



COMMISSIONERS AND PROVIDING PATHS TO FOSTERING TRAINED LEADERS

Thesis Project – College of Commissioner Science
Dan Beard Council, Boy Scouts of America

Abstract

How can Commissioners lead their units to facilitate training opportunities for their new and seasoned Scout leaders.

Mike Pillman
mike.pillman.bsa@gmail.com

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Introduction

There is a saying that reads, “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.” As a commissioner, we can help our units ensure that all leaders are properly trained to help teach Scouting skills to our youth. By reaching out to the unit leader we give them tools to make that happen. And as new leaders join our units, we need to make sure that they know and understand what it means to be a “trained” leader in Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, and Venturing.

The idea of a “trained” leader has many different facets depending on the leader’s role inside the unit. For the Cub Scouts, the Cubmaster and Den Leaders come to mind immediately, and in Boy Scouts, the Scoutmaster is the first role that comes to mind. In addition, there are the Committee Chairs and committee members that need to be trained as well, even though they are not “direct contact” leaders. Keep in mind, it is our responsibility as commissioners to make sure the units receive exceptional unit service.

Why is Training Important

Youth today find themselves involved with a variety of events and programs in their home, school, religious organizations, and others. Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA are another way youth today can prepare for their future. We as adults play a vital role in their development and being properly trained means that each Scout can be the best they can be.

We know that not every mom and dad that gets involved with Cub Scouts have ever gone camping, hiked ten miles, or even started a campfire. As we introduce new leaders into Scouting, we can teach them the hows and whys Scouting works as it does. Along the way, they learn what they can and cannot do with youth based on their age. BSA Age-Appropriate Guidelines are designed to always ensure the safety of youth.

the Chartered Organization Representative, and the Committee chair, we can help to encourage and empower the new leaders into the roles that have been chosen.

One of the core functions of Unit Commissioners is to make timely visits to their assigned units in the calendar year. That provides an opportunity to highlight what the training needs are for that unit during the same visit. Also, at different times of the year, the training needs will change. For example, In the fall as new youth join the units, new leaders are introduced as well. These meetings provide the unit with the most up-to-date information as to the training needs of the unit. This training is not just leader-specific training, but it also includes Youth Protection Training and Hazardous Weather Training.

Who are the Leaders?

So, who are these unit leaders? Typically, we find that the new unit leaders, for both Cub Scouts, and Scouts BSA are mom and dad or the legal guardian of the youth. These individuals might have never been in Scouting and are not familiar with what to expect. Some might have been in Scouting as a youth and earned their Eagle Rank and have returned after being away for a long period. And sadly, some of these parents might hold a negative view of Scouting due to current events of the day or secondhand comments. Regardless of the condition, each adult needs to have their training needs addressed. We need to ensure that these leaders are taking the training required in several stages of their leadership role.

The training modules are broken down into three or four sections depending on if it is Cub Scouts or Scouts BSA focused. In the case of Cub Scouts, eight (8) modules should be taken before the very first meeting. This will help to reinforce the basics of Cub Scouting. Before taking the Cub Scouts camping, additional modules need to be completed. And to be a trained leader, an additional five (5) modules need to be finished. Figure 2 below shows how the training can be taken in stages.

DEN LEADER & ASSISTANT DEN LEADER		
BEFORE FIRST MEETING		
SCO_450	WELCOME	2:02
SCO_451	AIMS AND METHODS OF CUB SCOUTING	6:17
SCO_452	BOBCAT	7:08
SCO_453	ADVANCEMENT	10:25
SCO_454	CUB SCOUT UNIFORMS	4:49
SCO_455	CONDUCTING A CUB SCOUT DEN MEETING	8:14
SCO_456	RESOURCES	5:14
SCO_457	DEN MANAGEMENT	5:27
		TOTAL TIME: 49 MIN
BEFORE FIRST OUTDOOR ACTIVITY		
SCO_460	PREPARING FAMILIES FOR OUTDOOR	5:19
SCO_461	KEEPING CUB SCOUTING SAFE	4:35
SCO_800	HAZARDOUS WEATHER TRAINING	31:00
		TOTAL TIME: 41 MIN
EARNING YOUR TRAINING STRIP		
SCO_462	INVOLVING ADULTS IN CUB SCOUTING	8:46
SCO_463	PACK STRUCTURE	8:02
SCO_464	DENNERS AND DEN CHIEFS	7:54
SCO_465	CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT	7:28
SCO_466	CONTINUE THE JOURNEY	4:09
		TOTAL TIME: 37 MIN

