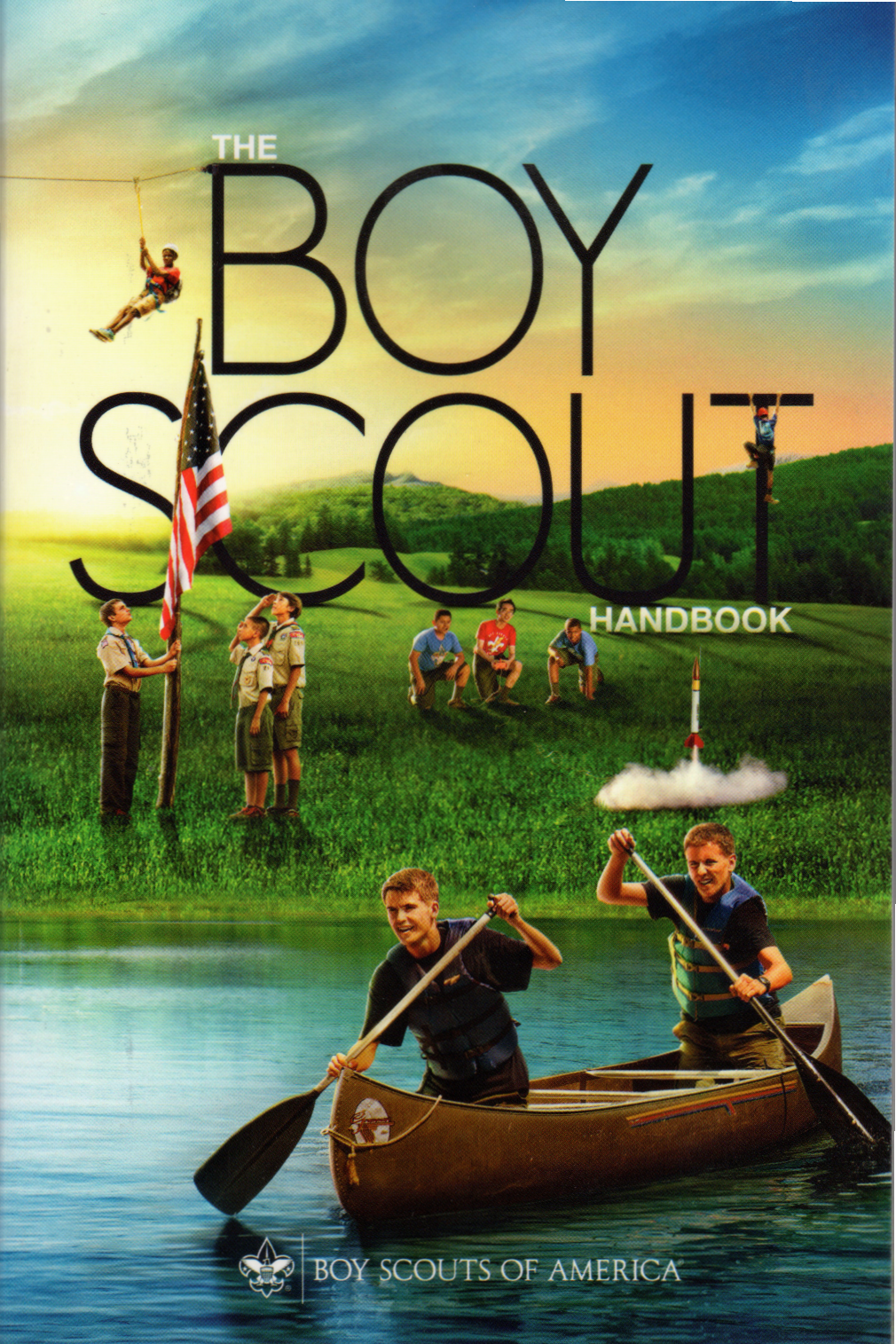


THE BOY SCOUT HANDBOOK



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

TELL A FRIEND ABOUT SCOUTING

A Scout is helpful and friendly. And a great way to demonstrate that is by helping a friend join Scouting!

To become a First Class Scout, you must invite a friend to a meeting, campout, or other activity. But you'll probably want to invite someone long before you reach First Class. Here's how to get started:

- **Think of a friend you think would be a great Scout.** Maybe he's already into the outdoors. Maybe he isn't involved in a lot of other activities. Maybe he laughs at your jokes.



- **Pick a meeting or activity that would be especially fun.** Hint:

The meeting where you're washing a bunch of dishes would not be a good choice, nor would the campout where you're hiking across Death Valley.

- **Make the ask.** Invite your friend to come along. Give him and his parents all the information they need and see if your parents can give him a ride.
- **Alert your senior patrol leader and Scoutmaster that you're bringing a friend.** If they know ahead of time, they can roll out the red carpet for your friend.

If your friend goes on an outing, he'll need to complete an Annual Health and Medical Record, but he won't need to turn in an application—yet. Many troops waive the cost of campouts for prospective members, making it as easy as possible for guys to check out Scouting.

Youth Membership Requirements

To become a Boy Scout, a boy must:

- Have completed the fifth grade and be at least 10 years old or be at least 11 years old or have earned the Arrow of Light Award and be at least 10 years old.
- Have not reached age 18.
- Complete and sign the Boy Scouts of America youth application.
- Give the completed application and fees to the Scoutmaster.

BOY SCOUT HANDBOOK

13th Edition

This book belongs to _____

Given to me by _____

I joined Troop _____ on _____

City _____ State _____

Milestones

Became a Scout on _____

Became a Tenderfoot Scout on _____

Became a Second Class Scout on _____

Became a First Class Scout on _____

Became a Star Scout on _____

Became a Life Scout on _____

Became a Eagle Scout on _____



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

Dedicated to the American Scoutmaster,
who makes Scouting possible.

