

Arrow of Light To Scout



FAMILY GUIDE

Scouting America
Susquehanna Council

#ADVENTURE ON!

Dear Scout and family,

Welcome to your final year as a Cub Scout! As an Arrow of Light Scout there are many exciting opportunities and challenges that are before you in the year ahead. I hope that you have fun and enjoy the adventure.

As your Cub Scout journey ends, you will begin on a new path that leads towards the highest rank in Scouting– the Eagle Scout. In the next program year, you will prepare to "transition" from being a Cub Scout to a member of a Scouts BSA troop.

You have been with your Cub Scout family for a long time and the prospect of moving to a troop may be both exciting and scary. This guide has been put together to help you on your journey.

We have so many great troops across the council that we are confident you can find a troop that is right for you and your family. However, not every troop is the same. Some troops do a lot of backpacking, hiking, some do a lot of camping, some focus on water sports, some are large, some are small, some are full of introverted Scouts, some are full of extroverted Scouts. It is important that you find the right fit. This guide along with the leaders of your pack are great resources to help you find your way. And if you ever need any help, please feel free to reach out to your district executive, or any member of our membership teams at the district and council.

Yours in Scouting,

Susquehanna Council Membership Team

Arrow of Light (AOL) to Scout Transition

It is an exciting time to be involved in Scouting; and for you and your parents, making the transition from a Cub Scout Pack to a Scouts BSA Troop is a big step. The Susquehanna Council wants every Scout that is interested in continuing his or her Scouting career to find the troop that is the best fit for the next part of your Scouting journey.

As you are finding the right fit, it is important that you know how the programs work including what is the same and different. It is also important to know that the transition is a process and that you are equipped with good tools to help you make the best decision.

As you will read, your AOL Den Leader and Cubmaster can be helpful in connecting you with local troops. If during this process, you have questions that your AOL Den Leader or Cubmaster can't answer, please don't hesitate to reach out to your District Executive or your District Membership Chair. They will be happy to assist you through the process.

About the Transition

Scouting offers a continuous program that becomes progressively more challenging. Cub Scouting takes place largely in the family. The Scouts BSA program is designed for boys and girls ages 11 through 17, who are old enough to be on their own in the outdoors. While adults serve as key leaders, Scouts hold leadership positions and plan the troop's program.

The passage from Cub Scout pack to a Scout troop should be smooth, with no time lost in between. By the time your Arrow of Light Scout is ready to cross over, you should be familiar and comfortable with the youth and adult leaders of a troop, their role in the troop and troop activities, and feel excited about beginning this new adventure.

The transition is not just the ceremony of bridging from one unit to the next. The ceremony is the culmination of events that helps set a Scout on the next stage of their Scouting career.



Finding a Troop

Finding the right Scout troop for you is the most important outcome of the AOL to Scout transition process. So how do you find the right one?

A great place to start is a local troop. Many packs have a troop at the same chartered organization (meeting place). This is a unit that may meet a different night of the week but has a history of having AOL transition from the pack to that troop. Usually, your Den Leader or Cubmaster will already have a connection and help set you up with a visit.

Looking for something different? Just like when you join a Cub Scout Pack, you can discover nearby Scouts BSA troops using BeAScout.org. Here you will find the troops closest to you and the contact information for the troop leadership.

Accept invitations from troops to visit. Many troops welcome Arrow of Light and Webelos Scouts to attend a troop meeting or participate in a troop activity. Take advantage of these opportunities! Attending an event doesn't obligate you to join that troop. Additionally, you can contact a troop as a family to explore whether their program and membership suit your needs. Use the contact information on the BeAScout.org page to get in touch troops in your area.

How many troops should I visit? As many as it takes to find the right fit. Some Scouts know without visiting any troops the troop that they want to join. A Scout, their family, and their den may visit 2,3,4,5, troops before they find the right one for them.

Do I have to go to the troop that the rest of my den is going? No, Arrow of Light Scouts can join any troop that they wish. Each troop is unique, and each Scout should find the troop that fits them.

