



BSA Troop 854

www.Troop854.com

BSA Troop 854 Questions and Answers Cheat Sheet

General:

Welcome to Troop 854!!!

What is the Troop website address? www.troop854.com

What can I find there? The Troop leader lists, email addresses, calendar, pictures, bi-laws, guidebook, cooking suggestions, health forms, permission slips.

How do I join the Troop wide Yahoo group? Just click on the link at the bottom of the main Troop website.

There are a lot of Troop leaders how do I know who to ask a question of? The Troop is organized into two primary segments – Program and Committee. All of the Assistant Scoutmasters and Patrol Advisors report up to the Scoutmaster.

All Committee members – Advancement, Membership, Treasury, Outdoor Committee, Fundraising etc report up to the Committee Chairman.

Parents are always free to ask questions but please encourage the boys to seek out the answers on their own. They should start with the Scout leadership – Patrol Leader or Senior Patrol Leader, and then go to their Patrol adult leaders, then to the Scoutmaster or the Committee Members associated with their questions.

I am new to Scouts, how long does it usually take a Scout to make 2nd Class, 1st Class, Eagle? First year Scouts primarily work on Scout Skills and rank advancements. They do this for the most part together as a group or Patrol and a lot is done at summer camp. On average a Scout will make 2nd Class by the end of their first year and 1st Class around 18 months. These are just averages but if a Scout is active and camping on a regular basis this is a good bench mark.

If a Scout has a goal of making Eagle Scout this is a great Troop to do so because of the vast resources available to them. While a Scout, on paper, can earn Eagle just before their 14th birthday this is not the typical path to Eagle and on average most of our 58 Eagle Scouts make Eagle sometime around their 16th birthday. The journey is an adventure filled with

many experiences and leadership lessons, it is not a race and there is no need to feel pressured to move any faster than your son wants to. An active Scout that regularly attends summer camp and service in leadership positions is very much on target to reach Eagle while they are 16 if they choose to have that as a goal.

How do announcements, messages get sent out to the families? In multiple ways. Troop announcements are made during the opening portion of every Troop meeting. The Troop has a Yahoo distribution list for emails that go out to the whole Troop. Updates are posted on the Troop web site. Patrols also have their own email groups and they communicate internally about what is going on with the Patrol.

If I have a problem who should I speak to? Any time you have a problem please see the Scoutmaster or Committee Chairman if it is not something that can be taken care of within the Patrol via the Patrol Advisors. We are always available to discuss anything, to provide answers and direction and get you the information you need.

Membership:

All New Scouts and Adults that want to be leaders must turn in a completed Scout application.

Where do I get this and who does it go back to? The Membership Coordinator

Who do I see about Troop t-shirts, epaulettes or neckerchiefs? The Membership Coordinator. All Scouts that have paid their annual dues get each of these three items, plus a Troop 854 shoulder patch as part of their dues.

What are the annual Troop dues and when are they due? The annual Troop dues are \$180 a year, prorated for new Scouts that come in during the Scout year; there is also a discounted price of \$150 for paying during the Month of August. New Scouts crossing over in February pay the prorated amount based on the discounted price so \$12.50 a month or \$62.50 for the remainder of the first Scout year (March to July).

Does the Troop provide the Scouts with a handbook? No, the Scouts must purchase their own handbook and uniform.

What training do I need to be a leader? All Troop leaders must be fully trained for their position. Everyone must complete Youth Protection Training and the certificate must be turned in with the application. There is then a variety of training for individual positions. Assistant Scoutmaster/Patrol Advisors are considered direct contact leaders and must complete some online training and also attend an in person Introduction to Outdoor Leader training at a leader campout. Committee members must complete training as well but it is all online, as it is for merit badge counselors.

Financial:

The Annual Troop dues, any payments for campouts, extra t-shirts etc etc all go directly to the Troop Treasurer. 99% of the time any monetary transactions go directly to the Treasurer so always start there.

How can I check my ISA balance or what I owe? The Troop Treasurer can provide you with that information at any Troop meeting.

Advancement:

Who can sign off on advancement items in my son's book? **Only 4 groups of people may sign off in your Scouts book:** The Troop Guides working with your son's Patrol, the Patrol Advisors for your son's Patrol, the Advancement Coordinator and the Scoutmaster.

- The Troop Guides work with the New Scout Patrols from March through August of their first year, acting as the pseudo Patrol Leaders and brining the new Scouts up to speed on how the Troop and Patrol function. After this transition period the older boys will go back to their own Patrols and the new Scouts will elect their first Patrol Leader as part of the Fall election cycle in August. At this point the authorized signors changes slightly as the Patrol Leader or Patrol Advisors may bring in some older Scouts, Star rank and above, to teach Scout skill classes. These senior boys may also sign off on requirements with the Patrol Advisors approval and also by putting their full name in the back of the Scouts handbook.

