

CUB SCOUT—AGE BOYS

UNDERSTANDING BOYS, 15-1

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT, 15-1

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, 15-2

DEVELOPING MINDS, 15-2

Boys With Disabilities, 15-3

LEARNING VALUES, 15-3

Keys to Successful Service Projects, 15-4

PEER RELATIONSHIPS, 15-4

TODAY'S CHALLENGES, 15-4

Drugs, 15-4

Alcohol, 15-5

Suicide, 15-5

Child Abuse, 15-5

WHAT CAN LEADERS DO?, 15-5

UNDERSTANDING BOYS

Scouting is designed to meet the ever-changing needs of a boy. It introduces him to the world of ideas, attitudes, values, beliefs, and skills that are important to his development. What a boy learns as a Cub Scout and as a Boy Scout will provide a solid foundation for his future.

The Cub Scout years are developing years for young boys, falling between the dependence of early childhood and the relative independence of early adolescence. Cub Scout-age boys are becoming more competent. It is important to them to demonstrate what they can do—whether it is climbing fences, performing wheelies on their bikes, achieving stunts on their skateboards, or taking dares. Eager to prove themselves to their friends and to validate their own self-worth, they show off what they can do—and sometimes they fail to plan ahead and are forgetful of safety.

The leader who understands and recognizes the normal developmental changes of these years will have a much better Cub Scouting experience, and so will the boys.

Although typical behavioral patterns exist for any age category, each boy will be unique. Racial, ethnic, social, and cultural environments influence development. Differences are particularly apparent among 10-year-olds. A small number might already be experiencing the accelerated growth associated with puberty, whereas others will resemble 8-year-olds.

You must be careful not to confuse size with psychological maturity. Being sensitive to the needs of each is a significant element of leadership. Activities for Tiger Cubs, Cub Scouts, and Webelos Scouts have been designed for specific groups, yet each component of the program is flexible enough to adapt to the needs of traditional, nontraditional, and physically or emotionally challenged boys.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Cub Scout-age boys

- Are becoming healthier and stronger
- Are full of energy
- Are steadily growing
- Are becoming better coordinated
- Are impatient with aspects of personal hygiene

- **Boys are becoming healthier and stronger.** Many boys who have chronic problems such as asthma and allergies may have fewer serious episodes of illness. Others who are physically and emotionally challenged are learning to adjust and cope.
- **Boys are full of energy.** They have a need for an outlet for their energy, particularly if they have been sitting in a classroom for an extended period of time. They can be noisy and boisterous, and the need to romp and play is characteristic of their behavior.
- **Boys are steadily growing.** They are often quite thin and lack muscle mass. Second-graders are also losing baby teeth and for a while will have an “all teeth and ears” look. By fifth grade, they will be both taller and heavier, have more stamina, and be capable of more sustained effort.
- **Boys are becoming better coordinated.** Many boys appear clumsy and still fall and bump into things fairly frequently and are accident-prone. By fifth grade, most

boys have achieved much better control and increased their mastery of large muscle activities.

- **Boys are impatient with aspects of personal hygiene.** Self-care routines can be a source of conflict, and few boys of Cub Scout age appreciate the fact that cleanliness is important. Tasks such as brushing their teeth, combing their hair, and dressing are not important to them.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Cub Scout-age boys

- Have a strong need for family support
- Are learning to interact within groups
- Are becoming genuinely devoted and committed to their friends
- Prefer dynamic group games
- Need acknowledgment for their performance

- **Boys have a strong need for family support.** Although they may be willing to try new things on their own or with peers, boys still need family members whom they can trust and with whom they can share their experiences. By fifth grade, boys are ready for greater independence and responsibility. They resent being treated like “little kids” although they still want their parents to be there for them.
- **Boys are learning to interact within groups.** Generally, boys understand the importance of friends, and many appear anxious about whether or not others approve of them. Still immature, they often view life mainly from their own perspective.
- **Boys are becoming genuinely devoted and committed to their friends.** They usually engage with enthusiasm in group activities. Many youngsters of this age also form spontaneous clubs and other fluid, though often short-lived, peer groups.
- **Boys prefer dynamic group games.** Young Cub Scout-age boys love to succeed, and they have a great desire to win every time. They have difficulty understanding and mastering intricate rules of games and may lay blame on their opponents. Fifth-graders, on the other hand, usually have a sharp sense of rules. They can make a distinction between intentional and accidental rule violation.
- **Boys need acknowledgment for their performance.** Sometimes boys avoid trying innovative endeavors because they are afraid that others might see them perform inadequately. Fifth-graders thrive on praise, too, but prefer not to be singled out in front of others.

