



# **AOL to Scout Transition**

**Silver Comet District**

**Updated February 2023**



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## INTRODUCTION

Let's start off with a quick review of the Cub Scout program. This is old news to you, but a quick recap is necessary to really highlight the major differences between the two programs. As you know, Cub Scouts begin in Kindergarten (Lion Scout) and continue through fifth grade (Arrow of Light), until a Scout "crosses over" into Scouts BSA. **Crossover** refers to when a Cub Scout officially says goodbye to their Pack and is welcomed into a Scouts BSA Troop. That's right! Cub Scouts have Packs and Scouts BSA have **Troops**. Same concept, different name.

A Cub Scout Pack is typically made up of boys and girls from a few select local schools or churches all within the same geographic area, and all within that first grade through fifth grade age range. Cub Scouts are arranged by grade into dens. Parents play a vital, hands-on role in the successful operation of the Pack, holding various leadership positions, planning the program activities for the year, and planning weekly meetings. The Pack Committee should meet regularly and make decisions as a group.

Let's talk now about Scouts BSA. Once a Scout crosses over into the Scouts BSA program at the end of fifth grade (or when they turn 10 and also complete their Arrow of Light), they can continue with their selected Troop until they are 18-years old. Scouts BSA Troops are organized similarly to a Cub Scout Pack; however, a Troop will draw Scouts from multiple places within a larger geographic region. Every Troop is different, and Scouts and their families should find a Troop that is a good fit for them. We'll talk more about the structure of the Troop in the next section. Parents and adult leaders still play a vital role in the operation of the Troop, but in a more "hands-off" fashion, as the model for Scouts BSA Troops is "Scout-Led".

## ORGANIZATION / STRUCTURE

**Patrol:** Upon joining a Troop, your Scout will be placed in a Patrol. A Patrol is a small team of eight or so Scouts, grouped together by rank or experience level, age, or common interests. Every Troop arranges their Patrols differently. Patrols allow Scouts to learn skills together, take on leadership responsibilities, and develop friendships that will last over a lifetime. Some Troops hold Patrol meetings during their regular Troop meetings. Others encourage Patrols to meet on their own time.

**Patrol Leader (PL):** Each Patrol is led by a Patrol Leader. This is equivalent to an Adult Den Leader in a Cub Scout Pack. But in the Troop environment, it's a Scout who was elected by the other Scouts within the Patrol to be the Patrol Leader. A Patrol Leader helps plan, organize, and conduct Patrol meeting activities. They represent the Patrol as a member of the Patrol Leader's Council (PLC). Patrol Leaders keep their Patrol members informed about upcoming events and deadlines and encourage their Patrol members to complete advancement requirements. They should set a good example by living up to the Scout Oath and Law. Patrol Leaders are led by the Senior Patrol Leader.



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**Senior Patrol Leader (SPL):** All Patrol Leaders report to a single Senior Patrol Leader in the Troop. This is equivalent, in many aspects, to the Cubmaster in a Cub Scout Pack. However, once again, in the Troop environment, this position is held by an elected Scout. Just as the Patrol Leader is the leader of Patrol members, the Senior Patrol Leader is the leader of the Troop.

The Senior Patrol Leader is responsible for the Troop's overall operation. With guidance from the Scoutmaster, they take charge of Troop meetings and of all Troop activities. The Senior Patrol Leader does everything they can to help each Patrol be successful. They preside over the Patrol Leaders' Council.

Different Troops have different requirements for holding the position of Senior Patrol Leader. The Senior Patrol Leader can also have an Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL) to help them.

**Additional Leadership Positions:** There are numerous other Scout-led positions in the Troop beyond Patrol Leader, Senior Patrol Leader, and their assistants.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Scribe: The Scribe keeps the Troop records. They record the activities of the PLC.
- Librarian: Troop librarians oversee the care and use of Troop books, pamphlets, magazines, audiovisuals, and Merit Badge Counselor Lists. They check out these materials to Scouts and leaders and maintain records to ensure that everything is returned.
- Historian: The Historian collects, assembles, and preserves Troop photographs, news stories, trophies, flags, scrapbooks, awards, and other memorabilia, and makes materials available for Scouting activities, Courts of Honor, the media, and Troop history projects.
- Quartermaster: Quartermasters serve as the Troop's supply boss. They keep an inventory of Troop equipment and see that the gear is in good condition. They work with Patrol Quartermasters as they check out equipment and return it.
- Den Chief: Den chiefs are Scouts who assist a Cub Scout den leader or Webelos den leader.
- Webmaster: Troop Webmasters are responsible for maintaining the Troop's website. They make sure that information posted on the website is correct and up to date and that the privacy of youth and adult Troop members is protected.

