

Bobcat

Required adventure • Character and Leadership

If you read nothing else

The Arrow of Light Bobcat is a different animal from every Bobcat before it. The den becomes a patrol, the Scouts elect their own patrol leader, and the signs and handshake change to the Scouts BSA versions.

Two meetings, and meeting 2 is a visit to a Scouts BSA troop. Book that visit before you start.

Requirement 8 is done at home with a parent or legal guardian.

From this adventure on, call them a patrol. The word does real work — it is the first thing that tells a fifth grader that something has changed.

The requirements

Official requirement text. Tick each one off as your Scouts complete it — the meeting plans below cover all of them.

- ☐ 1. Demonstrate the patrol method by choosing a patrol name and electing a patrol leader.
Discuss the benefits of using the patrol method.
- ☐ 2. Get to know members of your patrol.
- ☐ 3. Recite the Scout Oath and Scout Law with your patrol.
- ☐ 4. With your patrol, create a Code of Conduct.
- ☐ 5. Demonstrate the Scouts BSA sign, Scouts BSA salute, and Scouts BSA handshake. Show how each is used.
- ☐ 6. Learn the Scouts BSA slogan and motto.
- ☐ 7. With your patrol, or with your parent or legal guardian, visit a Scouts BSA troop.
- ☐ 8. At home, with your parent or legal guardian, do the activities in the booklet *How to Protect Your Children From Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide*.

Requirement 7 — the troop visit — is the single highest-value thing you will do all year for retention. Do it early, do it more than once, and do not save it for spring.

Meeting 1: Becoming a patrol

Goal: The den elects a patrol leader, picks a patrol name, writes its Code of Conduct, and switches to the Scouts BSA sign, salute, and handshake.

Covers requirements 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

Before the meeting

- Book the troop visit for meeting 2 now if you have not. Talk to the Scoutmaster and, more importantly, to the senior patrol leader — a visit run by youth lands differently than one run by adults.
- Print the Scout Oath, Scout Law, slogan and motto. Print the Scouts BSA sign, salute and handshake with pictures.
- Print the parent booklet, one per family, plus acknowledgement slips.
- Bring paper and markers for patrol flag design.
- Resist the urge to pick the patrol name yourself, however bad their ideas are.

Supplies

- Scout Oath, Scout Law, slogan and motto posters
- Sign, salute and handshake reference sheets
- Paper ballots and a box
- Poster board, markers, fabric or felt for a patrol flag
- Parent booklets and acknowledgement slips

Run of show

Time	What happens
5 min	Gathering: two truths about me
5 min	Opening: Scout Oath and Scout Law
20 min	Activity 1: the patrol method and the election
15 min	Activity 2: patrol name and flag
10 min	Activity 3: sign, salute, handshake, slogan, motto
10 min	Activity 4: the patrol Code of Conduct
5 min	Closing

Gathering — Two truths about me (5 min)

Each Scout says two true things about themselves that the patrol probably does not know. It is requirement 2, and at this age it works better than a name game — fifth graders know each other's names and are bored by being asked.

Play along yourself. They will remember that you did.

Activity 1 — The patrol method and the election (20 min)

Explain the change first, and be direct about it.

Say something like

Until this year, I ran your den. Starting tonight, you run your patrol and I help. You are going to

elect one of your own to lead, and when we camp and cook and plan this year, they lead it and I stay out of the way unless someone is about to get hurt. That is called the patrol method, and it is how Scouts BSA works.

Discuss the benefits before you vote — that is part of requirement 1. Pull the answers from them: you learn to lead, you learn to follow, decisions get made by the people doing the work, everyone gets a job, a small group can actually do things a big group cannot.

Then hold a real election. Secret ballot, every Scout eligible, count it in front of them. Plurality wins.

Set the term — six months is standard, so most patrols do two leaders across the year. Name an assistant patrol leader too, usually the runner-up.

Give the patrol leader real duties on the spot: leads the opening, runs the meeting plan with you beforehand, assigns jobs, represents the patrol. If you do not actually give the job away, the election was theater and the Scouts will know it.

Activity 2 — Patrol name and flag (15 min)

The patrol picks its own name. Nominate, discuss, vote. It is theirs and it will be on their flag all year and remembered for decades.

Then design and start building the patrol flag. It carries the name, a symbol, and every member's name. Bring it to every meeting, every campout, and the crossover ceremony.

Let it be a little ridiculous. The patrol that named itself something silly and owned it is a patrol with an identity, which is the entire point of requirement 1.

