*Transitioning from* Cub Scouts to Scouts BSA

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*Know the diﬀerences and* what your role is in the troop.

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# How a Scout Troop Works

A Scout Troop is meant to be a youth-led unit. Within that troop, there are one or more Patrols, each of which is also led by its patrol members. Troop leaders and Patrol leaders are elected every six months, so that each scout may have the opportunity to take on a leadership role.

Scouts will identify as being a part of a particular Troop and attend Troop meetings, events, and outings; however they are also encouraged to build a cohesive bond with their Patrols and even plan Patrol outings and events where possible. Such outings do not necessarily exclude the rest of the Troop, but they may include activities or events that the Patrol has a greater interest in than the rest of the Troop does.

While the Troop and Patrols are led by Scouts, adults are always involved to provide guidance, keep the Troop on track, exemplify a level of discipline and decorum, ensure the safety of the Scouts, and help with finances and logistics. Adult leadership includes the Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters, the Chartered Organization Representative, and the Committee Chair along with the Troop Committee itself.

If a Scout has a question or concern, the Scout should not go directly to a parent or adult leader.

While that will be the natural tendency at first; part of the Patrol Method and the Scouts BSA philosophy is to foster a spirit of independence, self sufficiency, and self-confidence in each Scout. Therefore, the Scout should follow the chain of command with questions or concerns.

The chain of command in a Troop is as follows (in ascending order):

# Scout-held positions:

*Assistant Patrol Leader (APL):* Assists the Patrol Leader and steps in when the Patrol Leader is unavailable.

*Patrol Leader (PL):* Leads the Patrol and represents the Patrol at Senior Patrol Leader meetings. *Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL):* Assists the Senior Patrol Leader and steps in when the Senior Patrol Leader is unavailable.

*Senior Patrol Leader (SPL):* Leads the Troop through the Patrol Leaders and runs Troop and SPL meetings.

# Adult leaders:

*Assistant Scoutmaster(s):* Assists the Scoutmaster and steps in when the Scoutmaster is not available. *Scoutmaster:* Guides the SPL in leading the Troop, suggests ideas that the Scouts might consider, and provides adult leadership for the Troop.

*Troop Committee:* Primarily organizes the schedule, event logistics, fundraising, and handles finances. *Chartered Organization Representative:* The liaison between the Troop and the organization that charters the troop.

The chartered organization is normally a church or other not-for-profit organization within the community. The chartered organization generally provides a meeting space for the Troop as well as opportunities for community service.

# How Is The Scout Troop Different From The Cub Scout Pack?

The primary difference lies in the leadership structure. The Pack is led by the adult leaders including the Cubmaster and the Pack Committee. Each Den within the Pack is led by an adult Den Leader; and the Cubmaster, Den Leaders, and Committee make all of the decisions for the Pack regarding outings, advancement, fundraising, community service, and anything else the Pack may choose to do. Therefore, everything that the Pack does reflects the wishes, interests, and motivation of the adult leadership.

A Scout Troop, on the other hand, is designed to be led by the Scouts themselves. Therefore, they choose which activities they would like the Troop or the Patrol to participate in. The adults are there to guide them in their decision-making and planning, to assist with funding and logistics, and to ensure the safety of all of the Scouts and other participants.

This can pose a challenge for parents new to scouting as well as those who are transitioning from a Pack to a Troop. Here are a few tips that will help you and your Scout in the transition:

1. *Learn to let go.* Each of the leaders involved in Scouting is there to make sure that all of the Scouts stay safe. If there is a problem, they will contact you immediately.
2. *Allow your Scout to make mistakes and learn from them.* Part of learning to be independent, self-confident, and self-reliant is learning to accept mistakes and failures, and learning from those mistakes.
3. *Participate in the Troop as an Adult Leader, but don’t give your Scout special treatment.* Allow your Scout to be a part of the Troop and follow the chain of command when he or she has questions or concerns.
4. *Encourage your Scout to earn Ranks and Merit Badges, but don’t push.* Let your Scout participate at his or her own pace. Unlike Cub Scouts, achievement is not on a

time-line. Any rank or Merit Badge may be earned by any Scout until he or she ages out at 18.

That last piece of information bears repeating. In the Cub Scout Program, Cub Scouts earn one rank each year. Scouting BSA is not structured in the same way; Scouts may Rank up at any time, and they may (and most likely will) spend more than a year in a particular Rank.

