



# Senior Patrol Leader

## Job Description and Responsibilities Troop 39 • Cumming, Georgia

### Introduction:

Congratulations on your selection to the most senior leadership role in the troop!

When you accepted the position of Senior Patrol Leader, you agreed to a position of service first and leadership second. Leadership by example. Leadership that brings others into the decision process and into the process of getting the mission accomplished.

This should be one of the most demanding—but fun and rewarding jobs you'll ever have in your life. You have been entrusted with a great responsibility by your fellow Scouts, your fellow junior leaders and by your Scoutmaster. This job description will help get you moving in the right direction.

### Attendance at Troop Functions

When you agree to take on the job of Senior Patrol Leader, you're agreeing to plan—and run—all troop functions. It'd be pretty silly for someone to be elected to President of the United States only to have him say, "Sorry, guys—can't come and talk to Congress. Gotta go see a football game."

We all understand that you have other responsibilities besides Scouting. You should always put God first, your family second and Scouts after both of these. However, once you agree to take on the job of Senior Patrol Leader, you're not just a "Scout" anymore. You're the senior leader in the troop, and it's going to be your job to both plan—and run—meetings, campouts, hikes and all other activities. If attendance during your tenure is going to be a problem, let your Scoutmaster know now.

If for some reason you can't make a troop function, call the ASPL and let him know immediately—then talk to him about the job at hand, give him your advice on what things he needs to remember and turn him loose to fill in for you. He's there to back you up, so work with him.

### Leadership first says "Follow me."

The best leaders are those we can look up to. Think back on the best leaders that you've known. They might be a grandparent, school teacher, a Bible class teacher, a coach, a friend, an older Scout or a Scouter. I daresay that what sticks out in your mind most about their leadership is their example. What they did and the way they acted demonstrated leadership, and you noticed—and you tried to follow their example.

Great leadership is first about example, and as Senior Patrol Leader *what you say* to people won't be noticed as much as *what you do* and *the way you act*. Once you understand that people will be motivated and that your team will be built up by the way you act, use it to your advantage.

Set a good example in speech and in habit. Weigh your words carefully and use them to build up, not tear down. Your most important job as a Junior Leader is team building, and they're looking to you as the leader of the team. Your smile, your humor, your ability handle the small problems that life throws your way will all be noted by everyone, from the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader down to the newest of Scouts. No kidding. You're going to set the tone of the campout, the meeting, the canoe trip. If you're grumpy, it'll rub off. But if you keep a smile on your face even when things don't go well, everyone will react positively.

You're not going to be perfect. But when you make a mistake, admit it immediately, and be prepared to apologize to those you let down. They'll deeply respect you for your willingness to admit your shortcomings, to ask for help and then— to put it behind you and move on. You're going to make mistakes. That's what life is all about!

Wear your uniform correctly to every meeting and every function. The greatest team-building tool

you have at your disposal is the Scout uniform. The guys in the troop will be taking their cues from you, and if you wear most of a uniform—well, they'll wear what you wear. When you see someone wearing the uniform well, make a "big deal" about it. Consider offering up a "Senior Patrol Leader Award" to the patrol or to the Scout each month that wears the uniform the best and the most consistently.

Live by the Scout Oath and Scout Law. These words you first began to recite as a young Scout should be a part of you by now. Live by them. Do your duty to God and country. In all things be trustworthy. Loyal. Helpful. Friendly. Courteous. Kind. Obedient. Cheerful. Thrifty. Brave. Clean. And reverent.

## Service, Service and... Service.

By now, you're already finding out that this new job isn't quite what you expected. Leadership looks good from the outside, but actually being a leader involves work, doesn't it? A famous sports figure, when told him how "lucky" he was, said with a grin, "You know, you're right. But you know, the harder I work, the luckier I get."

There's no such thing as "luck," as any winner knows. Success involves hours of planning and work—but the rewards are fantastic. Well-run meetings, well-run campouts, hikes, canoe trips, fishing trips and the hundreds of other activities that a Scout troop does together will *only* be fun if they're thought out and planned out in advance.

Ask for advice of those that have gone before you and listen carefully. Seek out those who have already been Senior Patrol Leaders. Ask the Junior Assistant Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmasters, the Scoutmaster. That's why they there.

