

**Scouts BSA Troop 617
Parent Handbook**



**VFW Post 1349
Prattville, AL**

Revised September 28, 2020

Welcome to Troop 617! This handbook is designed to provide an overview on: our Troop's structure and functions, responsibilities of the Scout and their parent(s), the formation of Troop 617, general Troop policies and rules we live by, and how your Scout will advance their Scouting career.

Overview of Program

The goal of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) - incorporated on February 8, 1910, and chartered by Congress in 1916 - is to train youth in responsible citizenship, character development, and self-reliance through participation in a wide range of outdoor activities, educational programs, and, at older age levels, career-oriented programs in partnership with community organizations.

The Scouting program has four specific objectives known as the "Aims of Scouting." They are character development, citizenship training, physical and mental fitness, and leadership development.

Scouts BSA is a year-round program for youth 11-17 years old that provides fun, adventure, learning, challenge, and responsibility to help them become the best version of themselves.

Troop 617 History

On June 17, 2019, a group of Scouts, who had recently crossed over from Cub Scouts, and their parents met to discuss the future of their patrol. It was decided that they would form their own Troop. The Scouts were asked to decide on the troop numerals. They chose that date - 6/17.

Troop Structure

You will receive a copy of "Troop 617 Framework," written by founding leadership, which covers everything pertaining to how Troop 617 operates and the rules that we follow. There are five components to a Scouts BSA Troop - charter organization, adult leadership, Troop committee, parents, and of course, the Scouts.

1. **Charter Organization:** Our charter organization is the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 1349. The VFW maintains a charter with the BSA as part of their mission to positively affect the lives of the youth in our communities while developing positive youth/adult partnerships. They provide a meeting space for the Troop as well as service project opportunities.
2. **Adult Leadership:** The adult leadership consists of the Scoutmaster, his Assistant Scoutmasters, and other members of the Troop Committee that take an active part in the weekly Troop meetings and

other Troop activities. This group varies depending on the needs of the Troop at any one particular time. Their primary responsibility is supporting Troop leaders in delivering quality program and handling Troop administration. Please remember that our leaders are all volunteers.

- ♣ The Scoutmaster is the adult leader responsible for the image of the troop and for supporting the youth leaders in implementing the troop's program. The Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters work directly with the Scouts. The Scoutmaster can be male or female, but must be at least 21 years old.
 - ♣ To fulfill obligations to the Troop, the Scoutmaster, with the assistance of the Troop Committee, recruits Assistant Scoutmasters to help operate the Troop. Each Assistant Scoutmaster is assigned specific program duties and reports to the Scoutmaster. They also help provide the required two-deep leadership standards set by the BSA. An Assistant Scoutmaster may be 18 years old, but at least one in each troop should be 21 or older, so he or she can serve in the Scoutmaster's absence.
3. **Troop Committee:** The Troop Committee is responsible for conducting the business of the troop, setting policy, and helping the Scoutmaster and Scouts with the outdoor program and other planned activities. The Troop Committee also has the responsibility to provide adults for boards of review.
- ♣ An outline of each position of the Troop Committee and its responsibilities is located in the *BSA Troop Committee Guidebook*. A copy will be provided to all Troop Committee members.
 - ♣ The Troop Committee shall hold a regular meeting each month and any other special meetings of the committee as requested by the Troop Committee Chair. Meetings will be announced at least 2 weeks in advance. All registered adults are encouraged to be in attendance and all Scout parents are openly invited to attend.
 - ♣ All adult volunteers will become trained prior to registration and/or within the 30 days of assuming Troop leader responsibilities. Youth Protection Training (YPT) is required before submitting an application; renewal of YPT is required every two years.
 - ♣ Adult volunteer privileges may be revoked at any time by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Scout Troop Committee present or by the Charter Organization. Reasons for dismissal can be, but are not limited to:
 - Abusive behavior
 - Lack of participation in the Troop

