

Roundtable Hot Topic

Unit Annual Planning

As always in Scouting, we want to Be Prepared. The best way to Be Prepared as a unit is to develop an annual plan. An annual plan helps leaders ensure they are providing an active and engaging Scouting experience, and that the unit has the resources needed to make that experience come to life. Written annual plans are also a great resource to use when leadership changes occur and can be shared with new units to help get them off to a great start!

Creating a plan will look different for packs, troops, crews or ships. Start with scheduling a time to create an annual plan. Make sure to have the unit leadership (youth or adults or both) in attendance. This is also a great opportunity for the unit commissioner to meet with the unit – they're a great resource!

Units can choose to hold planning meetings more than once per year as needed.



Tips for Packs

- Parents and legal guardians work together with pack leaders to run the Cub Scout program. The program year for packs generally follows the school year.
- Meetings and activities should incorporate Cub Scout Adventures. Determine which Adventures are best suited for which months, based on your local resources and weather. Don't forget to look at your district and council events too!
- Determine the cost of each activity – think about the supplies needed, fees to attend events, and costs for snacks or food so that adequate budgets can be prepared.

Tips for Troops

- In troops, the planning is done by the patrol leaders' council. It is run by the senior patrol leader with help from the Scoutmaster. Patrol leaders should consult with their patrols to help the senior patrol leader determine what types of activities the Scouts are interested in doing.
- Meetings and activities should help support Scout advancement, and can be prioritized based upon the current needs of the Scouts in the troop.
- District and council events, as well as those at High Adventure Bases, should be considered.
- The annual planning meeting can also incorporate Introduction to Leadership Skills training for troops or other team-building activities. Troops may decide to hold these meetings more often than once per year.

Tips for Crews and Ships

Venturers and Sea Scouts take the lead when planning their activities, while adult advisors help ensure plans follow safety guidelines. While all crews and ships are unique, there are seven basic steps units can follow:

- Define the specifics of the activity (who, what, where, when and why)
- Define the resources (the places, the supplies, the budget – the how)
- Consider alternatives (ships and crews think big – having a back-up plan helps to Be Prepared)
- Commit the plan to writing (taking notes ensures the details are shared and helps with participation)
- Promote the plan (Venturers and Sea Scouts sometimes have lots of activities to balance – promoting activities helps ensure participation)
- Implement the plan (reap the benefits of all that hard work to plan the activity)
- Assess the activity with a start/stop/continue follow up discussion. This is a great way to determine what everyone learned from an activity!

Having an annual plan keeps everyone on the same page with written goals and deadlines. It's also a great way to help new leadership when the time comes – new leaders won't feel like they're starting from scratch. An annual plan keeps Scouts engaged and excited!