This handbook, the official BSA manual, is based on the experience of
the Boy Scouts of America in the United States since its founding in 1910
and is administered under the leadership of

Dr. Robert M. Gates, *President*

Tico Perez, *National Commissioner*

Michael B. Surbaugh, *Chief Scout Executive*



Text pages printed on Rolland Enviro 100 Print, which is 100 percent post-consumer waste recycled paper, processed chlorine free, and manufactured within the Environmental Choice Program guidelines. This stock was produced using biogas energy, and the Forest Stewardship Council® has tracked the paper through a chain of custody from forest through printer to ensure that stock from these forests is managed correctly. Cover stock printed on 12 pt. Kallima Coated one-side cover, FSC® certified as a mixed-sources piece.

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Boy Scouts of America
Irving, Texas
Printed in the USA
No. 34554

Thirteenth edition
Total copies of 13th edition—[[total to come]]
Total printing since 1910—[[total to come]]

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Boy Scouts of America.
Boy Scout handbook.— 12th ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-8395-3102-9 (alk. paper)
1. Boy Scouts of America—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Boy
Scouts—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Title.
HS3313.B69 2009
369.43—dc22

2009005531

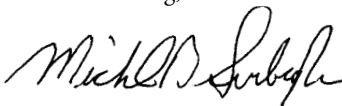
FROM THE CHIEF SCOUT EXECUTIVE

One day, a young boy behaved badly in class, and his teacher sent him to the library to get a book. The book he picked was the Boy Scout Handbook. As he opened it, he read, “Today, you are an American boy; tomorrow, you will be an American man.” He wasn’t sure what that meant, but as the pages unfolded and his Scouting adventure began, it started to become clear. The exciting activities like camping, rock climbing, and sailing were all pathways to becoming a good leader and a person of good character.

That young boy was me. As I began my Scouting journey, the book gave up a lot of additional wisdom. I learned it is not enough just to live and to dream; I learned that to achieve dreams for myself, it is important to know how to live in a way that helps others along the way. The Scout Oath and Scout Law will help you do that.

Now it’s your turn! Whether sleeping under the stars, cooking over an open fire, or even learning to use an underwater drone to study ocean life, you will work with others to achieve common goals and become a leader in your community. This book is packed with information that will serve you well. Read it often and use it as a tool to become a strong American man who does his duty to God and his country and willingly serves others. One promise I can make to you: Along the way, you will find friends for a lifetime and have adventures you will never forget!

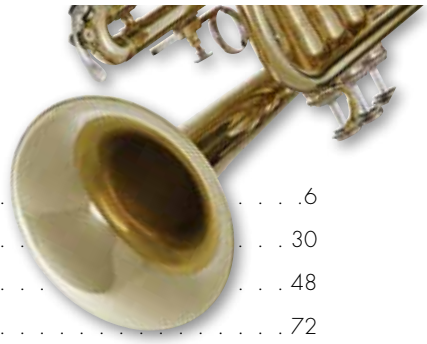
Yours in Scouting,



Michael B. Surbaugh
Chief Scout Executive
Boy Scouts of America

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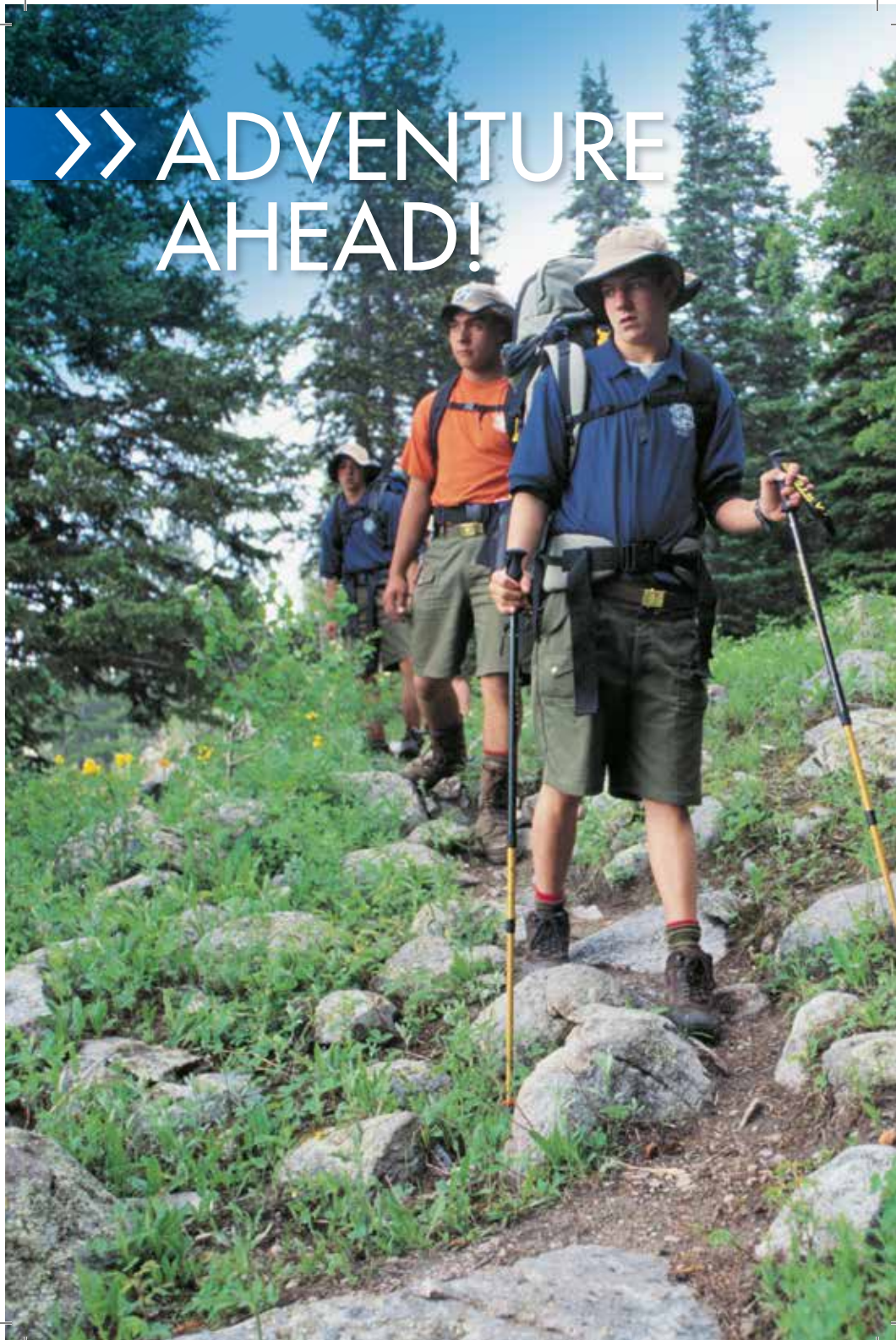
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>> ADVENTURE AHEAD!



