

TROOP PROGRAM FEATURES

2006–2007

YEARLY PROGRAM PLANNING

A successful troop meeting begins with advance planning. In recent research, the Boy Scouts of America determined that inadequately planned and executed troop meetings were the number one cause of boys leaving Scouting.

Troop meetings should focus on a monthly program feature, be fast-moving, and start and end on time. The program feature should be interwoven with the program at all experience levels: the new-Scout patrol, experienced patrols, and the Venture patrol.

Planning a troop program on an annual and a monthly basis is a new task for many leaders. Good planning and execution depend on (1) a Scoutmaster who understands the process, (2) trained youth leaders who can plan meetings and successfully execute them, (3) sufficient personnel in the form of assistant Scoutmasters and troop committee members, and (4) parents who are knowledgeable and informed.

Your first step in planning is to utilize the resources available to set goals for the troop. The next step is to train your youth leaders in the planning process. Then give them the responsibility and authority to plan and implement the troop program. The final step is to get your troop committee and parents to “buy in” to support this “Scout-planned” program.

The *Troop Program Planning* video is available to assist you and your Scouts in planning a super program. The video, along with the program planning in chapter 8 of the *Scoutmaster Handbook*, will guide you through the basics of planning, from doing your homework to securing parental support for your program. The monthly troop program features found in *Scouting* magazine are the other principal resources needed to run the program planning workshop.

The *Troop Program Planning* video has three parts. Part I is primarily for Scoutmaster use and will take you through “doing your homework.” This involves gathering information on district and council support, setting troop goals, developing a troop calendar, and training your senior patrol leader to run the annual troop program planning conference.

Part II of the video is a model for a troop program planning conference, to be previewed by you and your senior patrol leader and then shown to members of the troop’s patrol leaders’ council. It sets the stage for your troop’s actual planning session. (The *Scoutmaster Handbook* contains a detailed agenda for the troop planning conference, along with much of the support information you will need to make it effective.)



Part III of the video deals with *monthly* program planning and features a model of the planning portion of a patrol leaders’ council meeting. You and your senior patrol leader will preview this prior to the troop planning conference; you will then use it as the basis for a session at the conference devoted to planning the next month’s troop program in detail.

In addition, enhance the troop meeting by using games, Scoutmaster’s Minutes, ceremonies, and other support materials from *Troop Program Resources*, No. 33588.

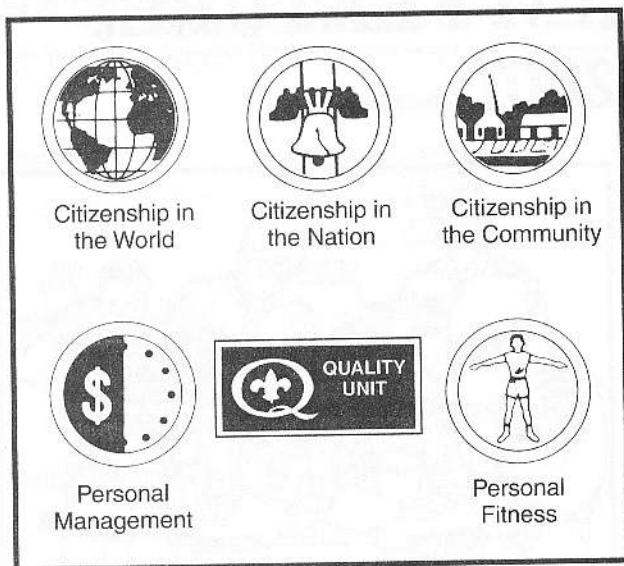
THE ANNUAL PLANNING PROCESS

The Scouting program year begins in September, so you should start troop planning during the summer. There are five basic steps in the annual process.

1. DO YOUR HOMEWORK.
2. GET PATROL INPUT.
3. CONDUCT THE ANNUAL TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING CONFERENCE.
4. OBTAIN TROOP COMMITTEE SUPPORT.
5. INFORM EVERYONE.

