



## AOL Scout to Scouts BSA Transition



Scouts BSA is a lot different than Cub Scouts. The idea of graduating from a Cub Scout Pack to a Scout BSA Troop may be intimidating for some AOL Scouts and their parents. Some AOL Scouts may not be sure they want to cross over into Boy Scouts because they believe it will just be more of the same thing that they did in Cub Scouts. The best way to make your decisions, to choose the right troop, and to get your questions answered is to visit several troops. This guide is designed to help the AOL Scout, parents, and den begin the AOL to Scout transition.

### **My Scout wants to be a Scout , how does the transition begin?**

During the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, a typical Webelos AOL Scout den continues to meet until February. During this time, the AOL Scouts will earn additional activity badges and work to complete the Arrow of Light. A review of the requirements for the Arrow of Light will show that it's designed to prepare a Webelos Scout to join a Boy Scout Troop. The requirements for the Arrow of Light include learning the basics about Boy Scouts (Scout Oath, Law, motto, slogan, handshake, salute). The requirements also call for the entire den to visit both a troop meeting and to participate in a troop outdoor activity. The latter usually gets taken care of by participating in the annual Long Valley Camporee in September, jointly run by all four of Long Valley's Scout BSA Troops.

### **How does an AOL Scout select a troop to join?**

Selecting a Boy Scout Troop to join is an individual decision for each AOL Scout and parents. Every troop is different in the kinds of activities they schedule, in their personalities and culture. Each family must choose the troop they feel will best meet their needs. In selecting a troop, you should consider the following factors. Are the troop activities the kind that you would enjoy? How do the Scouts interact with each other? How do the older Scouts interact with the younger Scouts? Are there older Scouts active in the troop? (This indicates if the troop's program is exciting and interesting for a variety of ages.) Is the troop "Scout led" or is it run by the adults? (The best answer is the troop is "Scout led".) Are you comfortable with the adult leaders in the troop? Are the adult leaders trained, do they follow BSA policy, and do they welcome input and participation by all parents? In practice, the decision of which troop to join usually comes down to two factors: convenience of the weekly troop meetings (meeting night and location) and which troop a boy's best friends are in.

A Scout does have the freedom to transfer to another troop if, for any reason, the scout changes their mind after joining a troop. When comparing troops, it is not important how large a troop is, or how many Eagle Scouts it has, or how many high-adventure trips they go on. The measure of a successful troop is how well it meets the three aims of Scouting: encouraging citizenship, building strong moral character, and helping Scouts to grow

physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. In other words, do Scouts leave the troop a better person than they were when they joined?

There are three male troops and one girl troop in our area. Any one of them would be a good choice. Below are some items to consider as you visit and evaluate the troops:

### **Troop Overview –**

- Meetings: When and where the Troop meets must fit with the overall family calendar. It's important that your Scout's schedule allow him to participate.
- Size: The number of active scouts in the troop has an impact on the number of activities that can be offered, the level of "intimacy" of the troop, and the potential demands on parents to assist with trips.
- Rank advancement: Advancements are strongly emphasized in some troops. Other troops focus less on advancement, a good environment for boys less motivated by ranks and more interested in activities and doing.

### **Troop Leadership –**

- Troops can be run by the Scouts, by the adult leaders or some combination thereof.
- Troops that are run by Scouts develop strong leadership skills but can be somewhat chaotic at times while the boys are learning these skills.
- Adult run troops are more structured and predictable but offer less opportunity for Scouts to learn by leading.
- Areas where the leadership ownership must be determined within a troop may include running the weekly meetings, establishing the annual calendar, organizing outings, and conducting the rank advancement.

### **Type and Breadth of Activities Offered –**

- Boy Scout troops typically offer a wide range of outings; however, each troop generally develops an activity profile that reflects the level and type of activities that the Scouts in the Troop prefer.
- High Adventure: These are trips that can be physically demanding and generally require substantial preparation. Examples include long (50 plus miles) backpacking trips and class 4 white water rafting.
- Outings: Included here are such events as camping, shorter backpack trips, and day trips.
- Educational Activities: These tend to be activities that focus on the mental and skills development rather than on physical skills.
- Service Projects: All Scout troops offer some level of service projects. They can range from Scouting for Food to Trail repair to visitations at senior centers.

