

# SIGN-UP NIGHT PLAYBOOK



“Sign-up” nights have been a keystone to Scout recruiting for years, and for good reason: They work! Sign-up nights give parents and youth an opportunity to get to know Scouting at a personal level, face-to-face. Questions are answered, interest is built, and parents see how Scouting is for families like theirs, no matter what that family may look like. What’s more, families often enroll their youth right there on the spot. It’s a win-win situation.

## THE CONCEPT



Your unit will hold a “sign-up” night at a prominent location in the community, such as a school, church, or community center. At this sign-up night, you will provide basic information about what Scouting offers youth and families in the area. This could be done through a formal presentation, an information table, a film about Scouting, or even through games and contests. The important thing is to get the family’s attention and let them see what Scouting is all about.

This playbook will act as your guide for planning, promoting, and carrying out a sign-up event in your area.

# PLANNING THE EVENT

The key to a successful sign-up event is thorough planning. You will need to work closely with the school or community center you are using, organize volunteers. And be prepared with any necessary materials such as information fliers, sign-up forms, and even treats. Planning should begin at least eight weeks in advance of the event. Below is a suggested outline for planning your event.

## 1 Get Help

Many hands make light work, so if you haven't done so already, assigning a unit membership chair and pack sign-up Coordinator is a great first step to a successful recruiting season.

## 2 Set Goals

Work with your chartered organization to discuss Cub Scout sign-up plans and set goals for your pack. How many youth and families do you want to sign up for Scouting? How will you do that?

## 3 Get Trained

Many councils and districts offer training for Cub Scout sign-up nights.

Check with your council to see if there is training in your area.

## 4 Reserve Your Spot

Sign-up events typically take place during the back-to-school recruiting season. For that reason, holding the event at a school is usually the best option.

Typically, the school's scheduled back-to-school night is where you will be able to meet with the most families. Contact your local school principals or superintendents to discuss your Cub Scout sign-up event and get permission to attend.

## 5 Choose a “Play”

Having a theme and incentive for a sign-up event is a great way to capture the attention of parents and incentivize them to sign up on the spot. The BSA National Service Center has put together several best-in-class programs to help you stand out in the crowd and get families excited about Scouting. These programs typically take form as a separate event to be held several weeks after the sign-up event. During fall sign-ups, your council or district will choose a “play,” so your pack won’t have to worry about this. But if you are holding a sign-up event at another time a play is the way to go.

## 6 Organize Volunteers

Your pack sign-up coordinator should organize the sign-up event team for your unit, usually five to six people to act as “station chiefs.” These are simple jobs that anyone can fill, but it’s best to use parents of current Cub Scout who can talk from the heart about what Cub Scouting means to their family and their kids.

## 7 Have Fun

Keep the event fun and exciting. This not only makes it better for the parents attending, but also will make it easier for you, the organizer. Speak from the heart, don’t stress, and just enjoy the opportunity to introduce new parents to Cub Scouting.

# VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

There are key individuals who play an important role in the success of your sign-up events, and they are:

- **Pack sign-up coordinator** - responsible for the pack sign-up event
- **Station chiefs** - responsible for the five stations of the event

**Responsibilities:** The pack sign-up night coordinator makes sure the pack is focused on registering new Cub Scouts and helps orchestrate the event. Here is an overview. Note: The dates may change depending on your schedule.

It’s important to start planning early.

1  
“Six Weeks Prior to the  
Sign-Up Event”

- Have your pack calendar, fee schedule, leaders’ list and meeting times/dates/locations prepared
- Provide information to your unit commissioner, district sign-up chair, or district executive

2  
Two Weeks Prior to the  
Sign-Up Event

- Meet with five station chiefs (who are outgoing, knowledgeable, organized, friendly, and responsible)
- Coordinate with district sign-up night chair and district executive
- Review responsibilities with each station chief

3  
Sign-Up Event

- Arrive one hour early
- Make sure the station chiefs have their stations set up
- Act as a “greeter and floater” during sign-up night window
- Be available to answer questions.
- Play traffic cop - direct families to next available station
- If back-up occurs, use your best judgement
- Coach station chiefs if they are keeping families at their stations too long - process is meant to be completed in 30 minutes or less
- Make sure station 4 (Check Out) does not get backed up

