



A Checklist for Selecting a Troop

	Troop ____	Troop ____	Troop ____	My Ideal
General Observations				
Troop Size	_____	_____	_____	_____
Number at this meeting	_____	_____	_____	_____
Meeting Night	_____	_____	_____	_____
Friends in the Troop? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Friends Joining with me? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other Scouts near my age? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Uniform (encouraged or required?)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Good mix of ages? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Good Advancement? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Good Parent involvement? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Troop Meeting				
Did I have fun? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Were the Scouts friendly? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Did I learn something? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Do the other Scouts have fun? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Was there good attendance? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Scout Run or Adult Run?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Was the meeting easy to get to? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Did I get a good feeling from the Troop Meeting? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Troop Outings				
Number per year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Yearly Calendar? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Does the program look fun? (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Summer Camp (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other Long-term Outings (Y/N)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Type of Outings				
Car Camping	_____	_____	_____	_____
Away from Car Camping	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mix of both	_____	_____	_____	_____
Number of Evening events per year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Equipment (Scout or Troop supplied?)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other Things				
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A GOOD TROOP

By Ron Fong and Henry Allen

Finding a good troop that fits you and your Webelos is critical towards making a successful transition from Webelos to Scouts BSA. There are many things to look for in a troop, but the key elements are to find out the philosophy and record of the troop in the areas of:

✦ Youth Leadership ✦ Outdoor Activities ✦ Advancement ✦ Having Fun ✦ Special Interests

✦ **Youth Leadership** - What is their position on youth leadership? Troops are supposed to be youth run. There are many troops where the adults run the troop and the Scouts just sit around learning few, if any, leadership skills. In other cases, the adults do nothing allowing chaos to reign. The youth don't learn any leadership skills in this type of troop either. The leaders are like trail markers on the hike through life. When one is confident that they are on the trail, the trail markers are not needed.

When people begin to wander from the trail, they become important in getting back on the trail. The trail markers should be off to the side and quiet until they are needed.

✦ **Outdoor Activities** - You should find an active outdoors troop. The scouting program cannot be implemented properly unless the troop has regular campouts and outings. Are they putting the outing into Scouting? Are they fighting Nature Deficit Disorder?

✦ **Advancement** – The troop should have a proven record of advancement. How many reach Eagle Scout? How many reach First Class? What is their approach towards helping scouts advance? How do they

help scouts in their first year of scouting develop skills and advance? Are they integrated into 1st year patrols or mixed? How do merit badges fit in the troop program?

✦ **Having Fun** - Scouts should be having fun. If they are not having fun the scouts will soon lose interest. How many older scouts are in the troop? Do scouts stay involved after they get their Eagle and after they turn 18? What is their High Adventure Program for older Scouts?

✦ **Special Interests** - Finally, what type of things do they specialize in? Most troops tend to have activities that they do on a regular basis. One troop, for example, does a lot of hiking but very little swimming. If your youth enjoys swimming above all else, then that troop would not be a good fit and they should look for another troop.

Other Questions to ask that will help you understand the troop to see if it is a good fit for your child and you include:

- ✦ Convenience of the day and location of weekly troop meetings,
- ✦ Which troop are your child's friends going to join or belong?
- ✦ Is the troop run by the youth or the adults?

✦ Is there good scout skills instruction for newer scouts? How is that handled?

✦ Is there strong patrol activity or inter-patrol activity, like competitions or games?

✦ Are the scouts sitting around or are they busy most of the time?

✦ How often does the troop go on outings of some sort?

✦ Is it a back packing/hiking troop or car camping troop?

✦ Is there a diversity of ranks throughout the troop? All Second Class and Tenderfoot ranks will tell you it's a pretty new troop with no maturity in leadership. All Life and Eagle scouts means it's a troop about to graduate and disappear on you, and a troop full of leaders with no followers.

✦ Is there sufficient adult help around for the size of the troop?

✦ Have any of these Troops contacted you, or did you contact them? This means are they actively recruiting?

✦ **Troop Meeting run by Youth** - The troop is a real-life opportunity for Scouts to learn leadership through participation. It is unfortunately a well-kept secret that the Scout program is a leadership training program with the outdoors as a laboratory.

