

# **THE TROOP ORGANIZATION**

## **For Successful Troop Operations**

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The following information was obtained from the following sources:

The “Troop Committee Guidebook” #34505B, ISBN 0-8395-4505-3, published by the Boy Scouts of America 2005 Printing. When referenced it will be footnoted as “**TCG**”

“The Scoutmaster Handbook” #33009C, ISBN 0-8395-3009-9, published by the Boy Scouts of America 2007 Printing. When referenced it will be footnoted as “**TSH**”.

“The Senior Patrol Leader Handbook” #32501A, ISBN 0-8395-2501-X, published by the Boy Scouts of America 2005 Printing. When referenced it will be footnoted as “**SPLH**”.

“Troop Program Features” Volume I #33110A, ISBN 0-8395-3110-9, published by the Boy Scouts of America 2006 Printing. When referenced it will be footnoted as “**TPF**”.

### **THE QUESTION:**

How does a troop come into existence? Who is the chartered organization and the chartered organization’s representative? What relationship do they have with the troop? What is the structure of a troop as defined by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA)? What are all of the classifications that make up a troop? What responsibility does each division have and how do they interrelate with each other? What role does the Troop Committee maintain in the organization and operation of the Troop? Who makes up the committee? What are the committee member’s duties and responsibilities? What role does the Scoutmaster, assistant Scoutmaster(s), and other adult leaders have in the operation of the Troop? What are their duties and responsibilities? What role does the senior patrol leader, assistant senior patrol leader(s), and patrol leaders maintain in the operation of the Troop? What are their responsibilities with respect to troop leadership?

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In understanding how a troop should correctly function you must first have a through understanding of each component of the troop, their duties, responsibilities, and how each segment interrelates with the other. A well organized troop is one where everyone knows and understands their role and carries out their duties to the complement of their interfacing partner. As with any organization, there is a certain degree of overlap between the duties and responsibilities of the different divisions, so it is with the troop. No one person should be expected to be exclusive to his or her job nor should any one person attempt to exert his or her authority beyond the scope of their specific job responsibilities as defined by the Boy Scouts of America. The key to a successful troop lies in the mutual respect and cooperation between all its members. Working together, they create the environment that encourages the scouts to reach their full potential, develop personal growth, understand the values of citizenship, recognize the importance of character, realize their ideals, and improve their overall fitness. A quality run Scouting program will empower youth with a strong sense of self, make a significant contribution in the type of leaders they develop into, and in the quality of men they ultimately become.

A Boy Scout troop is a small democracy (*TSH – 12*) [and should operate that way in order to be successful]. Good leaders accept leadership roles because they want to make a difference. Good leaders are servant leaders. They focus on helping others succeed (*SPLH – 5*).

***The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law***

**The following are summaries of each of the components that make up a troop:**

**The Chartered Organization** “owns” the troop and receives an annual national charter to use the scouting program as a part of its youth work. The chartered organization, [when first setting up a troop] using the Scouting program, provides a meeting place, selects a Scoutmaster, appoints a troop committee of at least three adults, and chooses a chartered organization representative (*TCG – 7*). The chartered organization representative is a member of the chartered organization and the recognized head of its Scouting department. The chartered organization representative may serve on the troop committee (*TSH – 162*).