STEP 1: DO YOUR HOMEWORK

As Scoutmaster, you serve as the “advance” person. You check out and pull together certain things before your troop’s annual planning conference. Neither difficult nor time-consuming, the tasks make a lot of sense because they pay off in a smoother, more effective conference, and they result in a better annual plan.



1. Gather district, council, community, and chartered organization dates for events that will affect the troop.

Begin by picking up a calendar of key school dates from the local school. Check with the local chamber of commerce for dates of community activities. Don't forget to obtain dates of key chartered organization activities. Personal dates, such as anniversaries or birthdays, also may affect troop activities, so be sure to include those.

During the summer, be sure to attend the annual council or district program planning conference. This is where you will be able to get the council and district calendar, as well as information on activities, training courses, summer camp, etc.

Now put all these dates on one calendar to share with the troop committee and for use at the unit program planning conference.

2. Review the resources needed to plan the annual program.

Pull together your Scouting library. The items needed to plan your troop program include: *Troop Program Planning* video, No. AV-02V010; *Troop Program Features—Volume I*, No. 33110A; *Volume II*, No. 33111; *Volume III*, No. 33112; issues of *Boys' Life* and *Scouting* magazines; program feature supplements from *Scouting* magazine; the *Scoutmaster Handbook*, No. 33009C; the *Boy Scout Handbook*, No. 33105; *Patrol Leader Handbook*, No. 32502A; *Senior Patrol Leader Handbook*, No. 32501A; *Troop Program Resources*, No. 33588A; and *Varsity Team Program Features—Volume I*, No. 34837; *Volume II*, No. 34838A; and *Volume III*, No. 34839.

3. Review the advancement status of each Scout.

Look carefully for basic skills needed by your Scouts and also for key merit badges that should be introduced through the troop program.

4. List some goals for the troop.

Take a look at successful areas from last year's program, like the number of Scouts who made First Class or the super Good Turn you did for your chartered organization. You probably will want to continue those things, but also consider some other challenges to address during the coming year. The list could get lengthy, so you may have to prioritize your choices, selecting only a few challenges for this year. After all, there is always next year. Here are some areas to consider:

- National Quality Unit Award
- National Camping Award
- Service project or Good Turn
- Summer camp
- Special weekend events
- Troop membership growth
- Troop equipment
- Advancement

5. Review program features available to the troop.

Using the Troop Planning Work Sheet, list suggestions for a program feature for each month of the coming year. Be sure to keep in mind the troop goals and advancement status of your Scouts. Share the list of program features with the senior patrol leader prior to presenting them to the patrol leaders' council. (Hint: List your program feature suggestions in pencil to emphasize that input is also expected from the senior patrol leader.)

6. Meet with the troop committee to review the calendar and potential troop goals.

Share the calendar with the committee to ensure you haven't missed any important dates. Many committee members will be involved in troop activities, so they will want you to note any conflicts in their personal calendars.

Review the goals you have set for the troop. Now is the time the troop committee "buys in" to its role in making your troop successful. There will be a lot of discussion and some compromise, but the result will be a set of troop goals to which everyone feels committed.

Remember, these goals will not be finalized until after the youth leaders have also "bought in" at their annual planning conference.

7. Meet with your senior patrol leader to plan the next steps leading to the annual troop program planning conference.

This can be time-consuming, and you may need more than one session. If so, devote the second meeting with the senior patrol leader to the sole task of mapping out the agenda for the troop planning conference.

You and the senior patrol leader should cover the following items at your meeting:

- ___ Review the *Troop Program Planning* video—parts II and III).

