

Boy Scout Troop 874

Ellicott City, MD



Patrol Coach Manual

SO THEY'VE ASKED YOU TO BE AN ADULT LEADER (AKA PATROL COACH)!!

Did your son just join the troop?

Do you want to help out a little, but you don't know much about Scouting?

Have you heard about the great food on the camping trips?

For whatever the reason, you'll find that it's great to be part of Troop 874!

Now that you've signed up, what are you going to do? Let's start at the beginning.

A patrol coach is an adult member of the troop committee who works directly with a group (patrol) of boys, especially the boy leaders, to accomplish the aims and methods of Scouting. If that's what you've been asked to do, this handbook is for you.

The purpose of this handbook is to describe the job of patrol coach. It provides some basic information you will need to do your job. The manual is divided into three main parts:

- Aims and Methods of Scouting
- Duties and Skills required of a Patrol Coach
- Resources

AIMS AND METHODS OF SCOUTING

Boys join scouting to have fun, especially in the outdoors. Few boys would join if the program was sold to them as a character building exercise or a leadership training vehicle. Scouting uses fun activities as the framework for its goals. To be a more effective patrol coach you need to know what Scouting is trying to accomplish and how. The program has three basic goals or aims which have been its direction since way back when, even as far back as when you were old enough to be a boy scout. They are:

- To Build Character
- To Foster Citizenship
- To Develop Fitness

A boy's character is defined by his personal qualities, his values, and his beliefs. Scouting builds character by promoting self-reliance, self-discipline, self-confidence and self-respect. Scouting promotes good citizenship. It includes duty to country, to other people, and to himself. Finally, Scouting promotes fitness, not just in the typical physical area, but also mentally and emotionally. A well tuned and healthy body, the ability to think, to solve problems, to have self-control, courage and self-esteem are all part of fitness. Although Scouting has no alliance to any one religion, it definitely values belief in God.

As in any leadership role, it is vitally important for you to understand the goals of scouting. If you are ever unsure of these goals, all you have to do is read two Scout sayings, the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

The Scout Oath is:

On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country

And to obey the Scout Law;

To help other people at all times;

To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

The Scout Law is:

A Scout is;
Trustworthy
Loyal
Helpful
Friendly
Courteous
Kind
Obedient
Cheerful
Thrifty
Brave
Clean
Reverent

Scouting accomplishes these goals through eight methods. They are:

- Ideals
- Patrols
- Outdoors
- Advancement
- Personal Growth
- Adult Association
- Leadership Development
- Uniform

IDEALS

These are the behavioral guidelines and personal standards against which a Scout measures himself. The ideals are spelled out in the Scout Oath and Law covered above. This is why the troop recites them at the beginning of every troop meeting, to encourage boys to follow these ideals, and strive for improvement. Many situations will arise during a meeting or camp out when a Scout can be congratulated for following these ideals. It is important that you do not hesitate to provide this positive feedback quickly. It is a good investment and will pay dividends in the future. On those occasions when things could function more smoothly, a reminder to follow some aspects of the Scout Oath or Law can usually help iron out the problem. Essentially, measure a scout's behavior against these two standards, the Oath and Law.

PATROLS

The Patrol is the basic unit of a Scout Troop. It usually consists of four to eight boys, with its own name, its own boy leader, and most importantly, its own identity. A part of this identity is the Patrol name, cheer and yell, which can help bond the boys together as a unit when they choose them right after they form the Patrol. Your function as a patrol coach is to do what the name implies- - be a coach and counselor for your patrol. Let the boy leaders lead and the boys do the job. It is 'Boy' Scouts, not 'Adult' Scouts. Your responsibility is to make sure that the health and safety of the boys are not at risk. Beyond that, consider yourself on vacation and let the boys run the show!

A fundamental part of the patrol concept is changing each boy in the group from thinking primarily about what is best for himself to what is best for the patrol. Something as simple as the camping menu becomes part of that process. The duty roster for a trip can do the same while ending potential disagreements on an outing about who has what duties during the trip. Each boy has input on the menu but in the end all eat whatever is decided for the group. No one scout eats his food at a campout while the rest eat the patrol's selection. It is a shared experience and a growth opportunity.

