

# What Adults Do on Scout Campouts

Boy Scouts is absolutely different from Cub Scouts and Webelos! And while parents are welcome to accompany Scouts on campouts (and often needed as chaperones); Scouts camp with other Scouts and not with their parents.

## **Troop 436 (and BSA) Policies**

Scout Tenting & Meals—Scouts tent with Scouts, minimum two per tent, never alone. Scouts plan their own menus, and cook and eat together as a Patrol. In general, adults do not eat or tent with a boy patrol.

Adult Tenting & Meals—Adults tent individually or with other adults. They plan their own menus, and cook and eat together as a group. In general, adults do not eat or tent with a boy patrol. BSA youth protection policies forbid an adult and a boy sharing the same tent. While youth protection policies may not apply to a father and son tenting together, it is highly recommended that boys tent with boys and adults with adults. If a father tents with his son, it's been our experience that the boy will lose out on many opportunities to make decisions and be part of the patrol team!

Smoking/Drinking—Drivers may not smoke while Scouts are in the car. Adults may not smoke or use tobacco products, nor drink alcoholic beverages during a Scout activity. Adults who must smoke or chew must do so discretely out of sight of the Scouts.

Youth Leadership—Adults should not interfere with the functioning of boy leaders, even if they make mistakes (we all learn best from our mistakes). Step in only if it is a matter of immediate safety or if the mistake will be immediately costly. If possible, involve a registered adult leader first.

Boy Growth—Never do anything for a boy he can do himself. Let him make decisions without adult interference, and let him make non-costly mistakes.

## **Rationale**

Boy Scout camping activities center on the patrol, where boys learn teamwork, leadership, and most camping skills. It is important that adults not be in the middle of patrol activities such as site selection, tent pitching, meal preparation, and anything else where boys get to practice decision-making.

A key difference between Boy Scouting and Cub Scouting/Webelos is leadership. Look for the word "leader" in a job title, and you will begin to appreciate the difference. The responsible person for a Cub/Webelos den is the adult Den Leader. The responsible person for a Boy Scout patrol is the boy Patrol Leader. This isn't token leadership; a Patrol Leader has real authority and genuine responsibilities. Much of the success, safety, and happiness of six to nine other boys depend directly on him. Boy Scouts teaches leadership and boys learn leadership by practicing it, not by watching adults lead.

So what do adults do, now that they've surrendered so much direct authority to the Scouts? Adults have an indirect, advisory role they should enjoy (no kidding, adults should enjoy watching their sons take progressively more mature and significant responsibilities as he zooms toward adulthood). The underlying principle is never doing anything for a boy that he can do himself. We allow boys to grow by practicing leadership and by learning from their mistakes. And while Scout skills are an important part of the program, what ultimately matters when our Scouts become adults is not whether they can use a map & compass, but whether they can offer leadership to others in tough situations; and can live by a code that centers on honest, honorable, and ethical behavior. Scouts need to learn to make decisions without adult intervention (except when it's a matter of immediate safety). Scouts are in a patrol so they can learn leadership and teamwork without adult interference.

If a parent goes on a campout, they're an automatic member of the adult patrol. This patrol has several purposes—good food and camaraderie (of course), but more important is providing an example the Scout patrols can follow without our telling them what to do (we teach by example). Quite simply, we require adults to cook, eat, and tent separately from the Scouts (even dads & sons ideally). We are safely nearby, but not smotheringly close. We want to give the Scouts room to grow while you enjoy the view. Show a Scout how to do something, but don't do it for him. Avoid the temptation to jump in just to prevent a mistake from happening (unless it's serious), we all learn best from our mistakes.