Activity 3 — Sign, salute, handshake, slogan, motto (10 min)

These change this year and the change matters to them. Teach the differences explicitly:

- Sign — three fingers up, not two. Raised for silence and given when reciting the Oath and Law.
- Salute — three fingers, hand to the eyebrow or hat brim. Used for the flag and in formal ceremonies.
- Handshake — left hand, normal grip, no two-finger version. The left hand is the one nearer the heart, and it is the hand that holds the shield.

Practice until it is automatic. They will use these at the troop visit next week, and being the kid who does it right is worth a lot to a fifth grader walking into a room of older Scouts.

Slogan: Do a Good Turn Daily. Motto: Be Prepared. Ask what each one actually asks of them — a good turn is not the same as a chore you were told to do, and being prepared is not the same as being lucky.

Activity 4 — The patrol Code of Conduct (10 min)

The patrol leader runs this, not you. Hand them the marker and sit down. It will be slower and messier than if you did it, and that is the price of the patrol method.

Same three questions as always: what makes a good meeting, what ruins one, what happens when someone breaks it. But this year the patrol leader asks them and writes the answers.

Everyone signs, you included. Bring it every week.

Send home with families

Do the activities in How to Protect Your Children From Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide together and return the signed slip. Requirement 8.

Troop visit next meeting — details on the handout. Class A uniform, and a parent is welcome and encouraged to come.

Ask your Scout what their patrol is called and why.

Meeting 2: Troop visit

Goal: The patrol visits a Scouts BSA troop meeting and sees what comes next, run by the troop's youth leaders.

Covers requirements 7, and collects 8

Before the meeting

- Talk to the senior patrol leader, not just the Scoutmaster. Ask them to run it. The single biggest factor in whether your Scouts want to cross over is whether they liked the older Scouts they met.
- Ask the troop for something active. A skills relay, fire building, first aid race, knot competition — anything but a tour of the meeting room and a slideshow.
- Tell the troop your Scouts' names in advance and ask them to use them.
- Send parents. This visit is at least as much for them, and the questions they need answered are different from the Scouts'.
- Visit more than one troop across the year if there is more than one nearby. Fit matters and it is not your call to make for a family.

Supplies

- Patrol flag — bring it
- Class A uniform
- A question card per Scout, written at the previous meeting
- A parent handout on how a troop differs from a pack
- Thank you card for the patrol to sign afterward

Run of show

Time	What happens
10 min	Arrive early, meet the senior patrol leader
10 min	Troop opening — your patrol takes part
40 min	Troop activity, Scouts mixed into troop patrols
15 min	Question time with the youth leaders
10 min	Troop closing and Scoutmaster minute

Time	What happens
10 min	Debrief in the parking lot

Before you go

Set expectations on the drive or at the door. They are guests, they are in uniform, and they participate rather than watch.

Tell them the one thing that makes this visit work: mix in. A patrol that stands together in a corner all evening has not visited a troop, it has observed one.

During the visit

Split your Scouts into different troop patrols if the troop will do it. Uncomfortable for ten minutes, then transformative.

Stand at the back with the other adults and let it happen. If you find yourself managing your Scouts during a troop meeting, you are in the wrong place in the room.

Questions worth having on the cards: What is the hardest thing you have done in Scouts? Where have you camped? What do you do when it rains? Who decides what the troop does? How much does it cost? What was crossing over like?

Debrief in the parking lot (10 min)

Do it before anyone gets in a car, while it is fresh.

- What was different from a pack meeting?
- Who was running the meeting? (The answer is the youth leaders, and you want them to notice that themselves.)
- What do you want to try?

Do not ask “do you want to join this troop.” It is too early, it puts them on the spot, and it makes the visit feel like a sales call.

Sign and send the thank you card. Then book the next visit.

Send home with families

Talk about the visit. Ask what surprised your Scout.

Crossover is in February or March. Start thinking about which troop fits your family — visiting two or three is normal and expected.

If the parent booklet slip has not come back, it is due.

Leader notes

- Say “patrol,” not “den,” from this adventure onward. It is a small thing that changes how fifth graders see themselves.
- Give the patrol leader real authority or do not hold the election. Scouts detect a fake job instantly and the whole year's tone follows from this.

- Troop visits are the highest-leverage retention activity in the Cub Scout program and they map directly to JTE objective 4. Do at least two.
- Some of your Scouts have older siblings in a troop and some have no idea what a troop is. Pitch the visit to the second group.

Safety

Before this adventure

Two registered adults with current Safeguarding Youth Training on the visit, from your pack — do not rely on the troop's adults to cover your Scouts.

Youth protection rules apply across units. Your Cub Scouts are not left alone with troop youth leaders or troop adults.

Transportation: seat belts, licensed and insured drivers, no one-on-one car rides.

Tracking

Write each Scout in and tick the requirement number as it is completed. Report to your advancement chair once the row is full.

Scout	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8