

Cub Scout Den Meetings

A den is a group of six to eight boys, within the pack, that meets several times a month between pack meetings. The boys in a den are usually all at the same grade level. The den structure allows boys to build relationships with leaders and other boys. The den provides opportunities for activities that would be difficult with a large group. The den also provides leadership opportunities for the boys.

The Den Meeting Location

The location of den meetings will vary, depending on the resources of the Cubmaster or den leader. An ideal meeting place is the home of an adult leader, if there is enough room for everybody. Meetings can also be held in a basement, garage, backyard, park, town square, or the activity room of an apartment building. Some dens meet at the chartered organization's meeting place or at a local school.

Den Meeting Attendance

The den leader and assistant den leader (or another adult) attend all den meetings with the Cub Scouts. (At least two adults must be present at all meetings.) Tiger den meetings are also attended by each Tiger's adult partner. Wolf, Bear, and Webelos den meetings are often attended by a den chief, a Boy Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer who assists the adult leaders. Sometimes, a parent, guardian, or other family member might be asked to help at a specific meeting, but family members do not normally attend Wolf, Bear, or Webelos den meetings.

The Den Meeting Agenda

All Cub Scout den meetings have the following parts:

Preparation and Materials Needed. Before the Cub Scouts arrive, leaders gather to make preparations and handle last-minute details.

Gathering. As the Cub Scouts begin to arrive, they join in an informal activity or game, often conducted by the den chief to keep the boys interested and active until the entire group has arrived.

Opening. The Opening is the official start of the den meeting. It usually consists of a formal ceremony, such as a flag ceremony, a prayer or song, or a group recital of the Cub Scout Promise.

Talk Time. This is where the business items of the den take place. Business items can include dues, recording advancement, notification of upcoming events, introducing a new adventure, and other items. Talk Time should be brief so the den can get right to the fun of the meeting.

Activities. The Activities part of the meeting will vary by the age of the boys (see below), and may be broken into two or more parts. Generally, most of the meeting consists of craft projects, games, and activities that are all based on the current adventure.

Closing. The Closing draws the meeting to an end. It's usually serious and quiet. Den leaders could present a thought for the day or give reminders about coming events.

After the Meeting. The leaders review the events of the meeting, finalize plans for the next den meeting, and review their progress toward the upcoming pack meeting.

Planning Your Den Meetings

As a leader plans the den's program for the year, there are a few important points to consider.

Required adventures. These adventures are required to advance from rank to rank.

Elective adventures. These add to the fun and adventure of Cub Scouting. One elective adventure is required to earn the Tiger, Wolf, and Bear ranks. Two are required to earn the Webelos rank, and three are required for boys to earn the Arrow of Light rank.

Coordinating your planning. Some of the adventures require coordination with other dens. A pack meeting is an ideal place to do this. There are some suggestions made in the *Cub Scout Leader Book*, but however your dens and pack wish to do this, work together with the other leaders in your pack to build this into your annual program. When working out your annual program plan, seek to deliver an entire year of fun programming. It is important to seek input from the Cub Scouts in the den to find out which adventures they would like to explore with the members of the den. Elective adventures that are not selected may be earned by boys at home, working with their families.

Audience for requirements. Many of the requirements state that a Scout should demonstrate a new skill or share something they have learned with other boys during a den meeting. We all need to recognize that not all Scouts are able to make each meeting. While we recognize that the best approach is to carry out sharing tasks in a den setting, it may be necessary to allow Cub Scouts to share what they have learned while working on Cub Scout advancement requirements in other settings, such as in front of their family.

The duty to God adventures are primarily done with the family and, for some dens, may not be included as part of the den meeting planning. If that is the case, the leader should notify families that they will need to help their Cub Scout complete the adventure at home.

Read through the adventures for your rank, and give some thought to which adventures will work the best for your location and climate. Write in the adventures you will use and the corresponding month that will work best. Check with your Cubmaster to see if some adventures need to be coordinated with other dens or for upcoming pack meetings.

Important: When planning, keep in mind that six required adventures and one elective adventure are required for Tiger, Wolf, and Bear advancement. The Webelos rank requires five required adventures and two elective adventures. The Arrow of Light rank requires four required adventures and three elective adventures. When planning your annual program, keep those advancement requirements in mind. Rank adventures can be awarded at any time within the boy's rank year by age or grade. Once a boy has moved (graduated) to his next level den, HE MAY NOT EARN THE RANK OF HIS PREVIOUS DEN LEVEL.

Den Meeting Plans

The den meeting plans are your guide to bringing the adventures of advancement to life for your den of boys. These plans will, if followed, help a boy advance in rank as he experiences all the FUN of Cub Scouting. It takes 45–60 minutes to read through and prepare for each den meeting.

The den leader guide for each rank provides leaders with a series of engaging and fun activities for each den meeting that will also move Scouts through the requirements of an adventure. Activities can

include a combination of games, crafts, songs, skits, science investigations, physical activities, and other hands-on opportunities to explore the adventure's theme.