- ___ Review steps to planning an annual troop program.
- ___ Review the calendar for any missing items.
- ___ Discuss troop goals. Allow the senior patrol leader to have input; the only way to achieve the troop's objectives will be with everyone's help.
- ___ Review resources needed to plan the troop program.
- ___ Discuss the program features suggested for the coming year.
- ___ Discuss what major events and activities the troop might do during the coming year.
- ___ Record these recommendations on the Troop Planning Work Sheet for presentation to the patrol leaders' council.
- ___ Discuss the presentation of this information at the patrol leaders' council meeting and the role of patrol leaders in the planning process.
- ___ Set a date for the annual troop program planning conference.
- ___ Review the agenda and preparation needed to conduct the conference.

STEP 2: GET PATROL INPUT

This second step in the annual planning process is where the senior patrol leader takes charge. At the next patrol leaders' council meeting, the senior patrol leader introduces the suggested annual troop plan. The patrol leaders need to understand that this is only a *proposed* program. The final program will be developed and voted on at the annual troop program planning conference.

Each patrol leader is asked to review this plan with his patrol members at the next troop meeting. The patrol leader should seek ideas from his patrol on what proposed programs they like or dislike and what additional programs they might be interested in.

The senior patrol leader then announces the date of the planning conference. He should briefly review the agenda and make assignments for physical arrangements, meals, etc.



STEP 3: CONDUCT THE ANNUAL PROGRAM PLANNING CONFERENCE

This is where your troop program comes alive. The success of this conference began when you prepared your senior patrol leader. Be alert throughout the conference to help out the senior patrol leader. Don't wait for him to fail, but be careful not to take over for him. Careful, nonintrusive coaching will help your senior patrol leader build confidence. Share your leadership with him.

Who attends the conference? The troop's annual planning conference is attended by the Scoutmaster, assistant Scoutmaster for the new-Scout patrol, assistant Scoutmaster for the Venture patrol, senior patrol leader, assistant senior patrol leader, patrol leaders, and troop guide.

Physical arrangements. Careful planning should ensure that this planning conference is a first-class experience for your youth leaders. Pick a location that would be special to your Scouts, possibly one offering opportunities for other activities, such as swimming, boating, etc. You can make it a weekend experience, although the conference is easily completed in a day.

Whichever you do, don't involve youth leaders in a lot of housekeeping chores that distract them from the primary purpose of planning the troop program. Consider using other troop adults to cook and clean up; let your patrol leaders' council concentrate on the task at hand.

Make sure the facilities are suited for a conference. Is ventilation good? Is there sufficient lighting? Electricity for a TV monitor and VCR? Are the chairs comfortable? Are there tables to work on? Is there a way to hang calendars on the wall? Use the checklist on page 7 to make sure your facilities will work.

Setting up the conference facility should have been previously assigned to members of the patrol leaders' council. A checkup by the senior patrol leader prior to the conference ensures that nothing is forgotten.

Follow the agenda. When directing a session, your senior patrol leader should be aware that it's easy to get sidetracked. If the group starts to drift away from the agenda, a gentle nudge from you may be in order to put them back on course.

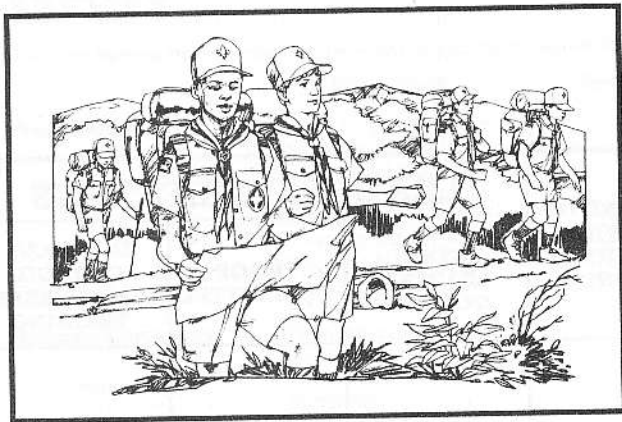
Remember the conference ground rules:

