



Boy Scouts of America Troop 317 Johns Creek, Georgia Frequently Asked Questions

General Information

1. How does Troop 317 differ from other Troops? What are the mission and vision for the Troop?

Troop 317 is not unlike any other Scout Troop in its overall look and feel. We conduct our meetings and run our Troop via the guidelines set forth by the BSA. However, Troop 317, like every other Troop, has its own "personality."

Troop 317's main distinctive is that our adult leaders work to train and equip young men to be mature and impactful disciples of Jesus Christ through the vehicle of Scouting. For more information on the Troop's discipleship process see our website: <http://www.troop317.com/Discipleship/>

In addition, a copy of our Troop Charter and our Troop Conduct and Operations document can also be found on the home page of our Troop website: www.troop317.com

2. In what ways would you expect a Scout to benefit from the scouting experience? What are the expected outcomes from a Scout's exposure and involvement in scouting and in Troop 317?

The founder of Scouting, Lord Baden-Powell said "Scouting is a game with a purpose." Scouts will expect to have fun at meetings and on our trips. While having fun, they will accomplish many things that will build skills, character and confidence for a lifetime. No other program today offers young men the variety of experience and opportunity for growth of the whole person.

A young man gets out of Scouting what he puts into Scouting. He may choose to pursue leadership in his patrol and the Troop. He may choose to focus on advancement. However, he might just have fun enjoying the activities we offer and the friends he makes in his patrol and the Troop. No matter his pursuit, he will be exposed to God's Word and God's people in a variety of settings and situations that will impact him in this life and the life to come.

3. I know the Troop is focused on Christian principles and meets at Perimeter Church. Is the Troop advocating Perimeter's specific theology? Are there potential conflicts if we come from other denominational backgrounds – Baptist, Catholic, etc.?

We hold to the historical teachings of the Bible, which we hold to be the infallible and inerrant word of God. We will always strive to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) whether a person holds to the teachings of Scripture or not. We also recognize that there are doctrinal differences between many denominations. Our intent is to consistently teach what we believe the word of God says. If you have further, more specific questions or comments on this point, please contact our Troop Chaplain.

4. Who are those in leadership positions for Troop 317? What is the leadership structure? Can parents be involved in leadership meetings?

The leadership structure, and an updated list of our Troop leadership, including Committee members, can be found on the Troop website: www.troop317.com. Parents are welcome to participate in our leadership meetings – Troop Committee Meetings – each month.

5. Where do I find more information on scouting in general? Are there recommended books or websites?

The best resource is your son's Boy Scout Handbook. We will be referring to it often, and all of the advancement requirements (with the exception of Merit Badge Requirements) are contained in the Boy Scout Handbook. In addition, here are some suggested websites, with general information about Scouting, as well as the websites for our local Council (Atlanta Area Council) and District (Milton District).

<http://www.scouting.org>
<http://www.atlantabsa.org>
<http://www.troop317.com>

<http://olc.scouting.org>
<http://www.miltonbsa.org>
<http://usscouts.org>

6. What kind of time commitment is required for the Scout? Are there participation minimums?

Other than our two "stand down" months of July and December, during which there are no meetings or campouts, Troop 317 operates year round. Our meetings are held once per week, on Tuesday nights, from 7:00pm-8:30pm. We meet every Tuesday night of the month, with the exception of the meeting following a campout, which is reserved for the Patrol Leader's Council meeting. We have a campout during the ten months each year that we are active – generally the 3rd weekend of each month.

Once a Scout reaches the First Class rank, we ask the Scout to participate in a minimum of 60% of Troop meetings and campouts to satisfy advancement requirements. The written requirement is that a Scout should be "active" in his Troop/patrol. We believe that the 60% standard, while a rate of participation lower than ideal, is a reasonable expectation.

7. What goes on at the Tuesday night meetings? Are they mandatory?

Our meetings begin at 7:00pm sharp (although Scouts often arrive at 6:45pm) with the "Opening." At this time, the Scouts form up by Patrols for the procession of the colors (the USA and Troop 317 flags), the Pledge of Allegiance, the Scout Oath, and a brief prayer. The agenda for the meeting is then announced.

Meetings generally include 3 elements: "Troop Time" during which there is group instruction, a guest speaker, a briefing on an upcoming campout, etc. During "Patrol Time" the Scouts may review advancement progress with their ASM, or develop a duty roster/meal plan for an upcoming campout. Lastly, "Game Time" includes playing a game like "Capture the Flag" or Ultimate Frisbee. Each segment lasts 20-30 minutes depending on the meeting. Advancement activities (e.g. Scoutmaster Conferences, Boards of Review, and Merit Badge Instruction) can take place during any segment.

The meeting ends at 8:30pm with the "Closing" which includes announcements, the Scoutmaster's Minute, the retiring of the colors, and a prayer. The Troop cleans the Uptown Auditorium of trash to ensure that we "Leave no Trace."

While Troop meetings are not mandatory, it only makes sense that if a Scout is going to do well, advance in Scouting, and have fun, he will participate in the life of the Troop to the fullest extent possible. Certainly, if your son obtains a leadership position in the Troop, we would expect him to prioritize his leadership commitment, and participate to the greatest degree possible.

8. How much should we expect to pay in annual, fixed costs (membership, etc.)?

Our Scouting year runs from August to July. Annual dues (payable in August) are currently \$85. When you join the Troop, we collect an additional \$45 to cover the cost of your joining kit (patches, Boy Scout Handbook, Class B T-shirt, Troop 317 neckerchief, etc.)