OUTDOORS

Without a doubt, the outdoor program is the most popular, yet the most important aspect of Scouting. It is what gets boys interested in the program and keeps them there. Ask a boy what he likes most about the troop and he will invariably tell you, "The camping trips". Troop 874 has an active, all year around, outdoor program. We camp every month except August and December. We spend a week at a summer camp in July. Every trip has a theme that is chosen by the boys at the semi-annual planning meeting. The themes have included role playing games, or patrol competition. As a patrol coach it is a good idea to attend as many of these camping trips and outings as possible. There are two reasons;

First, camping will be fun for you, really. Our troop has a fine group of adult leaders who enjoy camping and the outdoor experience. You will feast on some of the most superb cuisine this side of the Rockies - - including succulent roasts, meaty stews and the finest in freshly baked pies, cakes and cobblers. This is all possible because the troop has a few adults attending each trip who primarily purchase, prepare and cleanup each meal for the adults only. As an adult, you will eat decent meals throughout the trip with adults only. It provides you the

time to be with just adults and it frees you from having to spend valuable time taking care of yourself.

Second, the outdoors is the best place to get to know the Scouts in your patrol. The outdoors is where they get to put into practice their leadership skills, build character, develop self-esteem, and above all, have fun. As an adult, this is where you receive your ‘paycheck’. You do not want to miss that! You will get more out of that experience than anything else in Scouting.

ADVANCEMENT

The Boy Scout program provides a progressive ladder of skills for each Scout to climb at his own pace. The details of the program and requirements for each rank are described in The Boy Scout Handbook. Each of your boys should have their own book. The Handbook requirements reflect the aims of Scouting and are tied in large part to the outdoor program. Rank advancement gives the boy a sense of achievement as he learns, promotes leadership and personal development and allows the boy to measure himself. Part of your job as a patrol coach is to monitor the advancement of each Scout in your patrol, and advise the assistant Scoutmaster on advancement needs. Troop 874 uses a database for tracking advancement. Please see the advancement chair for information regarding your individual boys and their advancement status.

Because of the tremendous sense of pride that boys show when they attain a rank, it can be used as a motivator. This is especially true in the first year (Pioneer) program where the attainment of First Class in the first year is a goal. But remember, each Scout must progress at his own pace. Advancement is NOT a race and to make it so misses the point.

You may find yourself besieged with requests from the Scouts in your patrol to “sign-off” requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class in the Pioneer Program or in the higher levels. Do not worry. If you are not familiar with a particular Scout skill, there are plenty of troop instructors (a boy leadership position), patrol leaders or qualified adults to work with the Scout. Also there are lots of opportunities to acquire these skills at courses like Wagon Wheel or from the other adults within the troop. The Boy Scout Handbook provides plenty of instruction in every requirement for the earlier ranks.

PERSONAL GROWTH

As Scouts plan their activities and research their goals, they experience personal growth. It is in the “process of doing” as much as the attainment of objectives that teaches each scout. This is why Scouting is a boy-run program, and why you must remember to let the boys do what they can for themselves. We do not set out to let the boys fail, but they will learn from their mistakes, if we let them make mistakes. It is important to take every opportunity to have the boys think about and evaluate an experience after it is completed. Get them to talk about what went right, what went wrong, and how it could have been made better. Let the boys do the talking. Keep in mind, it is not about providing answers as a Patrol Coach, it is about asking questions. This is especially true when working with the boy leaders of your patrol. Generally you will find they know the answer, they are just looking for validation that it is the right answer. You are not there to do the work, but rather to coach the boys through the work. That said, it is important to repeat, your primary role is to make sure that in this process no one is exposed to an

unsafe or unhealthy situation. Inefficiency or falling short of the goal of an activity is OK especially when it serves to make the boy leadership learn how to be better leaders.

As a Patrol Coach you have two areas of focus. One is the boy leader in your patrol. Is he active in the patrol? Does he communicate with his group? Does he work well with them? Is he becoming a better leader? Is his personal leadership style effective? Is he making the patrol better? The second focus is the members of the patrol. Are they advancing? Are they attending? Are they getting along? Any problems? Have they progressed so they can camp by themselves without any adult help? Again, it is about asking good questions, not giving answers.

ADULT ASSOCIATION

Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scout movement, once said, “You are always being snap-shotted by your boys.” Put another way, everything we do or don’t do is likely to be copied and evaluated by someone. In Scouting these “someone’s” are the boys in your patrol. Positive role models are a cornerstone of the program. Boys will often imitate the behavior of leaders that they like and admire. Setting a good example is probably the most important aspect of your job, and one that should be taken very seriously. It is the most powerful tool in your arsenal. Remember in order to instill the aims of Scouting in boys, you must follow them yourself. One of the most important items that can be done is the wearing of the complete uniform by the patrol coach. It sets a good example for the boys and clearly identifies you as an adult associated with Troop 874.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Scouting is one of the largest practical leadership laboratories for boys today. Enjoy your role as a part of this laboratory. Formal leadership is required for rank advancement beyond First Class. There is also ample opportunity for “informal” leadership experience. Planning a patrol outing or organizing meal preparation on a camp out are examples of leadership that can be exercised by each Scout in your patrol. Scouts often find assuming leadership intimidating. This is typical of pre-teen and teenage boys. Encourage the boys to learn and practice leadership skills. Praise from you for their successes and encouragement after less successful efforts will create a positive atmosphere. With your help, scouts will often overcome their fears and enjoy the experience. Most importantly, they will gain the confidence that they can exercise leadership and succeed in whatever they do. As a laboratory, this confidence is what makes the experiment a success.

