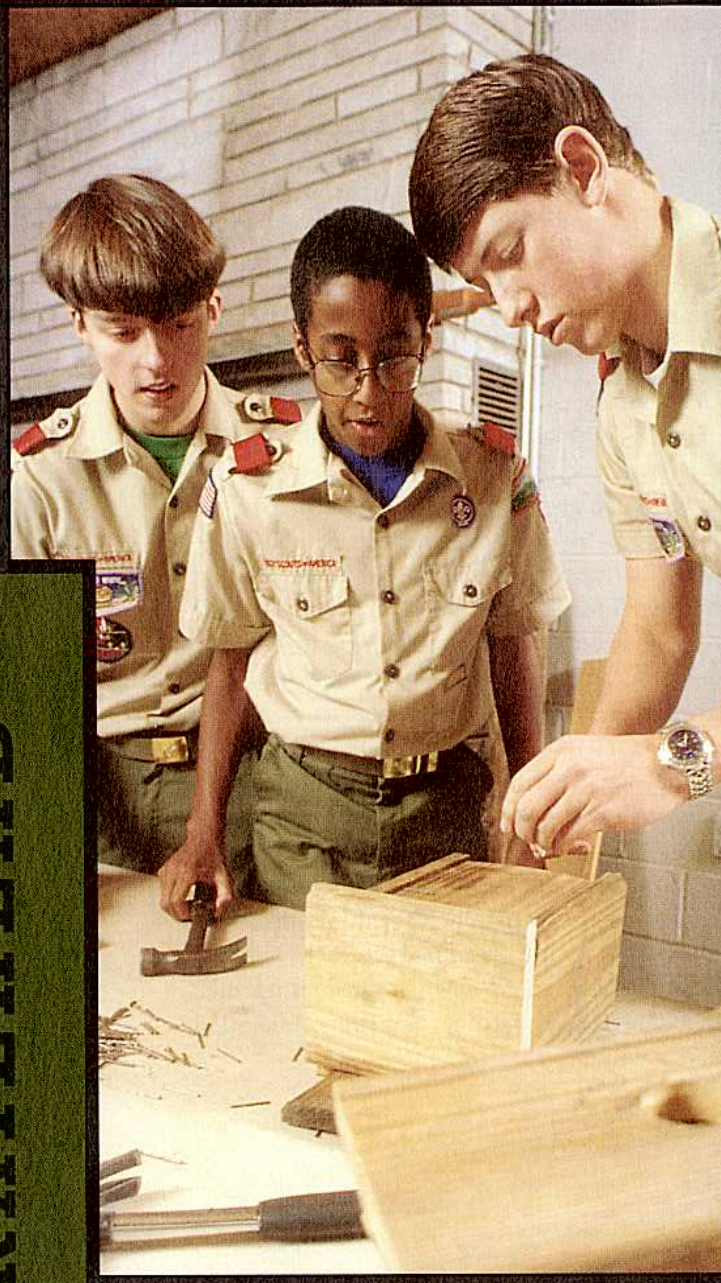


THE BOY-LED TROOP



TRAILHEAD

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THE BOY-LED TROOP

EMPOWERING BOYS TO BE LEADERS is the core of Scouting. Scouts learn by doing, and what they do is lead their patrols and their troop. The boys themselves develop a troop's program, then take responsibility for figuring out how they will achieve their goals.

One of your most important challenges as Scoutmaster is to train boy leaders to run the troop by providing direction, coaching, and support. They will make mistakes now and then and will rely upon you to guide them. But only through real hands-on experience as leaders can boys learn to lead.

Some Scoutmasters struggle with the idea of allowing boys to lead the troop. They wonder whether a boy of 12 can keep a patrol in order or if a 14-year-old senior patrol leader can organize and manage a successful troop meeting. In the short term it might seem easier for adults to make all of the decisions and direct the action. However, when you invest your energy in training boys to run the show, you will find that you can watch with great satisfaction as junior leaders thrive in fulfilling the responsibilities they have been given. Your time will have been spent productively, and the boys in your troop will be getting the full measure of the Scouting program.