- Inappropriate participation in the Troop
 - Illegal activities within or outside the Troop
 - Failure to promote the ideals of the Scout Movement
 - Failure to abide by the Bylaws of the Troop and/or the regulations of the Boy Scouts of America
 - Failure to provide safe, wholesome activities
- ♣ All adult volunteers will be encouraged to fill out and periodically review a medical record form and review it at least once a year upon re-registration. Physical examinations or other health forms may be required to be filed for special activities and/or council activities.
4. **Parents:** Parents are vital to their Scout's success in the Troop. Your role as a Scouting parent is to stay informed and encourage, support, and engage.
- ♣ Your Scout is expected to take notes during meetings in order to know what is going on in their Patrol and the Troop. We encourage you to talk with your Scout after each meeting to see what activities are coming up and if anything is due. Adult leadership will contact guardians via text message or phone call as needed. Updates and other information will be sent regularly via email. Troop 617 also has a private Facebook group where information will be shared, as well as a source of photos and updates while on outings. If you have a concern or question, please contact the Troop adult leadership. If your Scout has a question or concern, please have them contact their Patrol Leader.
 - ♣ Read your Scout's handbook to review and understand the requirements they are working on. Actively follow your Scout's progress and offer encouragement and a push when needed. Show support to both the individual Scout and the Troop by attending all Troop Courts of Honor. Assist and encourage your Scout to participate in Troop fundraisers and Troop service projects. Be aware of your Scout's leadership or patrol level responsibilities.
 - ♣ There may be times when parents are needed to drive to/from an event or assist at Troop events.
 - ♣ Parents are also encouraged to look at the list of merit badges and become a Merit Badge Counselor for any areas of expertise.
5. **Scouts:** The Troop is divided into Patrols. Patrols are small groups of Scouts who camp together, cook together, play together, and learn together. Patrols are where Scouts learn citizenship at the most basic level. They also take on responsibilities within the patrol and learn

teamwork and leadership. Patrols sort of look like Cub Scout dens, but there is one big difference: Patrols elect their own leaders, and through these patrol leaders, Scouts have a voice in deciding what activities the Troop will put on its calendar. Patrols are one component of what we call a youth-run or youth-led Troop. Note: Elected youth leaders run the Troop. The adult leaders are there for guidance, support, mentorship, and to clear the path for the Scouts to lead.

Joining Troop 617

The Boy Scouts of America requires that a youth must be 10 ½ years old or have completed the 5th grade in order to join a Scouts BSA Troop.

1. **Registration:** Troop registration consists of: BSA youth or adult application; BSA medical forms A, B, & C; and signed annual consent form. All forms must be submitted the Troop Committee Chair as soon as possible, but before attending any campout or activity.
2. **Fees and Dues:** Each Scout is responsible to pay the Troop Treasurer any dues. Troop 617 dues are \$12/month and can be paid weekly, monthly, or in advance. The dues will cover the BSA annual fee of \$60, rank badges, merit badges, and other supplies. Checks should be made to BSA Troop 617. Giving the responsibility to your Scout to pay for their dues and activities helps them gain an understanding of the financial responsibility. If any of the costs or fees present a financial burden to the family, please let either the Committee Chair or the Treasurer know as we may have scholarship assistance available.
 - ✦ If a Scout chooses to leave the program, they are responsible for paying any remaining balance of the BSA annual fee.
 - ✦ In a case where any refunds are owed to a parent, but their Scout has outstanding dues, the Troop will deduct those dues from the refund.
 - ✦ The Troop will schedule several fundraising activities during the year. Some of these fundraising activities will be for the purchase of Troop 617 equipment. Funds raised by these activities will be placed in the Troop 617 General Account. All Scouts are expected to participate in fundraising activities.
3. **Physicals** - In order to participate in Troop activities, your Scout must have on file with the Troop a BSA medical form with parts A&B completed. For your Scout to participate in Summer Camp or any campout that is 72 hours or longer, they must also have a physical and part C completed that is signed by a doctor. The same rules apply to adult volunteers.

