



## Pack 957: Quick Start Manual

*The goal of this manual is to give an overview of scouting, goals, pack/den functions, and resources. The intended audience includes all new leaders and new parents. For more details, additional resources are available on the pack website, from Boys Scouts of America, district roundtables, and training sessions.*

Welcome to Cub Scouting and Pack 957. We are excited you have chosen scouting for your son. Scouting offers an excellent opportunity to reinforce values that we try to instill in our children. The Cub Scouting program at all levels focus on four areas: the importance of God, Community, Family, and Self. Some of the requirements will be completed at home with the scout's family and some will be done in a den.

Before getting into what scouting is, the following are the three BIG items you need to know to make this year successful for your den!

1. Communication. As in any successful organization, good communication among leaders and members (that's you parents) is essential. In our pack, we communicate through the following ways:

- a) Leaders' meetings. We hold monthly leaders' meetings usually the first Sunday evening at 7 PM at Starfire Grill. (See Calendar for exact dates.) ***It is essential for one parent from each den to attend this meeting.*** Any pack parent is invited to attend this meeting. At this meeting, we will discuss upcoming events, plan activities, and distribute handouts and information. We do publish minutes of the meetings (on the website) shortly after the meeting, which can be reviewed by anyone.
- b) Email. We utilize YahooGroups for our group emails. There are two groups – one for leaders and one for members. Parents should at least join the member group. All leaders should join both groups. Also, any member can join the leader one (to keep better informed). You can join by following the links at the bottom of our website home page.
- c) Website. Our website address is [www.pack957.org](http://www.pack957.org). Go visit it today! You will find information about the pack, announcements, as well as great links to other sites and resources.

2. Calendar Goals for Your Den and Rank Completion. Our normal calendar is in parallel with the school year (Aug.- May), with a summer program. (Calendar attached at end of the handout.) As a new member to the pack, you will find it very helpful to know what the major calendar goals for your den are. Den leaders and the parents need to review the requirements for advancement associated with Bobcat and your den's rank (i.e., Tiger, Wolf, Bear, etc.) and use them to help plan the activities to be done at den meetings.

- a) September: Den formation and first meetings.
- b) End of October: First campout. Saturday night at campfire, we have a ceremony for Bobcat rank. For all new scouts, regardless of age or rank complete the requirements for the Bobcat badge by mid October. (It is not that hard – see handbook!)

- c) February: Blue and Gold Banquet. The goal is for the scouts to have completed the rank requirements for their rank by first of February. Although in Pack 957 the boys are at the same rank from May to May (except Webelos), Spring baseball season greatly impacts attendance at meetings. Hence, we have found that our scouts have a better chance of completing the rank if the den sets a goal to complete rank requirements by Blue and Gold Banquet in Mid-February and leave the rest of year as elective fun activities. (Please note that if rank is not completed by Blue and Gold, then a scout can continue to work on requirements till the last pack meeting in May.)

3. Handbook. Each rank has a specific handbook. You should look over your child's handbook. It is a great resource for requirements and the rank. (Remember in school when you finally read the textbook getting ready for finals and realized that you should have looked at before, the handbook is the same! So look at it now!) You can get the handbook at the Scout Shop, see below.

---

But there is more to get started!

Organization of Boys Scouts. Your den is part of Pack 957 that is a part of the Bayshore District that is part of Sam Houston Area Council (SHAC) that is part of Boys Scouts of America (BSA). Events throughout the year can be den events (planned by you!), pack events (campouts, summer events), district events (fishing tournament, twilight camp, roundtable), or council events (training sessions, summer camp, scout fair).

Within the pack, the volunteer leaders are organized into two major categories. Most visible are the den leaders and cubmasters. These are the volunteer leaders who run the program at a den or pack level and are headed by the cubmaster. Behind the scene, the committee members are the administrative volunteers that organize and make the programs happen. Committee positions are headed by the committee chair, and include (but are not limited to) treasurer, advancement coordinator, popcorn colonel (head of popcorn fundraiser), service coordinator, quartermaster, pinewood derby chair, and blue/gold banquet chair. (A list of the pack leaders and contact information is available on the website – simply click on Pack 957 Leaders.)

