



Session One

Patrol Leaders' Council

Time Allowed

20 minutes

Teaching Objectives

- Understand the purpose for and importance of the patrol leaders' council.
- Explore ways in which a Scoutmaster can support and guide the patrol leaders' council as it plans the troop's program and activities.
- See how the patrol leaders' council and the Scoutmaster can work together when Scout events or meetings do not go well.
- Review the key points of Session One.

Materials Needed

- *Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training* video, No. AV02V015
- Equipment for video presentation
- PowerPoint slides or overheads from CD, if desired
- Wall posters

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.

- Instructor-led discussion illustrated by several video clips

Presentation Procedure

This is the last presentation of this first session of Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training. In pulling together the various threads that have been presented so far, it seems appropriate to make the patrol leaders' council the subject of this discussion, for it is the vehicle through which a Scoutmaster can ensure that a troop is, in fact, boy-run and uses the patrol method.

Considering what you know already about how a troop is structured and how it offers opportunities for boys to determine what will happen and then lead those activities, several points should be clear:

- Planning is critical to the success of a troop and its program. We have already seen several examples of planning including the Scoutmaster meeting with the senior patrol leader days before a meeting and a subsequent discussion with the senior patrol leader as a troop meeting is beginning.
- The commitment of the boys to the troop and the program is also critical. One way to ensure that commitment is to give them the responsibility for doing the planning.
- Meetings of the patrol leaders' council are opportunities for longer-range planning. The boy leaders of the troop can determine the activities of a troop for weeks and months to come, and they can determine who will make them happen and how.

The Patrol Leaders' Council

The patrol leaders' council allows the senior patrol leader, patrol leaders, and troop guides to plan the troop's program for the coming month and to assess the progress of the current month's program. It is also an opportunity for patrol leaders to present the ideas and concerns of patrol members to the troop's leadership. The senior patrol leader conducts the meeting with the guidance and support of the Scoutmaster. Members of the patrol leaders' council recognize that their decisions are subject to final approval by the Scoutmaster and the troop committee.

Let's look in on a patrol leaders' council meeting that's already in session. This meeting takes place in the middle of a month. The patrol leaders' council is refining plans for an upcoming meeting and the month's big event, and is

Video No. 5—Patrol Leaders' Council

The video opens midway through the meeting. The senior patrol leader finishes the congratulations, says that the previous bullet points are all covered, and continues on to the heart of the meeting.

- The senior patrol leader announces that the theme for the following month (perhaps camping).
- The patrol leaders' council reviews in detail the meetings of the upcoming month and determines which patrol will be responsible for each section. (Spend considerable time on the first week, less on succeeding weeks.)
- The patrol leaders' council reviews the current month's big event, walking through the schedule and ensuring that everything is being prepared (transportation, Scout participation, patrol assignments, food, equipment, transportation, foul-weather plans, etc.).
- The senior patrol leader reviews the rest of the meetings for the current month.
- The Scoutmaster closes the meeting with praise and support of the troop's leadership for a job well done.

DISCUSSION OF VIDEO NO. 5

Lead participants in a discussion of what they have just seen, using their questions and observations to reinforce the importance of giving boy leaders the tools they need and the supportive guidance to plan and conduct their own meetings. Among questions that may be helpful in this discussion are these:

- What is the role is the Scoutmaster playing?
- What is the role of the senior patrol leader?
- How is the Scoutmaster relating to the senior patrol leader?
- What expectations does the Scoutmaster have of the youth leaders of the troop? In what ways will the meeting be a success?

Conclude by turning the discussion toward the fact that not every Scouting event, no matter how well planned, will be a success. What should a Scoutmaster do then? The next video explores just such a situation.

Video No. 6—Activity Review

The setting is a patrol leaders' council meeting after a service project that didn't go well. The patrol leaders' council members are discouraged. What should a Scoutmaster do when the best-laid plans fall through?

The Scoutmaster listens to the boys and stays in a supportive, coaching role. He does not assign blame, but rather helps the senior patrol leader lead other council members to examine the situation, figure out what went wrong, and seek out solutions. Scouts have much to learn from experiences that don't go as expected. Dealing with adversity is an important aspect of BSA leadership training.

DISCUSSION OF VIDEO NO. 6

Lead participants in a discussion of what they have just seen, using their questions and observations to reinforce the challenges that can face a patrol leaders' council and the ways in which Scoutmasters can help the patrol leaders' council overcome adversity, learn from disappointment, and become better leaders. Among questions that may be helpful in this discussion are these:

- What is the role is the Scoutmaster playing?
- What is the role of the senior patrol leader?
- How is the Scoutmaster relating to the senior patrol leader?
- What expectations does the Scoutmaster have of the youth leaders of the troop? In what ways could the meeting be a success?

Of course, no meeting will be perfect. Even with careful adherence to the troop meeting plan, there will be portions of some meetings that are not very successful.

The important thing to keep in mind, though, is that Scouts who are given the responsibility, resources, and support to plan and run their own troop meetings are learning extremely important lessons in leadership. Their growing confidence and advancing leadership abilities are a direct result of the efforts of their Scoutmaster to provide support and guidance and then, for the most part, staying behind the scenes.



Summary of Session One

The discussion we've just had about the patrol leaders' council and the Scoutmaster's role in supporting and guiding the boy leaders of a troop sums up much of what we have covered during Session One of Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training.

Among the most important points we've covered are these:

- The role of a Scoutmaster brings with it high expectations and requires a willingness on the part of a Scoutmaster to be, know, and do certain things.
- The troop is organized with patrols as its building blocks and with members of the patrol leaders' council deeply involved in planning the troop's program and making it a reality.
- Troop meetings are the glue that holds a troop together. They should be fun, fast-paced, productive, and meaningful.
- Through careful listening, Scoutmasters can determine the development level of individual Scouts and of each patrol and the troop as a whole. Depending on the needs of the Scouts, Scoutmasters can use the most appropriate style of leadership—directing, coaching, supporting, or delegating.
- The patrol leaders' council is the engine that powers the boy-led troop. It provides Scouts with a structure in which to learn and practice leadership skills as they plan the troop's program and figure out how to bring it to life.

Instructors' Note

As you close Session One, leave participants with one last reminder. Everything covered in Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training is explained in detail in The Scoutmaster Handbook. Even more important to remember is that every Scout leader has the support of a wide range of volunteer and professional Scouters. All of them will be there when participants need them. All of them are eager to help every Scoutmaster succeed.

Summary Assignment

Ask participants to take several minutes to write down two of the most important points they have learned during Session One of Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training, and note how they intend to use these points with their own troops. They are to keep this piece of writing with them, adding to it at the end of each of the three sessions. There will be no follow-up; the information they write down and the guidance it provides is for them alone.

Announce a break before the beginning of Session Two.
(For training scheduled over several evenings, confirm the time and location for the commencement of Session Two.)

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