



TROOP 1518

POLICY & PROCEDURE

November 2009

INTRODUCTION

The Boy Scouts have many rules and procedures, the most important of which are found in the Boy Scout Handbook. Troop 1518 follows national rules, but we do have our own way of doing things. This information sheet provides supplemental information on the troop's policies and procedures.

INFORMATION FLOW

Many verbal announcements are made at troop meetings about changes to the schedule, merit badge opportunities and service projects. Scouts need to pay attention and take notes regarding announcements that affect them. To help them, the troop publishes a monthly Troop Trumpet; a one-page newsletter that gives times and dates of all activities scheduled for the coming month. The Troop Trumpet is normally distributed directly to the scouts through their Patrol Leaders at the last troop meeting of the month.

We also maintain a troop web page located at www.troop1518.org that contains useful information about troop activities. The web page contains the master activities calendar. This calendar is kept current (as much as humanly possible) and should be the first place you look to find out what is happening when and where.

FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Annual dues are paid once each year, usually in September. Basic dues are \$39. A subscription to Boys Life magazine is optional but recommended, and costs an additional \$12. Give the completed application to the Membership Coordinator, checks payable to "Troop 1518."

The money raised by dues does not go far. To fund the troop's activities a mulch sale is held the spring of each year. The troop has found that this is an excellent fundraiser because it is appreciated by the customers in the community, raises adequate money and is over in short order. The order forms are distributed one weekend and the mulch is delivered about three weeks later. The down side to this project is that the bags of mulch are heavy and there are 6,000 of them that must be moved by hand. It's hard work, but it is also a day of great fun and camaraderie! Help is needed from scouts and dads on this long and hard workday.

THE HANDBOOK AND OTHER IMPORTANT RECORDS

The Boy Scout Handbook, or Handbook for short, is the principle training guide for scouts. It is also an official record. Entries are made in it to document the scout's advancement throughout his career. No matter what other records are maintained by the troop or council, the Handbook is the final authoritative document (an exception is merit badges). Wherever a young scout goes, the Handbook should go along. A book protector is recommended. Another important record is the "*Application for Merit Badge*," commonly called the blue card. The blue card documents that authority has been given to start working on the merit badge, helps track merit badge progress and records accomplishment. The blue card comes in three sections. Upon completion of the merit badge requirements one section goes into the troop's records, one is retained by the merit badge counselor, and the third is given to the scout for his records. The scout's record should be retained and safeguarded. It becomes important when making application for Eagle Scout.

TROOP ACTIVITIES

Typical troop activities include:

- Troop meetings. Held every Monday night, 7:30-8:45 p.m., during the school year, normally at the Sydenstricker United Methodist Church (SUMC) chapel. If the Fairfax County schools are closed for the day (scheduled or unscheduled) for any reason, there will usually be no troop meeting. Troop meetings are organizational and planning sessions.
- Monthly campouts. These are our major camping events held once monthly. Most are three-day/two nights, but some are two-day/one night.
- Day-trips. Day-trips are one-day events that are normally fun oriented, without scout training objectives. We may play miniature golf, go to an aquarium or visit an amusement park.
- Service projects. Scout labor is provided to a church, school, or community group on a volunteer basis. The participating scouts not only do their civic duty, but earn service hours necessary for advancement in rank.
- Scoutmaster conferences. Normally held one-on-one between a Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster (ASM) and a scout to check on his advancement progress or lack thereof. When advancement progress is demonstrated the conference is documented in the Handbook.
- Boards of Review. After the Scoutmaster conference, the next step in the advancement process is a formal Board of Review. The scout appears in full uniform with his Handbook and a board of at least three adults determines if he has met the qualifications for advancement.
- Courts of Honor. These are awards ceremonies where advancement and merit badge acquisition is recognized. Families come and refreshments are served following the ceremony. Four are held each year in SUMC's Hottle Hall (across the street from our usual meeting place – in the new church building). They start at 7:30 pm.

