

Troop 112, Carmel Indiana

Scoutmaster Conference Guide

First, remember what a Scoutmasters' Conference really is all about. It's your time to get to know and develop a working relationship with that Scout and to gage how good or bad a time he's having being a Scout, and a Scout in OUR TROOP.

For all Scoutmaster Conferences, the Scout should:

1. Request the conference in advance, by notifying the Advancement Chair and the Scoutmaster that he feels he is ready.
2. Review his accomplishments and familiarize himself with the expectations for the conference set out in this document.
3. Present himself at the conference in full uniform, with all insignia up to date and properly placed. He should bring his Scout handbook to the conference, and any other materials he thinks would be useful.

The Joining or Scout Scoutmaster Conference

This first Scoutmaster conference allows the Scoutmaster and the Scout to size each other up, to get to know each other, and to encourage the openness that is so important between the Scout and Scoutmaster. This is an opportunity for the Scoutmaster to explain a bit about the Scouting program, about the troop and its traditions, and about how Boy Scouting differs from Cub Scouting. A Scout probably will not know the Scoutmaster, nor the Scoutmaster the Scout, and this is a good chance for both to learn about each other. In some ways, the joining conference is one of the most important meetings of a boy's Scouting career because it will set the tone of the relationship between the Scout and his Scoutmaster. It should be informal; it should be friendly; and from the standpoint of the Scout, it should be encouraging and supportive.

Sample Questions:

What did you like about Cub Scouting?
What do you think you will like about Boy Scouting?
Do you have any brothers or sisters?
What are your interests outside of Scouting?
Why did you join our troop?
Do you have any questions about Boy Scouting or the troop?
What does the Scout Oath mean to you? The Scout Law?

You should explain:

The advancement process, including who will be approving and recording his progress
The purpose and timing of Scoutmaster conferences
How the boy-led troop works and his advancing role in it
The patrol method and the new-Scout patrol

Make sure you give the Scout handshake and see that the Scout can demonstrate the sign and salute.

The Scout Through First Class Scoutmaster Conferences

The Scout through First Class Scoutmaster conferences are ways of getting to know the Scout better, to review his progress in achievements, and to discuss how he felt about the various steps he has taken on the Scouting trail, including his individual achievements. This should not be a time of retesting, but rather a time to reflect on the skills learned and how the Scout has absorbed the ideals of Scouting. Questions here naturally will deal with a certain campout, for example, or the difficult time the Scout had with knots, but it also may deal with how he is getting along with certain other Scouts or how he exhibits Scouting ideals outside the troop.

Other aspects of the conference should never take a back seat. This is the time to ask the Scout how he feels about the troop's program, whether he feels he is learning anything, and whether he is having fun.

Sample Questions:

Who is your patrol leader, and what do you think of him?

What do you think of the problems you are facing?

How have you progressed on first aid?

What are your goals for the next few months, and how do those goals meet advancement requirements?

What do you think would make the troop better?

You can review what a Scout should have learned in his signed off achievements and see how he has absorbed the skills.

Ask a Second Class candidate about his service project—how he felt about it, how he felt he had done, did he believe he was successful, and how he measured that success.

If you were to think about leaving Scouts, would you come talk to me first?

You should explain:

That a Scout does not always keep a skill by simply doing it for advancement; that he must repeat it, and in some cases, teach it, to really have the skill

The value of planning to achieve his goals

How setting advancement goals involves looking ahead to see what must be accomplished and in what order

How the Scout can use the merit badge program to explore interests and accomplish advancement

The Star and Life Scoutmaster Conferences

The Star and Life conferences will be a bit longer than previous ones. The Scout will have acquired many more skills and will evidence more maturity. Leadership will be one of the significant topics to be discussed. Each of these ranks involves service projects, and you should ask the Scout how he felt about the projects.

