

Troop 87 New Parent Guide

Or, Things I Wish I'd Known As A New Parent

Youth-Led...But Parents Help (A Lot)

Unlike Cub Scouts, which is very much parent-driven, Scouting BSA is “youth-led”—the older Scouts plan and run the meetings and activities, and guide the younger Scouts. This **does not** mean that adults are absent but it does mean that they step back unless there are concerns about health and safety. (We also do a lot of paperwork behind the scenes, as you will learn.) We are striving to grow effective leaders and that means the Scouts must make decisions and see the consequences.

If you have concerns about the health and safety of your (or any) Scout, do not hesitate to bring it up with any of the adult leadership. If there is an immediate concern, always speak up *right then!*

Youth-Led Doesn't Mean No Adults

Just because the Scouts are the leaders doesn't mean that the parents/adults have no responsibilities. We need a *lot* of parent involvement:

- At a minimum, you should guide your Scout's advancement (see below) the six days a week they're not at a meeting. We don't (and can't) cover all junior Scout advancement topics during troop meetings -- some of them *have* to be done at home, with you. By working with your Scout on where they are, and what they need to do for their next rank, you increase your chances of parenting a new Eagle.
- The first Wednesday of each month is the Patrol Leaders Council (youth and adult leadership planning) at 6pm and the Parent Meeting at 7pm. During the Parent Meeting we hear about activities the Scouts did in the past month, plans for the months to come, and discuss issues that need adult involvement.
 - Despite the name, all Scouts are welcome to join the PLC and suggest activities for Troop meetings. (This is especially good for advancement nights, see below.)
- The PLC tries to schedule at least one advancement-oriented meeting or activity a month. You or your Scout can provide useful feedback on what the Scout leadership should be doing for these advancement nights.
- All Troop activities require a *minimum* of 2 registered adults for supervision. More is better. Especially for our campouts, having adults along is crucial. If you can show up for activities, for campouts, or come to summer camp with us, that is useful for your Scout and for the Troop as a whole.

- As of 9/1/2023, any adults going on an overnight activity *must* be registered with the BSA, which means that you have taken the online Youth Protection Training (YPT). YPT Training takes ~1 hour and is good for 2 years.
- This restriction does not apply for day activities, just for overnights.
- Becoming a registered leader – the Troop will pay your registration fee! – is extremely helpful to the Troop.
- While activities are youth-led, let's face it, long-term planning is not a young teenager's forte. For us to go to interesting places (Yosemite, Pinnacles), or do neat things, adults are better at setting up the framework. If there's a place you think we should go camping, act! Make the reservations, get the permits, let us know!
- The Troop does a lot of fundraisers and support for the Temple (our sponsors), and those require adult coordination. The Cherry Blossom Festival in April and Obon in July are big events for the Troop and they need a lot of adult coordination. If you are able and willing to help, it is *greatly* appreciated.

Advancement

If you know anything at all about Scouting, you probably know that Eagle Scout is the highest award (there are more awards beyond Eagle, but those are icing on the cake). There are 7 intermediate ranks along the way, starting with "Scout" and culminating with "Eagle Scout." The rank progression gets steadily harder and is calibrated to be achievable as each youth matures. Scouts working on the first ranks (Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class) are *junior Scouts* and those working on later ranks (Star, Life, Eagle) are *senior Scouts*. In theory, advancement for junior Scouts is mostly covered at Troop meetings and activities (led by senior Scouts), while senior Scout advancement is more individual. Senior Scout advancement in particular requires leadership positions, service projects and merit badges.

What you need to know as a parent:

Advancement Is Scout-Driven

Some Scout troops are very rank-advancement-focused and have organized programs to get younger Scouts through the junior ranks. Troop 87 is not one of those troops. There is one troop meeting each month that focuses on junior Scout advancement, but it is organized and led by the senior Scouts -- if your Scout needs a particular requirement, it's worth asking (see below about the Troop Guide & Advancement Meetings). In the end, your Scout is responsible for their own rank advancement (and we are delighted to help them).

