



**Troop
Program Planning
Workbook**

Boy Scouts of America

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**Please review the entire workbook and video
prior to proceeding with the planning process.**

Introduction

In recent research, the Boy Scouts of America determined that inadequately planned and executed troop meetings were the number one cause for boys leaving Scouting. The Troop Operations Plan introduced in 1989 addressed some of the issues dealing with "boring troop meetings." It added a new Scout patrol to assist new Scouts in becoming comfortable in the troop environment and in learning the basic skills of Scouting, their principal program during troop meetings. Delivery of skills instruction was segmented according to a Scout's knowledge and abilities. An older-boy program was developed to provide challenging experiences for those Scouts aged 13 and older. The challenge now is to help leaders and Scouts implement all these ingredients to create a successful troop program.

Planning the troop program on an annual and a monthly basis may be a challenge that many of you have yet to address. Good troop planning and execution depends on a Scoutmaster who understands the process; trained junior leaders who can both plan and successfully execute meetings; a sufficient workforce in the form of assistant Scoutmasters, troop committee members, and parents; and a group of knowledgeable and informed parents.

Your first step in planning will be to utilize the resources available to you to set goals for your troop. The next step will be to train your junior leaders in the planning process. Then give them the responsibility and authority to plan and implement the troop program. The final step will be to get your troop committee and parents to support this "boy-planned" program.

This workbook and supporting video contain all the basic information you will need to plan your troop's annual and monthly program. *Woods Wisdom* is the only other principal piece of literature needed to run this program planning workshop. The workbook will guide you through all the basics of planning, from doing your homework to securing parental support for your program.

The first step in the process is to review the Scoutmaster's orientation on the video. This part of the video will take you through "doing your homework." This will involve gathering information on district and council support, setting troop goals, developing a troop calendar, and training your senior patrol leader to run the troop program planning conference.

The second part of the video is a model for an annual troop program planning conference. This will be previewed by you and your senior patrol leader prior to the conference. When shown to members of the patrol leaders' council, this model troop planning conference will set the stage for your actual planning session. This workbook contains a detailed agenda for this conference, along with much of the support information you will need to make it effective.

The final part of this video deals with monthly program planning. This part should also be previewed by you and your senior patrol leader prior to the conference. It is a model of the planning portion of a patrol leaders' council meeting. It will be the basis of a further workshop exercise to plan the next month's program for the troop.

Please review part 1 of the video now.

You should now understand how the annual planning process works. The following is a summary of the key ideas, just in case you missed a point.

The Annual Planning Process

The program year in Scouting begins in September, so you should begin planning your troop's program during the summer. As you just saw in the video, there are five basic steps in the annual planning process:

1. Do your homework.
2. Get patrol input.
3. Conduct the annual troop program planning conference.
4. Obtain troop committee support.
5. Inform everyone.

Let's review step one in detail. The final four steps will be discussed later in the workbook.

Do Your Homework

As Scoutmaster you're the "advance" person. There are certain things you need to check out and pull together before your troop's annual planning conference. They are not difficult or time-consuming. They simply make a lot of sense. They will pay off later in a smoother, more effective conference—and a better plan.

1. Gather district, council, community, and chartered organization dates for events that will affect the troop.

Begin by picking up a calendar of key school dates from the local school. Check with the local chamber of commerce for dates of community activities. Don't forget to get dates of key chartered organization activities. Your personal dates, such as anniversaries or birthdays, may affect troop activities, so be sure to include these.

Almost every council or district in the country conducts an annual program planning conference in the summer. Be sure to attend. This is where you will get the council and district calendar, as well as detailed information on activities, training courses, summer camp, etc.

Now put all these dates on one calendar to share with the troop committee and to use at the program planning conference.

2. Review the resources needed to plan the annual program.

Pull together your Scouting library. The items needed to plan your troop's annual program include: *Woods Wisdom*, issues of *Boys' Life* and *Scouting* magazines, program features in *Scouting*, *Scoutmaster Handbook*, *Boy Scout Handbook*, and *Junior Leader Handbook*.

3. Review the advancement status of each Scout.

Using the *Troop/Team Record Book*, review the advancement status of each Scout. You need to look carefully for basic skills needed by your Scouts and for key merit badges that need to be introduced through the troop program.

