

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Congratulations on being the parent of a youth in Scouts BSA! Whether you have already been through the Cub Scout program or are new to Scouting, both you and your Scout are in for an adventure.

The purpose of this *Smooth Sailing Guide* (“*Guide*”) is to:

1. help you prepare your Scout when s/he is just starting out (Chapters 2-3)
2. provide the key information you need to understand the rank advancement path to Scouting’s highest rank of Eagle (Chapters 4-10)
3. make you aware of other achievements available for your Scout (Chapter 11)
4. give you important resources for staying on top of Scouting (Chapter 12), and strategies for keeping track of everything (Chapter 13).

The Planner notebook (Planner) that accompanies this *Guide* is your headquarters for all things Scouting (see Chapter 14). It includes checklists and forms to help you stay organized and on top of your Scout’s progress, and is set up to keep all your Scouting-related papers filed over the years.

How to Read This Guide

You might be feeling a bit overwhelmed. Fifteen chapters and 75 pages – so much information!

If you read the entire *Guide* in one sitting, don’t worry about taking it all in at once. Your *Guide*, which is mobile friendly, will always be available as a reference. You can also print a hard copy to put in your Planner. As you discover additional information – from the Internet, other people, Scouting experiences, etc. – your *Guide* makes a great place to jot down notes. At the end of every chapter there is a Notes page to do this.

But you don’t have to read this *Guide* in one sitting. For example:

- Is your Scout just starting out? You can read Chapters 2 and 3 on preparing your Scout and setting a goal.

- Is your Scout going to his/her first merit badge class? Chapter 7 will prep you both for this experience.
- Are you interested in learning about different Scouting awards? Sit down with Chapter 11.

Finally, there are calls to action for you throughout the *Guide*, but don't worry about those while you are reading. They are your heads up. When you have time to sit down with it, your Planner has all the tools necessary to get you up and running, to help you plan, and to keep you organized.

NOTE: There are a few online resources I consider important to include in your Planner. However, because they are not my own work product, I cannot include them myself. I have pointed them out in my "Tips" and provided the web page URL, with a recommendation that you print and add them to your Planner.

Your New Role

Scouts BSA, unlike Cub Scouts, is a youth-led program. Troop meetings, campouts, and other events are meant to be organized and run by the Scouts, not by parents. In fact, the Boy Scouts of America ("BSA") specifically states that troop meetings "are not a family activity, and the presence of parents can be a distraction" (<https://www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/FAQs.aspx>).

Your Scout also is responsible for making his/her own way through rank advancement. The pace at which s/he advances will largely be up to him/her.

As a parent it can be hard to sit back and give the reins to your Scout. But the BSA's view towards parental involvement is in line with its stated vision to "prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law" (<https://troopleader.scouting.org/scoutings-aims-and-methods>).

So let your Scout lead the way, but use this *Guide* and your Planner to help you be prepared for when s/he needs your advice or guidance.

The BSA does acknowledge that "parental involvement is not forbidden" (<https://www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/FAQs.aspx>). And in reality, troops need parents to help out as Scoutmasters, Assistant Scoutmasters, Committee members, merit badge counselors, volunteers, etc. Throughout this *Guide*, you will learn about some of these positions.

NOTE: In October 2017, the BSA announced that girls would be allowed to participate in the Scouting program. In May 2018, the BSA announced that it was changing the name of its program for 11- to 17-year-olds from Boy Scouts to Scouts BSA. Beginning February 1, 2019, girls were officially welcomed into Scouts BSA. You can learn more at <https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2018/05/02/scout-me-in>. In this *Guide*, the pronouns “s/he,” “him/her,” and “his/her” refer to youth in Scouts BSA, and are intended to be inclusive of all genders.

Ready to Set Sail

At the end of this *Guide*, you will have the knowledge and tools necessary to feel comfortable accompanying your Scout on the great voyage that is Scouting.

Let's get ready to set sail!