

Tips to keep new Scouts engaged during the first 18 months

By Kevin Sweetnam, Scoutmaster Troop 155

1. MAKE THEM FEEL WELCOME- At their first troop meeting, all of our current scouts introduce themselves to each new scout. The Scoutmaster (not just the ASMs) needs to meet with the new scouts. I also like to have the JASMs meet with the new scouts.
2. FORM A NEW SCOUT PATROL - Each new scout is placed in a "new scout patrol" at their first meeting and a Troop Guide is assigned to the patrol
3. USE YOUR TROOP GUIDE - The Troop Guide meets with the new scouts at every troop meeting. The Troop Guide works with them on advancement and helps them become familiar with the troop operations. The Troop Guide is like their big brother. It's very important to have a Troop Guide that wants to work with the new scouts.
4. ADVANCEMENT - Get the new scouts started on advancement right away. It's rewarding to them when they get something signed off in their handbook. Have the Troop Guides work on advancement and scouting skills with the new scouts at each Troop Meeting
5. CAMPOUTS / SUMMER CAMP – It's very important that the new scouts come out camping with the troop right after they cross over into the troop. It's my experience that the scouts that don't camp in the first few months or don't attend summer camp in their first year end up dropping out of scouts in their first year. Have the Troop Guides review "what to pack" before their first few campouts. You'll also want to have the Troop Guide help them on the campouts like setting up their tent, cooking and cleanup, and teach them other outdoor scouting skills.
6. GET TO KNOW THEM - spend some time with the new scouts and get to know them and let them get to know you.
7. PARENTS - Another real important point is the "parental buy-in" to the Scouting program. The Scoutmaster has to meet with all of the new parents and discuss the scouting program, trips, meetings, dues, safety, etc. The parents need to feel comfortable with the adult leadership in the troop.