**Patrol Leader Council (PLC):** The Senior Patrol Leader, Patrol Leaders, and all other Scouts with leadership positions within the Troop form the Patrol Leader Council (PLC). The PLC meets regularly to plan the upcoming Troop meetings and outings. This is equivalent to Leaders Meetings in a Cub Scout Pack. The Scoutmaster of the Troop and additional adult leaders are present at this monthly meeting to offer guidance to the PLC. The Senior Patrol Leader runs the monthly PLC meetings.

**Adults:** There are numerous ways for adults to be involved in the Troop for adults. Beyond the Scoutmaster (SM), adults can be registered Assistant Scoutmasters (ASM's) or Committee Members. There are also a few very key Committee Member positions such as the Committee Chair, Treasurer, and Advancement Chair. There are also numerous non-registered ways to assist the Troop as well as your Scout, which we'll cover later.



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## MEETINGS

**Patrol Meetings:** Some Troops hold Patrol meetings during their regular Troop meetings. Others encourage Patrols to meet on their own time.

**Troop Meetings:** Most Troops meet once a week, however, some Troop schedules may vary, so be sure to ask your Troop for scheduling information before you join. Once again, all Troops are different, but a typical Troop meeting goes something like this:

- Opening Flag Ceremony with the Scout Oath and Law
- Announcements such as upcoming outings, service projects, etc.
- Patrol Meeting / Time
- Instruction– some meetings will have an instruction period, typically an introduction to a Merit Badge.
- Games / Social – organized games for the Troop, and of course the social aspect of just being able to hang out and talk
- Closing comments, usually re-iterating the earlier announcements.
- Finally, a Scoutmaster’s minute by the Scoutmaster.

**Court of Honor:** Troops regularly hold a meeting called a Court of Honor. These meetings typically are held quarterly (but again, each Troop is different). The Court of Honor is to recognize the Scouts for their achievements since the last Court of Honor. All Rank advancements and Merit Badge completions will be recognized. Family members are encouraged to attend.

## ADVANCEMENT

Advancement in a Scouts BSA Troop is very different than in Cub Scouts. Advancement can be broken down into two basic categories: Rank and Merit Badges. The official records for these are maintained by the Troop Advancement Chair. Some Troops utilize electronic tracking programs such as Scoutbook. Some Troops utilize the Scout’s handbook ONLY as a written record. Be sure to talk with your Scout’s Advancement Chair to see how your Troop handles advancement recording.

**Rank:** Rank advancement is not done by grade/age like in Cub Scouts. Scouts advance at their own pace through the ranks. Your Scout will have until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to advance to the rank of Eagle, Scouting’s highest Rank. Let’s talk first about the steppingstones to Eagle.

**Scout Rank:** This badge is awarded when the youth can demonstrate a rudimentary knowledge of Scouting skills and ideals such as tying a square knot and knowing the Scout oath, law, motto, and slogan.



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The next three ranks focus on the areas of Scoutcraft, physical fitness, citizenship, personal growth, and Scout spirit.

- Tenderfoot Rank
- Second Class Rank
- First Class Rank

**Star Rank:** Star is awarded when the Scout serves actively in the Troop in a position of responsibility for at least 4 months, performs at least six hours of community service, and earns six merit badges (four of which must be among the 13 required for Eagle Scout rank).

**Life:** Life is awarded when the Scout serves actively in the Troop in a position of responsibility for six months and performs six hours of community service. A Scout must also earn five merit badges (at least three of which must be required for the rank of Eagle) for a total of 11, including the six previously earned.

