

# **B.S.A. TROOP 97**



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## **Troop Policies** **on Expectations and Behavior**

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## **GENERAL POLICY GUIDELINES**

This policy shall be considered in addition to generally accepted Guidelines of the BSA Policy, Procedure, Bylaws and the Guide to Safe Scouting.

The Troop / Unit Committee (TC) shall generally meet once a month in consideration of Troop function, Eagle Project applicants and budgetary allocation. Additional procedural guidance shall be attached to this Troop Policy as By Laws in regard to relevance.

The Troop Committee shall be comprised of the Troop Committee Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, Advancement Chair, and other positions, as needed. A Troop Committee meeting shall achieve Quorum with the presence of these noted permanent positions and two additional members or the presence of five Registered Committee members in addition to the Chair.

### **Scoutmaster Conferences**

These conferences, required for every rank, will normally be conducted in the scout house with at least one assistant scoutmaster present, or on a campout or outing when one other trained leader is present. Parent's of the scout are always welcome to attend their son's S.M. conference. Ideally, Scoutmaster conferences are conducted by the troop's Scoutmaster, but due to the size of the troop and the time required, this is not always feasible. Consequently, Primary Assistant Scoutmasters may conduct Scoutmaster conferences for Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, and Life. However, the troop's Scoutmaster will in all cases conduct no less than every other conference, so that a boy advancing through the ranks will see the Scoutmaster at least every other rank as he progresses towards Eagle.

The importance of the Scoutmaster conference cannot be overemphasized--it is a wonderful opportunity for the scout to discuss his position within the troop, and a chance for the Scoutmaster to individually emphasize the importance of living the Scout Oath and the Scout Law in the scout's everyday life. It is also an opportunity for the parents to talk with the SM about any problems they are having, either with their son or with the troop. Discussion centers around the scout ideals, and the boy's goals for the future.

### **Advancement**

Normally, advancement items are performed with prior coordination between the scout and an adult scout leader of his choosing. Advancement that does not take place as part of a planned meeting activities, such as cooking during a cooking night, will be accomplished after or before a meeting, or wait for a campout or a special pre-arranged time and place. Advancement items in the middle of a regular troop meeting will be discouraged---we don't want boys leaving their patrols during a normal meeting. Rank advancement will be signed off in the boy's Boy Scout Handbook. It is troop policy that all scouts will have a current issue of the Boy Scout Handbook, and bring their book to every event. An exception is the Boy Scout Handbook is normally not carried on backpacking trips where weight is a consideration. Scouts working on all ranks

through, and including First Class, can get their requirements signed off by any of the following individuals:

1. Scoutmaster
2. Assistant Scoutmaster
3. Troop Committee Chairman
4. Any Eagle Scout registered in Troop 230, scout or Adult
5. Life scouts holding the SPL, ASPL, or Troop Guide leadership positions
6. Individual's own patrol leader, if Life Scout or greater, with approval of the Scoutmaster
7. Any scout registered in Troop 230 who holds a Troop Instructor leadership position

**Items of emphasis:**

1. It is troop policy that parents will not sign off their own son on any requirement, regardless of the position they hold in the troop
2. Requirements that specify "show" or "demonstrate" mean exactly that---the scout must **show** or **demonstrate** by actually doing the skill to be signed off. Talking about it is not sufficient. Scouting is usually "hands-on;" a skill mastered by doing is a skill learned for life.
3. Although rare, requirements or other items that require a signature from the Scoutmaster will be approved or signed only by the Scoutmaster. The Scoutmaster's signature will not be stamped or copied. The only exceptions to this rule are that the troop's advancement chairman, with concurrence of the Scoutmaster, may use a signature stamp for advancement cards distributed at a Court of Honor or for blue merit badge cards distributed at a merit badge lockin where approval has been authorized.

