The Cubmaster

Cub Pack Program Guide | Run the room, protect the leaders, keep it fun

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

You run the pack meeting. That is the job. Everything else is somebody else's.

The pack meets four times a month: two den meetings, one pack meeting, one parent and leader meeting. Your name is on the third one.

Your goal at every pack meeting is simple — every Cub Scout is called by name, something gets celebrated, and everybody leaves louder than they came in.

If you are spending your evenings on money, forms, or the renewals, something has gone wrong. Hand it to the committee chair.

1. What the Cubmaster actually does

The Cubmaster is the face of the program to the kids and the families. You are the master of ceremonies, the keeper of the energy, and the person who makes a seven-year-old feel like joining this thing was the best decision of their life.

Yours

- Plan and run the monthly pack meeting.
- Lead the opening and closing ceremonies, and present awards in front of everyone.
- Support the den leaders — check in monthly, make sure they have what they need, and shield them from administrative noise.
- Set the tone: uniform worn correctly, Scout Oath and Law used out loud, adults treated like teammates.
- Represent the pack at roundtable and district events, and bring the good ideas home.
- Work with the committee chair as a partner. Program is yours; business is theirs.

Not yours

- Money, dues, budgets, and reimbursements — the treasurer.
- Renewals, applications, and rosters — the committee chair and secretary.
- Fundraising logistics — the fundraising chair.
- Day camp and outing paperwork — the outdoor or activities chair.
- Advancement record entry — the advancement chair.

If those jobs are unfilled, the answer is to recruit somebody, not to absorb them. A Cubmaster doing five jobs quits in March. **Say so out loud at the next committee meeting.**

2. Your first 30 days

In order. Do not skip the first three.

- ❑ Complete Safeguarding Youth Training (SYT) at my.Scouting.org. Required before you register, and it expires every 12 months.
- ❑ Register as an adult leader with the pack and submit your application to the chartered organization.
- ❑ Complete Cubmaster Position-Specific Training in the online Learn Center. It is about an hour and it is worth it.
- ❑ Get access to the pack's advancement system (Scoutbook or your council's equivalent) and to the pack calendar.
- ❑ Sit down with the committee chair for one hour. Agree on who owns what, and how you will handle disagreements.

- ❑ Call every den leader. Ask two questions: what do you need, and what is getting in your way?
- ❑ Read the Guide to Safe Scouting sections on Cub Scouting — or at minimum, the age-appropriate activity chart.
- ❑ Attend one district roundtable. You will steal at least one usable idea.
- ❑ Walk the meeting space. Know where the flags, the sound, the light switches, and the bathrooms are.

3. The pack's rhythm

This pack runs on a four-week cycle. Once families learn it, attendance takes care of itself.

Week	What happens	Who runs it	Your job
Week 1	Den meeting	Den leaders	Nothing. Stay out of it.
Week 2	Den meeting	Den leaders	Confirm next week's pack meeting plan with the den leaders.
Week 3	Pack meeting	Cubmaster	You run the room. Section 5 is the format; section 6 has the plan for that month.
Week 4	Parent and leader meeting	Committee chair	Give a 5-minute program report. Then listen.

> **THE ONE RULE THAT KEEPS PACKS ALIVE**
>
> Every family should leave every meeting knowing the date, time, place, and one-sentence purpose of the next two things on the calendar. Say it out loud at the closing. Put it in the email. Put it on the whiteboard.

4. The program year at a glance

Dates below follow the pack calendar. Adjust for your own school district, but keep the shape.

When	Pack meeting / event	Theme	What the Cubmaster is doing
Aug 31	Back to the Pack	Sign Up for Scouting	Welcome new families. Have den leaders standing with signs. Give every new family a calendar.
Sep 28	Pack meeting	Character and Leadership	First pack meeting of the year. Keep it short and loud. Bobcat is in progress in every den.
Oct 26	Pack meeting	Outdoors	Push the fall campout or hike. Recognize first Bobcats.
Nov 30	Pack meeting	Citizenship	Flag ceremony done properly. Service project announcement.
Dec 21	Pack meeting	Family and Reverence	Family-heavy meeting. Invite grandparents. Keep it to 45 minutes.
Jan 18	Pack meeting	Pinewood Derby	The biggest night of the year. Full playbook in section 11.

When	Pack meeting / event	Theme	What the Cubmaster is doing
Feb 15	Pack meeting	Personal Safety	Blue and Gold banquet with the Arrow of Light crossover the same night. Plan it in December. Lion through Webelos badges of rank come in April.
Mar 22	Pack meeting	Personal Fitness	Every den finishes its last required adventure on March 8 — recognize it. Start summer camp promotion.
Apr 19	Pack meeting	Elective / pack choice	Badges of rank presented — the elective meetings finish April 12. Check a week ahead who is short an adventure.
May 3	Summer event	—	Hand off the year. Celebrate every rank earned.
May 17	Annual planning meeting	—	Build next year's calendar with the committee. Non-negotiable.
June–July	Day camp / resident camp	—	Get bodies to camp. Camp attendance is the single best predictor of who comes back.
Aug 16	Parent meeting	—	Leaders in place, calendar printed, ready for recruiting night.

5. Running the pack meeting

A pack meeting is a variety show, not a business meeting. Sixty minutes, hard stop. If it runs long, families stop coming, and no amount of good content fixes that.

