

Creating a Troop Code of Conduct.

Like most people, you probably would like to be able to do whatever you want all of the time. But life isn't that simple, is it? There are always people who are affected by the things that we do, and so we have to take into account the effect that our actions have on others.

The same logic applies to a Scout Troop. Imagine a Scout meeting where no-one paid attention to what anyone else was doing. There would be chaos! So for a Scout Troop to work properly there needs to be some way of deciding how everyone acts and behaves. This is where a Troop Code of Conduct comes in.

A Code of Conduct is something that will help your Troop meetings and activities run smoothly. It is a set of guidelines which explain to everyone in the Troop how they should behave and what the consequences are if they 'break the rules'. The Code should be put together by the Patrol Leaders with the help of the Scouters, and you might like to use the following steps when creating your Troop Code of Conduct:

1. At a Patrol Leaders' Council meeting have a chat about the way you would like the Troop to operate and how individual Scouts should behave. You should then have a think about what guidelines, procedures and sanctions might want to be included in the Code.
2. Create a draft Code of Conduct based on the kind of things you talked about
3. Shortly after the Patrol Leaders' Council the PL's should talk to their Patrols about the contents of the draft of the Code. Each Scout should be encouraged to give their opinions on the content and should make suggestions for any changes they would like to see made.
4. The next time the Patrol Leader's Council meets the feedback from the Patrols should be discussed and a final Code should be agreed.



Guidelines

The following are some suggestions which will help get you thinking about the kind of guidelines you might like to include. But remember, they are only suggestions to help get you started, and you should come up with your own Code for your own Troop. Let's face it, you may not even agree with all of these!

1. Scouts are expected to have full and proper uniform and will wear it when indicated by the Scouter in charge. At all other times they will wear their neckerchief.
2. Scouts are expected to attend all meetings and activities of the Troop, unless they indicate to the Scouter in charge that they cannot attend.
3. The atmosphere and behaviour in the Troop is one of friendliness and welcoming, particularly in the case of new members, or when helping with other sections.
4. The law of the Troop is the Scout Law and Promise.

5. Bullying of all kinds is not allowed. Any member who is caught or is reported to be involved in such behaviour will receive one formal warning only. A second incident will result in them being asked to leave the Troop.
6. It is expected that all Scouts should make an effort to achieve the Crean Awards, Adventure Skills and Special Interest Badges.
7. No matter what venue we use we will leave it cleaner than it was when we arrived, even if the untidiness was not caused by our activity. This is particularly the case with regards to our Scout Den. Tidying up is the responsibility of every member.
8. Scouts mobile phones must be turned off before all meetings and activities begin.
9. Only Scouts who are appropriately trained should use knives, axes and saws.
10. Scouts are not allowed to smoke or drink alcohol on any Scout activity.

Consequences

Once you have agreed on a set of guidelines you might want to think about what will happen if a Scout doesn't follow them. While it would be wonderful if everyone simply followed the Code, the chances are that this will not always happen. Therefore for the Code to work there will have to be some consequences for a Scout if the Code is broken. The best way to approach it is to agree a procedure that will be followed if someone breaks the Code. The following is an example of the kind of thing we are talking about.

1. A verbal warning should be given if the Code is broken.
2. A sanction should be issued if the Code is broken again.
3. Where the Code is being broken on a repeated basis, the Patrol Leader's Council should interview the Scout. The Scout may wish another Scout. Agree an action to be taken following the interview.



4. If the Scout continues to break the Code after this, then a Scouter will need to talk to the Scout's parents, to explain the recurring problem with a few to working towards fixing it.

5. If this fails to work, the Scout may be required to take a break from Troop activities so that he or she can think about whether Scouting is really for him or her.

If you decide to include a list of sanctions on the Code, please consider them carefully. Sanctions should be used sparingly. They should not be used to humiliate a Scout and physical punishments should not be used. Appropriate sanctions would include exclusion from a portion of an activity or the completion of additional duties. Sanctions should also be applied consistently and progressively. You might consider the following procedure.



Roles of the Patrol Leaders and the Scouters

It is important to remember that the PL's and the Scouters have different roles to play in creating the Code and putting it into practice.

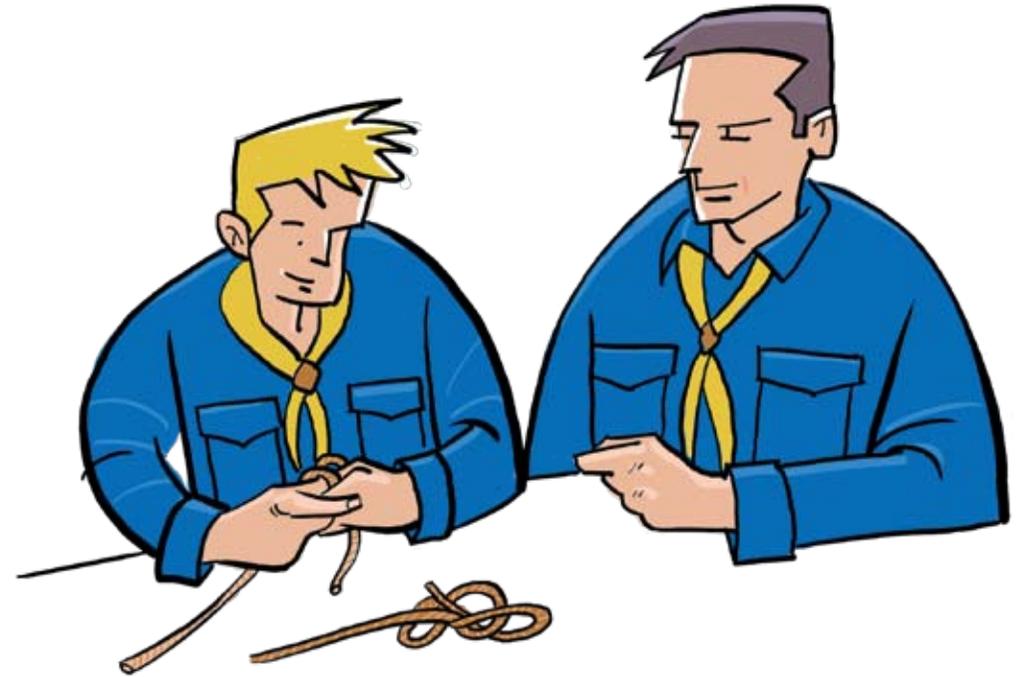
The PL's should be the ones who decide what goes into the Code in terms of guidelines, sanctions, etc. They should be responsible for explaining the Code to the Scouts in their Patrol. They can make warnings to any Scout who breaks the Code and can also issue minor sanctions, but they must always report on this at a meeting of the Patrol Leaders Council where a Scouter is present.

The Scouters are the ones who have the ultimate responsibility for discipline in the Troop. While the PL's should create the Code, the Scouters must ensure that the Code is workable and that all the guidelines and sanctions included are fair. They should make final decisions on major sanctions after discussing matters with the Patrol Leader's Council. They are always the ones who should deal with parents if such a need arises.

Presenting the Code

Once you have finalised the Code, give a little thought as to how you present it to the Troop. After all, if it looks like a set of school rules it might not be read by anyone! Maybe try some of the following ideas:

1. Try to make the Code look attractive using colour, cartoons and drawings.
2. On a suitable occasion, explain the Code to the parents of the Scouts.
3. Present a copy of the Code to each Scout, and have both them and their parents sign the Code to show that they agree to stick to the guidelines.
4. Put a poster copy of the Code on display somewhere in the Scout Den where everyone can see it.





SCOUTS