### **Parental Participation –**

- There are two elements to research here. Note that Scouting can provide one of the best ways that parents can stay involved with their Scout and friends as the Scout reaches their teenage years.
- What level of involvement is expected from each family? Troops can vary from expecting every family to be actively involved to desiring but not requiring involvement.
- What parent opportunities are available within the troop? Typically the opportunities are leadership/committee, activity support, or general support roles like merit badge counselors.

### **Social Makeup –**

- Are any of your Scout's friends or schoolmates involved in the Troop? It has been found that if your Scout has at least one friend in the Troop they are more likely to embrace Scouting and the Troop.
- Are there adults in the Troop that you know? This may or may not be important to you.

### **Troop Selection Checklist**

Use the worksheet below to record information you gather on the Troops. Hopefully it will help you in evaluating the relative merits of each Troop as compared to your boy's and your family's interests.

CRITERIA TO BE CONSIDERED	OUR PREFERENCES	TROOP 36	TROOP 236	TROOP 436
<b>Troop Overview</b>				
Focus				
Meeting Time and Place				
Size (Small, Medium, Large)				
Rank Advancement Emphasis				
<b>Troop Leadership</b>				
<b>Activities</b>				
High Adventure				
Outdoor Activities				
Educational Activities				
Service Projects				
<b>Parental Participation</b>				
Level of Involvement				
Opportunities				
<b>Social Makeup</b>				
Friends of Your Scout?				
Adult Friends in Troop?				
Personality of Troop				

Your Scout's AOL den leader should make arrangements for his or her den to visit the troops in town. BSA gives troops a lot of latitude in how they operate so you may notice some variety among the troops. It's also a good

idea to visit a few of the troops more than once to get a true impression of how they operate. AOL den leaders may receive invitations from troops to visit on particular nights. However, it's not necessary to wait for an invitation. The AOL den leaders may also initiate the contact with any troop they wish to visit.

### **When do AOL Scouts cross over into a troop?**

After the list of troops has been narrowed down a bit, it might be useful to invite the Scoutmasters of those troops to one of your AOL den meetings to meet the parents and to answer questions. By the end of January, every AOL Scout should have a good idea of which troop they want to join. Most Cub Scout Packs have a bridging over ceremony for the graduating AOL Scouts during the Blue and Gold Banquet in February. Scouts from the appropriate troops participate in the bridging over ceremony to welcome new members.

### **Who Sponsors Boy Scout Troops?**

All troops are "owned" by a chartered organization, which has goals compatible with those of the Boy Scouts of America. Each Chartered Organization chooses a Chartered Organization Representative and Troop Committee, and selects a Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters. Together, they implement the methods of Scouting to achieve the aims of Scouting. Chartered organizations can include schools, places of worship, parent groups, PTO/PTA groups and businesses. Regardless of whom the chartering organization is, membership is open to boys of all religions and ethnic backgrounds. Troop 36 is chartered by the Long Valley Presbyterian Church, Troop 236 by St. Mark's Parish, and Troop 436 by St. Luke Parish.

### **What are the Aims and Methods of Boy Scouting?**

The Scouting program has three specific objectives, commonly referred to as the "Aims of Scouting." They are character development, citizenship training, and personal fitness. The methods by which the aims are achieved are listed below in random order to emphasize the equal importance of each.

#### **Ideals**

The ideals of Scouts BSA are spelled out in the Scout Oath, Scout Law, Scout motto, and Scout slogan. A Scout measures themselves against these ideals and continually tries to improve. The goals are high, and, as they reach for them, they have some control over what and who they become.

#### **Patrols**

The patrol method gives Boy Scouts an experience in group living and participating citizenship. It places responsibility on young shoulders and teaches boys how to accept it. The patrol method allows Scouts to interact in small groups where they can easily relate to each other. These small groups determine troop activities through their elected representatives.