Imagine standing at a trailhead with a small group of friends. It's early morning, and the air is filled with the scent of pine and honeysuckle. In a nearby tree, a squirrel is chittering away. An eagle circles high overhead, soaring gracefully on unseen air currents. At the trailhead, a weathered trail sign reads simply, "Adventure Ahead!"

That's it. No description, no distance, just the promise of some untold adventure. You can't tell just where the trail leads, but that doesn't really matter, because you know the journey is the reward.

And so, without a word, you and your friends smile, pick up your backpacks, and take your first steps into adventure, into excitement, and into the future.



Imagine what you will discover on your next adventure.



WELCOME TO BOY SCOUTING

By becoming a Boy Scout, you are following in the footsteps of millions of boys over the past century who laced up their hiking boots and set off on great adventures in the outdoors. They served their families, their communities, and the nation. They learned skills and built friendships that guided them throughout their lives. They lived the values of Scouting and built lives of success and honor.

Soon after joining a troop, you will find yourself hiking in open country and camping under the stars. You will learn first aid, become stronger physically and mentally, and practice leading yourself and others. As you get more Scouting experience under your belt, the places you explore will become familiar as you discover plants, wildlife, and all else nature offers. You'll also learn how to enjoy the outdoors while leaving no trace that you were ever there.



But that's not all you'll learn. The skills you develop in Scouting will help you back home, too. You may become a better student or athlete or family member because you are a Scout. Through the merit badge program, you may discover a hobby or even a career that you can pursue throughout the rest of your life. One day you might save a life—or save the planet—because of something you learned in Scouting.

Throughout your life, you will face challenges as great as any you meet while camping and hiking. The Scout Oath and Scout Law provide guidelines for doing the right thing. As a Scout, you will be surrounded by friends and leaders who share your values and will be there for you in good times and in bad.

How do we know? Because that trailhead has been there since way back in 1910, when the Boy Scouts of America was founded.

THE MERITS OF SCOUTING



Scouting's merit badge program will lead you to experiences you might not get anywhere else, such as soldering the intricate pieces of your own robot as this Scout is doing to earn the Robotics merit badge.



Robotics





Scouting has changed a great deal since 1910. Camping gear is lighter and easier to use. Troop members undertake adventures their grandfathers could not have even imagined. Where the Scouts of the last century relied heavily on maps and compasses, Scouts today also use GPS receivers to find their way. While early Scouts could earn merit badges in Beekeeping,

Blacksmithing, and Pigeon Raising, Scouts today can work on Animation, Digital Technology, Nuclear Science, and plenty of other merit badges well-suited for the 21st century.



Honeybee

Not everything has changed, though. Scouts still go camping every chance they get. They still prepare themselves to do their best in emergencies and to care for their communities and the environment with Good Turns and other service projects. As steady as the Big Dipper and the North Star, the Scout Oath and Scout Law have shown the way for millions of boys and men during their time as Scouts and throughout the rest of their lives. And there's still the lure of the adventure beyond the next turn in the trail.

Scouting continues to be an adventure that is filled with opportunities to learn, to have fun, and to become the best person you can be. The pages ahead will lead you deep into Scouting. The more you learn, the more exciting and challenging your adventures will become.

Adventure, learning, challenge, and responsibility—the promise of Scouting is all this and more. If you are ready for the adventure to begin, then let's get started.



Modern camping gear used by today's Scouts is much lighter and more suited for outdoor activities than gear used by early Scouts.

ADVANCEMENT: SCOUTING BASICS

The basics of Scouting will follow you throughout your journey along the trail from the Scout rank to Boy Scouting's highest rank: Eagle Scout. It all starts here, with demonstrating that you know and understand some of Scouting's basic premises. *(See the back of this book for the official text of all rank requirements.)*



SCOUT Repeat from memory the Scout Oath, Scout Law, Scout motto, and Scout slogan, and explain what they mean. Explain what Scout spirit is and tell how you have shown Scout spirit. Give the Boy Scout sign, salute, and handshake, and explain when they should be used. Describe the elements and significance of the First Class badge. Explain the patrol method and describe the types of patrols that are used in your troop. Be familiar with your patrol name, emblem, flag, and yell, and explain how these items create patrol spirit. Describe the four steps in Boy Scout advancement and how the seven ranks of Boy Scouting are earned. Understand what merit badges are and how they are earned. Participate in a Scoutmaster conference while working on the Scout rank.



TENDERFOOT, SECOND CLASS, FIRST CLASS Demonstrate Scout spirit by living the Scout Oath and Scout Law, and tell how you have lived four different points of the Scout Law, as well as your duty to God, in your everyday life. Participate in a Scoutmaster conference while working on the next Scouting rank, and successfully complete a board of review.



STAR In addition to continuing the activities described for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class above, be active in your troop for four months as a First Class Scout. Earn six merit badges, including any four from the required list for Eagle. Participate in six hours of community service, and serve actively in your troop for four months in a position of responsibility.



LIFE In addition to continuing the activities described for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class above, be active in your troop for six months as a Star Scout. Earn five additional merit badges, including any three additional ones from the required list for Eagle. Participate in six hours of community service, including three hours of conservation, and serve actively in your troop for six months in a position of responsibility.



EAGLE In addition to continuing the activities described for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class above, be active in your troop for six months as a Life Scout. Explain how your understanding of the Scout Oath and Scout Law will guide your life in the future. Earn a total of 21 merit badges (10 more than required for the Life rank), including 13 required for Eagle. Serve actively in your troop for six months in a position of responsibility. Participate in a Scoutmaster conference while working on the Eagle rank, and successfully complete an Eagle Scout board of review.