- 4. Behavior** - This is a youth-led Troop, and Scouts will be leading other Scouts. It is expected that all Scouts will treat each other with respect and will honor the Scout Oath and Law. Troop 617 will not tolerate any form of bullying or malicious harassment. No Scout will attempt to form any type of initiation rite, society, or exclusionary clique within the Troop. No Scout will intentionally degrade or lessen another Scout's experience or enjoyment of the Scouting program. No Scout will be allowed to hinder an elected or appointed Scout's ability to lead. Discipline is a Scoutmaster/Assistant Scoutmaster level task, not a Scout level task. Adult leaders will deal with any unacceptable behavior within the Troop; however, if the behavior increases to a level that the adult leader finds unacceptable, a guardian will be contacted. Scouts may be removed from an activity for disciplinary issues.

The Scouting Year

- 1. Troop Meetings:** Regular meetings are Mondays from 6:30 pm until 8:00 pm. All of the Scouts meet together as a group, or Troop. They are assigned to a Patrol. Patrols are meant to work together as a group. Each Patrol has a Patrol Leader and Assistant Patrol Leader.
- 2. Patrol Leaders' Council (PLC):** The PLC is made up of the Senior Patrol Leader, who presides over the meetings; the Assistant Senior Patrol Leaders; all Patrol Leaders; Troop Guides; and others as determined by the Senior Patrol Leader. The PLC is guided by the Scoutmaster. The Scoutmaster serves as coach/counselor to the PLC and may veto any of its decisions. The PLC meets biannually to map out the upcoming six months, then monthly to finalize details for the current upcoming month.
 - ♣ Each biannual PLC will be responsible for planning six months of the camping year. The PLC is responsible for selecting the location, with a minimum of one backcountry campout. The PLC will present their selections to the Troop Committee. The Troop Committee will oversee the reservations and other planning requirements as necessary.
 - ♣ The 3rd Monday of the month is for PLC and our monthly service project of cleaning up Overlook Memorial Park (299 Jay Street, Prattville).
- 3. Court of Honor:** This is a formal recognition of all Scouts who have moved up to any rank except Eagle Scout, or who have earned merit badges since the last Court of Honor. The Troop will have a Court of Honor every 3-4 months. Families are expected to attend. Advanced notice will be provided.

- 4. Monthly Campouts** - Each month, with the exception of June and July, Troop 617 has a scheduled campout. June is typically the month that Troop 617 attends Summer Camp, while July is temperature dependent. Troop activities such as campouts are led by the PLC with the Troop working together to plan all meals & activities. One Scout from each Patrol will be selected to be the Grub Master for that month's campout, the Grub Master is responsible for shopping for food and may be responsible for supplies and/or equipment specific to the camp out. Shopping is a Scout/parent activity.
- ✦ Electronic devices are not allowed on campouts as they detract from the outdoor experience. Troop 617 accepts no responsibility for electronics lost or damaged.
 - ✦ An example of the agenda for campouts is provided in the Troop 617 Framework. All parents/guardians must sign the annual consent, permission slip, and medical forms before a Scout can attend a campout or activity. Parents/guardians and Scouts are responsible for signing up for the event so an accurate count can be assessed. Costs vary each month, but will cover the location reservation, food, transportation, and equipment. Scouts will pay their portion of the cost of food to the designated Grub Master and gas money to their designated driver when directed at the assembly the morning of the campout.
 - ✦ Effort will be made to keep the cost of campouts as low as possible while still maintaining the Scouting experience. The Troop will cover the camping fee for Scouts and Leaders unless the cost is burdensome on the Troop account and as long as the funds are available.
 - ✦ Each Scout is responsible for paying the cost of food to the Grub Master and the cost of gas to their adult chaperone at the assembly the morning of departure. The cost of food will vary depending on the menu selected. The cost of gas will be \$2 for in-council campouts, \$5 for out-of-council campouts, & \$10 for out-of-state campouts.
 - ✦ The following items are prohibited from all BSA activities:
 - alcoholic beverages;
 - illegal drugs;
 - tobacco products;
 - pornographic materials;
 - any knife without possession of the "Totin' Chip" (applicable to Scouts only)
- 5. Summer Camp** - Each year, Troop 617 attends a weeklong BSA summer camp. Costs range from \$250-\$300 for each Scout. At least two

adult volunteers must be present at the camp. Troop 617 highly encourages all Scouts to attend.

