



PROGRAM FEATURES FOR TROOPS, TEAMS, AND CREWS

A Guide to Program Planning
Volume 2



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

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Volume 3 will be available in late 2015.

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INTRODUCING THE NEW PROGRAM FEATURES

NOW FOR TROOPS, TEAMS, AND CREWS

As the Boy Scouts of America's mission statement says, Scouting exists "to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law." There is nothing in the mission statement about meetings, outings, and other activities. However, it would be impossible to achieve our mission without dynamic, relevant programming, which also requires effective program planning. The goal of Program Features for Troops, Teams, and Crews is to make that planning a little easier for you, the unit leader.

These three volumes of Program Features bring together 48 features in three volumes for use by Boy Scout troops, Varsity Scout teams, and Venturing crews. That's four full years of suggested programming. While your unit may not use the material here exactly as presented, it offers a launching point for you and your youth members to plan exciting programs that will keep members coming back, facilitate advancement and personal growth, and help you achieve Scouting's mission.

Annual Program Planning

In Scouting, planning is a two-phase process.

- Long-term planning results in an annual calendar and a set of unit goals for the year.
- Short-term planning yields detailed plans for one month's meetings and outings—and sometimes a little more.

The Annual Planning Conference

Long-term planning happens at the annual planning conference, typically held in late spring or early summer, as soon as possible after school, community, and council calendars have been published. A month or two before the planning conference, the committee chair, unit leader, and senior patrol leader, team captain, or crew president should perform the following steps.

Step 1—Gather the necessary information.

- Key school dates, like holidays, homecoming, and exams
- Community event dates, including those the unit might want to participate in and dates you should avoid
- The chartered organization's key dates, again considering opportunities to collaborate as well as potential scheduling conflicts
- Personal dates, such as family vacations, that may affect the unit's activities

- Key district and council dates
- Data collected from the troop resource survey or activity interest survey
- Last year's annual plan, if you have one
- Unit priorities and goals
- Advancement records for each member
- A general outline of next year's program

Step 2—Discuss the planning process with your top youth leader, explaining the importance of this process and his or her role in it. Discuss options for programs and activities and the unit's goals. Share a draft outline for next year's program, and ask for the youth leader's input and thoughts. Be flexible at this point. You should both review the program planning conference guide, available online at www.scouting.org/BoyScouts/ProgramPlanning.aspx for troops and www.scouting.org/Venturing/ProgramPlanning.aspx for crews, to be on the same page with the agenda and to work ahead.

Setting Goals

What sorts of unit goals should the draft plan include? Here are some possibilities.

- Attend summer camp.
- Have an outdoor adventure at least once a month.
- Strengthen relations with the chartered organization by planning a service project to benefit the organization and by increasing the unit's presence, such as on Scout Sunday or Scout Sabbath.
- Earn the National Camping Award and a gold Journey to Excellence rating.
- Conduct a fundraiser to help pay for unit expenses such as new tents and other camping gear.
- (For troops) Have each patrol earn the National Honor Patrol Award at least once.

Step 3—Have the top youth leader share the draft plan with other youth leaders, who then share it with other members to get their input and ideas. Besides reviewing the draft plan, members could evaluate the current year’s plan. A useful tool is the “start, stop, continue” method, which is based on three simple questions:

- What should we start doing that we are not currently doing?
- What should we stop doing that is not working?
- What should we continue doing that is working well and helping us succeed?

It’s useful for members to have copies of the current year’s calendar available for review, as well as the draft plan. They shouldn’t limit themselves to those materials, however. They might, for example, see a need to focus more (or less) on advancement during meetings or to build more opportunities into the calendar for patrol outings or social events—priorities that may not have been considered.

Step 4—Invite the following people to attend the conference to maximize the efficiency of planning:

- The unit’s youth leaders
- Unit committee members and other adult leaders
- The chartered organization representative
- The unit commissioner (optional)
- Anyone else who might be helpful, such as parents

Keep in mind that these people will play very different roles at the conference:

- Active roles—elected youth leaders (and all members in Venturing)
- Supportive roles—unit leader, assistant unit leaders, and any other adults

To keep the planning conference as purposeful and efficient as possible, invite only those adults who actively and regularly engage in unit activities and decision making.

