

Being a Good Leader

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Think of some of the best leaders

you have known. Perhaps there is a teacher at your school who seems gifted with the ability to guide people toward their goals. Maybe you are on a team coached by someone who inspires you to achieve the most that you can. You might have noticed the skill with which your Scoutmaster and senior patrol leader move the troop along.

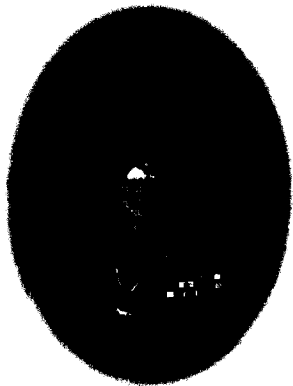
Now that you have become the leader of a patrol, you may be asking yourself how you can be most effective in your new role. What steps can you take to lead well?

Basics of Leadership

There are almost as many methods of leadership as there are leaders. All good leaders develop their own styles, building on their successes and learning from experiences that were not so positive. Approaches to leadership that are effective for one person may not work at all for someone else. Leaders may also discover that the methods they use will change depending on the people they are leading and the challenges their groups are facing.

Even so, there are some basics of leadership that can give you a head start in developing your own approach to being a patrol leader. Among the most important are these:

- ① Have a good attitude.
- ② Act with maturity.
- ③ Be organized.
- ④ Look the part.



“What you do yourselves, your Scouts will do also.”

—Robert Baden-Powell

than a leader who flip-flops on his decisions without clear reason. Likewise, a patrol leader who treats some Scouts more favorably than others will soon lose the group’s trust. Patrol members will respond well to your leadership when they know what to expect from you.

Be Organized

Careful preparations before meetings and patrol events will pay off many times over in the success of those activities. Patrol members will receive the message that you care enough about them to put energy into planning the best possible experiences for the entire patrol.

Have a Good Attitude

An optimistic outlook is infectious. Maintain a positive, can-do attitude, and those around you will find that they share your enthusiasm. You don’t have to be noisy about it; simply be willing to do your best all the time. Instead of feeling defeated by the challenges facing the patrol, set about the business of using the combined strengths of all patrol members to find good solutions.

Act With Maturity

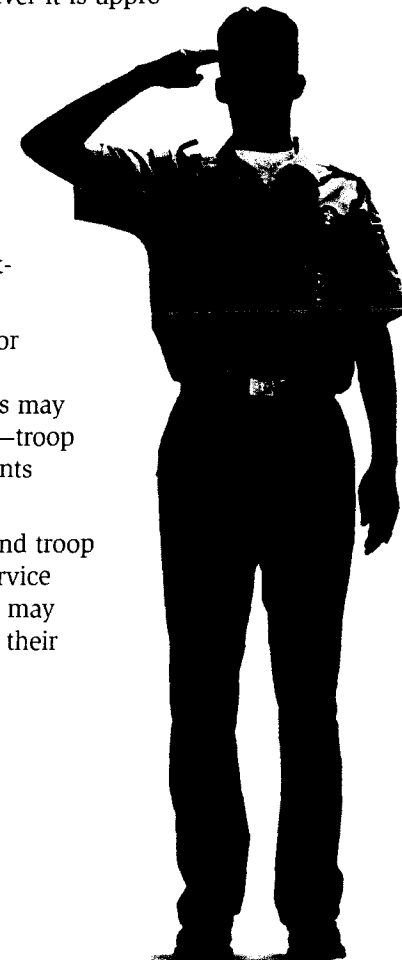
Earn the respect of those you are leading by being fair to everyone and consistent in your actions. It is important to be flexible enough to change direction when that will be best for the patrol, but there is nothing more confusing

Look the Part

Leadership comes from within, not from the shirt on your back or the patch on your shoulder. On the other hand, the Boy Scout uniform does command respect. It provides identity for troop members. It can strengthen the sense of belonging and build patrol spirit.

Set a good example for the patrol by wearing the full Boy Scout uniform whenever it is appropriate. Follow these guidelines:

- Patrol leaders and patrol members proudly wear the full uniform for all ceremonial activities, including boards of review, courts of honor, patriotic events, parades, and special occasions at troop meetings and summer camp.
- During physically active outdoor events and informal patrol and troop meetings, patrol members may wear the BSA activity uniform—troop or camp T-shirts with Scout pants or shorts.
- Scouts participating in patrol and troop conservation projects, other service work, or backcountry camping may wear work pants or jeans with their troop or camp T-shirts.



