



For a successful first year in our Troop A letter to this year's new Scout parents, From previous first years Scout parents

A scout is:
TRUSTWORTH
Y
LOYAL
HELPFUL
FRIENDLY
COURTEOUS
KIND
OBEDIENT
CHEERFUL
THRIFTY
BRAVE
CLEAN

1. First and foremost, get your scout involved. Bookmark the troop website: <http://www.troop728.com>, and go to it often, particularly the calendar. If possible, schedule your son to attend the first few campouts, and **definitely summer camp**. These early campouts are essential for the boys to advance on the Trail to First Class. The boys, who miss the early campouts and summer camp, invariably fall behind. In other words, try to make scouting a high priority particularly at the start of your son's membership in the Troop.
2. And get involved as a parent (and not just the dads)! The boys who do the best in scouting are the ones whose parents participate with them from the start. If possible, attend as many campouts as you can the first few years. This includes Summer Camp! Summer Camp is often the longest time a scout has spent away from his family, and your presence can really help your son get the most out of the camp and scouting experience.

If you want to participate in other ways, help with coaching and training the scouts as an Assistant Scout Master (ASM) in your patrol and at the troop meetings. Help with fund raising events, troop activities, or participate as a Committee Member.
3. Make a point to attend as many Troop meetings as possible. We always need parents to sign off boys on their Trail to First Class requirements, or to participate on a Board of Review. A Board of Review takes place each time a boy advances to a higher rank. All trained parents are qualified to serve on a Board of Review, and to sign off Trail to First Class requirements. Troop 728 has a hard and fast rule that no parent may sign off his/her own son on any requirement. Hence, the need for parents to attend troop meetings to be available for boys who need sign-offs. On some nights, we have multiple Boards of Review, and each involves at least three adults.
4. Each parent has expertise to offer the Troop. For instance, last year, one dad offered a cycling merit badge clinic that included leading a number of extended bike rides. Another dad who works directly with state legislators, arranged for the boys to perform the opening flag ceremony for the Oregon House of Representatives in the State Capitol in Salem.

5. Most parents are qualified to act as a merit badge counselor in a handful of merit badges. Chances are several badges directly relate to your profession, special training you've received, or lifelong hobbies. Check the list of badges, and sign up as a counselor. Then, if/when you feel so inclined, offer to hold a merit badge clinic for the boys.
6. Another opportunity could be working on the troop committee. There are frequently positions needing to be filled. Jump in and offer your services.
7. It is important to take BSA training to understand our program and goals for our scouts. There are two types of training offered; District/Council and troop training. District/Council training is mainly offered in the spring, while troop training is presented as part of our program. Please see the district website for a calendar of events, <http://www.cpcbsa.org/sunsettrail/>
8. Service projects: These are required for advancement, but they should also be done just for the sake of service. Service is a core value in scouting. In other words, a boy shouldn't stop doing service once he's met the requirements for the next rank. He should always serve, and participate in as many Troop service projects as he can.
9. Your son's focus at his first summer camp should be the Trail to First Class, and perhaps a merit badge or two. But at this point, the merit badges should be secondary in importance to rank advancement.
10. Email is one of the Troop's primary communication tools. Often important information comes out the day before or even the day of a Troop meeting or outing. While Troop 728 is a "boy run troop," it's a good idea to have a parent as well as the Boy Scout on email distribution, if you have separate email addresses.
11. Fundraisers offer the boys opportunities to earn money for their Scout Accounts and pay for some or all of their activities, as well as to build fellowship within their patrols and the troop. We have three fundraisers each year: A candy/beef stick sale in the early spring, a popcorn sale in the fall, and Christmas tree recycling in early January. Tree recycling is our largest fundraiser, and all Scouts and parents are expected to participate. The funds raised from this event are typically split between the troop and the scouts who participate. The other two fundraisers are optional activities, candy sales and popcorn sales. All the proceeds from these events go to the boys selling the items. Important note regarding the candy sale: Scouts are responsible for selling any candy they procure from the Troop, so plan accordingly.
12. You will hear that Scouting is an activity to "fit in" among other activities, such as participation in team sports. It is okay to take a "season off" for sports. Many of our Scouts participate in soccer, football, basketball, baseball, etc. Nevertheless, it is important for Scouts to attend Troop meetings whenever possible, even during times when other obligations may preclude participation in outings. If your Scout has a period when he will not be able to participate in most Troop activities, then it also is a nice courtesy to his fellow patrol members to let them know so they can plan outings, patrol leadership positions and

meetings accordingly. For Scouts who have seasons, due to sports or other obligations, that prevent full participation, it may be helpful to also pick a season or seasons when Scouting is the priority activity.

13. Communication is vital to the success of each Scout patrol and the entire Troop. When your Scout has a patrol leadership position, he must either attend the weekly patrol meeting or designate another patrol member attend in his place. Information critical to the smooth functioning of the entire troop is discussed and passed down to the patrols at the Patrol Leaders Council (PLC), held immediately before each Troop meeting. There is also a PLC monthly planning meeting held the Monday after each outing when there is no troop meeting scheduled.
14. Boy Scouts are expected to take responsibility for their own rank advancement and merit badge activities. The Troop creates opportunities to achieve rank and merit badge requirements, but it is up to your Scout to take advantage of them. That said, you should feel comfortable in giving your Scout guidance, and even a little prodding. Participation in campouts is vital for rank advancement, as a large portion of early rank advancement is related to camping skills.
15. Camping gear: If you and your Scout do not have camping gear, don't feel like you need to buy it all at once. More experienced Scouts and adults can provide plenty of solid advice on what you really need and the best sources. This is an area where it pays to wait for sales, and to pay close attention to details about equipment capabilities and quality. Inexpensive is not necessarily a bargain, and expensive is not necessarily high quality. You and your Scout absolutely will need foul weather clothing and boots to keep you warm and dry. It rains or snows on more campouts than not.
16. Judy Leppla maintains storage of used clothing. Please contact her if you would like to find something for your scout, or if you would like to donate clothing that your scout has out grown. Troop 728 also has a gear swap located on the main page of the website. This is a great place to look for or find experienced outdoor gear.
17. It is a good idea to plan rank advancement activities for your patrol (with advice from Scouts and other adults) in advance of each campout. This is very important for the First Class cooking requirements. Similarly, it helps your Scout to get off to a good start by planning one or two merit badges to earn early; some merit badges are not easily achieved in the first year, so this is another area to seek advice.
18. Have more questions? Here is a list of three parents who are willing to serve as informal mentors to new first year parents:

Tom Holt: holtco@comcast.net

Joe Engert: Joe.Engert@maxim-ic.com

David Steffens: scouterdave@steffens.us