

# **A PARENT'S GUIDE TO TROOP 76 and Scouting**



**[www.troop76.org](http://www.troop76.org)**

**Ridgefield, Connecticut**

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# ABOUT TROOP 76

Here in Ridgefield, we may be best known for our holiday wreath sale, which has been a Troop 76 tradition (and our only fund raiser) for more than 20 years! Our scouts and adults are known in town for their volunteer work; hundreds of hours annually to projects that improve our community. And close to 90 Eagle scouts have come from Troop 76.

We refer to our Troop as "boy led, adult supported". By placing decision-making and execution in the hands of our Scouts, they learn invaluable life skills; responsibility, leadership, independence, mentoring, and teamwork. During the journey, scouts also learn how to pitch a tent, build a campfire, backpack and many other skills part of an outdoor program. All the while, scouts have fun sharing these activities with their friends and make new friends.

As parents, it may be difficult for us to take a "hands off" approach when it comes to our children's activities. Scouting is a terrific opportunity to allow your son to make decisions for himself (e.g. shopping for his patrol's "grub" for a camping trip, preparing the uniform and completing a merit badge) and learn from these experiences.

So when your son asks you to pack for an upcoming camping trip...remind him "a Scout does for himself"!

## KEEPING INFORMED

[www.troop76.org](http://www.troop76.org)

You should bookmark this page, and this should be your first stop if you or your Scout has a question about the Troop and Troop activities.

Our website...aimed at both parents and scouts...is updated frequently. On the site you'll find:

- A current calendar of all upcoming meetings and events. (Not sure if there is Troop meeting this Tuesday...check the Troop calendar!).
- Information on all events and activities (time, meeting location, dress code, required equipment, etc.).
- The ability to download documents like permission slips, equipment lists, etc.
- Adult leader contact information.
- Listing of Patrols.
- Photo albums from previous Troop activities.
- A "frequently asked questions" section.
- Helpful links to other Scout (and non-Scout) information such as where to purchase camping gear, how to dress in a Class A uniform, and the step to earn Merit Badges and Rank Advancements.

Of course you are always welcome to reach out to the Adult Leadership with any questions or concerns you may have. E-mail is the preferred method. Messages may be sent to [scoutmaster@troop76.org](mailto:scoutmaster@troop76.org).

You and your Scout will also receive regular e-mail communications from the Troop. If these messages aren't appearing in your "in-box" at least weekly, check your spam filters to ensure you can receive e-mail from Troop members. You can also contact the Troop Committee Chair to make sure that we have your correct e-mail address.

For security and safety, e-mail addresses (parents and Scouts) are not posted on our website. Nor are scouts last names spelled out.

Another great resource for information is our own Troop 76 Handbook (not to be confused with you Scout's official Boy Scout Handbook) which is available for download off our website.

At our regular Tuesday Troop meetings, your Scout will receive handouts and information. You may want to have a central location for keeping this "Scout stuff".

## HOW CAN I HELP?

While we encourage our parents to allow their sons to work on their own — *the Troop needs extensive parent volunteers to operate*. Simply put — we cannot do it without you. There are a number of ways for you to help the Troop — whether you're a Mom or Dad, were never a Boy Scout yourself, or even if you hate camping!

**Uniformed Adult Leadership:** These are the parents involved with supporting the Scout program. From camping trips to merit badge activities to rank advancement, the uniformed leadership help provide the structure that allow the Scouts to grow. There is some training required to become a uniformed leader. Adult leaders also aid as "advisors" with rank advancement. Positions include Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters. Without uniformed adult leaders, there is no Scout program. Please contact our Scoutmaster if you are interested in becoming a uniformed leader.

**Troop Committee:** Think of the Troop Committee as the business unit. The committee is responsible for "non-program" aspects of the Troop such as maintaining finances, fundraising, maintaining records, establishing policies, registering scout with the Boy Scouts of America, training, and organizing community service projects. Positions on the Committee include chairperson, secretary, advancement, treasurer, trip permits and others. The TC meets on the first Wednesday of every month. For those parents who may not be comfortable taking on a uniformed leadership position, the Troop Committee is a great way to get involved. Please contact the Troop Committee Chairperson if you're interested in playing a role on the committee.

**Wreath Sale Committee:** Our annual wreath sale, coordinated by members of the committee, is the Troop's only fundraising event. Sale activities run from late September through mid-January. For our new parents in particular, this is a terrific way to get involved with the Troop. Please contact the Troop Committee Chair if you are interested in participating in this year's wreath sale.