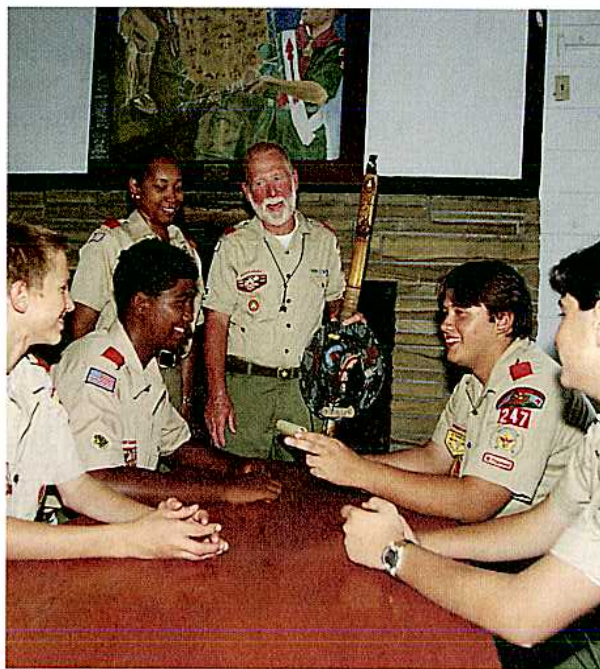
Each time Scouts are formed into a new group, whether it is a new patrol or a patrol leaders' council, the Scoutmaster must evaluate the skills, abilities, and morale level of the newly formed group, then provide direction, coaching, and support based on that evaluation.

"A leader is best when people barely know he exists; not so good when people obey and acclaim him; worst when they despise him. But a good leader who talks little when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say 'we did it ourselves.'"

—Chinese philosopher Sun-Tsu

LEADERS OF THE BOY-LED TROOP

A Boy Scout troop is a small democracy. With the Scoutmaster's direction, the boys are formed into patrols, plan the troop's program, and make it a reality.



In order for that to happen, a troop relies upon Scouts serving in positions of responsibility. The key boy leaders of the troop make up the *patrol leaders' council*. They are the senior patrol leader, assistant senior patrol leader, patrol leaders, and troop guides of any new-Scout patrols. (For a detailed description of each position, see the *Senior Patrol Leader Handbook*.)

Senior Patrol Leader

The junior leader with the most responsibility in a troop is the *senior patrol leader*. He is elected by all members of the troop. Each troop sets its own requirements and schedule of elections, though senior patrol leaders are usually chosen at six- to 12-month intervals and can be reelected. During a Scout's tenure as senior patrol leader, he is not a member of a patrol.

The senior patrol leader of an established troop is often selected from among experienced Scouts of a certain age and rank. In a new troop or a troop without older members, boys are still likely to choose a Scout whom they respect and believe will provide the best leadership. The patrol leaders' council might offer an opportunity for those in the running to make short presentations to the troop, explaining their qualifications and reasons for seeking the office. This provides good practice for the candidates and enables those who do not know them well, younger Scouts in particular, to gain a better sense of what they propose to do for the troop.

The senior patrol leader is in charge of troop meetings from beginning to end. He chairs meetings of the patrol leaders' council as they plan troop activities and programs. In short, the senior patrol leader's job is to see that the troop runs in an orderly and timely manner. To help the senior patrol leader achieve that leadership goal, you as Scoutmaster should work with him before and after troop meetings to mentor him, encourage him, and provide him with the tools to succeed. You might want to meet with him at other times, too, in order to discuss issues that will enhance his ability to lead the troop and improve the quality of experience the Scouts are enjoying.