Ranks. The different ranks are based on the boy's grade level: Tiger (1<sup>st</sup> grade), Wolf (2<sup>nd</sup>), Bear (3<sup>rd</sup>), and Webelos (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>). The rank requirements are designed to move the boy from a parent-involved (Tiger) approach to earning the rank to more of a parent-coaching situation (Webelos) to boy-led achievement (Boys Scouts). With that in mind, at the younger ranks, parents are more involved with den meetings and activities, while at Webelos, parents are not required (but are still welcomed and encouraged) to attend each den meeting.

Den Leaders and Parents. Although two parents have stepped-up to be den leaders, dens are only successful if the other parents also step-up and help. The role of the den leaders is to organize the calendar and the den meetings, but they don't have to necessarily run the activities in the den. Further, there are things that need to be done at a den level that are not den meeting activities. Hence, at the first parent meeting, the den leader should encourage (a.k.a., require!) each parent

to volunteer for either a “rank requirement” activity or a den function. Den functions include popcorn sales (see fundraiser below), service coordinator (e.g., food drive, see below), blue and gold banquet decorations, and packmaster data entry. (A sample list and job descriptions are available at the end of this document.) Remember the role of the den leader is organize and lead. It is NOT to do everything!

Volunteers. In addition to den activities, the pack could not run without volunteers. There are committee chair positions that need to be filled each year. We generally look towards parents of returning scouts to fill these positions. But each pack activity (outside of pack meetings) will require a den to provide at least one volunteer. (Activity = campouts, pinewood derby, blue and gold banquet, service project, and fundraiser.) Most of the commitment is usually a one-time commitment for several hours (sometimes in preparation and sometimes during the event). \*\*Your den leaders already are volunteering their time, so the pack expectation is that parents who are not den leaders should volunteer for these pack activities.\*\*

Leaders’ meeting It is essential that at least one parent from each den attend the monthly leaders’ meeting. We hold monthly leaders’ meetings usually the first Sunday evening at 7 PM at Starfire Grill. (See Calendar for exact dates.)

Calendar. You will find the calendar on the website. As well in the minutes of leaders’ meetings! (So come to the leaders’ meetings.)

Den Meetings. You should have received information about den meeting planning at the den formation night. Here are the “essentials”:

1. Den leaders and parents must meet to decide on time, and day of the week to meet. (Should have been done already!!)
2. Den meeting planning. As noted above, you should use the rank requirements to guide planning the meetings.
3. Most den meetings can be split up into several parts: gathering activity, opening ceremony, planned rank activity, “fun activity”, closing. Most dens meet for 1 hour.
  - a. Gathering activity. This is an activity to keep the boys busy (and out of trouble) while everyone arrives. It can be a game or even a rank activity.
  - b. Opening ceremony. A flag ceremony. A chance for leader to give an overview of the meeting. Also a great time to practice the Cub Scout oath, promise, handshake (all part of Bobcat).
  - c. Rank Activity. At Tiger ranks, you can incorporate 1-2 rank requirements into a meeting (without the boys even knowing!). At other ranks, you can usually complete one requirement (and sometimes two) at each meeting.
  - d. Fun activity. Depending on the rank activity, you may choose to play a game at the end of the meeting or do a craft. Many dens will play a game that will earn a “belt loop.” (see Awards below) Some dens have a small snack at that time.
  - e. Closing. Review the meeting and remind the den when the next meeting is.

4. Location. The location of the den meetings vary among dens. Some meet at a scout's home (recommended for Tigers, and should rotate among the scouts), at den leaders' home or at a classroom (in our pack, many use UBC's classrooms). In addition, depending on the activity, the location for specific meetings may be different than usual. (Examples: Fire station, front of the school for biking.)
5. Resources. There are many resources available for you. The pack will provide each den with a "how to" book that includes details on games, crafts and other activities. In addition, training sessions will help you. Finally, ask parents of older scouts what they did in the past, or ask any den or pack leader!