# A Brief Explanation of Ranks in Scouting BSA.

The Ranks in the Scouting BSA program, in ascending order, are: Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, Life, and Eagle.

The following is an excerpt from Scouting BSA’s Guide to Advancement 2025, available for download from [https://www.scouting.org/programs/scouts-bsa/advancement-and-awards/resources/](http://www.scouting.org/programs/scouts-bsa/advancement-and-awards/resources/)

The Scout rank is oriented toward learning the basic information every youth needs to know to be a good Scout. It starts with the Scout demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the Scout Oath, Scout Law, Scout motto, and Scout slogan and then introduces the Scout to basic troop operations and safety concerns.

Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks are oriented toward learning and practicing skills that will help Scouts develop confidence and fitness, challenge their thought processes, introduce them to their responsibilities as citizens, and prepare them for exciting and successful Scouting experiences. Requirements for the Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks may be worked on simultaneously; however, these ranks must be earned in sequence…

…All requirements for Star, Life, and Eagle, except for those related to merit badges, must be fulfilled after the successful completion of a board of review for the previous rank.

Every Scout is encouraged to strive to become an Eagle Scout, but not every Scout will reach that goal. Even Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouting Movement, once said that each Scout should at least reach the Rank of First Class.

# Merit Badges

Merit Badges are an important part of the Scouting experience. They are designed to help the Scouts explore hobbies and career opportunities which they may not otherwise have had the opportunity to experience or consider.

In order to achieve the Rank of Eagle, the Scout must earn a minimum of 21 Merit Badges, 13 of which must be Eagle Required ones which may be identified by the silver border around the badge itself.

There are currently (July, 2025) more than 135 Merit Badges available through Scouting BSA. A full listing, along with the requirements for earning them is available at [https://www.scouting.org/skills/merit-badges/](http://www.scouting.org/skills/merit-badges/)

In order to work towards earning a Merit Badge, the Scout must first obtain the Scoutmaster’s permission and signature to open the Merit Badge. After that, the Scout will work with a Merit Badge Counselor to fulfill the requirements of the Merit Badge and present the completed Merit Application to the Troop’s Advancement Chair or Coordinator.

It is very important that the Scouts keep their copy of the completed Merit Badge Application from each Merit Badge in case any of them are later called into question (it *has* happened).

# What Your Troop Expects of You and Your Scout

*Parents:*

*Please consider participating in the Troop.* We ask that at least one parent holds a leadership position of some sort. The Troop *is* Scout lead, but it doesn’t work without adult involvement.

*Keep your Scout’s account funded and up to date.* We all know that nothing is free. The Troop (and by extension Scouts and Scouters) pays membership fees, rechartering fees, and for summer camp and other outings in addition to camping supplies.

Each Scout has an individual Troop Account. They can earn money in that account by selling popcorn and participating in other fundraisers, and funds may be deposited at any time. Funds in the Troop account may only be used for Scout related expenses including dues, Troop or Patrol outings and activities, and for individual purchases of scouting-related supplies and equipment.

*Help and encourage your Scout.* Allow your Scout the freedom to have his or her own new experiences and adventures, but also help him or her to remain focused and to continue advancing.

*Be a good role model.* Try to live the ideals of the Scout Oath and Law in your daily life, and remind your Scout to do the same.

*Scouts:*

*Regularly attend Troop and Patrol Meetings as well as outings and activities.* Be an active member of your Troop and Patrol! No one expects you to attend *everything*, but the more you participate, the more fun and rewarding your Scouting experience will be.

*Share your ideas!* The Troop is always interested in hearing your idea for the next activity or outing. You might not think your idea is a big deal, but it could be a new experience for some of your fellow Scouts.

*Be Prepared!* This is the Scouting BSA Motto, and it means that you should show up to all Scouting events prepared with the appropriate attire and equipment for the event. It also means that you should come with an open mind, prepared to learn new things, to share new experiences, to make new friends, and to have fun!

We encourage you and your scout to visit as many troops as possible to find one that fits your scouts personality and needs to have the best scouting experience as possible. To find local scout troops, or answer any further questions, please contact the Rainbow Council Scout Office @ 815-942-4450 or your unit commissioner.