**The Troop Committee** is the troop’s board of directors and supports the troop program. It ensures quality leadership is recruited and trained (*TCG – 13*). Members are often parents and guardians of boys in the troop and chartered organization members who are interested in youth programs. There is no maximum number of committee members serving at a given time (*TSH – 163*). **The Scoutmaster (or assistant Scoutmaster[s]) is not a member of the troop committee, and has no vote** (*TCG – 33*). A key function of the troop committee is assisting in the best possible person to be your Scoutmaster (*TCG – 19*). If the Scoutmaster is unable to serve, a replacement is recruited (*TCG – 13*). It is the troop committee’s responsibility to select and recruit assistant Scoutmasters (*TSH – 2*). It provides meeting facilities. It advises the Scoutmaster on policies to Boy Scouting and the chartered organization. It supports leaders in carrying out the program. It is responsible for finances, adequate funds, and disbursements in line with the approved budget plan [it prepares an annual troop budget]. It obtains, maintains, and cares for troop property. It ensures the troop has an outdoor program. It serves on boards of review and courts of honor. It supports and assists the Scoutmaster in working with individual boys with behavioral or other problems that affect the troop program. It provides for the special needs and assistance some boys may require. It helps with the Friends of Scouting campaign. It assists the Scoutmaster with handling boy behavioral problems (*TCG – 13*). In effect, it is responsible for supporting the Scoutmaster in delivering quality troop program, and handling troop administration (*TCG – 8*). The importance of mutual cooperation between the two groups of leaders is critical for the smooth and successful operation of the troop (*TCG – 33*).

**The Committee Chairperson** is the adult leader with the most authority within the Troop second to the Chartered Organization Representative. In business terms they would be considered the Chairman of the Board. Their duties include organize the committee to see that all functions are delegated, coordinated, and completed. Maintain a close relationship with the Chartered Organization Representative and the Scoutmaster. Interpret national and local policies to the Troop. Prepare Troop committee agendas. Call, preside over, and promote attendance at monthly Troop Committee meetings and any special meetings that may be called. Ensure Troop representation at monthly Roundtables. Secure top-notch, trained individuals for camp leadership. Arrange for charter review and re-charter annually. Plan the charter presentation (*TCG – 14*).

**The Scoutmaster** is the adult leader responsible for the image and program of the troop. He is recruited by the troop committee and approved by the chartered organization representative. He works directly with the scouts. He trains and guides boy leaders. He uses the methods of scouting to achieve the aims of scouting. He meets regularly with the patrol leaders' council for training and coordination in planning troop activities. He attends all troop meetings. He attends troop committee meetings. He conducts periodic parents' sessions to share program and encourage parent participation and cooperation. He takes part in annual membership inventory and uniform inspection, charter review meeting, and charter presentation (*TCG – 9*). He conducts Scoutmaster conferences for all rank advancements. He delegates responsibility to other adults and groups. He supervises troop elections for the Order of the Arrow. He makes it possible for each Scout to experience 10 days and nights of camping each year. He participates in council and district events. He builds a strong program by using proven methods presented in scouting literature.

He conducts all activities under qualified leadership, safe conditions, and the policies of the chartered organization and the Boy Scouts of America (*TCG – 10*). It is the Scoutmaster's job to place and coach new Scoutmasters [assistants] into positions that best fit the needs of the troop (*TSH – 2*).

The Scoutmaster attends patrol leaders' council meetings as a coach and an informational resource. As much as is possible, a Scoutmaster allows the boys to run meetings and make decisions, stepping in with suggestions and guidance when that will enhance the program for the troop, the patrols, and the individual boys (*TSH – 14*). As a closing to the meeting, [patrol leaders' council] the Scoutmaster can share some constructive thoughts on what has happened and offer an upbeat, supportive Scoutmaster's Minute to provide a sense of completion to the proceedings (*SPLH – 51*).

**The Assistant Scoutmaster(s)** are adult leaders that carry out specific functions within the troop. It is the troop committee's responsibility to select and recruit assistant Scoutmasters and the Scoutmaster's job to place and coach new Scoutmasters into positions that best fit the needs of the troop (*TSH – 2*). Each assistant Scoutmaster is assigned specific program duties and reports to the Scoutmaster. The assistant provides the required two-deep leadership standards set by BSA (*TCG – 10*). In the absence of the Scoutmaster, an assistant should be designated to fill in as troop leader (*TSH – 2*).