Key Leadership Skills

In addition to the basics of leadership, several other skills will allow you to guide the patrol well. Four of these are:

- ❶ Effective communication
- ❷ Effective listening
- ❸ Start, Stop, Continue
- ❹ Matching leadership style to leadership needs

Effective Communication

Communicating effectively is more than just visiting with someone, especially when you are giving and receiving important information. At a patrol meeting or during a patrol activity, you will sometimes be challenged to explain detailed information to other patrol members so that all of them clearly understand. Here are some methods that may allow you to communicate better with the patrol.

GIVING INFORMATION

Assume you have just attended a patrol leaders' council meeting to plan an upcoming troop campout. Now you need to share the information with members of the patrol.

- Before you begin, take a moment to organize your thoughts. You may want to write a few notes to remind yourself of the points you want to cover.



- Have the patrol members gather in a place free of distractions. If you are outdoors on a bright day, turn so that you, rather than the listeners, are facing the sun. Don't begin until you have everyone's attention. You can hold up the Scout sign as a signal that it is time for everyone to focus on the business at hand.
- Speak clearly. Make eye contact with listeners. As you finish explaining each item, ask if there are any questions.
- If possible, write the most important points on a flip chart or chalkboard.
- Repeat facts such as dates, times, and places.
- Ask the patrol scribe to make notes of the discussion. He can also distribute copies of schedules, activity plans, or duty rosters to members of the patrol.

RECEIVING INFORMATION

Communication is a two-way street. When you are in a position to receive information, give it your full attention. Create an atmosphere for communication by doing the following:

- Give the speaker your full attention.
- Write down points of information—dates, times, locations, etc.
- If you are unclear about anything, ask questions.

Effective Listening

As you can see from the discussion of giving and receiving information, effective listening is essential to good communication. Effective listening is also a skill that each of us can learn and can constantly improve.

Most of us love to hear the sounds of our own voices. In conversations, we may think more about what we are going to say next than about what is being said by others. When you are in conversations with members of your patrol, though, practice good listening by paying close attention to what others are saying and also to what they are leaving unsaid. Notice their tone of voice and watch their body language. Try to listen without passing judgment.

① **Effective listening is vital for forming relationships, finding solutions, and developing patrol spirit.**

② **Effective listening can be a tool for turning a negative situation into a positive one.**

Be aware, too, of how you are feeling while you listen. Are you chilly, hungry, sleepy, too hot, too cold, or late for another meeting? Is the speaker's message something you don't want to hear? Any of these factors can have an impact on your attention span. If you are upset, angry, or worried, that can affect your ability to listen well.

Noticing how you feel can help you better grasp what others are saying. The adjustment you make might simply be a matter of focusing more on a speaker's message. Often, though, it may require calling a time-out so that you can put on a sweater, have a bite to eat, take care of distracting matters, or let your emotions cool

down. When you get back together with the speaker, the conditions may be much more inviting to good listening.

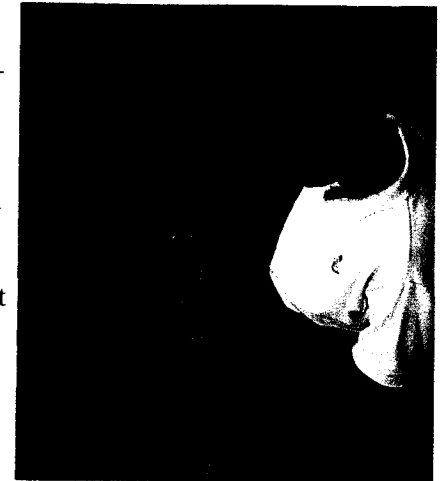
Of course, you cannot tailor every listening situation. Now and then you will find yourself in discussions with others when communications are difficult. Continually practice effective listening, though, and you will find that it can be a powerful tool for solving problems, settling disputes, and building patrol spirit.

FOLLOW-UP

Communicating well is a constant goal of a patrol leader. It is your responsibility to keep patrol members aware of activities for the patrol and troop. But sometimes when a patrol member is absent from a patrol meeting, he won't get important information along with other patrol members. Sometimes plans you have discussed with the patrol members must be changed, perhaps at the last minute.