## 4 After Sign-Up Event Concludes

- Help Station 4 chief get Cubmaster signature on all applications
- Assist Station 4 chief in separating “Local Council Copy” from applications and record dollar amount for fees and form of payment on each application (check #, etc.)
- Gather sign-up night materials
- Make sure room is left better than you found it
- Contact district executive immediately following sign-up night to report your success and make arrangements for pickup of applications and fees

## 5 Following Sign-Up Event

- Make sure EVERY FAMILY receives a welcoming phone call from their den leader, Cubmaster, committee chair, or your unit membership chair
- Remind parents of new Scouts of any upcoming council-wide activities

# PROMOTING THE EVENT

Families today are overwhelmed with advertising and marketing messages. To ensure families get the message that it’s time to sign up, use various methods of communication throughout this playbook and be sure to have a plan. You should start to build the buzz at least six weeks out from your sign-up event(s). Your local council or district will help get the word out, but the majority of your success will come from unit marketing.

How much access you have to promote Scouting in your schools will help you decide the best ways to market your sign-up event. Here are some suggestions – but these are just thought-starters. Don’t limit yourself. The more ways you reach parents, the more success you’ll have.

### **In-School Promotion**

If you have full access to promoting your event at schools, you can employ any of the following best practices.

- Distribute sign-up event fliers the week before the sign-up event
- Posters and yard signs around school
- School rallies or Scout talks at the school
- Back-to-school open house events, school carnivals, and conferences
- Electronic backpacks
- Invite current youth and parents to attend lunch at school in uniform
- Videos on in-school video networks
- School newsletter or website
- School marquee signs

## Scout Talks

Scout Talks can make a huge difference when signing up new Cub Scouts! Schools that provide access to Scout talks are the way to go. A Scout Talk is simply visiting each classroom and getting the youth excited about Scouting.

The Scout Talk is where youth excitement is created. The district's Cub Scout sign-up training will help give you the skills to put an effective Scout Talk together. Scout Talks work best by going class-to-class and giving a five-minute promotion on the fun that Scouting has to offer. If this scenario is not feasible then a school assembly will work; however, classroom talks are best. When speaking with the school, thank them for working with us in the development of youth and their community.

Helpful hint: Consult with your district executive if you should need assistance with your Scout Talks. These energetic in-school presentations will dramatically increase the success of your recruitment!

## Out-of-School Promotion

Here are several ideas for promoting the event outside of the schools. These tactics can be done either in tandem with your in-school promotions or on their own if you are not able to get full access to the schools.

- Ask current members to use social media to let their friends and family know about sign-up event nights
- Personalized invitations, emails, and personal phone calls to prospective parents
- Door hangers and door-to-door invitations
- Recruit-a-friend and other peer-to-peer recruiting initiatives
- Fliers and Scout talks at after-school programs or churches in the community
- Church and community websites, calendars, and bulletins
- Press releases
- Billboards, posters, and yard signs in the community (businesses, churches, etc.)
- Community fairs, parades, and other events

# HOLDING THE EVENT

Many units and districts are now holding come-and-go events, which are strictly sign-up events. These are faster for today's busy parents. The key to making them successful is preplanning. The following is an outline of how to execute this type of event.

This model features five stations that give parents information about Cub Scouting, get them signed up, and provide everything they need to know, including when the first meeting is, who the leaders are, and more.

## Sign-Up Night Stations

- **Station 1:** Welcome/Sign In
- **Station 2:** What We Do
- **Station 3:** Registration Form
- **Station 4:** Check Out (complete applications)
- **Station 5:** Den Leader Q&A

Below is an outline of what happens at each station. **Note:** *Make sure that each station sign is clearly visible to help make sure things go smoothly!*

## Information Station 1: Welcome/Sign In

This is the first place potential Cub Scouts and their parents will stop. Here they sign in while the greeter provides a brief overview of the process.

- Greet every family that comes to your station and ask them to sign in. Provide them with the “Welcome to Cub Scouts” brochure
- Tell each family that there are five stations that they will visit to complete the sign-up process and that it will take 20-30 minutes
- Materials:
  - Station 1 sign and “Welcome” sign
  - “Welcome to Cub Scouts” brochure
  - Sign-in sheets, pen

## Information Station 2: What Cub Scouts Do

This is the where you will share the excitement of Cub Scouting and your pack activities. Introduce the leaders and talk about what makes your pack special. Leave plenty of time and be prepared to answer any questions.