A major goal of our first year program (Pioneers) is to have each Pioneer learn camping skills so well that they feel free to show others and take the lead in going camping when they advance into the Ranger Program.

UNIFORM

Wearing the Scout uniform is an important part of Scouting. The uniform gives the Scout a sense of belonging to his unit. It gives the Scout a way to display the ranks and merit badges he has earned. The uniform sets him apart from those who are not Scouts.

Unfortunately, this is a two-edged sword in an environment where being a Scout is not always “cool” or “with-it”.

One way to encourage Scouts to wear their uniforms is to wear a uniform yourself. While it is not a requirement in Troop 874 for patrol coaches to wear a uniform, it is strongly encouraged. As stated previously, it sends a message to the boys by setting an example.

PATROL COACH SKILLS & DUTIES

Now that we have covered the basic aims and methods of Scouting, let's talk more about the specifics of the job. Patrol coach duties fall into some general categories, none of which are mutually exclusive. They are:

- Know the Group/Serve as a Resource
- Communicate
- Be a Counselor
- Set the Example
- Display Good Conduct
- Eyes and Ears of the Scoutmaster
- Contact with Parents
- Do not be the Patrol Leader
- At the Meeting

KNOW THE GROUP/SERVE AS A RESOURCE

Get to know the boys in your patrol. They are the fuel that makes the troop run. Learn the strengths and weaknesses of each member. Serve as resource to your boys and their patrol. Be there to respond to their questions, and give them your support. Remember you do not need to know all the answers, just where to go for help. The Scoutmaster, his assistants and the other patrol coaches can help get the answers. The Boy Scout Handbook and the Scoutmaster Handbook are invaluable aids. Do not be afraid to say, "I don't know" but couple it with, "I'll help you find out".

COMMUNICATE

Encourage your patrol members to communicate with you and the other adult leaders. A good rule to remember is *Listen Loudly, Talk Softly*. Boys can tell very quickly if you are interested in what they have to say. Speak to boys the way you would want people to speak to you. Clear communication is essential. Do not use jargon or acronyms. Listen carefully, ask questions, and repeat what is said. Do not be afraid to write things down. If you have promised a boy some help on a Scoutcraft skill at next week's meeting, he will be very disappointed if you forget to make the necessary arrangements. Remember too, that body language is a very important part of communication. Facial expressions, gestures, posture and tone of voice can either reinforce or send mixed signals.

Do not wait until a problem occurs before you establish good communication with your Scouts, by then it may be too late. Periodically ask yourself if you are communicating effectively. Learning how to communicate with a young scout is essential to your effectiveness as a coach.

COUNSELOR

You may also have to serve as a counselor to the Scouts in your patrol. A boy may be homesick at summer camp, feel harassed by his fellow Scouts or overwhelmed by pressures real or imagined. Counseling is helpful to encourage and reassure, provide more information about a specific task, interpret instructions, or correct a situation. Six keys to good counseling are:

- Listen Carefully
- Understand the Problem
- Summarize the Problem
- Get Additional Information
- Look for Alternatives
- Do Not Give “Lecturing” Advice

Be careful to look beyond what is immediately stated. A stomachache at summer camp may be a sign of homesickness. Lead the Scout to a solution, do not dictate one. Again, ask questions. Remember, often the Scout has already arrived at a solution and is just looking for confirmation. People, especially young ones, have a remarkable ability to come up with good solutions to a problem on their own with just a little guidance. Finally, do not exceed your abilities to counsel. You are not a trained psychologist and are not expected to be one. If the problem is a serious one, talk to the Scoutmaster and to the parents. If a youngster is truly troubled, professional help may be necessary.

SET THE EXAMPLE

Adult Association is an important part of the program. As a patrol coach you have more direct contact with the boys in your patrol than any other adult leader. As the “front line” adult you have a unique opportunity to make a significant difference in each boys Scouting experience, and in his life. A good Patrol Coach can set a positive example by:

- Following the Rules and Procedures of the Troop
- Trying Hard
- Showing Initiative
- Acting with Maturity
- Knowing the Job
- Keeping a Positive Attitude and Sense of Honor

Boys will follow the examples they see in their leaders. Make sure the example you set is a good one. Remember to instill the aims of Scouting in boys, you must follow them yourself.

