

GS-213: Writing Troop and Pack Policies

Organizations run better when everyone knows what is expected and what needs to be done. Troops and Packs need documenting policies and procedures to give everyone the same expectations of the unit's regular operations. Covers drawing up and adopting workable policies.

Many units work off the philosophy that the only by-laws the unit needs are the Oath or Promise, and Law. They may or may not create a parent guide to help answer parent's questions about the unit. Other units incorporate additional rules, over and above the BSA rules. Sometimes these rules are placed into additional documents.

We encourage the use of a "Troop Guidebook" or "Pack Guidebook" that contains information about the who, what, when, where, and how of the unit. The BSA has a set of by-laws and would prefer that units not use the expression "by-laws".

Some Guidelines

- Keep it short. Parent Guides that are longer than 15 pages will not be read. If you have a lot to communicate, consider a short parent guide, and place additional information into handouts for a particular activity. For example, instead of incorporating a sample parent permission slip, and all the rules associated with an outing, into the Parent Guide, simply say that there will be permission slips issued prior to an outing and that no Scout can attend the outing without one.
 - Make the font at least 12 point (remember, we are all getting older). If the guide is hard to read, it will not be read.
 - Write it with the parent in mind. Try to anticipate the questions the parents will have. Parent guides tend to be read by people just entering the unit. Ask yourself: What was it that I was concerned with when I joined the unit? For example, tell a Boy Scout parent about uniforming, sleeping bags, and tenting. Don't go into details about white water rafting, since a 11 year old won't be participating in that activity.
 - Don't let your program suffer. Paper is fine, but the boys are active in Scouting because of the program. Don't get caught up in administrative details at the expense of the program.
 - Many Scouters advise not calling anything a by-law. That is an official term that has a lot of hidden meaning. Call your handbook a 'guide'.
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Names:

What to include:

What NOT to include:

Writing Troop & Pack Policies

Overview

- Why have policies?
- Some Guidelines
- What might we include in our policy?
- Don'ts
- Review sample policy
- Where can I get sample policies?
- Questions

Why have policies?

- Organizations run better when everyone knows what is expected and what needs to be done.
- Units need documenting policies and procedures to give everyone the same expectations of the unit's regular operations
- Many units work off the philosophy that the only by-laws the unit needs are the Scout Oath and Law
- They may or may not create a parent guide to help answer parent's questions about the unit
- We encourage use of the "Troop Guidebook" or Pack Guidebook"...they contain information about the who, what, where and how of the unit
- BSA has a set of by-laws and would prefer that units not use the expression "by-laws"

Recommended unit policy guidelines

- Keep it short. Parent guidelines that are longer than 15 pages will not be read
- If you have a lot to communicate, consider a short parent guide, and place additional info in handouts for a particular activity. Example don't include permission slips in a guide...hand them out when needed.
- Make the font at least 12 point (remember some of us are getting older). If your policy is hard to read, no one will read it.
- Write with the parent in mind. Try to anticipate the questions the parents will have. Guides tend to be read by people just joining the unit. What were you concerned about when you first joined the unit?...uniforms, meetings, equipment, campouts, finances....
- Don't let the program suffer. Paper is fine, but the boys are active in scouting because of the program. Don't get caught up in administrative details at the expense of the program.
- Many Scouters advise not calling anything a by-law. That is an official term that has a lot of hidden meaning. Call your policy a handbook or guide.

What should we include in our policy?

- Committee membership, responsibilities, schedule, etc
- Management of unit funds
 - Dues, fund raising
 - Checking account policy, expenditure approval
 - Scout accounts
- Volunteer positions and responsibilities
- Uniform policy
- Camping policy
- Discipline
- Family participation
- Annual planning meeting
- Advancement
 - Boards of review
 - Merit badges
- Patrol Leader Council

Don'ts

- Can't violate BSA policies
 - Age limits for advancement
 - Reducing or increasing rank of merit badge requirements

Review Sample Policy

- Troop
- Pack

Where Can I get sample policies?

- Other units
- BSA web page
- Google