



Dear Arrow of Light (second year Webelos) Scout parents,

This year your son will be making a decision that will impact the balance of his Scouting career – which Boy Scout Troop he will join. We are providing this guide to help assist you and your son in making a decision. It includes brief answers for many of the questions you may have for each Troop and suggests other questions you and your son might want to ask. The choice of a Troop is a personal decision. All members of an Arrow of Light patrol need not join the same Troop. Although most packs are closely affiliated with a nearby troop, there is not a designated Troop that your boy *must* join. Troops welcome any new Scout that would like to join them at any time of the year. In the past, some Arrow of Light patrols have made the decision to form a new troop rather than join an existing one. District Director Nat Baker can provide you more information about this option.

As part of his Arrow of Light requirements, your son must visit at least one meeting of a Boy Scout troop that your son thinks he would like to join and have a Scoutmaster conference. We recommend he visit several troops, so he can see how different troops operate. Your son must also attend at least one Boy Scout oriented outdoor activity. If possible, you and your son should complete this by attending an overnight campout as a guest of a troop that your son is considering joining. If your son has friends that are not active in Scouts, they are welcome to visit troops as well. Your son will likely have an even better time in Scouting if his close friends are involved in it.

Over the coming months, Arrow of Light Scouts in the Del-Mi District will begin receiving invitations for troop open houses, campouts, and other outdoor activities. We would encourage every Arrow of Light patrol to take advantage of as many of these opportunities as you can. If your Arrow of Light patrol chooses not to attend an event that your son is interested in, feel free to make contact with the Boy Scout troop yourself.

The Arrow of Light leader may work with the Scoutmasters in local troops to set up these types of events. If there are other troops you would like to see, or if your son would like to visit a particular troop again, feel free to make the contact yourself by calling ahead to the Scoutmaster using the Del-Mi District Troop Contact Information document which lists all Boy Scout troops in Hamilton and Tipton counties. A map of nearby troop options is accessible from [www.BeAScout.org](http://www.BeAScout.org).

We hope you will continue to serve as a volunteer in your son's new troop. If you aren't already a volunteer, please consider becoming involved with your son as he continues in Scouting. It has been our experience that the most successful Scouts have parents who make the time to be involved. The values of Scouting can impact your son to the extent of your and his commitment to the program. With this commitment, the values of the Scouting program can become for your son, as they have for many, a way of life rather than just a boyhood activity.

Ideally, this information gives you a starting point to help you assess the troops you visit. If you have other questions and would like a sounding board, please feel free to contact any of the following people:

Kathy Smart	Membership Chair	317.843.0165	<a href="mailto:asmart6@att.net">asmart6@att.net</a>
Emily Roesch	District Executive	317.813.7128	<a href="mailto:emroesch@crossroadsbsa.org">emroesch@crossroadsbsa.org</a>
Nat Baker	District Director	317.813.7085	<a href="mailto:nbaker@crossroadsbsa.org">nbaker@crossroadsbsa.org</a>

During your visit, there are things to ask and observe. There are no “right” answers to these questions, but you want a troop that both you and your son feel comfortable with. Don’t be afraid to ask about the troop. They will be proud to tell you about themselves.

- How many registered Scouts are in the Troop? How many registered Leaders?  
Troops will vary in size. Bigger is not necessarily better. In any Troop, there should be an appropriate number of Assistant Scoutmasters (at least one for every eight to ten Scouts).
- What is the age range of the Scouts? Is the Troop able to hold the interest of the older, as well as, the younger Scouts? Do they offer any “High Adventure” Scouting?  
Younger Scouts traditionally work on their rank requirements so that they can advance through the Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks in their first year of Scouting. Much of their attention in meetings and on campouts is devoted to their basic Scout skills for these requirements. As the boys get into their teens, it is necessary to keep them challenged through the Merit Badge program, service groups like the Order of the Arrow and Firecrafter, and High Adventure activities. High Adventure activities may be conducted within the confines of the Troop or through an associated Venturing Crew—a coed program of the Boy Scouts of America for youth ages 14-20. They will choose to do things like advanced canoeing, rock climbing, sailing, traveling to Philmont Scout Ranch or Florida Sea Base, or participating in activities at other high adventure sites – even a National Jamboree.
- Who are the adult leaders in the Troop? Are the Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmasters and Committee Chairman trained? What trainings have they attended?  
To be considered trained, a Scout leader must have completed youth protection training in the last two years, a basic training course in common Scout knowledge, and leader specific knowledge, plus an outdoor skills training course. Anyone who has completed this minimum training is entitled to wear the “Trained” patch. An advanced training is available and recommended for all Scouting leaders called Wood Badge, which is conducted by the Crossroads of America Council annually. Wood Badge provides adult leaders the skills to create a better program for their Scout unit.
- Is the troop “boy run”? What is their feeling about boy leadership?  
In Boy Scouting, troops should aim to train their boys for leadership. Each troop has a senior patrol leader (SPL), elected by all the boys in the troop, who with his assistant senior patrol leader (ASPL), takes the helm for leadership within the troop. The troop is organized into patrols of 5 to 8 boys, who function together, similar to a Cub Scout den. They will have an elected patrol leader and assistant patrol leader. In a young troop, the boys may need more adult assistance in running meetings, but in an established troop with older Scouts, you should see evidence of “boys leading boys” while the entire program is guided by adults.
- What is their activity program like?  
Ask to see their yearly program schedule. You’ll want to see how often they camp. The Boy Scouts of America recommends that troops have a monthly outing. Do they participate in District and Council activities like camporees? You will find the troops in Del-Mi District have monthly outings that provide your son with a variety of experiences that allow him to stay interested in Scouting.

