

CHAPTER 9

The Outdoor Program

The outdoor program is where Scouting—*real* Scouting—happens. Trying to do Scouting without the outdoor program is like reading a cookbook but never cooking, joining a gym but never exercising, or practicing a sport but never competing.

“Camp is the boy’s Elysium and the Scoutmaster’s opportunity. And, moreover, it is Scouting.”

—Robert Baden-Powell

When Scouts hike through pristine wilderness, they discover the beauty of nature and begin to accept responsibility as stewards of the environment. When they cook together as a patrol, they discover what it really means to be part of a team. When they guide their peers through a crisis, they learn valuable lessons in leadership. And when they climb or cycle or swim just a little farther than they ever imagined they could, they discover their own capabilities.

Even so, the outdoor program is a method of Scouting, nothing more. As Baden-Powell once said: “To whatever degree it may be perfected, camping is not the end-all of Scouting. It is only one of the steps—though perhaps the most potential of the steps—toward our aim of building up happy, healthy, helpful citizens.”

As a result of the outdoor program, some of your Scouts may become lifelong family campers, climbers, or canoeists. Others may go on to hike the Appalachian Trail or stand atop Mount Everest. Still others may hang up their hiking boots forever the day they leave Scouting. None of that matters so long as they take the lessons of Scouting with them wherever they go.

Scouting’s Continuum of Outdoor Activities

Outdoor activities are important at every level of Scouting, but the specifics change as boys mature and progress through the program. Over the years, the BSA has developed definitions of which activities are age-appropriate and which may be a little too challenging. The point is not to withhold fun activities from younger Scouts only so they have something to accomplish down the road. (The fun of activities like rappelling does not diminish.) Instead, the point is to make sure the challenge level is right. An 11-year-old who has never slept away from home likely won’t do well if his first Scout outing involves hiking five miles into camp, sleeping under a tarp, and using a cathole latrine. Similarly, a 16-year-old Life Scout won’t get very excited about camping in the backyard.

As the Troop Program Planning Chart in chapter 7 shows, new Boy Scouts are ready for weekend outings, summer camp, and events like camporees—activities that are a

step above what they did in Webelos Scouting and that mostly take place in the frontcountry. Older Scouts, meanwhile, are ready to venture into the backcountry for canoe trips and backpacking treks. In keeping with this philosophy, the BSA’s national high-adventure bases set minimum age requirements for participation, as do many council-run programs.

The task for troops is to develop activities that combine the right amounts of fun and challenge for Scouts of all ages. Here are some ways you could do that:

- On a weekend campout, younger Scouts could ride to the campsite while older Scouts backpack in.
- At summer camp, younger Scouts could work on early-rank requirements, Scouts in the middle could work on merit badges, and older Scouts could participate in COPE or an older-Scout program that takes them away from camp for a short backpacking trek.
- During the spring, you could hold a special orientation campout for new Scouts, bringing along a handful of older Scouts to teach skills.
- Over the summer, you could take your older Scouts on a trip to one of the BSA’s national high-adventure bases.
- During the fall, you could set aside one month for patrol outings.

Also keep in mind that Scouts face challenges in more than just physical activities. A day of camporee competitions can be as challenging for the patrol leader who must prepare and lead his Scouts as it can be for the Scouts themselves.

Planning Patrol Activities

With the proper training, guidance, and approval by the troop leaders, patrols may conduct day hikes and service projects without the participation of adult leaders as long as they follow two rules:

- The Scoutmaster must approve the patrol activity.
- The patrol activity cannot interfere with any troop function.

A patrol day hike or service project without adult supervision can be allowed only when it has been thoroughly planned and the Scoutmaster is satisfied the activity is well within patrol members’ levels of training and responsibility. If the Scoutmaster has any doubts, he should encourage the patrol to reconsider its plans or assign adults to accompany the patrol during the activity.

Overnight patrol activities require the same adult coverage as any other Scouting activities: two registered adult leaders, or one registered leader and a parent of a participating Scout or other adult, one of whom must be 21 years of age or older.

Tour and Activity Plan

The tour and activity plan is a planning tool that helps your troop be prepared for safe and fun adventure. Under the following circumstances, you must complete and submit the plan to your local council for review:

- Trips of 500 miles or more
- Trips outside your council's borders (except to one of your council's properties)
- Trips to a national high-adventure base or a nationally or regionally sponsored event
- Trips that involve any of the following (outside of council or district events):
 - Aquatics activities (swimming, boating, floating, scuba, etc.)
 - Climbing and rappelling
 - Orientation flights
 - Shooting sports
 - Motorized vehicles (snowmobiles, boating, etc.)
- Trips where your council requests submission of a tour plan

Even when it is not required, the tour and activity plan is an excellent tool for planning any troop activity. It guides you through itineraries, travel arrangements, two-deep leadership, supervision qualifications, and transportation needs. Authorized leaders can complete the tour and activity plan online at www.MyScouting.org; look under the Unit Tools heading. A printable form is also available on the BSA website.

