

Resources – Patrols and The Patrol Method

A Beginner’s Guide to the Patrol Method

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September 5, 2014 Bryan Wendell Boy Scouting, Scouting Tips 17



The patrol method isn’t one way to run a troop. It’s the only way.

I’m paraphrasing Scouting founder [Robert Baden-Powell’s famous quote](#) about the patrol method, but the meaning is the same.

OK, it’s important. But how does it work? For that you can count on the [September 2014 ScoutCast](#).

This month’s guest is Mark Griffin, previously team leader of Learning Delivery for Scouting University and now an area director in the Central Region.

He describes the patrol method, explains the three different kinds of patrols, and discusses patrol meetings and patrol spirit.

Also of note is that for the first time, ScoutCast is making available its transcript. That’s great news for Scouters who are deaf or have partial hearing loss — plus for those who are at work where they can’t listen to a podcast. Find the transcript at the end of this post.

What is the patrol method?

The patrol’s a small team of eight or so Scouts, and it’s more than organizational convenience or a Boy Scout version of the den,” Mark says. “It’s the place where boys learn skills together, take on leadership responsibilities, perhaps for the first time, and develop friendships that will last over a lifetime.”

What are the three types of patrols?

- **New Scout patrol.** That might be a patrol of brand new Scouts who just moved up from a Webelos den, or it might be a group from a recruiting night that all joined together where they learn some basic skills as they join the troop.
- **Traditional patrols.** These are Scouts in that middle age group that are about the same age, have some similar interests and they work together to do things and learn advancement together.
- **Older scout patrol.** These are Scouts, say 14 years and older, who have been in the patrol for a while and have moved up into troop leadership positions.

How are patrol meetings different from troop meetings?

Some troops hold patrol meetings during their regular troop meetings. Others encourage patrols to meet on their own time, perhaps on a Sunday afternoon at the patrol leader's home.

Here are some ideas Mark suggests patrols do during patrol meetings:

- Have the patrol leader report on what happened at the latest patrol leaders' council meeting
- Plan upcoming outings, including food menus
- Design patrol flag
- Outfit and clean patrol box
- Work on advancement requirements
- Play a game or have fun in some way

Can patrols do activities outside of the troop, other than meet?

Yes.

"They may have their own day activities, such as a service project, or working on advancement, or merit badges, or things like that," Mark says. "If they go overnight, they need to have adult supervision, but they can do lots of things on their own. Service projects are a great thing for patrols to do."

What's patrol spirit?

"Patrol spirit starts with the [patrol name](#), which members choose and says something about them," Mark says. Come up with "a flag, a totem, a yell, a song, whatever they want, something that makes them feel part of a team, just like a sports team."

What does the patrol leader do?

- Plans, organizes, conducts patrol meetings activities.
- Represents the patrol as a member of the patrol leader's council.
- Keeps patrol members informed about upcoming events and deadlines.
- Encourages patrol members to complete advancement requirements
- Sets a good example by living up to the Scout Oath and Law