



Session Three

Membership

Time Allowed

20 minutes

Teaching Objectives

- Discuss the ways in which recruiting new members is good for boys and good for Scout troops.
 - Encourage Scoutmasters to make a regular effort to bring new boys into the troop.
 - Stress the importance of retaining a troop's current membership.
 - Explore various ways of recruiting new members.
 - Discuss membership recruitment as an important means of ensuring diversity within the Scouting program.
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Materials Needed

- *The Scoutmaster Handbook*, No. 33009A
 - *Webelos-to Scout Transition* brochure, No. 18-086
 - *Scoutmaster's Guide to Working With Scouts With Disabilities*, No. 33056B (one copy per patrol)
 - *Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training* video, No. AV02V015
 - PowerPoint slides or overheads from CD, if desired
 - Flipchart or other means of writing discussion notes
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Recommended Facility Layout

Session meeting area. Each participant should have a comfortable place to sit, take notes, and organize written materials. That setting most often consists of tables, each accommodating six to eight participants forming a patrol, and enough chairs for all participants.

Delivery Method

- Instructor-led discussion supported by a video
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Presentation Procedure

Begin this presentation by asking participants to share a few of the reasons they joined Scouting when they were boys and/or why they have decided to become involved as adult leaders of a Scout troop. Write their answers on a flipchart, then use the comments to steer the group into the following discussion of membership and recruiting.

Who Can Join?

In order to join a Scout troop a boy must have graduated from the fifth grade or be 11 years old, or he may join after he has earned the Arrow of Light Award as a Webelos Scout.

Why Recruit Boys to Become Scouts?

There are two important reasons to bring new boys into a troop:

- For the good of the boys.
- For the good of the troop.

FOR THE GOOD OF BOYS

Boys join Boy Scouting for the fun, for the adventure of camping and hiking, to learn skills for achievement, and to make friends. Parents encourage their sons to join for the same reasons, but they also look forward to the personal development Scouting offers boys—leadership opportunities, ethical decision-making, self-confidence, self-respect, and self-discipline.

Of course, the possibilities offered by the Boy Scouts of America can have no impact unless a youth joins a Scouting unit. Scoutmasters and assistant Scoutmasters must accept the challenge of continually bringing new boys into their troops.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE TROOP

When new boys join your troop, there are a variety of benefits:

- They bring fresh enthusiasm and energy.
- They provide increased teaching and leadership opportunities for current members.
- They enable a troop to maximize troop opportunities with multiple patrols and leadership positions.
- They ensure the existence of at least one new-Scout patrol and, in time, experienced Scouts to form regular patrols.

- They bring with them parents, guardians, and other adults who can join in supporting unit Scouting events and may serve in adult leadership positions—for example, troop leaders, committee members, or merit badge counselors.
- Recruitment is an important means of encouraging diversity (racial, cultural, socioeconomic, youth with special needs) in a troop.

Instructors' Note

This is a good time to point out that Scouting is open to all youth. As they shape troop programs to accommodate Scouts with various challenges, Scoutmasters will find support and guidance at roundtable meetings, from experienced Scout leaders, and from BSA professionals. Among the pieces of helpful literature available to troop leaders is Scoutmaster's Guide to Working With Scouts With Disabilities.

“Before we can put the values of Scouting into boys, we must put the boys into Scouting.”

—*The Scoutmaster Handbook*,
Chapter 12, “Membership”

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Retaining Current Members

Equal in importance to recruiting new members for a troop is retaining those boys who are already Scouts. Boys join because of the promise of Scouting offered in the opening paragraphs of *The Boy Scout Handbook*. Scouts will stay in a troop that delivers on that promise.

- Declining troop membership is a warning that a troop may not be delivering the promise of Scouting.
- If troop membership is declining, adult leaders need to figure out why. The first questions to ask are these: Is there a well-planned program with lots of camping and adventure developed with the input of the Scouts themselves? Is this a boy-led troop? Is the patrol method used all of the time? Are the eight methods of Scouting being used to the fullest advantage?

Bringing Webelos Scouts Into a Troop

The chartered organization sponsoring a Boy Scout troop may also serve younger boys by sponsoring a Cub Scout pack. The Webelos den of such a pack allows Cub Scouts who are at least 10 years of age to lay the foundation for their transition into Boy Scouting. (A troop not connected to a Cub Scout pack may build a similar relationship with

another pack. Your unit commissioner or district executive can assist you in contacting appropriate Cub leaders.)

Many troops assign an assistant Scoutmaster to develop a relationship with the Cubmaster and Webelos den leader, building enthusiasm among boys and their parents for the exciting challenges of Boy Scouting that await. When a Webelos den graduates into the troop, the assistant Scoutmaster can continue to work with the boys as they form into a new Scout patrol. Likewise, adults associated with a Webelos den may move into roles of troop leadership as their den members become Boy Scouts.

The passage from pack to troop should be smooth with no time lost between the two. The graduation clearly signifies a boy's transition to a new level of Scouting and may include the presentation of a certificate and a *Boy Scout Handbook*. This *crossover ceremony* may be conducted at the pack's annual blue and gold banquet.

