

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A GOOD BOY SCOUT TROOP

The following points are taken from BSA Publication No. 18-251, 1995 Printing, which is entitled *Are You Delivering the Promise?*

- Troop has earned the Quality Unit Award each year.
- Scoutmaster has completed basic training.
- Troop follows the traditional troop-meeting pattern, standard troop-meeting plan with two or more skills training groups)
- Troop has a high ratio of active adults to youth.
- Leaders regularly attend the district roundtables.
- Troop meetings are planned at Patrol Leaders' Council meetings.
- Woods Wisdom is used in planning the Troop program and monthly themes/activities.
- A patrol for new Scouts exists, with a Troop Guide and Assistant Scoutmaster.
- Troop adds at least 10 new Scouts each year.
- Troop plans and delivers an annual minimum of 25 days and nights of camping.
- Troop attends a council long-term camp.
- Leaders are proficient in outdoor skills.
- Troop has at least 24 Scouts.
- Troop has a program for older Scouts.

(OVER)

MORE CONSIDERATIONS

Other volunteers, based on experience, have suggested that the above criteria should not be applied rigidly as a test for a good Troop, noting that it is possible to find a Troop that meets all of the above criteria, but still fails to use the patrol method, for instance. Others have noted that in rural and some urban settings adding 10 new Scouts in a year may not be realistic for a particular unit and not a valid criterion. Still others have suggested the following things to consider:

- Convenience of the day and location of weekly troop meetings;
- Consider a troop that your son's best friends are going to join or already belong to;
- Is the troop run by the boys (most preferable) or the adults (least preferable)?
- Is there good scout skills instruction for newer scouts?
- Is there strong patrol activity or inter-patrol activity, like competitions or games?
- Are the boys just sitting around or are they busy most of the time?
- Does the troop go on monthly outings or day-trip activities?
- Is it a backpacking/hiking troop, a canoeing troop, or a car camping troop, or a combination?
- Is there a diversity of ranks throughout the troop? A majority of Second Class and Tenderfoot ranks will tell you it's a pretty new troop with no maturity in leadership. A majority of Life and Eagle scouts means it's a troop about to graduate and have a membership downturn, and it's also a troop full of leaders with no followers.
- Is there sufficient adult help around for the size of the troop?
- Did the troop contact you, or did you contact them? Translated: Does this troop have an active recruiting plan?
- Troop Meetings run by Youth - The troop is a real life opportunity for Scouts to learn leadership through participation. It is unfortunately a well kept secret that the Scout program is a leadership training program with the outdoors as a laboratory. The Patrol Leaders' Council of the Troop should plan the Troop meetings, campouts and activities. It is an important part of the leadership experience.
- Patrol Method Used - The Patrol Method gives Scouts an experience in group living and participating in leadership activities. The patrols determine troop activities through their elected representatives.
- Trained Youth & Adults - Understanding the concepts of leadership helps each person accept the leadership roles of others and guides them toward the citizenship aim of Scouting.

- Uniformed Youth & Adults - The uniform makes the Scout troop visible as a group. It shows each youth's and adult's commitment to the aims and purposes of Scouting.
- Troop Calendar Planned by Youth - Ask who planned the calendar. It should be planned by the Patrol Leaders' Council and approved by the Troop Committee.
- Troop Calendar Published - It needs to be planned and published or it does not exist.
- Troop Roster Published - Look and see if you find someone you know and then call them. Ask them about the program, leaders and activities.
- Troop Monthly Mailings - Even the best calendar needs updating. Does the troop communicate regularly with a mailed newsletter, e-mail, and/or website?
- Troop Program Explained During Visit - Each Scout program should plan programs that work towards the three aims of Scouting.
- Dues and Fees Explained - You should know how the Troop program is financed and what the money you are paying is used for. Find out what the campouts and activities cost.
- Troop Fundraising Assists Youth - The purpose of fundraising is to help you and your son participate in Scouting. Most of the profits should go to items or activities that benefit the Scouts.
- Enthusiasm of Youth & Adults - If the youth and adults are not excited by their program, why should you join?
- Troop Equipment – Does the troop equipment appear to be well kept and well maintained? This feature is the evidence of good organization and a an indicator of an active outdoor program.
- Does the troop have an active Troop Committee, with contributing members other than the volunteer leaders?
- How does your son feel about the Troop? - What was your son's impression of the visit? When he joins a program, you also become a part of it.

There probably isn't a single test that fits all units and certainly no one checklist will be best for making your decision about which Boy Scout Troop to join. The best advice may be to spend some time with the Troop you are thinking about joining and seeing whether it is a good fit between the new boys and boys already in the Troop. Does the Troop offer all the things you think your Cub Scout will need? Will he have fun? Sit down and make up your own checklist and visit several Troops. Pick the one that is best for you. And remember, no Troop is perfect in every dimension. What it becomes in the future is partially dependent on YOU!