The Arrow of Light Den Leader

Cub Pack Program Guide | 5th grade • 10–11 years old

A guide to best practices, not policy. Meant to be adapted to your pack and your council. Where anything here differs from current Scouting America policy, your council's guidance, or the Scout's handbook, those govern.

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IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE

Your den is 5th grade, 10–11 years old. Meetings run about 75–90 minutes.

Six required adventures earn the rank, plus two electives of your den's choosing. They are already scheduled on the pack calendar — you do not have to design the year.

The adventure plans are written out meeting by meeting. Read next week's plan on the weekend, gather the supplies, and show up. That is the job.

Two registered adults at every meeting, and a registered female adult 21 or over any time girls are present. Every time, no exceptions.

1. Who you are working with

These Scouts are finishing Cub Scouting. They are capable of planning and running their own meetings, and they should be. The Arrow of Light is the highest rank in Cub Scouting, and the only one that can still be worn on a Scouts BSA uniform.

CROSSOVER IS THE WHOLE YEAR, NOT ONE NIGHT

Work backward from the crossover date. Every required adventure has to be complete and recorded before it, and February arrives sooner than it looks.

Visit at least two troops so the Scouts and their families have a real choice. Invite Scoutmasters to a den meeting. Camp with a troop in the fall.

Then make the ceremony itself worth remembering. It is the last thing these Scouts will remember about Cub Scouting, and the first thing they will remember about their troop.

2. The six required adventures

Every rank in Cub Scouting has six required adventures covering the same six themes. That is why the whole pack can work the same theme in the same month, and why the pack meeting ties the dens together. For Arrow of Light, they are:

Adventure	Theme	What it covers
Bobcat	Character and Leadership	The Scout Oath, Scout Law, sign, salute, handshake, and motto.
Outdoor Adventurer	Outdoors	Camping, outdoor skills, and taking care of yourself outside.
Citizenship	Citizenship	Rights and duties of a citizen, the flag, and meaningful service.
Duty to God	Family and Reverence	Reverence and what duty to God means to this Scout and family.
First Aid	Personal Safety	Real first aid skills, practiced and demonstrated.
Personal Fitness	Personal Fitness	A fitness plan, carried out and measured over time.

- Six required adventures plus at least two electives earn the badge of rank.

- The two electives are your den's pick, not the pack's. The full elective list for every rank is at scouting.org/program-updates/cub-scout-elective-adventures. Archery, BB gun and slingshot are special electives — they can only be earned at a council or district program with certified range staff.
- Bobcat comes first. Every Scout at every rank earns it, and it is the same core: Oath, Law, sign, salute, handshake, motto.
- A Scout earns the rank for their current grade. They do not need the previous rank to earn the next one.
- You approve the requirements as the den leader. There is no test and no minimum standard of skill — the Scout does their best and participates.
- Always check the current requirements in the Scout's handbook. Requirements are revised from time to time and the handbook is the authority.

3. Your year at a glance

Straight from the pack calendar. Print this page and put it on the refrigerator.

Date	What	Focus
Aug 31, 2026	Back to the Pack	Recruiting night. Stand with a sign and collect names.
Sep 7, 2026	Labor Day	No Meeting
Sep 14, 2026	Den meeting	Bobcat — one meeting, and start your Personal Fitness plan
Sep 21, 2026	Den meeting	Outdoor Adventurer — meeting 1 of 2
Sep 28, 2026	Pack meeting	Theme: Character and Leadership. Tell parents now that summer camp next year is a troop week, and it books early.
Oct 5, 2026	Parent and leader meeting	Bring your den report and supply needs. Summer camp: pick the troop now. Troop camp weeks are chosen and paid for months earlier than Cub camp.
Oct 12, 2026	Den meeting	Outdoor Adventurer — meeting 2 of 2
Oct 19, 2026	Den meeting	Citizenship — meeting 1 of 2
Oct 26, 2026	Pack meeting	Theme: Outdoors
Nov 2, 2026	Parent and leader meeting	Bring your den report and supply needs. Summer camp: ask the Scoutmaster which week the troop goes, and what it costs.
Nov 9, 2026	Den meeting	Citizenship — meeting 2 of 2
Nov 16, 2026	Den meeting	Duty to God — meeting 1 of 2
Nov 23, 2026	Thanksgiving Week	No Meeting
Nov 30, 2026	Pack meeting	Theme: Citizenship
Dec 7, 2026	Parent and leader meeting	Bring your den report and supply needs. Summer camp: get your families onto the troop's camp roster before crossover, not after.
Dec 14, 2026	Den meeting	Duty to God — meeting 2 of 2
Dec 21, 2026	Pack meeting	Theme: Family and Reverence