Outdoor Ethics

There was a time when Scouts cut cedar boughs to make ground beds and ditched their tents to keep out the rain. No more. Today, Scouts pride themselves on taking nothing but pictures, leaving nothing but footprints, and killing nothing but time. Like their predecessors, they recite the Outdoor Code, which sets forth Scouting's aspirations in the outdoors, but they also follow the principles of Leave No Trace, which show how to put those aspirations into practice. The seven principles of Leave No Trace are described below.

The Outdoor Code

As an American, I will do my best to—

Be clean in my outdoor manners.

Be careful with fire.

Be considerate in the outdoors.

Be conservation-minded.

Leave No Trace

While most people think of Leave No Trace principles when they head into the backcountry, they are just as applicable to frontcountry activities at Scout camps, state parks, and private campgrounds.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare.

Proper trip planning helps you accomplish trip goals safely, be prepared for emergencies, and minimize damage to natural and cultural resources. By avoiding peak seasons and following area regulations such as group-size limitations, you ensure a better experience for your troop and other groups.

2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces.

Damage to land occurs when visitors trample vegetation or communities of organisms beyond recovery. The resulting barren areas develop into undesirable trails, campsites, and eroded gullies. Stay on established trails—even when they are wet or muddy—and use existing campsites whenever possible.

3. Dispose of Waste Properly.

Pack it in, pack it out. This simple yet effective saying motivates backcountry visitors to take their trash home with them. Minimize the need to pack out food scraps by carefully planning meals. Be sure everyone washes dishes and themselves at least 200 feet from public waters, campsites, and trails using small amounts of biodegradable soap. When permanent facilities are not available, use cathole latrines and follow local regulations on packing out toilet paper and human waste.

4. Leave What You Find.

Allow others a sense of discovery: Leave rocks, plants, animals, archaeological artifacts, and other objects as you find them, taking home photographs, sketches, or pencil rubbings instead. In some places, it is illegal to remove artifacts; in all places, it is ill-advised.

5. Minimize Campfire Impacts.

Some people would not think of camping without a campfire. Yet the naturalness of many areas has been degraded by overuse of fires and increasing demand for firewood, not to mention the potential for horrific brush and forest fires in areas with little rain. Use backpacking stoves for cooking and flashlights for lighting. When fires are permitted, use established fire rings and only use sticks from the ground that you can break by hand.

6. Respect Wildlife.

Quick movements and loud noises are stressful to animals, especially during sensitive times like nesting and birthing. Considerate campers observe wildlife from afar, giving animals a wide berth. Store food securely and keep garbage and food scraps away from animals to help keep wildlife wild and your Scouts safe.

7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors.

Thoughtful campers travel and camp quietly and in small groups, select campsites away from other groups, wear clothing and use gear that blend with the environment, respect private property, and leave gates open or closed as they find them. Be considerate of other campers, and they will likely return the favor.

The member-driven Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics teaches people how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly. This copyrighted information has been reprinted with permission from the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics: www.LNT.org.

For outings that involve mechanized recreation, review the best practices developed by Tread Lightly!, a nationally recognized organization that promotes responsible recreation. Learn more at www.treadlightly.org.

Being Conservation-Minded

The Outdoor Code encourages Scouts to be “conservation-minded.” This means thinking about the environment as more than just ground to be hiked over and rivers to be conquered, but as a larger community of soil, plants, and animals to which we also belong. As members of this community, we have responsibilities to help protect, preserve, and conserve the environment and the land for future generations. Known as the “land ethic,” this commitment to conserving the land has been part of Scouting for many years. Keeping this tradition alive is an important part of Scouting leadership.

Types of Outings

Some troops tend to specialize in one type of activity, like backpacking, but most offer a wide variety of outings throughout the year. Doing so keeps the outdoor program fresh and ensures that every Scout can find something he enjoys, something he can excel at, and something that challenges him.

What kinds of outings can troops take? It is easier to list those they can't take. The *Guide to Safe Scouting* includes a short list of activities that are unauthorized, including hunting, parasailing, boxing, bungee jumping, and paintball (except for target shooting). A longer list of activities requires special training and/or certification, as described in chapter 25.