The relationship between a senior patrol leader and his Scoutmaster is often one of friendship and mutual admiration. A great reward for a Scoutmaster is in helping a young man who has accepted a position of responsibility develop into a leader capable of fulfilling the high expectations placed upon him.



Assistant Senior Patrol Leader

With the approval of the Scoutmaster, the *assistant senior patrol leader* is appointed by the senior patrol leader, serves as his assistant, and takes his place when the senior patrol leader is absent. Among his specific responsibilities are training and providing direction for the troop quartermaster, scribe, Order of the Arrow troop representative, historian, librarian, and instructors. During his tenure as assistant senior patrol leader, the Scout is not a member of a patrol. Large troops may have more than one assistant senior patrol leader.



Patrol Leaders

One *patrol leader* is elected by the members of each patrol. He takes responsibility for the patrol's activities and represents the patrol as a member of the patrol leaders' council. Each patrol leader appoints an assistant patrol leader to serve with him. (For more on patrol leaders and assistant patrol leaders, see chapter 4, "The Boy-Led Patrol.")



Venture Patrol Leader

A Venture patrol is a group of older Scouts within the troop. Elected by members of his patrol, the *Venture patrol leader* helps his patrol get the most out of high-adventure experiences and sports activities. (For more on Venture patrols, see chapter 13, "Opportunities for Older Scouts.")



Troop Guide

The *troop guide* is both a leader and a "mentor" to the members of a new-Scout patrol. He is an older Scout, at least First Class in rank, who helps the patrol leader of a new-Scout patrol in much the same way that a Scoutmaster works with a senior patrol leader—providing direction, coaching, and support as determined by the skill level and morale of the patrol leader and members of the new-Scout patrol. The troop guide is usually not a member of another patrol, but may participate in the high-adventure activities of a Venture patrol.





THE PATROL LEADERS' COUNCIL

The *patrol leaders' council* (PLC) plans and runs the troop's program and activities and gives long-range direction with an annual program planning conference that lays out the troop's calendar for the coming year. Composed of the youth leaders listed above, the patrol leaders' council also meets each month to fine-tune upcoming troop meetings and outings. They might also get together briefly after each troop meeting to review the plans for the next troop meeting and make any adjustments to ensure its success. (For more on the annual program planning conference, see chapter 8, "Troop Program Planning.")

Meetings of the patrol leaders' council are conducted by the senior patrol leader. Patrol leaders and troop guides present the ideas and concerns of their patrols, then take the council's decisions to the rest of the troop members.

The Scoutmaster attends patrol leaders' council meetings as a coach and an informational resource. As much as possible, a Scoutmaster allows the boys to run the meetings and make the decisions, stepping in with suggestions and guidance when that will enhance the program for the troop, the patrols, and individual boys. The Scoutmaster and troop committee retain veto power over decisions of the patrol leaders' council, but should need to exercise it only on rare occasions when the plans of the patrol leaders' council would violate BSA policy or could lead to a situation that might jeopardize the safety and well-being of troop members.

OTHER TROOP POSITIONS

Depending upon the size and needs of a troop, any or all of the following positions may be filled. Unless otherwise indicated, the senior patrol leader selects the Scout who will hold each position. The Scoutmaster can help the senior patrol leader make his decisions on the basis of candidates' overall qualifications rather than merely on friendships. Scouts serving in any of the following troop positions will also continue to be active members of their patrols:

Quartermaster

The *quartermaster* is the supply and equipment boss. He keeps a current inventory of troop equipment and sees that it is in good condition.

He works with patrol quartermasters as they check out equipment and return it, and reports to the patrol leaders' council on equipment in need of replacement or repair. In carrying out his responsibilities, he may work closely with a member of the troop committee.



Scribe

The *scribe* is the troop's secretary. He attends meetings of the patrol leaders' council and keeps a log-book of their discussions, but is not a voting member. During troop meetings he records attendance and dues payments and maintains troop advancement records. He may be assigned to a member of the troop committee to help him with his work.



