

Spring Recruitment Plan for Troops

Plan your open house, and organize activities for new Scouts

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Spring Recruitment

Troop Open House

The Boy Scout troop open house allows a troop to swing open its doors and roll out the red carpet to welcome guests. It provides a forum to show off Scouting activities and the troop's accomplishments. It is an effective tool to reach youth who have never tried Scouting.

Hosting a troop open house is a five-step process that has been tried and proven in troops throughout the nation. Each of the following five steps is vital to the event's success:

1. Present a school rally to fifth- and sixth-graders.
2. Email or mail the parents of interested youth a personal invitation to the troop open house.
3. Follow the invitation with a telephone call to the parents.
4. Host the troop open house for youth and their parents.
5. Organize a troop or district activity to involve new Scouts right away.

Youth join Scouting for the fun and outdoor adventure. Parents want them to join for completely different reasons—character building and leadership training. Following this plan for conducting a troop open house will help you address the wants and needs of youth and their parents.

Troop Open House Timetable

February

- Set a date and plan a troop open house for March.

March

- Conduct a school rally introducing fifth- and sixth-grade boys to Scouting. Have them complete the High Adventure Survey, No. 34241.
- Follow up with interested youth by sending them a personal invitation to the troop open house and making a personal phone call to their parents.
- Hold the troop open house to welcome potential Boy Scouts and their parents.
- Plan a troop activity to get new Scouts involved with the troop shortly after they join.

April

- Sponsor a troop activity for new Scouts.
- Encourage each troop member to attend summer camp. Conduct summer camp orientation to encourage full troop involvement.

May

- Work closely with new Scouts and parents during their transition to the Boy Scout troop, ensuring their needs are met and that their move has been natural and fun.
- Work on rank advancement with new Scouts.

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Troop Open House Rally

Cooperation of schools is essential to gain access to Scout-age youth. Contact school administration to schedule presentation time during school with small groups of boys.

Plan the presentation to highlight Scouting's activities, high adventure, and outdoor experiences. Display hands-on visuals such as backpacks, canoes, and tents, and allow the youth to check them out up close. Dress in outdoor wear to complete the setting. Allowing some experienced Scouts to assist in the presentation could help the youth visualize themselves as Scout. The presentation should be no more than five minutes.

Following the introductory presentation, give each youth a High Adventure Survey, No. 34241. Ask them to check the high-adventure experiences that interest them. Explain that Scout troops do the kinds of activities listed on the survey.

While the youth are working on their surveys, announce that you would like to invite them to join a Scout troop. Explain that they will receive an invitation to join a Scout troop in their community if they mark that they are interested in joining. Collect every survey, and check to ensure that each is complete with the youth's full name and contact information.

If the school cannot allow assemblies with youth, suggest the alternative plan of having the school distribute the High Adventure Survey. Be sure to pick up the completed surveys soon after their distribution.

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Sample Invitation Letter for New Scouts

Dear parent,

Your son has taken a step toward building a solid future; are you willing to support his growth?

Recently, your son indicated his desire to try his hand at such high-adventure activities as backpacking, cycling, camping, swimming, canoeing, rock climbing, and horseback riding. Our Scout troop will participate in these activities and even more in the coming year, and we would like to invite him to join the Boy Scouts of America.

Scouting has a reputation for helping youth develop self-reliance, strong character, respect for others, good citizenship skills, and physical and mental fitness. For a century, our programs have instilled in young men the values and knowledge that they need to become leaders in their communities and in their countries.

Please join our troop for our open house at _____ (time) on _____ (date) at _____ (place). You'll get a firsthand look at some of our troop activities, and you can visit with our Scouts and their adult leaders. Take some time to look over the enclosed brochure, and bring any questions or concerns to the meeting.

I look forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,

Scoutmaster, Troop _____

Telephone No. _____

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Follow Up With a Call

On the day or evening before the open house, each prospective Scout's household should receive a phone call from a member of the troop, ideally the Scoutmaster, who sent the letter or email. As you make the call, keep in mind that the youth has already expressed his interest, so direct the call to a parent.

To help put the parents at ease, ask the following questions:

1. Did the family receive the Scoutmaster's letter or email?
2. Does anyone in the family have previous Scouting experience?
3. Do they have any questions about Scouting or the troop open house?
4. Do they know the time and location of the troop open house?

Ensure parents that you look forward to meeting them and will greet them at the door.

Sample Troop Open House Agenda

1. Preopening _____
 - Conduct a simple action game for early arrivals.
2. Opening _____
 - Hold the flag ceremony.
 - Welcome the guests.
3. Activity Time _____
 - a. Skill time for youth _____
 - Hot spark
 - Knot relay
 - Tent pitching
 - b. Parent orientation _____
 - Explain the ideals and values of Scouting.
 - Introduce the troop leadership and its organization.
 - Distribute the troop calendar.
 - Explain the summer camp opportunity.
 - Thoroughly explain the costs of troop membership.
4. Joining process _____
 - Youth and parents complete applications to join Scouting.
 - Announce information about the next troop meeting.
5. Closing _____
 - Scoutmaster's minute
 - Closing ceremony
6. Refreshments (optional) _____

Organize a Troop or District Activity

During the initial contact with Scout-age youth, we promised that Scouting is action-packed. Youth will expect that adventure soon after they become Scouts, so schedule an exciting activity soon after the troop open house. Here are a few suggestions:

Troop Campout

New Scouts joined with the expectation of going camping, and they should be given this opportunity for outdoor activity as soon as possible following the troop open house. Begin planning the activity well before the troop open house so that the event is in place when the new Scouts join.

Districtwide Overnighter

Some districts may choose to host all their troops for an overnighter at an area camp. The program could include basic Scouting skills, a campfire, and preparing a simple meal. The experience will quickly give new Scouts a sense of belonging and fulfill their expectations of an exciting adventure.

Lock-Ins

Lock-in events also have proven successful in some districts. Lock-ins, which are especially effective in colder climates, are more like “camp-ins” rather than the usual campout. They can be

set up at the local YMCA or school gymnasium. Program possibilities could include swimming, sports, movies, refreshments, and a little sleeping.

Two-Deep Leadership

According to BSA Youth Protection policies, every BSA trip or outing involving Scout-age youth should be supervised by two BSA-registered adult leaders or one registered adult leader and a parent or guardian of a participant, one of whom must be at least 21 years of age. The chartered organization is responsible for ensuring that sufficient leadership is provided for all activities.

For more information on BSA Youth Protection, consult the *Guide to Safe Scouting* at www.scouting.org.

Get New Scouts Involved

New Scouts should be introduced into the mainstream of troop activities as soon as possible after they join the troop. Assign them to a new Scout patrol and get them started on earning advancement. The Scoutmaster, assistant Scoutmaster, or troop guide should take responsibility for helping new Scouts get a good start.