The follow-up steps you take in these situations can ensure that effective communication continues:

- Make a list of the phone numbers and e-mail addresses of the members of your patrol. Use it to contact everyone if you need to relay information outside of a scheduled meeting.
- Give patrol members as much advance notice as possible concerning upcoming activities. If you wait until the last minute, some patrol members may have scheduling conflicts.
- Whenever possible, provide patrol members with written copies of important information—duty rosters, calendars of events, etc.
- Remind patrol members of specific duties they have accepted, such as buying the food for a campout.
- Maintain a patrol calendar for keeping track of upcoming patrol and troop activities.
- Discuss patrol activities with your parents or guardian. They need to know your schedule and may be an important resource for ideas and support.
- Plan, plan, plan. Fill out a planning work sheet on every activity.



Start, Stop, Continue

Start, Stop, Continue is a series of questions designed to help troop members assess an event or activity that has just occurred and explore some of the values that activity offers. The troop can then take the outcome and focus on reapplication and future events. Troops that use SSC are less likely to end up with an emphasis on what went wrong than when using other assessment tools. In its simplest form, SSC is three questions:

1. What should we *start* doing that would make us more successful?
2. What should we *stop* doing that is not working or is a barrier to our success?
3. What should we *continue* to do because it was a significant reason for our success?

For major events and when you are a more experienced leader, the group can explore the *why* of each question. The answers often will help to reinforce the values of the Scout Oath and Law in the experience.

Some key points for using the SSC assessment tool:

- Everyone has the right to express his thoughts.
- Each person has the choice of talking or remaining silent.
- No one may interrupt the person speaking, and there is no room for put-downs or making fun of someone.
- Gathering input here is key, but it is not always necessary to evaluate and reach consensus. The patrol leaders' council may be the right place to review the input and apply a solution.
- Do not allow the discussion to become negative or focus on individuals.

To end the discussion, summarize the most important points that were mentioned. When appropriate, the troop scribe should keep a record to be shared at the next patrol leaders' council meeting. Be positive throughout the session and as you bring it to a close.

Matching Leadership Styles to Leadership Needs

Effective leaders nearly always have more than one leadership style. A key to good leadership is to match the style of leadership to the situation. For instance, a First Class Scout who has been in the troop for a year or more may require little or no guidance on a weekend camping trip, but a new Scout on his first camp-out will probably need lots of attention, encouragement, and instruction.

Among the most common styles of leadership are:

- Explaining
- Demonstrating
- Guiding
- Enabling

THE EXPLAINING STYLE

Explaining is a leadership style used when patrol members are just beginning in a task or skill. They are enthusiastic but really do not have the skill or knowledge to do what needs to be done. When a patrol or an individual is at this stage, the leaders need to carefully *explain* what must be done, how to do it, and what the result needs to be.

THE DEMONSTRATING STYLE

When the patrol or an individual is just learning a new skill, frustration can come quickly when the skill just isn't there yet. The leader at this point needs to use the *demonstrating* style of leadership, showing precisely how something is to be done. He also must model the behavior expected of patrol members.



THE GUIDING STYLE

As the patrol or members get better at a task or skill, they will exhibit a growing enthusiasm and motivation. The leader's response to this should be to step back and give them plenty of room to act on their own, but be ready to coach and *guide* when help is needed. An example might be the patrol leader performing his responsibilities during meal preparation but remaining close by and ready to help others, if they need it. That will help *guide* them toward being successful.

THE ENABLING STYLE

Enabling is leadership style that can be used when skills are high to create an environment of continued success. It means the leader can delegate teaching responsibility for that task or skill to the individual or patrol. The leader recognizes that the group has reached proficiency, and he can and should express his confidence in them.

Helping the Patrol Develop as a Team

Understanding how patrols develop can help you better match your leadership style to the needs of all patrol members. In turn, that can encourage everyone to move forward, which helps a troop to achieve as much as it can.

Theories of Team Development

There are many theories explaining how teams like patrols and troops evolve. At the council-level National Youth Leadership Training, you will learn that teams go through a progression of stages, each requiring a different leadership approach. The Leading EDGE (Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, Enable) is the same term used to describe a process for teaching a skill, but here it describes the series of leadership behaviors you just learned.

Just as you can adjust your leadership styles to match the needs of individuals, you can address the needs of an entire patrol, too. The key is this: Figure out what the patrol is missing and then provide it.

Supporting the Patrol

To discover what the patrol requires from you, pay attention. Watch patrol members as they interact with one another. Listen to their comments and concerns and think about ways you can help each of them reach their full potential.

