

# What Adults Do On Troop Campouts

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! In a Cub Scout Pack, while parents (and sometimes whole families) often accompany the Scouts on campouts, the Scout Scouts camp with their scout patrols and Registered Adult Troop Leaders. Parents are welcome to attend a troop campout but more in the role of an observer to the camp out.

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

## **Scout Leadership/Adult Leadership**

Parents on a campout should not interfere with the function of youth leadership. Troops operate with the premise that the Scouts not the adults are responsible to provide the leadership and discipline at all times. The registered adult leadership is available to help the scouts in these roles. As a parent on a campout, we realize there may be a temptation to step in and take control of a situation, however we will only expect a parent to step in if there is a matter of immediate safety or if the mistake will be immediately costly. If you feel there is a scout, including your own son, that is in need to be spoken to about his behavior or actions and there is no immediate safety danger then we ask that you bring your concerns to the Troops Registered Leadership. The Troop's Leadership has been trained by the BSA to take the appropriate action according to the official BSA guidelines.

## **Scout Growth**

Many parents on campouts with their scout will want to do things for their scout or make sure that their scout doesn't make mistakes. This is especially true for Scouts who are just crossing over from a Cub Scout Pack. We ask again, that parents be more of an observer on the camp outs. Never do anything for a scout he can do himself. We understand it can be hard as a parent to NOT do for your son, even if you know they are making a mistake, but your scout needs that freedom without the parent safety net in place to gain confidence in their decision making skills and to foster their team building skills.

## **Scout Tenting and Meals**

Scouts tent with their Troop in a Patrol site. Patrols plan their own menus, and cook and eat together as a team without adult intervention. In general, adults do not eat or tent with a scout patrol. Scouts shall share a tent with other scouts so there are 2 – 3 scouts per tent. The Sleeping arrangements are decided within the troop prior to the campout.

## **Adult Tenting and Meals**

Parents attending a camp out will tent and eat with the Adult Leader Patrol. They will be expected to help with the duties within that adult patrol. Adult tents are disbursed through out the Troop camping area for the safety and supervision of the Scouts. BSA Youth Protection forbids any adult and a scout from sharing the same tent with the exception of a scout and a parent. With that said, it is the troops policy that scouts tent with scouts and adults with adults. It has been the experience of the Troop that the scout will loose out on many opportunities and experiences to make decisions and be part of the Patrol team if the scout is sharing sleeping arrangements with Parents. Yes, you and your scout are probably the rare exception, but it wouldn't be fair to the other adults to single you or your scout out.

## **Adult Smoking, Drinking, Inappropriate Behavior**

Any Adult that transports scouts may not smoke or drink Alcoholic beverages while Scouts are in their vehicle. Adults may not smoke or use tobacco products, nor drink alcoholic beverages during scout activities or in the presence of any youth. Adults that feel they must smoke or chew must do so discretely out of sight of the scouts. All evidence of smoking must be disposed of so the Scouts do not know anyone has been smoking. Drinking alcoholic beverages and the use of illegal drugs is never permitted at any scout event or campout. If any adult's behavior or choices are not in keeping with the BSA youth protection and safety policies, that adult will be asked to leave the event or campout. If you should be asked to leave an event or campout, we ask that you respect the Adult Leadership and do so immediately and without incident.

## **Adult Training and Resources**

The Boy Scouts of America provides an outstanding handbook for Adults and an excellent training course to help adults understand their Adult role in scouting and the goals of Scouting. The adult manual is called the Scoutmasters handbook. The training is called Scout Leader New Essentials Basic Training – Outdoor Leader Essential and is offered in our area at different times during the year. If you are a parent that is planning on attending campouts on a regular basis we would request that you consider taking this training. You don't have to be a registered leader to take the training, but the Troop would hope that you would consider registering as an adult leader. The Outdoor Leader Training will help you better understand the BSA way of doing things during troop outings.

## Rationale

Boy scout camping activities center on the Scout Lead Patrol, where scouts learn teamwork, leadership and most camping skills. It is important that Parents not be in the middle of patrol activities such as site selection, tent pitching, meal preparation, and anything else where scouts get to practice decision-making. If you are a Parent on a campout, most likely your son will be there too and it is important that you separate yourself from your parenting role and see your scout as just one of the other scouts. This can be very difficult for a parent to do.

A key difference between Boy Scouting and Cub Scouting/Webelos is leadership. Look for the word "Leader" in the job title, and you will begin to appreciate the difference. The responsible person for a Cub/Webelos Den is the Adult Den Leader. The responsible person for a Boy Scout Patrol is the Scout serving as the Patrol Leader.

This isn't token leadership like a denner in cub scouting. A Patrol Leader has real authority and genuine responsibilities. Much of the success, safety, and happiness of the Patrol will depend directly on him.

Boy Scouting teaches leadership. Scouts learn leadership by taking Junior Leader Training (JLT) and practicing those skills (mistakes and all) not by watching adults lead.

So what do the adults do now that we have surrendered so much direct authority to the scouts? Adults serve in an indirect advisory role, only stepping in if a Scout's safety is in danger. No kidding, you should enjoy watching your scout take progressively more mature and significant responsibilities as he zooms towards adulthood.

The underlying principle is "never doing anything for a scout that he can do himself". We allow scouts to grow by practicing leadership and by learning from mistakes they make. While Scout skills are an important part of the BSA program, what ultimately matters when our Scouts become adults is not whether they can use a map & compass, but whether they can offer leadership to others in tough situations; and can live by a code that centers on honest, honorable, and ethical behavior.

Scouts need to learn to make decisions and to handle conflict between themselves without adult intervention. Again, unless there is a matter of immediate safety, adults won't interfere with any scout's decision-making process. Scouts are in a patrol so they can learn from their mistakes, the skills of leadership and teamwork without adult interference.

Being an adult leader or parent at a troop event or campout is a difficult role, especially when we are advising kids (even worse our own sons). Twice each year the BSA offers special training on how to do this, called New Leader Essentials. Our Troop expects Registered leaders to take this training and suggests to parents who are planning on attending campouts on a regular basis to take this training. The Scoutmaster or Committee Chair can assist you in locating training dates.

If a parent goes on a campout, you are an automatic member of our Adult Patrol "The Old Geezers and Spring Chickens". This patrol has several purposes – good food and comradery of course, but more important is providing an example that the Scout patrols can follow without our telling them what to do – we teach by example.

Quite simply, our troop policy requires adults to cook, eat, and tent separately from the Scouts (even parents and sons). We are safely nearby, but not smothering close. Your tent should be located away from your son's tent so he can feel free to associate with the rest of the troop and not feel like a parent is watching all the time. 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. Give your scout room to grow while you enjoy the view. Show a scout how to do something, but don't do it for him. Avoid the temptation to give unsolicited advice, and don't jump in just to prevent a mistake from happening (unless its serious). We all learn best from our mistakes. Allow your scout to solve his own issues with other scouts. If you feel there is a problem that needs to be addressed, your best bet is to seek out the Senior Patrol Leader or a Registered Troop Leader.

Your job as a parent is very hard, challenging and ultimately rewarding, because your scout will be a man the day after tomorrow.