Avoid the temptation to pursue an unauthorized activity as a “group of friends”—all of whom happen to be Scouts and adult leaders in the same troop. Doing so sends the wrong message about what is meant by “A Scout is obedient.” Scouts are free to do non-Scouting activities with their friends, of course, but such activities should be clearly separate and distinct from troop operations.

The list of program features in chapter 7 gives you a good idea of the sorts of outings you could do; any of them can be the basis for an outing. In fact, most program features could lead to many different outings. Consider, for example, these hiking options:

- A simple day hike
- Simultaneous hikes of varying lengths at a state park; each patrol chooses its own challenge
- A 10- or 20-mile hike to complete Hiking merit badge requirements 5 and 6
- A nature hike to identify native animals and plants for Second Class requirement 6 and First Class requirement 6
- A night hike that ends at an observatory for star study
- A fitness hike with stations where Scouts complete fitness tests

- An orienteering hike, where Scouts navigate by map and compass
- A geocaching hike, where Scouts navigate from cache to cache in a large city park
- A service hike along the shoreline, where patrols compete to see which can pick up the most trash
- A shakedown hike, where Scouts practice carrying full backpacks and cook trail meals in preparation for a high-adventure trek
- A “duty to God” hike, where the troop visits various places of worship in the community to learn about the ways people worship
- A historic hike, such as one through a Civil War battlefield, in pursuit of the Historic Trails Award

As you can see, several of these options incorporate other methods of Boy Scouting, including advancement, the patrol method, and personal growth. When you think creatively, a hike becomes more than a walk through the woods; it becomes a vehicle for achieving Scouting's aims: character development, citizenship training, and physical and mental fitness.

Don't assume that everything you do on every outing must fulfill a larger purpose or lead to advancement. More than ever before, today's Scouts are overscheduled and under pressure to perform in sports and on standardized tests. Allowing them time on outings to unplug, relax, and have fun is a priceless gift.

Planning for the Camping Merit Badge

To earn the Camping merit badge, a Scout must camp at least 20 days and nights and do at least two of the following:

- Hike up a mountain, gaining at least 1,000 vertical feet.
- Backpack, snowshoe, or cross-country ski for at least 4 miles.
- Take a bike trip of at least 15 miles or at least four hours.
- Take a nonmotorized trip on the water of at least four hours or 5 miles.
- Plan and carry out an overnight snow camping experience.
- Rappel down a rappel route of 30 feet or more.

Frequently incorporating these activities into your outdoor program will help Scouts advance and ensure they are having fun along the way.

Duration and Frequency of Outings

Outings may be day trips, short-term outings of one or two nights, or long-term outings like summer camp and high-adventure treks. The 72-hour threshold is important to keep in mind because trips that exceed this length require participants to have a current medical-exam record on file (part C of the Annual Health and Medical Record). Shorter trips—unless they involve strenuous and demanding activities—require only a health history, informed consent

form, and hold harmless/release agreement (parts A and B of the Annual Health and Medical Record).

How many outings should you schedule? As a rule, Scouts should spend at least 10 days and nights outdoors each year and should participate in summer camp or a high-adventure trip annually. Troops that camp more often tend to retain and attract members at a higher rate. Moreover, with proper planning, camping 10 nights a year helps Scouts reach First Class rank within a year and earn the Camping merit badge within two years. These achievements are especially important for Scouts who are working toward the Eagle Scout Award.

Of course, many of today's Scouts participate in multiple sports, music programs, and other extracurricular activities that make it hard for them to attend every outing. If your Scouts are extremely busy, it may be helpful to schedule more—not fewer—activities to give them better chances of getting out with your troop most months.

You might also need to schedule outings more creatively to increase participation. You could start an October outing on Saturday morning instead of Friday night to let high-school football players and band members participate. Or you could take advantage of a teacher in-service day to squeeze in a day hike.

Resources for Leadership and Teaching

Scheduling one or more outings each month can put a strain on a small corps of adult leaders. It can also give you the opportunity to get more adults involved. Remember that—at a minimum—you can hold an outing with one registered leader plus the parent of a participating Scout or another adult, one of whom must be 21 years of age or older. In other words, parents don't have to register as adult leaders or commit to a lifetime of service to help lead an outing. That said, getting parents on outings is a great first step toward recruiting them as assistant Scoutmasters.

Although you can hold an outing with two adults, a good target ratio is at least one adult per patrol. Also, some activities, like aquatics activities, have more stringent rules.