Date	What	Focus
Dec 28, 2026	Winter Break	No Meeting
Jan 4, 2027	Winter Break	No Meeting
Jan 11, 2027	Den meeting	First Aid — meeting 1 of 2
Jan 18, 2027	Pack meeting	Theme: Pinewood Derby
Jan 25, 2027	Parent and leader meeting	Bring your den report and supply needs. Troop summer camp registration is open or closing. Every crossing Scout should be on that roster.
Feb 1, 2027	Den meeting	First Aid — meeting 2 of 2
Feb 8, 2027	Den meeting	Personal Fitness — finish it, and record everything. Last den meeting before crossover.
Feb 15, 2027	Pack meeting	Blue and Gold — Arrow of Light crossover. Your den's last night as Cub Scouts.
Feb 22, 2027	Parent and leader meeting	Bring your den report and supply needs. After crossover, camp belongs to the troop — confirm every Scout is signed up for it.
Mar 1, 2027	Den meeting	Crossed over — no den meeting. Go to a troop meeting with your Scouts instead.
Mar 8, 2027	Den meeting	Crossed over — follow up with any Scout who has not landed in a troop.
Mar 15, 2027	Spring Break	No Meeting
Mar 22, 2027	Pack meeting	Theme: Personal Fitness
Mar 29, 2027	Parent and leader meeting	Bring your den report and supply needs. Follow up with any crossed-over Scout who is not registered for the troop's camp week.
Apr 5, 2027	Den meeting	Reserve. Use these only if your den fell behind and crossover slipped.
Apr 12, 2027	Den meeting	Reserve. Use these only if your den fell behind and crossover slipped.
Apr 19, 2027	Pack meeting	Theme: Elective
Apr 26, 2027	Parent and leader meeting	Bring your den report and supply needs.
May 3, 2027	Summer event	End-of-year pack celebration.
Jun 7, 2027	Summer camp season	Scouts BSA camp — go with the troop your den is crossing into. It is the best recruiting week a troop has.
Jul 5, 2027	Summer camp season	Troop camp weeks run into July too. Whichever week the troop goes, your Scouts go with them.
Aug 16, 2027	Parent and leader meeting	Bring your den report and supply needs.
Aug 30, 2027	Back to the Pack	Next year's recruiting night. Your den moves up a rank.

Arrow of Light ends at Blue and Gold. Every required adventure has to be complete and recorded before the crossover ceremony on February 15, so all ten den meetings from September to February go to the six required adventures — Bobcat shares its night with the launch of the Personal Fitness plan, which then runs in the background until February 8. After crossover the March and April dates are not den meetings any more; your Scouts belong to a troop. Keep them only as catch-up if the den falls behind.

Your two electives have to be done before crossover as well, and this calendar has no den meeting left to spend on them. That is what summer camp is for: a den that went to Arrow of Light Camp in June or July may already have Engineer, Swimming, Into the Woods and Knife Safety. If your den did not go, pick two electives families can finish at home in the fall from the official list at scouting.org/program-updates/cub-scout-elective-adventures, and check them off as you go — do not leave them until February. Arrow of Light is the only badge of rank presented at Blue and Gold; the other dens receive theirs at the April pack meeting, after their elective meetings.

SUMMER CAMP WITH A TROOP IS WHAT MAKES CROSSOVER STICK

Your Arrow of Light Scouts have aged out of Cub camp. Somewhere in June or July they should be at a Scouts BSA troop's summer camp, with the troop they are crossing into.

This is not about advancement. A week at camp with a troop is the single strongest predictor that a crossed-over Scout is still registered a year later. Pick the troop in the fall, camp with them in the spring, and go to their summer camp in June or July.

Nothing here is advancement you record. It is the relationship that keeps a crossed-over Scout registered.
Talk to the Scoutmaster in September. Troop camp registration closes months before Cub camp does.
Troop camp registration opens and closes months before Cub camp does, so this is a September and October conversation with the Scoutmaster — not a spring one. A Scout who crosses over in February and has no camp week booked is the Scout who quietly disappears by fall.

4. How a den meeting runs

Every adventure plan you are given follows this shape. Once your den knows the shape, the meetings run themselves and you only have to prepare the middle part.

Part	Minutes	What happens
Before the meeting	15 before	Read the plan. Lay out supplies on the tables. Write the closing reminder on a board where parents will see it.
Gathering activity	As they arrive	Something on the table the moment the first Scout walks in. Nobody ever sits and waits. This single habit prevents most discipline problems.
Opening	5	Pledge of Allegiance, Scout Oath, Scout Law. Roll call and announcements. A Scout leads it, not you.
Adventure	30–35	The requirements for the month, done as activities. This is the meeting.
Homework	2	What gets done at home before next time. Say it, and send it in writing the same night.
Next meeting and reminders	2	Date, time, place, and what to bring. Say it out loud while the parents are in the room.

Part	Minutes	What happens
Closing thought	2	One short thought tying the night to a point of the Scout Law. End on the Scout sign, not on shouting.
After the meeting	10	Record attendance and advancement while it is fresh. Plan next week with your assistant.