BOY SCOUT BASICS

Boy Scouts learn an amazing number of things about camping, nature, first aid, and more. Some of the most important things are on the next few pages. The Scout Oath, Scout Law, Scout motto, and Scout slogan will guide your steps long after you hang up your hiking boots.

THE SCOUT OATH, SCOUT LAW, SCOUT MOTTO, AND SCOUT SLOGAN

Every Scout for more than a hundred years has pledged to live by the Scout Oath, Scout Law, Scout motto, and Scout slogan.

Scout Oath

Before you can agree to live by the Scout Oath, you must know what it means.

THE 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.

On my honor . . . Honor is the core of who you are—your honesty, your integrity, your reputation, the ways you treat others, and how you act when no one is looking. By giving your word at the outset of the Scout Oath, you are promising to be guided by its ideals.

I will do my best . . . Do all you can to live by the Scout Oath, even when you are faced with difficult challenges. Measure your achievements against your own high standards, and don't be influenced by peer pressure or what other people do.

To do my duty . . . Duty is what others expect of you, but more importantly, it is what you expect of yourself.

to God . . . Your family and religious leaders teach you about God and the ways you can serve. You can do your duty to God by following the wisdom of those teachings and by defending the rights of others to practice their own beliefs.

and my country . . . Help the United States continue to be a strong and fair nation by learning about our system of government and your responsibilities as a citizen. When you do all you can for your family and community, you are serving your country. Making the most of your opportunities will help shape our nation's future.

and to obey the Scout Law; . . . In your thoughts, words, and deeds, the 12 points of the Scout Law will lead you toward doing the right thing throughout your life. When you obey the Scout Law, other people will respect you for the way you live, and you will respect yourself.

To help other people at all times; . . . Your cheerful smile and helping hand will ease the burden of many who need assistance. By helping out whenever you can, you are making the world better. "At all times" is a reminder to help even when it is difficult and even if you haven't been asked.

To keep myself physically strong, . . . Taking care of your body prepares you for a lifetime of great adventures. You can build your body's strength and endurance by eating nutritious foods, getting enough sleep, and being active. You should also avoid tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, and anything else that might harm your health.

mentally awake, . . . Develop your mind both in and outside of the classroom. Be curious about everything around you, and never stop learning. Work hard to make the most of your abilities. With an inquiring attitude and the willingness to ask questions, you can learn much about the world around you and your role in it.

and morally straight. Your relationships with others should be honest and open. Respect and defend the rights of all people. Be clean in your speech and actions and faithful in your religious duties. Values you practice as a Scout will help you shape a life of virtue and self-reliance.



Scout Law

The Scout Law will show you how to live as a boy and as a man.

THE SCOUT LAW

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

A Scout is trustworthy. A Scout tells the truth. He is honest, and he keeps his promises. People can depend on him.

Trustworthiness will help you make and maintain good friendships. As you demonstrate that you are trustworthy, you are showing your character—the person you are on the inside. If your judgment fails and you make a mistake, your good character will be what helps you quickly admit it and make good on any damage. Adults and your peers alike will know that they can rely on you to do your best in every situation. Living in this way also means that you can trust yourself.



A Scout is loyal. A Scout is loyal to those to whom loyalty is due.

Loyalty can be shown everywhere: at home, in your troop and patrol, among your classmates at school. You can also express loyalty to the United States when you respect the flag and the government. Give real meaning to your loyalty by helping to improve your community, state, and nation.

A Scout is helpful. A Scout cares about other people. He helps others without expecting payment or reward. He fulfills his duties to his family by helping at home.

Scouts want the best for everyone and act to make that happen. While a Scout might work for pay, he does not expect to receive money for being helpful. A Good Turn that is done in the hope of getting a tip or a favor is not a Good Turn at all.

A Scout is friendly. A Scout is a friend to all. He is a brother to other Scouts. He offers his friendship to people of all races, religions, and nations, and he respects them even if their beliefs and customs are different from his own.

If you are willing to be a good friend, you will find friendship reflected back to you. Friends also are able to celebrate their differences, realizing that real friends can respect the ideas, interests, and talents that make each person special.

A Scout is courteous. A Scout is polite to people of all ages and positions. He understands that using good manners makes it easier for people to get along.

Being courteous shows that you are aware of the feelings of others. The habits of courtesy that you practice as a Scout will stay with you throughout your life.

A Scout is kind. A Scout treats others as he wants to be treated. He knows there is strength in being gentle. He does not harm or kill any living thing without good reason.



Kindness is not limited to how we feel about people. Be kind to pets and wildlife, too.

Kindness is a sign of true strength. To be kind, you must look beyond yourself and try to understand the needs of others. Take time to listen to people and imagine being in their place. Extending kindness to those around you and having compassion for all people is a powerful agent of change to a more peaceful world.

A Scout is obedient. A Scout follows the rules of his family, school, and troop. He obeys the laws of his community and country. If he thinks these rules and laws are unfair, he seeks to have them changed in an orderly way.

Many times, rules are put in place to keep you safe, to help you learn, or simply to create order. Being obedient when an authority such as your parents, teachers, or government imposes rules is your way of helping them achieve success. Trust your beliefs and obey your conscience, though, if you are told to do something that you know is wrong.

A Scout is cheerful. A Scout looks for the bright side of life. He cheerfully does tasks that come his way and tries his best to make others happy, too.

You know that you cannot always have your way, but a cheerful attitude can make the time seem to pass more quickly and can even turn a task you dislike into a lot of fun. You have a choice whether to enjoy life's experiences and challenges. It is always easier and much more enjoyable to decide from the start to be cheerful whenever you can.



Cheerfulness is infectious; the smile on your face can lift the spirits of those around you.

A Scout is thrifty. A Scout works to pay his way and to help others. He saves for the future. He protects and conserves natural resources. He is careful in his use of time, money, and property.

Paying your own way with money you have earned gives you independence and pride. Even if you have only a few dollars, you have enough to save a bit

for the future and even to share a bit with others—although what you share doesn't have to be in cash. Volunteering your time and talent can be just as valuable as donating money.

A Scout is brave. A Scout faces danger even if he is afraid. He does the right thing even when doing the wrong thing or doing nothing would be easier.