Pack and Troop Relations

Building strong ties to one or more Cub Scout packs is an important way of making the Boy Scout program available and attractive to Webelos Scouts. Among the ways to make that happen are to work with adult Webelos leaders to:

- Conduct orientations for Webelos Scouts and their parents to let them know the ways in which their Webelos activities are preparing them for the adventures and opportunities to be found in a Boy Scout troop. Distribute the troop calendar. Show troop activities through photos, slides, or video. Include camping, service projects, courts of honor, etc.
- Assist with Webelos parent-son campouts designed to support Webelos working on the Scout Outdoorsman activity badge.
- Conduct a Webelos den-Scout troop campout. An overnight event will allow older Scouts to help Webelos establish and conduct a camp, and will give Webelos a taste of the great Boy Scout adventures that lie ahead for them.
- Conduct informative new-Scout conferences for Webelos Scouts a month or two before they join the troop. Conferences can help boys set goals for themselves in Scouting and should involve each boy's parents or guardian.

Distribute copies of the Webelos-to-Scout Transition brochure. It highlights the points that have been made about easing the move boys make from a Webelos den into a Boy Scout troop, and provides useful information for Scoutmasters.

Recruiting Boys Not Currently in Scouting

In addition to Webelos Scouts making the transition into a troop, the following persons can be influential in bringing boys into Scouting:

- Parents
- Adult troop leaders
- Boys themselves

Parents

Instructors' Note

Two instructors or an instructor and a participant can present the following role-play to illustrate both the importance of Scouting to parents and a way for a Scoutmaster to present the case for the sons of parents to join the BSA. The roles are that of a Scoutmaster (to be played by an instructor) and a parent (to be played by a second instructor or by a participant).

Scoutmaster (to the audience): "How can Scoutmasters sell Scouting to the parents of potential members? By sharing with them not only the excitement of Scouting, but also the values of the organization and its leadership training."

Scoutmaster (to parent): "We'd really like your son to join our troop. Here's a copy of the troop program for the coming year. You can see there are plenty of exciting activities and lots of opportunities to learn new skills."

Parent: "Well, he's got lots of activities to choose from—sports, clubs, school groups."

Scoutmaster: "That's true, but Scouting offers something more. The making of ethical choices and hands-on leadership are a part of everything we do."

Parent: "What can you tell me about that?"

Scoutmaster: "A recent scientific study by Louis Harris & Associates asked the question, 'What is it about BSA programs that leads to such positive outcomes?' Can I read you a couple of the findings?"

Parent: "Sure."

Scoutmaster: "Here's what the study found:

- Cub Scouting meets or exceeds the expectations of parents on a variety of factors, including teaching ethical and moral values and parent/son togetherness.
- Boy Scouts agree that being a Scout has increased their self-confidence and taught them skills that they could not get elsewhere.
- Venturers attribute higher self-esteem and 'readiness for the future' to their experiences in the program.¹

Parent: "That sounds pretty good. I'll encourage my son to come to a troop meeting and see how he likes it."

Scoutmaster: "You're welcome to come and observe, if you'd like. There are plenty of great opportunities for adults to help out with the Scouting program, too."

(End role-play.)

Adult Troop Leaders Recruiting Boys

Experienced Scoutmasters know that adult leaders recruiting boys is a very effective means of bringing new members into troops. That recruitment can occur through informational presentations in schools, churches, service clubs, etc. Be sure to include your chartered organization.

Many school administrators understand the supplemental education values of Scouting. You may work with your district to arrange to visit area schools to tell eligible boys about your troop's program. Consider bringing an older Scout with you to appeal on a boy-to-boy level, or perhaps consider setting up a model campsite on a school playground.

Pursue other avenues, too, for getting out the word about Scouting. Distributing copies of a troop's calendar of upcoming program events can generate plenty of excitement. One Scoutmaster who placed a poster-sized copy of the troop's calendar in a school cafeteria had a tremendous response from the boys who saw it there. (Include on the calendar the regular meeting times and location of troop meetings and a phone number that interested persons can use to get more information.)

¹From "A Year in the Life of a Cub Scout ... Boy Scout ... Venturer; Strengthening Youth, Families, and Neighborhoods," a National Program Outcomes Study conducted by Louis Harris & Associates.

Always make early contact with the officials of the schools, churches, and organizations you wish to visit. Most are open to informational presentations by Scout leaders if you are willing to respect their scheduling concerns and time restraints.

Boy Scouts Recruiting Other Boys

Boys often join because another Scout asks them to join. The Scout is asking a friend of his or is asking a boy down the street just turning 11 years old and is just eligible to join. What makes the sale from one boy to another is talking about the fun and camping adventures available in their troop. Again, the annual calendar is a valuable tool.

Boy-to-Boy Recruiting

Boy-to-boy recruiting is a long-standing proven technique. Scouts like to have their friends enjoy adventurous activities with them, and being together in a Scout troop is a sure way to make that happen. Many troops motivate Scouts to recruit other boys by offering incentives to the recruiters—camping gear, T-shirts, patrol awards, or other tokens of thanks. The greatest motivation, though, will be for boys to be so excited about Scouting that those around them will want to take part, too.

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Video No. 9—Growing the Troop

Summary

- Scoutmasters need to understand that recruiting is important both for the benefits Scouting can offer a boy and for the benefits new members can offer a troop.
- Scoutmasters must consciously work at bringing in new boys every year.
- Retaining a troop's current members is every bit as important as recruiting new members.
- Recruitment is a means of encouraging diversity in troop membership.
- A valuable resource for information about membership and recruiting is *The Scoutmaster Handbook*, Chapter 12, "Membership."

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The biggest disservice we can do is fail to give a boy an opportunity to join the BSA. It's up to him whether he wants to join, but we owe him the invitation to take advantage of all that Scouting has to offer.