

MEMBERSHIP AND RETENTION

MEMBERSHIP MINUTE: HOW TO RECRUIT EACH AND EVERY MONTH

Note: This tool can be tailored to the program feature of the month and can be used monthly if so desired.

Youth can join Scouting any time of the year. We want to make sure each Scout troop has a true year-round recruiting plan. Understanding how to turn every activity into a recruiting opportunity is easy, but developing a culture of inviting all to participate in Scouting can be difficult. Following a few simple steps can result in some amazing growth in your troop. Using the theme of specialty cooking as an example, teach leaders how easy recruiting can be. As noted above, this Membership Minute may be used each month by simply modifying the steps to fit your selected program feature.

The Basic Principle

Step 1—Decide upon the activity to be targeted as a recruitment event. This should be something that is already on the troop's calendar and therefore does not take any additional time to plan or resources to accomplish. Example: Dutch oven cooking.

Step 2—30 days in advance of the event (Dutch oven cookout), have the Scouts make a list of invitees. This can be done by asking simple questions, such as, "If you were to have a party this weekend, who would you invite?" or "If you were going to invite some friends over to play video games tonight, who would they be?" Write down all of the names. This is similar to a brainstorming session, so do not remove any names from the list. Don't take away the right to accept the offer from any potential Scout.

Step 3—Within the next week (3 to 4 weeks before the activity), have each Scout deliver, mail, or email an invitation to the friends on the list you created in step 2. Extending an invitation to join may be difficult for many of our Scouts. Making the first invitation through a written format instead of face-to-face can be less intimidating and much easier for most Scouts. (See the sample invitation.)

Step 4—One week after the initial invitation is delivered (2 to 3 weeks before the activity), have the Scouts follow up with a phone call or text message to their friends. They may simply ask two

questions. First, "Did you get my invitation?" second, "Do you think you can come?" This step opens the door for a further discussion but avoids a face-to-face rejection, which can be embarrassing for the Scout should his friend choose not to show interest.

Step 5—After the Scout has received a warm reception to his invitation, have him make personal contact with his friend in regard to the invitation (1 to 2 weeks before the activity). Have the Scout ask direct questions such as "Can you come?" or "Do you need a ride?"

Step 6—Three days prior to your event, have the Scouts get a final commitment from their friends to attend. You will need this count in order to have enough materials or supplies on hand. Using the cooking program feature as an example, you may have Scouts ask something like "We want to make sure we have enough pizza for everybody. Will you be there?"

Step 7—Remember, we are working with teen and preteen boys who have a lot going on. Forgetting about a scheduled event is not uncommon. On the day of the activity, have the Scouts call or make personal contact one last time to either confirm or offer their friend a ride to the activity. This should give you a definite final count.

Step 8—Hold your activity. Remember that this is a regularly scheduled activity, likely during a troop or patrol gathering. You want your potential Scouts to have a realistic picture of what your troop does and how things work. Include all of the usual formalities such as opening ceremonies, business items, etc.

Step 9—Following your activity (within 3 days), have each Scout follow up with his friends who attended and extend an invitation to join the troop.

Step 10—Have each Scout follow up with those who couldn't make the activity and let them know how much fun you had and that they were missed. This opens the door for a future invitation.

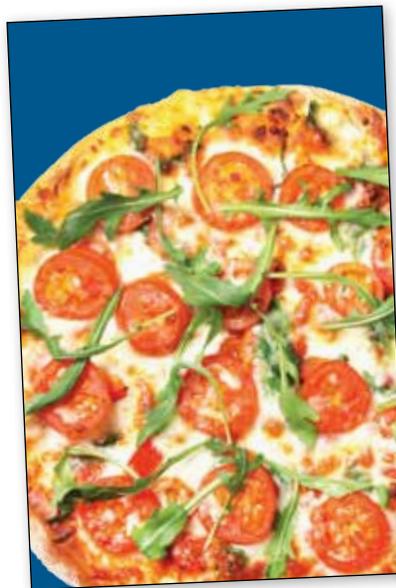


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Playing with fire and eating pizza—How much better does life get? My troop is having a pizza party, and I'd like to invite you to come along. Not only do we get to eat, but we'll be learning how to cook pizza Dutch-oven style.