When should the boys have their books with them and when should they get things signed off? They should have them with them at all Troop events where meetings or activities are taking place and they should get items signed off as soon as possible. The Scouts should write their name in large letters on the side of their book so it is easy to identify when they are passed around.

How do we update the Troop records on advancement? The Scouts should turn their books into the Advancement Coordinator periodically when they have requirements signed off so they can have the records updated in Troopmaster.

When are awards and rank advancements passed out? The Troop holds 3 Courts of Honor a year to pass out awards, merit badges and rank advancements. During the year any time a Scout earns a new rank they will get that rank patch and new rank immediately and then be recognized at the COH as well.

How does a Scout sign up for a Scoutmaster Conference? SMC's are used by the Scoutmaster for general discussions with the boys and also as part of their rank advancement procedure. Once the boy has all other requirements signed off for a rank in their book they then schedule a SMC. It is best to check with the Advancement Coordinator first and make sure all of those items are entered in Troopmaster before scheduling the SMC, this is mandatory for all Scouts scheduling a Star, Life or Eagle SMC. The Scout will then put their

name on the SMC Signup sheet at the front of the room. This is normally done a week in advance. The Scouts must be in full Class A uniform for their SMC.

How does a Board of Review work? After a Scout has his SMC and gets his sign off then he goes to the Advancement Coordinator to schedule a BOR to earn his rank. These are also scheduled a week in advance. A Scout must be in his full Class A uniform for a BOR, they will meet with the board for about 15 minutes on average and discuss what they have learned, how they are enjoying the program, get/give other feedback and then if everything else is set get the rank signed off on. The BOR is not a test, it is simply the way that the Troop Committee is able to monitor how the boys are progressing, how things are going and what they have learned and liked. While in some cases a Scout may not pass a board and will be referred back to the Scoutmaster, this is a rare occurrence and whatever needs to be addressed will be done with the Scoutmaster and they will then be able to schedule another BOR shortly.

What are merit badges, does my son need to do them and how do they go about it? Merit badges represent individual skills learned and then demonstrated to a specific merit badge counselor over a period of time. Some merit badges can be earned in a short period of times, others require many months. Merit badges are required for upper level ranks (Star, Life, Eagle) and they can be earned at summer camp, as part of a merit badge class or with a Troop merit badge counselor. You can learn more about merit badges at www.meritbadge.com and you can also start working on a merit badge whenever your son sees one that interests him simply by following the steps below;

- 1) The Scout sees the Merit Badge Coordinator to get a list of currently approved Merit Badge Counselors for a particular merit badge they are interested in starting, they can also look this information up on the Troop web site or through Troopmaster Web. The Scout goes to the Troop Librarian to check out a merit badge book if one is available. Scouts are also encouraged to purchase and donate merit badge books to the Troop library when they are not available.
- 2) The Scout chooses a counselor from the list and the Scout contacts the Merit Badge Counselor to let them know that they would like to begin working on that particular merit badge. If the MBC is not available or is working with too many other Scouts at the time they will be assigned to another MBC.
- 3) The Scout then goes to the Advancement Coordinator to let her know which merit badge they have chosen to work on and which merit badge counselor they have chosen.
- 4) The Advancement Coordinator prints up a blue card and processes scout information into Troopmaster.
- 5) The Scout works directly with their MBC throughout the process, going over each of the requirements with them personally and making sure that before they start any particular work that they make sure from the MBC that the work will in fact meet the requirement as listed in the BSA merit badge booklet.
- 6) The Merit Badge Counselor signs off on the blue card throughout the process until it is complete, keeping the stub for their own records and returning the completed blue card to the Scout.
 - The Scout may also bring the blue card to the Advancement Coordinator as they get items signed off on the blue card so that if they happen to lose it the data is already loaded into the system.

7) The Scout returns the completed blue card to the Advancement Coordinator for processing. Completed MB's are passed out at one of the three annual Courts of Honor.

How many merit badges does my son have to do? They do not need to do any to be a part of the Scouting program. If they would like to earn the ranks of Star, Life and Eagle they must complete a select number in order to do so, some of the merit badges are "Eagle Required" and others can be randomly selected by the boys from a very large list. Conversely they can work on as many merit badges as they like over their Scouting career, there are a nearly endless number of badges that can be completed. In order to earn the rank of Eagle a Scout must complete all 11 Eagle required merit badges and then 10 other badges that can randomly be selected from the overall list. The Scouts have until their 18th birthday to complete these badges. The merit badge program gives the Scout an opportunity to work with a wide variety of leaders with many specialty skills so encourage them to work with many different MBCs and not just a handful.

