

BACKPACKING



Long before backpacking became a popular sport, the Boy Scouts of America was promoting this exhilarating activity. For many years, Philmont Scout Ranch in northern New Mexico has provided hundreds of miles of trails for thousands of Scouts across the country. In addition, BSA high-adventure bases and local councils throughout the country can provide Scouts with a stimulating backpacking experience.

Backpacking can be a single-day activity of several miles or a weeklong trip of 50 miles or longer. But no matter what length, participation requires hikers who are in top physical condition and prepared to meet the challenge. New Scouts can learn the basics of hiking and low-impact camping so that many thousands of people can enjoy the same trail for decades to come.

SCOUTING OUTCOMES

This month's patrol and troop activities should give your Scouts

- Improved physical fitness

- A sense of communion with nature and God
- A greater appreciation for the outdoors and a determination to follow the Outdoor Code
- Enhanced self-confidence in their ability to be comfortable on the trail and in camp

ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

By month's end, all Scouts should have met the majority of their basic hiking and camping requirements through First Class. Depending on the outing activities, they may also complete all or part of the following rank requirements:

Tenderfoot

- Outdoor—cooking, hiking, camping
- Citizenship—flag ceremonies
- Patrol/troop participation—patrol identification
- Personal development—Scout Oath and Law



Second Class

- Outdoor—cooking, camping, hiking, nature
- Citizenship—flag ceremonies
- Patrol/troop participation—patrol identification
- Personal development—Scout Oath and Law

First Class

- Outdoor—cooking, camping, nature, hiking
- Citizenship—flag ceremonies
- Patrol/troop participation—patrol identification
- Personal development—Scout Oath and Law

Merit Badges. Older Scouts can concentrate on the Backpacking and Hiking merit badges this month; they should be able to complete many of the requirements. Depending on activities during the month, they might also cover requirements in Camping, Cooking, Orienteering, Pioneering, Wilderness Survival, and other nature-related merit badges.

PARENT/GUARDIAN PARTICIPATION

The patrol leaders’ council can involve parents in the program feature this month by

- Asking qualified parents to assist with instruction in camping and hiking skills
- Inviting parents on the backpacking outing
- Asking parents to provide transportation to the starting point for the hike, if necessary, and pick up at the end

PATROL LEADERS’ COUNCIL

The patrol leaders’ council should meet during the early part of the previous month to plan troop activities for this program feature. If you don’t complete all items on the following agenda, continue planning at patrol leaders’ council meetings after each troop meeting.

- Decide on the route and destination for the hike. If permission will be needed, assign someone to secure it.

- Decide whether it will be a day outing or a longer trek.
- Review skills needed for the hike.
- If the troop will be camping overnight, plan special activities. If special gear will be needed, assign someone to obtain it; seek the troop committee's help, if necessary.
- Plan details of troop meetings for the month. Assign patrol demonstrations, covering skills that will be needed for the hiking activities.

FEATURE EVENT

Backpacking Outing

Backpacking offers a multitude of program adventures for your troop. A hike or trek allows Scouts to interact with nature, test their physical abilities, presents photo opportunities for any camera bugs, and helps new Scouts meet their hiking and camping requirements through First Class.

You may want to organize the hike in stages, based on the skill levels and physical capabilities of the Scouts. One part could be relatively easy so that inexperienced Scouts can get a taste of backpacking. The second stage would give the more experienced young men a more challenging trail. Finally, the third stage would be a challenge for the older Scouts—almost a wilderness survival outing.

An unfamiliar route and destination would be best for the Scouts. Give them a topographic map and compass to find their way, or follow an established trail.

Conduct various activities along the route. Depending upon the needs of the group, you may want to consider one or more of the following highlights:

NATURE NOOK. Select a spot along the trail. Have each Scout select a 3-square-foot area and study wildlife within those boundaries. Note the plant life, animals, insects, etc.

ENVIRONMENT PROJECT. Check with local conservation authorities for an appropriate Good Turn. Here are some possibilities.

- Plant tree seedlings or shrubs to provide food and cover for wildlife.
- Build a check dam, deflector, or cover device to provide shelter for fish and to reduce streambank erosion.
- Build and set out nesting boxes for birds and small mammals like squirrels and raccoons.
- Plant hedges or windbreaks to provide winter cover for wildlife.
- Protect a streambank by planting grass or trees.
- Control erosion on hiking trails by constructing water bars or spreading a layer of an organic material such as sawdust, wood chips, pine needles, or leaves on the trail surface.

HOW TALL, HOW FAR? Locate a tall tree, mountain peak, cliff wall, etc., and have Scouts estimate its height and how far away it is.