4. List some goals for the troop.

Now is the time to take a look at last year's program. First of all, look at the areas that were successes, maybe the number of First Class Scouts or the super Good Turn you did for your chartered organization. You probably would want to continue doing these things, but what are some other challenges you might address during the coming year? The list could get lengthy, so you may have to set priorities and only select a few of these challenges for this year. After all, there is always next year. Here are some areas you might consider:

- Quality Unit Award
- National Camping Award
- Service projects or Good Turns
- Summer camp
- Special weekend events
- Troop membership
- Troop equipment
- Advancement

5. Review the program features available to the troop.

Using the Troop Planning Worksheet, list your suggestions for the program feature for each month of the coming year. Be sure to keep in mind the troop goals and advancement status of your Scouts as you determine these program features. You should also consider program features supported by roundtables, *Boys' Life*, and *Scouting* magazine. This list of program features will be shared with the senior patrol leader for his input prior to presenting them to the patrol leaders' council. It might be a good idea to put this year's suggestions in pencil to emphasize the input expected from the senior patrol leader.

6. Meet with the troop committee to review the calendar and potential troop goals.

Now that you have a calendar and your troop goals, it is time to meet with the troop committee for their input. Invite the chartered organization representative to get input from the chartered organization, too. Share the calendar to ensure that you haven't missed any important dates. Many committee members will be involved in troop activities, so be sure to watch for conflicts in their personal calendars.

Review the potential goals you have set for the troop. Now is the time when the troop committee makes a commitment on the role they will play in making your troop successful. There will probably be a lot of discussion and some compromise, but in the end you will have a set of troop goals to which everyone feels committed.

Remember, though, that these goals will not be finalized until after the junior leaders have "bought in" at the annual planning conference.

7. Meet with your senior patrol leader to review this information and to plan the next steps leading to the annual troop program planning conference.

A detailed checklist for this meeting with the senior patrol leader is provided below.

Now review the balance of the video and the workbook. Take your time and make sure you understand each part. If there are any items on which you are unclear, view the video a second time or review a particular part of this workbook.

Preparing Your Senior Patrol Leader

This could be a lengthy meeting. If it gets too long, then consider meeting a second time to actually plan the annual troop program planning conference. The following is a checklist of items to be discussed at this meeting.

Checklist for Meeting with Senior Patrol Leader

- Review the steps to planning an annual troop program.
- Review the calendar for any items that might be missing.
- Discuss the troop goals. Allow the senior patrol leader to have input into these goals. The only way to achieve the troop's objectives will be with the help of everyone.
- Review the resources needed to plan the troop program.
- Decide on the program features to be suggested for the coming year.
- Discuss what major events and activities the troop might do during the coming year.
- Record all these recommendations onto the Troop Planning Worksheet for presentation to the patrol leaders' council.
- Discuss the presentation of this information at the patrol leaders' council meeting and the role of the patrol leaders in the planning process.
- Set a date for the annual troop program planning conference.
- Review the accompanying troop program planning video (parts 2 and 3) and this workbook with the senior patrol leader.
- Review the agenda and preparation needed to conduct the annual troop program planning conference.

Get Patrol Input

This second step in the annual planning process is where the senior patrol leader takes charge. At the next patrol leaders' council meeting, the senior patrol leader will introduce the proposed annual troop plan. *The patrol leaders need to understand that this is only a proposed program. The final program will be developed and voted on at the annual troop program planning conference.*

After reviewing the plan, he asks each patrol leader to review this plan with his patrol members at the next troop meeting. The patrol leader should seek ideas from his patrol on what proposed programs they like or dislike and what additional programs they might be interested in.

The senior patrol leader should then announce the date and location of the annual troop program planning conference. He should do a brief review of the agenda and make assignments for physical arrangements, meals, etc. (See "Annual Troop Planning Conference Checklist" in the Appendix.)

Conduct the Annual Program Planning Conference

This is the step where your troop program comes alive. The success of this conference began when you, the Scoutmaster, briefed your senior patrol leader. Be alert throughout this conference to help your senior patrol leader. Don't wait for him to fail, but be careful not to take over for him. Good, non-intrusive coaching will help your senior patrol leader build confidence. Share your leadership with him.

Who Attends the Conference

The troop's annual planning conference is attended by the Scoutmaster, assistant Scoutmaster for the new Scout patrol, assistant Scoutmaster for the Varsity team and/or Venture crew, senior patrol leader, assistant senior patrol leader, patrol leaders, crew chief, team captain, and troop guide.

