

Summer Camp Class Scheduling FAQs

What should be included in a Summer Camp class schedule for a first-year Scout?

There are several guidelines that work pretty well in our experience.

First, it is good to schedule a class in every time slot for a first-year Scout. If a Scout is busy, he tends to be happier at camp. He stays engaged because he is doing something interesting and he sleeps better at night because he is tired. There is really no need to leave open time slots to work on things like the Firecrafter Camper rank or a camp religious award. There will be enough time for those things between and after classes if a Scout is interested in doing them.

Second, it is good to have a mix of rank advancement work, 'serious' merit badges, and something fun.

- First-year Scouts are encouraged to sign up for "Project N.E.S.T." This program focuses on rank advancement through projects, activities, and games. It fills the 3 morning hours of the Scout's schedule. Scouts will have an opportunity to work on the First Aid and Nature merit badges as part of this program.
- In the afternoon, first-year Scouts should select areas of interest and work on fun merit badges. Options include aquatics, shooting sports, STEM, nature, handicraft, Scoutcraft, and sports merit badges.
- Scouts who have been in the troop for a year or more and have not yet reached First Class rank might choose to participate in Open Rank Advancement at the N.E.S.T. shelter during one afternoon class period.
- Fun merit badges: A boy should round out his schedule by choosing badges that interest him or that he will enjoy doing with his buddies. Common choices are Leatherwork, Woodcarving, Wilderness Survival, Fingerprinting, Geocaching, Art, Chemistry, Basketry, Rifle Shooting, Mammal Study, and Nature. If he is a capable swimmer, he may like Canoeing, Rowing, or Small Boat Sailing. If he is a weak swimmer, Instructional Swim can give him some practice to build confidence and skill.
- Older Scouts may be interested in completing some Eagle-required badges, such as Camping, Citizenship in the Nation, Citizenship in the World, Communication, Cooking, Emergency Preparedness, Environmental Science, First Aid, and Lifesaving, Personal Management, Personal Fitness, or Swimming. Some of these are recommended only for Scouts age 14 and older, and some are not ideal choices for new Scouts, because they have a lot of prerequisite work that will prevent finishing them at camp.
- Doubling Up: Some classes last only 2 or 3 days instead of all week. Scouts usually pair these badges together to fill the week. For instance, Athletics Monday through Wednesday, and Fingerprinting Thursday and Friday. When you look at the online sign-up form, you will see the combinations that work.

Why do most First-Year Scouts like to complete the Wilderness Survival merit badge?

Wilderness Survival is a great merit badge to complete at camp. All the Scouts who are working on it will build their shelters in the woods near the troop campsite, and sleep in them for a night. This is an activity that is difficult to complete someplace else, but becomes a fun group activity at camp. Even if a Scout decides not to enroll in the Wilderness Survival merit badge at camp, he may want to complete this requirement of building a shelter, so that it is already done if he pursues the badge at a later time. Often some of the most memorable photos and stories of the week relate to the unique shelters. Some boys choose to bring a small (5'x7') sheet of plastic to camp to place on the ground in their shelters. Keep in mind that no boy is forced to sleep on the ground in the woods, but most of the boys opt to do it once they see the process for building a cozy shelter and they know the other Scouts are doing it too.

Does a Scout have to take the same classes as others in his patrol?

No, a Scout is free to choose the classes he wants to take. However, many patrols do choose to take all or most of their classes together. If a Scout is a little hesitant or shy, it's good to align his class schedule with the other boys in his patrol so they can walk together from place to place and enjoy each other's company in class. If a boy is independent and has interests that are different from others in his patrol, it is ok for him to sign up for other classes that interest him. If a first-year Scout does this, he will pair up with a buddy taking the same class, so they can walk to and from classes together. During the time that boys are moving from class to class, staff members are stationed along the way make sure Scouts reach their destinations.

Why are some classes restricted for age 13+ or even older?

Some classes are restricted because the content is particularly challenging. In a handful of cases, the merit badge requirements actually limit by age who can work on them. Other popular classes are limited so that priority can be given to older Scouts, encouraging them to return to camp from year to year.

What do the notations after a class in the activity schedule mean?

Notes like '4b, 5a, 7b, 9abc' refer to the merit badge requirements that will not be covered in class. A boy can complete those items at home before camp and present evidence to his camp counselor for sign-off, or he can finish them after camp with a merit badge counselor in our troop or district.

What is the cost of a specific class?