Troop parents are the most obvious source of outing leadership, but don't overlook these sources:

- Troop committee members
- Members of the chartered organization
- Alumni of your troop
- Venturing leaders
- Members of the local Order of the Arrow lodge
- Former Scouts at local colleges (You may be able to find them through your council's National Eagle Scout Association committee or through Alpha Phi Omega, a national service fraternity with Scouting roots.)

Holding joint activities with another troop is a good way to pool leadership resources. If your troop is small, try building a relationship with a troop in a neighboring community.

When your troop decides to try a new type of activity—planning its first canoe trip, for example—look for experts in that activity among your troop parents, troop committee members, members of your chartered organization, and registered merit badge counselors. You can also find resources in other local troops, on the council camping committee, and through your unit commissioner and district executive. Many local councils maintain a campmaster corps. Campmasters are experienced Scouters who specialize in outdoor programs and techniques and who are trained to assist in short-term camping, primarily at council camp facilities.

But don't limit yourself to the Scouting community. Almost every outdoor sport and hobby has clubs and groups of experts who can help your troop plan and run a safe and exciting event. (Many of these experts may have first experienced their sport or hobby in Scouting.) Ask for leads at local outdoor stores, or do an Internet search using a query like "hiking club Omaha" or "Georgia rappelling." Of course, sports like whitewater rafting have communities of professional guides and outfitters.

People who have a passion for a particular sport or activity will often put on a better presentation than an assistant Scoutmaster who is learning along the way. Moreover, these outdoor experts may have access to equipment you can borrow, which can make activities easier and cheaper to plan.

When using outside experts, be sure to follow BSA rules, not the rules of another group if they are more relaxed. Also, while these experts may be happy to help lead an activity, don't expect them to help supervise other parts of the outing, like cooking and cleanup. Effective June 1, 2010, all BSA registered volunteers—regardless of their position—must have current certification in BSA Youth Protection training. For more information about BSA Youth Protection policies, go to www.scouting.org/Training/YouthProtection.aspx.

Planning Outings

Assembling equipment, recruiting adult leaders, transporting Scouts to a campsite, making sure they are safe and well fed, and offering them activities that are both fun and instructive can seem a daunting task. And the task becomes even more daunting the farther you venture from civilization.

Fortunately, the BSA offers plenty of resources to support you and your youth leaders (who should be doing the bulk of the planning). The *Boy Scout Handbook* covers basic camping techniques, while the *Fieldbook* addresses more advanced topics like cold-weather camping, aquatics, and mountain travel.

BSA training courses, which we discuss in chapter 18, are another important resource. In addition to Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills (part of basic training for adults), courses like Safe Swim Defense, Safety Afloat, and Climb On Safely offer training for specific types of activities. Powder Horn, meanwhile, is a hands-on resource management course for registered adults and older Scouts who want to conduct unit-based high-adventure activities.

Here, we cover some basics of planning outings from an adult leader's perspective. Later in this chapter, you will find a Scoutmaster's campsite checklist and an outing planner.

Basic Planning Details

Planning an outing begins at the annual planning conference, as described in chapter 7, when the theme and dates (and perhaps location) are set. Then, as the outing gets closer, the patrol leaders' council (or designated PLC members) plan the outing in earnest. At the previous month's PLC meeting, you should have determined key details such as location, cost, and departure and return times.

Once key details are established, Scouts can begin signing up for the outing, and patrols can begin planning their menus. By requiring Scouts to sign up at the troop meeting at least one full week before the outing—or, even better, two weeks out—you allow patrols time to shop for food and allow yourself enough time to make sure drivers and adult leaders are in place.

Use your youth leaders during the sign-up process. Have Scouts sign up through their patrol leaders, who can report totals to the scribe or the lead Scout. To help Scouts develop personal responsibility, discourage parents from signing up their sons for outings.

Major events like summer camp and high-adventure trips will, of course, require early planning and payment. Set up internal payment schedules so you have enough money in hand before you must send fees to the camp or high-adventure base you are attending.

In many troops, outings are designed to break even; if expenses run \$20 per Scout, they charge \$20 per Scout. (For a good learning experience, have the Scouts in charge of the outing develop a basic event budget.) Ideally, the troop budget should cover the expenses of adult leaders and prospective members so they do not have to pay; those expenses also should not be borne by the Scouts. Also, it is important to have funds available to assist Scouts who cannot afford to pay.

Many troops with strong fundraising programs charge only for major events like summer camp. This policy can simplify trip administration and eliminate one reason for Scouts not to attend outings.