**Eagle:** Requirements include earning a minimum total of 21 merit badges, including all required badges that were not previously earned, and demonstration of Scout Spirit, service, and leadership. This includes an extensive service project that the Scout plans, organizes, leads, and manages. An Eagle Scout applicant must also write several essays, request five recommendation letters, compile an application binder and undergo an Eagle board of review, before his application is approved at the national level. The process typically takes several years, with the most intense and time-consuming aspects coming in the last three to six months.

Please see the Scouts BSA Handbook for more detailed information on the requirements for each rank.

**Scoutmasters Conference:** After all requirements for a rank have been completed, your Scout must schedule a Scoutmaster's Conference with the Scoutmaster. The Scoutmaster's conference is simply a visit between the Scoutmaster and a Scout. During the conference, the two can discuss the Scout's ambitions and life purpose, set goals for future achievement (both in Scouting and beyond), review the Scout's participation in the Troop and explore their understanding and practice of the ideals of Scouting. The conference also gives the Scoutmaster an opportunity to solicit feedback on the Troop program and any challenges the Scout is facing.

**Board of Review:** After all requirements for a rank (except Scout rank) have been completed and a Scoutmasters Conference has been completed, a Board of Review is the next and final step for Rank advancement. Your Scout will need to schedule a Board of Review with the Troop Advancement Chair. Its purpose is to determine the quality of the Scout's experience and decide whether the requirements for the rank have been fulfilled. If so, the board not only approves the Scout's advancement but also provides encouragement to continue the quest for the next rank.



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**Merit Badges:** In Cub Scouts, Scouts can earn different beltloops and pins for successful completion of their rank activities and electives. They are generally simple and require anywhere from 5-10 easy requirements to be met. The equivalent in Scouts BSA is merit badges, however, they are much more difficult to obtain. Each merit badge has its own book, listing the requirements, along with information a Scout needs to be prepared to work on the merit badge. A scout must read the Merit Badge book, complete all requirements, and then have them “signed off” by an official Merit Badge Counselor. This Merit Badge Counselor may be a leader in your Troop or may be a leader from your Council or District.

The process for obtaining merit badges may vary slightly from Troop to Troop, but can generally be described as follows:

- The Scout obtains permission from the Scoutmaster (SM) to start the merit badge. This is done for multiple reasons, including to make sure the scout is not over his head on a merit badge and that he meets the minimum requirements. He will obtain a blue card signed by the SM to show that he has permission to work on the merit badge. Some Troops are utilizing electronic blue cards in lieu of hard copy blue cards. This is fine.
- The Scout should read the merit badge book (available online or at your local Scout Shop) and familiarize themselves with the material and requirements. Some Troops also maintain a library of merit badge books for their Scouts’ use. Check with your Troop Librarian before spending money on a merit badge book.
- The Scout performs the requirements at summer camp, a merit badge clinic, on their own, with their family, etc.
- Merit badge worksheets are available online for each of the 135 available merit badges and are helpful for Scouts when arranging their notes. This step is not required but is encouraged.
- Once completing the above, the Scout will review the requirements with a merit badge counselor by sitting down with the counselor and explaining, showing, or completing the requirements as detailed.
- The counselor will sign off on the blue card.
- The Scout turns the completed blue card into the Scoutmaster and the rank patch or merit badge will be awarded according to the Troop’s policies. Some Troops hand out awards right away, and some Troops save advancement recognition for the next Court of Honor.



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**Merit Badges: Eagle Required:** To obtain the Rank of Eagle, there are 21 Merit Badges required: 14 Eagle specific + 7 chosen by the Scout. The 14 Eagle required merit badges are:

- First Aid
- Citizenship in the Community
- Citizenship in the Nation
- Citizenship in the World
- Citizenship in Society
- Communication
- Cooking
- Personal Fitness
- Emergency Preparedness *or* Lifesaving
- Environmental Science *or* Sustainability
- Personal Management
- Swimming *or* Hiking *or* Cycling
- Camping
- Family Life

## **MISCELLANEOUS:**

**BSA Annual Health and Medical Record:** Your Scout must have a BSA Annual Health and Medical Record on file with the Troop. Sections A, B, and C (medical physical) must be completed. This is different than Cub Scouts, as Section C was not previously required. Per BSA policy, this is an ANNUAL form, so a new one must be turned in yearly.

