



How to Plan your “Ideal Year of Scouting”

The best packs and troops are those that plan their program and budget one year at a time, and then use monthly committee meetings to review upcoming program. Plan now to manage your unit’s program rather than be managed by it.

There are 6 steps to success when it comes to planning your Pack’s or Troop’s year. Each step is important to overall success.

1. Planning
2. Budgeting
3. Goal Setting
4. Communicating the Plan to Parents & Scouts
5. Earning the money
6. Executing the plan



Planning

Steps to Success:

1. Attend Program Preview. Encourage as many leaders and parents from your unit to attend with you. Research tells us we retain only 15% of what we hear, so the more ears you bring with you, the more you’ll remember!
2. Schedule your unit’s Annual Planning Conference. This is a time to include leaders, parents, and even some Scouts. A Saturday or Sunday afternoon works best, so you can discuss ideas, work, and not be rushed for time.
 - Start by brainstorming ideas of fun things to do. Some ideas to keep in mind:
 - Troops should include at least one outdoor activity every month during the year, including a long-term summer camp.
 - In addition to pack meetings, packs should include outdoor activities at least quarterly, and include Day Camps and Resident Camp, both of which are summer activities.
 - The council provides a variety of activities throughout the year for packs and troops. Be sure to have a copy of the council calendar handy for your Program Planning Conference.
 - When you brainstorm, there are no bad ideas. Write all of them down – use a piece of posterboard and a sharpie, or a dry erase board to keep track of the ideas.
 - After you brainstorm the ideas, start identifying which activities you’ll do in each month. Certain activities are more fun in the winter vs. summer, and fall or spring vs. summer, for example.
 - At this point you don’t have to know exactly where each campout will take place, but in general terms what you’ll be doing and when.
 - It is helpful to have a calendar of local events – local fairs, rodeos, high school football, and other local activities that will compete with families for their attention.



- Put on your calendar when pack meetings, troop meetings, etc. will take place. Include the council/district activities, adult leader training and Roundtable too.
- Also at this time you should begin discussing your unit's budget. Here are some things to think about:
- Many units pay their leaders' BSA registration and insurance fees. You might consider reimbursing these fees after the leaders complete their training.
- Many packs provide boys with the handbook, neckerchief, neckerchief slide, belt buckle, and hat they'll need for the next year when they complete the current year.
- Many troops provide the neckerchief, hat, and handbook for new Boy Scouts joining their troop.
- Consider reimbursing your unit's leaders for participating in Cub Scout Leader Training.
- Consider reimbursing your unit's leaders for participating in Wood Badge (or better yet, when they earn their beads!).
- Rather than charge dues for crafts and snacks, many packs set a budget for each den during the year for these items.
- Pinewood Derby kits, awards, and Blue & Gold Banquet food & awards expenses are great items for packs to include in their budget.
- Once you know what your unit wants to do for the upcoming year you're ready to move on to Step 2!

Budgeting

1. It's time to set figures to each of the items on your calendar and the "operational" expenses for your unit.
2. It's a good idea to delegate the gathering/estimating of costs for this. One parent can go to the Scout Store to gather prices on handbooks, neckerchiefs, etc. Another parent can research the cost to attend activities & events at non-BSA facilities, state parks, etc. And yet another parent can review the council calendar/website to gather costs for district/council events.
3. Be sure to include costs for food, transportation (gas), and other "incidental" costs associated with activities.
4. Now you can start inputting items into your budget. The Golden Spread Council has a budgeting form you can download (www.goldenspread.org) and use in Microsoft Excel, or you can work with a scratch pad. Most of your expenses will be tied directly to each youth in the program.
5. After you've gathered up your expenses you'll probably have a figure of \$100 - 200 per boy for the year. Every unit is different and the figure reflects its activities and plans.
6. Take the "per boy" figure and multiply it by the number of boys in your unit. Don't forget to add boys based on an estimate to what you'll pick up through





Roundups. Most packs end up doubling their size from the number of active boys they had in the spring.