9. How much should we expect to pay for the uniform?

A Field Uniform (Class A) consists of a Scout shirt, Scout pants/shorts, Scout socks and a Scout belt. A full Class A uniform should cost around \$75. Most of us Scouters/parents would recommend the new Scout pant called the "Switchbacks". It is a pair of Supplex nylon or canvans-type "convertible" pants that are accepted as part of an official Scout uniform. At nearly the same purchase price as standard Scout pants, "Switchbacks" include a web belt and can be converted to shorts making them a great value. They are available for Scouts and adults. There are two Scout shops nearby, one in Marietta and one in Lawrenceville. Additionally, new/used Scout uniforms are often available for sale via eBay. For special circumstances, Troop 317 maintains a "Uniform Closet", where donated uniforms are occasionally available at no charge to needy families.

In addition, remember that your Scout is likely to grow, so please consider uniforms to be an ongoing expense. Troop 317 values the Scout uniform as an important part of the Scouting program. Scouts are expected to be in full uniform, including socks, for Scout events, Scoutmaster Conferences, Boards of Review, Scout's Own Worship Services and other appropriate times. A Scout should learn to care for his uniform, wear it correctly, and keep it looking neat.

The Troop provides one Activity (Class B) T-shirt as part of your joining kit. Extra T-shirts are approximately \$7 and are available for purchase from the Troop.

10. What other elective costs should we expect to have (campouts, Summer Camp, camping gear, etc.)?

Troop 317 plans 10 campouts per year. There are eight monthly campouts at an average cost of \$25-\$35. Summer Camp (once per year) usually costs around \$275. The Troop also plans one "SuperTrip" per year (usually 4 days, 3 nights), at an average cost of \$150.

11. Are there scholarships?

There are a limited number of scholarships (camperships) available on a case-by-case basis at both the Council level and at the Troop level. Scouts can earn money by participating in Troop fundraisers. Currently, the Troop sponsors a Popcorn sale each fall, and in the past, close to 25% of the Scout's sales can go to the Scout's "Scout Account". There are Scouts with several hundred dollars in their accounts, others with much less. Money in Scout Accounts can be used for annual dues, campout fees or Summer Camp. Troop camperships are available only after a Scout has taken full advantage of fund-raising activities (Popcorn sales, etc.), and the Scout's own personal earning potential has been taken into account.

It is our desire that no Scout would miss the full participation with the Troop due to financial difficulties. While it is not the intent of T317 to exclude anyone from Troop activities based on cost, Scouting families must understand that there will be a cost to be an active part of the Troop, and families should budget accordingly. Please contact your Assistant Scoutmaster for more details surrounding our campership policy.

12. Can the Scout participate in a season of sports on Tuesday night and still be in the Troop?

Yes, being in Scouting does not preclude the Scout from participating in other activities. We believe that there are multiple avenues of personal and character development. We obviously believe strongly in the role that Troop 317 plays in that arena, but other activities have their place, as well.

That being said, it is a rare Scout that can simultaneously do a full season of sports AND a full season of Scouting, and do both well. We leave the final decision about priorities to the Scout and his family, trusting in the family's wisdom to choose the slate of activities that they feel would best help their son.

13. How will a new Scout be assigned to a patrol?

Our Troop is organized in an "age and stage" arrangement, where Scouts of similar ages and grades will be together in a patrol. After a year or so of having different age/rank Scouts in the same patrol, we decided that the "age and stage" method more closely aligned with our vision and mission for the Troop.

Depending on his age when he joins, a new Scout will either be part of a new patrol, or (in the case of older Scouts joining for the first time) he will be assigned to a patrol of Scouts similar in age and grade.

14. Can we request that he be assigned to a particular patrol, in order to be with a friend?

We know that Scouting is more fun when done with a friend, so we try to accommodate any and all requests of this type. However, we have to keep in mind the balance of the Troop needs, the size of the patrols, the advancement track of the existing patrols, etc. The Troop will make the best judgment possible, while being flexible to change, should a serious need arise.

15. What kind of time commitment is required for the Scout parent? (more info in the Scout Parent section of FAQ)

It has been our policy for at least one parent per family to serve the Troop in some way. We have many varied positions that a parent can fill, some of which take more time than others. Committee Members, Assistant Scoutmasters, Merit Badge Counselors, Troop Committee "assistants", campout volunteers, campout drivers, etc. are all needed roles that can be filled by parents.

It is our desire that you serve in an area of your giftedness and passion, in order to make your service more meaningful and more rewarding. Please contact the Troop Committee Chairman to discuss how you can volunteer and best serve the Troop.

16. What kind of activities are parents typically involved in? (more info in Scout Parent section)

A parent can best support the Troop by working in a Troop Committee position, supporting the activities of the Troop in a "back office" manner. Positions like Membership Coordinator, Program Coordinator, Advancement Coordinator and Finance Coordinator all need assistance from time to time with administrative and record keeping details.

If a father wishes to be more involved with the Scouts, he can be trained to become a Patrol Discipler/Assistant Scoutmaster (ASM). The PD/ASM works with individual patrols in a smaller group setting. He also spends time with Scouts during Troop meetings and campouts on advancement and spiritual mentoring.

