Session One
Working With Boy Leaders/
The Patrol Method

Time Allowed

25 minutes

Teaching Objectives

• Show how to establish an environment that is safe both physically and emotionally in which Scouts can learn, grow, and enjoy Scouting to the fullest.
• Explain that listening well is the first step in using appropriate leadership styles.
• Show how positive reinforcement is among the most valuable contributions adults can bring to the lives of young people.
• Employ various supportive leadership styles, matching them to the needs of each Scout and to the patrols and troop as a whole. Among the most effective styles are explaining, demonstrating, guiding, and enabling.

Materials Needed

• Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training video, No. AV-02V015, or DVD, No. AV-02DVD15
• Equipment for showing videos
• PowerPoint® slides or overheads from CD, if desired
• Flip chart or other means of taking notes
• Wall posters
Recommended Facility Layout

- Session meeting area. Each participant should have a comfortable place to sit, take notes, and organize written materials. That setting most often consists of tables, each accommodating six to eight participants forming a patrol, and enough chairs for all participants.

Delivery Method

- Instructor-led discussion illustrated with video clips

Presentation Procedure

"The patrol method is not a way to operate a Boy Scout troop, it is the only way. Unless the patrol method is in operation you don't really have a Boy Scout troop."

—Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting

During New Leader Essentials training, you were introduced to the basics of safe Scouting. Within a Scout troop, that means that meetings, activities, and all other Scouting events strive to be physically and emotionally safe for everyone taking part. In Session Two of this training, during our discussions of the outdoor program, we will discuss at length what you can do as Scoutmasters strive to establish and maintain that safe environment.

By your own example and by insisting on high standards from others, you can steer Scouts away from vulgar jokes, disrespectful comments, bullying and inappropriate teasing, and any other forms of inappropriate behavior that can diminish the Scouting experience or cast a negative light on the BSA. Every boy should feel welcomed into the troop, and every boy should have a feeling of security and opportunity once he has joined.

You as Scoutmaster set the tone of a troop by the ways in which you support and inspire Scouts and trust them with positions of leadership. You also have ultimate authority to deal with behavior that will not be tolerated in the troop. It is essential that you establish and maintain an environment that strives to be safe for Scouts both physically and psychologically.
Within that safe environment, there are tremendous opportunities for Scouts to grow and to thrive on the Scouting experience. There are a variety of ways that Scoutmasters can make that experience as rewarding as possible for Scouts and for themselves. Let's talk for a few minutes about working with boys.

**Open up the discussion of working with boys by asking participants this question:** When it comes to working with boys, what are your greatest concerns?

Write the responses on a flip chart and post the pages. Among the answers you may receive are that leaders may lose control, that Scouts won't have fun, that older troop members may tease younger boys, etc. (In a large group, this activity may be done by patrols.)

**Instructors' Note**

If answers to this question are not forthcoming, instructors can generate discussion by sharing some of their own experiences. Other ways to give meaning to this discussion is to write the questions on flip chart pages, then cross out each question as the group discusses a satisfactory answer.

Ask participants to turn in *The Scoutmaster Handbook* to the opening of Chapter 3, “The Boy-Led Troop.” Invite someone to read aloud the sentences in the box at the end of the first paragraph:

One of your most important challenges as Scoutmaster is to train boy leaders to run the troop by providing direction, coaching, and support. They will make mistakes now and then and will rely upon you to guide them. But only through real hands-on experience as leaders can boys learn to lead.


Much of our discussion to this point in Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training has focused on the framework and mechanics of a Scout troop—how a troop is organized, how meetings are planned and run, where Scoutmasters can find written resources and other adults to help make a troop a success.

Throughout those discussions, we have made many references to the fact that a troop should be boy-led. We have emphasized that a boy-led troop offers the richest experiences for troop members and, in the long run, for adult leaders, too.
Now let’s talk about some of the specific skills that you can use to work with boys, skills that will strive to ensure a safe environment for Scouting and that can empower boys to have the greatest success in planning and leading the programs of their troops.

**A Key to Troop Leadership**

Here’s a basic fact of being a Scoutmaster: *Leadership is often a matter of providing what is missing.*

Let’s say that again. *Leadership is often a matter of providing what is missing.*

Imagine a Scout troop lost in the woods. What do they need from a leader? Solicit responses from the participants and use their answers to guide the discussion, touching upon these ideas:

- Perhaps the Scouts need to be directed to go a certain way. If there is a storm coming or night is falling and their safety is at stake, a Scoutmaster’s best course of action may be to step to the front of the line and get everyone quickly to shelter.
- Perhaps the Scouts need to be coached in using their maps and their compasses to figure out where they are and to chart their own course back to a known location.
- Perhaps the Scouts simply need to be supported in determining their own solution to the problem and then carrying it out.
- With some groups, a Scoutmaster may find it best to delegate to the senior patrol leader or other boy leaders the responsibility for managing the situation, then staying in the background ready to offer positive reinforcement or further guidance in the form of coaching or support.

In each of these situations, something was missing from the group. It might have been a lack of skill on the part of the Scouts or an inability to understand how to apply the skills they did possess. It may have been a lack of clear direction from the boy leaders of the troop to address the situation, or perhaps simply the need for encouragement to motivate them to draw upon the strengths they already possess.

Whatever the case, you as Scoutmasters can be most effective by adjusting your leadership styles to match the needs of your troop. Rather than taking the lead yourself in situations where the boys are capable of finding their own way, you can coach and support them in providing their own leadership. And when they do need more hands-on direction from you to teach them a skill, to set a boundary, or to move them to a new level of their development, you can do that, too.
In other words, you are providing your Scouts with what is missing.

