

Introduction

We Are Often Distracted from Effective Scout Leadership Training and Mentoring

Any good Scoutmaster can tell you that running a Scout Troop is hard work. Volunteers are constantly “forgetting” to do the things they say they are going to do — or doing them only at the last minute when there is little margin for error. Logistics of organizing Troop events can be challenging. Scouts do not get together every day and may attend different schools, making communication and coordination difficult.

With 21st century achievement-oriented parents and their children demanding increasingly well organized and well-run, action-packed, entertaining programs, many Scoutmasters, Assistant Scoutmasters and Crew Advisors have chosen to rely heavily on capable adults to get things done efficiently, timely and correctly. After all, Scouts usually do not have the planning, organization and logistical skills to carry out complex Troop activities. If you want to have something done right, delegate it to someone who has done it before and has all the requisite skills. That’s good leadership, right?

Consider our mission: to train Scouts to lead. If our Troop Committee and adult leaders do most of the planning and decision-making, the Scouts will have little responsibility. But Scouts can’t learn how to lead just by following or watching. Learning to be a leader requires practice. In Scouting, achieving perfection is not nearly so important as letting the Scouts do it themselves.

It Takes Discipline and Focus to Be Effective

While nearly all Scoutmasters say they want to develop leadership qualities in their Scouts, far fewer seem to have spent much time thinking through how to actually do it. Even fewer are disciplined and focused enough to do an effective job of training Scouts to lead other Scouts.

Many believe leadership training automatically flows from other Scouting methods such as good advancement, or by having Scouts in uniform be “up front” conducting opening and closing ceremonies, or by sending one or two Scouts to council-run leadership training courses. Those things are necessary, but they are not enough.

A Scout Troop Is the Perfect Place to Mold and Mentor Leaders

The BSA is dedicated to training Scouts to be leaders. It offers Council-level, regional and National Scout leadership training programs. These programs are excellent. They can transform Scouts who go through them.

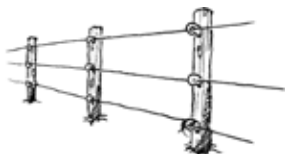
A Scoutmaster should encourage his Scouts to attend BSA leadership training courses. But he needs to do more. We unit leaders should not just sit back and let specialists at other levels of the Scouting organization take care of what is perhaps the most critical part of the mission. B-P intended *you* to train your Scouts to lead.

Leadership training is for all Scouts — not just the few who will attend council-level training programs. Baden-Powell believed leadership training should pervade the entire Scouting program. He created Patrols to offer leadership opportunities to as many Scouts as possible. That can happen only in a natural Scout Troop such as yours.

Nearly everything a Scout Troop does is an opportunity to train Scouts to lead. We Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters have a lot of time with our Scouts — at least a weekend each month, a night each week and a week at camp each summer. We know our Scouts better than any District or Council level leader ever will. The BSA has given us a mission: train Scouts to lead. We need to exercise careful focus, dedication and discipline if our unit's program is going to effectively train young leaders.

Leadership Training and Mentoring Is Hands-On, Not Theoretical

The only real way to learn how to lead is by doing it. Will Rogers once quipped,



“There are three kinds of men: The ones that learn by reading; The few who learn by observation; The rest of us have to pee on the electric fence and find out for ourselves.”

People are more complex than electric fences. Figuring out how to motivate people and get them to follow you is the quest of a lifetime. How does a teenager get the opportunity to learn how to do that? By joining a Scout Troop! Scouting provides many opportunities for Scouts to learn how to lead by finding out for themselves — but only if Scoutmasters and other adult leaders make it happen.

Will Rogers was also saying that you probably will not learn how to train Scouts to lead simply by reading this or any other book. We have tried to keep this book very practical, but there is no substitute for experience. Your next Troop campout is the perfect opportunity to try out a new approach. Be patient with yourself. Keep trying. If you have the vision, focus and dedication, you cannot fail.

The Patrol Method Is the Recipe for Scout Leadership Training

Baden-Powell's Patrol Method is the recipe for youth leadership training. Weekend camping trips and weeklong treks or summer camps are concentrated leadership opportunities. There are many logistical, planning and other interesting leadership challenges to putting together a fun, active outdoor program. The younger boys instantly recognize the authority of the older boys because of the difference in ages and experience. Outdoor activities tend to provide immediate and direct feedback about what works and what does not.

Many Scouts Will Not Lead Without Encouragement from Their Scoutmasters

Many 21st century teenagers are perfectly willing to sit back and let adults take care of all the headaches. After all, in America's increasingly suburbanized lives, that is what most parents do with their teenagers — take care of all their problems and make all their decisions for them.

In a Scout Troop, the Scoutmaster sets the standard for leadership. Effective youth leadership training begins with the Scoutmaster.

We use the term leadership *training* throughout this book to differentiate it from “teaching” leadership or “instilling” leadership or “encouraging” Scouts to lead. Leadership training is not about using a whiteboard to conduct management classes. Training a Scout to lead is much more active. It requires lots of individualized attention, mentoring, guiding, pushing and prodding. Even more importantly, it takes judgment and experience to know when and how to intervene in a way that will not undercut leadership.

Leadership training is also a gradual process that takes time and patience. One can think of it as tending a garden. The gardener can prepare the ground, plant the seeds, weed regularly and even guide the way the plant stems are headed. But ultimately, it is up to the plants themselves to grow strong and tall.

Sometimes, too much or the wrong kind of intervention can actually hurt the growing plants.

Are You Prepared to Train and Mentor Tomorrow's Leaders?

