

Outdoor Adventurer

Required adventure • Outdoors

If you read nothing else

Two planning meetings and an overnight campout. This is the biggest adventure of the Arrow of Light year and the one Scouts remember.

The requirements are written so the patrol plans it and the patrol sets up camp — including setting up the patrol gear before their own tents. Let them.

Camping with a Scouts BSA troop satisfies requirement 5 and doubles as a troop visit. If you can arrange it, do.

Feeds JTE objective 7 directly.

The requirements

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

- ☐ 1. Learn about the Scout Basic Essentials.
- ☐ 2. Determine what you will bring on an overnight campout — including a tent and sleeping bag/gear — and how you will carry your gear.
- ☐ 3. Review the four points of the Scouting America SAFE Checklist and how you will apply them on the campout.
- ☐ 4. Locate the campsite where you will be camping on a map.
- ☐ 5. With your patrol or a Scouts BSA troop, participate in a campout.
- ☐ 6. Upon arrival at the campout, determine where to set up your campsite: kitchen, eating area, tents, and firepit. Help the patrol set up the patrol gear before setting up your own tent.
- ☐ 7. Explain how to keep food safe and the kitchen area sanitary at the campsite. Demonstrate your knowledge during the campout.
- ☐ 8. After your campout, discuss with your patrol what went well and what you would do differently next time. Include how you followed the Outdoor Code and Leave No Trace Principles for Kids.

Meeting 1: Gear, essentials, and the map

Goal: Every Scout knows the Scout Basic Essentials, has a packing list they built themselves, and can find the campsite on a map.

Covers requirements 1, 2 and 4

Before the meeting

- Book the campsite first. Everything else depends on the date.

- Bring a complete set of real gear to display — tent, sleeping bag, pad, pack, mess kit, headlamp. Borrowed is fine.
- Print a topographic or park map of the camp, plus a road map showing the drive.
- Get the camp's own site map from the council or the park.
- Find out which families have no camping gear at all, quietly and privately, and solve it before the packing list goes home. A Scout who cannot come because of a sleeping bag is a Scout you lose.

Supplies

- Full display set of camping gear
- Printed camp maps and road maps
- Blank packing list templates
- A duffel and a backpack, to talk about how gear gets carried
- Scout Basic Essentials reference cards

Run of show

Time	What happens
10 min	Gathering: pack the pack relay
5 min	Opening: Outdoor Code, led by the patrol leader
15 min	Activity 1: the Scout Basic Essentials
20 min	Activity 2: build the packing list
15 min	Activity 3: find the camp on the map
5 min	Closing

Gathering — Pack the pack relay (10 min)

Pile of gear at one end, two packs at the other, plus a few items that do not belong — a game console, a glass jar, a full-size pillow. Teams race to load only what should go.

Argue about the ringers afterward. The pillow is the interesting one.

Activity 1 — The Scout Basic Essentials (15 min)

Hold each item up and explain what it is for and when it saves you. This is requirement 1 and it upgrades the Cub Scout Six Essentials they already know.

- Pocketknife, where permitted, with the Whittling Chip earned
- First aid kit
- Extra clothing for the weather, including rain gear
- Rain gear specifically — a poncho is not a jacket and both have a place
- Filled water bottle
- Flashlight or headlamp with fresh batteries
- Trail food

- Matches and fire starters, in a waterproof container
- Sun protection
- Map and compass

Ask the question that makes it stick: which of these would you miss most if it started raining at 9pm and the temperature dropped twenty degrees?

Activity 2 — Build the packing list (20 min)

The patrol builds this, not you. Patrol leader at the board, three columns: personal gear, patrol gear, food.

Prompt for what they forget rather than dictating: sleeping pad, camp shoes, a second pair of socks, a trash bag, sunscreen, medications, the flag.

Then talk about carrying it. How far from the car to the site? Can you make one trip? What goes in a duffel and what goes in a pack? That is the second half of requirement 2 and Scouts skip it every time.

Assign patrol gear to specific Scouts by name, written down. “Someone bring the stove” means nobody brings the stove.

Send the list home as-is, in their handwriting if you can photograph it. It is theirs.

Activity 3 — Find the camp on the map (15 min)

Spread the maps out. Find the camp, then find the specific campsite within it — requirement 4 is the campsite, not just the camp.

Have them trace the drive from the meeting place. How long? Which highway? Where is the last gas station, and where is the nearest hospital?