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TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ Week 1

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes	Locate the North Star, if it is dark enough, or practice telling directions without a compass. Set up a low-impact campsite for Scouts to see.		
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form patrols into an open square. • Recite the Outdoor Code. • Present colors. • Repeat the Pledge of Allegiance. 		
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Scouts work on reading a compass and learn how to set a pace. Do Blindfold Compass Walk. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i>. *) • Experienced Scouts work on choosing boots for backpacking and begin planning a 20-mile hike. • Older Scouts work on the Venture program. Review the principals of Leave No Trace and discuss ways they apply to the troop's next outing. 		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Discuss plans for this month's outing and make sure everyone knows what his assignments are and what to bring for the outing. Any Scouts who have not been hiking yet will need some extra help. All other patrols can plan activities to work on advancement. Plan any meals that will be needed for the outing. If it will be an overnighter, plan now for equipment distribution and tent requirements.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Hot Isotope Transport. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i>. *) • Run a mile and record the times. 		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemble patrols, repeat the Scout Oath. • Scoutmaster's Minute. • Retire colors. 	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and the backpacking outing. Begin work on next month's program feature.		

*Troop Program Resources for Scout Troops and Varsity Teams, Supply No. 33588

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TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ Week 2

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes			
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes			
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Scouts work on low-impact camping procedures, including site selection and cooking with Peak-type stoves. • Experienced Scouts work on packing procedures for the backpacking outing and select some campsites based on a topographic map of the camping area. • Older Scouts work on the Venture program or make plans to sleep under a shelter made from natural materials as part of the troop outing. 		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Review assignments for the campout. First-time hikers in the new-Scout patrol continue working on troop procedures for hiking and camping. All other patrols continue to plan activities for advancement. Practice interpatrol activities.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run a mile and record the times. • Do Silver Dollar Hunt. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i>.) 		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoutmaster's Minute. • Retire colors. 	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and plans for the troop outing. Continue work on next month's program feature.		

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TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ Week 3

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes			
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes			
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Scouts work on reading topographic maps and learn the symbols used on maps; also what to do if they get lost (<i>Boy Scout Handbook</i>). Play Map Symbol Relay. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i>.*) • Experienced Scouts plan projects that could be done along the hike route. • Older Scouts work on the Venture program or help younger Scouts with topographic map orientation. 		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Finalize the menu for the hike this week and make sure everyone knows what he will need to bring. Review clothing and equipment needs, and collect the necessary fees. Go over the hike route.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Ball Over. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i>.*) • Run a mile and record the times. 		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoutmaster's Minute. • Retire colors. 	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and plans for the hike. Continue work on next month's program feature.		

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TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ Week 4

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes			
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes			
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Scouts work on first aid for blisters, cuts, and sprains. • Experienced Scouts bring packs to the meeting and have a prehike inspection. • Older Scouts work on the Venture program or assist in teaching first-aid techniques. 		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Review plans and assignments for the hike/campout. Make sure everyone knows the travel plans and equipment needs. Review the patrol duty roster. Practice any interpatrol activities that will take place during the hike.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do Star Hunt. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i>.*) • Run a mile and record the times. 		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoutmaster's Minute—reflection on the experiences of the month. • Retire colors. 	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and checks last-minute details for the outing. Finalize work on next month's program feature.		

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TROOP OUTDOOR PROGRAM PLAN

Date _____

TIME	ACTIVITY	RUN BY
Friday evening	Load gear at meeting location, leave for campsite. Plan only a light meal en route.	SPL
	Arrive at the campsite. Off-load equipment. Set up patrol sites. Stow gear and set up camp.	
Saturday 6:30 A.M.	Cooks and assistants up. Prepare breakfast. (Cooks should be working on First and Second Class requirements.)	Cooks, assistants
7:00 A.M.	Everyone else up. Take care of personal hygiene, air tents, hang out sleeping bags.	
7:30 A.M.	Breakfast	
8:00 A.M.	Clean up.	Cooks
	Patrols clean up patrol site.	
8:30–11:30 A.M.	Give patrol leaders a topographic map to make a 2- to 3-mile hike. The new-Scout patrol could take a simpler hike. Older Scouts could begin a 15- to 20-mile weekend survival hike.	SPL
11:30 A.M.	Sack lunch	
Noon	Continue hikes.	
4:30 P.M.	Start dinner preparation.	Cooks
5:30 P.M.	Dinner	SPL
6:00 P.M.	Clean up.	Cooks
8:00 P.M.	Campfire	
9:00 P.M.	Cracker barrel	
10:00 P.M.	Lights out	
Sunday 6:30 A.M.	Cooks and assistants up. Prepare breakfast. (Cooks should be working on First and Second Class requirements.)	Cooks
7:00 A.M.	Everyone else up. Take care of personal hygiene needs, air tents, hang out sleeping bags.	
7:30 A.M.	Breakfast	
8:00 A.M.	Clean up.	Cooks
	Patrols clean up patrol site.	
8:30 A.M.	Worship service	

TIME	ACTIVITY	RUN BY
9:00–11:00 A.M.	Patrol games—run a 1-K orienteering course.	
11:00 A.M.	Break camp.	
Special equipment needs	Topographic maps, clipboards, compasses, troop camping equipment	