If advancement is not your Scout's thing, that's OK. (See "Advancement Isn't Everything", below.) They will still gain a lot from Scouting and we are happy to have them in the Troop.

The Scout Book Is Your Friend (So is ScoutBook)

Your Scout should have a Scout Handbook, which has pages at the back for tracking their advancement. **As your Scout completes requirements, these should be signed off by the Scout leading the activity or an appropriate adult (a Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster, or the appropriate Merit Badge Counselor). It is recommended that they get signed off as soon as the skill is done.**

If it's not signed off, it's *not done!*

There is also an online system, ScoutBook, which is connected to the BSA's official electronic records. It's not uncommon for ScoutBook and the Scout's Handbook to get out of sync, and planning for our advancement activities is based on what's in ScoutBook. Ideally, you should compare your Scout's progress in their book with what's recorded in ScoutBook and report discrepancies to the Scoutmaster, Troop Committee Chair or Advancement Chair.

ScoutBook URL: <https://scoutbook.scouting.org>

Troopmaster URL: <https://tmweb.troopmaster.com/mysite/MVTroop87> (TroopMaster is an old record-keeping system that Troop 87 used to use; it's now deprecated and new Scouts will not be present in those records.)

Advancement Sign-offs

In general, rank advancement sign-offs can be done by a senior Scout (the Troop Guide, the Senior Patrol Leader, Assistant Senior Patrol Leader or other member of the Leadership Patrol, or their Patrol Leader) or by a Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster. Merit badge requirements, if you do them, must be signed off by the relevant Merit Badge Counselor (merit badges are not required for junior Scout ranks). With few exceptions, unlike Cub Scouts, parents aren't authorized to sign off on requirements (but you can back your Scout up when they talk to someone who can).

The Troop Guide & Advancement Meetings

There is at least one meeting every month (usually the second Wednesday) that is specifically oriented around junior Scout advancement. The *Troop Guide* is the senior Scout who is responsible for advancement of new Scouts in general and the Advancement Meeting in particular. While the Guide tries hard to pick topics that are useful to as many Scouts as possible, they are *not* mind-readers and they are not *that* much older than your new Scout — they need help! **If there are specific topics your Scout needs for advancement, make sure this gets brought up with the Troop Guide or at the PLC, so they can plan out the advancement meetings.**

Oh, and of course: **Bring the Scout Handbook to Advancement Meetings for sign-off. If it's not signed off, it's *not done!***

Camping Nights

The junior ranks **require** that the Scout participate in outdoor activities and campouts, including packing, helping set up, planning and preparing meals, and cleaning up. It starts with 1 night for Tenderfoot and goes to 10(?) for First Class. Summer camp is allowed once, but that won't cover everything—you need to go on campouts! (See Outings, below.)

Family camping is not an acceptable substitute, although that certainly helps your Scout reinforce their skills.

There is a log of camping nights in the back of the Scout book. As they go on campouts, make sure to record these. Our electronic records are based on the electronic signup sheets on the Troop website, please register here!

Service Hours

Scouting is not just fun, but about helping out in the community. We do many activities to help the Buddhist Temple and the community at large, and it's part of the requirements for most of the ranks. To earn Eagle, a Scout has to plan and lead a service project.

There is a log of service projects and hours in the back of the Scout book. **These should be signed off as the Scout does them.** (Service projects are ones that don't benefit the troop, so our fundraisers don't count).

Examples of service projects include:

- Helping on an Eagle Scout service project (senior Scouts organize and lead a multi-person service project in order to earn the Eagle rank, and they always need help)
- Helping at the Obon festival
- Helping run the service at our annual Scout Sunday
- Flag-planting on Memorial Day weekend
- Writing Holiday Cards to Veterans

Service projects will usually be announced on our email lists and at our meetings. Most will require sign-ups.