1. The senior patrol leader presides.
2. Each event and program is voted on.
3. The majority rules.



TROOP PLANNING

| MONTH | PROGRAM FEATURES | | | TROOP OUTDOOR/ CAMPING ACTIVITY | DISTRICT/ COUNCIL ACTIVITY | |
|-------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|
| | NEW-SCOUT PATROL | EXPERIENCED PATROLS | VENTURE PATROL | | | |
| SEPT. | | | | | | |
| OCT. | | | | | | |
| NOV. | | | | | | |
| DEC. | | | | | | |
| JAN. | | | | | | |
| FEB. | | | | | | |
| MAR. | | | | | | |
| APR. | | | | | | |
| MAY | | | | | | |
| JUNE | | | | | | |
| JULY | | | | | | |
| AUG. | | | | | | |



ANNUAL TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING CONFERENCE AGENDA

(Note: No time limits have been placed on the agenda, but working sessions should last no longer than 45 minutes without a break.)

I. OPENING ACTIVITY SCOUTMASTER

Conduct All Aboard or other team-building activity. This helps foster a spirit of working together to solve a common problem.

II. REVIEW CONFERENCE GROUND RULES

SENIOR PATROL LEADER

- A. Write down the conference objectives:
1. To decide on troop goals for the coming year
 2. To develop a program that represents ideas from the entire troop
- B. Review ground rules:
1. The senior patrol leader presides.
 2. Each event and program will be voted on.
 3. The majority rules.

III. SHOW TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING VIDEO, PART II

IV. DEVELOP TROOP GOALS SCOUTMASTER

- A. The Scoutmaster leads a discussion on goals for the coming year. These could deal with such topics as advancement, service, or troop money earning. (These are the same goals discussed earlier with the troop committee and senior patrol leader.)
- B. The patrol leaders' council votes to approve the goals.

V. CONSIDER MAJOR EVENTS

SENIOR PATROL LEADER

- A. Review dates for items such as these:
1. Scouting shows
 2. Camporees
 3. Summer camp
 4. Special troop events
 5. Good Turn
 6. Patrol suggestions for special activities

- B. Vote on events. (Delete from the calendar any activities the troop will not participate in.)
- C. Insert events on the Troop Planning Work Sheet.
- D. Backdate necessary preparation time for each event.

VI. GAME BREAK

VII. DISCUSS PATROL SUGGESTIONS FOR PROGRAM FEATURES

- A. Discuss the program features suggested for the coming year.
- B. Will they meet the goals of the troop?
- C. What are the advancement opportunities?
- D. Decide where program features best fit into the calendar.
- E. Vote on the final list of program features.
- F. Insert the approved features into the Troop Planning Work Sheet.

VIII. LUNCH OR GAME BREAK

IX. SCHEDULE SPECIAL TROOP ACTIVITIES

- A. Decide on a schedule for the following:
1. Board of review
 2. Courts of honor
 3. Recruitment night(s)
 4. Webelos Scout graduation
- B. Add these dates to the Troop Planning Work Sheet.

X. FINALIZE THE TROOP PLANNING WORK SHEET

Put the Troop Planning Work Sheet into final form for presentation to the troop committee.

XI. GAME BREAK

XII. MONTHLY PROGRAM PLANNING

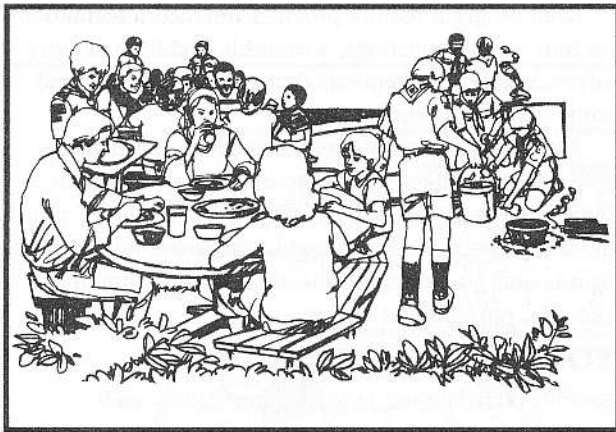
- A. Show part III of the *Troop Program Planning* video.
- B. Plan next month's program.