Eligibility

Youth can join Scouts BSA if they have completed the fifth grade and are at least 10 years old **OR** have earned the Arrow of Light rank and are at least 10 years old **OR** are age 11 but have not reached age 18.

All Arrow of Light Scouts joining a Scouts BSA troop must complete a new youth application.



The Troop Visit

Visiting a troop is a crucial part of the rank requirement; and it is vital for a Scout aiming to join a troop that fits them well. Whether through an invitation or independent research, it's essential for an Arrow of Light Scout to visit the troop(s) they are considering. Since each troop is unique, AOL Scouts are encouraged to visit multiple troops to make an informed decision.

To help you prepare for your troop visits, we have compiled some helpful resources below. Given that you will spend considerable time with the troop you choose, it is important to approach the visit seriously and ensure all your questions are answered before making your decision. While a Scout can transfer to another troop at any time, conducting thorough troop visits increases the likelihood of finding the best fit from the start.



Differences Between Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA

The difference between Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA encompasses critical categories like unit structure, leadership, parental involvement, advancement, and camping.

Both programs are built on Scouting's time-tested values. That's evidenced by the fact that members of both programs recite the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Beyond that, though, you'll find more differences than similarities -- for good reason. You wouldn't teach a third-grader the same way you'd teach a ninth-grader, right? By the same logic, the approach to Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA shouldn't be the same either.

Below are examples of how Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA differ:

Unit Structure:

Cub Scouts: Cub Scouts are in dens, which are part of a pack. A den is made up of girls or boys of the same rank (age/grade). There are two kinds of dens: all-boy / all-girl or a coed den. A pack can be all-boy, all-girl, or include coed dens. The exception is the Arrow of Light dens which are single gender. Dens usually meet weekly or biweekly; packs meet monthly.

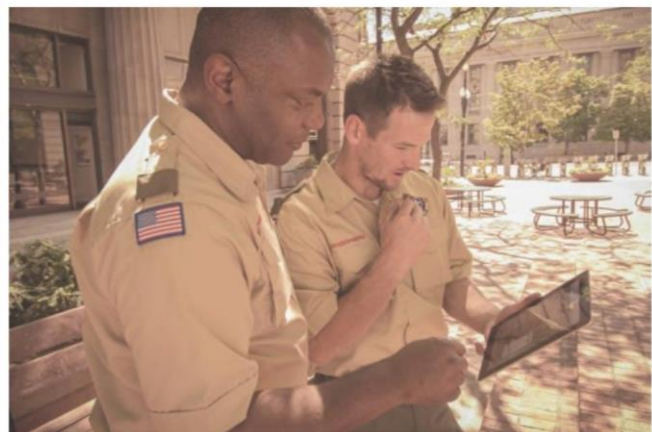
Scouts BSA: Scouts BSA members are in patrols, which are part of a troop. Troops are either all-boy or all-girl. Some leaders form linked troops, which means an all-boy troop and an all-girl troop share a chartered organization and troop committee. Some troops prefer mixed-age patrols (in which an 11-year-old and a 17-year-old could be in the same patrol), while others prefer to keep Scouts of similar ages together. Troops meet weekly. Patrol meetings typically are part of the weekly troop meeting, but patrols are welcome to meet on their own with adult supervision.

Leadership:

It's pretty simple: Cub Scout dens and packs are led by adults; Scouts BSA patrols and troops are led by the youth.

Cub Scouts: Adults plan and conduct the meetings and promote Advancement, teamwork, fun and character-building.

Scouts BSA: The Scouts plan and conduct meetings and outings. Adults step in when necessary for safety and they model good behavior. Youth-led troops might not be as organized or successful as if adults were running things, but the youth are able to learn from their mistakes and grow.



Parental involvement:

Parents are a critical part of both Cub Scouting and Scouts BSA.

Cub Scouts: Parents are expected to assist the pack with planning or helping with at least one activity or event annually. They may also take a leadership role in the pack or den. Parents are usually required to accompany their child on overnight campouts.

