

Welcome to Troop 281!

Boy Scout Troop 281

The Colony, TX

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When your son bridges to a Boy Scout Troop, most new parents are chock full of questions! We hope that this will help you and your son understand how a Boy Scout Troop is run and, specifically, how Troop 281 is run. This is a great Troop with great adult leadership and a bunch of energetic and fun boys!

What to Look for in a Troop

1. Safe haven – You need to be comfortable with the boys and adults in the Troop.
2. Advancement / Fun – Look for a Troop where the Scouts are moving up in rank/responsibility and are having a fun in the process.
3. Attitude – Does the attitude / character of the Troop match up with your son?
4. Program – Some Troops specialize on one type a program (shooting, camping, backpacking, etc.).
5. Flexibility – Some Scouts are in many activities (band/sports/church). Is there any issue with the Troop for other activities?
6. Adult core / training / cooperation – Has the core group been together for a while? Does the Troop encourage leader training? How well do the adults work together?
7. Spiritual encouragement – Is there a motivation toward “duty to God” and “a Scout is Reverent”?

Troop Program

The troop program consists of training and activities centering on the following areas:

Scout Skills – includes basic skills such as camping, cooking, first aid, knots, flag ceremony, etc. and advanced skills such as canoeing, sailing, climbing, shooting sports, etc.

Leadership Skills – are developed by living by the scout oath and law, training such as Troop Leadership Training, Brown Sea, Twin Arrows National Youth Leader Training, Aquatic school, etc.

Merit Badges – usually one merit badge is being taught at each troop meeting. Merit badges are a look at different occupations and future areas of interest (hobbies). Each rank above First Class have merit badge requirements. 12 are specifically required for eagle and 21 total must be earned to be an eagle scout.

High Adventure – the troop encourage high adventure activities (kayaking, shotgun/rifle shooting, rock climbing, etc.) to keep older scouts involved in the scouting program.

Honor Camper Society – The troop participates in Order of the Arrow (OA). This organization encourage service to outside organizations and attempt to keep older scouts involved in the scouting program.

Awards – are encouragement for competition and to recognize the effort and success of individuals and patrols. The troop has several awards that go beyond rank and merit badge recognition. The golden spoon is an award given for cooking contests at campout. We also recognize the honor patrol and honor camper at our courts of honor (approximately quarterly). Finally, there are special awards (flag totems, ice cream, etc.) presented as the boy or adult leadership deems worthy.

Meetings

Boys need to attend weekly meetings as often as possible. We meet every Monday starting at 7PM unless it is a LISD school Holiday. We meet at [Good Shepherd Church](#) along S. Colony Blvd. You can read and print the monthly Troop calendar from the web site. The calendar will contain information about what will be worked on at the meeting.

During Troop meetings, the boys normally work on skills needed to advance in rank, get to know the other boys and work on merit badges that have been chosen by the Patrol Leaders Council. Boys should always wear their Class A uniform, bring their handbook and a pencil. Boys should be paid up in their dues. The dues are paid on a monthly basis. The

boys will give their dues to the Boy Scout who is the patrol Scribe.

You may drop off your son or stay. There is a room where committee members gather. You are welcome to come in and meet everyone, sit and listen to what's happening and get involved if you desire! Most of you have already volunteered to help and we thank you for that.

At the end of the meeting (around 8:45-9:00), the boys "circle up" and I suggest you be there to hear the announcements. You will get emails from the troop, but this is the best source of "what's happening" with the troop, upcoming events, etc..

Camping

Monthly campouts are on the troop calendar, we have campouts around 10 months out of the year. See the equipment list or ask a leader if you have questions. The boys plan their own menus and need to pay a week in advance. It is always \$10.00 for boys and \$10.00 for adults for food.

The money should be paid in cash. This is to assist in bookkeeping and to facilitate purchasing of the food.

Some campgrounds or events we camp at also include a camp fee, this can vary from \$5-\$25 each scout/adult.

The boys will alternate the "grubmaster" position. The grubmaster for the patrol is responsible for purchasing the food and cooking the meals during the campout (usually the Thursday evening prior to the campout).

The times given for departure are usually pretty close, but the return back can vary GREATLY. Please be flexible! The boys are in charge and sometimes things take longer than expected. One parent will be designated to call the others when the boys are leaving to let you know when and where to meet to pick up your son.

Outings

There will always be many opportunities to do outings with the scouts, it is not necessary to attend all of the events.

