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# How to Utilize a Junior Assistant Scoutmaster

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## Time Available

10-30 minutes depending on the agenda format being used

## Learning Objectives

The position of junior assistant Scoutmaster (JASM) has been underutilized or poorly utilized by most troops. At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the purposes and importance of the position of junior assistant Scoutmaster.
- Understand the responsibilities of the JASM.
- Understand the differences between a JASM and adult assistant Scoutmasters (ASM).
- Understand how a JASM works with senior patrol leaders and the patrol leaders' council (PLC) to provide youth leadership in the troop.

## Suggested Presenter(s)

A unit leader whose troop already uses a JASM would be an effective presenter, possibly with the JASM as a co-presenter. The district Boy Scout training chair could be another presenter.

## Presentation Method

The presentation should include the position-specific duties of the JASM. Discuss the role of the JASM in troop activities and meetings, and as a peer and mentor to other Scouts. Note that the position is not necessarily a reward for Eagle Scouts or retiring senior patrol leaders. Offer suggestions on how to identify the best candidate for the position. Discuss tips for better performance by Scouts serving as JASMs. Have troop leaders share their experiences working with JASMs.

## BSA Reference Materials

- *Senior Patrol Leader Handbook*, No. 32501
- *Introduction to Leadership Skills for Troops: Position Description Cards*, No. 30521
- *Troop Leader Guidebook*, No. 33009

## Presentation Content

- Leadership development is one of the eight methods of Scouting.
- The junior assistant Scoutmaster can be a key youth leader when properly selected and trained. Knowing and properly implementing the role of a JASM will help him to achieve the desired results in his position of responsibility.
  - While a Scout whose outside schedule keeps him from attending meetings and outings wouldn't be the right choice for many youth leadership positions—since he

would need to be present to perform his duties—a Scout in this situation may be able to function as a JASM with the proper coordination of schedules and troop activities.

- Qualities of a good junior assistant Scoutmaster:
  - Sets a good example.
  - Wears the Scout uniform correctly and enthusiastically.
  - Lives by the Scout Oath and Scout Law.
  - Shows Scout spirit by attending as many unit events and meetings as he can.
- Position-specific duties for the JASM:
  - Mentors senior patrol leaders, assistant senior patrol leaders, and members of the patrol leaders' council.
  - Prepares to become an assistant Scoutmaster.
- Ideally, a JASM has attended leadership training and has experience in patrol and troop leadership before taking on this position. In preparing to mentor other troop leaders, a JASM should study carefully the skill to be taught to refresh his memory, using BSA resources such as the *Boy Scout Handbook*, *Fieldbook*, *Program Features for Troops, Teams, and Crews*, and merit badge pamphlets. He should write an instructional plan to ensure he teaches the subject thoroughly and doesn't leave out useful material. He must make sure to have all the necessary supplies ("Be Prepared").
  - The JASM should be trained in using the EDGE (Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, and Enable) method. This ensures that the Scouts he trains will really learn the skills being taught.
- The JASM, as part of the troop leadership structure, is appointed by the senior patrol leader with the consent of the Scoutmaster. The senior patrol leader should appoint someone he is comfortable getting guidance and direction from. The Scoutmaster works with the JASM to help the JASM provide support and supervision to the entire troop.
- The JASM is a member of the patrol leaders' council and should be attending its meetings. He should also work with the senior patrol leader outside of the meeting time to help review the meeting agenda and troop activity calendar.
- Depending on size and needs, a troop can have several JASMs, just as it may have more than one assistant Scoutmaster.

- Troops may allow the JASM to sign off on skills when Scouts have mastered them, or the JASM may be required to tell the senior patrol leader or assistant Scoutmaster that a Scout is ready to be tested on the skills.
- Troops often add their own additional eligibility requirements to the position of JASM, such as previous leadership experience within the troop, or that only Eagle Scouts can serve as JASMs, or that when a senior patrol leader has finished his term, he is “kicked upstairs” to serve as a JASM.
- The actual guidance on how a JASM is selected is intentionally left vague. This allows the senior patrol leader and the Scoutmaster flexibility in choosing a young man to fill the role. In some cases, there may be no one ready or able to fill the position, and it can be left vacant with no detriment to troop program and activities.
- The only specified requirement is that a youth be at least 16 years of age. The intent is that at 18, the young man can register as an adult and serve as an assistant Scoutmaster.
- A JASM should set the example and show Scout spirit by attending as many troop meetings and activities as possible.
- The JASM may assist troop guides and instructors as they work with new Scouts. He should share his expertise whenever appropriate.
- As someone closer in age to his fellow Scouts than the Scoutmaster, the JASM may find that Scouts are more comfortable working with him on problems or challenges with advancement.
- Remember that the JASM is still a youth member of the troop. Adult issues, such as youth protection and safety, must be handled by an adult.
- Some of the ways troops have successfully used JASMs include:
  - Training and supervising troop guides who work with the new-Scout patrol
  - Training and supervising instructors in teaching Scouting skills to all troop members
  - Training and supervising den chiefs as they work with local packs to help teach the Scouting skills necessary for Cub Scout advancement and encourage transition to Boy Scouting
  - Encouraging training in Leave No Trace skills and the Outdoor Ethics program
  - Serving as a liaison to the chartered organization by coordinating youth activities or service projects
  - Assisting the Scoutmaster in delivering troop leadership training
- Invite unit leaders at roundtable to share their experiences working with JASMs.