Order of the Arrow Troop Representative

The *Order of the Arrow troop (or team) representative* serves as a communication link between the troop and the local Order of the Arrow lodge or chapter. By enhancing the image of the Order as a service arm to the troop, he promotes the OA in the troop while encouraging year-round and resident camping in the troop and participation of older



Scouts in high-adventure programs. The OA troop representative assists with leadership skills training in the troop and supports fellow Arrowmen who undertake leadership roles in the troop. He reports to the assistant senior patrol leader.

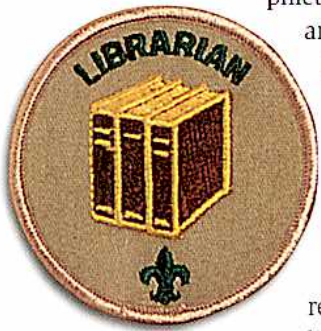
Historian

The *historian* collects and preserves troop photographs, news stories, trophies, flags, scrapbooks, awards, and other memorabilia. He might also collect and organize information about former Scouts and leaders and make materials available for Scouting activities, media contacts, and troop history projects.



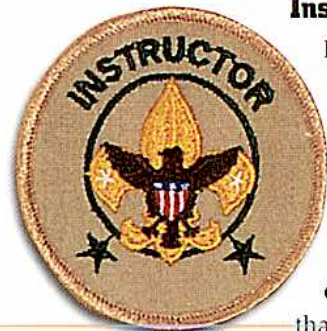
Librarian

The troop *librarian* oversees the care and use of troop books, pamphlets, magazines, audiovisuals, and merit badge counselor lists. He checks out these materials to Scouts and leaders and maintains records to ensure that everything is returned. He may also suggest the acquisition of new literature and report on the need to repair or replace any current holdings.



Instructor

Each *instructor* is an older troop member proficient both in a Scouting skill and in the ability to teach that skill to others. First aid, camping, backpacking—the subjects can encompass any of the areas that Scouts will want to master, especially those required for outdoor activities and rank advancement. A troop may have more than one instructor.



Chaplain Aide

The *chaplain aide* assists the troop chaplain (usually an adult from the troop committee or the chartered organization) in religious services for the troop. He sees that religious holidays are considered during program planning and promotes the religious emblems program.



Den Chief

A *den chief* works with a den of Cub Scouts and with their adult den leader. He assists with den meetings, encourages Cub Scout advancement, and serves as a role model for younger boys. Serving as den chief can be a great first leadership experience for a Scout.



Webelos Den Chief

A *Webelos den chief* meets each week with a Webelos den and helps their adult leader guide Webelos Scouts in their program. He can plan and assist with den meetings and field activities, lead songs and stunts, and encourage Webelos Scouts to progress into the Scout troop.

Junior Assistant Scoutmaster

A Scout at least 16 years of age who has shown outstanding leadership skills may be appointed by the senior patrol leader, with the advice and consent of the Scoutmaster, to serve as a *junior assistant Scoutmaster*. These young men (a troop may have more than one junior assistant Scoutmaster) follow the guidance of the Scoutmaster in providing support and supervision to other boy leaders in the troop. Upon his 18th birthday, a junior assistant Scoutmaster will be eligible to become an assistant Scoutmaster.



