

Ideas for Den Meetings

1. Indoor track meet (feather toss, straw throw, balloon heave, standing broad jump)
2. Kickball game using ball of rags or feathers, Nerf ball, etc.
3. Work on an achievement everyone needs
4. Treasure hunt
5. Scavenger hunt
6. Marble shooting contest
7. Game-making day (ring toss, box hockey, etc.)
8. Using Pinewood Derby cars; roll to stop in marked areas with points assigned
9. Telephone day – boys stay home, call each other with relay messages on a pre-arranged plan. (This is good for really bad weather!)
10. Scouts report on camping trip or other activity
11. Model day – planes, cars, etc. Each boy brings and displays his choice.
12. Uniform inspection – plan ahead for this one!
13. Design new closing ceremonies
14. Bird watching contest for most and/or variety
15. Science day: microscope to look at hair, water, etc.
16. Take a nature walk – discuss types of trees, flowers, birds, etc. that can be observed
17. Magic day: each boy does his favorite trick or teaches/learns new ones
18. Sky day: Look at the clouds. Discuss what causes them and why there are different types.
19. Sky night: Look at the stars and planets. Use a telescope if possible.
20. Session on First Aid – assemble a First Aid Kit
21. Have a swap day – boys bring items to trade
22. Play charades
23. Without a watch, each boy tries to walk around the block in an exact number of minutes
24. Make puppets for a show
25. Make sailboats to race on a pond
26. Go rock collecting
27. Joke or Tall Tale telling contest – winner picked by vote
28. Airplane sailing contest
29. Practice Cub Scout songs
30. Build den equipment box
31. Build den window display box
32. Scrambled word game with Cub Scout words
33. Make clay models, paint and fire them
34. Put together plastic models – worked on only at den meetings
35. Make handicraft items using beads, paints, wood, etc.
36. Plan a service project for a church, school or community
37. Make a den scrapbook of photos and souvenirs
38. Allow Cub Scouts to plan the next month's activities
39. Make neckerchief slides
40. Have a Lifeguard or Boy Scout talk about water safety
41. Tour two blocks in your neighborhood and look for safety hazards
42. Develop a brand new skit
43. Games or contests: ping-pong, miniature golf, baseball throw, football throw, basketball shooting, etc.
44. Play softball, baseball, or basketball and talk about sportsmanship and rules
45. Visit a fire station, police station, museum, cemetery or any interesting place in the community

Triangles of Valor

Another “discipline tool” is the Triangles of Valor. These were developed when the theme for the year was “Knights of the Roundtable” but can be adapted and used with other themes.

Each boy receives a poster board triangle with his name on it. The triangles are attached with yarn to the den flagpole or otherwise displayed during the meeting. For any infraction of the den code of conduct, a boy loses a corner of the triangle. If he loses all three corners, he has to miss the next den meeting and can only return to the following meeting if he is accompanied by a parent.

If, after starting with a fresh triangle, the boy loses all three corners again, he can no longer be a member of the den.

On the positive side, for any extraordinary instance of good behavior, the boy earns a stamp (or sticker) on his triangle (or a cut off corner replaced). Collecting three stamps or stickers allows him to select a prize from a “treasure chest”. Have the “chest” stocked with inexpensive games, puzzles, books, etc. that boys love.

Boys who clean up without being asked after someone else spills a drink or who eagerly help another boy learn a new skill or who show particular politeness and Scout-like behavior at an outing could all earn a stamp or sticker.

Does it work? Many years later, it still gets results. The boys love the concept and discuss it eagerly with their parents.

Remember, you can substitute your own ideas in this simple concept. The idea is to teach the boys that there are negative consequences for unacceptable behavior and rewards for exceptionally good behavior.

Help!

What if you've tried everything and *still* have a discipline problem? Consider the following:

- ⇒ If all the boys are misbehaving, ask your den leader coach, Cubmaster, or another Scouter to attend a meeting. It's extremely rare to have a whole den full of incorrigibles; ask an experienced Scouter to watch the den in action and suggest ways you could run the meeting a bit differently. Sometimes all you need is an objective observer to get the den back on track.
- ⇒ If one boy's behavior keeps causing trouble for the whole den, go to the parent without delay. Explain exactly what the boy has been doing and make sure the parent understands your expectations for change.
- ⇒ Sometimes the parent cannot, or will not, help to solve the problem. What's the best for the boy? If his behavior is silly but his attitude is positive, you might try to keep working with him, hoping the good influence of the rest of the den and the ideals of Scouting program will effect change over time.
- ⇒ Give him positive reinforcement for every little bit of progress, using all the tips in the *Cub Scout Leader Book* section on discipline. But test yourself often: Are you able to keep calm and cheerful around this boy? Is the den meeting able to function smoothly with his behavior? Make sure the rest of the den is not jeopardized while you work to rein in this boy.
- ⇒ Finally, what's the best for the den? Tell the boys at the very beginning that some actions will have immediate and final consequences; sometimes there is no second chance.
 - What if one boy hits another in anger?
 - What if a boy steals something from another boy's backpack during the meeting?
 - By keeping this boy in the den, you may well have no den in short order.

