

Paws for Action

Required adventure • Citizenship

If you read nothing else

Three meetings: the flag, the nonprofit visit, and the service project. Two of them need somebody outside your den to say yes, so start asking early.

For the flag, invite a VFW or American Legion post or a high school JROTC instructor four to six weeks out. They do this constantly and they are good at it. Ask them to bring flags for folding practice.

The nonprofit visit is a field trip. Health forms, transport, and your council's activity notification requirements all apply.

Requirement 4 is a service project. Log the hours in Scoutbook — it counts toward the pack's service total for the year, and packs lose the credit by simply not recording it.

The requirements

Official requirement text. Tick each one off as your Scouts complete it — the meeting plans below cover all of them.

- ☐ 1. Familiarize yourself with the flag of the United States of America including the history, demonstrating how to raise and lower the flag, how to properly fold and display it, and United States flag etiquette.
- ☐ 2. Identify three symbols that represent the United States. Pick your favorite and make a model, work of art, or other craft that depicts the symbol.
- ☐ 3. Learn about the mission of any non-profit. Find out how they fund their activities and how volunteers are used to help.
- ☐ 4. Participate in a service project.

Meeting 1: The flag, and the symbols we choose

Goal: Scouts hear the history of the flag from someone who lives it, fold one themselves, raise and lower one, and make something that depicts a symbol of the United States.

Covers requirements 1 and 2

Before the meeting

- Four to six weeks out, ask a community organization to present on the flag — Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, or a high school Jr. ROTC instructor. Ask specifically for the history, how to display it, how to fold it, and flag etiquette.

- Ask the guest to bring flags for practice, or borrow enough for one per group of three from your chartered organization or the school.
- Find a flagpole you can use. If there is not one, a rope and two Scouts holding a broom handle will teach raise-and-lower well enough — but a real pole is better and your chartered organization probably has one.
- Brief your denner and assistant den leader before the meeting: they help demonstrate the fold, so they need to know it cold.
- Set out craft supplies before Scouts arrive so activity 2 starts the second activity 1 ends.
- Have a thank you card ready for the den to sign at the closing.

Supplies

- United States flags for folding practice, one per group of three
- A flagpole and halyard, or a stand-in
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers
- Paper, one sheet per Scout, plus card and craft materials for Scouts who would rather build than draw
- Thank you card for the guest speaker
- Bear handbooks

Run of show

Time	What happens
10 min	Gathering: what do you already know about the flag?
5 min	Opening: Pledge of Allegiance
30 min	Activity 1: Patriotic Guest Speaker — history, folding, raising and lowering
20 min	Activity 2: USA Symbols Drawing
5 min	Closing: sign the thank you card

Activity 1 — Patriotic Guest Speaker (30 min)

Patriotic Guest Speaker — scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/patriotic-guest-speaker/

Tell the den at the start exactly what they are going to learn: the history of the flag, how to display it, how to fold it, and how to raise and lower it. Then remind them how to host a guest — hands up for questions, listen while someone is talking.

Welcome the guest and let them talk. Then get to the hands-on part, which is where the requirement actually lives.

Demonstrate the fold first, with the denner, the den chief, or the assistant den leader holding the other end. Go slowly and name each step. Then split into groups of three with a flag each and let them practice until every group has done it properly at least once. Third graders will not get it the first time and that is fine — the second time is usually the one.

Then move to the flagpole. With two Scouts helping, demonstrate raising and lowering. Say the rule as you do it: the flag goes up quickly and comes down slowly. Ask them why, and let them work it out — the answer is respect, and they get there on their own.

Cover etiquette while the flag is in their hands and it is concrete rather than abstract: never let it touch the ground, never fly it in the dark unless it is lit, always the highest point when flown with other flags, and a worn flag is retired with dignity rather than thrown out.

That is requirement 1, and “demonstrating” is the word that matters. Every Scout folds, and every Scout has a hand on the halyard.

Alternative: Outdoor Flag Ceremony — scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/outdoor-flag-ceremony/

Activity 2 — USA Symbols Drawing (20 min)

USA Symbols Drawing — scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/u-s-a-symbols-drawing/

Ask the den what symbols represent the United States and write everything they say on the board. Push for three from each Scout — the requirement asks them to identify three, so make sure everybody names three rather than letting the loudest Scout name all of them.

If they stall, offer: the eagle, the Liberty Bell, the Statue of Liberty, the national anthem, Uncle Sam, the White House. The flag itself counts too, and somebody will say it.

Then each Scout picks their favorite and makes something that depicts it. Drawing is the default and it works, but the requirement says model, work of art, or other craft — so a Scout who would rather build the Liberty Bell out of card and foil should build it.