**Merit Badge Counselor:** Parents can volunteer to help oversee a merit badge project. Merit badges can be earned in everything from salesmanship to photography to swimming. If you have a hobby or a career skill, chances are there's a merit badge program you could manage. If you're interested, please contact the Scoutmaster.

**General Volunteering:** There are always plenty of opportunities for you to help the Troop on an "ad hoc" basis. Whether it's running a service project, or providing refreshments for a Court of Honor, we never say "no" to the question, "can I help?"

One last way to help – *remind your Scout that he is a Scout 24/7*, not just when he is wearing the uniform. We expect the Scouts of Troop 76 to behave as scouts. These codes of behavior are described in the Scout oath, law, slogan and motto. They are:

***Scout Oath***

On my honor, I will do my best  
To do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law;  
To help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake  
and morally straight

***Scout Law***

A Scout is:

- Trustworthy
  - Loyal
  - Helpful
  - Friendly
  - Courteous
  - Kind
  - Obedient
  - Cheerful
  - Thrifty
  - Brave
  - Clean
- And Reverent

***Scout Slogan***

Do a good turn daily!

***Scout Motto***

Be Prepared

***Scout Spirit***

Scout Spirit applies to how a Scout lives and conducts his 'daily' life. He shows Scout spirit by being a role model to his peers, living by the Scout Oath and Law. The concept of Scout Spirit is not based on how many Scouting events or outings a Scout attends,

but rather by how he helps bring out the best in others as a reflection of his own character and attitude in his 'daily' life.

## HOW IS THE TROOP ORGANIZED?

The national organization, The Boy Scouts of America, is divided into councils. Within councils are districts. Troop 76 is a member of the **Connecticut Yankee Council** ([www.ctyankee.org](http://www.ctyankee.org)). Our district, **Scatacook** ([www.scatacook.org](http://www.scatacook.org)), consists of Troops in northern Fairfield County. Our liaison to the Yankee Council is our District Chairperson. Our sponsoring organization is **Jesse Lee United Methodist Church**, which generously provides us a meeting hall and large storage room for troop equipment. As part of the church, Troop 76 is a non-profit organization.

Within the Troop, we are organized by **patrols**. There are typically 8-15 Scouts per patrol, typically organized by age and rank attainment. All efforts are made to place Scouts within their desired patrol.

For each patrol there is a **Patrol Leader, Assistant Patrol Leader and Patrol Quartermaster**. These are rotating positions elected by the patrol. Because of the critical role they play during camping trips (covered in our Camping section), ***it is expected that a Patrol Leader will make every effort to attend camping trips.*** If your son has sports or other activities that will prohibit them from attending camping trips, they may want to consider being a Patrol Leader when their schedule will allow for regular trip attendance.

Think of a patrol as a "Troop within a Troop". Patrols work together on rank advancement, merit badge activities, service projects and (especially) activities during a camping trip. We often have contests of friendly competition across the patrols.

The **Patrol Leadership Committee (PLC)** is the Scout-run leadership of the Troop. In addition to the Patrol Leaders, the committee includes: Senior Patrol Leader (SPL), 2-3 Assistant Senior Patrol Leaders, Troop Guide, Instructor, Scribe, Historian, and Quartermaster. The PLC typically meets once a month, typically the last Tuesday of the month (when there is not a regular Troop meeting). They make decisions on everything from where our monthly trips will be to what service projects we should organize.

## TROOP MEETINGS

Troop 76 meets every Tuesday from September through early June, except (usually) for the last Tuesday of the month for PLC meetings.

For Troop meetings, the general guideline is that if there is no school (for vacation, holiday or snow day reasons), there will be no Troop meeting but there are exceptions. Best bet is always to check the Troop calendar on our website at [www.troop76.org](http://www.troop76.org).

We meet in Martin Hall at Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church, 207 Main Street in Ridgefield. Martin Hall (located below the sanctuary) has a main entrance off the main parking lot on Kings Lane. Meetings are held 7:30 to 8:45 pm.

***If your Scout's patrol is listed as being the Setup Patrol, they should come 15 minutes early at 7:15 to get the meeting room set up and they will be available by 9:00 after the post meeting take down and clean up.***

***Scouts are encouraged to wear their complete Class A uniform (including Scout pants, shirt, belt, socks and neckerchief) to Troop meetings. With the Scoutmaster's approval, they must wear their Scout shirt (tucked in) and neckerchief.***

Scout uniforms and gear are available in Ridgefield and other locations. Check the web site for information. <http://troop76.org/otherlinks.htm>

***Your Scout should also bring their Scout Handbook to all Tuesday meetings.***

Our Scouts run the Troop meetings, and typical activities include; camping trip planning, rank advancement, and merit badge activities.