17. What about Scouts with single parents?

Boys with single parents are particularly encouraged to join. We see our Troop Leaders as mentors and positive male role models for young men without a father figure in the home. Moms can help with the Troop Committee and take on roles that fit around her hectic schedule.

18. Can Moms participate in the camping trips or other activities?

It's important that our Troop utilize the skills and talents of every willing and able adult to make our Troop as good as it can be. Due to our emphasis on discipleship, we've found it to be more effective if dads are the main parents who spend time on the campouts. This is a critical time in the life of your son, as he seeks to embrace and exercise his masculinity. Solid role-models are important, in that they show what it looks like to be a man who follows Jesus Christ.

The nature and breadth of our program requires that every family be an active part of our Troop. There are many roles that our Troop moms play well: Committee Members, Merit Badge coordinators, Merit Badge Counselors, Court of Honor Committee, etc., so there is no reason that a Troop mom can't fully engage and support our Troop in the areas in which she is gifted and feels passionately about.

19. Is a background check done before an adult can participate in Scout activities or become a leader?

Yes. As we submit Adult Applications for review, the Atlanta Area Council performs a criminal background check and will notify the Troop if any relevant information is discovered.

20. What kind of training is required for leaders? What training, certification, or approvals are needed for the various types of involvement?

At a minimum, every adult who attends a campout is required to undergo the BSA's Youth Protection training. This training is available online, and takes about 30-45 minutes to complete.

Our ASMs undergo additional training, both at the Troop level, as well as the District and Council Level. BSA Fast Start Training is also available online from the BSA and is a key part of becoming a "Trained" leader. "This is Scouting" (available online), Specific Adult Leadership Training (SALT) and Introduction To Outdoor Leadership Skills (ITOLS) are the remaining courses that comprise a "Trained" Leader.

For certain types of activities (water-related, climbing, high adventure) BSA policy also requires specialized training in that specific area. Much of this training is now online and is easily accessible.

21. What kind of adult guidance or supervision is provided on the campouts?

At a minimum, two registered adult leaders, or one registered adult and a parent of a participating Scout, are required for all trips or outings. This "two-deep leadership" is always in place. If activities require the Troop break into smaller groups, the above requirements are in place for each smaller group. Troop 317's outings typically have around 15 adults participating.

22. Who should I contact with other questions?

You should have the contact information for the Assistant Scoutmaster (ASM) for your son's patrol. He will serve as the first point of contact for any question that you have about the Troop, your son's advancement, upcoming campouts, etc. Also, any member of the Troop leadership is available to answer your questions, either via e-mail or phone call.

23. What is the process for getting my son signed up for Troop 317?

Our joining packet consists of:
(1) BSA Youth Application;
(1) Adult BSA Applications;

The Scout application also requires a very basic health record to get started. More extensive health exams are required for Summer Camp.

Getting Started

1. What are the most important things to focus on after completing the initial paperwork?

- Reading the Scout Book and having your son do the same.
- Attending Scout events and meetings.
- Observe and ASK how you can help the Troop
- Get involved

2. Where do I obtain a uniform? What is required? What is recommended?

A Scout uniform, as with all Scouting related gear, can be obtained at official National Scout shops throughout America. In the North Atlanta area, there are two shops:

Atlanta Area Council Volunteer
Service Center
1800 Circle 75 Parkway SE
Atlanta, GA 30339
(770) 988-9912

Lawrenceville Service Center
Northeast Georgia Council
203 Swanson Dr.
Lawrenceville, GA 30043
(770) 962-2105

Some Scout gear can be purchased at other local businesses. One example in the North Georgia area is "The Outside World" on GA-400 in Dawsonville (just south of the North Georgia Outlet Mall). This same gear can be obtained via "mail order" from the Scout Stuff website www.scoutstuff.org

There are many more Scout Shops, some with a limited supply of uniforms and gear or specialized items. To do an online search, use this webpage:

<http://www.scoutstuff.org/BSASupply/StoreLoc.aspx>

Most of us Scouters/parents would recommend the new Scout pant called the "Switchbacks". It is a pair of Supplex nylon or canvas "convertible" pants that are accepted as part of an official Scout uniform. At nearly the same purchase price as standard Scout pants, "Switchbacks" include a web belt and can be converted to shorts making them a great value. They are available for Scouts and adults.

For special circumstances, the Troop may be able to provide a previously donated uniform.

3. What are the definitions of Class A, Class B uniforms?

These are common definitions although not universally accepted.

Class A or "Field" Uniform:

1. Official Scout Shirt with all insignia placed in the appropriate locations
2. Scout pants (long, short, or "switchback")
3. Scout belt
4. Scout socks

"Full Dress" uniform adds the following:

1. Neckerchief with slide
2. Merit badge sash (if merit badges have been earned)

Class B or "Activity" Uniform

1. Scouting-related T-Shirt (Troop 317 T-shirt is often assumed)
2. Scout pants (long, short, or "switchback")
3. Scout belt
4. Scout socks

4. What camping/hiking gear does a Scout need to have? What is needed to get started/essential? What is nice to have? Where should I buy the gear?

A Personal Campout Equipment List is posted on www.troop317.com and is a good basic list to get started. Appropriate camping gear is a necessity, but it is generally not required immediately. A Scout should consult their ASM concerning requirements and to answer questions about the appropriateness of a Scout's existing gear. A good-quality (rated to below freezing) sleeping bag is typically among the first camping items a Scout will need.