Time	Segment	What it looks like
−20 min	Gathering activity	A simple activity on the tables as families arrive. Kids never sit and wait. Assign this to a den on rotation.
0:00	Opening ceremony	Flag ceremony run by a den, Pledge, Scout Oath and Law. Different den each month — put it on the calendar in August.
0:05	Welcome and introductions	Cubmaster. Name every new family out loud. Thirty seconds of announcements, no more.
0:08	Den demonstrations	Two or three dens show what they did this month. Two minutes each. This is the heart of the meeting.
0:20	Main activity or theme event	The month's theme, run as a game, skit, competition, or guest. Everyone participates.
0:40	Advancement and recognition	Awards presented by name, Scout and parent together in front of the pack. Applaud every one.
0:52	Announcements that matter	The next two dates only. Written on a board behind you.
0:55	Cubmaster's minute and closing	Sixty seconds of something true. Then a closing ceremony and out the door.

Things that make a pack meeting good

- Start on time even if half the pack is missing. They will learn.

- Kids run as much of it as possible. Adults on stage should be rare.
- Every Cub Scout hears their own name at least once.
- No adult speaks for more than three minutes. Not you, not the treasurer, not the popcorn chair.
- Announcements go in email; the meeting is for celebration.
- End with energy, not logistics.

The Cubmaster's Minute

Sixty seconds at the end where you say one true thing. It is the part kids remember. Keep a running list on your phone; you need eight or nine a year. A good one names something you actually saw that night — a Scout who helped clean up, a den that stuck with a hard activity — and connects it to one point of the Scout Law.

6. Eight pack meetings, planned

One plan per month, matched to the theme on your pack calendar. Everything below has been run by real packs and needs nothing you cannot buy at a grocery store. Adapt freely — but do not show up without a plan.

September — Character and Leadership

First pack meeting of the year. Every den is working Bobcat right now, so the whole room is learning the same words. Use that. Keep it to 50 minutes — you are teaching families what a pack meeting is.

Segment	What you do	What you need
Gathering (as they arrive)	Scout Law Match. Twelve index cards with the points of the Scout Law, twelve with a plain-language meaning ("Tells the truth"). Kids match them on the floor. New siblings can play too.	24 index cards, marker
Opening	Oldest den presents colors. Pledge of Allegiance, then the whole room says the Scout Oath and Scout Law together — hold up a poster so parents can read along.	Flags, Oath/Law poster
Welcome	Name every new family out loud and have them stand. Point out the den leaders by name and grade. Ninety seconds.	Roster of new families
Den demos	Two dens show one thing from Bobcat — the Scout sign, the handshake, or the salute. Two minutes each.	None
Main activity	THE OATH RELAY. Write the Scout Oath on card stock and cut it into phrases, one set per den. Sets are scrambled at one end of the room, dens at the other. On "go," one Scout at a time runs down, grabs a phrase, brings it back. Den assembles the Oath in order. Then everybody says it together.	Card stock, marker, scissors, one set per den
Second activity (if time)	HUMAN KNOT, by den. Everyone grabs two different hands across the circle, then untangles without letting go. Talk for thirty seconds afterward about what made it work.	Nothing
Recognition	Any Bobcats already earned. Parent pins the badge on upside down; it gets turned right side up	Badges, safety pins

Segment	What you do	What you need
	when the Scout does a good turn at home.	
Announcements	The next two dates only. Written on a whiteboard behind you.	Whiteboard
Closing	Cubmaster's Minute, then the Living Circle. See the ceremony scripts.	None

> **NEW-FAMILY NIGHT**
> Roughly a third of the room has never been to a pack meeting. Say what is about to happen before it happens ("we are going to open with a flag ceremony — please stand and remove hats"). Nobody feels stupid, and they come back.

October — Outdoors

The month to sell camping. If your pack does a fall campout, this meeting is the pitch, and sign-ups happen at a table by the door before anybody leaves.

Segment	What you do	What you need
Gathering	PACK THE PACK. Dump 25 items on a table — some belong in the Cub Scout Six Essentials, some do not (a video game, a glass jar, a full-size pillow). Kids pack a daypack with what they would actually take.	Daypack, camping items, junk items
Opening	Outdoor-themed flag ceremony. Add the Outdoor Code read by a Webelos or Arrow of Light Scout.	Flags, Outdoor Code card
Den demos	A den that hiked this month shows photos and tells one thing that surprised them.	Photos on a laptop or printed
Main activity	CAMP STATIONS. Four stations, dens rotate every eight minutes, an adult runs each one: 1. Tent race — pitch a two-person tent, timed. 2. Square knot — teach it, everyone ties one, keep the rope. 3. Leave No Trace sort — cards showing behaviors, sort into "leave it better" and "not okay." 4. Trail signs and what to do if you are lost — STOP: Stay put, Think, Observe, Plan. Practice the hug-a-tree rule.	Tent, 30 short ropes, LNT cards, whistle for each Scout
Recognition	Bobcats and any adventure loops earned.	Awards
The pitch	Two minutes on the fall campout: date, place, cost, what to bring, who to ask. Sign-up table by the exit with a pen and a clipboard. Do not let families leave without walking past it.	Clipboard, sign-up sheet, flyer
Closing	Campfire-style. Sing one song, then the Living Circle.	None

CAMPING SELLS ITSELF IF YOU MAKE SIGNING UP EASY

Families do not skip campouts because they hate camping. They skip because they do not own gear and are embarrassed to say so. Announce out loud that the pack has loaner tents and sleeping bags, and that somebody will help them set up. Attendance jumps.

