

Roles of the Troop Guide and Instructor



BSA Reference Materials

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



Similarities

- Leadership development is one of the eight methods of Scouting.
- Troop guides and instructors are key unit leaders when properly selected and trained. Knowing and properly implementing the roles of the troop guide and troop instructor will help them achieve the desired results in their positions of responsibility.
- These two positions work well for a follow position for previous Senior Patrol Leaders.
- Scouts whose outside schedules may keep them from attending meetings and outings and performing their duties should not be selected as troop guides and instructors.
- Qualities of a good troop guide or instructor:
 - 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.



Troop Instructor

- Responsibilities of a troop instructor:
 - Teaches basic Scouting skills in troops and patrols.
 - Teaches outdoor skills to new Scouts so they can earn First Class in the first year. (Advancement is one of the eight methods of Scouting.)
 - Teaches outdoor skills to new Scouts so they can perform better on outings. (Outdoor programs is one of the eight methods of Scouting.)
- To prepare well in advance for each teaching assignment, a troop instructor should refresh his memory by studying carefully the skill to be taught, 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").
 - Instructors should teach all the related skills for Tenderfoot through First Class. Each of those ranks has requirements for first aid, cooking, knots and lashings, etc. An instructor should be able to teach all of those requirements.

- Instructors should teach Scouting skills at troop meetings to get newer Scouts ready for campouts where those skills will be used. The instructors should then attend campouts to provide additional guidance as needed so the newer Scouts can really master these skills by using them.
- Troops may allow the instructor to sign off on skills when the Scouts have mastered them, or may have the instructor tell the patrol leader or assistant Scoutmaster that a Scout is ready to be tested on the skills. The instructor should keep good written notes for his teaching activities and his evaluations of the Scouts he teaches, so he can advise their patrol leaders and others when they are ready to be tested. These notes and evaluations, plus the extent to which the new Scouts have mastered their skills, help the senior patrol leader and Scoutmaster evaluate whether the instructor is performing his duties well enough, or if the instructor requires additional coaching and training to perform his job effectively.
- The troop instructor 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 troop instructor is generally an older Scout who has demonstrated proficiency in Scouting skills by earning First Class rank. It is helpful if he also earns the merit badge or badges associated with the particular skills he is to teach, because the badges require skills beyond those needed for the lower ranks.
- Instructors are appointed by the senior patrol leader, who also designates the skills the instructor is responsible for teaching based upon the instructor's professed desires and demonstrated competencies.
 - Scouts often have favorite Scouting skills. Match the skill to be taught with the instructor's interest. For example, teaching swimming and other aquatic skills is a perfect job for a trained BSA lifeguard. A Scout interested in the environment may become an instructor on the principles of Leave No Trace, without the 16 hours of training necessary for the official Leave No Trace trainer position.
 - There will usually be one or more Scouts in a troop to whom others turn for advice on Scouting skills. If these boys have demonstrated their mastery of those skills, they should be considered for the instructor position. Depending on the troop size and needs, a troop may have several instructors.

Troops often add their own eligibility requirements to the instructor's position, such as:

- Minimum age of 13 or 14
- Minimum of Star rank
- Previous leadership experience within the troop
- Completion of the troop's junior leader training
- Some troops prefer older Scouts as instructors because seniority adds to their credibility. Yet some 12-year-old First Class Scouts may make good instructors.
 - These young but not-so-new Scouts often need a specific challenge to keep them engaged productively in the troop program so they will have fewer temptations to goof off.
 - Their mastery of basic Scouting skills is new enough that they often remember those skills better than older Scouts who haven't used them recently.
- An instructor should show Scout spirit by attending as many troop meetings, hikes, and camping trips as possible, not just when he is scheduled to give instruction or a presentation. He should also share his expertise whenever appropriate, not just when teaching younger Scouts or giving presentations.