In general, your best approach is to buy things a little at a time, and only when you need them (based on upcoming activities) or when you decide it's time to "upgrade" your existing equipment, based on your Scout's participation, specific needs, desired comfort level, and budget.

There are many places or sources to purchase your gear, depending on your specific needs, desired comfort level, budget, etc. After each joining window, we dedicate a full parent meeting to equipment needs. Please plan on attending this meeting to learn more about the options for your Scout.

5. Are there resources, presentations, or training that would be helpful in getting Scouts or their parents better informed?

www.scouting.org is the official website for the Boy Scouts of America National Council. It contains a wealth of information for the interested parent.

www.troop317.com is the Troop website and contains a copy of our Troop Charter and our Conduct and Operations guidelines.

MyScouting.org is the Online Learning Center website for the BSA and is the gateway to the training courses that are offered online.

www.miltonbsa.org is our local Milton District website. District specific information is available there, as well as a training course schedule for interested adults.

www.usscouts.org is a great resource for Advancement questions. Rank advancement and Merit Badge information is listed here and is kept up to date on an ongoing basis.

6. Who should I contact regarding questions or concerns?

You should have the contact information for the Assistant Scoutmaster (ASM) for your son's patrol. He will serve as the first point of contact for any question that you have about the Troop, your son's advancement, upcoming campouts, etc.

Also, any member of the Troop leadership is available to answer your questions, either via e-mail or phone call.

Being a Scout Parent

1. How can parents participate in Troop 317? What level of participation is expected?

At a minimum, we expect parents to come to Troop meetings at least 4 times per Scouting season, visit with their Patrol's Assistant Scoutmaster and pay necessary fees for trips, etc. In addition, we request that dads attend a minimum of 1 campout per year. Either parent can also plug into a Troop Committee position. The Troop Committee generally meets the first Sunday afternoon of each month, and once per year for a more formal extended training and planning session. Troop 317 operates well because our families see themselves as "citizens" of a community rather than "consumers" of a service.

2. Are there specific roles that only dads can fulfill?

The Patrol Discipler/Assistant Scoutmaster role has been reserved for dads, since we are trying to model Christian manhood and character. Other roles, especially Committee Members and Merit Badge Counselors are open to both dads and moms.

3. What jobs or roles can parents consider?

It has been our policy for at least one parent per family to serve the Troop in some way. We have many varied positions that a parent can fill, some of which take more time than others. Committee Members, Assistant Scoutmasters, Merit Badge Counselors, Troop Committee "assistants", campout volunteers, campout drivers, etc.

It is our desire that you serve in an area of your giftedness and passion, in order to make your service more meaningful and more rewarding. Please contact the Troop Committee Chairman, or the relevant Troop Committee member to discuss how you can volunteer and best serve the Troop.

4. Does a dad need a Scout uniform? If so when would he need one? Would a mom need a uniform?

In general, a Scout uniform for adults is not necessary. Depending on the role that you play within the Troop, however, it may be preferable for you to have a uniform, thereby demonstrating to the Scouts that a uniform is important. We would request that Scoutmasters, Assistant Scoutmasters, and Committee Members who have regular interaction with the Scouts would wear the uniform at all Troop functions, as well as when required for travel by BSA insurance.

Tuesday Night Meetings

1. What typically goes on at the Tuesday meetings?

Our meetings begin at 7:00pm sharp (although Scouts often arrive at 6:45pm) with the "Opening." At this time, the Scouts form up by Patrols for the procession of the colors (the USA and Troop 317 flags), the Pledge of Allegiance, the Scout Oath, and a brief prayer. The agenda for the meeting is then announced.

Meetings generally include 3 elements: "Troop Time" during which there is group instruction, a guest speaker, a briefing on an upcoming campout, etc. During "Patrol Time" the Scouts may review advancement progress with their ASM, or develop a duty roster/meal plan for an upcoming campout. Lastly, "Game Time" includes playing a game like "Capture the Flag" or Ultimate Frisbee. Each segment lasts 20-30 minutes depending on the meeting. Advancement activities (e.g. Scoutmaster Conferences, Boards of Review, and Merit Badge Instruction) can take place during any segment.

The meeting ends at 8:30pm with the "Closing" which includes announcements, the Scoutmaster's Minute, the retiring of the colors, and a prayer. The Troop cleans the Uptown Auditorium of trash to ensure that we "Leave no Trace."

While Troop meetings are not mandatory, it only makes sense that if a Scout is going to do well, advance in Scouting, and have fun, he will participate in the life of the Troop to the fullest extent possible.

2. Can parents come to the meetings and just watch? How could they help while at the meeting?

Yes, absolutely parents can come to the meetings and just watch. Alternatively, if they'd like to help on an ad hoc basis, they might be asked to serve on a Board of Review (with instruction beforehand), or to help supervise Game Time, or help plan the next campout. Troop 317's leadership is pretty inclusive by nature, and there are plenty of opportunities to get involved quickly for those who are interested.

3. Can we drop our Scout off at the meeting and come back to pick him up?

Yes. No problem. Please ensure that you return by 8:30pm. Although we sometimes run ~5 minutes late, we work hard to end on time at 8:30pm. Also, please make arrangements to pick up your Scout at a specific location and ensure that he knows not to wander around Perimeter Church. Thank you.

4. How long do the meetings last? Do they usually end on time?

The meetings last an hour and a half, from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. They usually (80-90% of the time) end at 8:30pm. Please note that Troop 317's Patrol Leader Council (PLC) meets on the Tuesday following each month's campout (also from 7:00pm to 8:30pm), so there is no regular Troop meeting at that time.