Figure 2 Breakdown of training modules

Types of Training

Unit leaders in Scouting will have a myriad of roles, including those who are “direct contact” leaders, such as Cubmasters and Scoutmasters, who work directly with the youth. Next, come the Committee members who play a role in the unit but do not have any contact with the youth in their units. The training options vary depending on the target audience.

Joining Courses

Youth Protection

Joining courses are courses that all leaders, regardless of their role, need to take. Most of these courses need to be renewed regularly. “True youth protection can be achieved only through the focused commitment of everyone in Scouting. Youth Protection volunteers and professionals must work within the Boy Scouts of America to maintain a culture of Youth Protection awareness and safety at the national, territory, area, council, district, and unit levels” (Boy Scouts of America, 2022). This is a required training for all Scouts BSA leaders and must be maintained and renewed regularly. The process for youth protection begins with the initial applications that all volunteer leaders fill out. Soon after that

criminal background checks and other background checks by the charter youth organization are completed to verify the adult application and help to ask more questions of the leader if necessary.

WITH YOUTH PROTECTION BEGINS

YOUTH PROTECTION

Boy Scouts of America

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for our youth members. Youth protection requires sustained vigilance, and we work every day to protect children through mandatory policies and procedures at every level of our organization. We are also committed to continuous improvement in our approach to youth protection.

HOW IT WORKS

ADULT VOLUNTEERS

STEP 1
Application
All adults who have been selected as potential leaders of youth by a chartered organization must provide references, past addresses, other community affiliations, and affirm that they have had no criminal accusations made against them.

STEP 2
Adult Leader Youth Protection Training
No person can become a registered leader in Scouting without first completing the BSA's youth protection training. All registered adult volunteers are required to complete the training. No BSA unit may be re-chartered unless all registered leaders have completed the BSA's youth protection training. The training is available online 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

STEP 3
Chartered Organizations Reference Check
Chartered organizations provide local insight and ongoing supervision. The involvement of local chartered organizations (churches, schools, or civic groups) helps ensure that volunteers are known and trusted in the community.

STEP 4
Criminal Background Check
The BSA requires criminal background checks on all Scout leaders. The background checks are administered by a nationally-respected third party that also provides this service to many local, state, and federal governments; educational institutions; and other nonprofits.

STEP 5
Volunteer Screening Database Check
Before an applicant can join or volunteer with Scouting, the BSA verifies that he or she is not included in our database of individuals that have been prohibited from participation. The database prevents individuals from re-registering in Scouting who were removed for a range of misconduct and inappropriate behavior inside or outside the organization, including allegations of abuse.

Figure 3 BSA Youth Protection Process

Charter Organization Training

The Charter Youth Organization such as a school, religious organization, or veteran's hall might have a youth protection process that runs parallel to the BSA Youth Protection program. As the commissioner working with the assigned unit, you can help guide the new leaders to determine the requirements for that group. It is entirely possible that the leader might pass their BSA Youth Protection training but might fail the checks imposed by the Charter Organization.



Figure 4 Charter Organization Youth Protection Training

Orientation Courses

Orientation courses are designed to teach adults the basic requirements of their roles in their unit. These are “position-specific” courses that are limited to either indoor or virtual settings. Lastly are the Outdoor skills courses which as the name implies, are taught outdoors and usually over multiple days to give the new leader the experience their youth will have when they go camping.