Bravery doesn't have to mean saving someone's life at risk to your own. While that is definitely brave, you are also being brave when you speak up to stop someone from being bullied or when you do what is right in spite of what others say. You are brave when you speak the truth and when you admit a mistake and apologize for it. And you show true courage when you defend the rights of others.



Facing your fears helps you grow so you are prepared for the next experience.

Scout Spirit

You show Scout spirit by making the Scout Oath, Scout Law, Scout motto, and Scout slogan part of your life. How well you live the Scout Oath and Scout Law can be judged by you and by others. You know when you are being kind and when you are helpful and a good friend. You know when you are trustworthy and reverent. You know how you act when no one is around to see what you do.

Do your best to live each day by the Scout Oath and Scout Law. You might look back on some of your decisions and wish you had acted differently, but you can learn from those moments and promise yourself to do better in the future.

As you use the Scout Oath and Scout Law for guidance, don't be surprised when others recognize those values in you and respect you for it. When a non-Scout tells you that you are behaving like a Boy Scout, that's a good sign that you have Scout spirit. Set high standards for yourself and strive to reach them. Ask nothing less of yourself, and no one can ask anything more of you.

The Scout Oath and Scout Law are not meant just to be recited at troop meetings, and they are not to be obeyed just while you are wearing a Scout uniform. The spirit of Scouting is always important—at home, at school, and in your community.



A Scout is clean. A Scout keeps his body and mind fit. He chooses friends who also live by high standards. He avoids profanity and pornography. He helps keep his home and community clean.

A Scout knows there is no kindness or honor in tasteless behavior, such as using profanity or ethnic slurs, or in making fun of someone who has a disability. A Scout avoids that kind of behavior in his words and in his deeds. He keeps his character clean by carefully monitoring what he views on television and the Internet or reads in books and magazines.

A Scout is reverent. A Scout is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties. He respects the beliefs of others.

Wonders all around us remind us of our faith in God, and we show our reverence by living our lives according to the ideals of our beliefs. You will encounter people expressing their reverence in many ways. It is your duty to respect and defend their rights to their religious beliefs even when they differ from your own.

Scout Motto

Be Prepared. That's the Boy Scout motto.

THE SCOUT MOTTO

Be Prepared.

“Be prepared for what?” someone once asked Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of worldwide Scouting.

“Why, for any old thing,” he replied.

The skills you learn in Scouting will help you live up to the Scout motto. Because you know first aid, you will be prepared if someone gets hurt. Because you will have practiced lifesaving skills, you might be able to save a nonswimmer struggling in deep water. Whenever leadership is needed, you will understand what to do.

Baden-Powell wasn't thinking only of being ready for emergencies. His idea was that Scouts should prepare themselves to become productive citizens and strong leaders and to bring joy to other people. He wanted each Scout to be ready in mind and body and to meet with a strong heart whatever challenges await him.



Lord Robert Baden-Powell,
founder of the worldwide
Scouting movement

You'll face plenty of decisions in your life. How will you spend your time? Who will your friends be? What will you do after high school? Remembering the Scout motto can help you make those decisions a little more easily.

The Scout Slogan

The Scout slogan is **Do a Good Turn Daily**. That means doing something to help others each day without expecting anything in return. It means doing your part to care for your community and the environment, too. A Good Turn is more than simple good manners. It is a special act of kindness.

THE SCOUT SLOGAN

Do a Good Turn Daily.

From recycling to helping conserve America's natural resources, opportunities for Good Turns are everywhere. Some Good Turns are big—providing service after floods or other disasters, rescuing someone from a dangerous situation, recycling community trash, or completing conservation projects with your patrol. Good Turns also can be small, thoughtful acts—helping a disabled person safely cross a busy street, going to the store for an elderly neighbor, cutting back weeds blocking a street sign, or doing something special for a brother or sister.



Keeping a Good Turn coin like this one in your left pocket can help you remember the Scout slogan. As the back of the coin reads, you can transfer the coin to your right pocket when you've completed your daily Good Turn.



The Value of a Good Turn

A Good Turn brought Scouting to America. In 1909, on the streets of London, American businessman William D. Boyce lost his way. A boy walked up and asked if he could help. Mr. Boyce explained where he wanted to go, and the boy led him there. The grateful American wanted to give the boy some money, but the boy said, "No, thank you, sir. I am a Scout. I won't take anything for helping."

Mr. Boyce was so impressed by the boy's actions that he learned more about the new Boy Scouting movement in Great Britain and about its founder, Lord Robert Baden-Powell. Mr. Boyce realized that many boys in the United States would want to be Scouts, too.

On February 8, 1910, Mr. Boyce and a group of businessmen, educators, and political leaders founded the Boy Scouts of America. Today, Scouts celebrate that date as the birthday of the BSA.

No one knows what happened to the boy who guided Mr. Boyce through the London streets, but he will never be forgotten. As with many acts of kindness, what was done proved to be far more important than who did it. In helping bring Scouting to America, the Unknown Scout's simple Good Turn has been multiplied millions of times over as Scouts through the decades have followed his example.



You can learn more about the history of Scouting and your place in it by earning the Scouting Heritage merit badge.

THE BOY SCOUT SIGN, SALUTE, AND HANDSHAKE

Scouts greet one another and show they are members of the BSA with the Scout sign, salute, and handshake.

Scout Sign

Give the Scout sign each time you say the Scout Oath and Scout Law. To make the Scout sign, raise your right arm to shoulder height with your elbow bent at a right angle. Cover the nail of the little finger of your right hand with your thumb and hold the three middle fingers of your hand upward and together.



Your thumb and little finger touch to represent the bond uniting Scouts throughout the world.



The three fingers stand for the three parts of the Scout Oath:

- Duty to God and country
- Duty to others
- Duty to self

Scout Salute

Form the Scout sign with your right hand, then finish the salute by bringing that hand up, palm down, until your forefinger touches the brim of your hat or the tip of your right eyebrow.

The Scout salute is a form of greeting that also shows respect. Use it to salute the flag of the United States of America. You may also salute other Scouts and Scout leaders.