#### **Outdoor Programs**

Scouts BSA is designed to take place outdoors. It is in the outdoor setting that Scouts share responsibilities and learn to live with one another. It is here that the skills and activities practiced at troop meetings come alive with purpose.

#### **Advancement**

Scouts BSA provides a series of surmountable obstacles and steps in overcoming them through the advancement method. The Scout plans their advancement and progresses at their own pace as they meet each challenge. The Scout is rewarded for each achievement, which helps them gain self-confidence. The steps in the advancement system help a Scout grow in self-reliance and in the ability to help others.

## **Personal Growth**

As Scouts plan their activities and progress toward their goals, they experience personal growth. The *Good Turn* concept is a major part of the personal growth method of Scouts BSA. Scouts grow as they participate in community service projects and do Good Turns for others. Probably no device is so successful in developing a basis for personal growth as the daily Good Turn. The religious emblems program also is a large part of the personal growth method. Frequent personal conferences with the Scoutmaster help each Scout to determine their growth toward Scouting's aims.

## **Leadership Development**

The Scout program encourages Scouts to learn and practice leadership skills. Every Scout has the opportunity to participate in both shared and total leadership situations. Understanding the concepts of leadership helps a Scout accept the leadership role of others and guides them toward the citizenship aims of Scouting.

## **Adult Association**

Scouts learn from the example set by their adult leaders. Troop leadership may be male or female, and association with adults of high character is encouraged at this stage of a Scout's development.

## **Uniform**

The uniform makes the Scout BSA Troop visible as a force for good and creates a positive youth image in the community. Boy Scouting is an action program, and wearing the uniform is an action that shows each Boy Scout's commitment to the aims and purposes of Scouting. The uniform gives the Boy Scout identity in a world brotherhood of youth who believe in the same ideals. The uniform is practical attire for Boy Scout activities and provides a way for Boy Scouts to wear the badges that show what they have accomplished.

## **What outdoor activities can my son participate in?**

### **Camping**

Summer camp represents the highlight of the year for most Scouts. Each troop chooses their summer camp destination. Scouts learn teamwork within their patrol and troop and seize this opportunity to pass advancement requirements and earn merit badges. Summer camp blends fun programs and advancement, competitive and noncompetitive events, and individual, patrol, and troop activities. Camp gives leaders an opportunity to reinforce what their Scouts have learned throughout the year. The Troop also participates in various weekend camping overnights, hikes and bike hikes throughout the year.

### **High Adventure**

Troops offer both regional and national high-adventure programs, usually in the summer, that include backpacking, canoeing, mountain biking, horseback riding, whitewater rafting and kayaking, sailing, mountaineering, and much more. These trips present unique opportunities for many Scouts year after year and differ between troops.

### **Conservation**

Scouts have always taken pride in being good stewards of the outdoors. *Leave No Trace* guidelines allow them to camp, hike, and take part in outdoor-related activities that are environmentally sound, and teach them to be considerate of other users of the outdoors.

## **How do Troop meetings work?**

Scouts BSA is a Scout-lead program. That is probably the biggest difference between Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA. Senior Scout leadership is composed of the Senior Patrol Leader (SPL) plus at least one Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL). These Scouts are responsible for planning and running meetings. The Scout leadership is also supported by the Patrol Leaders. During a typical meeting, the following activities will occur:

- Opening flag ceremony
- Meeting organizational announcements
- General advancement activities
- Camping trip planning (if necessary; it also may be held after the meeting).
- Recognition of any advancement earned that evening
- General announcements
- Closing flag ceremony

## **Adult Leadership**

Scouts BSA takes great pride in the quality of our adult leadership. Being a leader in the BSA is a privilege, not a right. The quality of the program and the safety of youth members call for high-quality adult leaders. Troops work closely with their chartered organization to help recruit the best possible leaders for their unit. The adult application requests background information that is checked by the Troop committee or the chartered organization before accepting an applicant for Troop leadership. Every Troop is required to have leaders who have been trained in youth protection. More information is available at [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org).