Session Two
Preopening Activity

Time Allowed

15 minutes

Teaching Objectives

- Model an effective, enjoyable preopening activity that Scout leaders can use with their own troops.
- Encourage participants to work together to succeed as a team.
- Lay the foundation for the upcoming discussion of the four steps to advancement.

Materials Needed

- A 3-foot length of soft rope or nylon cord, suitable for tying knots, for each participant and each instructor
- The Boy Scout Handbook, No. 33105 (Participants should have their own copies. The preopening activity requires at least one copy of the manual for every group of six to eight participants.)
- Posters on the wall

Recommended Facility Layout

- An open area of the Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training meeting room or an outdoor setting near the meeting room

Delivery Method

- Participant-driven activity and team competition guided by instructors
Presentation Procedure

Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster
Leader Specific Training—Session 2
PowerPoint® slides
Slide 1

As participants arrive for the opening of Session Two, provide each person with a 3-foot length of knot-tying rope and present the challenge that everyone learn how to tie a selected knot. Point out that instructions for tying the knot can be found in the Boy Scout Handbook. Encourage participants to help one another.

Instructors’ Note

The knot to be tied should be one of the six knots required for the ranks of Tenderfoot through First Class. All of these knots are illustrated and described in The Boy Scout Handbook.

• Square knot
• Double half-hitch
• Bowline
• Clove hitch
• Sheet bend
• Timber hitch

Base the choice of knot on what you know of the participants’ skill levels. Ideally, the knot will prove to be somewhat of a challenge for most participants and will offer opportunities for them to help fellow team members figure out how to tie the knot. For a group of new Scoutmasters with few Scouting skills, the square knot may be just right. Scouters who are a bit more savvy in the ways of the woods may be better served with the bowline or sheet bend.

Use the Teaching EDGE™ process to teach the skill. First explain how to tie the knot; then demonstrate it, then hand them the rope and talk them through it as they tie it; then enable them, giving them the opportunity to practice on their own during the day, by giving them their own piece of rope.

Session 2, slide 2

When all the participants feel confident in their ability to tie the knot, organize a knot-tying relay. Each team of six to eight participants (united by sitting together at the same table, divided into teams by an instructor, or grouped by some other means) sends its members across the room one at a time to tie the knot to the satisfaction of instructors serving as judges. A participant successfully tying the knot runs back to tag the next member of the team who, in turn, crosses the room to tie the knot.
As all the members of each team correctly tie the knot and return to the starting point, that team is declared a winner. The relay ends when every team has succeeded and all have been declared winners.

At the conclusion of the competition, debrief the activity. In the discussion with participants, bring out the following concepts:

- The event that participants have just experienced is a model of preopenings they can use with their own troops. Many Scouting skills can be used as the focus of a pre-opening activity. Some are most appropriate as challenges for individuals (for example, applying a first aid bandage, loading gear into a backpack, or lighting a fire by friction), while others are better done by teams of participants (pitching a tent, putting up a dining fly, etc.).
- Competitions conducted in BSA settings should be designed so that participants are challenging themselves against a standard where every patrol can win and all participants can feel as though they have achieved.
- An important goal of competitions in Scout settings is to ensure that everyone has fun. Ideally, everyone can also learn something new.
- Participants were engaged during this activity in one of the most basic concepts of Scouting—the four-step process of advancement. These will be discussed more fully later in this session. For now, it is enough to direct participants to the appropriate wall poster featuring the four steps to Scout advancement.

The Four Steps to Scout Advancement

1. A Scout learns.
2. A Scout is tested.
3. A Scout is reviewed.
4. A Scout is recognized.