Scout Handshake

Extend your left hand to another Scout and firmly grasp his left hand. Made with the hand nearest your heart, the Scout handshake signifies friendship.

Because only Scouts and Scouters know the Scout handshake, use the regular right-handed handshake when greeting people outside of Scouting.



When a youth or adult leader raises the Scout sign, all Scouts should respond by coming to silent attention and making the sign, too.



THE FIRST CLASS SCOUT BADGE

The imagery on Boy Scouting's rank badges features icons that are well-recognized by Americans everywhere, and each one has meaning. The background design is shaped like the north point on an old compass; it is known as a trefoil (a flower with three leaves) or a fleur-de-lis (the French name for an iris flower). It is the basic shape of the badges worn by Scouts in other countries, too.

The design on the First Class Scout badge signifies a Scout's ability to point the right way in life just as a compass does in the wilderness. The three points of the fleur-de-lis, like the three raised fingers of the Scout sign, represent the three parts of the Scout Oath—duty to God and country, duty to others, and duty to self.



THE FIRST CLASS SCOUT BADGE

The eagle with a shield, an emblem of the United States of America, represents freedom and a Scout's readiness to defend that freedom.

◀ The two stars symbolize Scouting's ideals of truth and knowledge. As guides in the night sky for finding the way, stars also suggest a Scout's outdoor adventures.

◀ The scroll displays the Scout motto. Its ends are turned up like a smile because a Scout smiles as he does his daily Good Turn.

◀ The knot below the scroll is a reminder to do a daily Good Turn.

YOUR SCOUT UNIFORM

The Scout uniform is a symbol of the BSA. It tells others that you are a Scout and represents Scouting's history of service to the nation and the world. By wearing uniforms, Scouts show that they are equals and that they share values and beliefs. Your uniform is also a sign that you are a person who can be trusted and that you will lend a hand whenever help is needed. When you are dressed as a Scout, you will want to act as a Scout.



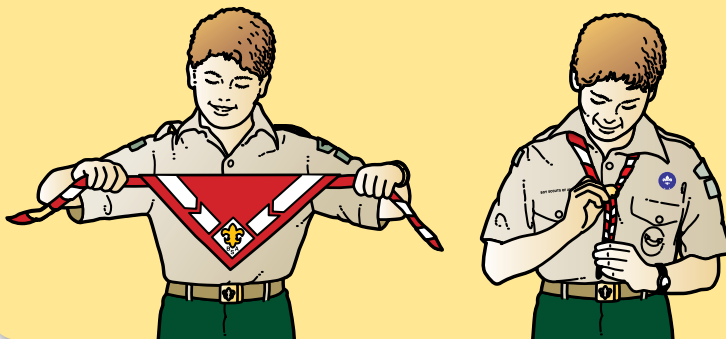
The BSA's official Boy Scout uniform (sometimes called the "field uniform") includes a Scout shirt, Scout pants or Scout shorts, Scout belt, Scout socks, and shoes or hiking boots. Your troop may also elect to wear a cap or broad-brimmed hat and a neckerchief. Your uniform may be brand new, or it might have been worn by others for many troop activities. Proudly wear your uniform to troop meetings, special ceremonies, and other troop functions where dressing up is appropriate. When you're headed outdoors to do something active, you can pull on a T-shirt with Scout pants or shorts, or wear other clothing that is appropriate for the events of the day. This is sometimes called an "activity uniform."