Scouts BSA: Parents are expected to continuously assist the troop by supporting the Scouts and participating in those tasks that the Scouts cannot do. This may include transportation to an activity, shopping for a trip or chaperoning a trip. It also may include assisting with fundraisers (finances and organization) and coordinating special events. It is expected that each family take an active role in the troop. Unlike Cub Scouts, parents aren't required to camp with their child.

Camping:

Cub Scouts: Limited to Scout and parent camping in tents or cabins. Campouts have a very structured schedule.

Scouts BSA: Monthly or bimonthly camping trips as well as additional outdoor day activities.

Much of the program involves activities that can only be done in the outdoors (nature, ecology, pioneering, orienteering, conservation, etc.)

Also available to the Scouts is at least one week of camping each summer. Not every minute of the campout is scheduled. Free time is important. Scouts normally get a couple of hours of free time to hang with friends, walk in the woods, work on advancement, sleep, play sports, or do nothing at all.



Top Ten Things to Look for in a Troop

When looking for a troop, this is a great list of some of the best things to look for in a local troop.

1. Fun -- It's got to be fun! Most of the activities within the troop have to be understood by the Scout as a fun, friendly, pleasurable, and rewarding experience. If a troop is too strict and regimented the Scout will lose interest.
2. Program – This is key to a well-run troop. The program should be planned out by the Scouts. This should be done annually. The program should include all the elements of Scouting: weekly troop meetings, monthly outings/events, weekend campouts, and yearly summer camps. The activities have to be new, exciting, and fresh to keep the Scouts interested.
3. Adult Leadership—All troops should have Trained Adult Leadership. Trained leaders are crucial to any well-run troop. The training provides the leader with the knowledge to understand the aims and methods of the Scouting program. When you visit a troop, look for the trained patch on the leader's uniform.

4. Youth Leadership – The Scouting program is designed to have the youth elected and appointed into leadership roles. A troop should have periodic elections to fill those positions. In addition, the troop should provide leadership training for those roles. The troop should conduct Junior Leadership Training (JLT) and/or send Scouts to council JLT training. Look for the trained patch on the youth leader's uniform.
5. Scout-Run Troop – The whole philosophy of Scouting is for the scouts to run the troop. The adult leaders are there to provide guidance and support. The weekly meetings, troop campouts, and troop activities should be planned and executed by the Scouts. The troop should encourage and strive to have its junior leaders run the troop. When observing a troop in action, see if the Scouts are running the program or the adults. Ask who choose and planned the last campout or activity.
6. Patrol Method – A troop should divide its Scouts into patrols of not more than eight. These patrols act like a team within the troop. They will elect a patrol leader and have periodic meetings either at the troop meetings or at a separate time and place. The troop should provide competitive activities at meeting and outings for the patrols to work as a team. This allows them to demonstrate their Scouting skills and plan for camping events or camp-o-rees. The troop should also have a functioning monthly Patrol Leaders Council, which plans the troop activities.
7. Meetings– Weekly troop meetings are pretty much the norm in Scouting. The troop should have a calendar for the year with the dates established for regular meetings and events.
8. Uniform -- The field uniform is an important part of Scouting and should be required in troop functions, like: ceremonies, religious activities, troop dinners, and district & council events. An activity uniform, which usually consists of a scouting T-shirt and scout shorts or pants, is commonly used for troop/patrol meetings, day activities, and weeklong camps. Troops may define or require uniforms in different variations but should have some defined requirements and periodic inspections.
9. District & Council Involvement -- A troop should have representatives attending monthly district roundtable meetings. The district and council provide a wealth of experience and knowledge to help the troop run a great program. They are a wonderful resource of information on training, activities, advancement, planning, and ideas.
10. Recruiting– A troop needs to bring in new Scouts. New Scouts provide the older Scouts with opportunities to mentor and teach them what Scouting is all about. It helps them build leadership and character. The best source for new Scouts is from the Cub Scout Arrow of Light program. A troop should have established a working relationship with local Cub Scout pack(s) to help bridge graduating Arrow of Lights to Scouts BSA. They should also have the Scouts in the Troop invite friends to join Scouting.