On the site map, find the water source, the latrines, the parking, the trailheads, and the ranger station.

If the map has contour lines, teach them: close together is steep, far apart is flat. Then ask where they would rather pitch a tent and why. They will find the flat spot themselves.

Send home with families

Packing list is attached. Tell the den leader this week if you need to borrow gear — the pack has some and nobody misses a campout over equipment.

Annual Health and Medical Record parts A and B are required for every camper, youth and adult.

Break in boots now, not the night before.

Meeting 2: SAFE, food safety, and the plan

Goal: The patrol reviews the SAFE Checklist against this specific campout, plans the menu, and learns camp kitchen sanitation before they need it.

Covers requirements 3 and 7

Before the meeting

- Print the SAFE Checklist and the menu planning sheet.
- Bring the actual camp kitchen gear: stove, fuel, pots, dish tubs, biodegradable soap, a thermometer, a cooler.
- Have the Scouts BSA duty roster format ready to show — cooks, cleanup, fire, water.
- Collect health forms at the door and chase what is missing this week, not on the morning of.

Supplies

- Camp stove and fuel — demonstration only
- Three dish tubs, biodegradable soap, sanitizer
- Food thermometer, cooler, ice
- Menu planning sheets and duty roster template
- Printed SAFE Checklist

Run of show

Time	What happens
5 min	Gathering: duty roster puzzle
5 min	Opening
15 min	Activity 1: SAFE against this campout
20 min	Activity 2: plan the menu and the duty roster
15 min	Activity 3: camp kitchen sanitation
5 min	Closing: final logistics

Activity 1 — SAFE against this campout (15 min)

Not in the abstract. On the board, against this camp, this weekend, these Scouts. That is what requirement 3 asks for.

- Supervision — who is coming, how many registered adults, is everyone SYT current, who is the designated first aider, what is the buddy system rule after dark.
- Assessment — what could go wrong here. Weather, water, fire, wildlife, the road, getting lost, someone getting cold. Write the top five and say what you would do about each.
- Fitness and skill — health forms on file, any Scout with a condition the adults need to know about, has everyone camped before, who has never slept outside.
- Equipment and environment — the packing list, the weather forecast, the terrain, the fire restrictions in effect that week.

Assign the patrol leader to check the forecast the day before and report to the patrol. Give it to them as a real job.

Activity 2 — Menu and duty roster (20 min)

Plan the real meals: Saturday dinner, Sunday breakfast, and trail lunch. Simple, cookable on a camp stove or over coals, and something they will actually eat.

Constraints on the board before they start: no refrigeration beyond the cooler, one stove, twenty minutes of cook time, this many people, these allergies.

Then the duty roster, which is the patrol method made concrete. Cooks, cleanup, fire, water, and rotate across meals so nobody cooks twice and cleans zero times.

The patrol leader assigns it and the patrol lives with it. If it is unfair, they find out at camp, which is exactly the lesson.

Activity 3 — Camp kitchen sanitation (15 min)

Requirement 7 says explain, then demonstrate at camp. Teach it here so the demonstration is possible.

Set up the three-tub wash line for real and have them run a plate through it:

- Tub 1 — hot soapy water, wash.
- Tub 2 — hot clear water, rinse.
- Tub 3 — cold water with sanitizer, sanitize. Then air dry on a rack, never a towel.

Food safety rules they need to say back to you:

- Cold food stays under 40°F. Cooler with ice, out of the sun, lid shut.
- Raw meat stays separate. Its own container, at the bottom, its own cutting board.
- Cook to temperature and check it — ground beef 160°F, chicken 165°F. Pass the thermometer around.
- Hands washed before cooking, after handling raw meat, after the latrine, before eating. No exceptions and no “it is just camping.”
- Leftovers out more than two hours get thrown away.
- Wash water gets strained and disposed of where the camp says, never in a stream.
- All food and anything scented goes in the car or a bear box overnight, never in a tent.

Send home with families

Health forms are due now for every camper including adults.

Final packing list check. Label everything with your Scout's name.

Departure time and location on the handout. Arrive fifteen minutes early for the gear check.

Meeting 3: The campout

Goal: The patrol camps overnight, sets up patrol gear before personal gear, runs its own kitchen, and debriefs honestly at the end.

