commissioner. The DE is the professional Scouter who oversees Scouting in your community; the commissioner is an experienced volunteer charged with supporting your unit. Their goal is to make your unit successful, and they have access to lots of useful resources.
14. **Meet and greet, part 3.** Find a mentor in your district who holds the same position as you. Meet for coffee to discuss any challenges you're facing, then visit one of your mentor's meetings to see him or her in action.
15. **Help Uncle Sam help you.** If you itemize your taxes, you can deduct the cost of your uniforms and the miles you drive as a volunteer. You'll need good records, so start a receipt file and mileage log. For more information, see IRS Publication 526 (<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p526.pdf>) or consult your tax advisor.
16. **Sign up for *Boys' Life* magazine**—or snag your son's copy when he's not looking. *BL* content aligns with pack and troop programs, and the jokes are always good for a laugh (or a groan). For a quick game, create a scavenger hunt where boys look for specific words or pictures in the current issue. Learn more about *BL* at www.boyslife.org.
17. **Catch up on your reading.** Read the appropriate youth and adult handbooks that relate to your position. If you're a Wolf den leader, get the *Wolf Cub Scout Handbook* and *Cub Scout Leader Book*. If you're an assistant Scoutmaster, get the *Boy Scout Handbook* and *Scoutmaster Handbook*. If you're a Venturing Advisor, get the *Venturing/Ranger Handbook* and the *Venturing Leader Manual*. If you're a Well, you get the idea.

18. **Set some personal goals.** What do you want to accomplish this year or before you leave Scouting (which we hope won't be this year!)? Write down your goals and paste them in your leader book.
19. **Speaking of goals, plan a journey to excellence.** Journey to Excellence is the BSA's performance recognition program for units, districts, and councils. JTE, which replaces the old Quality Unit program, measures everything from advancement and activities to leader training and member retention. Visit <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/Awards/JourneyToExcellence.aspx> to learn about the specific goals for your type of unit. Then ask your unit leader about your unit's progress toward Bronze, Silver, or Gold recognition.
20. **Find us on Facebook.** You are on Facebook, aren't you? Then "like" the pages for the BSA and *Scouting* and *Boys' Life* magazines. When you do, you'll get the latest Scouting news sent directly to your newsfeed.
21. **Learn the lingo.** Quick! What do the following acronyms and abbreviations mean?

COPE
KISMIF
NOAC
WOSM

Key:

COPE – Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience (Project COPE is the name given to the challenge courses found at many Scout camps)

KISMIF – keep it simple make it fun (the guiding philosophy behind good Scouting activities)

NOAC – National Order of the Arrow Conference (the biennial conference of Scouting's national honor society)

WOSM – World Organization of the Scout Movement (a sort of United Nations for Scout associations in 161 countries around the world)

If you don't know from NOAC, bookmark the Language of Scouting website (<http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/Media/LOS.aspx>). You'll never be at a loss when veteran Scouters start tossing jargon around.

22. **Check out the Summit.** The Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve promises a world of excitement for older Scouts and Venturers. You can't visit until next summer, but the website is open for business now: <http://summit.scouting.org>.

23. **Plan to visit Philmont.** Philmont Scout Ranch near Cimarron, N.M., is the world's largest youth camping facility. It's also the BSA's national volunteer training center. Every summer, the Philmont Training Center offers dozens of weeklong conferences for Scouters of all experience levels. Best of all, your spouse and children can participate in great family programs while you're in class. Details are at <http://www.philmontscoutranch.org/ptc.aspx>.
24. **Check out Be A Scout.** Be A Scout (<http://beascout.scouting.org>) is the BSA's spiffy new unit locator, which uses Google Maps technology to help prospective Scouts find you. Be A Scout is so new that many veterans don't know about it. Introduce your unit to it, and you'll no longer be the newbie!
25. **Find out about the founder.** Scouting's founder, Robert Baden-Powell, died in 1941, but his spirit is alive and well today. You can read many of his books, including *Scouting for Boys* (the first Boy Scout handbook), at <http://www.thedump.scoutscan.com/dumpinventorybp.php>.

Top Tips for Working with Scouts

26. The most powerful words in the world are, "That sounds cool. Make it happen."
– Cassie Johnson
27. Be willing to do whatever you are asking the boys to do. They will be more willing to participate if you make a fool of yourself first. – Stephanie Gourley
28. Listen to the Scouts. They are smarter than you think. – Andrew O'Connor
29. Scouts just want to have fun and learn. They never have an agenda. – Skip Tamke
30. Trust your older Scouts—but verify! – Tim Hagey

Top Tips for Working with Families

31. There are never enough volunteers. Recruit those parents from the day they sign up their kid! – Jane Hansen
32. Share as many details about an event as you can before a family has to commit. That way they have every opportunity to make sure it is right for them. – Shelli Smith Luna

33. Stick to your schedule. Families will come to understand it's easier to work into a planned schedule than to pull things together at the last minute. – Laurie Good Kautz
34. Some kids have a very structured home life; others are the opposite. Make your den rules apparent from the beginning and stick with them. – Michelle Cianflone Flynn
35. When someone asks you "How can I help?" you'd better have an answer; otherwise, they may never ask again! – Dave Ruiz

Top Tips for Getting up to Speed Quickly

36. Go to roundtable, learn online, and make friends! – Christine Needham Martin
37. Don't wait to get all of your basic training done. – Kirsten Johnson
38. At your first roundtable or training, look for the person with the most knots on his or her Scout shirt. Knots indicate experience and knowledge, and those individuals are a wealth of resources and contacts —and they are free! – Lindsay Foster
39. Talk to other Scouters. At summer camp or other council or district events, go to other campsites and talk to the Scouters there. – Chuck Pint
40. Ask questions. Most leaders are willing to help, but they don't want to make you uncomfortable or overwhelmed. – Aileen Sheehan Masone

How Do You Measure Success?

41. Success as a Scouter can be measured in grins, smiles, and laughter. – Tom Osen
42. Success is seeing your Scouts following the morals and ethics learned in Scouting and putting them into practice with enthusiasm. – Ronald Pierantozzi
43. Do you go home after a meeting tired but smiling because you saw a boy do something big for himself that most people, even his parents, probably would never notice? That's when you know you've done it right. – Phil Peck
44. Success is seeing the smiles of the boys as they learn new things and watching them come back every week eagerly anticipating wanting more. – Charles Nesloney

45. Wait 15 to 20 years to see what kind of men they become. Then you'll know if you were successful. – Calvin Gray

Miscellaneous Tips

46. There are so many Scouting urban legends out there. If someone says something that seems odd or strange, ask where it can be found in print. – Michelle Matowski

47. Plan for more than you can do in an activity or meeting. – Bradley White-Findeisen

48. In volunteering, you are truly receiving a gift. The more time and effort you set aside for your Scouts, the greater the gift you'll receive in return. – Anthony Daniel Thorne

49. No one, especially the Scouts, cares what you know. What is important is what you do! – Joe Julio

50. Learn to listen not lecture, to joke not judge, and to laugh whenever possible. – Dan Hartnett