Holding the Annual Planning Conference

The annual planning conference can be held at any regular meeting place in three or four hours on a Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon. However, if you have access to a cabin or retreat center, you might consider turning the conference into an overnight retreat to allow time for fellowship and team building. If the conference follows closely after unit elections, some units also combine the planning conference with the Introduction to Leadership Skills for Troops (ILST) or introduction to Leadership Skills for Crews (ILSC), the first step in the youth leadership training continuum.

Most adults should not play active roles in the planning conference. Instead, they should give their input ahead of time to the unit leader for program. If extra adults attend, keep them busy by putting them in charge of cooking and cleanup, and allow the youth leaders to focus on the task at hand.

Besides the materials described above, you might prepare poster-size calendars for each month that will be planned. (Office supply stores offer a variety of products that will work, including wall planners with erasable surfaces.) Pencil in the dates from the draft plan, as well as other important district, council, community, school, and chartered organization dates.

Another useful tool is the program planning chart, a worksheet for recording by month the program features, activities, courts of honor, service projects, leader meetings, and more. This worksheet can help ensure, for example, that leader meetings are scheduled every month and that courts of honor and service projects are evenly spaced throughout the year.

The outcome of the conference should be an annual calendar, a list of monthly program features (e.g., hiking, engineering, wilderness survival), and a set of unit goals. The amount of detail in the plan will vary. For some months, the group will decide both where it wants to go and what it wants to do. For other months, the group may choose either the destination or the outing’s focus.

Ideally, the calendar should include a mix of familiar and unfamiliar activities and destinations. A few traditional outings each year are fun; more than a few can make the program feel repetitive.

Even traditional outings can benefit from occasional tweaks, such as doing a favorite activity at a new location.

While discussing ideas at the conference, use these ground rules.

- It is important to respect one another's views. Listen and don't interrupt.
- Keep focused on the task to plan the unit's annual program. Don't get sidetracked.
- Write out ideas so everyone can see them.
- Be in agreement.

The Annual Planning Conference, Step by Step

Step 1—The unit leader leads a discussion on the unit's goals for the coming year. Write the goals on a flip chart or eraser board, and agree to that list of goals.

Step 2—Share with the rest of the meeting attendees the printed draft of the calendar that shows the dates researched (or review the dates listed on poster-size calendars around the room) and events planned. Ask if anyone has other dates and events to add.

Step 3—Take a few minutes to discuss these dates and events. Once you feel comfortable with this stage of the calendar, you might take a vote to approve the dates and activities listed so far.

Step 4—The top youth leader shares updates from members about what they want to do. This exercise can be the most challenging in the program planning conference, so take as much time as is needed. The Program Features could be used as a foundation for the group's desired programs or themes. You might take it one month at a time. Don't forget to include advancement opportunities. The flow of the program is up to you and could be driven by your goals. As an example, if one of your goals is for the unit to take a wilderness trip to Alaska, some of the programs could focus on traveling to Alaska, wilderness survival, trip planning, wilderness first aid, and van safety.

Again, as the group agrees on a monthly feature or program theme, write it on a flip chart or board and take a vote. Designate someone to record all this on a master calendar, and take good notes!

Step 5—Add other important dates such as:

- Unit meetings and leadership meetings
- Boards of review
- Courts of honor
- Elections
- Open house
- Service projects
- Webelos Scout joint outings and transition ceremonies
- Any other activities that can be scheduled this far in advance (for example, fundraising events)

Step 6—Hold a final discussion on the plan, calendar, and goals, and then take a vote for approval. Once youth members approve the annual plan, it will go to the unit committee for final approval. Work with the chartered organization representative to make any facilities reservations at the chartered organization. As soon as possible, begin making campsite reservations for the dates and locations selected.

Step 7—To make this plan a truly valuable tool, it must be shared with each unit family, the chartered organization, and all other interested parties. The unit must follow its plan, share it with everyone, and review it regularly to see if modifications are needed.

After the Planning Conference

Prepare the calendar in an easy-to-use format for distribution. Here are some features to consider.