Choosing Campsites

How do you find a good campsite? Your local council might have a list of suggestions. Scouters at district roundtable meetings, your troop committee, parents and guardians, and chartered organization members might know of places. National, state, and local parks and forests often have camping areas set aside especially for groups the size of a Scout patrol or troop. Also, many Order of the Arrow lodges publish "where to go camping" booklets.

Look for campsites where each patrol can have its own clearly defined space and where adults can camp at some distance from the Scouts (within earshot but not in the middle of the action). This strengthens youth leadership by encouraging Scouts to turn to their patrol leaders and the senior patrol leader, not an adult, when they have questions.

Also, in keeping with Leave No Trace principles, you won't overload an existing patrol-sized campsite to accommodate the whole troop.

Contact the owners or managers of any potential campsite well in advance of the Scouts' arrival. If this is the troop's first trip to a campground, try to make a personal visit to the person in charge of the area. He or she can be a great ally to you over the years and a tremendous source of information, support, and guidance. Get off on the right foot by doing all you can to build a good working relationship.

When you meet, explain what the Scouts are planning, the size of the troop or patrol, and the group's level of expertise in using Leave No Trace camping skills. Explore the opportunities available in that particular forest, park, or private land, including service project possibilities. Pay close attention to any regulations the land manager might explain. To protect natural resources or to enhance the outdoor experience of other people, a land management agency or property owner might limit group size, prohibit the use of campfires, or impose other guidelines on activities.

Scouts and their leaders must understand all regulations and obey them to the letter. Scouts are guests on public and private lands. By acting responsibly, they will ensure that they and future Scouts will have similar opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Troops that break the rules and Scouts who act irresponsibly give Scouting a bad name.

To avoid crowds, practice contrarian thinking. Visit a popular state park in the off-season, or go hiking in a national forest that is better known for canoeing.

Program Activities and Schedules

The Scouts planning each outing should already have a basic idea of what the outing's focus will be, such as hiking, special cooking, or wilderness survival. With that basic idea in place, they should develop a schedule for the outing and think about any special equipment they need to secure or consultants they need to recruit for the activities they have planned.

Schedules are important because they ensure that you have time to accomplish your goals for the outing. They also prod Scouts who might otherwise waste all Saturday morning doing their breakfast dishes.

As you have done with troop meetings, you can create an expectation among troop families that you will start and end outings on time. (Have Scouts call home from the road if you will return late.) The more consistent you are, the more likely parents will be to show up on time to pick up their Scouts after outings.

While you should go into every outing with a schedule, be flexible and take advantage of opportunities that arise along the way. Stop at that country store on the way to the campsite. Explore that abandoned railroad track that crosses your hiking trail. Climb that hill overlooking the ocean—or race Scouts to the top. Latch onto these exciting opportunities, which can turn a conventional overnigher into an unforgettable experience.

Similarly, you will want to allow for unstructured play and old-fashioned free time—essential elements of boyhood that are increasingly scarce in our achievement-oriented world. When younger boys play a game like capture the flag, they learn to negotiate rules and mediate conflicts without adult intervention. When older boys chat around a campfire, they build friendships that can sustain them through the challenges of high school and beyond.

“Play is the first great educator.”

—Robert Baden-Powell

Rainy-Day Activities

The first Scoutmaster to see the need for rainy-day activities was the one who spent a rainy day without any activities to occupy a damp and restless troop. Be prepared when that rainy day comes, because it will.

Scouting publications such as the *Boy Scout Handbook*, *Patrol Leader Handbook*, *Senior Patrol Leader Handbook*, *Fieldbook*, and *Program Features, for Troops, Teams, and Crews* overflow with ideas for games, skits, skills, contests, and problem solving that can be adapted for use in tents or under a tarp. Ask a youth leader to pull together some of the best of these before the rain begins. Another idea: Take along a rainy-day kit of supplies such as card games, travel versions of popular board games, word puzzles and quizzes, and rope to practice splicing.

If you have tarps over your patrol cooking areas, the weather may not affect cooking. However, there is nothing wrong with swapping menus around. Eat your ready-made trail lunch during a morning rainstorm; then cook your elaborate Dutch-oven breakfast at noon after the sun comes out.

Rainy days will come, along with snowy days, frigid days, and blisteringly hot days. But there is good news: Your Scouts will remember those days far more fondly than the perfect spring days that were so enjoyable at the time.

Note that there is a big difference between rainy days and hazardous weather. As we discuss in chapter 24, at least one adult who has completed Hazardous Weather training is required for all tours and trips.