Rank Advancements

One focus of the Troop is advancement. The Troop schedules meeting activities that support advancement and has a leadership position focused on getting the boys to the First Class rank. You can help your son advance by:

- Reviewing the requirements in the book with them
- Set aside time each week at home to do something for Scouts, so it is not overwhelming
- Make sure he attends all meetings, campouts, fundraisers, service projects, etc.

You cannot sign off anything in your Scout's book like you could in Cub Scouts. This must be done by an older Scout with a higher rank if it is a skill, or by one of the leaders or the Advancement Chair.

After he has gotten items in his book signed off the scout must transfer these records to the troop 'Blue Book'. This book is the official record of all scouts advancements and is what our Advancements chair uses to purchase all awards.

Once all of the requirements for a rank are met, he should ask the Advancement Chair to schedule a Scoutmaster Conference. If he passes this, he then asks the Advancement Chair to schedule a Board of Review.

The Scoutmaster Conference and Board of Review occur at different times and will occur at the normal Troop meetings or on the night of the Patrol Leader's Council meeting.

The rank is signed off when he passes the Board of Review, once the boy is confirmed by the Board of Review, he has earned and is considered to be that rank. The rank will be recognized in a more formal setting at the next Court of Honor.

Merit Badges

Merit badges are a fun part of Scouting and many are required for upper level rank advancement. The Troop generally works on merit badges throughout the year, but your son may choose a badge- to work on that he has a special interest in. The boy must have a buddy to start a badge, but that buddy does not have to be a Scout. If your boy has a particular interest, have your son talk to the Advancement Chair to get started. He will tell him who the adult counselor is that can help him, and if anyone else is currently working on it. If not, he can find another boy that might also be interested so that they can sign up together. They may then work together or independently.

Some specific and more difficult badges are required for Eagle. They are noted in the handbook. Boys should work on

these whenever the opportunity arises. Additional opportunities for merit badges are available throughout the year, including summer camp and merit badge “colleges”.

Once the scout has finished a merit badge class he should be given a ‘Blue Card’, this is the scout’s official records that he has completed the badge. At this point the scout needs to transfer this record into the troop ‘Blue Book’, after it has been transferred the scout will be awarded the badge at the next Court of Honor.

Court of Honor

3-4 times a year we gather all the parents and scouts to recognize all the scouts’ accomplishments over the past few months. We encourage you to attend and see how your son and his fellow scouts have progressed towards their Eagle rank.

Service Hours

Your son will need service hours as a part of his rank advancement. A significant aim in Scouting is to teach boys about service in the community. These opportunities come up in the form of Scouting for Food, Eagle Scout project assistance, reading to the elderly, working at CCA, etc..

Your son may also do service outside of the troop for any church or nonprofit group. Please have this pre-approved and then bring a letter in to the Advancement Chair from the group stating the nature of the service and the time spent.

Patrol Method

The scouts are organized into patrols of 5-8 and every 6 months they hold elections to pick their patrol leader. In addition the troop as a whole elects the Senior Patrol Leader. The ‘SPL’ is the scout leader of the troop and works hand in hand with the scoutmaster on all troop events. The Senior Patrol Leader must be a Star Scout and have Brownsea training. The scoutmaster and his asst’s are there to oversee the program and keeps an eye out for safety issues.

Patrol Leaders Council

Once a month the SPL gathers all the patrol leaders to go over the troop calendar for the next few months. They use this time to plan meeting agendas, camp outs, and other service projects/outings. This is called the ‘PLC’ and includes the SPL, his two assistants, each patrol leader and his assistant, and the scribe and webmaster. If a scout who is not a leader has a suggestion or request for a specific event/outing he should give that to his patrol leader who will then take it to the PLC to get voted on.

Summer Camp

This is a great and exciting time for the boys. Your son should definitely plan to attend summer camp. He should attend 2 out of the 3 spring campouts before he goes so that both the boy and the leaders feel comfortable that he can handle a week away from home. Camp is usually scheduled for the end of June or beginning of July each year.

A parent’s meeting to discuss summer camp is scheduled every year. Please attend as the information provided will answer all of your questions. Make sure you review the recommended list of items carefully as you may need to purchase a few additional things.

We recommend that your son try to take Swimming at camp as it helps fulfill many of the 2nd and 1st Class requirements at the same time. This is just a suggestion but seems to work out well for most Scouts. There are lots of badges to choose from!

Be sure to read the packet carefully as many badges are not offered to first year campers.

A locking foot locker is suggested with an extra key or code, given to the Assistant Scout Master in charge.

How is summer camp chosen: In the beginning of summer we hold a planning meeting with the PLC and the leaders of the troop. At that time the scouts decide monthly themes for meetings, monthly camp outs, and summer camp for the next year.