November — Citizenship

Veterans Day is this month. This is the meeting where you invite somebody from the community and where the pack starts a service project.

Segment	What you do	What you need
Gathering	FLAG FOLDING TABLE. An older Scout or a veteran teaches the triangle fold. Kids line up in pairs and try it.	One or two flags
Opening	Full ceremonial flag ceremony, done slowly and correctly. Practice with the den beforehand — this is the month to do it right.	Flags
Guest	A veteran, a police officer, a firefighter, or a city council member. Give them exactly five minutes and tell them the audience is five to eleven years old. Prepare three questions in advance so the silence does not happen.	Confirmed guest, three question cards
Main activity	SERVICE PROJECT KICKOFF. Announce a food drive or a card drive for a veterans home. Kids decorate collection boxes by den right there, and each den takes one home. Collect at the December meeting.	Cardboard boxes, markers, construction paper, glue
Second activity	FLAG ETIQUETTE RELAY. True/false statements about flag handling posted on two walls (“the flag may touch the ground” — false). Call one out, Scouts run to the wall they believe.	Printed signs, list of statements
Recognition	Awards. Recognize any Scout who did a good turn at home this month, by name.	Awards
Closing	Ask everyone to name one person who serves the community. Go around fast. Then the Living Circle.	None

BOOKING THE GUEST

Ask in September, confirm in October, call the day before. Send them one sentence about the audience and what you want them to talk about. A guest who is not briefed will talk for twenty minutes about budgets.

December — Family and Reverence

Short, warm, family-heavy. Invite grandparents. Forty-five minutes maximum — everyone has somewhere else to be in December.

Segment	What you do	What you need
Gathering	TRADITION WALL. Butcher paper on the wall. Each Scout draws or writes one family tradition. Read a few aloud later.	Butcher paper, markers, tape
Opening	Simple flag ceremony, then a moment of silence or a non-denominational reflection. Keep it inclusive — packs contain many faiths and some families of none.	Flags
Main activity	SERVICE DELIVERY. Collect the boxes from November. Count the cans out loud as a pack — kids love the number. If you are delivering, take a photo to show in January.	Collection boxes, a scale or a counter
Second activity	CARDS FOR SERVICE MEMBERS or a senior center. Every Scout makes one card at the table. Ten minutes, no fuss.	Blank cards, markers, stickers
Recognition	Awards, plus recognize the adults. Name every den leader and hand them something small. December is when volunteers wonder if anybody noticed.	Awards, small gifts for leaders
Closing	A song everyone knows. Then the Living Circle with the lights down.	None

> **RECOGNIZE THE ADULTS IN DECEMBER**
>
> Volunteer resignations cluster in January. A December thank-you in front of the whole pack, by name, is the cheapest retention tool you have.

January — Pinewood Derby

The biggest night of the year and the one most likely to go wrong. Full playbook in section 12 — this is the meeting-night run sheet only.

Segment	What you do	What you need
Before	Track set up and test-run at least 90 minutes early. Weigh-in and impound open one hour before. Once a car is impounded, nobody touches it but the pit crew.	Track, scale, impound table, pit box
Gathering	Coloring sheets and a craft table for siblings, away from the track. Bored siblings cause most of the chaos at a derby.	Coloring sheets, crayons
Opening	Short. Pledge, Scout Oath, and the rules read aloud in sixty seconds so nobody can claim they did not know.	Flags, printed rules
Racing	Every car races in every lane if your software allows it. Announce every Scout by name as their car runs. Keep the standings on a screen or a big board.	Timer, laptop, projector or board

Segment	What you do	What you need
Between heats	Design judging by the Scouts themselves — everyone gets three stickers to vote with. Keeps the room busy during the slow parts.	Stickers, ballot table
Recognition	Speed awards AND design awards — most creative, best paint, funniest, most patriotic, best use of a theme. Aim for more than half the Scouts going home with something.	Trophies, ribbons, certificates
Closing	Thank the derby chair and the pit crew by name in front of everyone.	None

> **THE TWO THINGS THAT RUIN A DERBY**
>
> A family that never got a kit, and a rule applied unevenly. Both are preventable: hand kits out in early December with the rules stapled to them, hold a build workshop for families without tools, and put one person in charge of the scale whose word is final.

February — Personal Safety • Blue and Gold

Scouting's birthday month. The Blue and Gold banquet is the February pack meeting, and the Arrow of Light den crosses over to a troop the same night — one event, not two. Program under 45 minutes even if dinner runs long. Badges of rank for Lion through Webelos come in April — the elective den meetings do not finish until April 12 — so build this night around the crossover and the year behind you, not around badges nobody has earned yet.

Segment	What you do	What you need
Gathering	SAFE OR NOT SAFE. Cards showing situations — a stranger offering a ride, a friend's parent picking you up when your family did not say so, being home alone and answering the door. Kids sort them and talk about why.	Printed situation cards
Opening	Flag ceremony, then the birthday of Scouting — one sentence on the founding and how many Scouts have come through since.	Flags
Dinner	Committee runs it. You stay out of the kitchen and work the room, greeting families.	Committee's problem, not yours
Main activity	SAFETY STATIONS between courses, or after dinner: 1. Call 911 — practice on an unplugged phone, say your name and address out loud. 2. Buddy system tag — you are only safe when holding a buddy. 3. Shout, Run, Tell — practice the shout. Loudly. In a room full of parents. 4. Home safety scavenger hunt list to take home.	Old phone, printed lists, open space
Recognition	The big one. Rank badges presented with the parent, one at a time, with a sentence about what the rank took. This is the emotional center of the	All rank badges, parent pins

Segment	What you do	What you need
	year.	
Closing	Cake, the Scout Law said together, and the Living Circle.	Cake

> **BLUE AND GOLD IS A BANQUET, NOT A PACK MEETING WITH FOOD**
>
> Program under 45 minutes. Adults speak for three minutes maximum, including you. If the Arrow of Light presentation and the crossover take twenty minutes, that is the right use of the time — it is what the families came for.