Troop Guide

- Each new-Scout patrol will elect a leader from among the patrol members, like all the other patrols do. By definition, that patrol leader is new to Boy Scouting and to the concept of youth-led Scouting. He will benefit from an older Scout as a mentor who can show him the ropes. That older Scout is called a troop guide. Each new-Scout patrol should have its own troop guide to mentor the patrol leader.
 - Troops that do not put recently transitioned Webelos Scouts in new-Scout patrols do not need a troop guide. Troops that “salt” new Scouts into existing patrols will rely on the leaders of those patrols to mentor and nurture their new Scouts—while also ensuring that older Scouts in the patrol befriend and do not bully the new Scouts, and the least desirable chores are not consistently assigned to new Scouts.
- A high-performing troop guide can assist new Scouts in learning and implementing the patrol method. (The patrol method is one of the eight methods of Scouting.)
- Responsibilities of a troop guide:
 - Introduces new Scouts to troop operations.
 - Coaches the leader of the new-Scout patrol on his duties.
 - Attends patrol leaders’ council meetings with the leader of the new-Scout patrol.
 - Guides new Scouts through early Scouting activities.
 - Ensures that older Scouts never harass or bully new Scouts.
 - Helps new Scouts earn First Class in their first year.
 - Teaches basic Scouting skills.
 - Helps the assistant Scoutmaster with training.
 - Counsels individual Scouts on Scouting challenges.
- To be effective, a troop guide must — Be First Class or higher.
 - Have strong leadership and teaching skills.
 - Have completed the troop’s junior leader training. — Be patient enough to work with new Scouts.
 - Use his status to prevent other older Scouts from picking on the new Scouts. In other words, he should be the “big brother” to the new Scouts.
- As a mentor to the new-Scout patrol leader, the troop guide provides direction and helps him learn and perform his responsibilities.
 - The BSA position description does not require that the troop guide be a former patrol leader, but it would be helpful if he is. It is easier to provide practical leadership training to the new-Scout patrol leader if the troop guide has “been there and done that,” rather than learning at the same time he is trying to mentor the new patrol leader.
- Ask the roundtable participants to remember the role of the adult troop guide in their Wood Badge course: The troop guide did not run the Wood Badge patrol, but rather coached the patrol members as

they took turns being the patrol leader. This same dynamic holds true with youth troop guides and the leaders of new-Scout patrols.

- Along with the patrol leader of the new-Scout patrol, the troop guide is a member of the patrol leaders' council.
- Troop guides are appointed by the senior patrol leader.
- The troop guide should enlist troop instructors to help train the new Scouts. This allows the troop guide to focus on his patrol leader mentorship.
 - The troop guide accompanies the new-Scout patrol on troop campouts and makes himself available to assist the new Scouts as they learn and implement fundamental Scouting skills.
 - He can also help the new Scouts use these skills on outings. But, like an adult leader, he should resist doing anything for the new Scouts that they can do for themselves.
- An older troop guide may also work with an assistant Scoutmaster to create an enhanced activities program that is interesting, fun, and challenging for older boys. However, some troops prefer to use a junior assistant Scoutmaster in this role instead of a troop guide.

Scouting's Teaching EDGE (BSA Edge Method)

EDGE is very basic, but it really does work. It will help Cub Scouts learn and retain skills also. So it is not only for Boy Scouts and Venturers, but for den leaders also.

The EDGE Method

The EDGE method is a four step method for teaching a skill:

- **Explain**
First explain what you will be doing. Tell them the steps involved. Visual aids might be helpful for this step. Use questions to gauge their understanding.
- **Demonstrate**
Show them how to do the skill. Demonstrate the steps using the actual materials. Describe what you are doing.
- **Guide**
Let them practice the skill. Guide and coach them as they try to do it themselves. This step will take the most time.
- **Enable**
Enable them by letting them do the skill themselves without any intervention.

Example of a Teaching EDGE Exercise

At our recent ILSC training, our Crew president did an exercise with paper airplanes to help the participants understand the Teaching EDGE method:

- **Explain:** He explained how they would make a paper airplane.
- **Demonstrate:** He got out a piece of paper and showed them how to make the paper airplane.
- **Guide:** He gave each of them a piece of paper and described each step. As he described the step, they did it with their pieces of paper.
- **Enable:** He gave them each another piece of paper and told them to make a paper airplane on their own.