

What Adults Do on Troop 1776 Campouts

Here is some information we try to give parents on their first campout with the troop.

Camping is the heart of Boy Scouting, so please take a few minutes to read this sheet. *Boy Scouting is absolutely different from Cub Scouting or Webelos!* And while dads often accompany the Scouts on campouts, the Scouts camp with their patrol and **not** with their dads (Troop 1776 is a male-only camping Troop).

Policy Summary

Here is a summary of our troop (and BSA) policies, followed by the reasoning for the policies. There are exceptions, but these policies are in effect on most outings.

Scout Tenting & Meals Scouts tent with their patrol in a patrol site separate from the other patrols. Patrols plan their own menus, and cook and eat together as a team. The patrol leader should lead the boys in planning a menu and shopping for food in advance of the camp out. The boys should do this, not a parent—some parent help may be needed on the first and second campout, but after that, parents should let the boys do the planning and shopping (obviously providing a ride to the store and monitoring them while there).

Adult Tenting & Meals Adults tent with the adult patrol in a patrol site separate from the boy patrols. We plan our own menu, and cook and eat together as a team. In general, adults do not eat or tent with a boy patrol.

Adult/Boy Tenting BSA youth protection policies forbid an adult and a boy sharing the same tent. While youth protection policies may not apply to a father and son tenting together, it is troop policy that boys tent with boys and adults with adults. If a father tents with his son, it has been our experience that the boy will lose out on many opportunities to make decisions and be part of the patrol team! [Yes, you are probably the rare exception, but it wouldn't be fair to the other adults to single you out.]

Smoking/Drinking Drivers may not smoke while Scouts are in the car. Adults may not smoke or use tobacco products, nor drink alcoholic beverages during a Scout activity. Adults who must smoke or chew must do so completely out of sight of the Scouts.

Boy Leadership Adults should not interfere with the functioning of boy leaders, even if they make mistakes (we all learn best from our mistakes). Step in **only** if it is a matter of immediate safety or if the mistake will be immediately costly. If possible, involve a uniformed adult leader first.

Boy Growth Never do anything for a boy he can do himself. Let him make decisions without adult interference, and let him make non-costly mistakes.

Adult Training & Resources To attend our campouts, you **MUST** take the on-line Youth Protection Training offered by BSA. It can be completed in less than an hour, on-line at:

<http://olc.scouting.org/index.html>

This training is for the protection of the boys in the Troop. Print out the certificate at the end of the training and provide it to the Scoutmaster.

The Troop also encourages taking the Boy Scout Leader Fast Start training at the same web location. Even if you do not intend to become an adult leader of the Troop, it will provide you valuable insight into the BSA program and what we are trying to accomplish. It too can be completed in less than an hour.

The Boy Scouts of America provides an outstanding handbook for adults, and an excellent training course to help us understand the goals of Scouting and how to attain them. The adult manual is called the *Scoutmaster Handbook*, and it's worth your time to read it. The training is called *Scout Leader Basic*

Training, and is offered in our area twice a year. It's also a good investment of your time. The Scoutmaster or any ASM can give you further information about these.

Rationale

Boy Scout camping activities center on the patrol, where boys learn teamwork, leadership, and most camping skills. It is important that adults not be in the middle of patrol activities such as site selection, tent pitching, meal preparation, and anything else where boys get to practice decision-making and develop skills.

A key difference between Boy Scouting and Cub Scouting/Webelos is *leadership*. Look for the word "leader" in a job title, and you will begin to appreciate the difference. The *responsible person* for a Cub/Webelos den is the *Den Leader—an adult*. The *responsible person* for a Boy Scout patrol is the *Patrol Leader—a boy*.

This isn't token leadership (like a denner). A Patrol Leader has *real* authority and *genuine* responsibilities. Much of the success and happiness of four to ten other boys depend directly on him.

Boy Scouting teaches leadership. And boys learn leadership by practicing it, **not** by watching adults lead. The Boy Scouts believe that learning leadership is like learning to tie a knot: No matter how many times it's explained or demonstrated, a boy will never learn it until he tries it himself.

So what do we adults do, now that we've surrendered so much direct authority to boys? Here are our troop's guidelines on the *indirect, advisory* role you now enjoy (no kidding, you should enjoy watching your son take progressively more mature and significant responsibilities as he *zooms* toward adulthood).

The underlying principle is: ***never do anything for a boy that he can do himself***. We allow boys to grow by ***practicing*** leadership and by learning from their ***mistakes***. And while Scout skills are an important part of the program, what ultimately matters is that our Scouts become adults—that is, what matters is *not* whether they can use a map & compass, etc., but whether they can offer leadership to others in tough situations; and can live by a code that centers on honest and ethical behavior.

Boys need to learn to make decisions without adult intervention (except when it's a matter of immediate safety). Boys are in a patrol so they can learn leadership and teamwork without adult interference. You'll be surprised with how independently they can take care of themselves, when given the room to do so.

If a boy approaches and wants help or advice about pitching his tent, cooking a meal, making his bed, getting his coat or with something else on the campout, direct him to his patrol leader, the senior patrol leader, troop guide, or another older Scout. If you intervene and help, no matter how well intentioned you are being, you are actually taking away an older Scout's opportunity to hone their teaching and leadership skills.

More importantly, when you take the leadership of a group of boys in an activity you are taking away a leadership opportunity from an older Scout.

Being an adult advisor is a difficult role, especially when we are advising kids (even worse, our own sons). Twice each year, the Boy Scouts of America offers special training on how to do this, which we expect our uniformed adults to take. And any adult is welcome, and encouraged, to take the training.

If a parent goes on a campout, you are an automatic member of our "Geezers" (adult) patrol (so dubbed by Patrick S.). This patrol has several purposes: good food and camaraderie (of course), but more important is providing an example the boy patrols can follow without our telling them what to do (we teach by example). Since a patrol should camp as a group, we expect the "Geezers" to do so also; that way, adults don't tent in or right next to a boy patrol where your mere presence could disrupt the learning process.

One logistical note: The Troop provides tents for the boys, but each man attending a campout should bring his own tent. Adults don't need to worry about bringing food or drinks—an adult leader will bring food and drink for the entire Geezer patrol; we loosely rotate that on a volunteering basis.

Quite simply, our troop policy requires adults to cook, eat, and tent separately from the Scouts (even dads & sons). We are safely nearby, but not smothering close. Sure, go ahead and visit the patrol sites (not just your son's), talk to your son (and the other Scouts), ask what's going on or how things are going. But give the guys room to grow while you enjoy the view. Please don't hover over the boys, especially while they are cooking, cleaning, making, breaking camp or building a fire. Avoid the temptation to direct them and avoid the temptation to give advice. Don't jump in just to prevent a mistake from happening (unless it's serious). We all learn best from our mistakes. And let the patrol leaders lead.

Your job is tough, challenging, and ultimately rewarding, because your son will be a man the day after tomorrow.