Activity Sign-ups Are Important

All activities outside of Troop meetings are posted on the Troop website and have electronic signup sheets. (Ask for the password to the "Restricted Member Area" so that you can look directly.) Usually the activities are announced on the Troop email list as well, including links to the signup sheets. Activities may be canceled if not enough Scouts sign up.

Our records use the signup sheets to track what your Scout did, which is particularly important for the camping and service hours advancement requirements. Please, always sign up for activities you plan to participate in!

Signup sheets can be found at: http://troop87.us/cgi-bin/event_list.cgi (password-protected, ask)

Board of Review/Scoutmaster Conferences

Every rank advancement (all the way to Eagle) requires Scouts to have a meeting with the Scoutmaster and to have a Board of Review. The Scoutmaster conference is a discussion about what they've done and what they'll need to do next, while the Board of Review is intended as a validation of their work (it is **not** a quiz). The Board of Review is run by non-Scoutmaster adults (and we always need volunteers!).

Both Scoutmaster conferences and Boards of Review **must be requested** by the Scout, either by asking in person or sending an email to:

Scoutmaster conference: sm@troop87.us

Board of Review: bor@troop87.us

Special Requirements To Be Aware Of

There are a couple of requirements for junior ranks that are well-known for being a challenge, not in terms of actual difficulty but for getting the Scouts to do them. Of particular note are the ~~GyberChip (for Scout)~~ and ~~(CyberChip has been deprecated as of late 2022)~~ the drug & alcohol awareness class (for Second Class). The Troop has resources to get Scouts through these and they're best done in a group, at the advancement meeting -- talk to the Troop Guide if you need to finish this requirement (someone else probably does too).

Opinion: Focus on Rank Advancement First, Then Merit Badges

Scouts BSA is well-known for "merit badges", which are general introductions to a topic: a Scout learns a bit and demonstrates some skill. There are merit badges for citizenship, for personal skills such as fitness, cooking, and personal economics, for shooting sports, for career-oriented fields like programming and law and entrepreneurship, and for skills like welding: in short, for all sorts of interesting and useful topics. Senior Scout ranks require merit badges for advancement, but these don't come into play until you are at least a First Class Scout. For younger Scouts, given the choice between working on rank advancements and merit badges (and given that you have a finite amount of time and attention), you should encourage them to work on rank advancements over merit badges.

Advancement Isn't Everything

As noted above, Troop 87 lets Scouts progress at their own pace -- we don't push them to reach certain ranks by certain times. We think that this is OK: that Scouting delivers many benefits just from participating -- service to others, respect, practical skills that aren't covered elsewhere. It is

worthwhile to participate in the program even if you don't reach (or want to reach) Eagle Scout, and it's still a lot of fun!

Service

The Troop does service for both the Buddhist Temple and the Community. The most important ones, where **we need your help** are:

Scouting For Food (early November)

A food drive, in early November, that takes place over 2 weekends. We have a territory where the Scouts distribute door hangers (the first weekend) and pick up food donations (the second). The collected food goes to a local food bank (CSA) and helps feed the less-fortunate in our community.

Obon Festival (mid-July)

Obon is a very important festival for the Buddhist Temple community, and the Troop helps out a lot by doing various service jobs at the festival. This is over a weekend in mid-July.

As noted above, projects where the troop is helping and not raising money qualify as service hours for rank advancement.

Outings

The Troop doesn't just do weekly meetings! There's a lot of other stuff going on, often something every weekend, ranging from camping trips to movie nights.

Medical Forms

BSA requires any Scout going on an outing to have a [medical form filled out](#). We need this form for *all* campouts; it provides a basic health history for your Scout plus insurance information. For longer trips (over 72 hours, like summer camp) there is a more comprehensive form (available on the same page) -- this longer form requires a physical exam by a physician (so get it done early!). Most of our activities only require the shorter form. The forms are good for 1 year.

