

A Quick Start Guide to Getting Your Den Up & Running

Introduction

Let me begin by welcoming you to the BSA Adult Leader program. By agreeing to volunteer your time to your son's Cub Scout Den as an adult leader, you are having a direct impact on the quality of the Cub Scout experience. For that you should be commended, and for that we at Pack 300 are deeply appreciative.

Making this decision does not come without stress. You may have questions about how a Den meeting is run, where Den meetings are held, as well as a multitude of other questions. This guide will not be able to answer every question that you have. It will however provide you with some tips to get you up and running as a Den Leader, and as a Den.

The Internet is filled with the answers you need, and we encourage its use as a research tool. It should be noted however that should you find an answer that comes from a source other than the BSA itself, always check the advice you find against these basic principles:

- Is it Safe? Consult the BSA Guide to Safe Scouting. The safe scouting guide can answer all of your safety questions and is available on our website.
- Is it Appropriate? Use your Best Judgment. For example: Some of the BSA literature, songs, skits, etc. from the early 1900's is filled with politically incorrect statements which at the time were not considered inappropriate, but by today's standards are.

If you follow these simple rules you can be assured that your activities and events will be a success.

Pick a Day of the Week for your Den Meeting.

Before anything else you need to contact the other parents in your Den and ask them if there are any days in the week that do not work for den meetings. Once all parents have been contacted you can come up with a day of the week that works for everyone.

Pick a Time for your Den Meeting.

With a day for Den meetings established it is not time to set a meeting time. Be sensitive to parental work schedules. In general meeting start times in the 6-7PM range seem to work best.

Pick a Den Meeting Frequency

How many times a month will your Den is meeting? Tiger scouts generally meet Bi-Monthly in Pack 300 with one of the week's being an "outing" event. Other ranks either follow a similar schedule or opt to meet for a longer period of time twice per month.

Pick a Den Meeting Length

The frequency that your Den meetings will help you determine the length of time each Den meeting will last. For Tiger scouts we do not recommend den meetings be longer than one hour. Because of their age and maturity level, meetings longer than one hour do not seem to work well.

Pick a Den Meeting Location

Finally, you need to decide where you are going to have your Den meetings. You can schedule your meetings in your home or in public facilities. Whichever works for you. Many of our current leaders have found that public spaces work the best especially when your den is over 4-5 scouts in size. We feel that use of public space offers these advantages:

- More Flexible Space – In general most school/public facilities have more space available for projects & activities (a gym for instance offers a lot of flexibility for active events, such as sporting activities).
- Personal Possessions Protected – by using a public facility you remove the possibility of accidental destruction of personal property.
- Less Stress – preparing for a Den meeting is a lot less stressful if you don't also have to prepare your home each week for additional scouts and parents.

Please consult with the Cubmaster before choosing your home as your Den's meeting place.

Schedule Your Den Meetings

Working with your other Den Leader(s), a copy of the school calendar, and a list of holidays, you can map out on a calendar when your Den meetings will be. Something to be aware of is that the Cub Scout program mixes together Den meetings with special "outing" activities, where the Den visits a location for a special tour that the Den Leaders have arranged (example: Police Station, Library, TV Studio, etc.).

We highly recommend the use of the Den Meeting Leader guides. The Leader guides tie together all of the required rank activities that need to be accomplished, along with Go-See-It activities in an easy to use format.

Before reserving your facility space, we recommend that you purchase or borrow the Leader Guide for meetings for the entire year so that you can gain a better idea for when in your

schedule you should be scheduling each Go-See-It. The reason for this becomes apparent when you look at the next section regarding reserving facility space.

Reserve the Facility Space.

So now you know your Den meeting dates and when you are going to do outing events. All that is left now is to reserve space at a facility of your choosing for use.

Remember: If you find that the space you want to use for a certain facility is not available on the night of your Den meeting, you can select a different facility for use

Notify Your Den.

Last but not least, you should notify the parents in your Den as soon as possible with the Scoutbook system to let them know your Den meeting dates. It is perfectly acceptable to mark outing locations as TBD (To Be Decided).

By sending your parents this list it gives them a chance to put the Den meeting dates on their calendar and improves the overall level of attendance.

Planning Your Den Meeting Content

With your facilities and meeting dates taken care of, the next question becomes — What do I do at my Den meetings? What do I need to cover?

Looking at the rank requirement book, and looking at Scoutbook you can see that there is a lot of material to cover. It can certainly be intimidating to look at, and cause confusion as to what the best method is to accomplish everything that needs to be done. Feel free to ask for help when getting started as well as using the suggestions below.

Option 1: Use the Leader Guides

The Leader Guides are series of den meeting plans (two den meetings per month) designed to be used in conjunction with the youth handbooks. By following these plans, active Scouts can earn their Tiger, Wolf, Bear, or Webelos rank by February, usually in time for the Blue & Gold Banquet. After these meetings, Scouts continue to meet to work on other electives, Belt Loops and Pins, and other Cub Scout Awards through the rest of the year. All Cub Scouts must first earn their Bobcat Badge.

It is very easy to complete the two meetings per month offered by the Leader Guides and extend them to fit your Den's meeting schedule.

The Leader Guides are a great way for all Den Leaders to address their scout's rank requirements in a logical manner. We highly recommend that all leaders follow this system.

Option 2: Make Your Own Schedule

If you are the type of person who likes to put together their own program, the BSA has no problem with this decision. As long as the rank requirements are met by graduation this is perfectly acceptable. Be warned, that this is a lot more work for the Den Leader.

Option 3: Hybrid Leader Guide / Custom Plan

Many Den leaders will use the Leader Guide system as a flexible framework for their Den meetings, adding or removing content to augment the system to their needs. You should keep in mind that the system does not necessarily take into account the weather in Indiana, so the meetings will have to be switched around. Also, you may have to work into the program time to do certain projects related to Pack activities. Certain rank achievements and electives match up nicely with other Pack activities, such as the Pack service projects. Take advantage of certain Pack activities that can count as Go-See-It activities for rank requirements, but keep in mind that you might have to plan a Go-See-It for the scouts who did not make the Pack activity.

Get Trained!

Most important to your success as a Den Leader is the training that you receive. The BSA has gone to great efforts to provide effective online training for all BSA Adult Leaders. Pack 300 requires that all adult leaders be 100% trained.

It will take approximately 4-5 hours for you to complete this training online. Training can be split over a number of days. Upon completion of your training, Pack 3005 needs to be sent a copy of the training certificate either physically or electronically so that it's records can be updated. Be sure to keep a copy of each of your training certificates in your own records.

A Training Tutorial is available here: [What Training Does the BSA Require for Adult Leaders?](#)