How much does it cost: Most camps charge around \$250-350 per scout, this includes food for the whole week along with the classes the scouts will be taking (Some classes have additional fees for class supplies). The troop also charges an

additional \$40-\$60 per scout to help pay for the adults who are taking the boys to camp and spending the week with them there. This fee covers gas to drive the scouts there and back, as well as a large part of the adults camp fee (We do ask \$50 from each adult going so they are not attending for free). All of the adults that go are giving up a week of their vacation to take your boys to camp, we feel that because of that sacrifice we shouldn't ask them to pay the full amount the camp is requesting as a thank you for their time.

Web Site / E-Mail / Facebook

The Troop maintains a web site with relevant information for Scouts and their families. The address is <http://www.bsa281.com/>. A monthly calendar is available and is updated regularly as well as Troop documents and the Troop Handbook.

Most communications outside of meetings takes place via Yahoo email Group. Please sign up for the Yahoo email Group. You can find the link right off our websites homepage, <http://www.bsa281.com/>, or you can visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/bsa281> and sign up directly on the Yahoo site. All emails from the Troop will be Scouting-related. We also send out a weekly Newsletter to everyone in the group that outlines all the events happening during that week and upcoming weeks.

Our Facebook page is by invite only but has most up to date information about camp outs and upcoming events. We also post most pictures of our events to the Facebook page. If you would like to join search for "BSA Troop 281" in Facebook.

Parent Involvement

Each troop needs two things to be successful, active boys who regularly advance and parents who can give their time to make sure the troop continues to operate as best it can. There are several levels of involvement, and we welcome any help our parents can give.

Parent Driver: At the very minimum we ask that ALL our parents donate one-two weekends a year to help with camp outs. We have 30-40 scouts in our troop, and only 2-3 scoutmasters who can attend most camp outs. This presents a monthly challenge for a troop our size by trying to find enough transportation to get our scouts out to camp and back home again. By offering to come camping with us you are helping a great deal by having an extra car that can transport these scouts. In addition any parents who come camping with us will enjoy a relaxing weekend with great food cooked by our scoutmasters.

Committee Member: Our troop committee meets once a month and discusses different items from finances to upcoming calendar events. Most committee members are only asked to come to the monthly meetings and help us vote on important matters. Occasional we need members to chair a certain job that the troop needs doing, these can include treasurer, equipment, outdoor events, fundraising, training, and advancements. If you would like more information about the committee and have time to help out your son's troop please talk to a leader at the next meeting.

Assistant Scoutmaster: If you enjoy working with the scouts and want to help guide them along their scouting career then you can become an Asst Scoutmaster. Asst scoutmasters help the troop scoutmaster oversee the boy scout program. This includes helping out at meetings by going over books with the scouts and signing off on scout skills, going on camp outs and helping run the program during these outings, going to summer camp with our scouts, attending scoutmaster meetings, and other program related items. These parents are the core of the troop leaders and end up giving the most time out of all our parents, every single one of these adults are a godsend and we would greatly appreciate anyone who is interested in stepping into this roll.

Fundraisers

Our troop has three primary fundraisers each year. Popcorn is in the fall, XMas Wreaths are before Christmas, and Camp Cards are in the spring.

Popcorn: This fundraiser is held in two phases; the first phase is called Show-N-Sell and is done in front of stores with the product in hand. We sell this phase as a group and each scout who works a shift gets an even break of the sales of that shift. The second phase is called Take Order, in this phase each scout has an order form and goes door to door and collects orders for about a month. At the end of that month we collect all orders and place our troop order for product. Once the product comes in we hand out each scout's product and it is up to the scout to deliver the product and collect any money due. All popcorn sales are broken up 75%-25% with the scout (or group for SnS) getting 25% of price.

XMas Wreaths: We have a short fundraiser right after popcorn where we sell fresh cut Christmas wreaths. It is a take order
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format but the order time is only a week or so in November. We usually try to have the orders in and the product back in time for Thanksgiving. Each wreath earns around \$6 back to the scout.

Camp Cards: In the spring we sell camp cards, this is a coupon card with several discounts to neighborhood stores and sells for \$5 each. We receive these from the district and they ask for %50 (\$2.50) back from each sale to help cover their fees. This is the only fundraiser the troop asks for money from to help pay for the program, so the scout gets \$2 from the remaining 50% and .50 cents goes to the troop. We usually have several booths set up in front of the key stores that the card offers a discount at. The scouts can sign up for shifts at these stores in a first come first serve bases. Scouts can also 'check out' cards and sell them themselves to friends/family or door to door.