Remember, your whole attitude has to be one of service. When you have to assign a dirty job to someone, offer to jump in and help them with it—and then, roll up your sleeves and help them do it! Your example will be noticed by those you're leading, and your hard work will be contagious.

Remember, people will notice your example. And when your whole example is one of putting the needs of others ahead of your own wants and needs—your influence on others will take a dramatic turn for the better. No one wants to follow someone that seems selfish or that doesn't seem to have the best interests of the troop in mind. Remember that.

## Planning and Running Troop Meetings

You need to come to all of the Scout meetings and other troop functions. (When you're not there, things just don't go as well.) Because you're in charge of the troop, your job as Senior Patrol Leader is to be there. If you can't be there, call your Assistant Senior Patrol Leader well in advance, brief him on what is planned for the meeting, discuss what he should probably do (remember, help to teach him how to lead!)—and let him do it.

Generally, you should expect to spend about an hour in preparation for each meeting:

- *First, call your Patrol Leaders and ask them what they have planned for their portion of the meeting. Who's leading the opening ceremony, and what does he have planned? (Junior leaders many times don't plan. They "wing it" at the meeting, and it shows! Help them to plan.) What does he want to accomplish at the Patrol Meeting—or was he just going to "bum around" with the guys and waste a meeting?*
- *Next, make sure that your program is lined up. Who's leading the game, and what game are they planning? Who's giving a demonstration, and how long are they planning to take? What materials do they need? You are responsible for making sure that they plan—and are responsible for making it all work smoothly. Don't assume that because the Scoutmaster's going to be there that he'll have lined everyone up—that's your job!*
- *Involve the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader in each meeting. Remember how you felt when you first took over as SPL? You can help the ASPL to transition better if you get him involved with the planning and the meeting itself.*
- *Call the other Junior Leaders and ask for their help. Make sure your Troop Guides are working with their patrols. Make sure that the Instructors are teaching their skill. And for goodness sakes, ask their advice every time that you talk to them. (You don't have to take their*

*advice—but asking will get you a perspective on things that you may not have thought of.)*

- *Call the Scoutmaster and let him know the status of the upcoming meeting to discuss the particulars with him. If you need his help, ask; he may have some perspectives and help you didn't even realize.*

Get to the meeting fifteen minutes early, and plan on staying fifteen minutes late. This means that during your tenure as Senior Patrol Leader you're going to spend two hours each week at meetings. Why? You need to be early to make sure the pre-meeting activity goes well, and to insure that the meeting goes well. You need to stay at least ten minutes late to make sure that cleanup goes ok and that everything's finished and planned for the next activity.

Keep your schedule with you during the meeting, and stick to it! Start the meeting promptly by making sure the patrol that has opening does it and does it well. Briefly let the troop know what the meeting agenda is for the evening—or if possible, put it on the white board. Be a "floater." Don't stay in one spot too long, but visit different parts of the meeting to make sure that things are going ok—especially during patrol meetings, which can be a zoo if uncontrolled and unplanned.

The meeting needs to be fun, it needs to be interesting, and it needs to accomplish a mission every week. Constantly ask yourself if you're meeting these three goals. If it's not fun, guys won't stay in the troop. If it's not interesting, attendance will be shoddy or the guys will get restless and things could get out of hand. And if it doesn't accomplish a mission, why have a meeting? We all wasted two hours.

So to summarize this section: 1) plan, 2) get your Patrol Leaders planning, 3) make sure everything's lined up and ready, 4) ask for help, 5) keep it fun, 6) keep it interesting and 7) accomplish a mission.

Got it? Don't worry! You'll do fine as long as you plan your work and work your plan.

## **Planning and Running Troop Outings**

The same rules apply to troop outings. Plan your work and work your plan!

You should figure on at least three hours of planning and preparation for troop outings, just to make sure your Patrol Leaders, instructors and other troop officers have it all under control.

First, the outing needs to be outlined at the PLC so that everyone's on track as to what's going to be accomplished and what's going to happen. Your Scoutmaster and other adult leaders can set it all up for you, but that's really not ideal. Make it a PLC outing from start to finish. And if at all possible, make copies of the schedule and give copies to the Patrol Leaders to give to their guys (so you don't get asked ten times each hour, "What do we do now?")

