

# Camping With Cub Scouts



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The Camping with Cub Scouts program is a special campaign designed to make your recruitment efforts as exciting as a Cub Scout's first night under a blanket of a million stars. With a focus on the fun, learning and adventure of the great outdoors that is at the core of Scouting, this program invites families in your community to experience the adventures that only Scouting can offer. Whether you are a rural council that can easily organize a community campout, or an urban council with access to a local park, this playbook should give you plenty of ideas to adapt this recruitment event in your area. Camping with Cub Scouts leverages an activity that kids and parents alike love—spending time in the great outdoors—while showing parents that Scouting will foster their child's courage, spirit of adventure and sense of wonder.

## Concept

Your council or district will host a community event for parents and youth to get a taste of what a Scout campout is like, by bringing elements of a Scout campout to your activity night. If your council has the resources and means, this could be turned into an overnight camping experience as well. All of the details (food, activities, supplies, etc) will be taken care of by the council or district. If budget allows, when promoting this event at a school night or open house, new Cub Scout recruits could be given a free gift they can use on the upcoming campout or camp night. Go to [ScoutStuff.org](http://ScoutStuff.org) or visit your local Scout shop for gift ideas.

# Planning the Activity

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A successful campfire is built on careful planning and prepared with the right firewood. So too, is planning and preparation essential for a successful Camping with Cub Scouts night or campout. And remember, this is meant to be a fun community event, alive with the spirit of adventure. You've organized campouts and similar events before, but here are some suggestions to help you get started.

## Step 1 – Determine Your Strategy

In terms of recruiting, the Camping with Cub Scouts program can be used as either a single, stand-alone event, or as part of a broader recruiting effort. We recommend and encourage you to make this your council-wide Cub Scouting recruiting program for the season to promote on the council level and execute on the district level. For example, it could be promoted at back-to-school nights or other similar presentation opportunities to incentivize families to join Scouting and receive their free camping gift when they sign up. Or you could plan to host this as an open community event and be prepared to recruit and provide camping gifts at the camping event itself. Whether you do a real campout, or a campfire evening at a local park, it's important to have a plan in place of when you extend the invitation to join Cub Scouting. Ideally this could be around a crackling campfire.

## Step 2 – Set a Budget

Once you have committed to hosting a Camping with Cub Scouts event, be sure to budget the appropriate funds needed so you can provide each boy who attends a camping gift (some councils have been successful securing donations to help cover these expenses). Go to [ScoutStuff.org](http://ScoutStuff.org) or visit your local Scout shop for gift ideas. Other costs to consider include event venue (if it's not a council-owned property), food & drink, activities supplies, and other event costs, including any other incentive gift or marquee item associated with the event. Obviously if you are camping, you'll need to budget for camping supplies as well.

## Step 3 – Pick a Date

This is an outdoor activity, so it should be relatively warm outside when the event is held. We know Scouts are tough, but we'll also have parents and youth participating with us for the first time. So it's important to make it a pleasant experience. Always have a backup plan if it turns out to be a rainy day when you show up for the event. If it's an evening event, you may want to specify a beginning and ending time but advertise the event as "open" for families to show up and participate anytime within the scheduled hours. If it's an overnight event, obviously there will be a more rigid schedule.

## Step 4 – Reserve a Venue

Select a family-friendly, open location to host the event. A city park, local nature center, or Scout camp (as long as it's close by) are all great options. [Note: A Council-owned Scout camp is the default, preferred location.] If you live in an area where nature is far away, you can even recreate the camping effect in a school gym, a church lot or at your regular meeting place. Wherever you hold the event, it's important that it's easy and fairly quick to get to and that the venue has plenty of space for those who attend. This might require reserving a venue months in advance. For public properties, be sure to check with your local government regarding fire restrictions or even spending the night.

## Step 5 – Secure Materials

The amount of supplies to bring will depend on if your event is a couple of hours on a weekday, or if it is an overnight campout. Whatever you do, you'll need to consider how many camping gifts you think you'll need—one for each of the youth attending the event—as well as all the gear, food, equipment and supplies you typically plan for to accommodate a large scale campout. Even if you're holding an evening-only campfire, there is always more items needed than are often expected. Make sure you allow for plenty of time to order certain items to ensure you have everything needed prior to the event.

## Step 6– Provide Meals

You may decide to have a meal service during the event, especially if it's an actual overnight campout. For ease, we recommend keeping it simple and quick. Almost all kids agree, S'mores are a must. And if you're doing dinner, cooking hotdogs over a fire is fun, but you can also do something easier like ordering pizza. A big pancake breakfast after your overnight Camping with Cub Scouts event can also be a huge crowd pleaser. Whatever you decide, this is your event, so it may be an opportunity to show how well your council can put on a campout for a lot of people. If you are doing an overnight, this might be a chance to really show off a great part of Scouting: feasting in the outdoors!

## Step 7 – Organize Staff and Volunteers

Like most things in Scouting, this event will only work with the help of our dedicated volunteers and professional staff. This is a great opportunity for parents, alumni, and donors to get involved. Be aware that your staffing needs will vary depending on event structure and how many people show up to the event.

# Promoting the Activity

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It doesn't matter how fun the event is if nobody shows up. Here are a few tried and true tactics you can use to get the word out. Remember to think outside the box and apply the to your community's specific situation. We have created customizable assets to fit your individual needs that can be found by accessing the [BSA Brand Center](#).

## Current Members

Be sure your current parents and volunteers are aware of the event and are invited to participate. This is a recruiting event, and our best recruiters are those who are currently in love with our programs. A Scout family that brings their friends to an event is one of the most powerful recruiting tools we have. And they know the drill when it comes to camping so newcomers are more likely to follow suit.