**Adult Participation:** Scouts BSA Patrol and Troop meetings are intended to be an activity for youth. They are not a family activity, and the presence of parents can be a distraction. However, parental involvement is not forbidden. If a parent or guardian would like to be present during a Troop Meeting, they should consult with the Scoutmaster in advance so a way can be arranged for them to observe. There also might be provision for them to register for a position on the Troop Committee or as an Assistant Scoutmaster. There are always ways for parent or guardian to be involved.

Ready to volunteer? A few key points to remember:

- You must complete an adult application and consent to a background check
- You must have completed Youth Protection training
- You must have a BSA Annual Health and Medical Record on file with the Troop



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Not ready to volunteer just yet? That's OK. There are many other ways you can help your Scout be successful in the Scouts BSA program.

- Support your Scout, but don't do things for them. Your Scout will take on growing responsibilities and self-sufficiency in Scouts. Both parents and the Adult Leaders in the organization will be there to support and guide the Scouts, but parents should begin a purposeful transition away from doing things FOR their Scout and towards allowing their Scout to do for themselves. Being responsible for their own progress towards Rank Advancement, packing their own bags for outings, and finding answers to their own questions are good examples of transitioning towards being responsible and self-sufficient.
- Stay Connected. Find out how your Troop communicates (Scoutbook, email, FB, etc) and follow along for important information for your Scout.
- Fundraising. While the Scouts are responsible for fundraising activities such as camp cards, parents will need to assist and encourage their Scout in those efforts. Fundraising keeps our costs low, provides the Scout with spendable funds in their Scout Account, and greatly supplements their activities, equipment, and outings.

## **OUTDOOR PROGRAM**

In the outdoors, Scouts have opportunities to acquire skills that make them more self-reliant. They can explore and complete challenges they first thought were beyond their ability. Attributes of good character become part of them as they learn to cooperate to meet outdoor challenges.

Troop outdoor activities may include:

- Day Hikes: Reasonably short hikes (3 to 10 miles) in terrain without a lot of elevation gain or loss.
- Service Projects: Daylong projects that may be related to conservation, food collection, building shelter, or healthy living activities.
- Patrol Activities: A Scout patrol may hike or camp with other patrols in the unit. Two registered adult leaders 21 years of age or over are required at all Scouting activities, including meetings.
- Weekend Overnights: Most Troops plan and carry out outings once a month or once a quarter throughout the year.
- Camporees: Councils and Districts plan camporees and other outings during the year that give Scouts an opportunity to test their knowledge and skills in competitive events with other troops and patrols.





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District, Council, and National Outdoor Opportunities:

- Jamborees: Every four years, the Boy Scouts of America hosts a National Scout Jamboree. More than 40,000 Scouts and leaders from across the country participate in this 10-day event filled with the most popular and highest quality outdoor activities Scouts enjoy.
- Council High Adventure: A high-adventure experience includes at least five nights and six days of trekking in wilderness and other rugged, remote locations. Trekking may include backpacking, canoeing, mountain biking, horse packing, mountain climbing, ski touring, rafting, kayaking, or a host of other outdoor adventures.
- National High Adventure:
  - Florida National High Adventure Sea Base: located in the Florida keys, offers a variety of aquatic and boating programs.
  - Northern Tier National High Adventure: based in northern Minnesota, provides a variety of canoe treks and programs.
  - Philmont Scout Ranch: located in the mountains of New Mexico, provides excellent backpacking treks and great views of wildlife and nature.
  - Summit Bechtel Reserve: in the mountains of West Virginia offers Scouts the opportunity to experience BMX biking, skateboarding, and the “BIG ZIP” and may have the opportunity to raft the whitewater of the New River.

## SUMMER CAMP

Summer Camp is a very important part of scouting, particularly for new Scouts. This is a time for memory making, for meeting new friends, learning new skills and exploring the great outdoors. Most of all, camp provides an opportunity for young people to take the lead, test their abilities and push their limits, all while having a blast. Studies have shown that after attending summer camp, Scouts displayed higher levels of skills in three areas: teamwork and collaboration, positive self-image, and work ethic and conscientiousness.