There are no additional charges for any classes or course materials. The camp registration fee is all-inclusive for merit badges and advancement activities.

What is a cash card?

Parents often choose to provide some money for Scouts to spend at camp during the week. If you purchase a card online and share the amount and card number with us, we will be happy to create a laminated 'credit card' for your son to use at camp. A lost cash card is often returned to the owner or can be replaced with help from an adult at camp. Lost cash is difficult to trace to an individual and may not be found. Funding a cash card is popular, but completely optional.

What if a Scout decides he doesn't like a class he's enrolled in?

A few classes will fill to capacity prior to the start of camp, so it is good to settle on a schedule the Scout is happy with early on. However, if a boy changes his mind before camp, we'll try to help him find something else of interest. Once he's at camp, if a class is just not what he expected or not of interest, he should speak up and we will work with the staff to try to find him something else of interest. They can't accommodate a huge number of changes, but they will do their best if the Scout has a real concern. Based on experience, some classes most likely to fill early are Archery, Cooking, Metalwork, Model Design & Building, Rifle, Robotics, Shotgun, Small Boat Sailing, Swimming, Watersports, and Welding.

Is a Scout required to attend class every day? What happens if he skips class?

The merit badge counselors take attendance in class each day and report back to the Troop 202 leaders who was absent. This gives us an opportunity to discuss with the Scout how things are going and if he has concerns. Occasionally, an attendance error is made, so this also gives the Scout a chance to alert his counselor and get corrections made.

If a Scout decides part of the way through the week that he would like to skip a class and do something else productive, he should approach one of the troop adults and propose a change. We will happily support a plan, for instance, to go sailing or fishing with a buddy, since those are activities that are available at camp but might be more difficult to do elsewhere. The Scout does need to understand that he may sacrifice finishing one of his merit badges in order to pursue a different activity, but that is an acceptable trade-off if he is excited about trying something new.

What is 'Firecrafter'?

The Firecrafter camp rank program is unique to our area of the country, and exists primarily to encourage Scouts to return to long term summer camp from year to year. Becoming a Firecrafter (3rd year rank) is respected by the boys as a 'macho' undertaking since they know the requirements are very difficult to complete. During their first two summers at camp, they can complete the prerequisite ranks which are easier and achievable even with a full merit badge schedule.

The first rank, Camper, can be earned by a Scout at his first summer camp. He will need to demonstrate some simple Scoutcraft skills (knots, lashings, orienteering, safe Scouting) and complete one hour of service. The following year, he can earn the Woodsman rank, and his third year he can complete the requirements to become a Firecrafter candidate.

How does a boy go about working on a camp religious award?

A small number of boys work on camp religious awards each year. If a boy lets the adult leaders know he'd like to complete a religious award, he will be directed to the camp chaplain to get started on it. He'll be given a card listing the requirements, which may include things like doing good turns, reading scripture, and saying grace at meals. Toward the end of the week, the boy will have a Scoutmaster conference about his work, and he will meet once again with the camp chaplain to finish up. The award certificate is presented at the closing campfire program.

What does a boy do if he has partially complete merit badges at the end of the week?

At the end of the week, the camp staff prepares a package for the troop of all advancement work completed at camp. On Saturday morning prior to departure for home, Scouts will be given an opportunity to ask questions and make corrections if a counselor didn't mark off complete all the requirements he thought he had done. Once we return home from Summer Camp, the patches for completed merit badges are presented at the next troop meeting. For incomplete badges, 'blue cards' are given to the boy for follow-up. By comparing what is signed off to a list of all the requirements for the badge, he can determine what he needs to do to finish up. He can work with a merit badge counselor for that badge in the troop, and once all the items are complete and signed off, he will turn it in to the troop Advancements Chairperson for processing. The Scout should find a place to keep these in-progress cards so that he doesn't have to repeat work later. They don't expire until he turns 18, but our experience is that most of the follow-up work is either done in the next six to twelve months or is never done at all.

How does a patrol earn the Baden Powell patrol award?

The Baden Powell patrol award (named after the founder of Boy Scouting) is a group award that the Patrol Leader manages. Similar to a Firecrafter rank or a religious award, there is a card that lists the requirements. As items are completed during the week, and adult can sign off. The Scoutmaster must approve the completed card before it is turned in. Examples of requirements are displaying the patrol flag, keeping a neat campsite, completing advancements, and doing a service project. The boys can decide to work on the award once they are at camp. We ask their intentions ahead of time so that we can remind them once they're at camp and help them get started if they have questions.