> **RECORD ADVANCEMENT THE SAME NIGHT**
>
> The most common failure in Cub Scouting is not a bad meeting. It is a good meeting that never got recorded, and a Scout who does not get their badge in February because nobody wrote it down in October.
>
> Ten minutes after every meeting, in the parking lot, on your phone. Then the advancement chair can order awards in time.

5. Getting started

- ❑ Complete Safeguarding Youth Training (SYT) at my.Scouting.org. Required before you register, and it expires every 12 months — put a reminder on your calendar now.
- ❑ Register as a den leader and be approved by the chartered organization.
- ❑ Complete Den Leader Position-Specific Training in the online Learn Center.
- ❑ Recruit a registered assistant den leader. Do this before the first meeting, not after you get sick in January.
- ❑ Get access to the pack's advancement system and confirm your den roster is right.
- ❑ Get the pack calendar and the adventure plans for the year from your Cubmaster.
- ❑ Collect contact information for every family, and set up one group text or email list.
- ❑ Confirm your meeting space, night, and time, and confirm it is on the pack calendar.
- ❑ Ask the committee how supplies are paid for and how you get reimbursed.

6. Your den supply kit

Keep this in one box and bring it every time. Individual adventures need their own supplies — those are listed in each adventure plan.

Always in the box	Get from the pack
U.S. flag and den flag	Scout handbooks for every Scout
Attendance and advancement sheet	Adventure plans for the year
First aid kit	Pack calendar, printed
Pencils, markers, scissors, tape, glue	Den supply budget or a way to get reimbursed
Construction paper and plain paper	Access to advancement records
Name tags for the first month	Awards ordered by the advancement chair
A ball or a beanbag for the two spare minutes	Family contact list
Emergency contact list for the den	Consent forms for outings

7. Making it easier on yourself

- The Scouts run the meetings. You advise. If you are still leading in January, hand it over.
- Camp with a troop at least once. This is the strongest predictor of crossing over.
- Teach the Scouts BSA skills they will need on day one: knots, first aid, cooking, the patrol method.
- Arrow of Light requirements include visiting a troop and meeting with a Scoutmaster — do it early, not as a checkbox in February.
- Watch the calendar. Everything must be finished before crossover, and crossover comes fast.
- Some of these Scouts will be Cub Scouts for eight more weeks. Make the eight weeks count.
- Winning is a Scout who cannot wait for the troop and a leader who is not dreading the empty Tuesday. They cross over in February already talking about the troop's summer camp, and you walk out of that ceremony proud rather than sad, because you know where every one of them landed.

THE THREE HABITS THAT SEPARATE A DEN THAT LASTS FROM ONE THAT DOES NOT

1. Read next week's plan on the weekend, not in the car. Fifteen minutes on Sunday saves you an hour of improvising.
2. Send one message a week to families: what we did, what is next, what to bring. Same day, same channel, every week.
3. Never do the job alone. An assistant den leader and two committed parents is the difference between finishing the year and quitting in February.

8. Working with families

- Parents mostly drop off at this rank. Ask two or three by name to stay as regular helpers, for the year, with a specific job.
- Two registered adults, 21 or over, at every activity, and a registered female adult 21 or over any time girls are present. No one-on-one contact with a youth, in person or by message. Parents may observe any meeting at any time.
- Send the same weekly message on the same day. Families that know what is coming show up.
- Some requirements are meant to be done at home with a family. Assign them clearly and follow up once — do not assume silence means done.
- When a Scout stops coming, call the family. Not a text. Most of them come back if somebody notices they were gone.
- Be honest about cost and about camp early in the year, and quietly point families toward the pack's help if they need it.

9. When things go wrong

The problem	What to do
The meeting is chaos	You skipped the gathering activity, or an activity ran too long. Something on the table when they walk in, and change activities before they lose interest.
One Scout will not participate	Give them a job instead of a correction. Passing out supplies, holding the flag, being the timekeeper. Participation almost always follows responsibility.
A Scout is disruptive every week	Talk to the parent privately, early, and about the specific behavior rather than the child. Ask what works at home. Most of the time they will tell you.

The problem	What to do
Attendance is falling	Check two things: are meetings running long, and do families know the date of the next two? Fix those before anything else.
You are behind on adventures	Do not panic and do not double up. Combine a requirement into a pack event or an outing, and tell the advancement chair where you are.
You cannot make a meeting	Your assistant den leader runs it from the same printed plan. If you do not have one, that is this week's job.
You are burning out	Say so out loud at the leaders' meeting before you quit. Almost always the fix is one more adult, and nobody knew you needed one.
Home requirements are not getting done	Do them in the meeting instead. A requirement done at the den meeting counts the same as one done at home.

10. Your den, on one page

	Name	Phone / email
Den leader (you)		
Assistant den leader		
Parent helper		
Parent helper		
Cubmaster		
Committee chair		
Advancement chair		

Den meeting night and time: _____ Location: _____

Pack number: _____ Council / district: _____

Scouts in my den:

Scout	Family contact	Bobcat	Rank earned