DEVELOPING MINDS

Cub Scout-age boys

- Are concrete thinkers and take things very literally
 - Are beginning to understand that behavior involves motivation and consequences
 - Enjoy meetings that are distinct from their school-day experiences
 - Have different learning styles
 - Are curious and adventurous
 - Can be highly imaginative
 - Are collectors
 - Have short attention spans
 - Are still developing a sense of time
- **Boys are concrete thinkers and take things very literally.** Subtleties and humor frequently escape them, and they often interpret “what if” and “maybe” as promises that they expect to be kept. They are beginning to build concepts out of their concrete experiences, however, and they can use these ideas to imagine possibilities and solve problems.
 - **Boys are beginning to understand that behavior involves motivation and consequences.** By first and second grade, boys are likely to try to explain away bad outcomes with, “I didn’t mean it.” Fifth-graders are better at planning ahead to predict the possible consequences of a course of action. They are better at communicating with others because they can begin to see others’ point of view.
 - **Boys enjoy meetings that are distinct from their school-day experiences.** By second grade, most boys have begun to read on their own with varying success and interest. Cub Scouting often stimulates interest in reading and learning because the activities create a need to know more. Cub Scout activities do not have the association with failure that formal schoolwork has for many boys. Boys having problems at school might turn out remarkable Cub Scout projects.

Boys With Disabilities

The increased demands that school places on boys this age make it a particularly confusing and perplexing time for children who are physically and emotionally challenged. They want to be right, but their very best efforts don't always measure up to standards.

Classroom anger and frustration might show up as immature and inappropriate behavior elsewhere. Teasing from peers frequently adds to the burdens that learning-disabled children endure.

Children with disabilities need special understanding from leaders and fellow Cub Scouts. You should remember that Cub Scouts of all abilities tend to balk when they think meetings are too much like school.

- **Boys have different learning styles.** Educators have discovered that children, and even adults, vary in the ways they learn best. Some people learn best visually, whereas others gain information best through listening to the spoken word. Still others learn best through a hands-on approach. Cub Scouting emphasizes a “learn-by-doing” approach and gives these youngsters a chance to shine.
- **Boys are curious and adventurous.** For the Cub Scout, so much of the world is still new and waiting to be discovered. First- and second-graders are eager to meet life head on—often with a willingness to take risks that outrun their abilities.
- **Boys can be highly imaginative.** Boys are ready to picture themselves in all kinds of roles and situations. Their ability to pretend opens opportunities for them to explore new ideas and feelings and their relationships with each other. Cub Scouting plays an important part in keeping curiosity alive by providing opportunities for boys to do and learn things in subjects that interest them.
- **Boys are collectors.** Cub Scouts seem to accumulate things indiscriminately. Although they might express interest in collecting, their attention usually shifts from one thing to another. They are more concerned with quantity than quality. Fifth-graders retain their interests in collecting but might have settled down to a more serious focus on one or two items. They are likely to spend more time in counting, sorting, and arranging collections.
- **Boys have short attention spans.** First- and second-graders throw themselves into activities with great enthusiasm but might be ready to move on to something else in a remarkably short time. But when something really interests them, Cub Scouts can stick with it longer. They also like to return again and again to favorite activities.

- **Boys are still developing a sense of time.** Many first- and second-graders can tell time with a clock, but they might have little sense of what time means. They express interest in planning, and particularly like to know what is coming next. By age 10, most boys have improved their time-management skills. They enjoy making rather elaborate plans and can generally get to where they want to be pretty much on schedule.