5. Who would I call if I have an emergency and can't pick up my Scout?

You should have the contact information for the Assistant Scoutmaster (ASM) for your son's patrol. He will serve as the first point of contact for any question that you have about the Troop, your son's advancement, upcoming campouts, etc.

6. Does the Troop have access to parent's cell numbers in case they need to contact them on Tuesday night?

Yes, the Troop maintains a database of all the telephone numbers that are submitted as part of the joining process. In addition, each Assistant Scoutmaster (ASM) will have a patrol roster, in case they need to contact a parent.

Monthly Campouts and Other Events

1. Where can we find a listing of monthly campouts?

We maintain a current schedule of upcoming campouts and activities on the Troop website: www.troop317.com.

2. Who decides on the locations and activities of the campouts? How far in advance are these decided?

The activities are chosen by the Scouts themselves. The Patrol Leader's Council holds an annual Program Planning Conference in May of each year to plan the next Scouting year (August – July). The Scouts suggest campouts and the Adults provide guidance in balancing costs, safety, and fun.

3. How much do campouts cost and what does that include?

We try to keep the costs to \$25-\$35 for the typical outing. This includes activity fees, site fees and food. Transportation is provided by volunteer parents. One 'Super Trip' is planned each year. These cost approximately \$150, all inclusive. The super trip is usually a 3 or 4 day excursion for high adventure or extended travel to distant activities. Summer Camp is held once per year, and usually costs around \$275. Troop 317 plans on camping 10 times each year, but some patrols will organize additional trips (usually in support of Scout skills for advancement). Such trips are organized at the patrol level and are dependent on voluntary parental involvement and financial support.

4. How can I pay for campouts?

Once we have a campmaster and the activity is selected for a specific campout, we will post the details of the campout on our Troop Campout Registration website: www.troop317.net. We will open registration for the campout, and provide a deadline by which registration and payment should be complete. Registrations after the close date may be allowed on a case-by-case basis, but should not be automatically assumed.

Payment is due before the campout, and should be taken care of via the www.troop317.net website, as well.

5. What is the grubmaster and what do I do when its my son's turn to fulfill this role?

The patrol decides on their menu in advance of the outing. The grubmaster is the individual in a patrol who is responsible for fulfilling that outing's meal plan. The grubmaster handles the logistics of purchasing, storing and transporting the food for that outing. (The Troop has the cooking equipment/utensils that a typical outing requires.) Parents should not just go purchase the food/ingredients. The Scout should get the groceries with parental guidance as to quantities, quality and usage.

6. Are there tips or guidelines to help with this role?

- The Troop budget is \$15 per person, per campout (4 meals)
- Each patrol should plan on 3-4 Adults eating as part of of the group
- Treat the trip to the store as a learning experience for your Scout.
- Plan what you need before going to the store and then stick to the plan.
- Remember that the Scouts have virtually no experience buying food...help your son in making reasonable purchases (jars of spaghetti sauce, not meat/tomatoes/spices – when there is no cold storage)
- Keep the receipt...maybe make a copy of it.
- Where appropriate, consider napkins, plastic utensils, and plates, but please have your Scout think 'Leave No Trace' as he meets the needs of the meal plan.

7. Are food expenses reimbursed and if so, how is this done?

Yes, all food costs are covered by the trip fees. Please have your son fill out the expense reimbursement form (available on the troop website), attach his receipt and give it (or mail it) to the Troop Treasurer. A reimbursement check will be sent by return mail. The Troop guideline is \$15 per person for meals for a 4-meal campout.

8. What is required if I decide to be a volunteer driver on a campout?

- You must be properly licensed to drive your vehicle.
- Scouts that ride with you must have seat belts.
- All vehicles **MUST** be covered by a liability insurance policy. The amount of this coverage must meet or exceed the insurance requirement of the state in which the vehicle is licensed. (It is recommended, however, that coverage limits are at least \$50,000/\$100,000/\$50,000.) Any vehicle carrying 10 or more passengers is required to have limits of \$100,000/\$500,000/\$100,000 or \$500,000 single limit.
- Only the annual super trip is budgeted to reimburse fuel expenses.

9. What happens if I have to cancel going on a campout? Can I get a refund?

Sometimes, despite our best efforts to plan, Scouts get sick, or a family emergency arises, or the Scout is otherwise prohibited from attending a campout. Should this happen, the Troop has adopted the following policy:

- If a Scout or adult knows he is going to miss a campout, he should notify his ASM **at the earliest opportunity**, in order to prevent unnecessary expenditures for food and activity/camping fees. Note that although most patrols buy food at least 1 day in advance of the campout, other fees may have already been paid much further in advance. Refunds may be adjusted accordingly.
- Scouts or parents who miss a campout for which they have already registered and paid, and for which they believe that their absence is justified (illness, family emergency, etc.), may request a refund from the Scoutmaster via e-mail, explaining the situation and giving the reason for the absence.
- Only the Scoutmaster can approve or deny a requested refund for a given event.
- If the refund request is approved, the Troop will issue a refund check for the appropriate amount to the Scout family.