Position Specific

The Boy Scouts of America maintains a list of the leadership roles in all levels of scouting, Cub Scouts, ScoutsBSA, etc. To be a “trained” leader in scouting, the leaders in the respective units will need to complete specific classes to earn the trained status. The benefit of this is that as scouts work their way through scouting, the leaders they work with will have the knowledge and skills that the scouts will lean into the grow from. These classes can be taken online or in a classroom setting. As commissioners, we want to make sure that these leaders can get that training. Some of the positioned trained leaders are:

- Cubmaster
- Den Leader
- Scoutmaster
- Merit Badge Counselor
- Committee Chair

Supplemental Courses

Outdoor Skills Training

As part of the position-specific training, some roles have specific components that are only taught outdoors. At each level of Scouting, specific skills are taught as part of the specific program. These programs are designed to give the leaders a feel for what to expect when taking their youth on an outdoor adventure.

BALOO

BALOO (*Basic Adult Leader Outdoor Orientation*) is a 1.5-day introduction to the Cub Scout outdoor program for units interested in offering a camping component to their Pack activities. This training consists of an online prerequisite component, plus an in-person overnight camping experience that provides hands-on practical skills (BALOO | Basic Adult Leader Outdoor Orientation, 2022).

IOLS

Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills (IOLS) gives adult leaders the practical knowledge they need to help Scouts to learn outdoor skills. The skills presented closely follow the Boy Scout Handbook and rank advancement requirements. All the skills from Tenderfoot to First Class are covered in this training (Introduction to Outlook Leader Skills, 2022)

Climb On Safely

Climb On Safely is the Boy Scouts of America's procedure for organizing BSA climbing/rappelling activities at a natural site or a specifically designed facility such as a climbing wall or tower. All unit-sponsored/planned climbing activities, regardless of where they are held, fall under Climb On Safely. This applies to a single unit or multiple units that may be participating in a joint unit climbing activity (Climb on safely, 2022). This training is available and offered at Camp Friedlander as of 2022.

Hazardous Weather Training

Since Scouting is an outdoor based activity, we need to ensure that all leaders, regardless of if they are Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, or other programs, are trained to deal with the weather. As we know, weather can be unpredictable, and being prepared is always necessary. Hazardous Weather Training is an online training module and can be taken at any time at home by the adult volunteer. This training includes how to handle situations such as lightning protection, heat stroke, hypothermia, dehydration, and others. This training does expire every two years, so to remain a “trained” leader you will need to update your training. If the leader’s Youth Protection is close to expiring, encourage them to update their Youth Protection Training and Hazardous Weather Training over the weekend before their next outing. This will ensure that they will be properly trained and have their training records updated.

Wilderness First Aid

Being prepared in Scouting often means being ready to render first aid. As we go farther into the backcountry with our units, some additional training is needed. Wilderness First Aid (WFA), the next step up from basic first aid, focuses on teaching assessment skills and using available resources when professional responders may be hours or even days away. It can have a dramatic effect on the outcome of emergencies, injuries, and illnesses. It can even mean the difference between life and death.

Powder Horn

Powder Horn is a resource course designed to introduce Scouting’s adults and youth to the exciting outdoor and high-adventure program possibilities for their unit. The goal is for the participants to leave the course with a list of ideas to help their program, along with the contacts and resources needed to implement them (Boy Scouts of America, 2022). This training is offered by districts in other councils, but Dan Beard Council is planning to offer this course in 2024.

Wood Badge

Since 1919, Wood Badge has been regarded as the ultimate leadership training program for the adult leaders of the Boy Scouts of America. This training course takes the leader beyond just the basics of Scouting and teaches advanced leadership skills in Scoutcraft and beyond. Similar professional training courses cost thousands of dollars per attendee and may not offer the same depth in an outdoor setting. Wood Badge is a modern format of training that delivers the latest in 12 leadership skills that will help you be the best leader possible (Dan Beard Council, Boy Scouts of America, 2022). This event takes place in the fall with opportunities to sign up during the early part of the year.