LEARNING VALUES*

Cub Scout–Age Boys

- Are developing ideas about right and wrong
 - Are beginning to see the value of trying to get along with others
 - Have a growing appreciation for fairness
 - Are beginning to see that values are important
 - Like being helpful
- **Boys are developing ideas about right and wrong.** By second grade, many boys do what is right because they have progressed in their moral development and have learned important values. Others may do what is right primarily to avoid punishment.
 - **Boys are beginning to see the value of trying to get along with others.** By age 10, most youngsters have begun to relate conformity to rules with self-interest. They are interested in the benefits they receive when they follow the rules. This age is also a time of much bargaining. They are beginning to understand that others have rights, too.
 - **Boys have a growing appreciation for fairness.** Some psychologists believe that sensitivity to the feelings of others is the beginning of a moral sense. The young Cub Scout takes a fairly rigid stand on the issue of fairness.
 - **Boys are beginning to see that values are important.** Some boys begin to realize that the ideas expressed in the Cub Scout Promise and the Law of the Pack are values that American society feels are important. Modern American culture requires both boys and girls to be able to experience moral issues in terms of obedience to rules and to explore them within networks of relationships.
 - **Boys like being helpful.** Boys are not too young to do things for others. Boys enjoy helping others, especially if they can see that their service actually meets a need. At the end of a service project, have time for discussion so that boys can come to understand their experience, learn from it, and grow.

*This discussion of moral development is based on the work of noted psychologists Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, and R. L. Selman.

Keys to Successful Service Projects

- Choose something that is challenging and genuinely helpful.
- Choose something that is developmentally appropriate for boys to do.
- Prepare boys for the experience. Let them know what to expect, what they will be doing, and how their efforts will be helpful and appreciated.
- Have a well-informed adult supervise the activity.
- At the end of the project, have a reflecting period during which boys can talk over the experience and discuss what they learned.

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Peers are very important in the lives of children. To boys of Cub Scout age, what their friends think, feel, say, and even wear to school are important. This period before adolescence is a period of measuring self-worth, comparing self with peers, and seeking acceptance. The child who feels secure in these three areas will probably do well. The child who feels or perceives himself or herself as lacking or not making the grade will be more vulnerable to problems.

Den and pack meetings can be used to improve peer relationships, teach boys to get along with others and work together, and give boys a group in which they can feel they belong. Badges and recognition items are positive rewards for accomplishments. Cub Scouting can help each boy feel proud of himself in his uniform and as a member of his group.

TODAY'S CHALLENGES

Adults like to imagine childhood as a secure and blissful period during which children can freely explore nature and come to appreciate various aspects of their racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage. Adults would like childhood to be a time when children can be children without fear of abandonment and abuse. It should be a time when children not only see love in action but feel it, too. For many children this is a certainty; however, an increasing number of children do not experience these things.

Many children of Cub Scout age live below the poverty level. Some will spend at least part of their early years in a family with only one parent present. For many young children, including some living with two parents, the hours between school and their parents' return from their jobs will be spent alone or with siblings. Others miss out on the familiar neighborhood playtime before dinner that once shaped an essential element of American culture.

More disturbing is the increasing number of children who are experiencing neglect or physical, sexual, or emotional abuse at the hands of adults. Often, these adults are their parents, relatives, or close friends. In many communities, crime and violence have become routine. Many social institutions—such as the family, the schools, religious institutions, and public welfare—and policymakers are struggling to address the issues affecting both children and communities.

Some disadvantaged children know little or nothing about hope. Children reared without a sense of hope see little point in subjecting themselves to attending school and discipline, let alone preparing for the future. These youngsters are vulnerable to exploitation, and they are more likely than others to engage in self-destructive behaviors such as using drugs and alcohol, homicide, early sexual encounters, possessing and using weapons, truancy from school, and even suicide.

Children need family members, role models, or leaders to talk with openly and to discuss their concerns. Often, children will turn to their peers who might know even less than they do and are not coping any better themselves. Many problems have the same basic causes: poor communication, inadequate information, increasing stress, misunderstandings, poor self-concept, and inadequate support from others.

Drugs

Throughout the country a growing child is likely to be confronted with some aspect of the misuse of drugs. Most boys have thoughts and opinions about it. These opinions are constantly evolving as the boy receives new input from leaders, parents, and other adults, friends, and peers. The opinions of these significant people in the boy's life are extremely important in the evolution of his thoughts and ideas, not only about drugs but about other important issues affecting his life, as well. When a boy has positive, supporting elements in his life pattern, he is much less likely to become involved with drugs.