Each type of activity included in the den leader guide serves a purpose both in the larger context of Scouting and in the more immediate context of the den meeting. An active team-building game might help build positive relationships within the den while also fulfilling an adventure requirement and providing balance to a more focused craft activity.

Here are some common types of activities found in the den meeting plans and explanations of their roles in Cub Scouting.

Crafts

As Cub Scouts work on craft projects, they not only learn to make useful items but also get valuable experience in using and caring for basic tools and materials, learning to follow directions, using their imaginations, and developing coordination and dexterity. Craft projects might be for advancement requirements or just for fun.

Making his own craft project calls for creativity in each boy. As he embarks on his project, he may need to measure, trace a pattern, cut or saw, sand, and assemble a project with nails, screws, or glue. Crafts develop boys' ability to understand and satisfy their urge to experiment. Furthermore, physical development and mental growth are by-products of the craft program. Muscle coordination comes from lifting, moving, sawing, drilling, hammering, and pounding. Painting helps improve arm and hand control. Folding, cutting, shaping, filing, and sanding craft materials help develop eye and hand coordination.

As boys work with crafts, they learn to shape materials into useful articles. While decorating them, they also learn that useful things can be beautiful art. They gain confidence to experiment with materials and tools and learn new ways to do things. A completed craft project enables each boy to shout out, "I did my best!"

Games

Games are part of all the fun of Cub Scouting. Skills and interests boys develop now teach self-confidence, independence, and the ability to get along with others. Children learn through play.

For these reasons, games are an important part of Cub Scouting. Games not only help to accomplish Cub Scouting's overall objectives of citizenship training, physical fitness, and character development, they have educational benefits, too. Games teach a boy to follow rules, to take turns, to respect the rights of others, to give and take, and to play fair. Some games help boys to develop skills, body control, and coordination. Some teach self-confidence and consideration for others. Games stimulate both mental and physical growth, as well as provide an outlet for excess "boy energy."

Skits

As they work on the requirements for an adventure, Cub Scout dens may be asked to present skits or demonstrations at the pack meeting or at a special den event. These can be pantomimes, sketches, or short plays. The main purpose of skits is for the boys—and the audience—to have fun. But as boys practice performing in these informal skits, their confidence and leadership skills begin to develop as well.

Songs

Group singing at a den or pack meeting adds to fellowship and a feeling of togetherness. Most boys enjoy singing. For a leader, music can help lift spirits and create a happy atmosphere for teaching the more serious parts of the program. Songs can help set whatever mood the meeting calls for—serious, patriotic, inspirational, or theme-related. Boys especially like action songs that give them a chance to move around. They also enjoy seeing their families taking part in action songs at pack meetings. To encourage the best participation, leaders should prepare the words for a song in advance either on display, in a printed format, or in the *Cub Scout Songbook* (No. 33222). And of course, leaders should be prepared to sing with spirit as well!

Storytelling

Storytelling is a good way for a den leader to introduce a new adventure. Depending on the theme, the leader might tell a true story from nature or an incident from the life of a famous person, a myth, or an American Indian legend. A story can set the scene for a special outing or trip. It can meet a special need, such as a behavior problem. It can help you get a point across without singling out a particular boy or incident.

One of the best reasons for telling stories is because they are fun and boys enjoy them. Stories are sometimes just the right thing to change the pace of a meeting from noisy to quiet, or to put a finishing touch on a pack campfire.

Stunts, Tricks, and Puzzles

Stunts, tricks, and puzzles brighten meetings and put the group in a happier, livelier, more receptive mood. Meeting plans might include them as icebreakers to get the meeting off to a good start or as an element of surprise or excitement when people get restless. There are several different types of stunts: Those that the boys perform for an audience

Audience participation, in which everyone joins in by making sound effects or some other type of response to a leader

Applause stunts, which are especially useful for recognition

These activities should be fun for the boys as well as the audience. Because stunts are simpler than skits, they usually don't require as much preparation and rehearsal. All stunts, however, should be positive in nature and encourage a boy's self-esteem.

Ceremonies

The den meeting plans include simple ceremonies to open and close den meetings and to mark important events in the lives of the boys and the den. Den ceremonies should be short—no longer than two or three minutes—and varied. The same opening and closing each week will become boring. Occasionally, the boys should have a chance to help plan and lead den ceremonies.

Here are some types of den ceremonies to consider using in your den meetings:

An opening ceremony, often a flag ceremony, signals the beginning of the den meeting.

An advancement ceremony can acknowledge a boy's progress toward his rank advancement.

A denner installation ceremony recognizes a boy leader and the importance of this position in Cub Scout and Webelos dens.

Special recognition ceremonies can mark special events such as birthdays and holidays.

Closing ceremonies can emphasize Cub Scouting's ideals and bring a quiet, inspirational end to the den meeting.