7. This is your unit's annual budget – congratulations! You're done with Step 2!

Goal Setting

1. This step will take no time at all if you did your homework in Step 2. You already know at this point your “per boy” budget for the year.
2. For money earning projects it's a good idea to add 5-10% for prizes. As you'll see in Step 4 below, good communication of your plan will excite your Scouts and parents, but prizes go along way toward getting the ball rolling.
3. So if you're “per boy” budget for the year is \$125, add 5% of prizes, making your per boy budget \$131.25.
4. Divide this new figure by your anticipated popcorn commission (commissions start at 21% and go up to 35% - it's probably safe to assume 33%). So your $\$131.25 \div .33 = \397.73 . Just round up to \$400 in this case, and you have your “PER BOY SALES GOAL”
5. You should also give some thought to what prizes you might like to offer to boys. To give you an idea of your popcorn prize budget, take your total unit budget and take 5% of it (it'll probably be in the range of several hundred to a thousand dollars, depending on the size of your unit and planned activities). Here are a few ideas to consider:
 - Offer a prize or two for your unit's top seller. This will excite the overachievers in your unit.
 - Offer prize “levels” – each level offers a different prize. Each boy can get excited about a prize and work toward it knowing what he'll earn.
 - Offer group prizes – pizza party for the den/patrol that sells the most, or hits their collective goal (per boy goal multiplied by the number of boys in the den/patrol)
 - Have fun – many units have gotten kids excited by offering pies to throw in the leader's face for every \$100 in popcorn sold.
6. Once you know your unit's “PER BOY SALES GOAL” you're ready to move on to Step 4.



Communicating the Plan to Parents & Scouts

- As you begin to plan how to communicate your plan, keep these two ideas in mind:
 - Boys join Scouting for fun. They want to experience adventure, excitement, and the outdoors. They want to be part of a gang and do things with their friends.



- Parents involve their sons in Scouting to teach them life lessons, values, and character. They want their boys to grow up to be caring productive adults.
- The way to communicate your plan will be different to your two audience, Scouts and parents.
- The message to boys is excitement – “Scouts, here’s what we have planned for the year, Pinewood Derby, overnighter at the Amarillo Zoo, Day Camp at Camp MK Brown or Camp Don Harrington where you’ll shoot bb guns and bows & arrows, Spook O Ree, and so on. You can do all these fun things by selling popcorn. If you sell \$400 worth of popcorn you get to do everything!”
- The message to parents is something a little different “Parents, here’s what we have planned for the year – [insert above] and your son can participate fully with no cost to you if he sells \$400 in popcorn.”
- The parents’ message is about participation at no out of pocket cost. The boys’ message is about fun. Properly communicated both will excite the boys and parents to success!
- You might consider offering 2 or 3 levels of sales goals:
 - Bronze Medal – covers all “operational” costs (neckerchief, handbook, etc), all activities through Blue & Gold, and their Pinewood Derby Kit.
 - Silver Medal – covers everything above, plus spring activities
 - Gold Medal – covers Bronze & Silver, and also covers Fun in the Sun, Resident Camp, Summer Camp, etc.
- This gives boys levels to shoot for, so his popcorn sale isn’t “all or none”



Earning the Money

1. With good planning in steps 1 – 4, earning the money is really easy.
2. Attend one of the Popcorn Kickoff Meetings; all the details of the sale will be discussed and you’ll receive the materials you need to be successful.
3. Hint: Start planning now on when your unit’s popcorn kickoff will take place; units can start selling popcorn as soon as the unit kernel attends a kickoff.
4. With the popcorn sale, you keep your unit’s commission – no waiting around for commission checks!

Executing the Plan

- This is the fun part – Scouting!
- Boys who attain their selling goal get to participate fully with no cost to their parents. You’ll find that your unit retention is better – more boys will stay active through the year.
- At your pack/troop committee meetings (which should take place monthly), discuss the previous activity and plan the upcoming one.