**Merit badges are earned by working with a BSA registered merit badge counselor. The Boy Scout Handbook outlines the process and steps to earn merit badges:**

1. Scout obtains a blue merit badge card from the Scoutmaster and obtains approval to begin working with a counselor. Only the troop's Scoutmaster, or Primary Assistant Scoutmaster(s), may sign blue cards authorizing that a scout can begin to work on a specific badge.
2. SM or Primary Assistant Scoutmaster(s), will assist the scout with locating the name of a merit badge counselor from a list of approved merit badge counselors maintained by the council.
3. Scout will obtain the merit badge book through either private purchase or by checking one out from the troop Librarian
4. Scout will find a buddy to work with.
5. As the first step in earning the badge, scout will read the merit badge book and then contact the pre-approved merit badge counselor.. Many merit badge counselors like to meet with scouts

before they start, preferring that boys not walk-in, with everything in hand. Many MB counselors are teachers and like to work with the boys and their MB projects.

6. The scout will, along with a buddy, meet with the merit badge counselor and begin working on the badge, completing the requirements at his own pace. (A buddy is required to insure the scout does not place the adult counselor in a one-on-one situation. In the absence of another scout, the boy's own parent(s) may serve in the buddy capacity.)

7. When the requirements are completed, the blue merit badge card will be signed by the merit badge counselor and the scout will then return it to either the Scoutmaster or Troop Advancement Chairman.

Troop policy is that scouts will earn all requirements for the ranks they seek. While parent participation is important and encouraged, all registered adults must carefully insure that the scouts themselves are accomplishing the requirements they are earning. Occasionally, over zealous parents may begin to do for their son what the scout needs to be doing for himself. The merit badge process specifically requires that the scout take all the initiatives, make all the arrangements, do all the required work for each merit badge. Typical danger signs are when the parent makes appointments, arranges merit badge counselors, sets up outings specifically for their son, or on rare occasion pressures registered adults to do something unique for their son only. Usually, when their behavior is pointed out by the SM, an ASM, or a Troop Committee member, they realize that they are defeating the very tenets of the Boy Scout Program. As Baden Powell, scouting's founder put it, "*never do for a boy what a boy can do for himself.*"

### **Attendance**

Few scouts will be able to attend every meeting and outing. Family, church, and school activities often conflict with troop activities. High school sports often demand an inordinate amount of time. Yet, attendance is important none the less. As the Boy Scout Handbook puts it, "*To gain full advantage of all that Scouting has to offer, you need to be present when things are happening. Take part in meetings, in planning activities, and in the fun of adventures. If you're there, you can do your part to make your patrol and troop a success.*" - page 169. Many activities require proper preparation, and often preparation as a patrol or scout team. The success of the scouting program depends on group participation, support, teaching and leading. Frequent absence from meetings and outings not only detracts from the experience of the individual, but it detracts from the experiences of the other scouts.

All scouts are appreciated whenever they can attend any event. Troop 97 has historically been a very active troop. The strength of the troop depends on the attendance of its members. The troop activities fall into three primary areas of activities: Troop Meetings, Troop Outings, and Troop Service Projects. Being active in this troop means, being active in all three of these important areas. It is not sufficient to attend only meetings---scouts that do quickly lose interest in the troop and leave. They also miss the "outing" part of scouting. It is not sufficient to attend only the outings---the meeting are used to teach important skills and allow the older scouts to teach and prepare the younger scouts for these activities. Likewise, the Troop Service Projects are where the second point of the Scout Oath, duty to Others, is put into practice.

The scout rank of Star, Life and Eagle, as well as Eagle Palms require an active participation level for rank advancement. For rank purposes, a minimum attendance of only 50% of the campouts, 50% of meetings and 50% of the service projects will be considered active participation. Scouts who involve themselves in other scout activities outside the troop, such as Order of the Arrow Outings, OA Tap out ceremonies, and ordeal camps, scout summer camp counselor, Philmont High Adventure Treks, den chief activities, cub scout crossover ceremony participation or other scout related activities may count those non-troop activities towards their overall participation level. Scouts not meeting the 50% activity level in the three areas of activities will not meet a board of review until they fulfill this requirement. Scouts unable to meet the activity level as averaged since their last Board of Review may use the most recent six month period to average their participation level if that works to their benefit. For example, in the previous six months if a scout has attended only 3 outings, 6 troop meetings and made at least one service project event, he would meet the minimum activity level for advancement. This level of participation is a minimum level, and in fact, if every scout in the troop participated only at the minimum level, the troop would come apart.

