

Welcome to Troop 633! Whether your son is bridging into Boy Scouts from Webelos, or is joining us from another troop, or has no scouting experience at all, you will probably have some questions about our program and organization. We hope this quick start will help you to help your boy make a successful transition.

**Note:** This quick start guide is only meant to provide an overview, and answer some of the questions that are frequently asked by new families. Comprehensive information on Troop 633 requirements, policy, procedures, rules, history, and sponsors are available in another document.

## Resources

Website: Visit the Troop 633 website at <http://troop633.com> for

- This quick start guide
- The troop calendar
- Photos from recent trips
- Forms (permission slips, suggested packing lists, ...)
- Current advancement records

The members-only area provides restricted access to additional information, such as the troop roster, parent meeting minutes, and scout account balances. You can request to join the members area right on the website, but you will have to wait until the webmaster grants you access before you can get to the restricted pages.

Email List: Be sure to join the [troop633@yahoogroups.com](mailto:troop633@yahoogroups.com) email group for announcements, trip coordination, and other news. Once registered with the troop, you will receive an invitation to join this group via e-mail. Simply follow the directions in the e-mail to join. If you do not receive this invitation, look in your e-mails junkbox. If the invitation is not in your junkbox, contact John Hawklyn our webmaster.

Key Contacts: Any scout who has a question about an outing, fund raiser, or anything else should call his Patrol Leader first. The Patrol Leaders should be calling their patrol before every meeting to remind them of any relevant details, so the connection between the two boys should already be familiar.

A parent who has additional questions or concerns can contact the Scoutmaster or any of the Assistant Scoutmasters at any time, but we encourage the scouts and their Patrol Leaders to coordinate as much as possible on their own (although this sometimes takes some prodding).

- Scoutmaster: Scott Caldwell.....335-9654
- Committee Chair: Mark Surber.....479-8374
- Treasurer: Julie McGowan.....476-6168

Visit our website's members only area for a current Troop Roster.

## The Program

The Troop 633 program is family oriented — we encourage parents to participate as much as they are able. We try to be flexible enough to accommodate the hectic lives we all lead these days.

**Charter (membership)** Every boy must be a BSA member to participate. We also encourage at least one parent to join as well. The charter is renewed annually, in the fall.

**Commitment** The Boy Scout program is very different from Cub Scouts. Some boys may be unsettled by the change from being the oldest in the pack to newbies in the troop, and may need several months or more to adapt to the new environment before they really feel comfortable with it.

When you join Troop 633, please make a commitment to yourself and your son to stick with it for a full year, even if you hit a slump early on. Most boys hit their stride within a year, and then go on to become important members of the troop.

**Uniforms** The uniforms are an important part of the scout program. Dressing the same way promotes team spirit, but the subtle differences allow pride in their individual accomplishments.

- Class A uniforms are required at troop meetings, travel to and from outings, and any time a more formal appearance is appropriate.

Class A uniforms consist of an official BSA shirt, with appropriate patches correctly applied (as shown in the *Boy Scout Handbook*), plus BSA pants or shorts, BSA belt, BSA socks, and the trademark black and green scarf (green goes on the right side, by the US flag). Once scouts earn First Class rank, they can add a “Smokey” hat to complete the outfit.

New boys earn their scarves when they achieve the rank of Scout. Other parts of the uniform are available at [www.scoutstuff.org](http://www.scoutstuff.org) or Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council (SVMBC) store at 970 W Julian Steet, San Jose.

- Class B uniforms are worn at outings, service projects, fund raisers, and other scouting events where a Class A would be too formal. A Class B uniform can be any scouting T-Shirt (but preferably the kelly-green Troop 633 shirts), plus respectable pants or shorts, and appropriate boots or shoes for the activity. No camouflage, please.

Class B shirts, some of the Class A patches, and scout books are available from the treasurer. You can also ask Scott or the treasurer about loaned uniforms.

- Troop Meetings
- Troop meetings are held from 7:00 to 8:30 PM on Tuesday evenings, at St. Stephens Lutheran Church, 2500 Soquel Ave, Soquel.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday is a regular troop meeting, plus a separate parent meeting (more on this below).
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday is a regular troop meeting.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday is a regular troop meeting, typically with a focus on advancement. Scouts should bring their books to every meeting, but especially on this week.
- Extra Tuesday of each month is a regular troop meeting.
- Last Tuesday of each month is a special planning meeting for the Troop Leadership Council (TLC). Only scouts in leadership positions attend the TLC meetings.
- \$1 dues are collected at every troop meeting, which we recommend the scouts earn by doing some chore at home. The Troop Scribe maintains a record of attendance and dues, and gives a report at the parent meetings. The dues are used to pay for advancement awards.
- Patrol Meetings
- Each patrol leader is encouraged to hold a patrol meeting every month. Patrol meetings give the boys a chance to develop teamwork while having fun, outside of the usual troop meeting setting.
- Parent Meetings
- All parents meet on the first Tuesday of the month, at the same time as the troop meeting, but in a separate room. The agenda covers:
- Review of recent activities — we want feedback on what the boys liked or didn't like, and it's an opportunity for you to hear more than some boys feel like saying.  
*Parent: "How was the campout?"*  
*Scout: "Good."*  
*[awkward silence]*  
*Parent: "What did you do?"*  
*Scout: "Camp."*  
*[...]*
  - Review the upcoming calendar, and discuss the details and logistics of outings and fund raisers. This is the best time to submit permission slips and payment for outings.
  - Vote on expenses (e.g. should we buy new tents or upgrade our web service?).
  - Vote on troop policy (e.g. should we allow MP3 players while traveling?).