March — Personal Fitness

Get them moving. This is the easiest meeting of the year to run and the one that needs the most floor space. It is also the first meeting after every den finishes its sixth and last required adventure on March 8 — say that out loud, and tell each family which two electives their Scout still needs before April.

Segment	What you do	What you need
Gathering	STRETCH STATION. An older Scout leads whoever has arrived through five stretches on a mat. Repeats every few minutes as more arrive.	Mats or open floor
Opening	Flag ceremony, then a pack-wide 60-second exercise — jumping jacks, then everyone sits down winded and laughing.	Flags
Main activity	PACK OLYMPICS. Six stations, dens rotate every six minutes, a parent runs each and records: 1. Standing long jump (tape measure on the floor) 2. Hula hoop, longest spin 3. Balance beam — a 2x4 flat on the floor, walk it heel to toe 4. Sit-ups in 30 seconds 5. Obstacle course — cones, a crawl under chairs, a jump 6. Bean bag toss for accuracy Everyone gets a card and records their own numbers. No overall winner.	Tape measure, hula hoops, 2x4, mats, cones, bean bags, score cards
Finish	TUG OF WAR. Dens against dens, then all the kids against all the adults. The adults lose. Always.	Heavy rope, open space
Snack	A healthy snack table — fruit, water. Talk for thirty seconds about what fuel does.	Fruit, water
Recognition	Awards. Any Scout who set and hit a fitness goal this month gets named.	Awards
Closing	Living Circle. Announce summer camp — dates, cost, deposit deadline.	Camp flyer

THIS IS YOUR SUMMER CAMP MEETING

Camp attendance is the strongest predictor of who comes back next year. Announce it in March with a deposit deadline, have a table at the door, and tell families about camperships out loud so nobody has to ask.

April — Pack choice • pick one

A free month for the program and the night the badges of rank are presented — the two elective den meetings finish April 12. Pick one of these and run it well rather than trying to do several, and budget twenty minutes for advancement.

Segment	What you do	What you need
Raingutter Regatta	Two ten-foot vinyl rain gutters on sawhorses, lined and filled with water. Scouts build small sailboats from kits and propel them by blowing through a straw — no hands. Cheap, loud, and hilarious.	Two gutters, sawhorses, plastic liner, boat kits, straws, towels
Space Derby	Rubber-band-powered rockets on a wire. Build night two weeks before, race night at the pack meeting. More build effort than the regatta.	Space derby kits, wire, hooks
Bike rodeo	Helmet fit check, a safety course with cones, hand signals, and a slow race (last to cross without a foot down wins). Invite a police officer.	Cones, chalk, helmets, an officer
STEM night	Four stations: baking-soda rockets, straw bridges holding weight, circuit blocks, and a paper airplane distance contest. Recruit a parent engineer to run one.	Varies by station
Nature night	A nature hike at a park with a scavenger hunt list, plus a naturalist from the park district. Move the meeting outdoors.	Hunt lists, park reservation
Talent show	Every den performs one skit or song. Give them the assignment a month out. Cheap, and families film it.	Sound system, a stage area

WHATEVER YOU PICK, PLAN IT IN FEBRUARY

A pack choice night decided in early April becomes a movie night. Choose at the February leaders' meeting, assign a chair, and put it in the newsletter.

7. Ceremony scripts

Say these out loud once before you use them. They are written to be read from a card in your hand — nobody expects you to memorize anything.

Opening flag ceremony

Runs about three minutes. A different den each month; put the rotation on the calendar in August so no den is surprised.

[Color guard forms at the back of the room with the U.S. flag and the pack flag.]

Cubmaster: *Will the color guard please advance the colors.*

[Color guard walks forward slowly and posts the flags in their stands.]

Color guard leader: *Please rise. Scouts, salute. Audience, place your right hand over your heart. Please join us in the Pledge of Allegiance.*

[Everyone says the Pledge. Then:]

Color guard leader: *Two. [everyone drops the salute] Please join us in the Scout Oath and the Scout Law.*

[Everyone says the Oath and Law. Color guard returns to their seats. Cubmaster takes over.]

Bobcat ceremony

Two minutes per Scout. Bobcat is the first badge every Cub Scout earns, at every rank.

Cubmaster: *Tonight we recognize Scouts who have earned the Bobcat badge. Bobcat means you have learned the Scout Oath, the Scout Law, the Cub Scout sign, salute, handshake, and motto. It means you know what a Scout is. Will [name] and their family please come forward.*

[Scout and parent come to the front. Hand the badge to the parent.]

Cubmaster: *[Name], the Scout Oath begins "On my honor, I will do my best." That is all we ask of you. [Parent], will you pin the Bobcat badge on upside down?*

[Parent pins the badge upside down on the uniform pocket.]