Scouting University

Each winter, Scouting University (or Scouting U) is offered as a way to have in-person training within the Cincinnati market. On a Saturday morning, the new Den Leaders and Scoutmasters can complete those last remaining training classes with other leaders in the area, not just their district. This is a great opportunity to meet and talk with other leaders and get a feel for what works for them. In addition to leader-specific training, you will find classes on knot tying, how to run a Blue and Gold program, how to run a Pinewood Derby event, and even Dutch oven cooking skills. Scouts BSA youth can also receive training that day as well.

Philmont Training Center

The Philmont Training Center at the Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimmaron, New Mexico is the ultimate training opportunity for both new and well-seasoned Scouters. The training programs at Philmont are geared for the entire family so that while your adult leader is attending training classes, the rest of their family is enjoying horseback riding, fishing, rock climbing, and other high adventure-based activities.

Online Resources and more information

On the BSA National website, there are links for both cub Scout packs and Scout BSA troops to help with delivering a high-quality unit. Links for topics such as Guide to Safe Scouting, Scouting Form, Advancement Resources, and Training for Adults to name a few. Following the link for the Training for Adults will take you to all the training resources you will need to help your units. The online pages can be found here [Program Support Resources](#).

Do not forget the EDGE Method

The EDGE method is applicable at all levels of Scouting, not just for the youth but adults as well. EDGE is an acronym made up of the words Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, and Enable. The first step of the EDGE method is to “explain” what you will be doing and why it’s important. Then we move on to “demonstrate” the skill so we can show both youth and adults what the skill looks like when it’s completed. Then we “guide” them, by giving them tools and skills to complete the task, and not forgetting to demonstrate a second time if necessary. And finally, we “enable” the youth and leaders, letting them do the task on their own. At all levels of Scouting, if they can demonstrate the skill by themselves then they have effectively learned the skill.

Barriers to training

Scouting is a volunteer-based organization and like many volunteer organizations those who volunteer have a life outside of the group. The steps to becoming a “trained leader” includes taking many courses over a short period which can easily become a mental roadblock. As commissioners, we need to encourage and support the new leaders in the unit so that the content and materials are easily discovered and can be taken over some time. The documentation provided by the Boy Scouts of America includes the amount of time needed for each course and you can use that to find a good time for the leader to focus on that module.

There are many paths available to unit leaders to become trained and avoid any possible barriers. Each district has a monthly or bimonthly Roundtable meeting where scheduled training events can be offered for leaders. Each district has a training team that works with the parent council, by creating conversations with these members you can also open opportunities for training. For both Cub Scouting and Scouts BSA, monthly committee meetings are another good location to offer training classes.

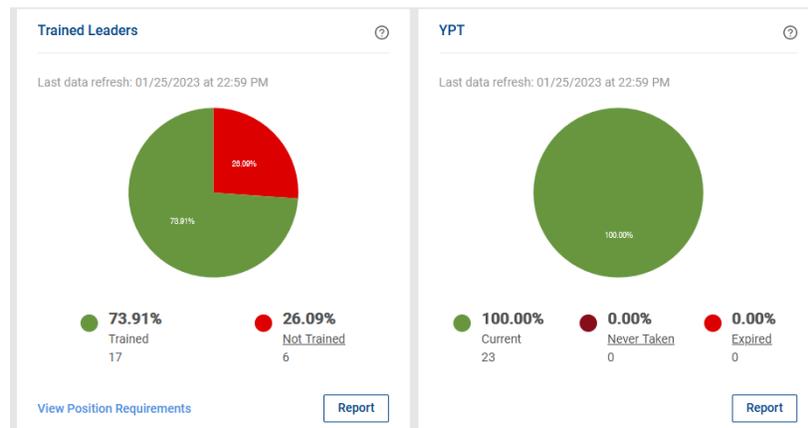


Figure 5 Example of a trained leader charts

By working with your District Training chair, you can see how many leaders in the unit need leader-specific training but also how many need their Youth Protection updated as well.

Where can training be completed?