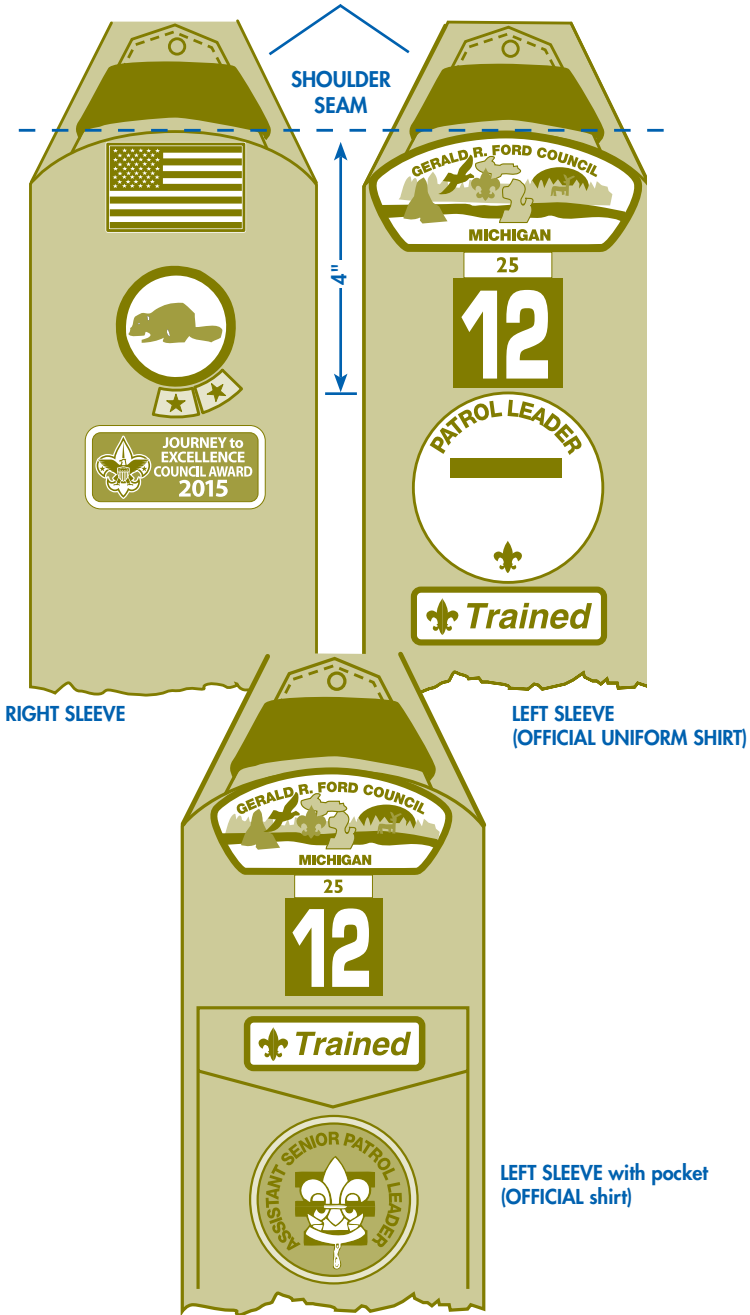
Scout wearing his merit badge sash

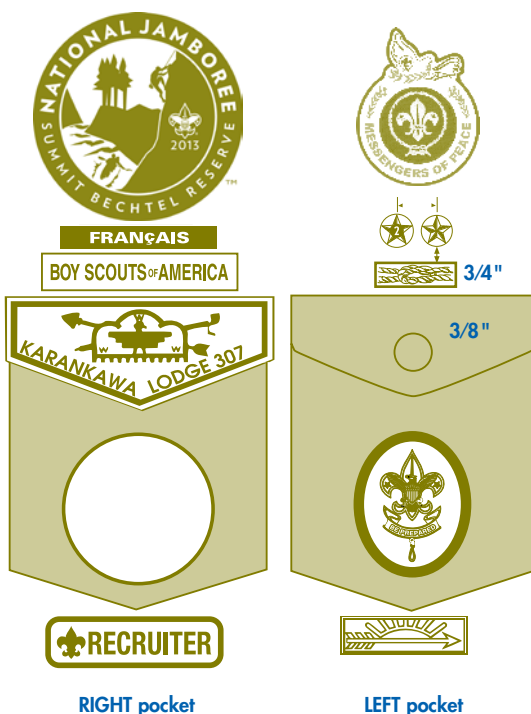
Your uniform is the perfect place to show off your patrol patch, your badge of office if you're a youth leader, your rank, and patches from some of your adventures. For formal occasions such as courts of honor, you'll wear a merit badge sash that displays all the merit badges you've earned. Formal occasions are also the time to wear medals like the Eagle Scout medal or the religious emblem of your faith.

Whether your uniform includes a Scout neckerchief is up to your troop. To wear a neckerchief, first roll the long edge to about 6 inches from the tip. Place the neckerchief smoothly around your neck, either over or under the collar, depending on your troop's custom. Hold the neckerchief in place with a neckerchief slide.



SHOULDER EPAULETS AND LOOPS





RIGHT pocket

LEFT pocket

Duty to God

The Boy Scouts of America believes that you can't grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing your duty to God. However, Scouting is nonsectarian, which means it doesn't tell members what to believe or how to worship.

One of the great things about Scouting is that it lets you meet with and learn from people of different religious backgrounds. At summer camp or a national Scout jamboree, you may encounter Scouts from all sorts of faith groups and even get the chance to participate in worship services with them. The first thing you may notice is how differently they do things, but look for similarities, too, like reverence toward God and a commitment to serving people in need.



As a Scout, you'll have the chance to talk about your duty to God. If you aren't sure what that means, talk with your parents and religious leaders.

YOUR TROOP

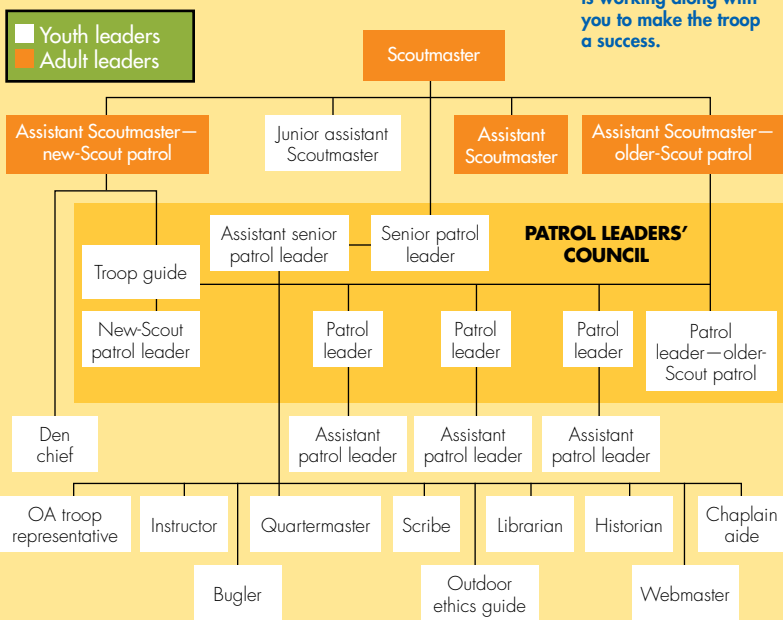
Your troop is an organization of boys enjoying the challenges and adventures of Scouting. Your Scoutmaster and other adult leaders will help Scouts become good leaders, then will step back and allow the troop's youth leaders to take charge of planning and carrying out activities. Once you're ready to become a leader in your troop, you'll learn much of what you need to know through the BSA's youth training programs such as Introduction to Leadership Skills for Troops and National Youth Leadership Training.

How a Troop Is Organized

This chart shows how a large Boy Scout troop is organized. Your troop might be big like this one or quite a bit smaller. It might have a long history or be brand new. Leaders might have years of experience or could be learning their roles as they go. In this sample, there are enough members to fill all of the patrols and positions of responsibility.



Whatever your troop is like, you can proudly wear its number on the sleeve of your uniform and know that everyone is working along with you to make the troop a success.



If you were a Cub Scout, your Boy Scout troop is the rough equivalent of your Cub Scout pack, and your patrol is the rough equivalent of your den.

YOUR PATROL

Your Boy Scout troop is made up of patrols, with each patrol's members sharing responsibility for the patrol's success. You will learn together, make plans, and turn your ideas into action. Together, your patrol will achieve much more than each of you would on your own.

A patrol of eight Scouts is the right size for many outdoor adventures. A few tents will shelter everyone on camping trips, and a couple of backpacking stoves are enough for cooking patrol meals.

Placing Scouts in small groups—Scouting's patrol method—is so important that most troop meetings include time for each patrol to meet by itself. Other patrol meetings might take place at a special patrol site or in the home of one of the patrol members.