Cubmaster: *It stays upside down until you do a good turn for someone at home. When you do, your family will turn it right side up. Congratulations, Bobcat. Pack — a Bobcat cheer!*

Rank advancement

The centerpiece of the April pack meeting, once the elective meetings are done and the badges are in hand. Arrow of Light is the exception — it is presented at Blue and Gold, immediately before crossover. Present any other rank the night it is earned rather than holding it. Name the rank and say what it took.

Cubmaster: *Earning a badge of rank takes six required adventures and at least two more the Scout chose. It takes a year of showing up. Will the [Wolf] den and their families please come forward.*

[Line the Scouts up with a parent behind each one. Hand each badge to the parent.]

Cubmaster: *[Name] — you hiked, you learned to be safe in a group, you served your community, and you did your best. Your family will now present your [Wolf] badge.*

[Parents present the badges together. Applause. Then a den cheer for the whole den.]

Birthday recognition

Cubmaster: *We have birthdays this month. When I call your name, come stand with me. [Names.] Pack, on three, the biggest "Happy Birthday" this room has ever heard. One, two, three —*

Closing: the Living Circle

The standard Cub Scout closing. Works every month and takes ninety seconds.

Cubmaster: *Will everyone please form a circle. Left hand out in front of you, palm down. Right arm over your left, palm down, and take the hands of the Scouts on either side of you.*

[Everyone crosses arms and joins hands, forming a woven circle.]

Cubmaster: *This circle has no beginning and no end, like the friendship of this pack. Let us say the Scout Law together.*

[Everyone says the Scout Law. Then the Cubmaster gently squeezes the hand of the Scout on their left, and the squeeze passes around the circle.]

Cubmaster: *Pass the friendship squeeze. When it comes back to me, we are done. Goodnight, Pack [number]. See you [date].*

Arrow of Light and crossover

The most important ceremony of the year. Rehearse it. Invite the troop and have the Scoutmaster present. Budget fifteen to twenty minutes.

[Lights low. Arrow of Light Scouts line up at one end. A physical bridge, or two lines of rope on the floor, separates the Cub Scout side from the troop side. Troop Scouts stand on the far side in uniform.]

Cubmaster: *The Arrow of Light is the highest rank in Cub Scouting. It is the only Cub Scout badge that may still be worn on the uniform of a Scout in a troop. These Scouts have earned it.*

[Present the Arrow of Light badge to each Scout with a parent, one at a time. Say one specific thing about each Scout — not a generic line. Then:]

Cubmaster: *[Name], you came to this pack as a [Lion / Tiger]. You have learned to hike, to serve, to lead, and to do your best. Tonight your Cub Scouting is complete. Will you cross?*

[The Scout crosses the bridge. The den leader shakes their hand on the Cub side; the Scoutmaster meets them on the troop side and replaces the Cub Scout neckerchief with the troop neckerchief.]

Scoutmaster: *Welcome to Troop [number].*

[Repeat for each Scout. When all have crossed:]

Cubmaster: *Pack, these Scouts are no longer ours. They are Scouts now. Let us send them off the way they deserve.*

[Full pack cheer. Photos. Do not skip the photos — this is the picture the family keeps.]

THREE THINGS THAT MAKE A CROSSOVER WORK

Rehearse it once, with the Scouts, the week before. Ten minutes.

Say something specific about each Scout. “Marcus never once let a younger Scout carry a pack heavier than his own” beats “Marcus did a great job.”

The troop must actually be there. A crossover with no troop on the far side of the bridge is a goodbye, not a handoff.

8. Cheers, applauses, and the quiet sign

Every award, every announcement, every good thing gets a cheer. Learn six of these cold. Say the name of the cheer, demonstrate it once, then call it.

Cheer	How to do it
Great job	Everyone claps twice, points at the person, and shouts “Great job!”
Rocket	Crouch down, countdown from five, jump up with arms overhead going “whoooosh.”
Round of applause	Clap while moving your hands in a big circle in front of you.
Seal of approval	Clap with straight arms like a seal and bark three times.
Alligator	Arms straight out, one above the other, clap them together like jaws — three snaps.
Bobcat	Make claws with both hands, three swipes, and a “rrrow” each time.
Wolf	One long howl, everyone together. Best cheer in Cub Scouting.
Bear	Arms up, growl, and stomp three times.

Cheer	How to do it
Fireworks	Whistle rising with your hands going up, then “boom” and fingers spreading.
Cowboy	Slap your thigh, swing a lasso overhead, and shout “yee-haw!”
Two-dollar	Two claps, then everyone shouts “two dollars!” Nobody knows why. It works.
Silent cheer	Everyone waves both hands overhead saying nothing. Use it when the room is already too loud.

THE QUIET SIGN IS THE ONLY CROWD CONTROL YOU NEED

Raise your right hand with the Scout sign — two fingers up. Every Scout who sees it raises theirs and stops talking. Adults learn it by watching.

Never shout for quiet. Never count down. Raise the sign, wait, and say nothing. It takes about eight seconds the first few times and about three by October. If you shout over the room even once, the sign stops working.

9. Gathering activities

Something must be happening the moment the first family walks in. A gathering activity is the single cheapest fix for a chaotic pack meeting. Assign one den per month to run it.

