

Scouting as a Safe Haven

Program material for use at a Patrol Leader's Council, or part of a larger training program. See instructor guide at end.

Scouting's **safe haven ideal** describes how we should act and the *scouting spirit* we should display. It follows from the ideals embodied in the BSA Scout Oath and Law. Scouting should be a fun and challenging activity for scouts. It should also be free of unnecessary roughness, physical and verbal threats, and foul language:

Scouting promises a safe and supportive environment in which scouts can have fun and grow.

Please list two reasons a safe environment is important for your scout troop:

1.

2.

How do we ensure that troop and patrol activities provide a safe haven in which scouts can have fun and grow?

We need to make scouts feel:

- (1) free of physical and emotionally threats and intimidation, and
- (2) welcome, accepted and respected.

Consider how we act, how we think, and how we lead.

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Part of Woodbadge Ticket for NE-III-133. *Back to Gilwell!*

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A. How scouts act —

Scouting events need to provide a friendly, cheerful and affirming environment for ALL scouts. This describes how every scout should act. In our own conduct we must avoid unnecessary roughness, physical and verbal threats, foul language, and disrespect, and we should not tolerate such behavior by others. Scouting should be fun, it should build character, and it should give scouts opportunities to gain confidence and self-respect by their successes.

1) How do those negative behaviors hurt the scout toward whom they are directed?

2) How do negative behaviors diminish the character of the scout who does them?

3) How does such behavior effect your patrol and the troop?

B. How we think –

Avoiding negative behavior is not enough. We need to look for ways to make other scouts feel welcome and respected. To see that all scouts feel included and are encouraged by their involvement with the troop we can —

- (i) Actively welcome and attempt to draw all scouts into troop and patrol activities.
- (ii) Watch for scouts who feel left out because of their own limitations and interests, or because of something that happened; then we can intervene to be *helpful, friendly, and kind* to such scouts so that we can bring them back into the troop.

How does this apply to —

1. a younger scout who is hurt in a game?

2. a first-class scout who does not play a game very well and is embarrassed?

3. a scout whose close buddies are not on a particular campout?

4. a scout in your patrol who misses several meetings because of school work?

5. a scout in your patrol who cannot perform a needed scout skill in a competition?

In general, what should each of us seek to do?

*In scouting, all scouts are viewed as leaders
and are expected to strive to follow the Scout Law and show Scout Spirit.*

“On my honor, I will do my best to help other people at all times.”

The Safe Haven ideal follows directly from these scouting principles.

C. How We Lead –

Boy Scouting looks to all scouts to be leaders, whether or not they hold a troop or patrol office. However, elected leaders have an *explicit responsibility* to see that scouting functions provide a safe haven and respect each scout.

How can we do this in your patrols and the troop? How might you improve?

I. *By setting an example: what you DO says more than what you SAY.*

Leaders should set a good example, and strive to create a safe haven.

Give two example of how YOU will try to improve:

1.

2.

II. *By planning events and activities* in which all scouts can safely participate and have fun.

Give two examples where your patrol or your troop can improve:

1.

2.

III. ***By being fair as a leader.*** When acting as a leader, one is often called upon to assign tasks and to resolve conflicts.

a) Do scouts BELIEVE you are FAVORING yourself and your friends? What are two things YOU can DO differently so that your decisions are VIEWED as fair?

1.

2.

b) The RULES are for EVERYONE. Why is it important in scouting that leaders apply the same rules to themselves as they do to others?

What is one way you can improve?

IV. ***Setting an example when keeping order and discipline.*** Keeping order at patrol and troop functions is the responsibility of every scout, but problems need to be addressed by patrol leaders, senior patrols leaders, and other junior leaders. Critical times are during games, at the opening and closing of the troop meeting, and when problems arise at campouts.

How to lead—

Scout leaders need to keep order by

- (i) providing a good program and positive incentives for good behavior,
- (ii) listening to complaints and problems,
- (iii) searching for resolutions to conflict that all can agree to, and
- (iv) helping scouts understand the broad consequences of their action.

Discipline should strive to address the problem and not the symptom.

Scout leaders may need to involve other juniors leaders and scouts in the resolution of disagreements and to clarify agreed upon codes of conduct.

Finally scouts should involve adult leaders before problems get out of hand, or if severe disciplinary action is required.

How not to lead—

Scouts should not lead by using physical or mental threats or intimidation.

This is important because:

- (i) this is not how the Scout Law indicates that scouts should behave,
- (ii) scouting is a voluntary activity that should be fun, and it is unlikely to be an enjoyable activity if scouts act in this fashion,
- (iii) it does not show respect for the scout, and
- (iv) the scout leader and the troop lose moral respect and authority.

Give an example of unscout-like leadership that you have observed.

What were the consequences? Was it effective in the long term?

*As a leader in your troop,
it is your responsibility to see that patrol and troop activities
provide a safe haven and friendly environment.*

*Scouts must treat other scouts and adults
by both word and deed
with the respect and friendliness required by the BSA Scout Law.
A Scout is ... helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful ...*