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Let me know if you need a ride or if you have any questions. I think it'll be pretty fun!

Phone: _____

Email: _____

 BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

RETENTION MINUTE: SCOUTPARENTS

www.ScoutParents.org

Experience has shown us that keeping youth involved in Scouting isn't simply a matter of engaging the Scout, but also reaching out to the parents and families of the Scouts in our units. That's where ScoutParents comes in.

What Is a ScoutParent?

A ScoutParent is a parent or adult mentor of a Scout who enthusiastically participates with their Scout and also helps other volunteers to provide the best quality program experience to all youth in every unit.

A ScoutParent leads their family in obtaining the values, benefits, experiences and rewards from their family's Scouting participation, and in sharing these with others; enjoys participating with his or her Scout and inspires their child to persevere in Scouting with

their tenure, activity participation and achievement; helps enhance youth and parent-mentor recruitment; demonstrates retention, enthusiasm, commitment and participation in the passionate GREAT family FUN of Scouting.

What Is the ScoutParents Mission?

The ScoutParents mission is to develop and implement methods which encourage and empower Scouting participants to help maximize the number of dedicated Scouting youth and parents and mentors as dedicated Scouting volunteers who participate with their Scouts.

Be sure to check the registration forms of your Scouts. You'll probably find that many of their parents have checked the box to be a ScoutParent. Look for ways to engage them and you'll retain more Scouts in Scouting.

RETENTION MINUTE: UTILIZATION OF *BOYS' LIFE* MAGAZINE

How can you keep more boys in your troop? Promote and utilize *Boys' Life* magazine to your parents and boys. Why?

- **Longer Scout tenure and retention.** On average, Scouts who subscribe to *Boys' Life* recharter two times more often than Scouts who do not subscribe to *Boys' Life*.
- **The silent Scout leader.** *Boys' Life* works in the absence of direct leadership. Even if a boy must miss a meeting or two, *Boys' Life* will be there, helping him work on his Scouting projects when no leader is available. *Boys' Life* brings Scouting into the home!
- **Higher rank advancements.** On average, 78 percent of *Boys' Life* subscribers advance at least one rank each year, versus 38 percent for nonsubscribers.
- **Stronger parent support for Scouting.** Most parents/family members read part or all of *Boys' Life* each month and become more knowledgeable about and stronger in their support for Scouting.
- **Age-specific reading for Scouts.** The BSA publishes two demographic editions of *Boys' Life* magazine, for ages 6 to

10 and 11 and older, to meet the reading levels needs of all Scouts.

- **General Scouting excitement/education.** *Boys' Life* is an essential part of the Scout's learning process. It is a positive influence in shaping the character of our Scouts.
- **Scouts in Action.** This is one of the most popular features in *Boys' Life*. Scout leaders can use the stories of Scouts in Action for inspirational talks and real-life examples of Scout heroes. The stories are based on the actions of real Scouts who have received the BSA Lifesaving and Meritorius Action Award.

Frequently Asked Question

Question: How many months is the *Boys' Life* subscription, and how much does it cost?

Response: *Boys' Life* comes each month, and the cost for Scouts is only \$1 per month—only \$12 per year, a real bargain! *Boys' Life* is the official monthly youth magazine of Scouting. It stimulates rank advancements and strengthens membership retention! Visit www.scouting.org/magazines for more information.