Share at the end. Each Scout holds theirs up and says which symbol it is and why they picked that one. The “why” is the part that is actually about citizenship.

Closing (5 min)

The den signs the thank you card before anyone leaves. Mail it this week.

Announce the nonprofit visit: date, location, what time, who is driving, and that health forms are needed.

Send home with families

Ask your Scout to show you how to fold a flag. If you have one at home, let them do it.

Look at how flags are displayed on the way to school this week and talk about which ones follow the etiquette rules.

Get the Annual Health and Medical Record in to the den leader before the nonprofit visit.

Meeting 2: The nonprofit visit

Goal: Scouts learn what one nonprofit does, how it pays for it, and what its volunteers actually do.

Covers requirement 3

Before the meeting

- Contact a local nonprofit and ask whether they will host the den and have someone talk to them. Food banks, animal shelters, humane societies, libraries, hospices, community gardens, and habitat groups all say yes more often than you expect.
- Give the host the three things the requirement needs, in writing, before the visit: what is your mission, how do you fund your activities, and how do you use volunteers. A host who knows the questions gives useful answers.
- Ask whether a tour is possible and how long they need. Third graders learn more in ten minutes of walking around than thirty minutes of sitting.
- Tell parents and legal guardians about the visit — where, when, transport, and pickup.
- Gather health forms for every participant, youth and adult, and review them for anything affecting participation.
- Check your council for any activity notification requirement before taking the den off site.
- If nobody can host you, invite a nonprofit to your meeting place instead, or run Groups That Help — scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/groups-that-help/

Supplies

- Health forms for every participant, youth and adult
- Roster with parent phone numbers
- Question cards, one per Scout, written at the gathering
- Pencils
- Thank you card for the host
- Den first aid kit

Run of show

Time	What happens
10 min	Gathering at the site: roll call, expectations, write question cards
5 min	Opening: Pledge of Allegiance
35 min	Activity 1: Nonprofit Visit — mission, funding, volunteers
10 min	Activity 2: the tour, if the host offers one
5 min	Activity 3: thank the host and sign the card
5 min	Closing

Gathering — Question cards (10 min)

Gather the den outside the space before you go in. Roll call, buddies, and a plain reminder of what respectful looks like here: hands up for questions, stay with the group, do not touch what is not yours.

Every Scout writes one question on a card. Three questions are mandatory across the den and you assign them before anyone free-writes: what is your mission, how do you get the money to do it, and what do your volunteers do. Those three are requirement 3 and they need real answers.

Activity 1 — Nonprofit Visit (35 min)

Nonprofit Visit — scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/nonprofit-visit/

Let the host talk, then work the question cards. Have the denner ask the first mandatory question so the den sees a Scout starting it rather than you.

Listen for the funding answer specifically, because it is the one hosts gloss over and the one third graders find most surprising. Donations, grants, memberships, a thrift shop, a fundraiser they have all been to. Ask a follow-up if the answer is vague: where did the money for this building come from?

The volunteer answer is the one that changes behavior. Ask how many hours volunteers give, what jobs only volunteers do, and whether a family could help. Some of your families will follow up, and that is the point of the requirement.

Keep an eye on the clock and the Scouts. If the room is losing them, ask the host to move to the tour.

Activity 2 — The tour (10 min)

Take the tour if it is offered. Warehouse, kennels, kitchen, sorting room — whatever they have.

Buddies stay together, everyone stays with the group, and the host sets the rules about what can be touched.

Ask one question while you walk: what happens in this room when we are not here?

Activity 3 — Thank the host (5 min)

A Scout thanks the host out loud, by name, in front of everyone. The den signs the card before you get back in the cars.

Write and send a thank you note this week. If the visit went well, tell your committee — that organization is now a candidate for next year's service project.

Send home with families

Ask your Scout what the organization does and where its money comes from. If they can explain the funding, they have requirement 3.

Talk about whether your family could volunteer there. Several of these organizations take families.

Meeting 3: The service project

Goal: The den carries out a real service project together and the hours get logged.

Covers requirement 4

Before the meeting

- Read the instructions at militaryholidaycardchallenge.com/how-to-send/ before the meeting so you know the rules on names and card size.
- Make a sample card yourself. Third graders start faster when they can see one.