Appendix 1. Terms and Definitions

Court of Honor – Ceremony where the boys are recognized for their rank advancements and merit badges. The Court of Honor is usually held quarterly. This is where your son is honored for and receives his advancements and merit badges.

Scoutmaster Conference – This is the time when the Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster meets with your son to review his progress. This review will occur before, and is a requirement for, rank advancement but may also be held periodically to keep the Scout progressing.

Board of Review – After a successful Scoutmaster conference, several committee members will meet with your son and review his advancement. They will question the Scout as to his advancement in the Troop to ensure that the boy is adjusted and feels that he is a functional part of the Troop. The questions will not be focused on the skills that were reviewed by the Scoutmaster, but rather will cover areas such as progress in school, family, etc..

Scout Spirit – Always a part of rank advancement and is shown by participation in meetings, service projects, camping trips, etc.. It is an attitude that shows the Scout is proud to be a Boy Scout and part of Troop 281. The Scoutmaster or one of the Assistants will sign off on the Scout Spirit requirement.

Blue Card – A blue multi-part card that is used to keep track of merit badge awards. The adult counselor leading the badge and the Scoutmaster or Advancement Chair must sign this card signifying that all of the requirements have been met. One part is for the Troop records and the other part is awarded with the badge at the Court of Honor. **The boys must keep these cards!** Many use plastic baseball card sheets to organize these. This is your proof that your son has completed the badge and you will need this for advancements (especially Eagle Scout).

Senior Patrol Leader (SPL) – The “boy leader” of the Troop. The position is rotated every 6 months.

Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL) – Takes charge if the SPL is unavailable.

Patrol Leader (PL) – Each patrol has a leader and assistant, voted for every 6 months by the patrol members.

Patrol Leader's Council (PLC) – All of the Patrol Leaders get together once a month to review the campout and once every 6 months to plan the Troop activities.

Class A/B Uniform – The tan Scout shirt, Scout pants, belt, socks, neckerchief and slide and proper insignia are all required to be in full uniform. The Troop t-shirt is optional but recommended. “Full” class A is required to achieve First Class rank. Class B uniform includes the Troop t-shirt (tucked in) with shorts or long pants.

Order of the Arrow (OA) – Scouting's National Honor Society. Boys are elected in that best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives.

Mic-o-Say – Honor Society for Camp Geiger in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Chartered Organization – The group that sponsors and provides support for our Troop. The chartered order for Troop 281 is the Group of Citizens – The Colony.

Committee Members – Adult leadership that help keep the boys on track. Anyone who wants to volunteer can serve in the committee. There are many positions available. The committee meets once a month to discuss Troop policy and to address financial and other concerns.

Appendix 2. New Scout Camping Checklist

Recommended Gear

The following list should be treated as a guideline. Adjust as appropriate for the Scout.

- Canteen or water bottle
- Mess kit with silverware (we don't use paper goods)
- Drinking cup
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Sleeping bag (doesn't have to be expensive but should go to 20 degrees)
- Sun screen
- Insect repellent
- Toilet paper
- Scout book
- Class A & B Uniforms (must be in class A while traveling)
- Hiking boots or other rough soled shoes (should be broken in before camping!)
- Poncho or rainsuit
- Personal toiletries
 - Toothbrush & toothpaste
 - Comb or brush
 - Lip balm
 - Glasses case
 - Mirror
 - Contact case and solution

Optional Items

- Pillow
- Folding chair
- Cot and/or sleeping pad
- Scout hat
- Paper and pen/pencil
- Compass
- Whistle

No Electronics Allowed On Campouts

In this digital age we understand most young adults have phones/ipads, and they are welcome to bring them for the car ride to the camp site or to let their parents know when the troop will be home. They are not allowed in camp though, if your son does bring electronics they must be left in the car. Please do not encourage them to call you if they have problems. The scout program is built to help the boys be self-sufficient, and sometimes the first few campout without their parents the scouts can get home sick. We feel this is a disservice to you and the scouting program, and would like all scouts to keep their phones in the car. The scoutmasters on the campout will be contacting the parents IF (and only if) there is an emergency.

Tent

A 3 or 4 man tent is sufficient for the monthly campouts the Troop goes on. Each boy does not need a tent. The boys camp by patrol, however, so make sure if you are sharing with a friend that they are in the same patrol. The Boy Scout should know how to set up the tent before he goes camping.

Weather

Remember to dress in layers and be prepared for all kinds of weather. Add warm clothing, including sweatshirt, cap and gloves, if the weather is expected to be cold. Check the weather where you will be camping, not where you live. Do not assume it will be the same!