RETENTION MINUTE: MENTOR, ENGAGE, CONNECT, AND NURTURE NEW SCOUT PARENTS

- **Engage them.** Do not disregard these new parents. You must pay attention to these new parents immediately. Intentionally plan and conduct activities that will build relationships and interactions with all the new parents.
- **Involve them.** Look for ways that new parents can be a part of your patrol and troop activities. As a Scout leader, your first source of helpers, transportation, chaperones, new adult leaders, and other resources are these new parents. Provide intergenerational activities, Scout projects, and learning opportunities that will involve the entire family (including brothers and sisters).
- **Inform them.** Information should be provided on several levels. First, make sure parents are aware of the events and activities their children are involved in. Parents/leaders newsletters, event calendars, and personal contacts reduce the chances of misunderstandings and miscommunication. Second, keep them in the loop concerning the needs and decisions regarding their Scout. Treat them as partners who have joined with you to provide the very best for their children. Third, become a student of local school culture and serve as a resource to help parents recognize current trends and thought processes.
- **Educate them.** Survey parents to determine their needs and resources. Provide regular workshops and training opportunities to develop Scouting skills to address those needs. Schedule times for parents to interact and discuss common interests. Serve as a mentor to these new Scout parents, or enlist other successful Scouting parents to mentor new Scout parents.
- **Support them.** Regardless of how successful and popular a Scout leader is, the parent is still the parent, and Scouting leaders are not. Never criticize or defy a parent in front of a youth or child. If there are problems or misunderstandings, handle them privately and confidentially and deal directly with the parent. The most important support a Scouting leader can give beyond Scouting is to support parents individually and specifically.
- **Encourage them.** The best thing a Scout leader can do for a youth or child is to give that child a supportive parent. One principle of growth states that adults/parents are open to the people/leaders/coaches/teachers who invest in their children. As you mentor and provide servant leadership to their children, you are building credibility, confidence, and trust with Scouts and their parents.

RETENTION MINUTE: THINK STEM!

Keep more youth in your Scout troop: How? Do cool science experiments and teach your boys about the wonders of STEM! Each Scout can work on the NOVA and Super NOVA awards. Some of our most famous astronauts, nuclear scientists and inventors started right here in Scouting. With the NOVA awards guidebook, Scouts can have fun and learn about the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and math. They can choose from four separate modules, and each module supports existing recognitions in Scouting. Robots and cool science experiments are one of the best retention strategies around!

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Do leaders need to be experts in STEM fields?

Response: No; the NOVA awards guidebook has a section for counselors and mentors. There is also website support at www.scouting.org/STEM. By having and using the NOVA awards

guidebook you can increase the STEM experiences in your unit and help your Scouts earn their NOVA Awards!

Question: What is in the NOVA awards guidebook?

Response: The guidebook provides the instructions and requirements for earning all four of the NOVA awards and the Super NOVA awards. These awards are based on the integration of existing merit badges and Scouting awards plus hands-on experiments targeted to Scout-age boys.

Question: Do Scouts need to complete all four modules to earn the NOVA Award?

Response: No; each Scout can choose from four different modules. Completing any one of the modules will earn the Scout the right to wear the NOVA Award. For each additional module he completes, the Scout is recognized with a “pi” pin device placed on the NOVA patch.

RETENTION MINUTE: SUCCESSION PLANS FOR SCOUT LEADERS

Many new and even long-tenured troops fail to recharter due to a key adult leader who has decided to step down. They may be moving out of the area, there could be health issues, there could be any number of reasons for leaving the leadership position. Many times the troop fails because there are no other people prepared and willing to assume the leadership roles. To avoid this, it's important to establish a succession plan, identifying at least two key leaders in every troop for leadership roles, and getting those leaders trained. Good succession planning calls for leadership to be identified and selected two years in advance.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: How do you implement succession planning?

Response: The committee chairman should identify a candidate or two who will be trained to succeed the Scoutmaster, assistant Scoutmasters, or other leadership positions. This person should be familiar to the unit's parents, other leaders, and the boys. To ease the transition, he or she should be provided leader in training authority to support the troop or a patrol while still serving under the current leader's direction.

Question: When should we begin succession planning?

Response: Like most emergency preparedness, the best time to plan is now, yesterday, last year, immediately. Ideally, the current troop leadership should do this before there is a crisis. Starting early also allows the current leadership to really research the past performance of the troop to help predict the future needs and requirements of the troop. Warning: Some leaders might feel threatened by having to groom their replacements.

Question: So do we recruit new leaders?