Advancement

1. What are the 3 most important things to know about advancement?

Advancement is one method used by Boy Scouting to achieve the “Aims of Scouting” which are character development, citizenship training, and personal fitness. Boy Scouting provides a series of surmountable obstacles and steps in overcoming them through the advancement method. The Boy Scout plans his advancement and progresses at his own pace as he meets each challenge. The Boy Scout is rewarded for each achievement, which helps him gain self-confidence. The steps in the advancement system help a Boy Scout grow in self-reliance and in the ability to help others.

The Scout needs to be intentional about advancement. While he needs to proceed at his own pace, those Scouts that fall significantly behind the group often get discouraged and drop-out. **Parents should encourage their Scout to advance, but should not push.**

The Scout needs to make sure he understands each requirement and needed resources to help him accomplish each surmountable obstacle. The Scout needs to read the Handbook or Merit Badge books to understand what is expected. Then the Scout works through an Assistant Scoutmaster or Merit Badge Counselor to demonstrate that the task was properly completed. The Scout needs to make sure he is obtaining the proper signatures and paperwork to record the accomplishment.

2. What is a Scoutmaster Conference and how are they scheduled?

A Scoutmaster Conference is a meeting with the Scout conducted before each rank advancement. The Scoutmaster conference allows the Scoutmaster to review:

- The Scout's growth in his understanding of Scouting's ideals
- How the Scout applies these ideals in his daily life and in the Troop
- The requirements of the Scout's next rank so that he can be properly encouraged

Why does the Scoutmaster engage in this one-on-one review? The relationship between a Scout and his Scoutmaster is important for the Troop's health and for the Scout's success. The Scoutmaster must watch the Troop dynamics to see who is showing leadership, who is holding back, who is shy, who is working with the younger Scouts, who is skilled in outdoor activities, etc. Further, the Scoutmaster must watch the individual Scout to determine whether he is advancing, whether he is having fun, and whether he seems eager or uneasy.

One important aspect of the Scoutmaster Conference in Troop 317 is the chance for the Scoutmaster to assess each Scout's spiritual condition and to encourage the Scout to pursue his spiritual advancement, as well. If we provide Scouting advancement, but fail to provide spiritual encouragement, our vision and mission are not being fulfilled.

See question 11 for more information on scheduling a Scoutmaster Conference.

3. What is a board of review?

A Board of Review is a meeting between the Scout and two or three adults active in the Troop. The board of review is how the Troop Committee (or the Eagle Scout board of review) tracks the progress of a Scout to determine his understanding of the ideals of Scouting and how he applies them in daily life in the Troop. If the board of review is for rank advancement, the board will satisfy itself that the Scout has done what he was supposed to do for that rank and will review with the Scout the requirements for the next rank. The board of review is also a way of reviewing the Troop's progress and providing spiritual encouragement to the Scout as well. It's also a time where the Troop leadership can hear from the Scout as to what's working well in the Troop, and what might need improvement.

4. Can parents volunteer to assist with the advancement program – reviewing merit badge requirements for example?

Absolutely, parents can support the advancement program. In fact, they are dearly needed and are critical for a successful advancement program. They can serve in several ways. They can use their own talents to be Merit Badge Counselors. They can assist in the management of the advancement and Merit Badge process and paperwork. Last, they can become Assistant Scoutmasters and work directly with the Scouts on rank advancement.

5. Can parents assist their son with their badge requirements?

Scouts are responsible for self-performing each requirement. Parents can encourage the Scout to work on requirements, help explain any details that need to be completed, and can be aware of Merit Badge clinics. **However, parents cannot “sign-off” the completion of a rank requirement for their own son even if they are an Assistant Scoutmaster.**

6. How will my son know what types of badges to pursue?

Your son's Assistant Scoutmaster will provide suggestions and direction. There are a certain number and type of “Eagle Required” badges, which should receive a good deal of focus. The others are elective and can be used for the Scout to pursue items of interest and/or talents. Many Scouts are first exposed to their long-term career through the Merit Badge program. Occasionally, Boy Scout Troops and other BSA entities will offer Merit Badge “clinics” or “camps”. These activities bring together the resources needed to accomplish many or most of the Merit Badge requirements. These clinics are a great way to start or continue work on Merit Badges.

The Merit Badge process starts with getting a “Blue Card” from their Assistant Scoutmaster. The Scout will need to know at that time which Merit Badge they wish to pursue and who will be their Merit Badge Counselor. At the ASM's discretion, he may point the Scout towards a Merit Badge that is more age appropriate, or may ask the Scout to focus on Rank advancement first – before pursuing a Merit Badge. The Scout (and their parent) should respect the ASM's perspective on this aspect of Advancement and seek to live within these recommendations.

7. Is there a recommended timeline for progressing through the Scout ranks, or sequence for obtaining badges?

There are no fixed deadlines. However, working through the lower ranks, to the First Class rank, in about 15-18 months is about average for Troop 317. The upper ranks focus primarily on Merit Badges and serving the Troop in leadership roles. Boy Scouts are required to leave the Boy Scouts on their 18th birthday.

Planning for the Eagle Rank, however, should start well in advance of the Scout's 17th birthday. The Life-To-Eagle process has a number of steps, several of which are time-consuming. If a Scout wishes to achieve the Eagle Rank, he should be well on the way by his 15th birthday. If a Scout waits until he's 17 to start the process, he will not have enough time to do all that is required.

8. Is there a recommended sequence for obtaining merit badges?

There is no specific recommended sequence. Some of the badges are routinely offered, (Swimming at Summer Camp, etc). The Scout needs to take advantage of opportunities that are presented and seek out opportunities of high interest.