Summer camp may be the first time sleeping away from their families for some Scouts – parents do not attend, unless as a registered adult leader. This is an important step towards independence for your Scouts. We encourage you to check with your Troop regarding their summer camp plans and sign your Scout up for memories that will last a lifetime!

## RECOMMENDED PERSONAL GEAR

- |                 |                |                |                   |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| ● Pocketknife   | ● Water Bottle | ● Compass      | ● Sleeping Pad    |
| ● First Aid Kit | ● Flashlight   | ● Mess Kit     | ● Two Person Tent |
| ● Rain Gear     | ● Firestarter  | ● Sleeping Bag | ● Tarp            |

Most Troops have a cache of “Troop Equipment” which often includes tents, cooking equipment, and more. Check with your Troop before buying a bunch of equipment – you may not need it!



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## UNIFORM

The BSA has always been a uniformed body. Wearing a uniform gives youth and adult members a sense of identification and commitment. Check with your Troop regarding their specific uniform policy.

**Field Uniform:** Sometimes referred to as the Class A uniform, the khaki (tan) and green Scouts BSA uniform is a well-known symbol of American scouting. All Scouts in the program wear the same uniform with the major differences being the badges each Scout has earned and the Troop specific neckerchief. Scouts and leaders should wear their uniforms to all patrol meetings, troop meetings, and scout outings.

**Activity Uniform:** Sometimes referred to as the Class B uniform, this consists of a Troop or other Scout T-Shirt, Scout pants or shorts, Scout socks. Activity uniforms are worn for work projects, sporting activities, and other events in which the dress uniform might get damaged.

**Scout Handbook:** This is officially part of the Scouts BSA Uniform and should be brought to each Troop Meeting.

**Patch Placement:** Have questions about which patch goes where? There's a handy guide located at <https://www.scouting.org/resources/insignia-guide>. Your Troop leaders, particularly your Troop Advancement Chair, are valuable resources for any uniform questions.

## FUNDRAISING

Fundraising continues in Scouts BSA just like in Cub Scouts. The funds raised can be used by the Scouts to help offset the costs of trips, camping, etc. Each Troop is different, but typically, the Troop Treasurer maintains each Scout's account and can provide you or your Scout with the detail about its status.

**Camp Cards:** These are \$5 discount cards sold in the Spring with one-time or multi-use coupons to local establishments. Check with your Troop for more information on the percentage of sales earned from each card for your Troop.

**Other Fundraising Events:** Some Troops participate in their own, additional fundraisers outside of the traditional council-wide popcorn and camp card sales. Some fundraisers have included Christmas tree recycling, Christmas wreath sales, pine straw sales, and more. Check with your Troop for more information.



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## COMMUNICATION

Communication is key to knowing what's going on in the Troop. Generally, it is your Scouts' responsibility to know what's going on and what due-dates there are – but we are talking about teenagers. So, there are numerous ways the various Troops communicate their important information including websites, social media, emails, Scoutbook, flyers, etc. Find out how your Troop communicates and get involved!

For information about the Atlanta Area Council, visit [www.atlantabsa.org](http://www.atlantabsa.org)

For information about the Silver Comet District, visit [www.silvercometdistrictbsa.org](http://www.silvercometdistrictbsa.org)

## ORDER OF THE ARROW

The Order of the Arrow (OA) is Scouting's national camping honor society. It recognizes Scouts and Scouters (adults) who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives. Scouts are elected into the Order by their fellow Troop members. Membership Requirements include:

- Be a registered member of the Boy Scouts of America.
- Have experienced 15 nights of Scout camping while registered with a Troop
- At the time of their election, youth must be under the age of 21, and hold at least the rank of First Class

## IN SUMMARY

We hope this document has answered a lot of your questions and will help get you up-to-speed with the Scouts BSA program. Your Scout is about to embark upon the journey of a lifetime. Remember, the true reward of becoming an Eagle Scout isn't the fanfare at the finish but the experiences along the way. Don't rush a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Take the time necessary for your Scout to learn and comprehend what Scouting is giving you: friendships, leadership, and a path in life.