- Troop Leaders Council (TLC). Held 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the chapel the first Tuesday of each month. This is a meeting for the junior leadership and is mandatory for the Senior Patrol Leader (SPL), Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL), Patrol Leaders, and Troop Scribe. All other staff members are encouraged to attend.
- Troop Leadership Training (TLT). Usually held on Saturdays, twice a year, soon after the troop elections. The purpose is to organize and train the incoming junior leadership. Mandatory for SPL, ASPL, Patrol Leaders, Scribe, Librarian, Historian, Quartermaster, Chaplain Aide, and Guide.

UNIFORM POLICY

Troop 1518 has a reasonable uniform policy that tries to accommodate all ages. We encourage all scouts to wear the full uniform, and we require it at Boards of Review and Courts of Honor. The parts of a full uniform are: hat, neckerchief with slide, class “A” shirt, pants, web belt with buckle, and socks. Otherwise, our uniform policy changes depending on the type of event.

Here are the rules broken down by the type event:

- Campouts. Class “A” shirt (tan button down) is the minimum uniform to be worn on trips to/from monthly campouts. We want the scouts to be identifiable when we make stops at fast food restaurants. They are not required to wear the uniform shirt in the field and can leave them in the cars. The troop tee shirt is an alternative in good weather when authorized by the Scoutmaster-in-Charge (SMIC).
- Day-trips. The Class “A” shirt is the minimum required, and it is normally worn throughout the trip.
- Troop meetings. Class “A” shirt is the minimum requirement, unless announced otherwise.
- Boards of Review. Full uniform required.
- Courts of Honor. Full uniform required.
- Service projects. Troop tee shirt. Scouts who do not wear the proper uniform are not sent home, but will be counseled if their non-compliance is consistent. If there are exceptions to the standard uniform policy, announcements will be made in advance or posted in the Troop Trumpet

Where can you buy the uniform and insignia? The BSA National Northern Virginia Scout Shop at Ravensworth Shopping Center, 5230 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA, (703) 321-4836, is the best option. Scout uniforms and other Scout items may also be purchased online at www.scoutsuff.org.

The Scout is responsible for purchasing his own Council patch, troop numerals and patrol patch. The troop provides a troop neckerchief and tee shirt to each new scout. If extras are needed the troop Quartermaster sells neckerchiefs for \$5.00 and tee shirts for \$7.00. Our Quartermaster also stocks some insignia items for sale. They include Troop 1518 numerals, already sewn together, for \$2.00 and Council patches for \$3.00 each.

SCOUT BUCKS

A portion of the annual mulch sale profits are set aside in the troop treasury and reserved to fund Scout Bucks. They are earned by scouts who work on the mulch sale flyer distribution or delivery and just like cash for members of the troop. They may be used to pay partial or full payment for any troop activity.

EQUIPMENT

The troop provides a lot of camping equipment for the scouts. To use it, a scout has to sign it out of the scout locker and make sure it's clean and dry when he turns it back in. Tents are especially vulnerable to damage from mildew if not completely dried out. They should be hung up to dry when they are brought home from a campout. If the weather is damp and they will not dry by hanging, a clothes dryer on the "no heat" setting can be used. The troop loses equipment sometimes because boys take gear home and put it in the basement or garage and it is forgotten about. All borrowed gear should be returned at the troop meeting immediately following the campout.

CAMPING CLOTHING

This section is intended as a short course on proper outdoor clothing in cold weather. There are two principle rules. The first is dress in layers. Wet or damp clothes cause the body to chill and can lead to hypothermia. The moisture can come from sweat or rain. Layering gives you some control over your sweating because you can take off layers as the temperature get warmer or add them as it get colder. The second rule is don't wear cotton in cold, damp weather. Cotton retains moisture, holds that cold moisture against the skin and dries slowly. Mountaineers have a saying, "cotton kills."

Early in scouting when your son is camping near the cars, clothing is not a major concern. If his clothes get wet he can change. It is when he graduates to backpacking and multiple changes of clothing are not available to him that proper clothing becomes critical. Clothing to protect your son in the outdoors can be expensive, and we don't expect you to go out and buy full sets right away. Your son will outgrow them anyway. You can help by helping your son chose the best clothing he has available to him at home.