Everyone in your patrol will have skills and knowledge to share. You can teach one another what you know and learn new skills together. As friends, you can look out for one another. Hikes and campouts give your patrol a chance to put its knowledge into practice and to enjoy friendship, fun, and adventure together.



Patrol members can create a muster point around the patrol camp box.

KINDS OF PATROLS

A Scout troop can have three kinds of patrols:

New-Scout Patrols. The new-Scout patrol is made up of boys who have just become Scouts. An experienced Scout, called a **troop guide**, helps show the way. An assistant Scoutmaster assigned to the patrol gives it added support.



Members of a new-Scout patrol choose their patrol leader and plan what they want to do. They take part in troop meetings and activities. As they learn hiking and camping skills, they also will start completing requirements for the Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks.

Regular Patrols. Scouts who hold the rank of First Class or higher can be members of regular patrols. Older Scouts who have not yet reached the First Class rank also may join a troop's regular patrols and continue to work on the First Class requirements.

Older-Scout Patrols. Many troops have an older-Scout patrol for seasoned Scouts who are eager to set out on rugged, high-adventure activities. Being part of such a patrol gives older Scouts the opportunity to stay active in their troops. They also may use their knowledge to enrich the Scouting experience for themselves and for other troop members.

YOUR PATROL'S NAME, EMBLEM, FLAG, AND YELL

Your patrol will choose a name that says something about its members. Nature lovers might become the Flying Eagles, the Crafty Foxes, or the Pine Tree Patrol. Some patrols name themselves after people; you could become the Daniel Boone Patrol, the Frontiersmen, or the Vikings. Other patrols come up with fun names like the Superstars, the Brainiacs, or even the Space Aliens. The choice is yours.

Each patrol can make a flag to carry at troop meetings and on campouts. A patrol also has an emblem that members wear on the right sleeves of their uniform shirts; the design on the patch reflects the patrol name.



A unique patrol yell can give your patrol some character.

give the patrol yell whenever they do well in a troop competition or reach an important goal, and even when they're ready to chow down on a camp meal.



Patrol emblems

Patrols have yells, too. If your patrol is named for an animal, you can use that animal's sound—the howl of a wolf, for example, or the hoot of an owl. Or your patrol might decide on some other shout that identifies it. Members can

Patrol Leaders' Council

Your patrol will elect a leader to help the patrol reach its goals. The senior patrol leader, the chief youth leader of the troop, gives guidance, too. The patrol leaders will meet with the senior patrol leader and his assistants at a patrol leaders' council to plan the troop's programs and activities. Your patrol leader will represent the wishes of your patrol as decisions are being made.

BOY SCOUT ADVANCEMENT

The biggest reward of participating in Scouting comes from the fun you have and the skills you learn. But you can also receive more concrete recognition of your accomplishments, including rank awards and merit badges. The Awards and Advancement chapter of this handbook will help guide you through them.

RANKS

In Boy Scouting, there are seven ranks:

The **Scout** rank covers the basic information you need to know to be a good Scout. You should earn it soon after joining a troop.

The ranks of **Tenderfoot**, **Second Class**, and **First Class** cover skills in camping, hiking, cooking, first aid, nature, fitness, aquatics, citizenship, and leadership. Once you become a First Class Scout, which will probably take a year to 18 months, you will be a well-rounded Scout. You can work on requirements from all three ranks at the same time, but you must complete the ranks in order.

The ranks of **Star**, **Life**, and **Eagle** (Boy Scouting's highest rank) focus on active participation, community service, leadership, and merit badges. Each of these ranks will take several months (or even a year or more) to complete, but that's OK, because you can keep working on Boy Scout advancement until you reach your 18th birthday.



Scout



Tenderfoot



Second Class



First Class



Star



Life



Eagle



Receiving your Eagle Scout medal at a special court of honor ceremony can be one of the most memorable moments of your life.

MERIT BADGES

Merit badges are awarded to Scouts who have put special emphasis on learning specific topics. There are about 135 merit badges you can choose from, and they cover everything from camping and first aid to robotics and game design.



To become an Eagle Scout, you must earn at least 21 merit badges, including 13 from a list of Eagle-required merit badges. (You can spot these badges because they have a silver border instead of a green border.) If you earn more than 21 merit badges—and complete some other requirements—you can earn Eagle Palms, which are pins that go on the Eagle Scout medal or patch.

A NOTE ABOUT SAFE SCOUTING

Scouting's top priority is keeping you safe. When you go camping, your leaders follow the guidelines in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, a book that explains how to make sure that even the most adventurous activities are conducted safely. They make sure there are always two adults on hand and that the people leading activities have the right training.

Two simple tools Scouts can use to help stay safe are creating safety checklists and using the PAUSE program. Like a packing checklist to remind you what to bring on a campout, you can use a safety checklist to help remind you what you need for a safe campout or event, like training, fire extinguishers, emergency plans, or the location of the nearest hospital. Use the checklist to talk about safety with your patrol and adult leaders.

After your planning is complete, put the PAUSE program to work as a last-minute safety check. Just before setting off on an adventure, start your PAUSE:

- **Pause** before you start.
- **Assess** possible hazards.
- **Understand** how to proceed safely.
- **Share** your plan with others.
- **Execute** the activity safely.

And safety is just as important back home. Inside the front cover of this *Boy Scout Handbook* is a pamphlet that is part of the BSA's commitment to ensuring your safety. The exercises inside the pamphlet were developed to make sure that you and your parent have an open line of communication when it comes to keeping you safe at all times, in and outside of Scouting.

In the Personal Safety Awareness chapter, you will learn more ways to keep yourself and your friends safe.

Buddy System

During outdoor activities, Scouting uses the buddy system to help ensure everyone's safety. You and a buddy can watch out for each other during a campout by checking in now and then to be sure everything is all right. In the backcountry, you'll want to stay in groups of at least four. That way, if someone gets hurt, two people can go for help while one stays behind.



YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY!

Going to meetings and camping with your troop and patrol will help you imagine all the things that you can do as a Scout. You'll also discover that your troop's leaders and other Scouts will be there to guide you along the way. So grab your pack and hit the trail!