You will discover that not every Scouting volunteer has a computer at home or might have limited knowledge of using web-based training modules. It is possible and highly encouraged that you can bring your leaders together to a scheduled event can be highly beneficial. Your district Roundtable event is a monthly or bi-monthly event and is an opportunity to have your leaders sitting together and completing their training. One key to this is that every leader needs to have their computer logged into their my.Scouting account. Another training opportunity is your unit's committee meeting which your leader can attend and work together to get their training accomplished.

Where it all begins

As a commissioner, we want to make sure that the new unit leaders know where to go to begin their training. After filling out the necessary paperwork, point the leader to <https://my.Scouting.org> and they can begin the process of creating their account and starting the journey into Scouting.

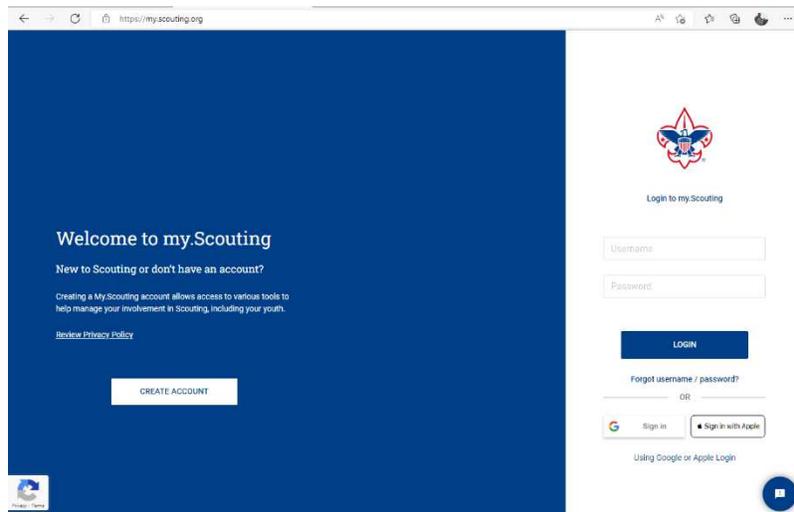


Figure 6 Create your account

Clicking on “Create Account” will start the life-changing process. As a commissioner, nothing is restricting you from helping the new leader set up his or her account at a troop or den meeting. You can guide them through the steps, making sure that everything is done correctly.

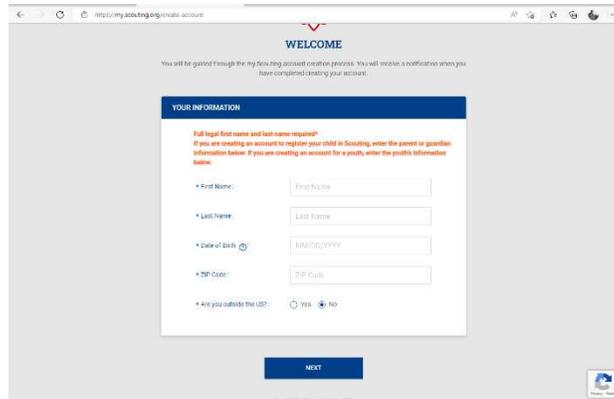


Figure 7 Enter your personal information.

How to find the training

Once logged in with their username and password they will hit the “landing” page with some general notices including periods of maintenance where the site will be unavailable. Immediately on the landing page the Youth Protection training links are visible. This is the first opportunity for the new leader to get their first required training course completed.



Figure 8 my.Scouting landing page

Have the leader reach out to their council directly if they have forgotten their password. The professional staff can easily reset that for them and answer questions as well. Clicking on the Menu button on the top left portion of the screen will open a menu with options that are specific to the unit leader. Depending on their role in Scouting they will see more or fewer options than others.

Under the Menu button, you will find “My Training” which will then immediately take them to their specific training page. This page will show their current Youth Protection Status including the ability to print off a copy of their training certificate.