Three to four times a year, the Troop will hold a **Court of Honor (CoH)** during our regular Troop meeting time. During the CoH, scouts are recognized for rank advancement and merit badge achievement. ***Class A uniforms are required*** and family members are encouraged to attend. Check the Troop calendar at [www.troop76.org](http://www.troop76.org) for upcoming CoHs.

## CAMPING

Enjoying, respecting and learning about nature are essential elements of Scouting. Our monthly camping trips offer scouts an opportunity to learn invaluable life lessons, enjoy the great outdoors, work on rank and merit badge activities and have fun with their friends. It's expected that your Scout will attend as many trips as possible.

Because our activities are decided on, and planned by, our Scouts, they reflect the variety of interests of our members. There's something for everyone. We have at least one outing a month, which in the past have included: hikes, backpacking trips, beach camping, trips to historical sites, an annual ski-trip, winter and spring "Camporees" with other area Troops, orienteering, off-shore fishing, and the multi-night "big trip" to celebrate the end of the school year. Many of our Scouts also participate in sleep-away summer camp at Camp Sequassen here in Connecticut, as well attending Philmont Scout Ranch, a national boy scout camp; 100,000 acres of adventures in New Mexico.

To take advantage of these opportunities, scouts need to sign-up during at our regular Troop meetings. A Permission Slip, signed by a parent or adult guardian, is required. The coordinating uniform leader prepares an equipment list, describing what to pack. The Permission Slip and Equipment List are usually e-mailed or downloaded from [www.troop76.org](http://www.troop76.org).



The Troop provides much of the camping equipment (tents, stoves, lanterns, cooking gear, etc.). Scouts typically need a sleeping bag, pad, two one-quart water bottles, flashlight, compass, knife (if they're qualified by earning a Totin' Chip, a card for passing a knife safety course), extra clothing, towels, and personal hygiene items. Also, it is worthwhile to invest in a decent pair of waterproof hiking boots for your Scout. ***Electronic devices (cell phones, iPods, Game Boys, etc.) are NOT allowed.*** Adult leaders carry cell phones and are First Aid trained.

During our regular Tuesday Troop meetings leading up to the trip, patrols organize for the outing. They plan meals, organize activities and assign tasks. Each patrol assigns a **Grub Master** who is responsible for actually purchasing and bringing the food for their patrol. If your son is the assigned Grub Master for a particular trip, you can help them (but not do for them) by:

- Making sure they have a complete shopping list based on their patrol's meal plan (e.g. did they forget syrup to go along with their pancakes?).
- Bringing them to the grocery store to purchase the food.
- Helping them add up the money spent and divides it equally among the number of patrol members attending the trip.
- Bringing the food at the gathering location for the trip.
- Creating a list of Scouts they need to collect money from, and ensure that this is done (if collecting money becomes an issue, they should contact an Adult Leader).

***IMPORTANT: If your son is the Grub Master for a trip and is unable to attend, they are still responsible for purchasing and delivering the food at the gathering location for their patrol (unless other arrangements have been made).***

In addition to the patrol-provided food, a "bag lunch" is typically required for each Scout (lunch for the day of the trip). You may also pack snacks for your Scout — we encourage you to limit these to "healthy options" — a camping trip is a great opportunity to get away from junk food.

On the day of the trip, the Troop will meet at a central location (typically this is the rear parking lot at Jesse Lee near the playground) to organize and pack equipment. ***Scouts need to be on time and may be asked to wear the full Class A uniform (Scout pants, shirt, belt, socks and neckerchiefs).*** Transportation is typically provided through car-pooling among the adults attending the trip, though for longer trips we may rent vans or buses.

Scout safety is always our number one concern. There are always a sufficient number of adult leaders on camping trips to oversee and supervise the Scouts. It is imperative that the Scoutmaster be alerted if your Scout has any medical needs or requirements. Scouts must give all medications to the Scoutmaster (or Adult Leader) for proper administration.

Parents are always welcome and encouraged to attend our trips. Before attending a scout-sponsored activity, registered BSA volunteers must complete Youth Protection Training, a 20-minutes on-line course that helps insure a secure environment for scouts. The Internet link to Youth Protection Training is on the home page of the troop's web site. Each adult is typically assigned a meal that they are responsible for providing and cooking.

