Ten Essentials for New Scout Parents

1 **Lead from Behind**

Scouts BSA Troops are youth-led and adult-run. The troop needs adult leaders just like in Cub Scouts, but now with the youth in charge of the program, you are assigned to the support corps instead of the front lines. Adults leaders and parents provide all the logistical help that youth need to create their own adventures. The Troop Committee is the adult organization that coordinates the support requested by the youth leaders. We welcome all new parents to join the Committee!

2 **Failure Is an Option**

Scouting presents youth with challenging and difficult tasks that may result in discomfort and failure. This approach is purposeful and designed to cultivate problem-solving, confidence, and determination. One of the best tools available for growth is failure. Failure along with reflection leads to learning. Scouting requires youth to attempt difficult things, however, there are always sufficient protections in place to ensure that scouts fail safely. Although it may be difficult to experience the frustration of your child, the reward of allowing independent growth and eventual success will be well worth it.

3 **Ranking Up Is Not a Race**

One of the methods of Scouting is Advancement. It is not the most important thing about scouts, but it isn’t the least important thing either. Scouts are presented with a challenging but eminently achievable set of tasks that reinforce values, citizenship, and overall fitness while teaching critical skills such as project planning, conflict resolution, and communication. There is no extra value in doing it quickly. In fact, it may be harmful to focus on one method of Scouting while ignoring the others. So, the trick is to find the right level of encouragement with your scout. Not too much, not too little so there is a consistent pace and learning.

4 **Chaos Is Normal...and Important**

Sometimes parents think the troop has problems when they see chaos. Although it is counterintuitive, it is actually more worrisome when there is NO chaos. If everything is always running smoothly, this is a clear indicator that adults are too involved and not giving youth the opportunity to lead. Dealing with chaos, unintended situations, and difficulties is one of the primary experiences that builds leadership ability. In time, scouts will learn to bring order and purpose to their endeavors. However, this is impossible if parents and leaders intervene and resolve issues for them. If your scout comes home confused or frustrated, encourage him to talk to his patrol leader and senior patrol leader to figure things out. Also, when new scouts bridge in, the troop will necessarily become more chaotic as new personalities join the group and a new group dynamic evolves. This is expected and part of the plan.

5 **More than Mac 'n' Cheese**

We insist that scouts learn to cook a variety of things on campouts. But they won't do it if they don’t want to eat what they are cooking. If your scout survives on Mac ‘n’ Cheese and chicken nuggets, work to expand their diet at home.

6 **Avoid Pack Rat Syndrome**

Sometimes parents want to make the scouts' camping experiences as comfortable and/or convenient as possible. That can result in parents donating gear to the troop, or packing gear for the scout, that is, in fact, more burden than it is worth. Scout camping best takes a minimalist approach. We love it when a scout leaves their fork at home because we can teach them to carve chopsticks from a tree branch. Heavy cooking gear is just something else to carry. Scouts enjoy NOT packing/carrying/cleaning/storing this extra gear more than they enjoy using it. And younger scouts struggle to keep minimalist gear organized. Extra gear gets lost or ignored. Adult leaders are versed in what is required and beneficial and finding alternatives to gear that we don't have with us - which is the preferred problem.

 7 **Safety First - Take Youth Protection Training**

BSA has very strict and effective policies for youth projection covering every aspect of child safety. Prevention of bullying, all varieties of child-abuse (by both leaders and others), anti-discrimination, outdoor safety, leader avoidance of false claims, and more are all covered completely and appropriately by an online training course. That course is mandatory for all official leaders (we call tan-shirts). But it is encouraged and very valuable for all parents so we strongly suggest you take it too. With that knowledge, you’ll be able to help our leaders identify and address any potential problems as well as get a complete understanding of how we proceed to address them.

8 **Encourage Your Child to Be a Scout...Not Just an Eagle Scout**

Parents have their child’s future in mind and will realize the value of an Eagle badge long before college applications. Sometimes parents prioritize scouting activities for the scout to achieve that rank but ignore the wider responsibilities and opportunities involved in scouting. Encourage your child to be a great scout. Eagle scouts are not made in fancy ceremonies with clean uniforms and grandmas pinning eagle badges on prim-and-proper youth. They are made on campouts, at Klondike, at summer camp, and hikes in the mountains. Often dirty, usually away from the watchful eyes of parents, always laughing. These are the things a well-earned Eagle will reflect on when they are adults, not being accepted to college or their Eagle Court of Honor.

9 **Don't Do Dunkin Donuts**

Parents like to show their appreciation to adult leaders which is nice. But if you show up at a campsite at 8 AM Sunday morning with D&D donuts and coffee, we will have already had coffee at 6AM, cooked breakfast at 6:30AM, and packed up. A parent arriving with donuts will disincent scouts from cooking their own breakfast and cleaning up. These, and similar, well-meant intentions can often thwart the goals of scouting.

10 **Label EVERYTHING**

A scoutmaster’s job is 10% teaching parents these Ten Essentials. The other 90% is running the lost-and-found program. :-)

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