

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE TROOP MEETINGS

1. Troop meetings must have **variety, action, and purpose**.

a. Variety. Don't get in the same old rut. Help the senior patrol leader mix in surprises now and then—a special visitor, for example, a fresh activity, or perhaps a chance for the troop to make homemade ice cream. Keep a file of resources and ideas that can add spice to meetings.

b. Action. Boys spend much of their day sitting in school. Get them out of their chairs at troop meetings. Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class Scouts should be involved in learning basic Scout skills. Keep in mind that all Scouts, regardless of their age or experience level, should be active participants, not just observers.

c. Purpose. Troop meetings should be built around a purpose; for example, helping Scouts prepare for an upcoming activity or event.

2. Many meetings can and should take place outdoors.

3. The patrol that was assigned the previous week to be this week's service patrol should arrive early enough to prepare the room or outdoor area for the troop meeting. At the end of the meeting it is the service patrol's responsibility to put everything away and return the meeting space to its original condition.

4. The senior patrol leader is in charge of every troop meeting. Help him plan ahead, coach him along the way, but stay in the background and let him be the leader.

5. Encourage the senior patrol leader to start and end meetings on time. Ninety minutes is an ideal maximum.

6. You and the junior leaders can use the Scout sign any time the troop must come to order, especially when shifting from one part of a meeting to another. Keep it effective by using it sparingly.

7. Don't wear out activities the Scouts enjoy. If the troop has a favorite game, keep things lively by alternating it with other games now and then rather than relying on the same one every week.

8. During the planning stages of skills instruction, remind instructors that demonstrations are most persuasive when they *show* rather than simply *tell*. If a troop instructor is going to explain how to load and carry a backpack, he should bring the gear and the pack to the meeting.

9. Hands-on experience is an especially effective method of teaching. Coach instructors on the importance of involving Scouts as participants in skills instruction, not simply observers. Plan ahead. Will a patrol need a plant identification book for nature study? Will each Scout need a length of rope to learn a new knot? Instructors should get in the habit of gathering their materials ahead of time.

10. Coach junior leaders to keep meetings moving at a fast pace. If an activity or project is not working well, suggest that the boy leaders end it and move on to the next item of the meeting plan.

11. Keep the length of the Scoutmaster's Minute to not much more than just that—a minute. Just as you ask junior leaders to plan well for efficient meetings, give some thought ahead of time as to how you will manage the closing of the meeting.

12. End the meeting on time. Leave the boys wanting more and they will be eager to return the next week.

13. Unless they have been invited to take part in a specific part of a meeting, visitors should be observers only. Don't allow them to disrupt the flow of events.

14. The recognition and encouragement Scouts receive from their Scoutmaster is a crucial part of their development. At every meeting, find something positive to praise about each patrol—well-planned presentations, proper uniforming, a good opening ceremony, or even something as simple as arriving on time.

15. Support junior leaders in a positive manner during meetings. If you feel the need to correct or criticize, save your thoughts until after the meeting and then find a productive way of teaching boy leaders how to be more effective.