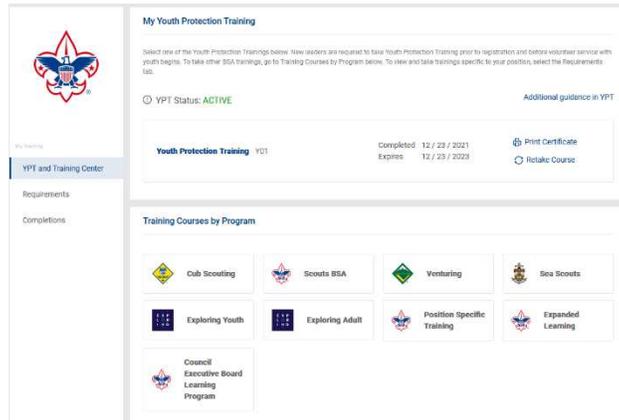


Figure 9 my.Scouting My Training page

On the bottom of the page will be linked to the various Programs that the unit leader can pick from to find the training they want. Clicking on the “Scouts BSA” link will take them to the Scouts BSA “Learning Paths” where links are given for all the training courses that are required for each role.

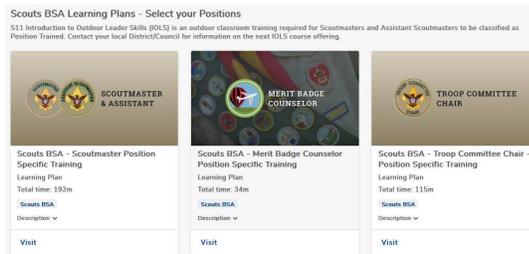


Figure 10 Scouts BSA Track

Enrolling into the Scoutmaster Specific Learning path you will find the courses are divided up into categories of what specific courses need to be taken first. Included with that are the approximate times that it will take to complete each training course. The important item to note is that these training modules can be taken over the course of days. This will encourage the new leader that they do not need to spend a full day getting their training completed.

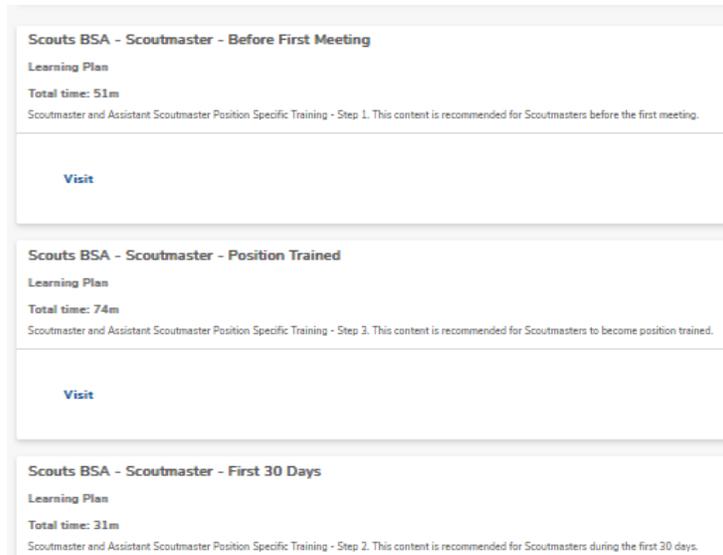


Figure 11 Scouts BSA Specific Courses

Clicking on the Cub Scouts program will show you a similar page with similar options but with colors and themes that are oriented to Cub Scouts

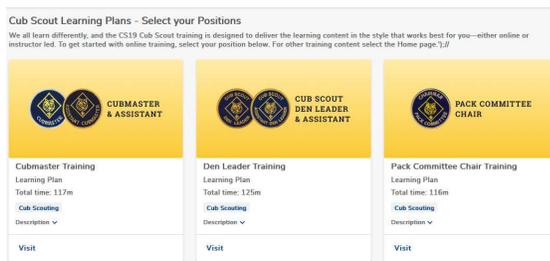


Figure 12 Cub Scout Track

Clicking on “Catalog” at the top of the page will open the online catalog of classes. Regardless of their position, the training classes posted are open to anyone to complete. At this point, you can pick any number of courses that are available for any position in Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, or even Venture Scouts. The benefit of this is that all of the online training modules do not have an expiration date, so your Den Leaders in Cub Scouts can start to take Scouts BSA training classes as they are getting their Cubs ready for their Arrow of Light.