- Include as much detail as possible, including meeting start and end times.
- Indicate when regular meetings won't be held or will be held at different times.
- Color-code events for easy reference. For example, you might use blue for unit meetings and outings, green for meetings that don't affect all members (such as patrol leaders' council, unit committee, boards of review), red for special notices (such as meeting cancellations), and black for external events (such as national Scout jamborees, roundtables, and training courses).

- Add a revision date at the bottom of every page. If the calendar must be updated later, change the revision date and highlight the changes.

Distribute copies of the final plan to youth members and their families, adult leaders, members of the unit committee, and representatives of the chartered organization. Be sure to include Cub Scout pack leaders, the unit commissioner and district executive, and the chartered organization's leader, secretary, and facilities manager. Also be sure to post the calendar on the unit website and at the meeting place.

Monthly Program Planning

No matter how comprehensive and well planned your calendar is, it's simply a skeleton on which to build your program. Short-term planning puts flesh on the bones. Each month, the patrol leaders' council or crew officers plan in detail the coming month's outing and meetings. If the group is on the ball, it actually looks at three months of programming each time.

- Briefly review the month that's just ending using the "start, stop, continue" model.
- Plan in detail everything the unit will do in the month that is just beginning (or will soon begin).
- Briefly preview the following month and make assignments for tasks like reserving campsites.

As with the annual plan, be sure to communicate the results of each monthly planning meeting with all members, leaders, and other stakeholders—especially if changes are made to the annual plan.


How to Use the Program Features


Each program feature in this book provides a month's worth of program ideas for Boy Scout troops, Varsity Scout teams, and Venturing crews. You will find the following content:


- General information about the topic
- Related advancement requirements and awards
- Games related to the topic (or that are just for fun)
- Ideas for using the EDGE method (Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, Enable) to teach topics
- Four weeks' worth of meeting plans

- Outlines of three main events (outings) that build in length and intensity
- Print and online resources related to the topic, including a list of related program features

Each program feature: You will find these icons in each program feature:

 **Essential:** Basic skills-development information and beginner-level activities

 **Challenging:** Skills-development information and activities for those who have moved beyond the basics

 **Advanced:** Learning topics and activities for those who are ready for the ultimate challenge

A NOTE TO VENTURERS

For the purpose of earning the Discovery and Pathfinder awards, the main event examples from each module can be considered as follows:

Essential (Tier I): Beginner level activities requiring little preparation or planning; events often last less than a full day (not overnight); activities are not far beyond the comfort zone for most participants.

Challenging (Tier II): Midlevel activities requiring some planning or preparation; events last less than four days; some prior skills development may be desirable or required; activities extend beyond the standard range for most participants.

Advanced (Tier III): Higher level activities requiring extensive preparation; events last at least four days; activities are mentally and physically challenging, requiring skills development prior to participation; such adventures are highlights of the program year and may take place once or twice annually.

BOYS' LIFE TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING CHART

TABLA DE PLANIFICACIÓN PARA EL PROGRAMA DE TROPA BOYS' LIFE

Charter Expiration Date
Fecha de vencimiento
del estatuto:

Troop
Tropa

Month Mes	Program Features Características del programa		Troop/Program Planning Date(s) Fecha(s) de Planificación del Programa/Tropa	Troop Outdoor/ Camping Activity Actividad al aire libre/campamento de la tropa	District/Council Activity Actividad de Distrito/Concilio	Chartered Organization Dates/Charter Renewal/ Service Project Fechas de la Organización Autorizada/ Renovación de estatu- tos/Presntación de estatuato/Proyecto de servicio	Special Events/ Holidays Eventos especiales/ Días festivos	(For Troop Use) (Para uso de la tropa)	Board of Review/ Council Honor Consejo de Revisión/ Consejo de Honor	Leaders' Meeting Junta de líderes		
	New-Scout Patrol Patrulla de nuevos Scouts	Experienced Scouts Scouts con experiencia								Patrol Leaders' Council Concilio de líderes de patrulla	Troop Committee Comité de Tropa	District/Council Roundtable/ Training Capacitación de Distrito/Concilio/ Mesas redondas
Sept. Sept. 2015												
Oct. Oct. 2015												
Nov. Nov. 2015												
Dec. Dic. 2015												
Jan. Ene. 2016												
Feb. Feb. 2016												
Mar. Mar. 2016												
Apr. Abr. 2016												
May Mayo 2016												
June Jun. 2016			Conduct annual troop program planificación del programa anual de la tropa.									
July Jul. 2016												
Aug. Ago. 2016												