For example, members of a newly formed patrol usually are eager to fit in. They may be unsure about what is expected of them, though, and will need lots of guidance. Take time to establish personal connections with each Scout and learn about his interests and talents. The *explaining style* and the *demonstrating style* you use with individuals can also be used with great effect in group leadership situations when applied to a newly formed patrol.

Patrol members who have been around for a while should have developed quite a bit of skill in resolving their difficulties and achieving many of the goals they have set for themselves. They should be confident in their ability to perform tasks and to overcome obstacles. They have a sense of pride in belonging to a successful patrol, and they enjoy working together. The trust and respect they have for one another is high.

You can support experienced patrols by seeing to it that members have everything they require to continue succeeding. Those resources may be in the form of materials, camping gear, or knowledge, especially information you can share from meetings of the patrol leaders' council. Recognize individuals for their accomplishments, too, and encourage open communication. You may find that the *guiding style* and *enabling style* of leadership are just right for bringing out the best in a veteran patrol.

Providing Leadership to the Patrol

- Rely on shared values as you make ethical choices in patrol leadership. The Scout Law and Oath are expressions of the BSA's values, and shared values are a foundation of any team.
- Offer a vision of success. The troop's annual program plan is a blueprint for exciting activities and outdoor adventures. Use it to focus the patrol members' energy and enthusiasm.
- Recognize that some patrol members may be advancing faster than others. Give additional assistance to Scouts taking additional time to learn skills and to gain Scouting experience. Offer advanced Scouts added responsibilities and leadership positions, and allow them to help others.
- Model the kind of behavior and achievement you expect from everyone in the patrol. Be what you want them to be. Have high expectations for yourself, and expect the best in others.
- Acknowledge differences. Look for ways to draw on individual strengths of Scouts to the advantage of the entire patrol. Develop trust by keeping the interests of patrol members in mind.

- Make meetings count. Get down to the business of making things happen and of having fun along the way.
- Respect and value others. Help each Scout feel that he has something important to contribute to the success of the patrol.

Overcoming Patrol Disappointments

Now and then a patrol may become discouraged. Perhaps Scouts are discovering the reality of the challenges facing them. A campout or other planned activity that didn't go very well may cause some Scouts to become frustrated.

You will be tested as a patrol leader when the spirits of patrol members are down. Draw upon your abilities to communicate clearly, listen actively, and encourage open discussions. Recognize patrol accomplishments and offer encouragement and reassurance to those Scouts who are making efforts to achieve. Start, Stop, Continue can be an effective tool for helping you discover what is at the root of patrol members' discontent and for helping Scouts find their own solutions to the situation.

Celebrating Success

Now and then patrol members will achieve significant milestones together or even complete their time together as a tight-knit group. Some patrol members may be moving on to form a Venture crew, for example. Members of a new-Scout patrol may have reached a level of experience and advancement to be ready to join the regular patrols of the troop.

Whatever the case, celebrate the many accomplishments that patrol members have enjoyed during their time together. Documenting the patrol's history with a scrapbook or photo album can be an enjoyable way to create a record of all that the Scouts have accomplished.

"It is up to the patrol leader to take hold of and develop the qualities of each boy in his patrol. It sounds like a big order, but in practice it works."

—Robert Baden-Powell

Putting Out Fires

Being a patrol leader is not always an easy task, nor is it always a popular position. There may even be times when you want to give your patrol leader's patch back to the Scoutmaster. But if leadership were always easy, everyone would do it. It's when the challenges of leadership become difficult—when you need to put out fires—that you will know you will gain some of the most valuable experience in becoming a good leader.

Difficult leadership situations come in many forms. A patrol member may not be aware that his behavior was out of line or may not understand that what he is doing compromises the safety of other Scouts. A patrol member having problems at home or in school may let out his anger during a patrol activity. Sometimes a Scout may simply want to challenge your leadership.

When a personality issue surfaces, others in your patrol will be watching to see how you handle things. They will sense if you are being fair and if you are seeking workable solutions. In short, they will be watching to see if you really are a leader.

A few guidelines can serve you well as you cope with difficult leadership issues:

- Remain as calm as you can. Don't get mad. Stay focused on finding a solution.
- If possible, meet privately with those who are upset. That will give everyone a chance to air concerns without an audience.
- Use open-ended questions to explore differences:
 - If you were patrol leader, what would you do?
 - How can we solve the problem as a patrol?
 - What are you willing to do to resolve this situation?
- Be firm and state the case clearly, especially if the problem involves safety issues or Scouting policies with nonnegotiable guidelines.