Menus and Shopping

Camp cooking gives Scouts and leaders the fuel they need for rugged outdoor activities, but it also offers valuable lessons in nutrition, planning, and teamwork. Patrol cooking tests patrols—and their leaders—more than most Scouting activities. Whenever possible, Scouts should cook and eat by patrols, perhaps inviting the senior patrol leader or an adult leader to join them as a guest. Besides being a gracious gesture, this encourages patrols to do their best in preparing the meal and provides a pleasant way for Scouts and troop leaders to more closely share the outdoor adventure.

Just as each patrol cooks together, so should each patrol plan its menu, estimate the cost, and buy the food. Typically, the patrol quartermaster or a member working on a cooking-related advancement requirement will take care of the shopping. In some troops, patrol members contribute money to cover food expenses; in others, patrols are asked to stay within the budget set by the patrol leaders' council. The senior patrol leader, troop instructors, and adult leaders may help patrols, especially the new-Scout patrol, review their menus and price lists.

How elaborate patrol menus can be will depend on the type of outing you are planning. On backpacking trips, you will be limited to lightweight foods that require minimum refrigeration and can withstand hours of being jostled in a backpack. For more sedentary trips, your Scouts can branch out, creating elaborate feasts or experimenting with different techniques like cooking in Dutch ovens, foil packs, and reflector ovens.

As of Jan. 1, 2014, the Cooking merit badge is required for the Eagle Scout rank, giving Scouts another good reason to eat more than hotdogs and toaster pastries on campouts.

The *Boy Scout Handbook* contains menu-planning tips, recipes for camp meals, an overview of cooking methods, and a chart to help Scouts estimate the serving-size quantities they will need. Other resources include the *Camping* merit badge pamphlet; *Camp Cookery for Small Groups*, which features patrol-sized recipes for entrees, side dishes, and desserts; and the Cooking program feature, which includes a section on special cooking.

You can add variety to menus by coming up with a theme (international cooking, perhaps) or planning a cooking contest where patrols must create a meal based on a predetermined set of ingredients

Since shopping is typically delegated to one or two Scouts, parents usually get involved in the process. While you should welcome parents' help, discourage them from going beyond the menu the patrol planned. It is OK (and a good object lesson) if Scouts forget to buy milk for their cereal. Keep in mind that no Scout has ever starved to death on a weekend campout. Later in this chapter, you will find a patrol menu planner.

When Scouts are first learning to plan menus, consider taking them to a nearby grocery store to shop during a troop meeting.

Duty Rosters

Cooking can be hard work. Someone must fuel and light the stoves or gather kindling and build a fire. Someone must haul water for cooking and washing. Someone must cook. Someone must clean up afterward. Also, someone must make sure the campsite is litter-free and that—depending on the type of outing—the latrine is clean and the flags are posted in the morning and retired in the evening.

While most adults and older Scouts can handle these chores collaboratively, younger Scouts benefit from a duty roster that clearly spells out who does what each day. Below is a simple duty roster for a weekend outing's meals. Notice how the tasks rotate so that no one is stuck washing dishes after every meal.

	Stoves/Fire	Water	Cooking	Cleanup
Friday Cracker Barrel	Tyler, Alex	Neil, Peyton	Bill, Mac	Angelo, George
Saturday Breakfast	Chase, Jamal	Tyler, Alex	Neil, Peyton	Bill, Mac
Saturday Lunch	Angelo, George	Chase, Jamal	Tyler, Alex	Neil, Peyton
Saturday Dinner	Bill, Mac	Angelo, George	Chase, Jamal	Tyler, Alex
Sunday Breakfast	Neil, Peyton	Bill, Mac	Angelo, George	Chase, Jamal

Should the patrol leader put himself on the duty roster? He probably should, and he should make sure that he or the assistant patrol leader is available to help at each meal.

Cleaning up at the end of an outing is everybody's responsibility. Before departing a campsite, each patrol leader should lead his Scouts in cleaning up their area and making a thorough sweep through the camp. Their goal is to leave the site with no sign that the patrol has ever been there. In many troops, the patrol cannot depart until the senior patrol leader inspects the campsite and approves the Scouts' efforts to leave it better than they found it.

Adult Leaders on Outings

Much as at troop meetings, adults on outings should let the youth leaders lead and the Scouts learn from their mistakes. Setting up camp a short distance from the patrols can help in this regard.

That is not to say the adults should be unapproachable or distant. Far from it. On outings, the adult association method thrives, mentoring relationships are strengthened, and Scouts can seek guidance from trusted adults. Outings are also great for conducting Scoutmaster conferences for advancement—or for working with Scouts who should be advancing but are not.

Remember that the BSA's Youth Protection guidelines require one-on-one conferences to be held in full view of others—at a picnic table in the middle of the campsite, for example, or on the porch of the camp dining hall.