Activity	What you need	How it works
Scout Law match	24 index cards	Match each point of the Scout Law to a plain-language meaning.
Pack the pack	Daypack, real and silly items	Kids choose what belongs in the Six Essentials.
Human bingo	Printed grids, pencils	“Find someone who has slept in a tent.” Signatures fill the grid. Great for new families.
Knot table	30 short ropes	An older Scout teaches one knot. Everyone keeps their rope.
Guess the jar	Jar of beans, slips of paper	Estimate the count. Winner announced at recognition time.
Photo wall	Printed photos, tape, butcher paper	Photos from the last month’s den meetings. Parents love it and it fills five minutes.
Card making	Blank cards, markers	For service members, a senior center, or a sick Scout.
Word scramble	Printed sheets	Scrambled Scouting words. Easy version for the little ones.
Beanbag toss	Beanbags, a bucket	Endlessly replayable. Costs nothing.
Draw the theme	Butcher paper, crayons	One giant mural on the theme of the month. Hang it up next time.
Sock line	Clothespins, string, mismatched socks	Match and hang the pairs. Absurd, and five-year-olds adore it.
Buddy tag	Open floor	Tag, but you must hold a buddy’s hand. Burns energy

Activity	What you need	How it works
		before you need them seated.

10. Ten Cubmaster's Minutes

Sixty seconds at the end of the meeting where you say one true thing. It is the part the Scouts remember. Ten written out below — use them, or use them as a shape for your own. The best ones name something you actually saw that night.

September

Tonight some of you said the Scout Oath for the first time. It starts with three words — "on my honor." That means when you say you will do something, people can stop worrying about whether it gets done. That is a big thing to be trusted with. You are eight. Start now.

October

Out on the trail, the person at the front sets the pace, but the person at the back decides how fast the group actually goes. A Scout looks back. If somebody is struggling, you slow down. That is what "help other people at all times" looks like when there is nobody watching.

November

We had a guest tonight who spends their working life taking care of people they have never met. Nobody made them do that. Somewhere along the way they decided that is who they were going to be. You get to decide that too, and you get to start deciding it now.

December

We counted the cans tonight and it was a big number. But the number is not the point. Somebody is going to eat a meal this month because a seven-year-old carried a can of green beans into this room. You will never meet them. Do it anyway. That is what a good turn is.

January

Some of you won tonight and some of you did not, and I want to tell you something about that. In about a week, nobody will remember who was fastest. What people will remember is who helped somebody carry their car up, and who shook a hand after losing. That is the part you control.

February

This is the month Scouting has its birthday, and tonight you watched Scouts you have known for years walk across a bridge and not come back. That is what this is for. Nobody crosses that bridge in a night. They got there on the Tuesday they did not feel like coming, and came. Every one of you is on that same walk.

March

Everybody in this room found something tonight they were not very good at. That is not a problem — that is the whole point. A Scout is Brave, and being brave mostly means being willing to be bad at something in front of other people while you learn it.

April

Tonight we handed out badges for a whole year of work, and not one of you earned it in a night — you earned it on the Tuesday you did not feel like coming, and came. Now look around at the people standing next to you. In September, some of you did not know each other. A Scout is Friendly, and friendly is not a feeling — it is a thing you do. You did both this year.

Any month — kindness

I want to name something I saw tonight. [Name] noticed somebody was left out and went and got them. Nobody asked. Nobody was watching. That is the Scout Law happening in real life, and it is worth more than anything I could say up here.

Any month — the year ahead

The Scout Oath does not say "I will be the best." It says "I will do my best." Those are completely different promises. One of them you can keep every single day, no matter who else is in the room. That is the one we ask you for.

11. The events that carry the year

Seven events carry the year. For each one: what it is, when to start, your job on the night, and the mistakes that actually happen.

Back to the Pack — late August

The fall recruiting night. Everything about the year's size is decided here.

When	What happens
May	Set the date at the annual planning meeting. Clear it with the school and the chartered organization.
July	Flyers to the schools, yard signs out, social media posts scheduled. Confirm the space.
2 weeks out	Every den leader confirmed and told exactly where to stand. Print calendars, applications, and a one-page "what Cub Scouting costs and what it includes."
Night before	Everything in boxes in your car. Signs made. Applications counted.
90 min before	Room set: a welcome table at the door, one table per grade with a sign a parent can read from across the room, an activity area in the middle.
The event	See the run of show below.
Within 48 hours	Every application submitted. Every new family gets a personal call from their den leader — not a group email.

Back to the Pack — run of show

Time	What	Detail
0:00	Doors open, activity running	Kids go straight to an activity — a beanbag toss, a craft, anything. Parents are not asked to sit yet. This is the single most important design choice of the night: a child having fun is the pitch.
0:20	Welcome	You, five minutes maximum. What Cub Scouting is, what a year looks like, what it costs, and how much time it takes of a parent. Be honest about all four.
0:25	Den leaders introduced	Each stands, says their name, their grade, and their meeting night. Twenty seconds each.
0:28	Break to grade tables	Parents walk to the table for their child's grade. Do not point — have a volunteer walk each family over.
0:30	Applications and questions	Den leaders collect applications at the table, with a laptop or phone for the online form. A family that takes the form home is a coin flip.
0:50	Close	Everybody leaves with a printed calendar and the name and phone number of their den leader.

THE THREE FIXES THAT RAISE RECRUITING NUMBERS MOST

Complete applications on site, with somebody standing there to help. Take-home forms disappear.

Walk families to their den leader instead of pointing. A physical handoff turns a stranger into a person.

Say the cost and the time commitment out loud, unprompted. Families who feel a hidden ask coming do not sign up.

Pinewood Derby — January

The biggest night of the year. Assign a derby chair in October — this is a full job and it is not yours.