If the good boys in the den feel uncomfortable or unsafe because of the behavior of one boy, the good boys will leave. Contact the Cubmaster and your committee chair right away and remove the boy from the den – at least until your District Executive can advise your pack on the best course to follow.

One of the toughest things a den leader can do is make the decision to remove a boy, permanently, from the den. But remember – each boy has an obligation to live up to the ideals of Scouting, and you have an obligation to ensure that those ideals are not compromised by the behavior of one boy.

Removing a serious offender from your den may even serve as a wake-up call to the boy and his parents in the long run, your insistence of good behavior could help that boy get back on the right track.

NOTE: The above article's original source has been lost. However, it is obvious that the article pre-dates the requirement for **two-deep leadership**. At every den meeting or other activity, there must be two adults present. This becomes particularly important when dealing with discipline issues.

Boys often misbehave because they need attention. With two (or more) adults working with the den, the needs of the boys for attention from the adults can be more easily met.

- Adults should move about the room offering praise and assistance as appropriate.
- Adults should get down on the eye level of the boys. This may mean sitting on the floor or in a low chair.
- Adults should pay attention to the boys. Don't get caught up in an adult conversation and NEVER leave the boys unsupervised. If one adult has to leave the room, keep the door open or make the absence as brief as possible.
- Set the example. Come to the meeting in uniform. Be prepared - for all sorts of contingencies. KIS – MIF! **Keep It Simple – Make It Fun!**

More Survival Hints

Decide how much dues to charge. This is usually decided by the entire Pack so that Dens are consistent. Dues are collected to pay for craft supplies; advancement patches, beads, etc.; and other expenses as decided by each Pack and Den. Dues can range from as little as 25¢ a week to \$1.00 a week. Some Packs collect the dues weekly from the boys but some collect an annual amount from parents. Your Pack and Den should decide and be consistent.

Decide when and where to meet. Again, this may have already been decided by the Pack Committee for the Pack Meeting but Dens may have some flexibility. Your Cubmaster will be able to discuss the practice in place. Remember, each Den can meet separately except for the Pack Meeting.

Den meetings are usually held weekly at the same time and place. Three meetings are for den activity and the fourth meeting of the month is set aside for the Pack meeting. Pack meetings give dens an opportunity to share activities, skits, and songs. Pack meeting is also a good time to award any badges or advancements earned during the previous month, announce upcoming events, hand out a calendar for the next month (or two) and a newsletter, if possible. Pack meetings are usually followed by light refreshments and socializing by adults and children. Door prizes can also be fun.

As soon as you can, get together a “Games” box. Stock the box with a dodge ball, jar and clothes pins, a Nerf (foam) ball, and other quick and simple games for those times when you need a quick game because Plan A failed or did not take as long as anticipated. Games should be tested and have simple directions.

Put together another box for “Crafts.” Again, stock this box with the materials for one or two simple crafts that would be fun any time of year.

Try out crafts before the den meeting. Make sure you have all the materials and that you can do the craft. If you can't, it is probably too difficult for the boys.

Try to plan the month's crafts and activities around a monthly theme. The Scouter magazine and Cub Scout Program Helps will outline the themes for the entire year. You can also use holiday, seasonal, or regional themes. For example, you might want to use fall and Halloween themes during October. Each meeting could feature crafts and activities related to the theme. For the Pack meeting, use the crafts and other fall items for refreshments and decorations.

Den meetings have several segments. There is usually time for an opening, business, learning, crafts, games and a closing. An opening can be the Pledge of Allegiance and Cub Scout Promise. A closing can be joining hands and reciting the Scout's Prayer, “May the Great Scoutmaster of all times be with us until we meet again.”

Books and the activities for advancement are usually to be done at home with the Cub and his family. Unfortunately and realistically, some boys don't get the help at home to complete them. Help those boys when you can and encourage the parents to work with them. Sign their books and record their progress.

Go to your district roundtables! You will find lots of help and resources. You will meet other leaders and learn from each other. You will have fun!

Suggested resources for all Scouters:

- Age appropriate Den and Den Leader Books
- Cub Scout Leader Book
- Cub Scout Leader How-to Book
- Cub Scout Songbook
- Cub Scout Sports and Academics
- Group Meeting Sparklers
- Staging Den and Pack Ceremonies
- Web sites such as www.bsa.scouting.org , www.macscouter.com and www.usscouts.org offer information, crafts, activities, etc.