As a Scoutmaster, you may be evaluating how a Scout has done in his leadership positions, but this is not the time to tell a Scout that he was a poor leader. If that is the case, or was the case, it should have been the subject of a Scoutmaster conversation long before the advancement conference. Leadership skills should be reviewed as they are exhibited, not held over to a Scoutmaster conference where the Scout is flunked for failing to meet expectations.

On the other hand, it may be that a Scout will conclude that he needs to work on certain aspects of leadership before he achieves the next rank, and you should be supportive of this concept.

As before, you will be evaluating his Scout spirit. Remember that at these ages the Scout will change fundamentally much quicker than you might imagine, and the Scoutmaster conference can be an opportunity for you to reevaluate the candidate.

Sample Questions:

What merit badges did you enjoy, and why?
What merit badges did you get the most out of, and why?
How did you feel about your leadership position?
How did you feel about how you exercised that position?
Did you feel you accomplished anything in that position?
What were your frustrations?
Who do you think is doing a good job in the troop?
Have you decided what merit badges you will be earning next?
Have you thought about achieving Eagle?
Have you thought about a service project for Eagle?
If you were to think about leaving Scouts, would you come talk to me first?

You should explain:

The progressive nature of service projects from Star to Eagle
The nature of required and unrequired merit badges

For Life: The expectations for Eagle requirement #1—active participation in the troop, what that means, how the Scout can demonstrate it

The Eagle Scoutmaster Conference

If you have watched him from the date he joined the troop, you may know this Scout well by the time of his Eagle conference. He should be congratulated on all he has accomplished thus far.

This is an occasion to review the Scout's Eagle service project, but not an occasion to criticize it. After all, you, as Scoutmaster, have already approved the project concept and both the troop committee and the head of the agency for whom the project was accomplished have determined that it was satisfactorily completed. Rather, you should review the Scout's project with him so that he will feel comfortable explaining it to his Eagle board of review.

You will be counseling a very accomplished young man, one who has an experience with the troop that is inherently different than yours. It is wise to understand what the Scout feels are the strengths and shortcomings of the troop.

You also can ask the Scout whether he believes he is prepared for his Eagle board of review. Of course, Scout spirit is a part of this discussion. The Eagle candidate's spirit should be such that he is an example to other Scouts.

Sample Questions:

How did you feel your Eagle project went?

Did you run into any rough spots?

Did you plan enough to get you over the rough spots?

How did you work with the agency for which you did the project?

Was that agency clear in its goals for you?

Would you do the project differently now?

How do you think the troop is doing?

How do you intend to help the troop after you become an Eagle Scout?

Do you have any goals for the troop?

What are your goals for yourself?

Do you feel you are an Eagle Scout?

Do you believe you have accomplished all you need to in order to become an Eagle Scout?

You should explain:

That his Scouting career is not over; that Eagle Palms, leadership, and adult leadership await him

That other opportunities exist in the Order of the Arrow, Venturing, and Sea Scouting

The Eagle Palm Scoutmaster Conference

Like the Eagle Scoutmaster conference, the Eagle Palm conference is an opportunity for you to learn. Listen carefully to what the Scout says.

By now you will have a strong relationship with the Scout and will be able to discuss his goals and how they may have changed. You should encourage the Scout to remain visibly connected to the troop. You should not be discouraged if a high school student is less able to devote his spare time to Scouting alone. You may notice that this Scout's activity with the troop is less than you would desire, but you should be able to tell if a Scout is living up to the ideals of Scouting outside the troop as well as inside it.

Again, always conclude these conferences with words of encouragement. Eagle Palm conferences are opportunities for you to have a give-and-take discussion with the very best in Scouting. Enjoy it.

Sample Questions:

How do you plan on contributing to the troop now?
What are your goals for the troop?
What are your personal goals?
How will your Scouting experience help you?

You might explain:

Scouting opportunities for older boys
National Youth Leadership Training
Leadership in the Order of the Arrow
Camp staff opportunities
The Hornaday Awards
Venturing
What happens when a boy leader turns 18
Potential service as an assistant Scoutmaster
Remaining active in Scouting in college or when one moves