**The Senior Patrol Leader** is the youth leader with the most responsibility in a troop. He is elected by all members of the troop (*TSH – 13*). He is the primary link between a troop's scouts and its adult leaders. He shoulders the responsibility for leading meetings of the troop and the patrol leaders' council. He provides valuable leadership in planning and carrying out the troop's program of outdoor activities, service projects, and events (*SPLH – 5*). The Senior Patrol Leader runs all troop meetings, events, activities, and the annual program planning conference. He chairs meetings of the patrol leaders' council. He appoints troop members to serve in the troop's other youth leader positions (with the advice and counsel of the Scoutmaster). He delegates duties and responsibilities to other youth leaders. He assists the Scoutmaster with troop leadership training. He sets a good example, wears the Scout uniform correctly, and shows Scout spirit (*SPLH – 10*). He works with the Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmaster(s), troop committee members, and the chartered organization representative (*SPLH – 11*). The senior patrol leader is in charge of troop meetings from beginning to end. In short, the senior patrol leader's job is to see that the troop runs in an orderly and timely manner (*TSH – 13*).

To help the senior patrol leader achieve that leadership goal, the Scoutmaster should work with him before and after troop meetings to mentor him, encourage him, and provide him with the tools to succeed. The Scoutmaster might want to meet with him at other times, too, in order to discuss issues that will enhance his ability to lead the troop and improve the quality of experience the scouts are enjoying. The relationship between a senior patrol leader and his Scoutmaster is often one of friendship

and mutual admiration. A great reward for a Scoutmaster is in helping a young man who has accepted a position of responsibility develop into a leader capable of fulfilling the high expectations placed upon him (*TSH – 13*).

**The Assistant Senior Patrol Leader** with the approval of the Scoutmaster, is appointed by the senior patrol leader, serves as his assistant, and takes his place when the senior patrol leader is absent. Among his specific responsibilities are training and providing direction for the troop quartermaster, scribe, Order of the Arrow representative, historian, librarian, and instructors. During his tenure as assistant senior patrol leader, the Scout is not a member of a patrol. Large troops may have more than one assistant senior patrol leader (*TSH – 13*).

**The Patrol Leader** is elected by the members of each patrol. He takes responsibility for the patrol's activities and represents the patrol as a member of the patrol leaders' council. Each patrol leader appoints an assistant patrol leader to serve with him (*TSH – 13*).

**The Assistant Patrol Leader** steps in to serve whenever the patrol leader must be absent. He may carry out special assignments given him by the patrol leader – working with the patrol members on advancement, for example (*TSH – 21*).

**The Scouts** are the reason we are all here in the first place. The troop is their organization, a youth group created to develop character, citizenship, encourage spiritual growth, teach mental and physical fitness and become the recipient of the “promise”, which is the adventure that embodies the entire Boy Scouts of America program.

## **BOY-LED TROOP**

Empowering boys to be leaders is the core of Scouting (*TSH – 12*). The troop is actually run by its boy leaders. With the guidance of the Scoutmaster and assistants, they [the boys] plan the program, conduct troop meetings, and provide leadership among their peers (*TCG – 11*). The boys themselves develop a troop's program, then take responsibility for figuring out how they will achieve their goals (*TSH – 12*). It is the Scoutmaster's responsibility to ensure that the troop program delivers the promise of Scouting, that the values of the Scout Oath and Law come to life in the troop, that the troop's leaders are developed, and that the environment for character development and fun is offered for every Scout (*SPLH – 12*). A Scoutmaster trains boys to be leaders, makes available to them the resources and guidance they need to lead well, and then steps into the background and lets them do their jobs (*TSH – 6*). Patrols serve as the building blocks of a troop. The patrol leaders and other troop leaders who make up the patrol leaders' council are deeply involved in planning the troop's program and in carrying out monthly meetings and activities. As a result, an effective troop has a program that is run by the Scouts themselves, is of the greatest interest to the most troop members, and provides many opportunities for Scouts to sharpen their leadership skills (*SPLH – 14*).