XIII. SCOUTMASTER'S MINUTE

ANNUAL TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING CONFERENCE CHECKLIST

Literature

- Troop Program Features, Volume I*, No. 33110A
- Troop Program Features, Volume II*, No. 33111
- Troop Program Features, Volume III*, No. 33112
- Troop Program Resources*, No. 33588A
- Scoutmaster Handbook*, No. 33009C
- Boy Scout Handbook*, No. 33105
- Patrol Leader Handbook*, No. 32502A
- Senior Patrol Leader Handbook*, No. 32501A
- Varsity Team Program Features, Volume I*, No. 34837
- Varsity Team Program Features, Volume II*, No. 34838
- Varsity Team Program Features, Volume III*, No. 34839



- Program features from *Scouting* magazine
- Scouting* magazines
- Boys' Life* magazines
- Troop Planning Work Sheet
- District/council calendar
- School calendar
- Chartered organization calendar
- Community calendar
- Information on council and district events
- Complete copy of next month's program feature, for the final part of the workshop (one per participant)
- Troop Resource Surveys completed by parents and troop leadership
- Troop/Team Record Book, No. 34508A
- Troop Advancement Chart, No. 34506A

Program Supplies

- All Aboard activity (supplies needed)
- Game (supplies needed)
- Flip-chart stand and pad(s)
- Twelve large calendar pages
- Felt-tip markers
- Writing pads for participants
- Pens or pencils
- Thumbtacks
- Masking tape
- VCR and monitor
- Extension cord

Food/Refreshments

- Refreshments for morning and afternoon breaks
- Additional food (lunch, etc.)

Conference Facility Setup

- Tables set in horseshoe or square, depending on number of people
- VCR and monitor located for easy viewing
- Flip-chart stand placed for easy viewing and use
- Calendar pages hung on wall

- Troop Planning Work Sheet hung at front center of room
- Table at front of room for resource material

Conference Assignments

- _____ Develop menus and purchase food.
- _____ Prepare food and clean up.
- _____ Gather supplies (see checklist).
- _____ Set up conference facility.
- _____ Prepare large blank calendars with months, days, and known dates.
- _____ Prepare flip chart with conference objectives and ground rules.
- _____ Prepare Troop Planning Work Sheet with correct months.

STEP 4: OBTAIN TROOP COMMITTEE SUPPORT

At the completion of the annual troop program planning conference, you and your senior patrol leader should prepare a clean draft of the Troop Planning Work Sheet for presentation to the troop committee. Arrange with the committee chair for this important topic to be placed on the meeting agenda. Then you and the senior patrol leader present the troop's annual program to the committee.

Try to anticipate questions and prepare your senior patrol leader to answer them. (Remember, it's a Scout-planned program.) The critical question the committee must resolve is: Does the troop have the resources to carry out this program? If not, can the resources be obtained, and are the troop members willing to do their share in obtaining these resources?

There may be need for compromise. In those cases, the senior patrol leader should present the options to the patrol leaders' council for its approval.

The finished product from these discussions will be a troop program that is accepted by everyone and has the necessary support to make it work.

STEP 5: INFORM EVERYONE

Now that you have a great troop program planned, don't keep it a secret, share it with everyone.

The best way to do it is at a parents' night program. Have some good fun and fellowship, and then share the troop's plan for the year. Let the Scouts announce the plan, but let the troop committee talk about what kinds of help will be needed from parents to make the program work.

This is the final phase of the buy-in talked about earlier. Here is where you get those extra hands for the garage sale, transportation for outings, and maybe even a consultant for Venturing.