Uniforms and Equipment

1. Scout Uniform: Like most sports teams, Scouts wear a uniform. Like most sports teams, we expect our Scouts to wear the uniform when they are doing Scouting, and to wear it properly. It is a symbol of who we are and what we do. Scout uniforms can be purchased at the Tukabatchee Area Council Scout Shop in Montgomery. There are three classifications of the uniform:

- ✦ Class A uniform should be worn to all Troop 617 activities, unless otherwise instructed. Class A uniform includes the official BSA uniform top with Troop 617 neckerchief, at minimum. A merit badge sash is worn by Scouts that have earned at least one merit badge and may be worn anytime with the Class A uniform.
- ✦ Class B uniform (green Troop t-shirt) will be worn as directed by Troop leadership.
- ✦ Class C uniform (grey Troop t-shirt) is the designated attire for service projects or cleanup activities.

Once your Scout has outgrown their uniform, we ask that they consider donating it to the Troop for other Scouts to use.

2. Scout Handbook: The *Scouts BSA Handbook* contains the requirements and great resources for each rank from a new Scout earning the Scout rank through the Eagle Scout rank to Eagle Palms. The handbook is also a guide for life that addresses issues such as alcohol and drug abuse, respecting others, and using the Internet appropriately. It can also be purchased at the Tukabatchee Area Council Scout Shop.

- ✦ Each Scout should bring their handbook to every meeting, event, and campout. Parents/guardians should consider purchasing one of the covers to protect the book & ensure your Scout's name is on it.
- ✦ The Scout Handbook is the official record of completed requirements.

3. Equipment: The Troop provides all patrol gear (tent, chuck box, stove, cooking utensils, etc.). Your Scout, at minimum, will be responsible for their own sleeping bag, pillow, sleeping pad, personal first aid kit, raingear, flashlight & batteries, backpack, mess kit, utensils, cup, personal hygiene items, and clothing. Adult and Scout leadership will work with you and your Scout to help round out any additional gear

that may be necessary throughout the Scouting year. All personal gear should be marked specific to your Scout.

Advancement

- 1. Ranks:** Scouting has a system of ranks in which Scouts learn progressively more difficult skills and take on progressively greater responsibilities. The highest of these ranks is Eagle Scout. Becoming an Eagle Scout is an important achievement that your child can be proud of throughout life. But turning out Eagle Scouts is not what the Scouting program is all about. Advancement is probably the most visible of the Scouting methods, and the easiest to understand, but it is only one of eight methods. We strongly encourage advancement, but we never force it—advancement is the Scout’s choice, and they set their own pace. Keep in mind that many great Scouts never became Eagle Scouts. During regular Troop meetings and campouts, Scouts have an opportunity to work on advancement requirements for a merit badge or a new rank. It is the responsibility of each Scout to know what requirements they have completed or need to work on.

- 2. Approval Process:** The Scout should record completed requirements in their Scout Handbook for rank or their issued Blue Card for Merit Badges. Once a Scout has completed all rank advancement requirements, they will need to go through the formal approval process that involves a Scoutmaster Conference and a Board of Review.
 - ✦ The Scoutmaster Conference is a time for the Scoutmaster and Scout to reflect on the skills learned and how the Scout has absorbed the ideals of Scouting. It is the Scout’s responsibility to schedule the Scoutmaster Conference, and to get their Scout Handbook signed off. After completion of the Scoutmaster Conference, the Scout will need to meet with the Advancement Coordinator to schedule a Board of Review.
 - ✦ The Board of Review consists of at least three committee members who ask the Scout general questions about their scouting experience, leadership, and goals. The first Scoutmaster Conference and particularly, Board of Review, can be intimidating for a young Scout. As their parent/guardian, you may want to discuss with your Scout some of their experiences in scouting before their first Board of Review to help ease their fears a little.
 - ✦ Scoutbook is the BSA’s online unit management tool and helps Scouts, parents, and leaders track advancement and milestone achievements along the Scouting trail. Adult leadership will record all completed requirements in Scoutbook in a timely

manner. However, the Scout Handbook is the official record of completed requirements.

