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You know you're not in the Cub Scouts Anymore when...

Dear New Troop 73 Scouts and Families:

Welcome, once again, to Boy Scout Troop 73! Many of you have come from a Cub Scouting background, and will soon notice some of the differences between the Boy Scout and Cub Scout programs. Others may have no Scouting history and no frame of reference at all, and everything is brand new. You are all welcome, and we hope you and your sons will want to be as active as possible!

The biggest difference between Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting is that the Boy Scout program is designed to be boy-led. That was the founder of Scouting's idea right from the start in the late nineteenth and very early 20th century. With guidance and supervision from adults, the boys plan their own program, execute their own program, critique their own program and move on to the next one. Sometimes the adult guidance is stronger than other times, but a good rule we use is that, as long as things are safe, adults try not to do something for the Scouts that the Scouts can do for themselves. There are certainly exceptions. But as a guideline, when you see Scouts struggling a bit, or not doing a job as well as you know that YOU could do it, resist the temptation to do it for them. A little help is always welcome. But let the successes be theirs as much as possible, as well as the learning which comes from those temporary setbacks.

A camping trip is where things REALLY differ between Boy Scouts and Cubs, including Webelos. While there may be exceptions, Cub Scout camping is typically very family-oriented. Families often bring their own tents and gear, a variety of family belongings and even other family members – like siblings. And since a small group of adults did all the shopping and will be doing all of the cooking (and cleaning) for the whole group of 20, or 30, or more, families arrive and depart whenever it is most convenient for them. Generally, no one was counting on any individual Cub Scout or his parent, so if he comes a little late or leaves a little early, it does not affect the program in any significant way.

In Boy Scout Troop 73 camping, Scouts typically camp with the other members of their Patrol, using their own Troop 73 camping gear. Everyone has the same tents, pots, stoves, etc. This enables everything to be interchangeable, and makes camping skills more easily taught and learned. The newest Scout who has only learned how to set up one type of tent will be able to do so no matter where we go or who he is working with on the next trip.

Adults camp and cook together just like the Scout Patrols, apart (but not far apart) from the Scouts. While we have plenty of tents and other camping gear available, adults *may* bring their own tents if they wish. With the exception of our annual Delaware River Canoe Trip, which is open to all family members and other guests, most of our trips use the Patrol Method described, and aside from parents, it is not appropriate to bring other family members.

Unlike the Cub Scout camping trip example, every Scout has an important role within his Patrol. The Patrol is led by the Patrol Leader with his Assistant Patrol Leader. They may have an older Scout, the Patrol Guide, who offers additional assistance and guidance. And the Senior Patrol Leader and his Assistant direct the Troop. Each Scout in the Patrol is assigned duties in advance of the trip, which are posted on the Patrol's *Duty Roster*. These responsibilities may include food preparation, cooking, cleanup, water collection, etc. Other duties on a camping trip may include packing and carrying some of the Patrol's camping gear (tents, pots, water jugs, etc.), erecting the campsite, gathering firewood, striking the campsite, packing the Patrol's gear, patrolling the site for litter, etc. There's plenty of time for fun and games as well, but ALL of these duties are performed by the Scouts themselves. Scouts quickly learn that if they don't do it, it doesn't happen. So you can see how arriving late or leaving a trip early can be disruptive to the functioning of the Patrol. Who is going to take down Johnny's tent if he has to leave before breakfast on Sunday morning? Who is going to do clean up if the person listed on the *Duty Roster* for that chore is suddenly gone? There may be times when late arrival or early departure is absolutely necessary in order to participate in an event back at home. And we will certainly do whatever we can to accommodate special scheduling needs that enable a Scout to participate who has some conflict (sports, religious study, family events, etc.). But please understand that each member of the Troop and the Patrols is important, and it is disruptive to the program when people come and go. So please try to keep this to a minimum.

Please help your son pack for his first few camping trips. Use the checklist which is provided for each camping trip (usually given out and always available on our Troop website: www.troop73bsa.com) and pack together. The checklist is a list of what *should be brought* – not merely a suggestion. You'll probably over-pack, and that's ok at first. But it is important that the Scout plays a large role in his own packing. Just because a parent packs things in a Scout's backpack, there is no reason to expect that the Scout will know where those things are or be able to find them. We have seen Scouts spend a whole weekend without a fork, or a flashlight, or a hat, simply because they couldn't find where Mom or Dad packed it in their backpack. It usually surfaces right before we head for home.

Troop 73 takes great pride in its mission to help boys develop leadership skills, and to learn to take responsibility for others. This, of course, begins by learning to be responsible for yourself. With your help, and with almost 100 years of Scouting supporting us, our program will not only accomplish this, but provide fun and challenging experiences which will produce memories to last a lifetime.

Sincerely,

Richard Buzzard

Richard Buzzard

Scoutmaster, Troop 73