

## What Adults Do on Scout 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!* And while we encourage parents to accompany the Scouts on campouts, you should be there because you enjoy the outdoors, not because you need to be there as a parent. Similarly, the Scouts are there to camp with their patrol; **not** with their parents and family members. The way the boys will learn is through the things they do as patrol.

### Some Things to Think About

Here is a summary of our troop (and BSA) policies, followed by the reasoning for the policies. There are exceptions and this may vary slightly by outing depending on the event or activity, but these are the core policies in effect on most outings.

**Scout Tenting & Meals**—Scouts tent with their patrol and with other Scouts. Patrols plan their own menus, and cook and eat together as a team. In general, adults do not eat or tent with a boy patrol.

**Adult Tenting & Meals**—Adults tent with the adult “patrol” in a separate site or part of the site separated from the Scouts. The Camp Master will typically plan the adult menu, and the adults will cook and eat together as a group.

**Adult/Boy Tenting**—BSA youth protection policies forbid an adult and a boy sharing the same tent. Youth protection policies are not an issue when it comes to a father and son tenting together, but as a troop we discourage it. Boys tent with boys and adults with adults.

**Smoking/Drinking**—Adults may not drink alcoholic beverages during a Scout activity. Adults who must smoke or chew must do so discretely out of sight of the Scouts. Drivers may not smoke while Scouts are in the car.

**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 (one of the Scoutmasters) first. One of the most difficult things you will have to do is to stand back, but remember that we are trying to teach independence, youth leadership, and association with adults other than yourself. If you are not sure what the boundaries are then ask – we have all been through it.

**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**—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 - in fact if you plan to register as a committee member or Assistant Scoutmaster and help us out on a regular basis we will insist you take this Basic Training.

## 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.

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 adult *Den Leader*. The *responsible person* for a Boy Scout patrol is the boy *Patrol Leader*.

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

*Boy Scouting teaches leadership*. And boys learn leadership by practicing it, **not** by watching adults lead.

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 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.

Boys need to learn to make decisions without adult intervention (except when it's a matter of immediate safety of course). Boys are in a patrol so they can learn leadership and teamwork without adult interference. Being an adult advisor is a difficult role, especially when we are advising kids (even worse, our own sons).

Quite simply, and it does vary from camp to camp depending on the outing, but in our troop adults cook, eat, and tent separately from the Scouts (even dads & sons). We are safely nearby, but not smotheringly close. Sure, go ahead and visit with the Scouts (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 them 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 advice, and don't jump in just to prevent a mistake from happening (unless it's serious). We all learn best from our mistakes.