When	What happens
October	Recruit the derby chair. Confirm the track — borrowed from the district, another pack, or your own. Book it in writing.
November	Order kits, one per Scout plus five spares. Write the rules — or adopt your district's — and get the committee to approve them.
Early December	Hand out kits at the pack meeting with the rules stapled to the kit. Announce the build workshop date at the same time.
Early January	BUILD WORKSHOP. A Saturday morning with saws, sanders, a scale, and three adults who know what they are doing. This is what keeps families without tools in the race.
Week of	Confirm the pit crew, the timer or judges, the awards, and who brings the scale. Test the track and the software.
Race day	Track set up 90 minutes early and test-run. Weigh-in and impound open one hour before the meeting.

Rules that prevent arguments

- Maximum weight 5.0 ounces, measured on the pack's scale, and the pack's scale is the only scale that counts. Say this in writing on the rules sheet.
- The car must use the wheels, axles, and block from the official kit.
- Maximum length 7 inches, width 2¾ inches, and it must clear the center guide rail.
- No loose material — no liquids, no moving weights.
- Once a car is impounded after weigh-in, only the pit crew touches it.
- Every car runs in every lane if your timing system supports it. Tracks are not identical and everybody knows it.
- A car that fails inspection gets one chance to fix it at the pit table before racing.

AWARDS: AIM FOR MORE THAN HALF THE SCOUTS GOING HOME WITH SOMETHING

Speed: 1st, 2nd, 3rd overall, plus fastest per den.

Design, voted by the Scouts themselves: most creative, best paint job, funniest, most patriotic, most like a real car, best use of the theme.

Every single Scout who raced gets a participation ribbon or certificate handed to them by name. Nobody walks out empty-handed at seven years old.

Consider an open class for siblings and adults, raced after the Scouts. It keeps parents from over-helping on the Scout cars.

Blue and Gold banquet — February

Scouting's birthday, the February pack meeting, and the Arrow of Light crossover, all on the same night. The committee owns the logistics; you own the program. Badges of rank for Lion through Webelos are presented in April, after the elective meetings, so build this night around the crossover, the year in photos, and adult recognition.

Time	Program element	Detail
0:00	Doors and gathering	Photo board of the year, a slideshow on a loop, and a craft table for the little ones. Families sit by den.
0:20	Opening	Full ceremonial flag ceremony by the Arrow of Light or Webelos den. Grace or a reflection if your chartered organization expects one.
0:28	Welcome and the birthday	You, two minutes. Scouting's founding, and how many Scouts have come through this pack. Get the pack number from the committee chair.
0:32	Dinner	You are not in the kitchen. You are at the tables, talking to families, especially the new ones.
1:05	Den skits or the year in photos	Two or three dens perform. Assign this in January so they have time.
1:20	Arrow of Light and crossover	The heart of the night. Present the Arrow of Light to each Scout with a parent, one specific sentence each, then cross them to the troop. Take the time — this is what the families came for. If your pack has no Arrow of Light den this year, give these minutes to the year in photos and to naming what every den finished.
1:45	Adult recognition	Every den leader and committee member named and thanked. Give something small. Applause.
1:50	Cake and closing	Cake, the Scout Law together, Living Circle. Out the door.

- Total program under 45 minutes, not counting dinner. Adults speak three minutes maximum, you included.
- Head count matters — collect RSVPs and a per-plate cost, or the committee eats the loss.
- Invite the chartered organization, the unit commissioner, and the district executive. Seat them, name them, and thank them.
- Photographer assigned in advance. Every crossing Scout gets a picture with their family, and every den gets a group photo.

Pack campout — fall and/or spring

The event families remember for years. The activities chair owns permits, site, and food; you own the program after dark.

Time	What	Detail
Fri 5–7 pm	Arrival and setup	Dens camp together. Assign an experienced family to each new family for tent setup. Nobody struggles alone in the dark.
7:30 pm	Dinner	Simplest possible. Hot dogs or a chili the committee made ahead. Cooking is not the program on night one.
8:30 pm	Campfire	Your event. Run of show: opening cheer, three skits by dens, two songs, one story, closing. See the campfire pattern below.
10:00 pm	Lights out	Announce it, mean it, and walk the loop once.

Time	What	Detail
Sat 7:30 am	Breakfast	Assigned to a den or the committee.
9:00 am	Activity blocks	Rotate dens through: a hike with a scavenger hunt, BB and archery if your council range and certified instructors are available, fishing, nature crafts, a service project on the site.
12:00 pm	Lunch and pack up	Site inspection by the ranger before anyone leaves. Leave it better than you found it — say that out loud to the Scouts.

The campfire pattern

Campfires work on an energy curve: start loud, end quiet. Run it in this order and it works every time.

1. Opening cheer or a loud song to get everyone shouting.
2. The two funniest skits. Dens prepare these at their meetings two weeks before — assign it.
3. A big participation song everyone can do badly.
4. One more skit, then a quieter song.
5. A story — a legend about the place you are camping works best.
6. Cubmaster's Minute, quiet, with the fire low.
7. Closing: Scout Law together, then everyone walks back in silence. The silence is the part they remember.