There is an adult whose job it is to keep track of these forms, make sure that they go to (and come back from) activities, and mention that they need to be renewed.

Campouts

Camping is an integral part of the Scouting experience and like most Troops, we try to go at least once a month. **Camping is a requirement for all of the junior ranks.** (To get credit for the campout, you should sign up on our online signup forms.)

Important/notable campouts during the year:

Gold Rush

The Gold Rush Adventure is the Fall camporee (camping with lots of participating Troops) for the Pacific Skyline Council and is a lot of fun. There are all sorts of activities and inter-troop competitions. It is usually at the end of September/beginning of October.

Trail To First Class

This is a Pacific Skyline Council camporee that focuses specifically on completing requirements for junior Scouts. Going to this will help your Scout advance much more quickly, plus it's generally pretty fun. **This campout is strongly recommended for younger Scouts who haven't reached First Class rank.**

Trail to First Class is usually at the beginning of November.

Beach Campout

The Troop has a winter tradition to go beach camping during the week between Christmas and New Year's. Because we're in California it's often pretty nice weather and it's always great fun. This is a "no requirements" campout and just a lot of fun.

This is usually in the week after Christmas and before New Year's, during winter vacation.

Cache Creek/White Water Rafting

The Troop often does a white water rafting trip every year, usually (but not always) to Cache Creek, near Willits, CA. (We've also gone to the American River.) This is another fun outing, usually with 2 camping nights. **To participate your Scout must have passed the BSA Swimmer/First Class Swimmer test ("blue" swimmer).**

The Cache Creek trip is in the summer; the dates have varied from late June to early August.

This trip has not happened in several years, it would be great if we had an adult to help move it forward.

Summer Camp (Oljato)

The camping highlight of the year for the Troop is summer camp. The Troop usually goes to Camp Oljato on Huntington Lake, in the Sierra Nevada near Fresno, but has gone to some other camps as well. Summer camp is an excellent time for your junior or senior Scout to work on basic advancement or merit badges for higher ranks in areas ranging from aquatics to nature to archery or rifle shooting to general Scoutcraft. It lasts for a week (Sunday-Saturday) and has been anywhere from mid-June to early-August. (We usually know the precise dates by early November.) It is a great experience and a lot of fun. **We also need adults, for supervision and leadership.**

Fundraising

The Troop does a lot of activities and our dues do not cover all of the costs. While Scouts are expected to cover their direct costs (campout food, specific campout fees), there are a lot of other things that still cost money (troop gear, adult registration fees, awards) and the Troop does fundraising efforts during the year so that members aren't directly paying all of those. **You can help** by participating "on the scene" or by coordinating and planning "behind the scenes" -- there's always a lot to do, and we need *everyone's* help. (The alternative to our 1- and 2-day

fundraisers are the official Scouting Popcorn sales, which honestly take up a lot more time, are a harder sell, and are less productive financially for the Troop.)

Fundraisers Through The Year

Cherry Blossom Festival -- the Cherry Blossom Festival is held in April in Cupertino every year. The Troop runs a food booth selling yakisoba noodles, spam musubi and other goodies. Adult help is needed for food preparation and supervising the booth (and helping run it as well, it can get very busy).

Chinese Chicken Salad -- the Troop makes and sells Chinese Chicken Salad to members of the Temple, usually sometime in May. There are two or so weekends of sales, and a weekend of delivery. This involves a few nights of setup and salad preparation, and Scout help on Sundays to sell tickets and then make sure the food gets delivered. Adult help is needed for coordination, as well as the actual food preparation and supervision of ticket sales and food delivery.

Beyond Junior Scouts

There's a lot more once Scouts turn 14 and/or reach the First Class rank, like High Adventure, Order of the Arrow, senior leadership roles in the Troop, and of course, reaching for their Eagle. But that's for later. For now, welcome to the Troop and helping your Scout reach upward!