Training, "Each scout deserves a trained leader" is a mantra at all levels in scouting. So there are many opportunities to be trained. Some of this training can be done online and some done in evening or weekend classes. All leaders (and parents can do it as well) need to complete Youth Protection Training (YPT) and Cub Scout Fast Start – both available online at the SHAC website. (Easiest way is go to our website and click on "Leaders' resources". You will find a link to SHAC. Then Click on Training at the top.) \*\*Please print out any certificates and bring to leaders' meeting so we can track your training.\*\*

Resources. With the internet, you will find that other than the rank handbook, you don't need to buy anything else! If you can think of it, you will find details on the web. Under "leader resources" on our website, you can find some of the best links! I can honestly say that I click on "The Virtual Cub Leader's Handbook" several times a month. Looking for a skit, a joke or a song to do, go to "MacSouter". Questions, just ask another leader! Finally, each month, the Bayshore District has a roundtable at University Baptist Church (UBC). At that time, events for the upcoming month are communicated to pack leaders. There is also breakout sessions (15-20 minutes) for den leaders.

Pack Meetings and Awards. Pack meetings are generally held on the third Monday of the month in the Brookwood Elementary cafeteria. The meetings begin at 7:00 pm and run for one to one and a half hours. To help ensure that the meeting runs on schedule, we ask that everyone plan to arrive by 6:55. At that time, all the dens gather. Scouts will receive awards (including belt loops) earned since last pack meeting. Dens have an opportunity to do opening flag ceremony, closing ceremony, or a skit/song if they wish.

Awards including Belt Loops. During the year, the scout can work on completing a rank. A scout can also earn belt loops. Belt loops are split into two groups – academic and sports. Generally, the belt loops have three requirements and are easy to earn. (There are "pins" but these require more work.) For example, the tennis belt loop requires the scout learn the rules, practice 30 minutes, and then play a game. These requirements are the same for almost all the sports (including soccer, baseball, flag football, ultimate frisbee, table tennis, etc.) \*\*The belt loops do not need to be earned in a den meeting. So if the scouts are playing a fall sport, then they will earn at least one belt loop after the first game! The academic ones also have three requirements and vary from art to chess to computers to wildlife conservation. All the Belt Loops can be viewed from our website. (click "leaders' resources", then "Virtual Handbook", then "The NEW Academics & Sports Program!"). There are also other awards, e.g., summertime activity award, Texas badge, etc. These will be mentioned at the leaders' meetings. (They are listed at the

bottom of the “leaders’ resource” page of our website.) *There is no charge or fee for awards. The pack buys them for the boys. (Fundraising pays for the awards!)*

Tracking achievements and awards.

1. **PACKMASTER.** We utilized a web-based program, entitled “Packmaster”, to track achievements and awards. **ONLY AWARDS ENTERED IN PACKMASTER WILL BE GIVEN OUT.** The advancement chair will printout a report and go to the scout shop to buy the awards that are given out at each pack meeting. Instructions on downloading Packmaster will be distributed or you can email the committee chair at [aaboulei@utmb.edu](mailto:aaboulei@utmb.edu) . Feel free to ask one of the current leaders if you have questions about entering data.
2. Excel trackers. Excel trackers can be downloaded from our website. These excel workbooks allow for den leaders to better know how everyone in the den is doing towards ranks and other awards.

Camping. We have two campouts – Fall and Spring. These are “family campouts” – siblings and parents are invited. The campout is scheduled from Friday evening to Sunday morning. The pack will plan a program for Saturday afternoon and evening (campfire). Saturday dinner is a pack event and we cater it. Other meals and times are open and up to the family/den. (Webelos will begin Saturday morning with a program.)