Consider these effective responses to Scouts whose behavior requires some action from the patrol leader:

- “Mark, it looked like you were giving that new Scout a hard time. I'm sure you know that's not an acceptable way to treat others. Tell me what's going on and let's talk about some ways we older Scouts can help these new guys.”
- “Jim, our patrol is a team, and each patrol member has a task to do. Let's consider some ways you can take more responsibility for doing your share.”
- “Bob, you seem to be second-guessing me on everything. Let's talk about why that is happening and how we can work out a better way of dealing with each other.”

The other person may be argumentative, even hostile. Stay calm, letting him know that you are hearing what he is saying. A simple “I got it” is a good response. Keep the dialogue going with open comments:

- “I hear what you are saying. Let's look at that another way.”
- “I hear what you are saying. How can we change what you are doing so it is within the Scouting guidelines?”
- “I hear what you are saying. Let's look for some ways that this will work for everyone in the patrol.”

Serious problems such as those involving drugs, alcohol, hazing, or harassment should be reported to troop leadership immediately.

Sample Leadership Problem-Solving Situations

Here are five situations you may encounter as a patrol leader, each followed by one of the many appropriate solutions. Read each situation and consider how you would handle the problem.

ON THE TRAIL

Your patrol is on a 10-mile hike to a destination that is new to everyone. An assistant Scoutmaster is leading the hike and the Scoutmaster is hiking at the back of the troop. You notice that the assistant Scoutmaster and several Scouts are hiking so quickly they have disappeared up the trail. You mention this to the Scoutmaster, who asks you to handle the situation.

One solution: You and another patrol member jog up the trail to catch the others. When you catch them, you ask to speak to the assistant Scoutmaster. Moving off the trail out of the hearing of the other Scouts, you share your concern they should stay with the rest of the troop and suggest that the new-Scout patrol join the assistant Scoutmaster at the head of the troop where they can set the pace.

AT A TROOP FEAST

The troop is planning a feast. At the patrol leaders' council meeting your patrol was assigned to select and prepare the main course. The members of your patrol want to prepare spaghetti and meatballs, but you are a vegetarian and never eat meat. What can you do?

One solution: You were elected to be the representative of your patrol and should do your best to allow the patrol members to achieve all they can within the plans of the patrol leaders' council. As a member of the patrol, your interests are also important. You lead the patrol in a discussion to find a solution that works for every patrol member, including you. In this case, it may involve preparing two dishes of spaghetti sauce, one with meatballs and one without.

AT SCOUT CAMP

On the second day of summer camp, the assistant patrol leader tells you that a Scout in your patrol is not taking part in archery because a boy from another troop has been picking on him. What do you do?

One solution: Speak with the Scout away from the hearing of others, and ask him if there are any problems with his camping experience that he would like to talk about. Encourage him to tell his side of the story of what happened at the archery range. Listen closely to his answer and consider his attitude. Did the assistant patrol leader seem to get it right? Does the Scout see things differently?

Once you understand the situation, work with the Scout to come up with a good solution. It may be that he needs nothing more than to know his patrol supports him. There could be a different archery session the Scout could attend. It might be appropriate to talk with the boy who is picking on the Scout or to have a word with the archery instructor. Encourage your patrol member to help you figure out an answer to the problem so that he can return to the archery range and get the most out of his Scouting experience.

AT A TROOP MEETING

The senior patrol leader telephones you at home to let you know several Webelos Scouts will be visiting the troop meeting the following night. He would like your patrol to take responsibility for presenting an impressive opening flag ceremony. The entire patrol will need to arrive at the troop meeting place early and in full uniform. What do you do?

One solution: Telephone all the members of your patrol and pass the word on to each of them.

BACKPACKING

At the last meeting, patrol members divided up the patrol tents, cooking gear, and other group equipment for a weekend backpacking trip, assigning heavier items to the bigger, stronger hikers and lighter gear to smaller Scouts. Saturday morning at the trailhead, though, one member of your patrol refuses to carry his share. What do you do?

One solution: Talk to the Scout out of the hearing of others. First, try to determine why the Scout is reluctant to carry his load. Perhaps his pack is out of adjustment and uncomfortable, or he is afraid he will tire quickly and become embarrassed in front of the rest of the patrol. He may have brought too much personal gear that is weighing down his pack.