Physical Arrangements

Careful planning should take place to ensure that this planning conference is a first-class experience for your patrol leaders' council. Pick a location that would be special to your Scouts, possibly one that offers an opportunity for other activities, such as swimming, boating, etc. Perhaps, as the video suggests, you might want to make it a weekend experience, although the conference itself could easily be completed in a day.

Whichever you do, try to make sure you don't get involved in a lot of housekeeping chores that detract from the primary purpose of planning your troop program. Consider using other troop adults to do the cooking and cleanup so your patrol leaders' council will have adequate time to plan the program.

Make sure the facilities are suitable for the conference. Are they properly ventilated? Is there sufficient lighting? Is there electricity for the television and VCR? Are there comfortable chairs? Are there tables to work around? Is there a way to hang calendars from the wall? The "Annual Troop Program Planning Conference Checklist" in the appendix will give you some of these specifics.

The setup of the conference facility should be assigned to members of the patrol leaders' council. A list of tasks to be accomplished and all the materials needed to conduct this conference is found in the checklist. Make sure that those with assigned responsibilities have copies of this information. A checkup by the senior patrol leader at least a week prior to the conference will ensure that nothing is forgotten.

Follow the agenda (see Appendix A). It will be very easy to get sidetracked. Your senior patrol leader needs to be alert to this. A gentle nudge from you may also be in order.

Remember, the ground rules for the conference are

1. The senior patrol leader presides.
2. Each event and program is voted on.
3. The majority rules.

Obtain Troop Committee Support

At the completion of the troop's annual planning conference, you and your senior patrol leader should prepare a clean draft of the troop program planning worksheet for presentation to the troop committee. Arrange with the committee chairman for this important topic to be placed on the troop committee meeting agenda. You and the senior patrol leader will present the troop's annual program to the committee.

Try to anticipate questions and prepare your senior patrol leader to answer them. (Remember, it's a boy-planned program.) The critical question the troop committee must answer is whether or not the troop has the resources to carry out this program. If not, can the resources be obtained and are the troop members willing to do their share in obtaining these resources? There may be a need to compromise. In those cases, the senior patrol leader should present the options to the patrol leaders' council for their approval. The finished product from these discussions will be a troop program that is accepted by everyone and one that has the necessary support to make it work.

Share the Plan— Inform Everyone

Now that you have a great troop program planned, don't keep it a secret. Share it with everyone. The best way to do this is at a parents' night program. Have some good fun and fellowship, and then share the troop's plan for the year. Let the Scouts share the plan, but let the troop committee talk about what kinds of help will be needed from parents to make the program work. This is the final phase of that commitment we talked about earlier. Here is where we get those extra hands for the garage sale, transportation for outings, and maybe even a consultant for the new Venture program.

Find the computer "hacker" in the troop and let him put together an original troop calendar for the year. Give everyone a copy. If it is nice enough, it may be the one the family uses to keep up with all family activities.

Don't stop the sharing at the troop level. Make sure the chartered organization and your unit commissioner have a copy of your troop's plans. Develop a news article for the local newspaper highlighting the special activities the troop has planned for the coming year. Some potential Scout or parent might read it and want to join your troop.

Planning the Monthly Troop Program

Developing an annual plan is really just the first step in planning the troop program. On a quarterly basis, the patrol leaders' council should review this plan and make any adjustments necessary to ensure the smooth implementation of the annual program. These quarterly checkpoints are also important since some programs require more than a month to plan.

As a part of the annual program planning conference, you are asked to plan the next month's troop program. The third part of the video gives a model for your junior leaders to follow in accomplishing this task. Even if your troop is very experienced, this session should be used to teach your junior leaders to use *Woods Wisdom*. Once they are comfortable in using *Woods Wisdom*, give them the option of more flexibility in the program. But be careful, since too much departure from the troop meeting plan could result in less-exciting troop meetings and poor advancement.

Each of the thirty-six program features found in *Woods Wisdom* provides detailed information on four weekly meetings, a monthly highlight activity, advancement requirements that can be satisfied, and skills suggestions. Interwoven in each week's meeting plans are all the basic and intermediate skills that your Scouts need. The detailed use of the program features found in *Woods Wisdom* will ensure regular advancement of your Scouts and troop meetings that are fun and exciting.

You have completed your review of this workbook and the accompanying video. You need to be comfortable with this process prior to meeting with your senior patrol leader. If you still have questions, review all or part of this workbook and video.

The Troop Program Planning Conference

No time limits have been placed on the conference agenda, but working sessions should last no longer than forty-five minutes before a break.

Use the Troop Program Planning Conference Checklist, Appendix A, to determine what facilities, equipment, materials, supplies, food, and refreshments will be needed; to plan the conference room's physical setup; and to assign responsibilities for conference preparation.

Opening Activity

The Scoutmaster conducts an "all aboard" activity, which fosters a spirit of working together to solve a common problem.

Equipment: A stable 2' × 2' platform

How to play: Each participant must get off the ground and onto the platform, with both feet off the ground for five seconds.

Lead the group in reflecting on the "all-aboard" activity. (Information on how to conduct a reflection is found in Appendix E.) This should help junior leaders understand the importance of listening to other ideas, of being able to compromise, and of working together as a team to come up with the best plan. Here are some questions to get you started:

1. What do you think this activity was all about?
 2. How did the group work together to get everyone "on board?"
 3. Were all ideas given fair consideration? How did you feel if your idea was rejected?
 4. How difficult was it to reach a decision that everyone could agree on?
 5. How can we use what we have learned here in our annual planning conference?
-

Conference Objectives and Ground Rules

The senior patrol leader writes these conference objectives where everyone can see them:

- Decide on our troop's goals for the coming year.
- Develop a troop program that represents ideas received from the entire troop.

The senior patrol leader reviews these ground rules:

- The senior patrol leader presides.
 - Each event and program will be voted on.
 - The majority rules.
-

Video

The senior patrol leader introduces the video, saying something like this: "The video you are about to see should give you a pretty good idea why we have this conference and what we need to accomplish today."

Show part 2 of the video.

The senior patrol leader continues: "As you saw in the video, we have already completed a couple of items on the annual planning conference agenda. Do you have any questions about what we need to do for the balance of the day?"

Troop Goals

The Scoutmaster leads a discussion on troop goals for the coming year in such areas as advancement, service, or troop money-earning projects. (These would be the same goals discussed earlier with the troop committee and senior patrol leader.)

The patrol leaders' council determines the goals by voting on each one.

Major Events

The senior patrol leader lists major events the troop could participate in:

- Scout shows
- Camporees
- Summer camp
- Special troop events
- Good Turn
- Patrol suggestions for special activities

The group votes on each event. The senior patrol leader (or designated helpers) deletes activities from the calendar that the troop will not participate in, inserts the events on a clean copy of the Troop Planning Worksheet, and backdates the necessary preparation time into the troop calendar for each event.

Game Break

The senior patrol leader might say, "We've been using our 'mind muscles' for awhile, so let's play a fun game." He asks a patrol leader to pick a game from *Woods Wisdom*, then lead it.

Patrol Suggestions for Program Features

The senior patrol leader leads a discussion on the program features to be used for the coming year:

- Will they meet the goals of the troop?
- What are the advancement opportunities?
- Where do they best fit into the calendar?

The group votes on each program feature, then inserts the selected ones on the Troop Planning Worksheet.

Lunch or Game Break

If lunch is served, make sure it is easy to prepare or that someone other than the patrol leaders' council is responsible. If a game is played, the senior patrol leader selects an action game from *Woods Wisdom*.

Special Troop Activities

The senior patrol leader presides in deciding on a schedule for the following activities.

- Boards of review
- Courts of honor
- Recruitment nights
- Webelos Scout graduation

Add these dates to the Troop Planning Worksheet.

Troop Planning Worksheet

The senior patrol leader puts this worksheet in final form for presentation to the troop committee.

Game Break

Amazon Activity

Equipment

- 1 6-foot pole
- 1 plank, 12 inches wide and 8 feet long
- 1 12-foot piece of $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch rope
- 1 No. 10 can with a wire handle

Procedure

The object of the game is to retrieve a container placed across and some distance from a simulated river. The group may use the materials and themselves in any way they see fit.

Rules

The group may only use the materials provided. If a participant touches the far river bank or the ground beyond the bank, that person is eliminated.

Reflection

Reflection on the purpose of this game should include how planning, teamwork, and good communication skills are needed in a good troop program.

Here are some questions to get you started:

- What do you think is the purpose of this activity?
- How were group decisions made in completing this activity?
- Was the plan well communicated? If not, what were the problems?
- How did cooperative behavior lead to completing the activity successfully?
- How can we use this experience in implementing our troop program?

Monthly Program Planning

The last step in planning is to plan in detail one month's program for the troop. The video will describe how this is accomplished.

Show part 3 of the video.

The senior patrol leader says, "We have chosen (name of program feature) for next month's troop program." He distributes copies of pages from *Woods Wisdom* related to this program feature or, if copies are unavailable, blank copies of the troop meeting plan.

Even if the troop is very experienced, for today, use *Woods Wisdom* as written. Plan the monthly highlight event first. Then plan the troop meetings. Have patrols volunteer for different parts of the meetings. Week 1 in *Woods Wisdom* is usually pretty detailed, but in the following weeks the group may need to select ideas from the resource sections in *Woods Wisdom*.

Scoutmaster's Comments

Congratulate the Scouts on planning a good troop program. Explain that the plan will not be final until the troop committee is sure they can support everything the patrol leaders' council wants to do. They may have to compromise, but if so, the senior patrol leader will review the issues with them before they vote on the recommendations. Once this is done, plan a parents' night to introduce the year's program to the Scouts and their parents.

Appendix A—Troop Program Planning Conference Checklist

Literature*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Woods Wisdom, Troop Program Features</i>, No. 7262A <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Scoutmaster Handbook</i>, No. 6502 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Boy Scout Handbook</i>, No. 3229 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Junior Leader Handbook</i>, No. 3500 <input type="checkbox"/> Venture/Varsity activity pamphlets (choose) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Orienteering</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3439 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Snow Camping</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3440 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Rock Climbing and Rappelling</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3480 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Whitewater</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3465 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Canoe Camping</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3479 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Freestyle Biking</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3447 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Mechanics</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3449 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Fishing</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3438 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Frontiersman</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3454 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Survival</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3441 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Discovering Adventure</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3472 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Caving</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3458 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Backpacking</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3442 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Cycling</i>, Venture activity pamphlet, No. 3437 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Swimming</i>, Varsity activity pamphlet, No. 3473 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Bowling</i>, Varsity activity pamphlet, No. 3467 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Shooting Sports</i>, Varsity activity pamphlet, No. 3457 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Waterskiing</i>, Varsity activity pamphlet, No. 3478 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Triathlon</i>, Varsity activity pamphlet, No. 3456 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Soccer</i>, Varsity activity pamphlet, No. 3453 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Volleyball</i>, Varsity activity pamphlet, No. 3451 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Basketball</i>, Varsity activity pamphlet, No. 3450 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Softball</i>, Varsity activity pamphlet, No. 3452 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Tennis</i>, Varsity activity pamphlet, No. 3455 <input type="checkbox"/> Program features from <i>Scouting</i> magazine <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Scouting</i> magazines <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Boys' Life</i> magazines <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Boys' Life</i> Troop Planning Worksheet, No. 26-005 <input type="checkbox"/> District/council calendar <input type="checkbox"/> School calendar <input type="checkbox"/> Chartered organization calendar <input type="checkbox"/> Community calendar <input type="checkbox"/> Information on council and district events <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of entire program feature from <i>Woods Wisdom</i> (this should be your next month's program feature for the final part of the workshop, one per participant) <input type="checkbox"/> Troop Resource Surveys completed by parents and troop leaders <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Troop/Team Record Book</i>, No. 6510A <input type="checkbox"/> Troop/Team Advancement Chart, No. 34506 |
|---|--|

*In order to facilitate accounting and inventory procedures, the national office is in the process of changing catalog numbers on all literature. The Supply Division will deliver requested items by matching old numbers with new (listed above). All new numbers will be added to future editions of these items as they are reprinted.