Covers requirements 5, 6, 7 and 8

Before the meeting

- Confirm the campsite reservation, the roster, and the health forms the week before.
- Recheck fire restrictions the day before — they change fast in a dry season.
- Pack the patrol first aid kit, the roster with emergency contacts, and a written plan showing the nearest hospital.
- Brief the other adults on one thing: we let the patrol leader lead, and we step in for safety, not for efficiency.

Supplies

- Everything on the patrol gear list, checked against names
- Patrol flag
- Patrol first aid kit
- Roster, health forms, emergency contact sheet
- Trash bags — pack it in, pack it out

Run of show

Time	What happens
Arrival	Gear check, then site walk and layout decisions
+30 min	Patrol gear up first, then personal tents
Afternoon	Skills, hike, or troop activity
Evening	Cook, eat, clean by the roster
Night	Campfire and Scoutmaster-style minute
Morning	Breakfast, break camp, Leave No Trace sweep
Before leaving	The debrief circle — requirement 8

Arrival and layout (requirement 6)

Do not let anyone touch a tent yet. Walk the site as a patrol and decide together where things go. The patrol leader runs it; you ask questions rather than giving answers.

- Kitchen — flat, away from tents, downwind, near but not on the water source.
- Eating area — beside the kitchen, room for everyone to sit.
- Tents — flat, high ground, not under a dead branch, not in the low spot that becomes a puddle at 2am.
- Firepit — in the existing ring, away from tents and low branches, with water and a shovel beside it.

Then the part the requirement is specific about: patrol gear goes up first. Dining fly, kitchen, water, latrine path. Personal tents after. Say why out loud — the patrol eats and stays dry together before anyone worries about where they personally sleep.

That sequence is the patrol method in physical form, and Scouts who learn it here arrive at a troop already knowing it.

The kitchen (requirement 7 demonstrated)

The duty roster runs. Cooks cook, cleanup cleans, and you eat what the patrol made.

Watch for the three that always slip: hands not washed, the cooler lid left open in the sun, and the wash line set up but bypassed when everyone is tired after dinner. Correct the first one gently and the patrol will correct the rest themselves.

Have the patrol leader check the meat temperature with the thermometer in front of everyone.

Evening campfire

Songs, skits, and run-ons led by the Scouts. Then let it go quiet before the end.

Close with something short and real — a minute on what you saw them do that day. Name a specific Scout and a specific thing.

Say something like

Tonight you put the kitchen up before your own tents. Nobody made you do that in that order — you decided it, and it meant everyone ate warm. That is what a patrol is.

Breaking camp and the sweep

Everything comes down and out. Then walk the site shoulder to shoulder, eyes down, and pick up every scrap — including the ones that were there before you.

The standard is that the next patrol cannot tell you were here.

The debrief circle (requirement 8)

Sit down before the cars get loaded. Patrol leader runs it; you keep quiet as long as you can stand to.

- What went well?
- What would we do differently next time?
- How did we follow the Outdoor Code and the Leave No Trace Principles for Kids?

Requirement 8 names the Outdoor Code and Leave No Trace specifically, so make sure that question gets a real answer rather than a nod.

Write down what they say. Read it back before the next campout — it is the single best planning document you will have, and it teaches them that a debrief is not a formality.

Send home with families

Air out and dry the tent and sleeping bag before storing them, or they will smell next year.

Ask your Scout what they would change about the campout. They will have a strong opinion.

Leader notes

- Let the patrol run it. The campout will be slower and slightly worse than one you organize yourself, and it will be worth ten times as much.
- Camping alongside a Scouts BSA troop is the ideal version of this adventure — it satisfies requirement 5 and it is a second troop visit.
- No Scout misses a campout for lack of gear. Ask quietly, solve it quietly, and keep a pack loan kit.
- At least one adult on every campout should have current first aid training beyond the basics, and everyone should know who that is.
- The first night outdoors is a big deal for some fifth graders. Watch for the Scout who is quiet at bedtime and check on them without making it public.

Safety

Before this adventure

Annual Health and Medical Record parts A and B for every participant, youth and adult, in hand before departure.

Two-deep leadership, both registered, both SYT current. No adult shares a tent with a youth who is not their own child.

Check the fire restrictions the day before. Water and a shovel at the firepit whenever there is fire.

Check your council for any tour or activity notification requirement, and for local rules on unit overnight camping.

Know the route to the nearest hospital and whether you have cell signal. Tell every adult both answers before the Scouts arrive.

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

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