## **PATROL METHOD**

Made up of Scouts of similar ages and experience levels, the patrols of a troop help their members develop a sense of pride and identity. The patrol members elect their leader, divide the tasks to be done, and share in the satisfaction of accepting and fulfilling group responsibilities. Each patrol expresses its patrol spirit with a patrol name, flag, yell, and song. Members of a patrol may also master a specialty – orienteering, for example, or Dutch oven cooking – and use it as their trademark (*SPLH – 28*). Patrol size depends upon a troop's total enrollment and the needs of its members, though an ideal patrol size is eight. That size is appropriate not only for effective patrol and troop meetings, but also for hiking and camping without leaving a trace. New-Scout patrols are sometimes smaller, allowing the flexibility for

patrol members to invite friends to become Scouts and join their patrol. While they [Scouts] see their patrol as their home in Scouting, they often cooperate with other patrols during troop games, adventures, and opportunities to learn skills and to complete requirements for advancement. There are three types of patrols – *Regular Patrols* – *New-Scout Patrols* – and *Venture Patrols* (**TSH – 20**).

## THE PATROL LEADERS COUNCIL

The patrol leaders' council, ***not the adult leaders***, is responsible for planning and conducting the troop's activities. The patrol leaders' council is composed of the following voting members: senior patrol leader, assistant senior patrol leader, patrol leaders, troop guide. At its monthly meetings, the patrol leaders' council organizes and assigns activity responsibilities for the weekly troop meetings. The troop committee interacts with the patrol leaders' council through the Scoutmaster (**TCG – 12**).

The patrol leaders' council plans and runs the troop's program and activities and gives long-range direction with an annual program planning conference that lays out the troop's calendar for the upcoming year. Composed of the youth leaders, the patrol leaders' council also meets each month to fine-tune upcoming troop meetings and outings. They might also get together briefly after each troop meeting and make any adjustments to ensure success (**TSH – 14**). The Scoutmaster observes the patrol leaders' council meeting and may ask a question or two, but otherwise allows the senior patrol leader to run the meeting and guide the agenda (**SPLH – 51**). The Scoutmaster and troop committee retain veto power over decisions of the patrol leaders' council, but should need to exercise it only on rare occasions when the plans of the patrol leaders' council would violate BSA policy or could lead to a situation that might jeopardize the safety and well-being of troop members (**TSH – 14**).

## MONTHLY AND ANNUAL PROGRAM PLANNING CONFERENCE

Planning a troop program on an annual and a monthly basis is a new task for many leaders. Good planning and execution depend on (1) a Scoutmaster who understands the process, (2) trained youth leaders who can plan meetings and successfully execute them, (3) sufficient personnel in the form of assistant Scoutmasters and troop committee members, and (4) parents who are knowledgeable and informed. Your first step in planning is to utilize the resources available to set goals for the troop. The next step is to train your youth leaders in the planning process. Then give them the responsibility and authority to plan and implement troop program. The final step is to get the troop committee and parents to "buy-in" to support this "Scout-planned" program (**TPF – 5**).

The troop's activities are selected and planned at the annual program planning conference. Submit the troop's yearly plan to the troop committee for its support. At this time, the troop committee may make alternative suggestions for the patrol leaders' council to consider (**TCG – 12**).

## TROOP MEETINGS

Troops get together every week for a meeting, an activity, or a combination of the two. Meetings should occur at the same time every week so that the boys and their families can schedule efficiently. However, if a troop has a campout or other weekend activity, the patrol leaders' council may sometimes decide to forego a meeting the following week. Except for the Scoutmaster's Minute during the closing, each section of a troop meeting is the responsibility of the Scouts themselves (**TSH – 24**). Responsibility for the conduct and content of a troop meeting falls to the Scouts themselves. Troop meetings are planned well in advance by the senior patrol leader and the patrol leaders' council. Each troop meeting is planned the previous month at the meeting of the patrol leaders' council. The senior patrol leader will have assigned patrols and individuals to take care of portions of a meeting, giving as many Scouts as possible the chance to contribute (**SPLH – 57**). Troop meetings are run by the senior patrol leader (**SPLH – 65**). The senior patrol leader and the Scoutmaster will visit briefly before meetings and activities to look over the

agenda developed by the patrol leaders' council to ensure that everything is ready to go according to plan (*SPLH – 52*). At the end of the meeting, the service patrol for the week puts away any troop equipment and returns the room to its original arrangement and condition. Meanwhile, the senior patrol leader should meet briefly with members of the patrol leaders' council and the Scoutmaster to review the meeting, go over the plans made at the patrol leaders' council meeting, and decide which patrol will be the upcoming service patrol (*TSH – 28*).