BOYS' LIFE TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING CHART (A program package item)
TABLA DE PLANIFICACIÓN PARA EL PROGRAMA DE LA TROPA BOYS' LIFE
(Un artículo del paquete del programa)



Boys' Life subscriptions expire two months after unit charter expiration.
Las suscripciones Boys' Life caducan dos meses después del
vencimiento del estatuto de la unidad.



CAMPING

Meeting Plan: Plan Ahead/Knots



Week 1 Date _____

2

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

4

3

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Prepare several decks of index cards listing various items of camping gear, one item per card. Have small groups sort the cards in order of importance, setting aside items that shouldn't be taken camping.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 10 minutes	Review the Scout basic essentials from the <i>Boy Scout Handbook</i> ; discuss why each item should be considered essential.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 35 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and practice the square knot, two half hitches, taut-line hitch, clove hitch, timber hitch, bowline, and sheet bend. Discuss how each is used in camping. Make a list of personal camping gear Scouts should have. 		7:20 p.m.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the above skills. Make a camp gadget using lashings. Learn the trucker's hitch and explain its use in camping. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the above skills. Practice splicing. Learn how to tie a monkey's fist or woggle. 		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss plans for the main event. Review what personal and group equipment will be needed. 		7:55 p.m.
Game 15 minutes	Play Knot-Tying Relay (described earlier).		8:10 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.

Parts of a Program Feature

- 1 A thumbnail description of the meeting content
- 2 A breakdown of the parts of the meeting with suggested times
- 3 Note who is in charge of each segment of the meeting
- 4 Write down the actual times for each segment of the meeting
- 5 A fun activity for members to do as they are gathering
- 6 Start the meeting right with a formal opening ceremony
- 7 A quick (or not so quick) introduction to the topic for all members
- 8 Specific instruction for all three skill levels; note the colored icons
- 9 Time for patrols or other small groups to practice skills and prepare for the main event
- 10 A game that tests what members have learned or just lets them blow off steam
- 11 Take care of business at the end of the meeting
- 12 Get ready for the next meeting and the main event



CAMPING

Main Event: Overnight Car Camp



Date _____

2 **Logistics**
 Location: _____

 Departure time: _____
 Return time: _____
 Duration of activity: Overnight
 Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____
 Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____
 Transportation: Group _____ Self _____
4 Tour and activity plan: Completed _____ Submitted _____

3 **Essential (Tier I)**
 Find a campsite that you can drive to and that offers plenty of opportunities for outdoor adventures. Camp overnight and hone your camping skills.

5 Equipment List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camping gear (individual and group) • Backpacks, canoes, or bicycles to get the group to and from the campsite (optional) • Food • Water • Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)
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6 Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose your campsite and event location. • Plan camping duty roster and meal plan. • Develop a schedule that allows plenty of time for setting up camp the right way, including establishing defined sleeping, social, and cooking areas. • Practice camping skills Scouts need to work on (fire building, cooking, knots, etc.). • Participate in other activities as desired (hiking, boating, mountain biking, etc.). • On departure, be sure you are leaving no trace of your presence.
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7 Safety	Normal camping safety guidelines apply. Use the buddy system; cell phones are a good idea as appropriate. Have a first-aid kit handy.
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Notes

For an added challenge, plan for all Scouts to reach camp under their own power—by hiking, cycling, or canoeing. If possible, have them carry their own gear. All could travel by the same means, or different groups could choose different options.

Parts of a Main Event Plan

- 1 A quick description of the main event
- 2 Basic information such as times and transportation plans
- 3 A quick reference to the event's ability level (essential, challenging, advanced) and more in-depth description of the main event
- 4 Key equipment you will need to take, including specialized gear for the type of event
- 5 A thumbnail planning worksheet
- 6 Safety concerns you should keep in mind
- 7 Special notes about the activity, including variations you could consider