CONDUCT

Along with setting an example, there are some basic rules of conduct for all Scout leaders. Boy Scout policy strictly prohibits the use of alcohol and drugs at any and all Scouting activities. This applies equally to leaders and boys. Also, the use of profane language is prohibited. Always treat the boys with respect even when they do not.

In Scouting you will often hear the expression *Two Deep Leadership*. This simply means that two registered adult leaders must be present at any scout gathering. Something as small as a

hike in the woods with just a few scouts requires two adults. “Private” one on one contact is never allowed. If you must speak to a Scout individually, for example while working on advancement, do so in an open place, clearly observable by others. If working as a merit badge counselor, make sure another troop adult is present at sessions if for no other reason than to be the second adult. This is for your protection as well as the boys. If one scout is injured, one adult can attend to him while the other adult oversees the rest.

EYES AND EARS OF THE SCOUTMASTER

The patrol coach serves as the eyes and ears of the Scoutmaster and his assistants, especially in a large troop such as Troop 874. You are the adult leader with the closest contact with the Scouts. You can best assess how a Scout is progressing, whether he is ready for rank advancement, if he is losing interest, or if any special needs exist.

This information is especially important for the Scoutmaster at the Scoutmaster conference, a requirement for rank advancement. You can serve as an early warning system. Let your Scoutmaster or his assistants know if you suspect any problems. Let him know which Scouts are doing well and help him to monitor the needs of the boys.

CONTACT WITH PARENTS

Frequent contact with the parents of your Scouts pays big benefits and is an area where your role is critical. The troop is too large for any one assistant Scoutmaster to talk to each parent on a regular basis. When you get a new group of Scouts, or a boy joins your patrol, make contact with the parents as soon as possible. This is the formation of the ‘parent’s secret network’. Call or introduce yourself at a meeting. Do whatever works best for you. Do not wait for them to make the first contact...it may never happen. Make sure the parents have your phone number, email or whatever is the best way for them to communicate to you and vice-versa. Let them know that they can call you with questions. Let them know you are there to support the program and them in the program. Encourage them to attend outings.

Your first contact with the parents is a good opportunity to explain your function in the troop as well as the aims and methods of Scouting. If parents understand the program, they can be an invaluable resource. Follow-up periodically, do not wait until things go wrong. Parents like to hear when their kids are doing well and that someone cares when they are not.

Let’s discuss some items that should receive your attention. Poor attendance, lack of a proper uniform and reluctant motivation are often signs that a Scout may be getting ready to drop out of the program. If more than two meetings are missed with the “believable” explanation, it is probably a good time to contact the parents. Of course, talk to the Scout first. Also check with the patrol leader or troop guide, then follow-up with the parents if necessary. Sometimes, especially in single parent households or those where both parents work outside the home, transportation can be a problem. Try to help them with alternate arrangements such as car-pooling.

Sometimes parents simply don’t realize that the boys are expected to be in proper uniform at each meeting. You would be surprised how much misinformation a 12 year old boy can communicate to his parents. Get the parents to sign up for the Troop email system on our website. If there is a financial problem that is limiting a boy’s participation, remind the parents

that arrangements can be made through the troop committee chair and they will be kept strictly confidential.

If a boy's behavior at meetings and outings is a recurring and disruptive problem, discuss it with the Assistant Scoutmasters in your program. *Don't go this one alone!* Together, you can come up with a strategy for solving the problem which generally leads to contacting the parents. There may be similar problems in other activities, and you can work with the parents toward a successful resolution. Troop 874 has many experienced leaders who are outstanding at working with boys. Sometimes bucking a problem up to the next "Scouting level" is all that is needed.

The importance of contact with parents cannot be overemphasized. You would be surprised what you will learn about the family and the boy that will help you to communicate with him and allow the boy to have the best Scouting experience possible.