Questions to ask when visiting Troops

Arrow of Lights should ask:

- Is the Troop active?
 - Do they do things I would enjoy?
- What size is the Troop?
 - What size of a Troop would I like?
- Are there other boys/girls my age in the Troop?
- Does the Troop go to a summer camp?
 - Which summer camp?
 - Is it important to me where they go?
- Should I/ Could I go to summer camp?
- Does the Troop participate in any Honor Camper programs (e.g., Order of the Arrow)?
 - Do they matter to you?
- How often does this Troop do outdoor activities (e.g., Camping)?
- Will I have a say in decision making?
- Does the Troop have advanced programs for older Scouts?
- How often does the Troop meet?
- Do I have a good chance of advancing to Eagle with this Troop?
- Will I have fun?

Parents should ask (Troops should tell parents if they don't ask):

- What values/skills will my son/daughter learn?
- What are the other adult leaders like?
- Can I participate in leadership if I desire?
- Is this a Scout run Troop? Is that important?
- Where, when, and how often does the Troop meet?
 - Is it convenient for transporting my child?
- What is the age ratio of the Scouts? Do the older Scouts help the younger Scouts?
- How much will it cost? Camping? Summer Camp? Fundraisers? Uniforms?
- How often does the Troop camp?
 - Do I have to camp with them?
- Does the Troop go to a summer camp?
 - Which one(s)?
 - Is it important to me where they go?
- Does the Troop participate in the Order of the Arrow?
- Is the Troop active?
 - Do they do activities my son/daughter will enjoy?
- Will my son/daughter be encouraged/able to advance to Eagle in the Troop?
- How can moms/dads participate?
- Can this Troop provide a quality Scouting experience for my son/daughter and his/her friends?
- What is expected of the parents and family by the Troop?
- Will my child have fun?

Arrow of Light Troop Visit Checklist

Information about the Troop

Troop Number:

Meeting Place:

Scoutmaster's Name: _ _ _ _ _

Senior Patrol Leader's Name: _ _ _ _ _

Troop Contact Information:

My Evaluation of this Troop:

Are all the Scouts in uniform?	Yes	No
Was the meeting organized?	Yes	No
Is the meeting run by Scouts?	Yes	No
Did I feel welcome?	Yes	No
Did their campouts sound like fun?	Yes	No
Do they have a calendar?	Yes	No
Do I already know Scouts in the troop?	Yes	No
Will I enjoy the activities they have planned?	Yes	No
Were the older Scouts helpful?	Yes	No
Did they answer my questions?	Yes	No
Did they have a program for New Scouts?	Yes	No

Things I like about this troop:

Things I did not like about this troop:

Parent Troop Visit Checklist

Troop Number. _____ Date of Visit: _____

Sponsored by: _____ How Long: _____

Scoutmaster's Name: _____

Meeting Place

Contact Information: _____

Meeting Run by: Mixed Youth Adults

Was the meeting organized?

Does the troop produce a calendar of events?

Does the program schedule: remain similar from year to year

 change yearly remain similar with different summer camps

What special events does the troop participate? (e.g., Scouting for Food, Camporees, Merit Badge College, etc.)

Scout Leadership

Does the troop have active Scout Leadership?

How often do the Scout leaders meet?

How many Scouts are in the leadership positions?

How is the youth leadership decided?

Elected by youth
combination

Decided by adults
other

How often does the troop hold elections?

Camping:

How often does the troop camp?

What type of camping does the troop do? (check all that apply)

Summer camp: In Council Out of Council

Winter camp

Camporees

High Adventure

Backpacking

Canoeing

Most popular camp for the troop is located:

Do all the Scouts get to go on all of the outings?

Do campouts have a theme, merit badge, or rank requirement focus?

Uniforms:

Were Scouts in uniform?

Were the adults in uniform?

What are the uniform requirements of the troop?

How many uniforms will each youth need?

Costs:

What are the joining costs?

What are the local troop costs?

Are there additional costs to join the troop?

What fundraisers are available for the Scouts?

How are fundraiser earnings used in the troop?

Support troop needs

Applied to reduce expenses of Scouts

Notes:

Things I liked about this troop are:

Things I did not like about this troop are: