

Hints and Tips for New Cub Scout Leaders

Plan your meetings far enough ahead to allow time to gather materials needed. Set goals that you want to accomplish during the year. Outline your program for the year and plan ahead to involve as many people as possible. Plan each meeting ahead of time. You might find it valuable to plan next weeks meeting after just completing a meeting.

Always have a plan B, each group will be different and activities that thrilled one den may bore another, and when they get bored they get rowdy. If they are showing signs of boredom drop the activity and go to plan B and you will rarely have discipline problems.

If you plan an outdoor activity, always have an indoor alternate planned.

Transitions from one activity to the next are easiest if the meeting is planned so that the next activity is always preferred to the current one. For example we begin with opening ceremonies that reinforce the values of Scouting (boring) then go to advancement activities (less boring but not as much fun as games which come next), after games we go to snack time (they are always willing to stop what they are doing for snack!). I use the fact that they have their hands full and their mouths full as the best opportunity for announcements and reminders. Their parents are beginning to show up, and it doesn't hurt that parents are also hearing the announcements and reminders; it also helps to keep those impatient parents from grabbing the Cub and leaving before the closing ceremony, since they intuitively understand that they should not take their child away during announcements.

Don't try to carry the entire load yourself. In Tiger, Wolf and Bear dens the family unit is central to the forming of the Cub Scout and activities revolved around the family unit. Get other parents involved. Help them realize it is their program and then depend on them to lend expertise on aspects of the program. Invite them to attend by determining their interests and using them.

Leadership is developed and learned. You can become an effective Cub Scout Leader if you will prepare yourself and take the time to learn. Remember to be flexible in your planning. There are no set answers to handling boys. Don't be afraid to experiment.

Get trained! Start out with the Cub Scout Den Leader Fast Start video. It is very short and enjoyable to watch. After you get settled in, attend the Cub Scout Den Leader Basic Training at your District. It is the best place to go to learn your Cub Scouting fundamentals.

Understand the Cub Scout program so you can help the boys grow throughout the program. There is a lot of resources available to help you. One of your best resources is the monthly district Cub Leader Roundtable, where you can exchange ideas with other Cub Scout Leaders. Do your best, and, above all, have fun!

Leader Directions

Always plan the meeting in advance. Write down your plan and share it with your assistant and Den Chief.

Keep the boys occupied at all times; not just with busy work, but with activities that fulfill the Purposes of Cub Scouting.

Be sharing with your criticism; generous with praise.

Be fair and consistent with discipline. Don't permit one boy to do something you would discipline another for doing.

Treat each boy as a very special individual.

Establish your rules and stick to them.

Begin and end meetings on time.

Set a good example by wearing your uniform.

Use the Cub Scout sign to get attention...don't shout or yell.

Give the boys a chance to let off steam. Plan den meetings to alternate quiet activities with active ones.

Be firm in a friendly way.

Also, Note...

A leader usually serves a full year term. Has a friendly attitude...The den is like one happy family. Has consideration for the individual...A cub is never embarrassed in front of his friends. Has patience...Is satisfied to wait until the new boy adjusts. Has wide interests...Brings talents to the Cubs. Is fair...Treats all Cubs in a like manner. Has a good manner...The Den Leader's voice and smile makes each Cub feel good all over. Has a sense of humor...Puts joy, fun, and enthusiasm into working with Cubs. Has a good disposition...Temper is always under control and rarely shows impatience. Has an interest in the individual...Helps the self-conscious Cubs and shows an interest in the personal and Den problems of each Cub. Is generous...Gives praise, encouragement, and with others, plans unexpected treats for the Cubs. Plans the meetings and assembles supplies...Uses the den meetings outline and gathers supplies and equipment for future use. Knows the job...Because the Cub Scout literature is read often and thoroughly. Because training sessions are taken, Roundtables and Pow Wow attended. All planning meetings are also attended.

Leader Enjoyment

You can be a den leader and enjoy it. You've taken care of your own son for seven or eight years and you're still fairly normal, so adding seven or eight more boys to the roost isn't all that hard.

The first rule is clothe yourself in optimism, grin a lot, and be prepared at least an hour before they are due to arrive, with everything you need in your meeting room. One enthusiast in the group always comes early.

Don't feel you're copping out if you use the *Cub Scout Program Helps* for games to play and projects to make. Scout Headquarters has a lot of experience with this sort of thing, and you need all the help you can get.

As soon as the meeting opens, collect the dues, make announcements, and explain the day's activities. You're not likely to get their undivided attention again.

Cub Scouts have little enthusiasm for the more worthless things in life and may refuse to waste their time on such stuff as table centerpieces that can't be played with later, and artificial flowers or crepe paper things.

Good den leaders know where to look for supplies, they scour their garages, attics and trash barrels. Keep your projects simple. If you don't; you know who will be putting the finishing touches on 10 projects the night before your pack meeting. Learn enough carpentry so that you know how to build a bird feeder or a wooden bank.

Cub Scouts love to hammer, but you or another adult should do most of the sawing in advance. Remember to be patient; keep 1 inch bandages on hand; decide what you'll do about unsavory words that might follow after the boys bang their fingers with a hammer a few times. Even if it's a birdhouse they have to paint, have them use a washable paint. And NEVER leave a room full of Cub Scouts all alone with paint buckets.

Cub Scouts love to wait their turn to use supplies or materials or tools, it gives them time to explore your closets, to test each other's endurance to punches and pokes and leaves time for races and shouting contests. There are ways to avoid this; one is to get together with the other parents and make up a den box. It should contain all those things that nobody cares to own ten of.

Remember how the kindergarten teacher pinned notes to your son's shirt? He's too old for that now, so put the notes for home inside each Cub's pocket and let a corner show so his mother finds it before his shirt goes in the washer.

Always make it clear that everyone left in your house after the meeting must take a hot bath and clean out your garage. This spurs the Cubs to have their parents pick them up right after the meetings and saves you from driving them home.

Working with Boys

Every adult who has a boy in the home has learned from experience something about dealing with boys. The Cub Scout Leader Book contains many good ideas on preventing and handling behavior problems. Here are some additional tips den leaders have found helpful in dealing with the boys in their dens.

Set the rules. Establish a den code of conduct with consequences for breaking the rules. A few simple rules are less formidable than a long list. Once you set the rules, stick to them.

Be fair. Don't permit one boy to get away with something you would correct another boy for doing. Boys can sense when you have a favorite. Avoid "picking out" or "picking on" any boy.

Be consistent. Boys need to know what to expect. Be consistent from week to week in the way you deal with behavior problems.

Treat each boy as an individual. Get to know each boy and find out why he behaves the way he does. Getting to know the family helps you understand the boy.

Mean what you say and say what you mean. Don't warn or threaten unless you intend to carry it out. Give compliments only when they are deserved, but remember that we can say something good about almost everything. Don't say one thing and do another.

Set a good example. Wear the uniform and the boys will wear theirs. Be positive and they will be positive. Be polite and they will be polite. Be unfair and they may be unfair.

Reward good behavior. When we reward good behavior it is often repeated. The good conduct candle is a good example.

Correct only the guilty. If the den misbehaves, correct the den. If one boy misbehaves, correct the boy. It's usually best to take a boy aside to correct him rather than embarrass him in front of the den. Praise in public, correct in private.

You get what you ask for. Boys have a remarkable way of living up to their own expectations of themselves. Well-deserved praise and encouragement can help improve a boys' self-esteem and will usually result in better behavior. Let him know you have confidence in him. If he is continually criticized for bad behavior that's probably what you will get.

Be open and honest. If you are disappointed in a boy's behavior, tell him so. He really wants to please you. If you are proud of a boy's accomplishments, let him know. Everyone needs a pat on the back occasionally. And if you make a mistake or have been unfair, admit it and apologize.