## Outings

For many boys the outings are the main attraction, and it's the thing that keeps them interested in Scouting. We try to get out there camping, hiking, biking, canoeing, skiing, or whatevering at least once per month. Some of the outings are designated as family outings; feel free to bring the whole family along and meet some of the other families.

- Scouts must have signed permission slips submitted in advance to attend an outing. There is also a nominal fee for food, gas, and other expenses, which is paid to the treasurer at the prior parent meeting.
- There is a designated contact person for each outing who will call you when the troop is about an hour away from return arrival. If you need to contact the troop during the outing, or vice versa, this contact can make the connection. When you sign up for an outing, make sure you note who the contact person is, and that they have your correct contact information.
- Trips may vary, but usually we meet at the church on Friday evening at 5:00. Please try to be prompt so we can get on the road as early as possible — every minute later we start is a minute later we arrive at camp. If you will be late, or have to cancel suddenly, please call your Patrol Leader, Sr. Patrol Leader, or Scoutmaster as soon as possible to let them know what's going on.
- Please try to be prompt about picking up your scout because we'll all be hungry and tired by then, and ready to go home.
- If there will be an alternate pick-up arrangement (e.g. aunt, sister, or neighbor), you must inform us in advance.

**Note:** We do have a minimum attendance requirement to participate in outings. Scouts must attend 2 of the last 3 troop meetings to be eligible to attend an outing. (If an active scout misses this requirement due to extenuating circumstances, please discuss the situation with Scott or the acting Scoutmaster).

## Summer Camp

Every summer the troop goes to a 1-2 week summer camp. This is a great opportunity to work on advancement, plus it's a lot of fun. Each year we alternate between our home camp, Pico-Blanco (inland from Big Sur), and an out of council scout camp.

Sometimes we go far out of council, for example Hawaii in 2004 and Puerto Rico in 2008. Since these trips can be expensive, scouts also have the option of going to Pico Blanco on those years instead of going so far away.

**Fund Raising** We offer a number of fund raising opportunities to help pay for all the activities. For each hour worked by a scout and up to 2 family members, the scout takes “a cut” of the money made, which is deposited into his “scout account”. This money may be used to pay for outings or scouting activities and equipment (see the treasurer for details).

Fund raising is optional; no one needs to do more than they want to, but it gives the boys a chance to work towards a tangible goal, and enjoy the accomplishment of having earned something that they wanted.

## The Organization

**A Boy-Run Troop** One thing you’ll hear over and over is that it’s a “boy-run troop”, but what does that mean?

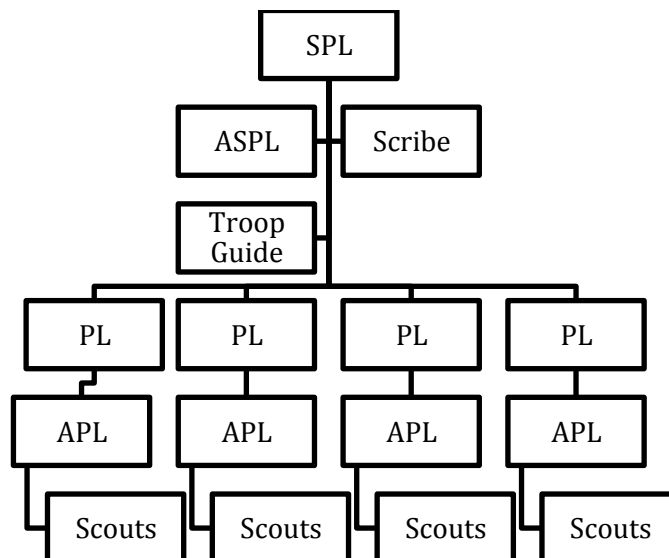
- The boys vote for their own leadership every year (or sooner if leaders turn 18 and “age-out”).
- The boys vote for which outings they would like to do each year. The November “Planning Camp” is an important outing because that’s when the boys decide what they’d like to do the next year.
- The boys plan and run their own meetings (under the supervision of adult leaders)
- The boys plan the meals for their outings, buy the food, cook the food, clean up, set up camp, tear down camp, maintain the gear, ...
- Older boys provide most of the training, and sign-off on advancement requirements of the younger boys.

However, the boys are not operating entirely on their own. The adult leaders oversee the boy lead troop to facilitate and manage logistics, and most importantly to ensure a safe and healthy environment.

We also mentor the boys that are in leadership positions to help them effectively lead the boys in their charge. The Scoutmaster and his assistants are constantly working behind the scenes to help the Sr. Patrol Leader (SPL) and the Patrol Leaders organize and run troop meetings, patrol meetings, and outings, but from the scouts’ perspective, the SPL and Patrol Leaders are running the show.