Since you and the PLC planned out the function, make sure you keep it on track. Keep the schedule with you at all times, and refer to it often. And remember, you're job isn't to tell each member of the troop what to do. Work through your Patrol Leaders. Wander around. See if they need help, see if things are on track, see if you need to lend a hand or ask someone to lend a hand. (That's why we have Troop Guides and Instructors.)

When problems arise (and they will!) or changes are needed in the plan, don't lose your cool. Instead, call your Patrol Leaders together, outline what needs to be done and ask their opinion. Remember what you learned during your Junior Leader Training about outlining problems and seeking solutions from the group? Apply it!

## **Planning and Running the PLC Meetings**

First, if you don't have a Troop Scribe, think of someone in the troop that would be good at taking notes during meetings, making copies and getting them to everyone. (Having a personal computer is a definite plus.) This person needs to be dependable and needs to come to every meeting of the PLC. Appoint this Scribe as soon as you can—it will drastically help the PLC in getting much more accomplished.

When preparing for a PLC meeting, look over last month's meeting notes. Was there something you were supposed to do this month? Someone you need to call? Next, look over the calendars for the next few months and get a rough idea of what'd you'd like to get accomplished and when. Take some notes on a notepad.

Work up a rough agenda of what you'd like to cover during the meeting: meetings to be planned, troop

outings to be planned, or any other business that you need to talk about over the next hour and a half.

Set up a telephone meeting with the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader. (The best way to do this is to tell him, "We need to talk about the upcoming PLC. Can I call you Thursday at 7 PM and talk with about this for about half an hour or so?") It'll help he and you to be much better prepared for your discussion, and will formalize what could otherwise be a haphazard phone conversation.

Call your Patrol Leaders and ask their advice in advance of the meeting. And listen.

And finally, here's the best way to run the meeting:

1. Get there ten or fifteen minutes early and put the Agenda minutes on the table at each setting.
2. Start the meeting on time. To the minute! It's a show of respect to those who arrived on time. Call the meeting to order and ask someone to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Ask the members if there are any changes to the minutes of the last meeting (which had been taken by the Scribe and mailed to all of the members of the PLC and the Adult leaders.) (These changes are only made to correct errors made by the Scribe as he took notes.)
4. Once the minutes are approved, ask if anyone has additions to the agenda. In other words, does the Patrol Leader of the Lizard Patrol have something he needs to add to the evening's discussion?
5. Once the Agenda is finalized, get down to it. Give your guys some choices, and listen to their input. If you say, "What do we want to do at our meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup>?" you'll probably get a table full of blank stares, because they haven't even thought about it! On the other hand, if you ask, "During our meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup>, should we cover First Aid, knots or camping skills?", you'll get input. Give the guys some choices and you'll get plenty accomplished. This is why it's so vitally important to plan ahead for the meeting.
6. Keep the meeting on track by keeping the discussion pertinent to the topic at hand. The more junior of your Junior Leaders will be talking about the ball game Friday night if you let them, so it's up to you to keep it on track. Don't allow two or three people to have side discussions during the meeting, either—it needs to be one meeting at all times.
7. Keep good notes yourself. Don't depend on the Scribe to write it all down for you! Bring a calendar and a notepad to the meeting. I would strongly suggest that you use your school agenda book, which includes a calendar, and write down the dates and particulars of anything important.
8. End the meeting on time. Again, it's a sign of respect to your participants (and their parents, who are taking them home.)

## In Closing

- You can't do it all, so don't try to! In all things you plan and you do, constantly asking for help and input. Former Senior Patrol Leaders (especially the last SPL), your Scoutmaster, other adult leaders, Junior Assistant Scoutmaster, Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, other Junior Leaders are here to help give you some good advice. Ask—and listen.
- Use your Junior Leader manual as a reference. It has some great ideas.
- See yourself as a team-builder, not as a dictator. You're biggest priorities to the troop are to build people up, to show them the way and to help themselves to find the way.
- Remember, people will notice what you do far more than what you say.

Relax and have fun, and it'll rub off on others! The job of Senior Patrol Leader is the hardest but most rewarding job in Scouting, and the six months that you serve will be over far too soon. Enjoy, learn and grow.