But how do you discover what the missing elements are? The easiest way is also the most essential ... by being a good listener.

**Listening**

One of your most powerful tools as a Scoutmaster is also one of the simplest—be a good listener. Why? What is it about listening that is so important to leadership?

Many of your most effective moments as a leader will occur when you are simply paying close attention to the words and actions of your Scouts.

- One value of listening is that it lets boys know that you care. You are valuing their thoughts. You are giving weight to their ideas. You are opening lines of communication that can lead to fresh ways of doing things. For many boys, having an adult pay attention to them through careful listening is a tremendously important experience.

- A second value of listening is that it will give you information about the current status of each boy in your troop. It can help you understand the stage of development of the troop itself.

Listen to the Scouts in your troop. Make yourself available to them during Scoutmaster conferences, on hikes and campouts, and on other occasions when they want to talk. Often they will simply be eager to share the excitement of a moment or the pride of having learned a new skill or completed a requirement. At other times they may have concerns about something happening in the troop or in their lives. Train yourself to pay attention to what they are saying and to listen without passing judgment. When you are willing to hear what they want to share, you can address issues in ways that are coherent, meaningful, and effective.


**Positive Reinforcement**

It is impossible to underestimate the effects of positive reinforcement. Seek out opportunities to “catch Scouts doing something good” and then praise them for it. Help them realize when they have done worthwhile deeds, and acknowledge their acts of kindness, good will, and sincere effort.
The role of positive reinforcement is itself reinforced through the BSA’s advancement program, recognizing Scouts who have achieved specific goals along the trail to Eagle. Just as important, though, is the sincere support that adults can offer young people throughout their experience within and beyond Scouting.

Another way to look at positive reinforcement is to consider its place in the larger context of Scouting. A Scout is friendly. A Scout is kind. A Scout is trustworthy. In the way we treat others, be they boys in a troop, fellow adult leaders, or individuals with no connection to the BSA, our pledge to conduct our lives according to the Scout Law provides us with the guidance to offer the best possible support to those around us.

**Matching Leadership Styles to the Needs of Scouts, Patrols, and Troops**

By listening well and by paying attention to other clues provided by Scouts, a Scoutmaster can get a sense of the style of leadership needed in a given situation by a boy, by a patrol, and by a troop.

One way to think about approaches to leadership is the Leading EDGETM progression of styles or behaviors:

- Explaining
- Demonstrating
- Guiding
- Enabling

Each fills a particular need. Each can supply what is missing in a given situation or to an individual or team at a certain point in its development.

**EXPLAINING**

For a boy new to Scouting, for a Scout taking on a new leadership position, or for a troop undertaking a fresh challenge, what is often missing is a sense of structure and an understanding of what Scouts are supposed to do. A Scoutmaster can fill that need by explaining—that is, giving clear guidelines. He can tell Scouts, “Have the members of your patrol use buckets of water to put out the campfire, then we can remove any trace that it was here.”
DEMONSTRATING
Demonstrating as a leadership behavior comes when Scouts are still new to a task and are not together as a patrol or team. When their group is storming through the challenges of working together and skill and motivation are pretty low, demonstrating literally involves showing them what is expected—how to do something, what the desired outcome looks like, and even what their behavior needs to look like.

You are not providing feedback on their skill or behavior; you are still showing how to make sure their patrol understands and setting the example.

GUIDING
As Scouts, patrols, and a troop are becoming more comfortable with their new roles and activities, a Scoutmaster can begin to step to the sidelines and allow boys to assume more responsibilities. Guiding allows the Scoutmaster to continue to provide coaching and praise as the Scouts take on the challenges and learn from their own mistakes.

ENABLING
As individuals and as a team, members of a Scout troop can reach a stage of high skills and high productivity. Youth leaders plan and carry out worthwhile troop meetings that lead to exciting outdoor adventures and other successful troop events and have a sense of “we did it ourselves.” A Scoutmaster who has helped a troop reach this stage can shift his leadership behavior to enabling. This includes delegating more of the responsibility, but it goes further. It means creating an environment for their continued success at the skill or activity. Praise can be followed by high praise when they continue to do well.

Instructors’ Note
If you are using a VHS video, ignore the segment titled “Leadership Styles,” as it has been updated with the Leading EDGE™ material.
What Scouting Can Provide a Boy

In bringing this presentation to a close, let’s turn to The Scoutmaster Handbook, Chapter 11, “Working With Boys,” and the passage titled “What Scouting Can Provide a Boy.”

As we discuss leadership skills and Scoutmaster responsibilities and all the rest, it’s important to remind ourselves now and then that our efforts to do the best we can as leaders have great rewards. Among the most important are what Scouting can provide a boy.

(Ask a participant to read this passage aloud.)

What Scouting Can Provide a Boy

- The sense of belonging to a group
- Achievement and recognition
- Self-esteem
- Confidence in himself
- Self-discipline
- Self-reliance
- Healthy interactions with others
- Importance and effectiveness of teamwork

There are many approaches that Scoutmasters can use to help Scouting provide the most for boys. Listening well is the beginning. Providing an appropriate style of leadership is valuable, as well. But underlying it all is the willingness to seek out good in young people and to support them with positive reinforcement.

Open the discussion to questions and comments relating specifically to the material covered in this presentation.