## Chain of Command

The troop works within the Patrol Method chain of command. The boys vote for their leaders. Scouts are organized in patrols, Patrol Leaders report to the Senior Patrol Leader (SPL) and his assistant (ASPL).



**Note:** It is very important that if a scout has a question or concern, he should call his Patrol Leader or Assistant Patrol Leader. If they are unavailable or unable to help, then he can call the SPL or ASPL.

The Troop Leadership Council (TLC) also includes a Scribe, who records attendance and dues, and corresponds with the public on behalf of the troop.

## Problem Resolution

As with any group of people, there are sometimes behavioral problems or other disagreements that need to be resolved. We have processes in place to deal with minor infractions of our own rules as well as bigger problems. There is a huge emphasis on discretely and impartially listening to everyone who was involved and all witnesses before any action is taken. If your boy is involved in such a problem, we will keep you informed, but otherwise we will handle it as low key as possible to avoid any undue embarrassment.

In the unlikely event that a scout is too unruly or disruptive, and uncooperative in our attempts to manage the situation, the adult leadership reserves the right to call you and ask that the scout be removed from the meeting or outing.

## Bullying and Hazing

Bullying and hazing are not allowed at any time. We handle these types of problems through the chain of command, and usually find a reasonable solution.

However, if a situation arises that we are not aware of, or if you have concerns about the way a case has been handled, please discuss the situation with Scott or one of his assistants so that we can make sure to reach a resolution.

## Advancement

### First Year Focus

The first goal for a new scout is to earn the Scout rank, which mainly consists of learning the scout oath and scout law, and identifying all the components of the scout uniform. The second rank is Tenderfoot, which covers many of the basic skills used in scouting.

Don't worry about merit badges in the first year, the important thing is to integrate with the patrol and troop by participating in meetings, outings, and fund raisers.

Youth and adult leadership will work with the new scouts on advancement, but in the first year especially, it really helps for the parent to remind the boy of the specific requirements he should focus on before each meeting or outing, and to double check that he did get requirements signed off in the scout book. It's important for the scout to drive the process, but sometimes they need help remembering to do so.

The requirements for each rank are spelled out in the *Boy Scout Handbook* (available from the troop treasurer, [www.scoutstuff.org](http://www.scoutstuff.org) or at the SVMBC Scout Store at 970 Julian St., San Jose.) — if you have questions on what is required, please don't hesitate to ask Paul Caldwell (the advancement chair) or any of the adult leadership.

### Advancement Process

The advancement process usually starts with a scout's Patrol Leader signing-off on the scout's requirements for the next rank in the *Boy Scout Handbook*. Alternatively, any scout who is at least First Class rank can sign-off a younger scouts requirements.

Often the youth leadership will train the boys on certain requirements at meetings or outings, and then sign off right there, but if a scout has met the requirements elsewhere, all he needs to do is demonstrate that he knows the material to the scout who will be signing-off the requirement.

Once all the requirements for the next rank have been met, the scout should schedule a Scoutmaster conference (usually during or after a troop meeting, or at an outing). Scott will review the requirements with the scout, to make sure he really does know the material. He may ask the scout to go back and review or practice something if the scout is unprepared, but eventually he'll authorize an advancement board of review.

This Board of Review is a group of adult leaders who will interview the scout on the requirements for the rank being sought, as well as all prior ranks.

Court of Honor	<p>We hold a Court of Honor twice per year to recognize and reward scouts who have advanced to the next rank, or who have received merit badges, or have been elected into a leadership position. Typically these occur in April and again in October. This is a pot luck dinner scheduled in place of one of the regular troop meetings.</p> <p>If your son is working towards the next rank, it's good to pay attention to when the next Court of Honor is scheduled to ensure he'll have time to complete the advancement process prior to the court of honor. If too many boys wait until the last few weeks to schedule their Scoutmaster conference and board of review, there just may not be enough time to get all of them through the process.</p>
Merit Badges	<p>Merit Badges are a way for boys to explore a wide range of experiences outside of the normal routine, and to see what they can do in the real world. As mentioned before, this is not something you need to worry about in the first year, it's more important for the older scouts, when rank advancement becomes less frequent. However, any scout can earn a merit badge at any time.</p>

## How Can I Help?

Scout Attendance	<p>We place a huge emphasis on teamwork and cooperation, but participation is essential for this to develop. It's hard for a boy to feel like part of the group if he doesn't really know the other boys. It's also sad to see a boy falling behind his peers because he just isn't there enough to keep up.</p> <p>We do realize that family, church, school, and sports are all priorities as well, and it's harder than ever to fit everything into an already hectic schedule. Nevertheless, please try to make every effort to get your son to as many meetings as possible, even if no one feels very motivated to leave the house after dinner.</p>
Volunteering	<p>There are countless volunteering opportunities. If you come to the parent meetings you will undoubtedly find that we need someone to take care of something that's right up your alley, and we're always happy to accept help from anyone willing to offer.</p>