Camping:

What does my son do to go on a campout? He should first put his name on the campout signup list in the Outdoor book located on the table in the back of the Community Room during Troop Meetings. The campout signup list provides the program patrol an estimate of approximately how many scouts and adults are attending to assist them in the planning of the event.

Second and most importantly he must pay for the campout by the designated deadline for that campout. If your son can no longer attend he should cross his name off the signup list as soon as possible.

Finally, you must complete a permission slip for that campout and place it in the Outdoor Book. Blank permission slips for the campout are in the Outdoor book.

When do I sign up? You can sign up as far in advance as you like for all campouts. All campouts will close the week before the campout week itself, sometimes two weeks out for the more complex campouts. You can see these dates on the Troop Calendar and also on the monthly electronic Committee Meeting Agendas.

How do I pay? When your son signs up for a campout the final costs will be announced, and written at the top of the signup sheets about a month or two in advance. Payment for the campout is made to the Troop treasurer at any meeting in cash or check. If necessary, you can transfer money from your Scout's ISA but this should be on a limited basis as the ISA is designed to be a long term savings account for big trips such as summer camp or high adventure trips.

What is an ISA? It is an Individual Scout Account. The treasurer maintains an ISA for every Scout in the Troop. Parents can put money in their son's ISA any time to fund their activities. Reimbursements for expenses or driving can be placed in the ISA and monies earned from fundraisers will be put in their as well. Money can be taken out of an ISA for any Scouting activity or expense, although the ISA is designed to be a long term savings account for big trips such as summer camp or high adventure.

Can parents go on campouts? Yes, parents are allowed to camp twice a year if they are not trained leaders. Leaders that have completed training and serving as a leader either as an ASM, Committee Member or Merit Badge Counselor may camp as often as they like and simply sign up in the Outdoor book like a Scout does.

Who pulls trailers, who drives the Scouts, when and where to I drop them off and pick them up? The Troop Transportation Coordinator organizes the drivers based on the final signup sheet. We use the minimum number of drivers to keep gas costs down and fill up all seats in the cars. Drivers are reimbursed for driving based on the guidelines in the Troop Guidebook. The more drivers we have available and the more drivers that can tow one of the Troop trailers the better! If you can do so please make sure to let the Transportation Coordinator know. This information is listed in the Outdoor sign up book as well.

Scouts must have a permission slip signed by the parents in advance of all campouts. The slips are in the Outdoor book and once they are signed they go back into the book in the "signed" section. Each campout will have a departure date/time on the bottom of the permission slip and a return date and time. In general the Troop leaves on Friday night. We meet at the Church at 6pm and return on Sunday around noon. This does vary depending on the trip so please listen to the announcements and check the permission slip.

The Troop always departs from Holy Cross and always returns and Scouts are picked up over at the back Pet Smart parking lot – adjacent to Holy Cross property.

Do I need a health form? Yes, all Scouts and leaders must have a completed health form on file. You can get these forms from the Health and Safety Coordinator and you can also print them off the Troop website.

Where should I get more information about camping, what we should bring and what the program is? Read through the full Troop Guidebook there is a lot of general camping information in there. In regards to upcoming campouts watch for the scheduled program presentation to the Troop about what the campout is about and what the boys will be doing. Talk to the Patrol Advisors they will be able to provide all of the information that you need.

There is a Campout Packing Checklist at the Troop 854 website on the Documents page. Scouts can print a copy before each campout to use while packing.

Do the boys bring their own tents? Yes in most cases but they also work within the Patrol to come up with a tenting plan so that they only bring as many tents as they need and usually pair up or have several boys in a large tent.

Do the boys bring their own food? Each Patrol cooks their own food. They put together a meal plan for the campout that they design in the Patrol meetings and is approved by the Patrol Advisors. They select a grubmaster who will get a Troop check for the food shopping money from the Treasurer the week of the campout. The scout grubmaster will develop a shopping list and do all of the shopping with a parent and will be in charge of the cooking on the campout. This job is also one of the requirements for advancement so each Scout will get the opportunity to serve in this role. Scouts will need to track the purchases during shopping to stay in budget. We currently collect \$15 per person for food on a typical Friday night through Sunday campout.

Grubmasters should bring the patrol black box (for dry goods) and patrol cooler home the Tuesday before the campout to store the food they purchase. They must bring them back loaded Friday night for the campout.