

CLASSIC BOYS LIFE SERIES

SCOUT SPIRIT



Patrol Flags

Patrol Spirit is a culture of teamwork and camaraderie that develops among the members of a Patrol that is run according to the principles of the Patrol System. Patrol Spirit is what makes a group of boys a real Scout Patrol rather than just a convenient division of a Troop. A lot of little things which develop Patrol Spirit were already built into Scouting by the founders. One such feature of Scouting is that of the Patrol Flag.



The Purpose of the Patrol Flag

The Patrol Flag is a unique symbol designed and crafted by the members of the Patrol to represent themselves during activities. It should be carried with the Patrol during all Scouting activities in which the Patrol participates. It should accompany the Patrol on camping trips and hikes, mark the Patrol's rallying point during games, and be kept prominently in the Patrol area when not in use.

There are many ways that using a Patrol flag raises Patrol Spirit. To start with, the making of the flag itself is a group effort. Every Scout in the Patrol will have a hand in the construction. This sets the tone for the Patrol that every individual Scout is necessary to make the Patrol work.

It is a unique visual symbol of the Patrol. Just as Scout uniforms help set apart Scouts and becomes a symbol of what Scouting stands for, a Patrol flag becomes a special symbol that sets apart the members of different Patrols.

The Patrol flag is an effective way of building a unique Patrol culture. A Patrol is a dynamic team that develops an identity of their own. Each Patrol does things a little differently. They develop their own routines in setting up Patrol camp site; they have their own traditions that they carry on; and they have certain Scouting skills which they specialize.



Most importantly, each Patrol develops a unique character that is grown out of the combination of individual personalities which make up the Patrol. The Patrol Flag design represents all of this. It helps to solidify this Patrol culture and pass it down to younger Scouts.

Creating the Flag

The Design

Creating the Patrol Flag seems very simple; the Patrol drafts a design, then crafts it from any available materials. However, because of the significance of the Patrol Flag, it isn't something that should be done carelessly. Making the flag is a series of decisions that must be made by the Patrol as a group. Each aspect of the flag must be decided upon carefully.



There are really no rules as to what the flag should look like and be made of. One rule that must be followed is that every member in the Patrol must have a hand in making it. The Patrol Leader is responsible to make sure each of the Patrol members participate. One Scout might get the fabric, one Scout may draw out the chosen design, one Scout may get the pole, another may sew it together.

Every member of the Patrol should contribute to the design, and the Patrol votes on which design will be used. They should use the best ideas from each design and incorporate them into a final design.



The Material and the Shape

Besides the main design of the flag, another decision that must be made is what material it will be made of. If your Patrol wants a more traditional looking flag, there are many different types of fabric you can use. Try to pick out a fabric which is very durable. The Patrol flag should last many years. You can find fabric at a sewing store, craft store, or thrift shop.

If your Patrol wants to make a flag which isn't like a traditional flag, you can use other materials. You can use leather, metal, wood, or whatever else serves the purpose and is available. When you think of a flag, you may think of the traditional rectangular shape. A Patrol Flag doesn't have to fit this mold. Many Patrol Flags have been triangles, squares, or any other shape. You can put notches or streamers at the end. You can make the shape a silhouette of your Patrol symbol. Whatever the shape is, just ensure that it can be firmly attached to a pole

The Pole

Patrol Leaders made their Scout Staff higher than the other members of the Patrol. This was so they could attach the Patrol Flag to it and carry it more easily on hikes and camping trips. Some flag designs, on the other hand, require a special pole. If wood is used, a pole can be fashioned from a long, straight branch. The bark can be left intact, or you can strip it off. You can carve the pole or leave it plain. You can paint or stain the wood, or you can keep it plain. What the Patrol decides upon is part of the design process.



Team Building Exercise

The Patrol Flag is such a great building block of Patrol Spirit that it is no wonder why the founders considered it a necessary accessory to a true Scout Patrol.

If you are a Patrol Leader, be sure that every member of your Patrol is involved in its construction.

Make sure to carry it with you on camping and hiking trips, and always treat it with pride and respect.



“Patrol spirit doesn’t spring up like a mushroom overnight. It can’t be made to order. But it can be developed in the same way that a small tree can be helped along by giving it rich soil in which to grow, by tending it faithfully, by letting plenty of sun and air get to it, by pulling up the weeds that threaten to choke it.

Patrol spirit grows in the things that distinguish your Patrol from the others in the Troop; your Patrol name, your flag, your emblem, your call, your song and yell. Patrol spirit grows in the things that you make for your Patrol: your Patrol corner, your Log Book, your camping equipment, your Patrol Box, the unique way that you decorate your Patrol flag and staves. Patrol spirit grows by the things that you do together: your Patrol meetings and hikes and camps and your taking part as a unit in the activities of your Troop.”

From "The Patrol Method"