- Check the deadline. Cards for the current season need to reach the Scouting America National Service Center by early November — confirm the year's date before you commit the den to this one.
- Gather supplies in quantity. Scouts will make more cards than you expect once they get going.
- Clear the project with your committee first so the hours get logged and so it is not colliding with a pack-wide project.
- If the timing does not work for holiday cards, pick another and clear it the same way. All of these are real service: Eyeglasses Donation Drive — scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/eyeglasses-donation-drive/ · Plant Trees — scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/plant-trees/ · Scouting for Food Bear — scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/scouting-for-food-bear/

Supplies

- Construction paper, 8½" x 11", assorted colors
- White copy paper, 8½" x 11"
- Crayons and markers, enough to share
- Scissors, enough to share
- Decorative stickers
- A sample card
- Camera or smart device for photos
- A box and packing tape for mailing

Run of show

Time	What happens
5 min	Gathering: sample cards on the table
5 min	Opening: Pledge of Allegiance
10 min	Activity 1: why we are doing this, and the rules for the cards
35 min	Activity 2: make and decorate cards
5 min	Activity 3: count them, box them, address the package
5 min	Closing

Activity 1 — Why, and the rules (10 min)

10,000 for the Troops Bear — scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/10000-for-the-troops-bear/

Tell them plainly what this is: people in the military are sometimes away from home over the holidays, and these cards tell them somebody was thinking about them. That is enough. Do not oversell it.

Then the rules, because they are not optional and a card that breaks them cannot be sent:

- Address it “Dear Warrior.”

- Write a holiday or gratitude greeting. Our troops hold many different beliefs and celebrate different holidays, so keep the greeting welcoming to all of them.
- Write a personal note — how you celebrate the holidays, a family memory. The warriors say this is their favorite part of receiving a card.
- Sign your first name only, plus your town and state and your pack number. No last name, no address, no school.
- No bigger than an 8 x 11 sheet folded in half.

That first-name-only rule is a youth protection rule as much as a mailing rule. Say why, briefly, and check every card against it before it goes in the box.

Activity 2 — Make the cards (35 min)

Let them make as many as they want in the time. Some Scouts will make one careful card and some will make nine; both are fine and both are service.

Circulate and read what they are writing, kindly. You are checking two things: that the personal note is actually personal, and that nobody has written their last name or their address.

A Scout who freezes on what to write gets a prompt, not a script: what did you do last December? What food does your family make? What is the best present you ever gave somebody?

Photograph the den at work if you have photo permission on file. Those pictures are what the pack newsletter and the committee want.

Activity 3 — Count, box, address (5 min)

Count the cards out loud as a den and write the number on the board. Third graders should see the total they made together.

Box them and address the package with the den watching:

- 10,000 for the Troops · Scouting America · 1325 West Walnut Hill Lane · Irving, TX 75015-2079

Mail it this week, and confirm the current year's deadline before you post.

Log the service hours in Scoutbook the same night. It is two minutes and it counts on the pack's service record for the year.

Closing (5 min)

Say something like

Today you showed what it means to be a Bear who cares — learning our nation's symbols, finding out how the helpers in our community make a difference, and then taking action yourself. Keep showing respect, keep helping others, and keep finding small ways to make your community stronger. That is how Bears lead with pride and purpose.

Thanks are due to the Holiday Cards 4 Our Military Challenge at militaryholidaycardchallenge.com and to Boots for Troops at boots4troops.org, who make this project possible.

Send home with families

Ask your Scout what they wrote in their card and who they think will read it.

If your family wants to do more, the nonprofit you visited almost certainly takes family volunteers.

Leader notes

- Stay neutral on politics. This adventure is about the flag, the symbols, and service — not about parties or candidates. If a Scout brings politics into the room, redirect to what the symbol means rather than shutting the Scout down.
- The flag guest is the easiest yes in Scouting. VFW and American Legion posts have people who do flag education as a matter of course and will usually bring their own flags.
- Requirement 1 says demonstrating. A Scout who watched somebody else fold the flag has not completed it.
- The service project can be shared with the pack, but each Scout must actually participate.
- Log the service hours in Scoutbook. Packs lose credit for service they actually did, every single year, for no reason other than nobody typed it in.

Safety

Before this adventure

Two registered adults with current Safeguarding Youth Training at every meeting and on the visit. A guest speaker or host who is not a registered leader is never alone with Scouts. If your den includes girls, one of those adults must be a registered female 21 or over.

Health forms for every participant, youth and adult, for the off-site visit, reviewed for anything affecting participation. Check your council for activity notification requirements before you go.

Follow the SAFE Checklist for any service project site — gloves, closed shoes, no sharps, and no roadside work without high-visibility vests and adult spotters.

Scissors and craft knives: adult supervision, blunt scissors for third graders, and no throwing.

Photo permission on file before posting pictures of Scouts, and first names only on anything that leaves the room.

Tracking

Write each Scout in and tick the requirement number as it is completed. Report to your advancement chair once the row is full.

Scout	1	2	3	4

Scout	1	2	3	4