

How to Utilize a Junior Assistant Scoutmaster

Learning Objectives

The position of junior assistant Scoutmaster (JASM) has been underutilized or poorly utilized by most troops. At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the purposes and importance of the position of junior assistant Scoutmaster.
- Understand the responsibilities of the JASM.
- Understand the differences between a JASM and adult assistant Scoutmasters (ASM).
- Understand how a JASM works with senior patrol leaders and the patrol leaders' council (PLC) to provide youth leadership in the troop.



BSA Reference Materials

- *Senior Patrol Leader Handbook*, No. 32501
- *Introduction to Leadership Skills for Troops: Position Description Cards*, No. 30521
- *Troop Leader Guidebook*, No. 33009

Presentation Content

- Leadership development is one of the eight methods of Scouting.
- The junior assistant Scoutmaster can be a key youth leader when properly selected and trained. Knowing and properly implementing the role of a JASM will help him to achieve the desired results in his position of responsibility.
 - While a Scout whose outside schedule keeps him from attending meetings and outings wouldn't be the right choice for many youth leadership positions—since he would need to be present to perform his duties—a Scout in this situation may be able to function as a JASM with the proper coordination of schedules and troop activities.
- Qualities of a good junior assistant Scoutmaster:
 - Sets a good example.
 - Wears the Scout uniform correctly and enthusiastically.
 - Lives by the Scout Oath and Scout Law.
 - Shows Scout spirit by attending as many unit events and meetings as he can.
- Position-specific duties for the JASM:
 - Mentors senior patrol leaders, assistant senior patrol leaders, and members of the patrol leaders' council.
 - Prepares to become an assistant Scoutmaster.
- Ideally, a JASM has attended leadership training and has experience in patrol and troop leadership before taking on this position. In preparing to mentor other troop leaders, a JASM should study carefully the skill to be taught to refresh his memory, using BSA resources such as the *Boy Scout Handbook*, *Fieldbook*, *Program Features for Troops, Teams, and Crews*, and merit badge pamphlets. He should write an instructional plan to ensure he teaches the subject thoroughly and doesn't leave out useful material. He must make sure to have all the necessary supplies ("Be Prepared").

- The JASM should be trained in using the EDGE (Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, and Enable) method. This ensures that the Scouts he trains will really learn the skills being taught.
- The JASM, as part of the troop leadership structure, is appointed by the senior patrol leader with the consent of the Scoutmaster. The senior patrol leader should appoint someone he is comfortable getting guidance and direction from. The Scoutmaster works with the JASM to help the JASM provide support and supervision to the entire troop.
- The JASM is a member of the patrol leaders' council and should be attending its meetings. He should also work with the senior patrol leader outside of the meeting time to help review the meeting agenda and troop activity calendar.
- Depending on size and needs, a troop can have several JASMs, just as it may have more than one assistant Scoutmaster.
- Troops may allow the JASM to sign off on skills when Scouts have mastered them, or the JASM may be required to tell the senior patrol leader or assistant Scoutmaster that a Scout is ready to be tested on the skills.
- Troops often add their own additional eligibility requirements to the position of JASM, such as previous leadership experience within the troop, or that only Eagle Scouts can serve as JASMs, or that when a senior patrol leader has finished his term, he is "kicked upstairs" to serve as a JASM.
- The actual guidance on how a JASM is selected is intentionally left vague. This allows the senior patrol leader and the Scoutmaster flexibility in choosing a young man to fill the role. In some cases, there may be no one ready or able to fill the position, and it can be left vacant with no detriment to troop program and activities.
- The only specified requirement is that a youth be at least 16 years of age. The intent is that at 18, the young man can register as an adult and serve as an assistant Scoutmaster.
- A JASM should set the example and show Scout spirit by attending as many troop meetings and activities as possible.
- The JASM may assist troop guides and instructors as they work with new Scouts. He should share his expertise whenever appropriate.
- As someone closer in age to his fellow Scouts than the Scoutmaster, the JASM may find that Scouts are more comfortable working with him on problems or challenges with advancement.
- Remember that the JASM is still a youth member of the troop. Adult issues, such as youth protection and safety, must be handled by an adult.
- Some of the ways troops have successfully used JASMs include:
 - Training and supervising troop guides who work with the new-Scout patrol
 - Training and supervising instructors in teaching Scouting skills to all troop members
 - Training and supervising den chiefs as they work with local packs to help teach the Scouting skills necessary for Cub Scout advancement and encourage transition to Boy Scouting
 - Encouraging training in *Leave No Trace* skills and the *Outdoor Ethics* program
 - Serving as a liaison to the chartered organization by coordinating youth activities or service projects
 - Assisting the Scoutmaster in delivering troop leadership training
- Invite unit leaders at roundtable to share their experiences working with JASMs.

Front Line Stuff

Getting the most from junior assistant Scoutmasters

*Edited by Robert Peterson
Illustration by Bill Basso*



When Scouter J.H. asked how to best use a troops 16- and 17-year-old leaders, readers cited many ways JASMs can contribute, while in the process gaining experience for a future role as an adult Scout leader.

As a Scoutmaster for 20 years, I have always felt the job description for a junior assistant Scoutmaster [JASM] was left intentionally vague to give Scoutmasters freedom in assigning duties and responsibilities to these highly skilled and experienced Scouts.