✦ **Patrol Method Used** - The Patrol Method gives Scouts an experience in group living and participating in leadership activities. The patrols determine troop activities through their elected representatives.

✦ **Trained Youth & Adults** - Understanding the concepts of leadership helps each person accept the leadership roles of others and guides them toward the citizenship aim of Scouting.

✿ Uniformed Youth & Adults - The uniform makes the Scout troop visible as a group. It shows each Youth and Adult's commitment to the aims and purposes of Scouting.

✿ Troop Meetings Planned by Youth - Patrol Leaders' Council of the Troop should plan the Troop meetings, campouts and activities. It is an important part of the leadership experience.

✿ Troop Calendar Planned by Youth - Ask who planned the calendar. It should be planned by the Patrol Leaders' Council and approved by the Troop Committee.

✿ Troop Calendar Published - It needs to be planned and published or it does not exist.

✿ Troop Roster Published - Look and see if you find someone you know and then call them. Ask them about the program, leaders and activities.

✿ Troop Monthly Updates - Even the best calendar needs updating.

✿ Troop Program Explained During Visit - Each Scout program should plan programs that work towards the three aims of Scouting.

✿ Dues and Fees Explained - You should know how the Troop program is financed and what the money you are paying is used for. Find out what the campouts and activities cost.

✿ Troop Fundraising Assists Youth - We believe the purpose of fund raising is to help you and your scout participate in Scouting. Most of the profits go to items that benefit the Scouts.

✿ Enthusiasm of Youth & Adults - If the youth and adults are not excited by their program, why should you join!

✿ Were you asked to Join - You be made to feel welcome at the Troop Meeting.

✿ How does your child feel - What was their impression of the visit? When they joins a program, you also become a part of it.

✿ If your child has special diet needs or other special needs, then is the troop prepared?

There probably isn't a single test that fits all units and certainly no one checklist will be best for making your decision about which Troop to join. The best advice may be to spend some time with the Troop you are thinking about joining and seeing whether it is a good fit between the new scouts and Scouts already in the Troop.

Does the Troop offer all the things you think your Scout will need? Will it be fun? Sit down and make up your own checklist and visit several Troops. Pick the one that is best for you.

Other Questions to ask from BSA Publication No. 18-251, 1995 Printing entitled Are You Delivering The Promise. include

✿ What level in the Journey to Excellence has the Troop earned?

✿ Has the Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster completed basic training?

✿ What adult leaders have advanced training in HAT or Woodbadge Leader trained?

✿ Does the Troop follow the national BSA traditional troop-meeting pattern with a standard troop-meeting plan (with two or more skills training groups) or have some other pattern?

✿ Does the Troop follow the national BSA program helps plan?

✿ Does the Troop have a high ratio of active adults to youth?

✿ Do Leaders regularly attend the monthly District roundtable?

✿ Are Troop meetings are planned at Patrol Leaders' Council meetings?

✿ Is there a separate patrol for new Scouts, with a Troop Guide and Assistant Scoutmaster assigned?

✿ How has the Troop changed in size in the last year?

✿ What is the Troop's goal for annual nights of camping? Is it 25 days and nights annually?

✿ Does the troop attend a summer camp? Is it always in the Council?

✿ Are the Leaders proficient in outdoor skills? Do youth leaders attend NYLT training?

✿ What is the typical Troop attendance? How does that compare to the roster?

✿ Is the troop a small Troop, medium size Troop, or a large Troop?

✿ Who is the charter organization that owns the troop? What obligations and relationship are there with the charter organization?

✿ Does the Troop have a program for older Scouts?

Other volunteers based on experience have suggested that the above BSA questions not be applied rigidly as a test for a good Troop, noting that it is possible to find a Troop that meets all of the above criteria, but still fails in using the patrol method. Others have noted that in rural and some urban settings adding 10 new Scouts in a year may not be realistic for a particular unit and not a valid criterion.

Ultimately, it a decision for the Scout and the Parents for the fit that feels best. If a choice is made that later reveals things did not work out, then it's not irrevocable. Find another unit with a better fit.

Our ultimate aim of Scouting is to deliver opportunities for young people to become better leaders with skills using an outdoor program; to become better citizens of our nation; and to become better people who will learn life-long values of being mentally, morally and physically fit. Find the unit that will help you and your son deliver those opportunities.