- What is a “typical” meeting like?  
Is it “boy run”? Are the boys kept busy? Does it look like they are having fun? Do they show respect during the flag ceremony, during program time, and to the adults?
- What are their uniform requirements?  
Some Troops require a full uniform for all meetings, District, and Council events. Troops, as a whole, choose whether to wear a neckerchief and the particular type. Others only require the uniform shirt. Some have designated uniformed meeting days, while others wear an activity shirt, or a customized troop T-shirt. You will probably want to choose a troop that feels the same about the uniform as you and your son do.
- Does the troop attend summer camp? How many attended last year? Where do they go?  
Summer camp is a wonderful opportunity for Scouts to experience the fun and excitement of camping while affording them the chance to work on rank advancement and the completion of Merit Badges. Our council operates Ransburg Scout Reservation (Bloomington) and Camp Krietenstein (Terre Haute). Most of our troops routinely attend one of these camps because they offer some of the best experiences found anywhere in the country. A few troops choose to vary their summer camp experience and attend other camps in the Midwest. Summer camp begins on Sunday afternoon and ends on Saturday morning.
- How do they utilize the advancement and Merit Badge program?  
Some troops use the advancement and Merit Badge program as the cornerstone of their normal activities. Their campouts and meetings center on helping the boys advance within the format outlined by the Boy Scouts of America. Other troops may feel the advancement program is secondary (or resultant) and plan activities independent of advancement and Merit Badges. Their Scouts complete rank requirements and earn Merit Badges on their own. Both systems can work well, and boys can work with either one to advance all the way to the Eagle Scout rank.
- What can a parent expect in terms of fees?  
Most troops have an annual fee, or at least a joining fee, which covers membership and basic materials, including badges and awards. It usually does not cover uniforms, monthly outing fees, summer camp fees, meals, travel or other special activity costs. Troops are encouraged to use the council endorsed “Program Planning” model for budgeting and having boys earn money needed for costs by using the annual Popcorn Sale, which can fully fund your son’s year of activities. The troop may have additional fundraisers for specific needs, such as purchasing or repairing troop equipment. Troop equipment may include a trailer, tents, cook sets, dining shelters, and specialized light-weight backpacking gear.
- Observe how the boys interact. How do they treat the visitors?  
You’ll want to join a troop where your son feels welcome and comfortable. Does your son need a group where he already knows some of the boys? If he does not know other boys initially, do they seem like a group that will treat a newcomer well?

- What if my son isn't sure about joining Boy Scouts?

Sometimes boys and their parents are uncertain if Scouting fits into their future. Whether it is because of a lack of time or uncertainty about what happens in a troop, there is a simple method to allow for your son to try the Boy Scout program to see if it is really for him. We encourage all Arrow of Light Scouts to join a Troop and try Boy Scouting through the end of the school year culminating with a week at summer camp. This trial period will allow you and your son to see what Boy Scouts is all about. If after these few months, you and your son decide that Scouting is definitely not for him, simply let your Scoutmaster know that your son won't be continuing. We're confident that after seeing all of the great things that happen in Scouting, your son will want to continue on the Trail to Eagle.

- What can I do to help?

Troops require lots of adult support. Like a Cub Scout pack, a Boy Scout troop is still a volunteer organization that relies on families to guide the program. There are many areas and levels of involvement in a troop – leadership roles, serving on the Troop Committee, helping with campouts, driving to events, serving on Boards of Reviews, and being Merit Badge counselors based on experience in your vocation or other interests.

Most importantly, your son will need encouragement along the way. The trail to becoming an Eagle Scout can be a difficult one, especially if he is to get out of Scouting all it has to offer. There will be times when your son would rather stay at home to play video games rather than go to a meeting to learn first aid skills or teach other Scouts how to tie knots. If your son's interest begins to wane, it's important to remember that you and your child are on a path in Scouting together, and any road to achievement and reward will have its ups and downs much like other things in life. Your words of encouragement to keep him on the path will help him continue the journey to becoming an Eagle Scout.