> **BEFORE ANY PACK OVERNIGHT**
>
> Two registered adults with current Safeguarding Youth Training, minimum, and enough adults that no den is ever alone. If any girls are on the campout, one of them must be a registered female adult leader 21 or older.
>
> Every Scout sleeps in a tent with their own parent or guardian, or in a tent with other youth — never with an unrelated adult.
>
> Annual health forms collected in advance, plus a first aid kit and one adult with current first aid training.
>
> Check the Guide to Safe Scouting for what Cub Scouts may and may not do. Shooting sports and any water activity have specific requirements — ask your council, do not assume.
>
> Weather plan written down, and a phone number families can reach on the night.

Day camp and resident camp — June and July

The strongest predictor of who comes back in the fall. Treat summer camp promotion as a retention project, not a summer activity.

- Get the dates from your council in January and put them on the pack calendar immediately.
- Promote at the March pack meeting with a deposit deadline, and again in April.
- Recruit a camp coordinator to handle registration as a pack rather than family by family. Packs that register together attend together.
- Say out loud, in front of everyone, that camperships and financial assistance exist and who to ask. Families will not ask if they have to raise their hand.
- Day camp needs adult leaders from your pack on site. Recruit them in April, not the week before.
- Follow up in August with photos at Back to the Pack. Camp photos recruit better than any flyer.

Service projects — at least twice a year

- Pick things a six-year-old can physically do: food drives, park cleanups, cards for veterans or a senior center, collecting supplies for an animal shelter, planting at the chartered organization.
- Tie it to the month's theme — Citizenship in November, Family and Reverence in December.
- Kick off at one pack meeting, collect at the next. The gap creates the story.
- Count the result out loud in front of the Scouts. "Four hundred and twelve cans" lands; "a lot of food" does not.
- Report service hours to your council — the committee chair needs the number for the pack's year-end report.

12. Working with your den leaders

Den leaders are the program. A pack with strong den leaders and a mediocre Cubmaster does fine. The reverse does not.

Once a month, ask each of them

1. What went well this month?
2. What do you need that you do not have?
3. Which family is drifting, and does someone need to call them?
4. Are you covered for next month, or do you need a substitute?

What you owe them

- A calendar they can plan against, published in August and not moved.
- A budget for supplies and a fast reimbursement, arranged through the treasurer.
- Trained assistant den leaders so nobody is a single point of failure.
- Public credit at pack meetings, by name.
- Protection from committee business. Den leaders should not be on cleanup crews, phone trees, and fundraising committees.

13. Safety non-negotiables

These are not suggestions and they are not local preferences. If one of them is violated, the activity stops.

- Two registered adult leaders, 21 or older, at every Scouting activity — including den meetings, outings, and rides. A registered female adult leader 21 or older must be present for any activity involving female youth, and a pack or den serving girls must have one registered.
- No one-on-one contact between an adult and a youth member. Not in person, not by phone, not by text, not by direct message.
- All registered adults have current Safeguarding Youth Training. SYT expires 12 months from the day it is completed — not two years.
- Parents may observe any activity at any time.
- Activities stay inside the age-appropriate guidelines in the Guide to Safe Scouting. Cub Scouts do not do everything older Scouts do.
- Report any suspected abuse to local authorities and to the Scout executive. Immediately. There is no internal review step first.

SAFEGUARDING YOUTH TRAINING REPLACED YPT

Safeguarding Youth Training (SYT) is the training formerly called Youth Protection Training. It went live in May 2025 and fully replaced YPT as of May 31, 2026.

What changed that matters to you: SYT expires 12 months from the date it is completed, not two years. That means every adult in your pack lapses once a year, and somebody has to be watching.

The full course runs about 90 minutes at my.Scouting.org and requires 80% to pass. Within seven days after expiration a leader can take a short refresher and retest instead. Miss that window or fail the refresher, and it is the full course again.

CHECK YOUR COUNCIL

Councils add their own requirements — Hazardous Weather Training, swim classification for water activities, activity consent forms, and local tour or outing notification. Ask your unit commissioner or district executive once, in September, and write the answers on the back page of this guide.

14. When things go wrong

The problem	What is usually actually happening	What to do
Attendance is dropping	Families do not know what is coming, or meetings run long	Publish the next two months. Cut the pack meeting to 60 minutes and hold to it.
A den has no leader	Nobody was asked directly	Ask one specific parent, in person, for one specific job, with an end date. Never send a group email asking for volunteers.
The pack meeting is chaos	No gathering activity, adults talking too long	Add a gathering activity. Cap every adult at three minutes. Give the dens jobs.
A den leader is burning out	They are doing three jobs	Recruit an assistant this month. Take the non-den jobs off them.
Advancement is behind	Nobody is tracking it	Advancement chair reviews every den's progress in January and again in March, and reports at the leaders' meeting.
You and the committee chair disagree	Unclear boundary	Program calls are yours. Business calls are theirs. Settle it privately, present one answer to the pack.
Arrow of Light Scouts are not crossing over	They have never met the troop	Joint activities starting in the fall, not a February introduction.
A parent is a problem	Often unclear expectations or an unaddressed grievance	Talk to them alone but not one-on-one with a youth present. Bring the committee chair. Document it.

15. Your pack, on one page

Fill this out in September and keep it with the guide.

Role	Name	Phone / email
Committee chair		
Chartered organization rep		
Treasurer		
Advancement chair		
Lion den leader		
Tiger den leader		
Wolf den leader		
Bear den leader		
Webelos den leader		
Arrow of Light den leader		
Unit commissioner		
District executive		
Scouts BSA troop contact		

Pack number: _____ Chartered organization: _____

Meeting place and night: _____

Council: _____ District: _____