Patrol Leaders play a critical role during our camping trips (and learn valuable leadership skills in the process). They ensure that their patrol has their required equipment, supervise the patrol task lists, and lead patrol-specific activities. ***It is expected that Patrol Leaders will make every effort to attend ALL our monthly trips.*** If your son has sports or other activities that will prohibit them from attending camping trips, they may want to consider being a Patrol Leader at a time when their schedule will allow for regular trip attendance.

At the end of the trip, scouts and adults meet back at Jesse Lee to unload some equipment. Scouts and patrols that check out Troop equipment must take them home to clean (pots, pans, stoves, griddles, utensils, etc.) Tents must be cleaned and dried. Wet tents in storage become moldy. We will check for missing poles, stakes and other parts. It's the scout's responsibility, with your supervision; to clean and dry troop equipment.

Even though he may be tired, encourage your scout to do this job when they get home from a trip. Typically, equipment is returned at the next regular Tuesday Troop meeting. Replacing lost equipment is the responsibility of the Scout in whose care it was entrusted.

Caring for our tents:

- They should be set up (either outside, weather permitting, or indoors in a garage or basement).
- They should be swept out thoroughly (our smaller tents can be given a good shaking to get debris out).
- Clean the tent by wiping it down with a mild soap (liquid hand soap) and lukewarm water solution. Rinse thoroughly and dry completely. Never use detergent, washing machines or dryers because they can damage the tent's protective coating and seams. ***After cleaning, be sure the tent is completely dry, especially the heavier, double-stitched areas such as the seams, before storing or mold and mildew are likely to grow.***
- Clean the tent poles with a soft, dry cloth. This is especially necessary after oceanside camping trips to remove salt spray so the poles don't corrode or stay gritty.
- Clean the zippers by wiping with a damp cloth and then dry them off. This is especially important if we've been camping in a location with sand/dirt. If our Scouts don't clean the zippers, the sliders will wear out and eventually the teeth will become inoperable.

## SERVICE PROJECTS

Volunteer service to the community is a bedrock of scouting. Throughout the year, our scouts are involved in a number of community-focused projects including open space improvement projects, providing set-up and takedown help for charity events and assisting Jesse Lee, our sponsor, with activities.

It is expected that your Scout will complete a total of 12 hours community service work during the scouting year; six hours between September and December, and another six hours between January and June.

There are two types of service projects — **Troop sponsored** and **non-Troop sponsored projects**. As the name would imply, Troop-sponsored projects are organized and run by the Troop (an example would be helping Jesse Lee unload pumpkins for their annual Pumpkin Patch sale for charity). Helping an Eagle candidate with their Eagle Project is also considered a Troop-sponsored project. Non-Troop projects are any service activities completed by a Scout on their own (an example would be helping pick up litter within their neighborhood). A written description of the service project and an adult signature is required for a Scout to get credit for a non-Troop project.

For all service projects, full Class A uniform (Scout pants, shirt, belt, socks and neckerchief) is required, unless otherwise notified.

**IMPORTANT POLICY: At least six service hours earned between September and December are required to attend the annual Troop ski trip. At least four of those hours being from Troop-sponsored projects. Attending our annual end-of the-school-year “big trip” requires an additional six service hours earned between January and June, with at least four of the hours being from Troop-sponsored projects.**

## FUNDRAISING

The Troop's only fundraising activity is the Troop 76 annual Holiday Wreath Sale, a Ridgefield tradition more than 20 years. Money raised pays for our equipment and contributes to expense of Scouting activities.

Scouts are given a comprehensive wreath sales kit in the fall. Starting in late October/early November, your Scout will sell wreaths or other decorative items by calling on friends, family and neighbors. Their selling “season” is typically 2-3 weeks.

Starting the week of Thanksgiving, and through the second or third week of December, wreaths are available for pick-up and assembly by the Scouts for delivery to their “customers”. The Troop also conducts “cash and carry” sales a few Sunday mornings at local churches.

Each Scout is has been required to achieve a minimum dollar amount in individual sales in order to participate in both the annual ski trip in February and the end-of-year “big trip” in June. Details are available in the sales kit, on the web site and distributed via e-mail.

All families are required to become involved in the Wreath Sale. It's a way to help support the troop and get to know other scout families. If you wish to volunteer at a higher level, please contact the Troop Committee Chair.