- ✦ Parents should not sign off on requirements for their own scout in Scoutbook. Only designated adult leadership have authorization to do so.
- ✦ Please remember that just because your Scout has completed all the requirements for a rank, it is not automatic that it is awarded to them. If the adult leadership has a concern that they have not learned a skill well or have not mastered the leadership skills needed for the next rank, they will let the Scout know what they need to work on.

3. Merit Badges: There are more than 135 merit badges that are available to your Scout to earn. Certain merit badges are required for rank advancement and some are Eagle rank required. A Scout first expresses an interest in a particular merit badge by letting their unit leader know. To get them started, the leader gives them an Application for Merit Badge (blue card) along with the name and contact information for a district/council approved merit badge counselor. The Scout then, with help from their parent/guardian, contacts the merit badge counselor and makes an appointment. The merit badge counselor sets a date and time to meet with the Scout and a buddy. A Scout should never meet with a merit badge counselor without their buddy present. **{Unless otherwise specified, work on a requirement can be started at any time.}**

- ✦ Merit badge pamphlets on each subject are available at the Tukabatchee Scout Shop, but the Troop may have a copy that your Scout can borrow.
- ✦ The blue card is the nationally recognized merit badge record. This tool makes the recordkeeping easier for the Scout, the merit badge counselor, and the unit leader. At summer camp and other offered merit badge classes, a Scout may receive partial credit for completion of a merit badge on the blue card (at summer camp this will go to the Scoutmaster at week's end). Back home, the Troop will assist the Scout with completing any outstanding requirements.
- ✦ The merit badge counselor will update the blue card as the Scout completes each requirement. When the Scout has completed all of the requirements, the merit badge counselor will sign off on the card and the Scout returns the completed card to the Scoutmaster or Advancement Coordinator.
- ✦ A list of all merit badges will be given to each Scout. If there is a merit badge you feel comfortable teaching, please let the Committee Chair or Scoutmaster know. We are always in need

of merit badge counselors. Some merit badges can be completed at summer camp or other merit badge classes.

- ✦ Scouts will be limited to **two** Scout-initiated merit badges open at a time. Scout-initiated is defined as a merit badge requested by a Scout and not completed as a group. *This does not include merit badges started or completed at events such as summer camp, merit badge days, winter camp, etc.*

Youth Protection

Your Scout's safety is number one priority. Troop 617 leadership is required to take BSA's Youth Protection Training (YPT) & follow the guidelines outlined below.

1. "Two-Deep" Leadership will be provided on all Troop activities and functions. "Two-Deep" is defined as a minimum of two registered adult leaders, or one registered leader and a participating Scout's parent or another adult. One of these adults must be 21 years of age or older.
2. One-on-one contact between adults and youth members is prohibited. In situations requiring a personal conference, such as a Scoutmaster conference, the meeting is to be conducted with the knowledge and in view of other adults and/or youth.
3. The policies of two-deep leadership and no one-on-one contact between adults and youth members also apply to digital communication. Leaders may not have one-on-one private online communications or engage one-on-one in other digital activities (games, social media, etc.) with youth members. Leaders should copy a parent and another leader in digital and online communication, ensuring no one-on-one contact takes place in text, social media, or other forms of online or digital communication.
4. During transportation to and from planned Scout outings, the following procedures must be implemented:
 - ✦ Meet for departure at a designated area.
 - ✦ A roster of passengers to vehicles must be compiled before departure, to include the phone number of one adult in each vehicle.
 - ✦ Prearrange a schedule for periodic checkpoint stops as a group.
 - ✦ If you cannot provide two adults for each vehicle, the minimum required is one adult and two or more youth members—never one-on-one.
5. When staying in tents, no youth will stay in the tent of an adult other than his or her parent or guardian.

6. The buddy system must be used for latrines by having one person wait outside the entrance, or provide Occupied and Unoccupied signs and/or inside door latches.
7. Adult leaders need to respect the privacy of youth members in situations where the youth are changing clothes or taking showers, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.