## Social Media

Don't forget to promote the event on your council's social media channels. Encourage parents and adults to share photos from the event on their Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. Often, any local businesses you partner with will be willing to share the event with their online communities as well. You may want to consider making a Facebook Event as well, which provides a page for updates, questions from participants, etc.

## E-Mail

As you reach out to your network via email, remember that the email is likely to be forwarded to friends and potential participants. You'll want to include links to learn more about Scouting in your community as well as where to connect with the local and national Scouting community on social media.

## Printed Materials

Flyers, posters, yard signs, etc. are great ways to drive awareness and promote the event in your local area and to put up at the site of the event so folks know they've arrived at the destination. Professionally designed assets have been created for you to leverage during your recruiting efforts on the BSA Brand Center.

## School Outreach

School outreach is a great opportunity to promote your council's [Campaign with Coleman] event. If you already hold Back-to-School recruiting nights, you know they provide an opportunity to invite new Scouts to the event and allow boys who are not signed up yet to see Scouting in action. For new Scouts that sign up at the Back-to-School night, you can use the free camping gift as an incentive for signing up. Daily morning announcements, take home mail, and weekly emails to parents are also great options to explore. Note: If you are holding an actual campout, involving a parent is crucial, as they would need to accompany the potential Scout to the overnight event.

## Public Relations / Earned Media

Local news outlets are always looking for an interesting angle on Scouting. As you reach out to your local newspapers and news stations, you may want to invite them to attend the event as part of their story. Local news organizations usually appreciate advanced notice so be sure to let them know well in advance.

## Community Partnership

There are great opportunities with a campout or a camping themed evening for you to coordinate with local businesses, churches and other local nonprofits (such as an outdoor outfitter, nature society or kids club) and invite them to participate as well, or even take a larger role in having a booth for nature education, as an example.

# Holding the Activity

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This particular event is really what you want to make of it. If you are doing an evening in a park, and can have a fire, you may want to include some fireside stories and games indicative of a family camping outing in Cub Scouts. If you are actually holding a campout then a campfire is a given, and you may want to include more advancement and nature education activities. With so many components of Scouting highlighted in the camping experience, from nature hikes to camp cooking, there really is no limit to the types of outdoor activities you can do with this event. We've compiled a few possible scenarios below of what a Camping with Cub Scouts recruiting event could look like.

## Slide 1: The Nature Path

Adaptable to an urban park, a council-owned facility, or deep-woods camping, this model for a Camping with Cub Scouts event can start with a nature stroll or a short hike where samples of leaves and animal tracks are discovered, photographed, recorded, studied and sketched. You can make a fun Nature Passport for the event where participants can learn to identify various animal tracks and plants, while learning how that knowledge is useful, and relevant to the Scouting experience and to life. You could even incorporate learning stations along the way, or a fun Scavenger Hunt to reinforce the learning in a participatory way.

## Slide 2: The Ultimate Campsite

This model gets down to the brass tacks of camping. By guiding participants along a curriculum that includes how to choose an ideal campsite, what pitfalls to look out for, how to pitch a tent, pack up and care for camp gear, and how to keep campsites clean and safe from wildlife. Of course, all of this can be taught by doing, especially if you are on an actual overnight trip.

## Slide 3: To Build a Fire

The campfire is the ultimate symbol of Scouts in the great outdoors, where skill, safety and respect are the ultimate aims of every Scout in harnessing the incredible power of nature. To host a campfire-focused event, you'd definitely need to be on a council-owned property or somewhere an open pit fire would be allowed. The participants with their parents can initially learn about the safety of a Scouting campfire, and the proper method of preparing for a successful campfire in varying climates and weather situations. This could include a scavenger hunt for various kinds of wood, and an overview of the many methods of igniting and building a fire. Of course a campfire focus for your Camping with Cub Scouts event would be a perfect opportunity to roast marshmallows and enjoy fireside skits, followed by proper fire pit clean up and Leave No Trace best practices.

## Slide 4: Scouting and the Outdoors

You can elevate the experience of camping and socializing around a campfire by tapping into that other hallmark of Scouting: Showmanship! You may want to invite a storyteller, have Scouts put on a skit, or hold a ceremony of Scouts reciting the Scout Oath and Law to earn their Bobcat rank. It's a great way to involve your current Scouts with those considering joining the program. With hot cocoa and roasted marshmallows, the participants will experience the fun of Scouting, whether or not you are actually staying overnight. This may also be a great time to present the Camping with Cub Scouts as someone from the council explains to new boys and their parents what Scouting is all about.

Whether or not you hold an actual overnight event, and however you choose to incorporate the above scenarios—or even if you create your own entirely—the idea is that you can create an experience that effectively conveys the spirit of the outdoors and the Scouting experience with camping to new and prospective recruits in your council.

# Recruiting at The Event

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Recruiting at the event itself should occur naturally and organically. When parents and youth have the opportunity to participate in Scouting and see what it's all about, they tend to be much more responsive to recruiting messages. Be sure to have plenty of recruiting material on-hand and provide opportunities to sign up, but remember to keep it light and informal. Families came here to have a fun time, not to hear a sales pitch.

# Follow Up

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After the event, it is appropriate to follow up with the parents and families that attended and include them in future council communications. Send an email to new families thanking them for their time and sharing photos or recaps from the event. Include an invitation to join a local pack if they haven't already. The important thing is to follow up and ensure that those who have a desire to become part of Scouting are able to do so.

# Thanks!