## ADVANCEMENT AND MERIT BADGES

To grow in character and self-reliance, scouting provides a series of challenges and steps in meeting them through rank advancements. Each rank is earned through achievements known as requirements and Merit Badges. Scouts advance their own pace, according to their own interests, abilities, and participation. They're rewarded for each achievement, which helps gain self-confidence. Troop 76 is proud that a majority of our high-school aged Scouts reach the rank of Eagle Scout.

The requirements for badges and rank includes attending Troop meetings, hikes, camp outs and certain skills. At every step, demonstrating *Scout Spirit*<sup>1</sup> is a key criteria that is expected of all Troop 76 Scouts. We're fortunate to have...but need more...adult leaders who "help our Scouts help themselves" by being merit badge counselors and Eagle Advisors. As Scouts take part in our Troop programs, they learn new skills and work towards rank advancement.

Scouting ranks are as follows:

- Tenderfoot
- Second Class
- First Class
- Star
- Life
- Eagle Scout

Specific information on rank advancement is located in the Boy Scout Handbook.

Once a Scout has completed the requirements for rank advancement, they must first have a Scoutmaster's Conference with the Scoutmaster or an Assistant Scoutmaster to confirm their completion of all the rank's requirements. He then will schedule participation in a **Board of Review (BoR)**. BoRs are run by our Advancement Chair and parent volunteers, and are essentially a "job interview" for the rank that the Scout is looking to achieve. They are scheduled throughout the Troop year (generally the last Tuesday in most months); check our calendar at [www.troop76.org](http://www.troop76.org) for specific BoR dates/times/location information. **A complete "Class A" uniform (Scout pants, shirt, belt, socks and neckerchief) is required for a BoR.** Note that for Eagle, a special Scatcook District level Board of Review will be scheduled.

Merit badges are designed to help a Scout learn new skills, reinforce activities they enjoy and open the door to new interests. Merit badge requirements can be found in the current BSA merit badge pamphlets. There's a pamphlet for each merit badge, they can be purchased online at [www.scoutstuff.org](http://www.scoutstuff.org) or at a scout store. Our troop maintains a lending library for merit badge booklets; check the home page of the web site for details.

Merit badges may be earned throughout the year. A **Merit Badge Counselor** coordinates merit badge activities. The general process to earn a merit badge is as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Scout spirit applies to how a Scout lives and conducts his '**daily**' life. He shows Scout spirit by being a role model to his peers, living by the Scout Oath and Law. The concept of Scout spirit is not based on how many Scouting events or outings a Scout attends, but rather by how he helps bring out the best in others as a reflection of his own character and attitude in his '**daily**' life.

- Your Scout obtains a signed merit badge application (this is the merit badge “blue card”) from our Scoutmaster and the name of the Merit Badge Counselor.
- They set up a time to meet with the Merit Badge Counselor to discuss requirements and schedules BEFORE they do any work on the badge.
- They complete the requirements (tracked on the “blue card”) until the requirements are met, meeting with the merit badge counselor as needed.
- **It is the Scout’s responsibility to manage this process – not Mom, Dad, or the Merit Badge Counselor. There are complete instructions on earning a merit badge on our website at [www.troop76.org](http://www.troop76.org).**

Merit badges are presented to scouts at Court of Honors.

**IMPORTANT: Your Scout’s Boy Scout Handbook becomes the official record of their advancement history. It is critical that your Scout not lose his handbook! Your son will use the same handbook for his entire Scouting career especially for advancement.**

**With their merit badge patch (which may be displayed on a sash) your Scout will receive their completed “blue card”. DO NOT THROW THIS CARD OUT. It should be kept in a safe place (the Troop has “Advancement Records” binders with vinyl sheets that are ideal for this – just ask for one). These “blue cards” act are the official record for earning badges, and are needed for rank advancement.**

## Conclusion

The Boy Scouts of America is one of the nation's largest and most prominent values-based youth development organizations. The BSA provides a program for young people that builds character and trains them in the responsibilities of participating citizenship.

For over 100 years, scouting has helped build the future leaders of this country by combining educational activities and lifelong values with fun.

Troop 76 has improved the lives of hundreds of local boys over the years. And with your help, the troop will continue its mission of providing a strong local program of activities, skills and character building.

If you have question about the troop or scouting, please visit our web site or the site of the Boy Scouts of America, [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org). Or send a message to our scoutmaster at [scoutmaster@troop76.org](mailto:scoutmaster@troop76.org).

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