DON'T LEAD THE PATROL

As the name implies, your primary function is to coach and counsel the boys. Serve as an example and mentor to them, do not lead the patrol. This is a common mistake often made by first time coaches. It is the job of the patrol leader or troop guide to lead. As an example, something looks like it needs to be done or maybe a problem is about to occur. The first reaction may be to step in and set things straight. Please, resist this temptation. If you feel the need to do something, twiddle your thumbs. Other than that, speak to the Patrol Leader, he is in charge. Do not tell him what to do, ask questions that are open ended in nature. If a patrol is trying to light a fire using matches and a four inch diameter wet log, let them try. After a few minutes, or maybe longer, of unsuccessful effort you might want to hold an impromptu fire building clinic, and let them try again. You do not want to build the fire for them. Of course, the major exception to this approach is in the area of safety or health. If the boys are taking flaming sticks into their tent for illumination, you must step in immediately and take control. The lesson and time for teaching can occur when the danger has passed.

AT THE MEETING

What would life be without paperwork? Probably more fun!! However, as with any job, there will be some that you will need to do. The extent of it will vary with each assistant Scoutmaster, but there are some basics. At each meeting try to monitor the following:

- Attendance and uniforms
- The dues envelope for accuracy
- Program
- Monitor the advancement progress of each scout
- Sign-Off completed requirements in their books
- Help the patrol leader stay on task
- Keep track of where your patrol members are on the Church property

Keeping track of attendance, uniforms and progress toward rank advancement will help you monitor Scout spirit and assess the program needs of the patrol. Periodically, verify with the advancement chairman the rank of each boy in your patrol. This is a great motivator.

Make sure the patrol leader knows what he needs to be doing and by when it needs to be

accomplished. Menu preparation and equipment returns are essential for a successful outing, and are often part of the agenda that is planned at the monthly Patrol Leaders Council meeting. This is the responsibility of the patrol. If these things are not getting done, a gentle reminder to the boy leader is all that is usually required. You can provide him with a resource, if needed, to accomplish the task.

Make sure you know where your patrol members are at all times. We are guests in the facilities of the Church, and must stay in the rooms set aside for the troop.

RESOURCES

Listed below are some books and courses that should help you with your job as a patrol coach.

BOOKS

The Boy Scout Handbook

Everything a Boy Scout needs to know about Scouting. It covers the Oath, Law, and Scoutcraft skills through First Class. It describes how a patrol and troop work, and provides a brief history of Scouting. A must for your library.

The Scoutmaster Handbook

Despite the name, it should be required reading for all patrol coaches. It covers the entire program from the adult leader perspective. Of particular interest are the sections on troop organization, the patrol method, the aims and methods of Scouting, and understanding boys.

Troop Committee Guidebook

Describes the structure and organization of the troop committees, and how it fits into the troop.

Junior Leader Handbook

Describes the boy leadership positions in the troop, especially that of patrol leader. Will be helpful in understanding the patrol leader's responsibilities. It is also a good training aid for boy leadership positions. Your patrol leader and troop guide should have a copy and read it carefully.

TRAINING

Wagon Wheel

As with The Scoutmaster Handbook, the title is a misnomer. This is a valuable first course for any adult leader. It covers much of the material in the Boy Scout and Scoutmaster handbooks and provides a forum for trying out what you have learned. There are three classroom sessions, and one weekend camp out where you will work with other course participants in patrols. Troop 874 will pay the entire cost of the course fee upon its successful completion. The National Pike District has a great training staff, the course is well organized and run, and is a lot of fun.

Wood Badge

This is an advanced adult leadership training course. It has a practical phase,

during these outings you will live as a patrol, and have ample opportunity to practice the leadership and Scoutcraft skills that you learn. Those who complete the practical phase move on to the applied phase. Each participant writes a “ticket” or contract that describes how these skills will be put into practice back in his or her home troop. The course fee is approximately \$125, half of which is covered by Troop 874 upon successful completion of the applied phase. People who have completed the training generally feel that it is a real growth experience, both in their Scouting and personal lives.

FINAL THOUGHTS

You probably never thought there was so much to the job of a patrol coach. After all, it is usually the first job given to a new adult leader in the troop. To make matters worse, you may not have any Scouting experience or training, at least not in the last 25 years. If things seem a little over-whelming to you at first, just imagine how an 11 year old boy must feel when he joins the troop!

We hope that this manual will make things a little easier for you. Take the suggestions as a guide, not the gospel. Apply your own style and experiences to the job, while keeping in mind the aims and methods of Scouting. Have fun with it, maintain your sense of humor. There is no job in the troop, especially a large troop, which provides you with as much direct contact with the boys. That is what makes a patrol coach the greatest adult leadership position in Scouting

As a final thought, remember as an adult in scouting, we are here for the boys. Keep what is best for the boys your overriding aim, always. Your number one job is to keep them in the program. Whenever you are unsure of what to do or say, just ask yourself what is best for the boys and everything else is secondary. If you are not sure what is best for the boys, take a moment and reread the Scout Oath and Law. You are ready.