The BSA has a resource called "Drugs: A Deadly Game! Choose to Refuse," No. 26-511, and its companion leader guide, No. 26-521, are available through the Drug Abuse Task Force, S302 at the national office. Test questions are in the leader guide and can be downloaded from www.scouting.org/drugquiz.

Elements in a Boy's Life that Help Deter Use of Drugs

- Warm and open relationships between the boy and his family
- Good friends who are loyal and dependable
- Positive self-concept
- Ability to reach out to others
- Real highlights in the boy's life

Make sure that boys know these facts:

- All drugs are dangerous when misused—even aspirin.
- Drug misuse doesn't solve problems, it creates bigger ones.
- Sometimes people must take an open stand against things they know are wrong.
- People simply don't need drugs if they have real "highs" in their lives.
- Family can be a great support. Often, the best place to bring a problem is home.

Alcohol

An increasing number of preteens are experiencing problems with alcohol abuse. Many began drinking during their preteen or Cub Scout years. Sometimes, drinking can be encouraged by a child's environment, either in his home or at a friend's home where alcohol is prevalent.

Cub Scout-age youth need to be reminded of the harm of alcohol and know that support from their Cub Scout leaders is available.

Suicide

Suicide and suicide attempts are serious problems among teens and preteens. Boys seem to succeed in their suicide attempts more frequently than girls. Many of the youth who commit suicide have alcohol in their systems. Most have some form of disruptive behavior in their history, such as truancy, running away, drug or alcohol abuse, getting into fights, and/or rebelling.

A basic ingredient of suicide is depression, or the holding of feelings inside most of the time. Again, open and honest discussion, caring, and "being there" can go a long way toward the prevention of suicide attempts.

Child Abuse

Child abuse—neglect and emotional, physical, and sexual abuse—is a concern for everyone. In many cases the abuser is a family member, and the child often has nowhere to turn. If one of your Cub Scouts turns to you, you need a basic understanding of the problem to be able to respond appropriately.

Refer to Chapter 27, "Youth Protection," which details information on recognizing and reporting child abuse and provides BSA policies and guidelines on Youth Protection.

For more information on child abuse, read "How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide," contained in the front of the *Tiger Cub Handbook*, *Wolf Handbook*, *Bear Handbook*, and *Webelos Handbook*. Youth Protection training is also available through local council Web sites and on DVD (AV-09DVD01).

WHAT CAN LEADERS DO?

Leaders can follow some basic guidelines to help provide the kind of loving, supportive atmosphere that children need. Leaders need to provide activities that enhance the boys' positive growth and provide them with the tools they need to deal with life's problems and stresses.

Communication is a crucial ingredient for healthy living. A boy needs to know that he can talk about his problems and concerns openly without fear of rejection, rebuff, or derision. He needs to feel support, love, and compassion from the people who are most important in his life.

Here are some basic guidelines:

- **Listen**—This is probably the most important component of effective communication.
- **Avoid lecturing**—Discuss problems with boys and be receptive to their input.
- **Be open**—Be receptive to new ideas and approaches. Boys need to feel that their ideas are important, even if your final decision as a leader is to the contrary.
- **Accept mistakes**—Expect mistakes both in yourself and in your Cub Scouts. Help them understand that it's all right to be wrong or to make mistakes as long as we acknowledge them and try to learn from them.
- **Admit when you don't know the answer**—Don't give false answers to questions. Make every effort to find out the answer to questions and get back to boys.
- **Communicate caring**—Do this both verbally and nonverbally. Don't be afraid to show boys through your actions and support that you care.
- **Compliment appropriately**—Reinforce positive behavior. Expect Cub Scouts to do their best. Praise boys when they do well. Try not to praise a mediocre or poor job, because Cub Scouts know the difference between a good job and a sloppy one.
- **Be consistent**—This is probably the hardest task. If your unit has several leaders, try to be consistent with one another. Discuss your joint approach to a problem or a concern, and then discuss it with Cub Scouts.
- **Discuss problems together**—If your unit is having a disagreement, discuss the solution together. Be open to input from all members. If boys feel that they are part of a solution, they will take it more seriously—and feel more worthwhile themselves.
- **Try to be available to talk**—If one of your Cub Scouts comes to you, try to take time at that moment to talk. If you are too busy or are involved in something else, take a moment to set up a time when you can talk. Be sure to keep your appointment.