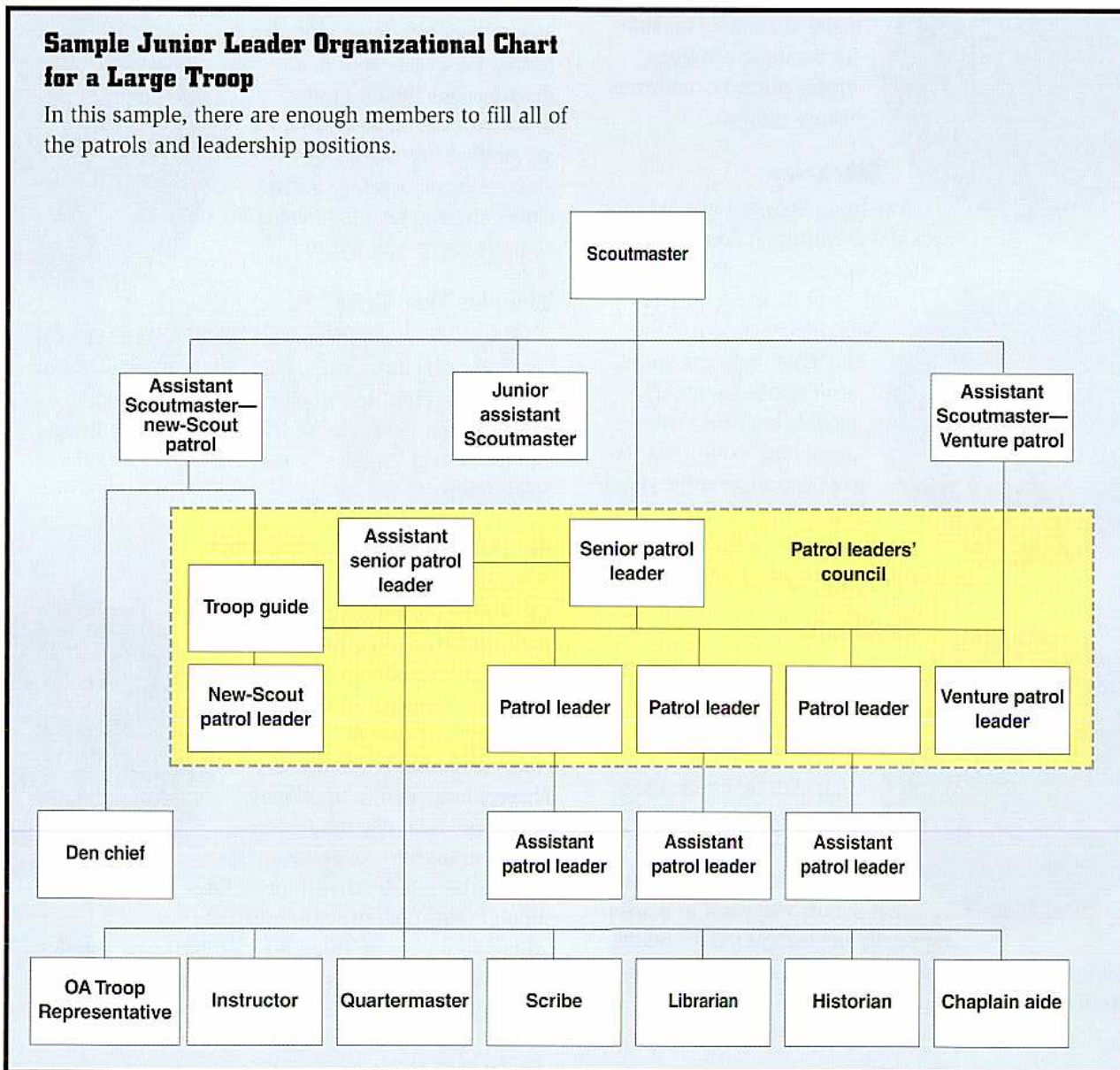
TROOP JUNIOR LEADER ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS

Troops come in many sizes. Those that are just starting out or that are in small towns might not have many members, but boys filling the most vital leadership positions can still put the Scouting program into action. As troop membership grows, additional leadership positions can be filled until the full roster of leaders is complete.



Sample Junior Leader Organizational Chart for a Large Troop

In this sample, there are enough members to fill all of the patrols and leadership positions.



Sample Junior Leader Organizational Chart for a Small Troop

As more boys join, more patrols can be formed and more leadership positions filled.