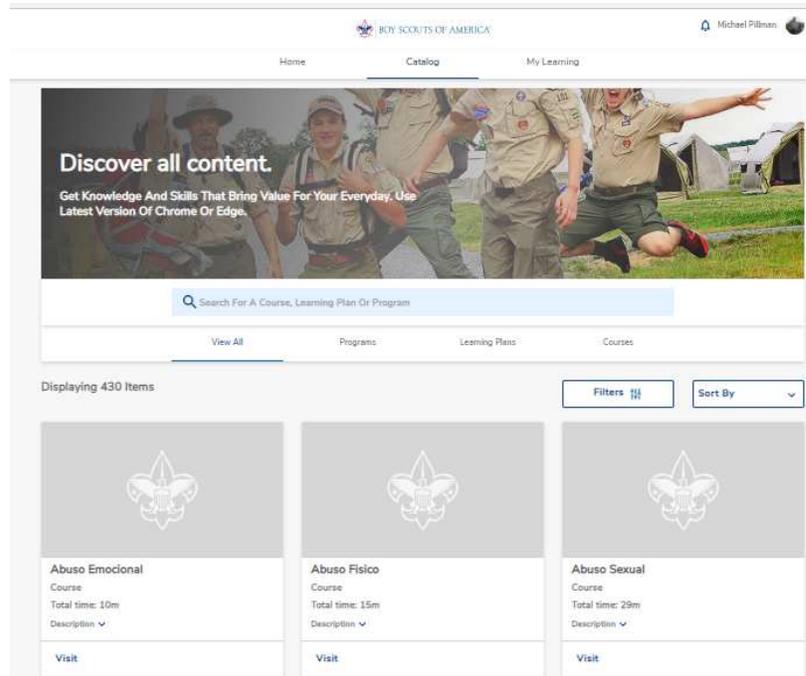


Figure 13 Sample Catalog Page

Training for all levels of Scouting is divided into sections to help ease the leader into the role that he has inside the unit. For Cub Scouts, there are eight (8) modules that the leader needs to take before the “First Meeting”. Here they will learn the Aims and Methods of Scouting, Uniforms, Den Management, and other topics. But then, when it is time for the Cub Scouts to enjoy the outdoors there are three (3) more classes that can be taken. At that time, it is recommended that a minimum of two (2) leaders take and complete the outdoor-based BALOO training. Ultimately the cub Scout leader will need to take sixteen (16) courses before they can be “Position Trained”.

DEN LEADER & ASSISTANT DEN LEADER		
BEFORE FIRST MEETING		
SCO_450	WELCOME	2:02
SCO_451	AIMS AND METHODS OF CUB SCOUTING	6:17
SCO_452	BOBCAT	7:08
SCO_453	ADVANCEMENT	10:25
SCO_454	CUB SCOUT UNIFORMS	4:49
SCO_455	CONDUCTING A CUB SCOUT DEN MEETING	8:14
SCO_456	RESOURCES	5:14
SCO_457	DEN MANAGEMENT	5:27
		TOTAL TIME: 49 MIN
BEFORE FIRST OUTDOOR ACTIVITY		
SCO_460	PREPARING FAMILIES FOR OUTDOOR	5:19
SCO_461	KEEPING CUB SCOUTING SAFE	4:35
SCO_800	HAZARDOUS WEATHER TRAINING	31:00
		TOTAL TIME: 41 MIN
EARNING YOUR TRAINING STRIP		
SCO_462	INVOLVING ADULTS IN CUB SCOUTING	8:46
SCO_463	PACK STRUCTURE	8:02
SCO_464	DENNERS AND DEN CHIEFS	7:54
SCO_465	CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT	7:28
SCO_466	CONTINUE THE JOURNEY	4:09
		TOTAL TIME: 37 MIN

Figure 14 Cub Scout Den Leader Specific Courses

For Scouts BSA, the same rules apply but in different scenarios. All Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters have five (5) courses they need to take before the very first Troop meeting. These will help with understanding on the Patrol method works, how a Troop meeting is organized, and the Aims and Methods of Scouts BSA. Soon after, before the first 30 days three (3) more classes need to be completed. Ultimately there are seventeen (17) modules that Scoutmasters need to pass and complete their outdoor-based IOLS training before they are called “Position Trained”.