Here are some specific ways adults can help make outings enjoyable:

- Make sure tents are pitched properly and that ground beds will keep Scouts comfortable, warm, and dry.
- In cold weather, make sure each Scout's sleeping bag is sufficiently warm. Encourage Scouts to change from sweat-soaked clothing into dry sleepwear before going to bed.
- In hot weather, make sure each Scout uses sunscreen and drinks plenty of water. (Encourage Scouts to monitor their urine output; it should be clear and copious.)
- Watch out for signs of homesickness, health problems, or other issues.
- Help the senior patrol leader and patrol leaders enforce bedtimes so that everybody has the chance to get enough sleep. Typically, an adult will be the last to go to bed and the first to rise the next morning.

Outdoor Equipment

Equipment requirements vary greatly depending on the type of outing you are planning. Here we focus on the personal gear and troop and patrol equipment you will need on most overnight outings.

Keep in mind that the lightweight gear suitable for backpacking works just as well when you are car camping or participating in activities like district camporees. By promoting the use of lightweight gear, you make it easier for the troop to camp anywhere from the backyard to the backwoods.

Personal Gear

The *Boy Scout Handbook* simplifies the issue of what a person needs to take on outdoor adventures by suggesting that each Scout carry the Scout Basic Essentials on every outing. That way he will be in the habit of having what he needs to be self-sufficient.

Scout Basic Essentials

- Pocketknife
- First-aid kit
- Extra clothing
- Rain gear
- Water bottle (and method to treat water in the backcountry)
- Flashlight
- Trail food
- Matches and fire starters
- Sun protection
- Map and compass
- Insect repellent, a whistle, and other items might also be considered essential, depending on the destination, the length of the trip, and the season.

The Scout Basic Essentials will see Scouts through most day hikes. For campouts and trips of greater duration, a Scout can add the personal overnight camping gear listed below. Each item on this and the following lists is more fully described in the *Boy Scout Handbook*.

When new Scouts join the troop, have an adult or experienced older Scout advise them on what to buy, what features to look for, and where to shop. Knowledgeable advice can save them from buying gear they do not need or gear that is inappropriate for Scout camping.

Personal Overnight Camping Gear

- Scout Basic Essentials
- Clothing appropriate for the season
- Backpack with rain cover
- Sleeping bag, or two or three blankets
- Sleeping pad
- Ground cloth
- Eating kit (spoon, plate, bowl, cup)
- Cleanup kit (soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, comb, washcloth, towel, hand sanitizer)
- Plastic garbage bags
- Nylon cord, 50 feet

Personal Extras (Optional)

- Watch
- Camera
- Small notebook
- Pencil or pen
- Sunglasses
- Small musical instrument
- Swimsuit
- Gloves

Electronic Devices on Outings

Among the more contentious issues facing troops today is whether, and under what circumstances, to allow Scouts to carry cell phones, portable music players, and other electronic devices on outings. Although it might make sense to ban them altogether once you reach camp, many such devices have features that can be useful in the outdoors. (The *Boy Scout Handbook* is available as an iPhone app, and the new edition of the *Fieldbook* is available as an e-book. Most phones can take pictures; and smartphones can double as GPS units—although you should always have a backup plan.)

Also complicating the situation is the reality that many parents expect to be able to reach their sons at all times. Some will even encourage their sons to defy your ban, putting Scouts in a position where they must be disloyal to either you or their parents.

Your troop needs to develop its own policy, which the patrol leaders' council should have a voice in determining. Short of a total ban, your policy might allow certain devices during certain times of the day or give troop-level youth leaders more privileges than other Scouts.

Keep in mind that today's Scouts are digital natives, people who don't remember a time before cell phones and MP3 players. Through your troop policy—and personal example—you have the opportunity to teach them how to use technology responsibly and respectfully.

Troop and Patrol Gear

The following checklist includes those items that will outfit a troop or patrol for nearly any outing. The BSA Supply Group sells much of the equipment Scouts need. You may also be able to borrow or "inherit" usable items from troop families, members of the chartered organization, or other local supporters of Scouting. Surplus stores, yard sales, and secondhand outlets are other potential sources of gear.

Many troops keep a few backpacks and sleeping bags on hand as loaners for new Scouts. This reduces a new member's initial costs of joining the troop.

