

Why shouting ‘sign’s up’ to quiet Scouts is all kinds of wrong

Posted on July 6, 2016 by Bryan Wendell in Scouting Tips



The Scout sign holds incredible power.

Without saying a word, a leader can raise the Scout sign and transform a room of rowdy Scouts into a quiet, attentive group.

Sometimes it takes a few moments, but eventually the Scouts notice the silent signal and raise their sign.

Like magic, the effect spreads until everyone quiets down.

But on a few occasions this act is accompanied by an unnecessary, not-so-silent exclamation: “Sign’s up!” Moment over. Magic ruined.

Page 42 of Vol. 1 of the *Troop Leader Guidebook* says adults should never shout “sign’s up” to shush Scouts: “The Scout sign is a silent signal, and getting control of the group is the senior patrol leader’s responsibility.”

North Carolina Scouter David Webster agrees. After hearing “sign’s up” for the zillionth time at a Scout event, David was compelled to email me.

“In my opinion, hearing ‘sign’s up!’ is like hearing fingernails raked across a chalk board,” he writes. “Yes, it’s that annoying.”

The ah-ha moment for David came during his Wood Badge course. A staffer held up the Scout sign, and when the group didn’t settle down immediately, someone yelled the offending phrase.

“That staff member quickly nipped that in the bud,” David writes. “He explained that it was not necessary to yell ‘sign’s up’ — that the mere action of putting the sign up is sufficient. Furthermore, if you are going to yell ‘sign’s up,’ there’s actually no point to put the sign up. It now becomes a yelling match to see who can be the loudest. That will accomplish nothing in a Scout meeting.”

A Cubmaster or senior patrol leader might have to stand up there, sign raised, for 20 seconds or even a full minute for the group to quiet down, but the lesson learned will have been worth it.

“Yep, it takes patience to stand there with your arm up, waiting on the boys, parents, siblings and sometimes leaders to quiet down and pay attention,” David writes. “But it needs to be done that way. In the end, it’s worth it. Eventually, the boys will learn that things will go smoother and faster if they are paying attention and quiet down quickly when the sign goes up.”

Have Scouts who take medications? Read these instructions, too

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Plan ahead. Talk to the Scout's parents. Be smart about storage and labeling.

Taking these steps and others when dealing with a youth member's medication is a vital part of keeping our Scouts and Venturers safe and healthy.

Here's the latest: The July 2016 update to the *Guide to Safe Scouting* includes some new guidance on medication use in Scouting. It's all covered in this PDF, but I have included some highlights below from the BSA's Health and Safety team.

8 elements of safe medication use

1. **Annual Health and Medical Record:** Using the Annual Health and Medical Record and listing all medications in the "Health History" section is how information is documented.
2. **Plan:** Having a plan affirmed by the youth, his or her parents and the leader is a huge help — especially with medication that is self-administered or kept by the youth member. A "drug holiday," where parents let their Scout take a break from medications for the weekend, isn't a good plan.
3. **Supervision:** Based on agreement and capacity for self-care, a decision is made on who is responsible for supervision of the medication administration.
4. **Labeling:** If you have ever been handed or had to keep up with medication for 10 to 100 Scouts, you will probably appreciate this guidance: Medication sent on an outing should generally be in the original container and labeled with the name of the participant, medication, dose and strength, prescribing health care provider's name, date of prescription, current instructions for use, special storage, etc. Pharmacies will print out labels on small bottles for such use.
5. **Storage:** Tips — but not prescriptive advice — for securely storing medications include keeping it under "lock and key" (like a locking bank bag) or direct observation. This is especially important for substances that might be subject to theft or abuse.
6. **Emergency medication:** Those inhalers or epi-pens don't do much good locked up. In addition, a buddy may need to help administer in an emergency. It's also critical to make sure everyone understands what happens if emergency use is needed. In many cases this may require evacuation vs. stay and play.
7. **Nonprescription (over-the-counter) medication:** It's not uncommon for such things as Benadryl or ibuprofen to be carried along, and the same planning process described above can apply.
8. **Accountability:** The larger the group, the more complex the plan. Having a system to document when medications were delivered or administered may be needed to keep track of medication.

See the full guidelines [here](#). Review the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, including the July 2016 updates, at this [link](#).