Some activities will demand a higher level of participation due to training and other preparation requirements. These requirements will be identified in advance. In all cases of absence, it is imperative that the scout missing the activity be the one who contacts his patrol leader or other troop leadership in advance of the absence. It is not the parent's job to do this notification, but the scout's.

### **Inactive Scouts:**

Sometimes scouts have trouble making activities because of conflicts with school, sports, medical, or other reasons. We have had several scouts who have had to take a break from scouting because of these conflicts. If a scout finds himself in this position, he should notify the SM of the situation and when he will be able to participate again. A scout in this situation should realize that his advancement may slow down some, but he will be advancing in another areas (soccer, baseball, swimming, etc.). Although it should be obvious, a scout taking such a break should not take a leadership position during this time.

### **Discipline**

Experience has shown that at most activities serious discipline problems are rare. Usually, reminding a scout to follow the Scout Oath and Scout Law is sufficient 99% of the time. Sometimes the situation requires calling a parent--in this day and age of cell phones usually that is easy to accomplish. On even rarer occasions a parent might be needed to come and talk with his or her scout son who is having difficulty handling himself. Other than asking a scout to take a "time out" to cool off, adult leaders will not take active discipline measures against any scout in the troop. Scouts who are out of control, harming or potentially harming or endangering themselves or others, or using foul language, and who are unable to live the Scout Oath and Scout Law during an activity, troop meeting, or campout will have their parents contacted. If the adult leader in charge feels the behavior warrants the scouts removal, then the scout's parents will be contacted and asked to come and pick up their son whose behavior has not been acceptable. This is extremely rare, but having the ability to call a parent day or night and have a misbehaving boy removed is an important safety valve and good for every scout and parent in the troop. If a scout is removed from a troop function that scout will be required to participate

with his parents in a scout master conference at the next scheduled troop meeting to discuss the matter. Scouts who continuously cause problems and who require exceptional time and vigilance may necessitate requiring parental support at the campouts as a prerequisite for attendance.

Upon an acting campmaster or acting Scoutmaster's discretion in consideration of an individual's past performance, a boy may be requested not to participate in a specific campout or trip, due to various criteria including issues of safety, distance, and duration. The acting campmaster or acting Scoutmaster for the activity will make every opportunity to properly observe prospective participants before engaging in such activities, including pre-hikes and pre-camp involvement.

In cases of extreme disciplinary issues, a Disciplinary Review Board (DRB) will be convened, comprised of no less than two Troop Committee Members and an Assistant Scoutmaster. This panel of three should not be related to the individual in question. The members of the adhoc DRB will examine in question and make recommendations to the Scoutmaster for action.

### **Appeals:**

A scout may choose to appeal the decision of a Disciplinary Board of Review or an acting Scoutmaster per above policy, to a special session of the Troop Committee.

### **Restrictions and Prohibited Items:**

Scouts are prohibited from bringing weapons, personal archery equipment, slingshots, sheath knives, wrist rockets, ammunition, or fireworks to any scouting activity. Discovery of such items may result in expulsion from the troop. Radios, tape/CD players, electronic games, etc., are also prohibited at troop functions, unless authorized by the Scoutmaster for a specific scout-related event. Such items will be confiscated by troop Leaders and returned to the parents at the event's completion. Likewise, items such as skateboards, bicycles (except as used for transportation to and from a meeting), unicycles, pogo-sticks, and scooters have no place at campouts and troop meetings and are usually disruptive when brought unless the activity planned for their use. Alcohol, tobacco, and any illegal substances of any kind are prohibited and will be confiscated. The finding of such substances will be reported to the Troop Committee and parents for further action. Personal medications must be carried in their original containers and the Scoutmaster must be made aware that such medications are in a scout's possession. At certain events such as summer camp, most personal medications are gathered and distributed by trained medical personal.

### **Uniforms and Clothing**

All scouts are expected to have a full scout uniform. A full scout uniform consists of official BSA Scout pants, official BSA Scout shirt complete with patches and red epaulets, troop neckerchief, scout belt. Uniforms will be worn when specified on the month's activity sheet. A free uniform "library" of "experienced clothing" is maintained by the Troop Committee, and any items are available free of charge to any scout registered in the troop. The availability of items depends on the donations received and varies from time to time. All scout families are encouraged to donate any items outgrown to the uniform library to help future scouts. The troop also utilizes a Class "B" or red shirt "uniform" which consists of BSA scout pants, a scout belt, and a red BSA shirt, or red troop T-shirt. This red shirt uniform is sometimes specified for

certain events. It works well for summer hikes, summer camp, and some indoor activities and "saves" the regular uniform when the planned activity might dirty up the regular uniform.

