

SCOUT MEETINGS THAT DEMONSTRATE A HIGH LEVEL OF SUCCESS

“Troop meetings are the glue that holds the troop together.” What do you think is meant by that statement? Take a few answers from participants. Then hand out and briefly discuss the story below.

- Hand out and walk through the parts of the Troop Meeting Plan:
 - Preopening**—An activity that engages Scouts as they arrive.
 - Opening ceremony**—A formal portion of the meeting that signals the meeting has officially begun.
 - Skills instruction**—A period of presentation and instruction.
 - Patrol meetings**—A breakout section where patrols address their needs, and an opportunity for patrols to prepare for activities or outings.
 - Inter-patrol activity**—A challenge or game for the whole troop that is fun with a positive outcome
 - Closing**—A presentation and ceremony that puts a cap on the troop meeting’s proceedings
- **What helps a troop meeting achieve high level of success?**
 - The meeting is planned and prepared by the Scouts.
 - ✓ The meeting’s framework is planned by the patrol leaders’ council.
 - ✓ Each section of the Troop Meeting Plan is included and assignments are made in advance.
 - ✓ The plans are fine-tuned.
 - ✓ All assigned facilitators are coached so they will be ready.
 - The meeting is Scout-run.
 - ✓ The meeting is carried out by the Scouts with the Scoutmaster invited to give his “minute” just prior to the closing.
 - The skills instruction portion is well managed, well presented, and appropriate.
 - ✓ The whole troop participates.
 - ✓ All presenters are prepared and organized.
 - ✓ The subject matter relates to the troop’s program or advancement needs.
 - The meeting agenda is well paced.
 - ✓ All the necessary materials for each part of the meeting are set out and organized with no down time.
 - ✓ Timing for each part of the meeting is coordinated so that all youth leaders, instructors, and presenters can keep the meeting moving.
 - ✓ All announcements are brief, to the point, and given at the appropriate time.
 - The meeting is well-attended.
 - The Scouts will behave appropriately.
 - ✓ The Scouts are respectful to all leaders and to one another.
 - ✓ The Scouts act in a manner that is appropriate for the troop activity.
 - ✓ Individuals refrain from distracting their fellow Scouts or disrupting the meeting.
 - The Scouts are well focused.
 - ✓ The meeting’s content is interesting and effectively presented, so the Scouts give their complete attention throughout.
 - The Scouts are involved.
 - ✓ There is always something going on.
 - ✓ All troop members participate in the meeting’s activities because they are challenging, relevant to the troop’s needs, or just plain fun.
 - The Scouts are having FUN.
 - ✓ Scouts show that they are happy through their facial expressions, words, and behavior.

Here is an account of a troop meeting from the perspective of a boy who has never been to a Scout meeting and knows next to nothing about Scouting:

It was his first troop meeting. The new boy was young and eager, but also a little uneasy. He didn’t know what to expect. His mother dropped him off at the back of the church about 15 minutes before the meeting was

supposed to begin. To his surprise he saw there were Scouts already gathered in the grassy area outside the entrance making a lot of noise.

Most of the Scouts were in some kind of circle, and one was standing in the middle on top of a big bucket. He had a stick in his hand, and it looked like he was using it to keep the others from hitting the bucket with a rubber ball. One of them threw the ball at the bucket, and the guy in the middle whacked it away! The next thrower hit the bucket and took the place of the Scout with the stick. As the new boy approached, he was invited to join the circle. He got into the action and even got to take a couple of shots at the bucket. It was fun.

Before long, an older Scout stopped the game. Everybody noisily went into the church and entered the meeting room. Inside, some adults were talking. There were also some other older Scouts. One of them was standing up front between two flags. His uniform looked really neat. He seemed to be watching everybody as they entered. When the Scouts were all in the room, the Scout in front held up three fingers of his right hand high above his head. Somehow, in a few seconds, the room got quiet. Then he stretched both arms out from his sides, each pointing down at an angle. There was a scuffling as all the Scouts quietly and quickly formed into smaller groups. The whole troop was facing the Scout in front, in a half circle. The new boy remained standing near the door, and soon, one of the older Scouts ushered him over to one of the smaller groups. The Scout in front led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance and some kind of promise, which was followed by a series of brief announcements and directives. Then, it seemed like everybody scattered. Before the boy knew it, he was sitting at a table across from the older Scout who had led him over to the smaller group. He introduced himself as his patrol leader, and began sharing some information about their patrol. A few minutes later, for a short time, the Scoutmaster joined them, and just about all of the new boy's uneasiness disappeared. His patrol leader continued sharing some new and interesting things, frequently referring to a book on the table between them.

Before long, all the patrols were back and each assembled in what appeared to be their own portion of the room. The new boy's patrol leader seemed to know exactly what was happening, like he had some information that the rest of the guys didn't. He went over some things that obviously interested everybody. They were enthusiastic and had a bunch of questions.

Soon one of the other older Scouts came by and told them "it was time." The new boy followed his patrol outside.

Spread over one side of the grassy area, there were some long poles and ropes. On the other side were some orange cones. In the middle was the neat-looking older Scout; the senior patrol leader. As soon as the troop was gathered, he silently got everyone's attention, signaled for the patrols to form a half circle in front of him, and in a loud voice, explained what they were about to do. A whistle blew and each patrol hurried to carefully join three of the poles together in a triangle-shaped structure. When ready, one patrol member climbed aboard the triangle and held on tightly. The rest of the patrol then lifted the triangle and carried it to an orange cone on the other side. There they all turned around and raced back to the starting line. When it was over, a whistle blew and the senior patrol leader again held up his three fingers. Instructions were given for each patrol to take apart their "A-frames," carry the materials to the storage area, and then quickly head back up to the meeting room.

Once inside, the patrols again gathered in their troop half circle. The Scoutmaster was invited up front and told a short story, a closing ceremony was conducted, and the chaplain's aide of the troop delivered a closing prayer. The meeting was over.

The boy's mother was waiting for him in the parking lot. When asked how the meeting went, he remarked that lots went on, that the time went by quickly, and that it was a lot of fun.