We strongly recommend, however, that newer Scouts (up to 2nd Class) focus on **Rank advancement** before trying to get too many merit badges. There is no compelling reason for a Scout who is not yet First Class rank to focus on Merit Badges. Rather, the Scout should work on Rank advancement (as delineated in the Scout Handbook). Per BSA National guidelines, the Scoutmaster has the final say on whether or not a Scout may take a particular Merit Badge.

9. How do we know where to apply the badges?

The front and back inside cover of the Boy Scout Handbook shows the proper placement of insignia. Merit Badges should be sewn onto a Merit Badge sash, which is worn from the right shoulder to the left hip.

10. Should the badges be sewed or ironed on?

Differing parents have differing experiences with the iron-on products (Badge Magic, etc.). Iron-on badges can sometimes come off. Sewing keeps them attached. A staple is a reasonably good short-term solution.

11. How can I schedule a Scoutmaster Conference or Board of Review for my son?

Without putting too fine of a point on it, YOU should not be scheduling these activities for your son. Part of the value of the Boy Scout program is the Scout learning to interact with Adults in a positive, forthright fashion. This trains the Scout to take responsibility for themselves, to take responsibility for their own advancement, to self-advocate in an appropriate manner, and to exercise courtesy.

Parents should be involved, but as a coach or encourager for their Scout – not as a social secretary planning the Scout's events for them. This guidance applies to every area of a Scout's involvement.

We use the www.troop317.net website for Scouts to request Scoutmaster Conferences. Once a Scout completes all the requirements for a rank, he should contact his ASM for verification. Once a Scout has clearance from his ASM that he's ready, the parent should log in to the website, have their Scout choose the "Advancement" link from the top of the page, then click on "Request a Scoutmaster Conference", filling in the appropriate fields for Rank, etc.

Once the Scout's ASM verifies online that the Scout is "book ready", the Scoutmaster (or his delegate) can contact the Scout to schedule the Scoutmaster conference. Due to the number of Scoutmaster conferences, we ask that the Scouts be flexible as to the timing and location of Scoutmaster conferences and Boards of Review.

Once the Scoutmaster Conference is completed (and marked as complete in the online system), then a Board of Review can be scheduled. There is no need for the Scout to request a Board of Review, since the online system keeps track of the Scout's progress, once he requests a Scoutmaster Conference.

Summer Camp

1. What is Summer Camp?

Summer camp is a week-long outing that is focused on high adventure, fun, advancement, fun, merit badges and fun. Summer camp is usually held at a camp facility dedicated solely to BSA Summer Camp activities.

2. When and where is it held?

For the past five years, Troop 317 has used the Atlanta Area Council's facilities at the Robert W. Woodruff Scout Reservation in Blairsville, GA. Robert W. Woodruff Scout Reservation is a 1,575-acre camp property adjacent to Lake Notley and the Chattahoochee National Forest. The North Georgia Mountains surround most of the camp. Woodruff offers a spectacular 86-acre mountain lake, a climbing/rappelling tower, nature center, trading post, a COPE Course, astronomy, shooting sports, heavily wooded campsites, and great hiking trails. Scouts have the opportunity to enjoy a great aquatic area or visit the nearby Nantahala or Ocoee Rivers for whitewater rafting, canoeing, or tubing. The Appalachian Trail and Cohutta Wilderness is close at hand and offers the opportunity for extended backpacking trips.

See www.atlantsacamp.org for more details.

3. Do most Scouts go to Summer Camp? Why is attendance encouraged?

Yes, the vast majority of Scouts in our Troop attend Summer Camp. They are encouraged to attend as they build stronger relationships with their fellow Scouts and discover new abilities and proficiencies. Summer Camp is a great time for the Scouts to have in-depth, focused instruction in Scouting skills, Merit Badges, as well as great opportunities for outdoor activities and other types of unadulterated fun (swimming, canoeing, whitewater rafting, horseback riding, sailing, rifle shooting, shotgun shooting, etc.) The camp also offers a wide variety of advancement opportunities for both newer Scouts and older, more experienced Scouts.

One additional consideration is the excellent value that Summer Camp represents. A week-long camp (Sunday - Saturday) usually only costs around \$275. Merit Badges (for the 2nd year and over Scouts) are taught by qualified, dedicated, Scout instructors. Summer Camp gives your Scouts a big jump in their advancement objectives.

4. How much does it cost and are there scholarships available?

Summer Camp costs around \$275 for the full week (six nights) of camping. Camperships are available through the Atlanta Area Council. Additional campership assistance is available directly from our Troop. Camperships are awarded only after all Scout participation in fund-raising activities (Popcorn, etc.) and the Scout's own earning potential are taken into consideration. Please contact your Scout's ASM to receive a copy of the campership application.

5. What does a typical week of Summer Camp look like? Is this a week of intense activity or can the Scout just go and have a relaxing time?

The correct answer is both! The day is full of activities...some you sign up for weeks in advance, others you just show up for. The afternoons can be open time to swim, shoot rifles, hike, etc. Most evenings have relaxed programs like campfire gatherings. Keep in mind that just going and having a relaxing time is not what most 11-17 year old Scouts want to do.