Tennis shoes are not acceptable for hiking, camping, or any winter outing, although for indoor troop meetings and for around camp they are acceptable. Tennis shoes or any white sneaker are not permitted for any "formal" function, parades, flag ceremonies, or any time a scout must appear in front of an audience. Normally, some type of boot is the thing for a scout to wear.

As a matter of safety, scouts reporting for hiking, camping or other outings that do not have basic acceptable clothing and equipment will not be allowed to participate. The essential list includes acceptable rain gear, foot wear, and other predetermined/announced requirements.

### **Service to Others**

Higher ranks in scouting require that the scout take part "...in service projects totaling at least 6 hours of work. These projects must be approved by your Scoutmaster." The Scoutmaster as troop policy automatically approves all projects associated with other scouts in the troop working on their Eagle service project requirement, Other service projects must be approved **IN ADVANCE** by the Scoutmaster to be counted toward rank advancement. Specifically, projects done for another purpose, such as church/parish work days, school service projects accomplished for credit or by teacher request, court-ordered service time, and any project where any kind of monetary income is received will not normally meet the troop's service policy.

### **Parental Support**

The strength of Troop 97 is in the support of the parents. BSA is not "Baby Sitter's Anonymous"---there is a need from time to time for every parent to do something. Some parents are campers---some are not. Some parents have lots of free time---most do not. All parents have something to offer; perhaps a talent or a skill they can teach or share. Some parents are single, with other kids to handle. The policy of Troop 97 is to ask that parents support the troop and do what they can. We can always use drivers, both to and from every event. We welcome additional support at every campout. The annual pancake breakfast, summer camp, our monthly activities and our ongoing program all requires multiple adult support to make these happenings possible. Scouting is meant to be a parent/son activity, but unlike the cub scout program, the entire emphasis is toward independence and self reliance. While it is important to encourage your son and to give praise whenever possible, it is also just as important to allow your son to advance at his own pace. At special "Courts of Honor" we reward the scouts with badges and patches to recognize their achievements. Please come to these special events and give scouting the emphasis that it deserves. You will be rewarded a thousand times over--in your son's accomplishments, and his ever increasing self esteem, and abilities.

### **Driver Responsibility:**

The troop uses parents/guardians as transportation resources. Adults volunteering to drive to activities must be at least 21 years of age and have a valid driver's license. All vehicles must be covered by automobile liability insurance with limits that meet or exceed requirements for the state of PA. Drivers will obey all state laws and insure seat belts are worn by all occupants at all times. Scout tour permits, which we must complete for all outings, require the identification of all drivers with limits of insurance.

**Camperships:**

The Troop Committee shall endeavor to provide outing/camping and general financial assistance to those scouts in need. For confidentiality, fund dispersal shall be at the agreed discretion of the Scoutmaster, Treasurer, and Troop Committee Chair. Assistance in excess of \$500 per year to any individual scout will require Troop Committee concurrence.

**Last comment:**

As a general guideline, try to be as upbeat and positive with each and every scout as often as you possibly can. Try and catch them being good, and give them praise at how impressed you are with their performance. We would like each boy to feel good about being a scout, and especially to feel good about coming to a meeting or a campout. The troop policy is simple---keep it fun! Experience has shown that scouts generally thrive in a positive environment where good performance is recognized and rewarded. If we believe in them they will believe in themselves. A large part of a scouts development is trial and error. As leaders we need to embrace “gentle” direction and guidance over harsh criticisms.

This troop policy is backed by the Scoutmaster and the Troop Committee. It is subject to change with the majority consent of the Troop Committee. Individual exceptions to the policy are subject to the approval of the Scoutmaster and Troop Committee and should be requested by the scout in writing. This policy was originally drafted in November of 2008. It was amended and accepted by the troop committee in \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ by majority vote of the troop committee with concurrence of the Scoutmaster.

Troop 97

Scout Master 2009