Program Supplies

- Game supplies
 - 1 6-foot pole
 - 1 plank, 12 inches wide and 8 feet long
 - 1 12-foot piece of ¼-inch rope
 - 1 No. 10 can with a wire handle
- Flip chart stand and pad(s)
- Twelve large calendar pages
- Felt tip markers
- Writing pads
- Pens or pencils
- Thumbtacks
- Masking tape
- VCR and monitor
- Extension cord

Food/Refreshments

- Refreshments for a morning and afternoon break
- Food for lunch

Conference Facility Setup

- Tables set in horseshoe or square, depending on the number of people
- VCR and monitor in location for easy viewing
- Flip chart stand placed for easy viewing and use
- Calendar pages hung around wall
- Troop Planning Worksheet hung at front of room
- Table at front of room for resource material

Conference Assignments

Person Assigned

- _____ Develop menus and purchase food.
- _____ Plan food preparation and cleanup.
- _____ Gather supplies (see checklist).
- _____ Set up conference facility.
- _____ Prepare large blank calendars with months, days, and known dates from Scoutmaster's master calendar.
- Senior patrol leader Prepare flip chart with conference objectives and ground rules.
- Senior patrol leader Prepare Troop Planning Worksheet with months.

Appendix D—Troop Meeting Plan

Date _____

Activity	Description	Run by	Time
Preopening _____ minutes			
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes			
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Scouts • Experienced Scouts • Older Scouts 		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes			
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes			
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	Scoutmaster's Minute	SM	
After the Meeting			

Appendix E—Conducting Activities and Reflections

(Reprinted from *Scoutmaster's Junior Leader Training Kit*)

How to Conduct Activities

Be prepared.

Familiarize yourself with the activity. Know how the game is played, what the objectives are, and how its parts lead to the learning objective.

Plan a strategy ahead of time so you can help your Scouts if they get into trouble with the game.

Check out space and equipment requirements. Plan ahead to avoid last-minute snags.

Review the questions you will use in reflecting following the activity. You may want to jot down some notes while the activity is in progress. If you are so tied up in the nuts and bolts of making the activity work, you'll miss many important interactions. The key to good listening is the development of empathy, where the critical eye and ear are connected to a sense of caring. Take time to prepare in terms of the youth involved.

Present the Game

Make the rules clear. Be sure the Scouts understand the problem they must solve or the skill to be learned before they begin. Emphasize that there should be **no put-downs or harassment** during the activity.

Stand back. Let the Scouts solve the problem themselves. Even though you may know a better solution, let them figure it out for themselves. They will learn the most from an experience they've worked through on their own. During some of the activities, you may be an active participant. This gives you an opportunity to get on common ground with your youth leaders, to be able to lead and to participate at the same time. There doesn't have to be a loss of credibility or authority. You are the leader, but can still convey the message that you're part of the group.

Leading the Reflection

Lay the ground rules for discussion. Have Scouts sit so they can see each other and ask them to agree not to interrupt or make fun of each other. Let them know they are free to keep silent if they wish.

Facilitate the discussion. As a leader, avoid the temptation to talk about your own experiences. Reserve judgment about what

the Scouts say to avoid criticizing them. Help the discussion get going, then let the Scouts take over with limited guidance from you. Avoid the temptation to jump in with both feet. Often we are so excited about the insight we've developed that we can't stop ourselves from sharing our wisdom. Give the group the opportunity to come up with it. Often, a well-placed question can crack a deadlock and get the juices flowing better than any enlightened monologue would have. Remember that the group thinks of you as the expert. They don't have to think if you step in. If you describe what you saw, be sure that your comments don't stop the boys from adding their own thoughts. Above all, be positive. Have fun with the activity and the reflection.

Discuss what happened. Direct open-ended questions toward specific incidents. For example, you might ask, "Who took leadership?" "What did they do that made them a leader?" "How did decisions get made?"

Make a judgment. Ask the group to decide if what happened is good or bad. Try to focus on the good things first. Direct their attention toward specific skills. For example, you could ask, "What was good about the way decisions were made?" Then you could ask, "What didn't work so well about the way you made decisions?"

Generalize the experience. We want to try to get them to see the connection between the game and regular troop experiences. You could ask, "How could we use the ideas we learned today in our troop?" Or you can be more specific. "How can we use what we learned about decision making on our campouts?"

Set goals. Begin with the positive. Ask them what skills they used today that they would like to keep doing. Then ask what things they need to change in order to better work together.

Reflecting on an activity should take no more than 10 to 15 minutes. The more you do it, the easier it becomes for both you and your Scouts. Remember that the real answers often lie beneath the surface. Reflection helps you ensure that these values come through to your Scouts.