Small troops differ from large troops only in the aspect of more patrols (Scouts) and enhanced leadership positions for both the adult and Scout leaders. Refer to Youth Leader Organizational Charts for a large troop (*SPLH – 15*) verse a small troop (*SPLH – 16*).

## TRAINING YOUTH LEADERS

***“Training boy leaders to run their troop is the Scoutmaster’s most important job. Train Scouts to do a job, then let them do it. Never do anything a boy can do” – Robert Baden-Powell.*** Leadership is a vital part of the Scouting program. Scouts in positions of leadership run their patrols and the troop. They take care of the many tasks necessary for troop meetings and activities to run smoothly and well. By accepting the responsibilities of troop and patrol leadership, they are preparing themselves to be leaders throughout their lives. Leadership experiences can be frustrating and disappointing for a Scout if he is not given the knowledge, skills, and encouragement he must have to fulfill his leadership assignment. It is the Scoutmaster’s responsibility to make sure the Scout has all the necessary tools and to encourage the Scout to be successful through coaching and mentoring (*TSH – 70*).

Training youth to be leaders is an ongoing process that begins immediately when a Scout accepts a new position in his troop – even that of becoming a new member of a patrol – or when he is elected to a leadership position in his patrol or troop. Troop Leadership Training (TLT) is Scoutmaster directed training, divided into three modules, and designed to be used by the Scoutmaster in separate or back-to-back sessions. The first module should be conducted within a week of a Scout’s acceptance of his new leadership responsibilities and should always immediately follow patrol and troop elections. Each youth leader should have experienced all three modules before going on to the council-sponsored National Youth Leadership Training (NYLT) course. Completion of all three modules qualifies the Scout to wear the “Trained” patch. Scoutmasters should insist that a Scout participate in TLT each time he changes leadership roles within the troop or his patrol. Like NYLT, the TLT sessions are organized into topics that explain what he must **Know** to successfully fill his leadership position, what a youth leader must **Be** to be successful, and what he must **Do** to carry out his new responsibilities. Each module is designed to take no more than one hour. The material draws from and reinforces the elements of the *Patrol Leader Handbook*, the *Scoutmaster Handbook*, and NYLT. (*TSH – 70*). It is important that a new senior patrol leader be trained first, so that he may fully participate in the training of other youth leaders (*TSH – 71*).

***“A leader is someone people want to follow – not someone they have to follow only because they are directed to do so!”***

## TROOP FINANCES

Proper management of the troops’ finances will allow your troop to achieve program goals. The recording, disbursing, and budgeting of troop funds, along with unit money-earning project assistance, is the responsibility of the troop committee and its treasurer. Disbursements from the checking account are made on the recommendation of the Scoutmaster with authorization of your troop committee.

*Occasionally* in the course of troop activities, the Scoutmaster will need unplanned miscellaneous articles. The committee needs to establish a petty cash fund for this purpose (*TCG – 23*).

The troop budget is a plan for receiving and spending troop funds. Immediately after approval of the troop's annual program plan, the Scoutmaster and committee should start the preparation of the annual budget. When the cost estimates for expenses have been calculated, the next step is to identify sources of income, which include dues and troop money earning projects. Project selection (to raise money) should begin with the patrol leader's council and the Scoutmaster. They will bring their ideas to the troop committee (**TCG – 24**).

Once the money earning project has been reviewed for conformity to Boy Scout of America standards and approved by the troop committee and the chartered organization, the Unit Money-Earning Application must be submitted to your local council for approval. This step is to make certain that the project conforms to Boy Scouts of America policy (**TCG – 25**).