

# How to be an Organized Scout

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## Outline

1. Motivation – Why bother to be organized?
  - a. Can accomplish much more within a given period of time
  - b. Hard to reach Eagle rank without efficient effort
  - c. Good habit for future success, when parents and school won't be helping you
2. Objectives
  - a. Without clear objectives, everybody will march in different directions. Take the time to explain the objectives, even if someone complains "We've already heard that." If any participants haven't heard the objectives, misunderstandings are likely.
  - b. Projects need a clear definition, e.g. "The bridge over xxx Creek at yyy County Park has become unsafe due to dry rot. My Eagle project is to build and install a replacement bridge." For a hike, the appointed leader might say "The troop will backpack four miles along trail zzz and camp overnight, take a two-hour hike to the ridge top the next morning without packs, then pick up packs and return to the trailhead."
  - c. Some objectives come directly from the Boy Scouts of America, e.g. definition of the work needed for rank advancement. These objectives may come with limitations, such as the hang gliding prohibition.
  - d. Objectives associated with far-reaching issues should be set by the appropriate committee, e.g. troop committee (adults), uniformed leaders, patrol leaders, entire troop, etc. Your scoutmaster will explain these if he hasn't already.
    - i. Scouts propose activities, Scoutmaster and Troop Committee provide oversight
    - ii. Patrol leaders generally plan calendars and agendas
  - e. Scouts should not attempt unilaterally to set objectives or policies that affect everyone in the troop and should have been decided by a group.
  - f. When possible, try to fulfill merit badge / advancement requirements while carrying out activities.
3. Preparation and planning
  - a. Gather enough materials for the upcoming event. Think of all the details, e.g. nails or screws to build a wood structure
  - b. Remember that not everybody is like you; try to accommodate all Scouts.
  - c. Prepare written directions if needed

- i. Keep in mind that you can't efficiently give a ten-minute explanation individually to several people arriving at irregular times
  - d. Plan ahead with others who might be impacted by your activities
    - i. E.g. if you are planning to build something a footbridge in your garage and your sister's garage band is going to meet there at the same time, you will have a problem. You need to make sure your parents are willing to park outside, too.
  - e. Remember that almost everything takes longer than you think it will
    - i. Usually the more detailed your planning, the more accurate the plans.
- 4. Communication
  - a. Write your email messages yourself, but if they're especially important (e.g. trip plans) have your parent look them over before you send them out.
  - b. Remember to include
    - i. Who – All scouts? Families and friends too?
      - 1. Be sure to send the notice to EVERYONE relevant
        - a. Think how it feels to be left out
        - b. Be careful - Not all circulating email lists include everyone in the troop
    - ii. What –
      - 1. Required vs. optional
      - 2. What to bring
        - a. safety first - safety glasses, whistle, flashlight
        - b. check camping/backpacking lists, "10 essentials" list
      - 3. What to wear
    - iii. When – Four parts
      - 1. Date
      - 2. Day of week
      - 3. Start time
      - 4. End time
    - iv. Where
      - 1. Do not post Scouts' addresses on the Internet
      - 2. "My house" is now OK because members can look up your address in the roster
      - 3. Outside of Portola Valley, remember to be specific. (Where in Yosemite will you meet? It's a big place.) Provide directions to places that are new to any Scouts.
    - v. Why – objective of the event
    - vi. How – How will the goal be accomplished
      - 1. E.g. work on building bridge every Saturday, the move bridge with truck to park and on rollers within park

- vii. Attractant (if appropriate)
    - 1. E.g. “Refreshments will be served” – be sure to stock up on enough healthy snacks and drinks
  - viii. Reminder – send out a reminder about two days before the event
- 5. Execution – during the event:
  - a. Greet people, introduce all people who don’t know each other
  - b. Provide objectives / directions as needed
  - c. Be a good example – work hard and pleasantly yourself
  - d. Provide assistance and encouragement. Be considerate and respectful of others.
  - e. Don’t forget cleanup – you can get help with this too if you’re organized!
  - f. Thank people for their contributions / help
- 6. Wrap up
  - a. Thank people again for their help
  - b. Inform people of relevant news, e.g. “The ranger said that we did a great job both building and moving the bridge.”
- 7. Additional topics
  - a. Contact information - If you change your contact information (e.g. email address or phone number), get it updated on the troop roster and send out an email telling the troop of the change. Otherwise, you won’t receive messages.
  - b. Library books – Make sure that the librarian knows of any library books in your possession. Be sure to check them out before borrowing them.
  - c. Advancement – If you want to be an Eagle Scout, then
    - i. Strive to earn Eagle-required badges, using Merit Badge Midway and Scout camp to earn those that are more difficult to earn locally (e.g. no counselor in troop)
    - ii. Use worksheets available on the web to help cover all topics for each merit badge
    - iii. Save documentation, e.g. blue cards if you get them
    - iv. Keep a spreadsheet(s) containing dates and counselor information, with tabs for rank advancement and merit badges, and logs for individual badges/ranks (e.g. camping nights, hours of service)
    - v. Plan to finish well before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday so that if something goes wrong, you can still succeed.
  - d. Eagle project documentation
    - i. Get your agency’s representative and your troop’s Scoutmaster/Eagle Coordinator and Troop Committee Chair to sign your project plan before getting the Council/District Advancement Committee signature. Do not start holding events for your project until signoffs are complete.

- ii. During your project, keep careful track of who has spent how much time on what dates as you go along. Otherwise, it will be very hard to figure out at the end.
- iii. After completing your project, you will again need signatures from your agency's representative and your Scoutmaster.
- iv. You will also need to fill out an Eagle Scout application form. Be sure to use an up-to-date form. The current (9/09) form contains a requirement 5 asking for the project name and grand total of hours. It can be helpful to ask the Advancement Chair for a listing of your merit badge completion dates from TroopMaster before filling in requirement 3. The form needs to be signed by the Scoutmaster, Troop Committee Chair, Pacific Skyline Council, and later by the Chair and Council/District Representative on your Board of Review.
- v. It's a lot of work, but it's worth it!