Pinewood Derby. The pack will provide the BSA kit for pinewood derby. Distribution will be either November or December (to be determined). The event will be held in mid-January. If you are unfamiliar with pinewood derby, the best thing to do is ask a parent of a current scout!

Blue and Gold Banquet. In February, we have a banquet (instead of pack meeting) on a Saturday night to celebrate the anniversary of scouting. In addition to awards, many scouts will receive their rank badge (the goal!). There is also a cake decorating contest, and a table decoration contest. It is catered, and costs may be offset by the pack, although a modest fee for admission is usually required.

Service Projects. The pack sponsors two service projects every year. The first, in December, is a “toiletries” drive, where scouts bring to the December pack meeting toiletries to donate to a shelter. The second, in May, is a food drive that we do in our neighborhoods – Brookwood and Pinebrook.

Fundraiser. We do one major fundraiser and two minor ones. These fundraisers pay for awards, summer activities and campouts. The major fundraiser is popcorn sales that begins end of September and finishes in October (with distribution in November). In October, scouts can also participate in a greenery sales (for the holidays). Finally, in April there is a SHAC scout fair. Ticket sales (with great coupons!) is the third fundraiser.

Scout Shop. The local scout shop is located on Bay Area (at corner of Saturn, in the United Way Building). In the scout shop, you can find everything you need for your son and more. They sell uniforms (shirt, neckerchief, neckerchief slide, belts, pants, hats, socks, patches, etc.), handbooks, and other items including craft kits. They are open everyday except Sunday. (more

information at <http://www.samhoustonbsa.org/Home/AboutSHAC/ScoutShop/>, or call (281)282-6067).

Uniform for Den Leaders. Sorry, den leaders, you do need to have a “tan” shirt.

Class B T-shirts. Although uniforms (Class A uniforms) are required at pack meetings, den meetings, and for evening flag ceremony at campouts, the boys can wear a pack t-shirt for other activities (especially for outdoor activities). We will be selling pack t-shirts at the pack meetings.

Summer Activities. We usually plan 4-5 pack-run events during the summer and there is also several camps (one day camp and at least one overnight camp) available. But more on that in the Spring.

Finally – what will the boys remember? They will remember camping out and having fun, especially around camp-fires. Now go and have fun.

Don’t hesitate to ask questions to any of us.

Amr Abouleish  
Committee Chair  
[aaboulei@utmb.edu](mailto:aaboulei@utmb.edu)  
281-486-0968  
Cell 281-352-6592

Gordon Bellah  
Cubmaster  
[gbellah@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gbellah@sbcglobal.net)  
281-480-8328

### **Appendix: Sample Den Positions/Volunteer**

Den Leader – Organizes calendar and den meetings. In charge of the den meetings, but other parents can run activities. Although any parent can attend leaders' meeting, the leader should try to make every effort to attend. If you cannot, then you should your assistant or another parent.

Asst Den Leader – Helps den leader and steps in his/her absence.

Den Chief – A boy scout can help the den leader with the den. This can be done for any rank, but usually in the older ranks (Bears and Webelos). If you are interested, please let the committee chair or cubmaster know. They will submit your request to local troops in our area. (Alternatively, if you know of a boy scout who wants to be a den chief, then please contact him directly.)

Requirement/Den meeting – rotating. Works with Den leader to plan den meeting and activities, snack.

Advancement coordinator –Tracks requirements, attendance, electivities, and belt loops that each boy completes and enters in Packmaster.

Popcorn sales coordinator (October – December). – TBA – coordinates sales of popcorn, collects sales sheets and checks, picks up popcorn when available and distributes to each the correct boxes. Also, greenery sales.

Food Drive coordinator (March, May) – TBA – coordinates March book drive and May food drive.

Campout coordinator (November, February) – TBA – coordinates camping materials (if needed) –e.g., Sunday breakfast, firewood. Two campouts – Fall and Spring

Blue and Gold coordinator (late January and February) – TBA – coordinates and plans decorations for blue and gold