



Citizenship in the World



Sports



Citizenship in the Community



Citizenship in the Nation



Personal Management



Personal Fitness



Safety



STEP 1: DO YOUR HOMEWORK

As Scoutmaster, you're the "advance" man. You need to check out and pull together certain things before your troop's annual planning conference. Neither difficult nor time-consuming, these tasks, listed below, make a lot of sense, because they pay off in a smoother, more effective conference. And they result in a better annual plan.

1. Gather district, council, community, and chartered organization dates for events that will affect the troop.

Begin by picking up a calendar of key school dates from the local school. Check with the local chamber of commerce for dates of community activities. Don't forget to get dates of key chartered organization activities. Personal dates, such as anniversaries or birthdays, may also affect troop activities, so be sure to include those.

During the summer, be sure to attend the annual *council* or *district* program planning conference. This is where you will be able to get the council and district calendar, as well as information on activities, training courses, summer camp, etc.

Now put all these dates on one calendar, to share with the troop committee and to use at the unit program planning conference.

2. Review the resources needed to plan the annual program.

Pull together your Scouting library. The items needed to plan your troop program include: Troop Program Planning Kit, *Woods Wisdom*, *Troop Program Features*, issues of *Boys' Life* and *Scouting* magazines, program feature supplements from *Scouting* magazine, *Scoutmaster Handbook*, *Boy Scout Handbook*, and *Junior Leader Handbook*.

3. Review the advancement status of each Scout.

Use the *Troop/Team Record Book* to do this. Look carefully for basic skills needed by your Scouts, and also for key merit badges that should be introduced through the troop program.

4. List some goals for the troop.

Take a look at successful areas from last year's program, like the number of Scouts who made First Class, or the super Good Turn you did for your chartered organization. You probably will want to continue those things, but also consider some other challenges to address during the coming year. The list could get lengthy, so you may have to prioritize your choices, selecting only a few challenges for this year. After all, there is always next year. Here are some areas to consider:

- National Quality Unit Award
- National Camping Award
- Service project or Good Turn
- Summer camp
- Special weekend events
- Troop membership
- Troop equipment
- Advancement

5. Review the program features available to the troop.

Using the troop planning worksheet, list your suggestions for a program feature for each month of the coming year. Be sure to keep in mind the troop goals and advancement status of your Scouts. Share the list of program features with the senior patrol leader prior to presenting them to the patrol leaders' council. (Hint: List your program feature suggestions in *pencil* to emphasize that input is also expected from the senior patrol leader.)

6. Meet with the troop committee to review the calendar and potential troop goals.

Share the calendar with the committee to ensure you haven't missed any important dates. Many committee members will be involved in troop activities, so they'll want you to note any conflicts in their personal calendars.

Review the potential goals you have set for the troop. Now is the time the troop committee "buys in" on its role in making your troop successful. They'll have a lot of discussion and some compromise, but the result will be a set of troop goals to which everyone feels committed.

Remember, these goals will not be finalized until *after* the junior leaders have also "bought in" at their annual planning conference.

7. Meet with your senior patrol leader to plan the next steps leading to the annual troop program planning conference.

This can be time-consuming and you may need more than one session. If so, devote the second meeting with the senior patrol leader to the sole task of mapping out the agenda for the troop planning conference.

You and the senior patrol leader should cover the following items at your meeting:

- ___ Review the Troop Program Planning video (parts II and III) and workbook in the Troop Program Planning Kit.
- ___ Review the steps to planning an annual troop program.
- ___ Review the calendar for any missing items.
- ___ Discuss troop goals. Allow the senior patrol leader to