OUTINGS (CAMPOUTS AND DAY-TRIPS)

There are some standard procedures for outings that you should know. The events are advertised well in advance in the newsletter, the Troop Trumpet, and usually through flyers at preceding troop meetings. A *Permission Slip* is distributed in advance that the parents must fill out. This document gives your permission for your son to go on the trip and provides your authority to get him medical attention if he is injured. Take care and fill the form out fully and accurately.

We do not draw money from the treasury to pay for outings. The cost of outings is paid for by the participants on a pay-as-you-go basis, and the price is always reasonable by any standard.

Some outings are inexpensive, like rock climbing or backpacking. However, where there are entrance fees (Kings Dominion) or equipment rental (white water rafting) the costs can be substantial. Unless told otherwise, checks should be made payable to "Troop 1518." Parents are expected to get their son to the departure point (usually the church) on time. Please be home or, if the boy is old enough, have a way that he can get into the house. If you are going to be out of town or away from the house for long periods during the outing, please let the Scoutmaster In Charge (SMIC) know a phone number where you can be reached. A SMIC is assigned for each outing. He is responsible for planning and running the outing. If you have any questions, direct them to the appropriate SMIC.

MEDICATION

Any medication, prescription or over-the-counter, is best carried by the scout who can self medicate himself on a schedule or when needed. The SMIC, after obtaining all the necessary information, can agree to accept the responsibility of making sure a scout takes the necessary medication at the appropriate time, but BSA policy does not mandate or necessarily encourage scout leaders to do so.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Mom and dad are always welcome on any outing, and if mom and dad go, brothers and sisters can go too on most events. The SMIC will decide if the event is too arduous or dangerous for younger siblings. The troop gear will be made available to families. If you didn't get to go rock climbing or caving when you were a kid, now is the time. The troop's insurance policy does not include family members for accident medical expenses and accidental death while participating in or traveling to scheduled troop activities. Friends can be invited to troop activities for the purpose of encouraging them to participate in Scouting, and they are covered by the troop's insurance policy. Adults always sleep separately from the scouts. Your son needs to stay with the other scouts so that he has the same experiences they do and so he can learn to be independent.

MERIT BADGES

Until the scout reaches first class rank, advancement should have priority over merit badges, but limited work on merit badges starts soon after becoming a scout. The first opportunity will usually be at summer camp. Summer camp offers advancement and merit badge opportunities. Summer camp is a good place to get things done that are difficult to do back home, like the first and second class swimming requirements. In addition to summer camp there are two other ways for scouts to earn merit badges.

The primary way is through the troop merit badge program. The troop normally offers two merit badges a month, one that is required for Eagle Scout and one that is optional. The troop provides the counselors, classroom space and other support. Merit badge books can be obtained by signing them out of the merit badge library located in the scout locker. The troop program operates during the scout year, but shuts down in summer.

Another approved way is for two or more scouts who are seeking the same badge to find an approved merit badge counselor and arrange to work with this counselor to earn the badge. The list of approved counselors is compiled by the scout district. The Old Dominion District has an extensive approved counselor list. The troop Merit Badge Coordinator holds the list and can provide information on the identities of district counselors. In addition, the district and council occasionally offers hoc merit badge opportunities that will be announced through the troop. Usually one district camporee each year offers merit badge opportunities.

To repeat, merit badges must be earned through summer camp, the troop merit badge program, or through the district/council program. However, there are exceptions that the Scoutmaster can grant. There are certain merit badges that can be earned on an individual basis. The counselor is normally a teacher or tutor who is not approved by the BSA, but is a responsible adult known to the parents and the community. Examples of some of these merit badges are reading, art, scholarship and music. To get an exception to do individual merit badge work the scout must see the Scoutmaster and get a blue card signed by the Scoutmaster before he starts working on the merit badge.