SCOUTMASTER & ASSISTANT SCOUTMASTER		
BEFORE FIRST MEETING		
SCO_481	SCOUTING ORGANIZATION	12:20
SCO_472	AIMS & METHODS OF SCOUTS BSA	8:30
SCO_479	ROLE OF THE UNIT KEY 3	7:00
SCO_480	ROLES OF SCOUTMASTER & SP LEADERS	13:00
SCO_484	TROOP MEETING	10:10
		TOTAL TIME: 50.30 MIN
FIRST 30 DAYS		
SCO_478	PATROL METHOD	10:00
SCO_471	ADVANCEMENT	10:00
SCO_477	PATROL LEADERS COUNCIL MEETING	11:00
		TOTAL TIME: 31 MIN
FIRST 60 DAYS		
SCO_476	OUTDOOR PROGRAMS	10:00
SCO_482	TROOP COMMITTEE	14:00
SCO_485	SCOUTS BSA UNIFORMS	11:30
		TOTAL TIME: 35:30 MIN
POSITION TRAINED		
SCO_473	ANNUAL TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING	14:00
SCO_474	INTRODUCTION TO MERIT BADGES	8:00
SCO_475	OUTDOOR ETHICS	7:30
SCO_800	HAZARDOUS WEATHER TRAINING	31:00
SCO_530	JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE	13:00
		TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR 13.30 MIN

Figure 15 Scoutmaster Specific Courses

Other noteworthy Training Classes

Beyond the required training modules for position-specific courses, other modules would be beneficial to both new and well-seasoned Scouters:

- **Succession Planning for Volunteer Leaders** - The goal of this training is to teach volunteers both how to recruit new leaders and succession planning for replacing leaders.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Scouting** - Diversity, equity, and inclusion work only if everyone is invited to participate and feels accepted for their uniqueness.
- **New Member Coordinator Welcome Course** - Introduction to the New Member Coordinator role in Scouting. This is a great opportunity for the unit to have a trained leader for new units.

Adult awards and recognition

As Scouts work their way through the Scouting program, they are given patches and awards to demonstrate the skills that they have learned and the ranks they have earned. The same can be said of adult leaders. Scouts BSA will recognize leaders who are officially trained and meet certain expectations for the roles that they have. The Adult Square knot award is presented to the adult leaders to show that they too have worked diligently for the position they have in Scouting.

	Den Leader Training Award can be earned after completing one year of tenure as a Den Leader and attending a training event like Scouting U.
	A leader's training award is earned after completing a two-year tenure as a leader in either Cub Scouts or Scouts BSA. Attending Scouting U is also a requirement.
	The Scouters Key is earned after completing three (3) years in a role and completing other pack or troop awards in addition to attending Scouting U.

Conclusion

Scouts BSA has a history of creating a program that helps the youth of today excel in ways that many Scouts never thought they could ever accomplish. From that very first day hike with the den or pack, to returning from a 12-day trek at Philmont to the verge of being an Eagle Scout. The only way that Scouts can achieve these goals is by having trained leaders to help them along the way. As commissioners, it is our charge to make sure that the units we serve can help and provide the direction that is needed to make that happen.

As commissioners, we might not always have the answers to the many questions posed to us, but we can reach out to our District Executive or Council Commissioner for guidance when those unforeseen times arrive. But let this paper be that map and compass to help your units receive the training they need. Remember, every Scout does deserve a trained leader.

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