Response: This isn't about just recruiting new leaders. It's the planning and execution of a system by the unit, for the unit, and with the active engagement of a unit commissioner. The process must also continuously update and improve the unit, while making sure nothing is lost in the transition process. The ultimate goal is to effectively have the next leader trained and ready to go before that leader is REALLY needed to take over.

RETENTION MINUTE: UTILIZE THE *BOY SCOUT HANDBOOK*

Keep more youth in your troop: How? Use the *Boy Scout Handbook!* Each Scout should have the most recent edition of the *Boy Scout Handbook*. Leaders should be given the handbook appropriate to their role: *Patrol Leader Handbook*, *Senior Patrol Leader Handbook*, etc. As a parent or caring adult, you want your son to grow up to be self-reliant and dependable, worthy and caring. Scouting has these same goals in mind for him. Your son will be greatly helped not only by the fun outdoor information, but also by the reminders of those important character traits included in the Scout Oath and Scout Law, which are contained in the handbooks. Your son will be groomed to receive the full benefits of Scouting with the *Boy Scout Handbook* to guide you and him along the Scouting trail. It is the responsibility of the troop leadership to promote the utilization of the handbook. It is the manual for Boy Scouting and one of the best retention strategies around!

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What is in the *Boy Scout Handbook*?

Response: The *Boy Scout Handbook* is a resource and instructional tool for Scouts. In it you will find instruction on the purpose of Scouting, including the goals and ideals. While that may not sound like a lot of fun for the Scouts, the bulk of the handbook teaches

them all about how to have fun in the outdoors. It includes things like how to pack a pack, first-aid, orienteering tips, how to safely use wood tools (knives and axes), cooking in the out of doors, and so much more.

Question: Can the handbook help parents as well as Scouts?

Response: Yes. The handbook is for both of you. While it includes information about skill development, advancement, and outdoor program for the Scout, it can also be a valuable introduction guide for adults. The handbook includes basic information that will help parents understand the goals and ideals of the Boy Scouts of America, which will then help them to support their son in his Scouting involvement. It will also serve as a tool for parents to assist their child work on skills and goals even when he is not in a troop or patrol setting.

Question: Is there just one *Boy Scout Handbook*?

Response: Yes, but there are a number of other books that will help support your son and keep him engaged in Scouting. The *Fieldbook*, for example, is a great tool to generate enthusiasm and instill confidence in a young man's ability to try new activities and explore the outdoors in more depth.

RETENTION MINUTE: PARENT COMMUNICATION

Regular communication with your Scout parents/families is critical to keeping boys in Scouting.

For Scouts who have just joined your troop, the first few weeks of activities are very important. It's important to remember that even though they are officially members of your troop, during the first few weeks most Scouts (and their parents) are still making up their minds on whether this troop is right for them. They are still in an assessment stage. Help them make the choice to stay with your troop.

- **Be sure your troop is welcoming to new families and introduce them to both youth and adult leadership.** They may have lots of questions. You should answer their questions completely, but don't overwhelm them with information. It is important to stay in contact with parents during the first few weeks so they will decide they want to continue to be a part of the unit.
- Social media (Facebook and Twitter) is very helpful with troop communication. **Regular push communications about upcoming events/activities can help ensure good attendance.**

- Making and distributing periodic **newsletters with upcoming events, contacts, and frequently asked questions (FAQs)**, as well as announcements of rank or other accomplishments, is a great way to keep Scouts and their families engaged.

It's a good idea whenever a boy is absent from meetings/activities to give his parents a personal phone call rather than an email to provide a more personal connection. **At the very least, the leader should call when the boy has missed two meetings in a row.** Most people are very appreciative when someone notices their child's absence and checks to see how he is doing. Staying in touch like this is often enough to keep a boy who misses a few meetings from dropping out altogether.

Of course, sometimes boys have to miss gatherings for an extended period of time due to sports, family matters, health issues, or other activities. When this happens, let them know that this is understandable. Simply ask that they stay in touch with the troop and keep tabs on what the troop is doing. **Make sure they are welcomed back when they can return to regular attendance.**