I have used JASMs as new Scout patrol advisers and teachers of such advanced skills as backpacking and rock climbing. They also serve as special advisers to the patrol leaders' council [PLC]. JASMs can instruct patrols in a variety of Scout skills, run special programs at camp, and aid in the PLC's annual program planning conference by sharing their experiences in camping and program activities.

Besides being a resource person, the JASM's greatest value is as an example for both older and younger Scouts.

*Chartered Organization Representative H.T.B.,
Hemet, Calif.*

Please remind readers that junior assistant Scoutmasters are just that—"juniors" who are 16 and 17 years old. At age 18, a young man must register as an adult assistant Scoutmaster to maintain membership in a troop.

The JASM position is a great way to utilize the troop's former senior patrol leaders, assistant senior patrol leaders, instructors, and troop guides. The duties, which can include working directly with the Scoutmaster, prepare older Scouts for future roles as assistant Scoutmasters.

The Scoutmaster may assign JASMs important responsibilities, depending on their abilities and interests as well as on the needs of the troop. For example, a JASM might be assigned as liaison with the troop's brother Cub Scout pack. He might manage the Webelos-to-Scout transition by overseeing Webelos den chiefs, maintaining communication with the pack's adult leaders, and including Webelos Scouts in some troop activities. Another excellent assignment for a JASM is working with first-year Scouts by supervising their troop guide and patrol leader.



Scoutmaster J.A.T., Webster, N.Y.

The Scoutmaster Handbook states that a junior assistant Scoutmaster is at least 16 years of age and can become an ASM on his 18th birthday. In our troop, JASMs are young men who have reached Eagle Scout rank, or older Scouts who have a few Eagle requirements to finish. They have demonstrated leadership, and their knowledge is especially helpful to the troop.

JASMs can answer questions posed by Scouts and parents alike, and they help out wherever needed. Usually the senior patrol leader—but sometimes the Scoutmaster—assigns them tasks that range from running an activity to helping a young Scout with advancement requirements to helping an assistant

Scoutmaster with an unruly group. They are excellent role models for the younger Scouts.

Assistant Scoutmaster M.M., Penfield, N.Y.

Scoutmaster Minute: The JASM

The position of the Junior Assistant Scoutmaster is one that I find debated frequently. The debate ranges from what rank he needs to be to the age he needs to be and then as to what his job is within the Troop. Is he treated like a youth or is he treated like an adult? Where does he camp? Who does he eat with? What does he do?

We let me start with what the Boy Scouts of America says about the Junior Assistant Scoutmaster (JASM):

The Junior Assistant Scoutmaster is a Scout at least 16 years of age who has shown outstanding leadership skills. He is appointed by the Senior Patrol Leader with the advice and consent of the Scoutmaster. A Junior Assistant Scoutmaster follows the guidance of the Scoutmaster in providing support and supervision to the other boy leaders in the troop. Upon his 18th birthday, a Junior Assistant Scoutmaster is eligible to become an assistant Scoutmaster.

Ok, so we have the answer to the age question, he must be at least 16. He is appointed by the SPL, yes the Senior Patrol Leader. The Scoutmaster advises and approves the leadership of the young man, but it is the SPL that appoints him. It is important to note that the JASM need not be an Eagle Scout. The position qualifies as a Leadership role for the ranks of Star, Life, and Eagle. In a Troop with a functioning Patrol Leaders Council, the SPL will be able to identify the needs of the Troop and where best a Junior Assistant Scoutmaster can serve the troop. This is where the advice and counsel of the Scoutmaster play an important role in selecting a JASM. The JASM, once selected will work directly for the Scoutmaster just as any other Assistant Scoutmaster would do. The fine line here is that he is still a youth and all the youth protection guidelines apply. He can't sleep with adults and he would not be considered to transport Scouts.

Our JASMs are 16 and 17 years old and are mostly Eagle Scouts. They work under the Scoutmaster in one specific area, such as teaching outdoor skills or coordinating service projects. Each of them has served as senior patrol leader.

E.N.K., Spring Hill, Fla.

The role of the JASM is to help the Troop. Be a good example by wearing the uniform correctly and be a visible example of the Scout Oath and Law, he is a teacher, coach, and mentor to the Patrol leaders and to all the Scouts of the Troop. He is typically an older Scout that has demonstrated outstanding leadership and therefore has the respect of the Scouts of the unit. In our Troop the JASM is an asset, he is a good "go between" from the Scouts to the PLC and to the Adult leadership. We treat him like an Assistant Scoutmaster and give him a lot of responsibility and latitude. His primary function is to assist in the training of Patrol leaders, but his specific job is to train the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader preparing him to become the SPL. He signs books, tests Scouts in skills, coaches Patrol leaders, and is available to meet the needs of the Scoutmaster and SPL support of the Troop.

I have noticed that many Troops in our District do not have JASM's. When I have talked to other Scoutmasters about why, the typical response is they don't need them or don't know what to do with them. In response to that I always suggest that if nothing else it is a great way to keep an older boy completely engaged in your Troop. It is a fantastic way to recognize a young man that has been an outstanding leader and is getting close to his 18th birthday. It is hard sometimes for a Scout that has been in front of the Troop serving to now step back into a patrol and just follow. In most cases they have served in Troop level positions for some time and have been a decision maker for the Troop for a long while. To ask him just to follow is not rewarding and leaves the Scout in a awkward position. So the reward comes from being appointed by the SPL to continue his service to the Troop at a level that is fitting of his skills, maturity, and demonstrated leadership. We all have that Scout in our Troop, that Scout that you will want as an Assistant Scoutmaster one day.