Try to find a solution together—fixing his pack, leaving behind some unnecessary personal items, or reminding him that you and the patrol will support him even if he is not the strongest hiker in the group. If there seems to be no clear cause for his concern, remind him that a patrol is a democracy in which every member has an equal voice and equal responsibilities. By doing his part, he makes it possible for the entire patrol to succeed.



Conflict Resolution

Conflicts can occur when people disagreeing with each other seem unable to find a reasonable compromise. The roots of these disagreements can arise from many sources, including differences in personality, values, and perceptions.

As a patrol leader, you will need to handle the differences that arise among members of the patrol. Those conflicts may be minor, or they may fester into something that can damage patrol spirit and the ability of the patrol members to work together effectively.

Responses to Conflict

Your response to a perceived conflict probably will take one of three forms:

- ❶ Avoiding
- ❷ Compromising
- ❸ Problem solving

AVOIDING

Avoiding a problem seldom makes it go away, but there are times when it is best to let others work out their differences on their own. By using the skills of effective listening, you should have a good feel for the quality of the relationships among patrol members and should be able to decide when to help resolve a disagreement.

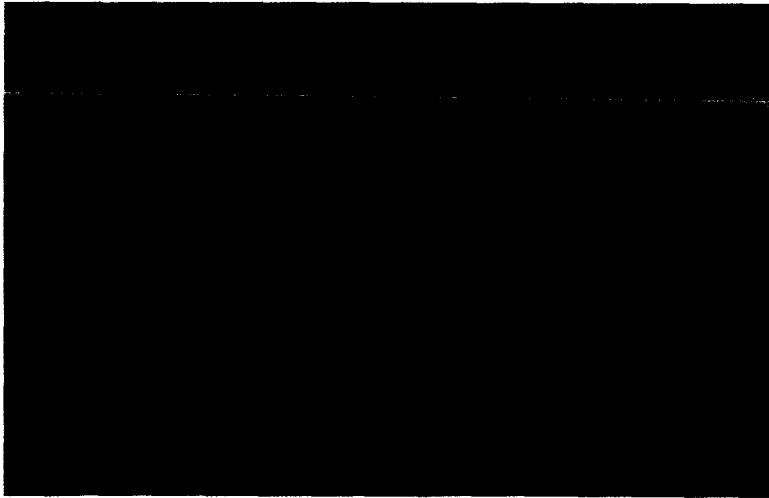
An important time for you to step in is when the patrol members themselves are avoiding a problem by shying away from the steps that would lead to a resolution of a disagreement. They may have decided simply not to talk about it, but without communication, there can be no progress.

COMPROMISING

In solving a conflict by compromise, both parties must be willing to give up something to gain something more. Reaching that point may require the assistance of a negotiator—in this case, you, the patrol leader.

PROBLEM SOLVING

The most effective way to resolve conflicts is for all parties to explain their points of view and to become convinced that they should exert effort to solve the problem. As in compromising, a negotiator may serve as a guide to help them resolve their differences.



Dealing With Inappropriate Behavior

The Scouting program offers young people opportunities to learn and grow in a setting where they can enjoy the acceptance and support of others. Hazing, harassment, name-calling, and bullying have no place in Scouting and will not be tolerated. Likewise, cheating, stealing, lying, cursing, vandalism, fighting, and other forms of inappropriate behavior must be firmly addressed by a Scout troop.

Scouting is built upon the youth-led troop and youth-led patrol. As a patrol leader, you set an example for the behavior of everyone in the patrol. When you see that a patrol member is overstepping the boundaries of the code of conduct spelled out in the Scout Oath and Law, it is your responsibility to step aside with that Scout and discuss with him why his behavior is not acceptable.

Serious or recurring inappropriate behavior should be reported to the Scoutmaster and senior patrol leader. The patrol leaders' council may become involved in discussing certain behavioral problems. Disruptive behavior on the part of an individual Scout may be referred to the Scoutmaster and troop committee, who will, in turn, involve the Scout's parents or guardian in a cooperative effort to resolve the issue.

"The thing is to cooperate happily in the process which develops discipline and obedience in the doing of small things while we are young. Then, when our turn comes to do big things, discipline will help to ensure accomplishment."

—James E. West, the BSA's first Chief Scout Executive