Here are some interesting questions we ask ourselves from time to time:

- ♣ Do we believe ethical, effective leadership is important to America and the world?
- ♣ Are we committed to helping our Scouts become effective leaders?
- ♣ Are we willing to give our Scouts the opportunity to lead?
- ♣ Are we prepared to focus on applying the Patrol Method?
- ♣ Can we trust teenagers to lead “our” unit?
- ♣ Can we allow teenagers to learn from their own mistakes without trying to solve all their problems?
- ♣ Are we prepared to be the patient mentor and counselor — sitting in the back of the room rather than standing up in front?
- ♣ Do we have the time, commitment and dedication to give our Scouts the training and tools they need to lead effectively?

The Best Scoutmasters Are Stage Directors



Baden-Powell taught us that the best Scoutmasters are the ones who can retire to a corner of the meeting room or campsite and watch the activities move forward under the leadership of the Scouts themselves. This does not mean that the Scoutmaster's role is unimportant or minimized. Far from it! To the contrary, putting the Scouts out in front to make decisions and lead other Scouts is the highest credit to any Scoutmaster.

The best Scoutmasters we have seen spend most of their time behind the scenes — mentoring and guiding young leaders, educating parents and running interference to prevent other adults from taking responsibility away from Scouts. They train their Scouts to lead and then trust them with the responsibility of self-governance. Of course, any Scoutmaster occasionally needs to take charge and exercise authority — after all, boys will be boys. But the best Scoutmasters are careful about how and why they intervene. In this

book you may find some pointers so you don't have to learn all your lessons the hard way.

How This Guide Is Organized

Section 1 “Understanding and Telling ‘The Why’ ” describes a basic approach of logic and explanation in leadership and leadership training. American boys are more willing to be led when they understand the reason why they are being asked or told to do something.

Section 2 “ ‘The Why’ of Scout Leadership Training” provides historical perspective on how B-P designed Scouting to train leaders. If you are new to Scouting, you may learn a lot from Section 2. If you already know all about Brownsea Island, you can skip to Section 3.

Sections 3 and 4 on “The Patrol Method” are the heart of this guide. These sections provide practical advice and guidance on how to use B-P’s basic Patrol organizational structure and method to train Scouts how to lead other Scouts. If you read nothing else in this guide, you may want to spend some time with these sections.

Section 5 “Striving for Excellence: Doing Your Best” provides some inspirational explanation about the importance of doing our best along with techniques for motivating Scouts to do their best.

Section 6 “Caring Leadership” discusses the role of ethical decision-making in training Scouts to become leaders. Ethical servant leadership is the starting point for the “Be-Know-Do” principles underlying modern Scout leadership training. Unethical or immoral leadership is far worse than no leadership at all. We can show our Scouts through our example what it means to act ethically. We can make ethical considerations a part of every important decision.

Section 7 “Planning: How to Facilitate Without Taking Over” provides practical guidance on how to get inexperienced planners to plan more effectively and accomplish goals. Planning is a life skill. It is also an essential part of modern Scout leadership training. Effective leadership cannot take place without it. Planning is usually where Scoutmasters have the most difficulty when they are trying to create a Scout-run Troop. The typical fifteen-year old has no idea how to plan, and yet is expected in a Scout-run Troop to plan for many other people including adults.

Section 8 “Shared Leadership” explores delegating, situational leadership and other ways to share leadership.

Section 9 “Techniques that Support the Patrol Method” is a series of special topics we have found useful in training leaders.

Section 10 “Create Your Personal Legacy of Leadership” steps back and gives a long-term perspective.

The Appendix includes information that may be useful to you, including some ideas for Troop Leadership Training weekend experiences.



Look for “leadership compass bearings” to help you orient yourself on your journey.

Each section contains quotations from Baden-Powell’s original source materials as well as additional quotations we have found helpful or inspirational.

You will also find storytelling “Leadership Yarns.” Baden-Powell knew that storytelling is one of the most effective ways to communicate ideas. Our “Leadership Yarn” stories are fictional but are loosely based on composite observations we have made along the way or heard from other Scout leaders. Any resemblance of the fictional characters in our “Leadership Yarns” to real people is purely coincidental.

In our experience, the best way to train Scouts how to lead is out in the field, not in a classroom. Scouts get more than enough classroom time in school. We cannot imagine B-P telling a group of Scouts to sit down in front of a chalkboard or even a television set for a presentation on effective personnel management. He used campouts, hikes, patrol meetings and campfires as practical opportunities to train Scouts how to lead. In our experience, it is highly effective to teach Scouts leadership on a practical as-needed basis when they need a particular technique or realization to solve a problem. If we are doing our Scoutmaster job correctly, our Scouts will constantly present us with “teaching moments” we can use to advance leadership training.

If you have completed Wood Badge for the 21st Century, you may notice that this guide is sparse on the memory tips of the BSA’s current Youth Leadership

Training Continuum. This guide is closely aligned with the spirit of National Youth Leadership Training and complements NYLT's detailed methods, skills, tools and philosophy. However, we are starting from a somewhat more traditional perspective: our founder, B-P's, own writings. For in-depth discussion of modern BSA leadership theory and practice, we encourage you to read your BSA Scoutmaster's Handbook and other excellent course and leadership training materials the BSA offers — or even better, enroll in your council's next Wood Badge for the 21st Century course. Just remember B-P's admonition: if you follow the Patrol Method and do uour best, you cannot fail!

For more information and other resources, point your web browser to our website www.Scoutleadership.com. It offers helpful links, additional materials and other resources.

Most of all, have fun! You are an important part of the most successful youth organization the world has ever known. We are all fortunate to be Scout Leaders in 21st century America.