6. Will the Scouts/Adults have a schedule? What time do we go to bed/wake up?

A "typical" schedule:

- Reveille at 6:30am
- Breakfast
- Four morning sessions of activities. (Merit badges, Mountain Man activities)
- Lunch
- Two afternoon sessions of activities (Open time, merit badge courses or field work). This time is also used for excursions: horseback riding, river trips, etc.
- Dinner
- One session of activities .(Open time, some older Scouts merit badge courses use this time)
- Evening program (Troop activities such as campfire, sing-a-longs, etc.)
- Scouts in camp by 10:00pm. Lights out at 10:30pm

7. What activities does a 1st year Scout sign up for? What is Mountain Man? If a Scout attends all Scout trips in one year, is Mountain Man repetitive of previous accomplishments?

The Mountain Man Program is designed for those Scouts who have either just crossed over from Webelos or have limited camping experience. As new rank requirements are adopted, the Mountain Man Program is constantly under review and revision to meet those requirements. In addition, feedback from Scoutmasters and other Scout leaders is utilized to retain those portions of the program that have proven to be effective and change those areas in need of improvement. Basic Scout skills for the inexperienced Scout form the basis of the program.

A first year Scout will typically be best served by the Mountain Man program, which covers a substantial portion of Scout skills used in attaining the rank of Tenderfoot and Second Class Scout, as well as some First Class requirements, too. It is usually populated by the younger Scouts and provides a good introduction to the Summer Camp experience.

First year Scouts that are older (13+ years) or older Scouts that are attending their first Summer Camp may opt to use Summer Camp for attaining merit badges. This will put them in groups with older Scouts, will help them with requirements for higher rank (beyond first class), but relies on their maturity and individual initiative to complete the Scout skills for rank advancement on their own.

8. To what degree will the Scouts be supervised by adults while at camp?

As always, there is two-deep adult leadership for activities and in the Troop's camp site. Over such a large campus, Scouting relies on the buddy-system to move from activity to activity. Younger Scouts tend to have the same schedules and travel naturally in small groups – often with an adult leader from the Troop. The Mountain Man program has a Troop adult leader specifically designated.

9. What do the Scouts pack?

A list of recommended equipment is provided as part of your Scout's Summer Camp packet (mailed and e-mailed to every family in February). In addition, please have your Scout refer to chapters 8 and 9 of the Boy Scout Handbook for further camping and equipment guidelines.

10. What if there is a problem at camp, or at home, how do we contact the Scout directly?

Scouts will not be immediately accessible for direct contact. A list of contact numbers are supplied before we depart for camp. Emergencies should be communicated via the Troop adult leadership, who can quickly locate the Scout and can respond appropriately.

11. Can my son take a cell phone?

Cell phones for Scouts are not allowed on any Troop 317 campout, and Summer Camp is no exception. Any cell phones will be taken and held until the end of camp. Additionally, no electronic games, gadgets, music, etc. are permitted at any Scouting event.

12. Should we contact – phone or mail – our son during the week?

No phone calls should be made, and we won't allow the Scout to call home. This is a firm policy. Homesick kids are rarely positively affected by calling home; usually a call home exacerbates the problem. The Scout will be OK! (Mom, you'll be ok, too!) We have seen numerous Scouts take their first steps toward manhood as they deal with their first significant separation from home.

Mail, however, is WONDERFUL! Please keep in mind that mail delivery from greater Atlanta takes a few days, so early mailing of words of encouragement is advisable. If it's not mailed by Tuesday, then getting to the Scout before we leave is problematic. Please, don't send negative news that can wait until they get home. Emergencies should be communicated via the Troop adult leadership.

13. Can parents come up for all or part of the week? If so, what would they typically do during that time? Where would they camp? Does it cost for parents to attend?

Parents are welcome to come for part or the entire week. We must have your plans to join us as early as possible. Parents will be incorporated into the adult leadership, and will be asked to escort Scouts or provide supervision at various times and locations. You will be able to accompany your Scout(s) to their various activities, whitewater rafting, hiking, etc. Parents will camp in the adult section of the Troop campsite with the rest of the adults. Because parents who attend are busy supporting the Troop's camp activities, Troop 317 covers their camp fee.

14. I understand that there is a planned family visitation time on Friday night? What are the details regarding this? Is this encouraged? Can we take our son home on Friday night? Can we pick him up Saturday morning if we are already in the area?

Friends and family are invited to visit their Scouts on Friday afternoon to enjoy camp fellowship. Parents are encouraged to stay for supper, which begins at 6:00pm. For those desiring to eat scrumptious camp food at Woodruff, a \$5.00 meal fee will be charged for each guest and they will eat with their respective units. Tickets for the meals must be prepaid by noon on Wednesday to assure that there will be sufficient food available. After supper, everyone is invited to stay for the final campfire and a farewell until next summer. More details are contained in your Summer Camp packet, which is mailed and e-mailed to each family in February.

There are no overnight accommodations for visiting family members. Please plan appropriately; it is a long drive home after visiting.

Due to the complexity of scheduling drivers and other logistical concerns, Scouts cannot leave on Friday night. They are expected to return from camp with the Troop. Any early departure from Summer Camp requires advance notification and there is BSA/Camp Woodruff paperwork that must be completed.

With advanced planning, a Scout can depart separately on Saturday. The adult leadership must be informed and involved with any separate departure. Imagine the angst that will occur if your Scout leaves with you, but we don't know he is with you.

15. What are the dates for the next Summer Camp?

While we normally attend Summer Camp the 2nd available week of summer, this can change. Up-to-date details on all of our camping activities are available on www.troop317.com