Troop Overnight Camping Gear

- Tents with poles, stakes, ground cloths, and lines
- Dining fly
- Nylon cord, 50 feet
- Backpacking stoves and fuel
- Group first-aid kit
- Cook kit (pots and pans; spatula, large spoon, and/or ladle, depending on menus; two plastic sheets, each 4-by-4-feet; matches and/or butane lighters in waterproof containers)
- Cleanup kit (sponge or dishcloth; biodegradable soap; sanitizing rinse agent/bleach; scouring pads, no-soap type; plastic trash bags; toilet paper in plastic bag)
- Repair kit (thread, needles, safety pins)

Troop extras (optional):

- Hot-pot tongs
- Camp shovel
- Water container, one 1-gallon or two ½-gallon collapsible, plastic
- Washbasin
- Grill
- Pot rods
- Patrol flag
- Small U.S. flag
- Ax
- Camp saw
- Lanterns and fuel

Before buying a new piece of equipment, consider these questions:

- Will it fill a definite need?
- Will it enhance or detract from the troop program? For example, heavy plywood patrol boxes are useful for long-term camping, but they limit your mobility and are best transported in pickup trucks or trailers.
- Is there space to store it?
- Is it in good condition and safe to use?
- Are there hidden costs? Must the troop buy a rooftop carrier, for example, to use a "free" canoe?

Plastic bins are light, inexpensive, and versatile replacements for traditional patrol boxes.

The final question might be, "Can we afford it?" Sometimes paying more for quality equipment is a better decision in the long run than buying cheaper gear that won't be so durable or useful.

Storing and Caring for Troop Equipment

Here are a few commonsense guidelines.

- Write, stencil, or engrave identifying information on equipment. If possible, include a telephone number. Doing so will increase the likelihood that items will be returned if you inadvertently leave them behind or they become mixed-up with the gear of other troops.
- Store equipment in a locked space where dampness and extreme temperature are not a concern.
- The troop quartermaster should work with a member of the troop committee to organize the gear and set up an efficient checkout system.
- Check the condition of an item after each use. If it should be cleaned or repaired, arrange for that to be done as soon as possible, or retire the item from the troop's inventory and remove it from storage. Be sure wet tents and tarps are allowed to dry thoroughly before being packed away.
- Keep a list of the gear on hand. That will help troop leaders plan future equipment acquisitions to meet the troop's needs.

Tents and Tarps

Two-person tents are ideal for most patrol and troop camping. They can be carried in backpacks and are available with sewn-in floors and insect netting. (Be sure they are seam-sealed.) Two Scouts in a tent can also strengthen a troop's use of the buddy system. Also, the fewer Scouts in a tent, the more likely they will get to sleep promptly.

A tarp or dining fly (about 12 feet square) will fend off rain and hot sun when the patrol is eating and protect gear stored underneath it at night.

When camping, in accordance with BSA Youth Protection guidelines, no Scout is permitted to sleep in the tent of an adult other than his own parent or guardian. Many troops discourage parents from tenting with their sons; this promotes the patrol method and encourages Scouts to bond with each other.

Trailers

Many troops haul their gear to camp in trailers, which can certainly come in handy, especially if your troop is large. Just keep these ideas in mind.

- When purchasing a trailer, be aware of its towing requirements. A very large trailer full of patrol boxes might require a heavy-duty pickup truck with a towing package, something that can be hard to find. You also need drivers available who are experienced at pulling trailers.
- If possible, unload the trailer completely after each outing. This forces your youth leaders to plan what gear they will need for the next outing instead of just assuming everything they may need will be in the trailer.
- Do not become tied to your trailer. Some of the best campsites can only be reached on foot.
- Be sure to budget for the costs of insuring, licensing, and maintaining your trailer.

Unfortunately, trailers are tempting targets for thieves. If yours is stolen, you can be out thousands of dollars for the trailer and its contents. Actions you can take to protect your trailer include:

- Buy and use a wheel lock similar to a common wheel boot used by police officers to disable illegally parked cars. These can be bought through the Internet or by checking with local boat dealers.
- Add padlocks to all the doors. Do not rely on built-in locks, which can be flimsy.
- Park your trailer in a highly visible location with its rear doors butted up against a wall or other permanent structure. Situate it against parking blocks or a curb so it cannot be turned or moved.

Scoutmaster's Campsite Quick Checklist

With the senior patrol leader and patrol leaders showing the way, the Scouts themselves will have the responsibility of setting up and running their camp. Though there are dozens of details that, when properly addressed, can increase the success of a campout, the following checklist can serve as a reminder of key issues for adult leaders to watch for as a troop goes camping. Share any concerns with the senior patrol leader so he can address them with the Scouts.

The checklists provided here appear also in the appendix but on separate pages. Those checklists will come in handy for the individuals who will be responsible for those tasks.