- Materials:
  - Station 2 sign
  - Pack calendar and event fliers
  - Handout with meeting times and locations
  - Listing of pack and den leaders with contact email and phone numbers.
  - Scout Shop Guide to the Uniform
  - Boys' Life* mini mags
  - Popcorn sales form

## Information Station 3: Registration

This is the sign-up station where the station chief helps parents complete the actual application.

- Have BSA Youth Application forms ready to be completed and have pens available.
- Have copies of “What Other Costs Are There?” and give these out.
- Be prepared to answer questions about pack fee payment plans and/or financial assistance.
- Materials:
  - Station 3 sign
  - BSA Youth Applications and pens
  - Pack leadership handout
  - “What Other Costs Are There?”

## Information Station 4: Check Out

Leaders at this station are responsible for final “check out,” including payment.

- Make sure applications are properly completed
- Collect the proper fee amount for BSA membership fee and *Boys’ Life* (if added)
- Forms and payments should be collected, signed by the Cubmaster, and put in the envelope
- Materials:
  - Station 4 sign
  - Calculator
  - Envelope for applications and fees

## Information Station 5: Den Leaders Q&A

Leaders at this station make sure parents know when and where the first meeting is and answer any other questions parents may have.

- Make an effort to have as many den leaders and assistant den leaders on hand to talk about their dens and give families a chance to get to know them
- Answer questions about the type of activities their child will be doing
- Materials:
  - Station 5 sign

### **After the Sign-Up Event Is Over**

Turn in the applications and money. Unit leaders and the Join Scouting coordinators should review and complete applications after the Join Scouting event. Applications, registration fees, and one copy of the attendance roster are to be turned in to the district executive within 24 hours of the event.

Welcome your new families and members. Don’t wait! Be sure to invite all families to first-night den and pack events the very next week. These meetings are a chance to make a great first impression, have fun, and involve new parents in the life of the pack. Den leaders should make welcome phone calls to the parents of the new Cub Scouts and/or send welcome email messages with meeting dates, location, pack calendars, and any other important information.

Follow up with those families who did not sign up. This is where the sign-in sheet comes in handy. Check your applications against the sign-in sheet and call those families that did not join. Address any concerns the person may have and offer to drop an application by their home, or invite them to the first meeting or your council’s recruiting event so they can see Cub Scouting for themselves.

# “PRO TIPS”

- Consider using your Pack’s New Member Coordinator to take responsibility for portions or the sign-up night or the entire event. More information can be found here: <https://scoutingwire.org/marketing-and-membership-hub/councils/new-member-coordinator>
- Have your New Member Coordinator(s) wear their special “Welcome” pins or polo shirts so they are highly visible to new parents.
- When possible recruit your new leaders *before* sign-up events. Cultivate current parents to take positions like Den Leader and Assistant Den Leader.
- At every opportunity during the sign-up night and afterward, talk to the new parents about how rewarding and fun it is to be a volunteer leader.
- Have computer stations with internet access at your sign-up event so parents can register and pay online.
- At the first meeting of the new Scout, with his or her parent/guardian present, encourage them to invite their friends to join their new Den!
- Utilize Den Chiefs at your sign-up night. They can act as greeters and assist leaders at the various stations.

## **Consider some of the lessons about sign-up nights learned by North Florida Council when they achieved an 18% increase in membership:**

- **Focus on education** at the sign-up night, rather than selling. The people who were coming to the event are, in most cases, already committed to joining.
- **Eliminate jargon.** For instance, stop using the word “roundup,” aka “the R word.” The term is confusing to parents. “What is a roundup? Do I need a horse?” That is why the name was changed to a “sign-up” event.
- **No more uniforms at sign-ups.** Uniforms create an us vs. them mentality and a barrier to joining. Instead go with a less intimidating golf shirt and a name tag that includes the person’s name and the title of “parent,” followed by their Scouting position, such as Cubmaster.
- **Provide a great first experience immediately.** Whether the Pack participates in a Council/District event or holds one of their own, an exciting outdoor experience almost immediately upon joining is critical to retaining your new members.