

CUB SCOUTING: A POSITIVE PLACE

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INTRODUCTION

The Boy Scouts of America emphasizes a *positive place* in Cub Scouting. Any Cub Scouting activity should take place in a positive atmosphere where boys can feel emotionally secure and find support, not ridicule, from their peers and leaders. Activities should be positive and meaningful and should help support the purpose of the BSA.

Many boys grow up loved, respected, adequately nourished and clothed, and properly housed. But some boys have a different experience. The environments in which some boys are reared are challenging—for a variety of economic, social, or cultural reasons. For all boys, but especially for these boys, the Cub Scout den and pack can be positive places where they can feel emotionally secure and find support.

Leaders and boys can reach a consensus on standards for protecting each other from name calling, bullying, racial and cultural put-downs, and all forms of violence. They can discuss and then put into practice more appropriate ways of resolving conflicts.

But the idea of Cub Scout meetings being a positive place goes beyond merely ruling out aggression. Boys can differ in many ways—racially, ethnically, socially, and culturally. They need to learn to accept and respect not only the diversity found within their own social and cultural environments but that of the broader community, nation, and world.

Finally, using athletics as their ideal, many boys tend to think of all outcomes as win-lose situations. Instead, they need to find ways, through cooperation, by which everyone can be successful. They need to come to understand that they can meet more of their goals and realize more success through joint effort and finding the middle ground.

GUIDELINES FOR A POSITIVE PLACE

Positive Values

Fun is an important element of Scouting. But we must remember that everything we do with our Scouts should be positive and meaningful. Activities should build self-esteem, be age-appropriate, and should not offend participants or the audience.

As leaders of the Boy Scouts of America, it is our responsibility to model the values of the organization and set a high standard for appropriateness in all Scouting activities. When making decisions, resolve to follow the high road—“If in doubt, take it out.”

These are some of the things that can make activities inappropriate and unacceptable:

- Name-calling, put-downs, or hazing
- References to undergarments, nudity, or bodily functions
- Cross-gender impersonation that is in any way derogatory, rude, insulting, or lewd. (This is not to suggest that boys cannot dress for and play female roles when needed in a skit or play, as long as good taste prevails.)
- Derogatory references to or stereotyping of ethnic or cultural backgrounds, economic situations, or disabilities
- Sensitive social issues such as alcohol, drugs, gangs, guns, suicide, etc.
- Wasteful, ill-mannered, or improper use of food or water
- “Inside jokes” that exclude some of those present
- Cultural exclusion—emphasis on the culture or faith of part of the group while ignoring that of the rest of the group

- Changing lyrics to patriotic songs (“America,” “America the Beautiful,” “God Bless America,” “The Star-Spangled Banner”) or to hymns and other spiritual songs

A PLACE FOR GROWTH

The den and pack should offer Cub Scouts a place where they can talk intelligently about their differences and learn to respect and appreciate them. When sensitive situations arise, parents and other adults who are competent to deal with such situations should be invited to attend the meetings. Often, they can shed light on such issues and encourage understanding.

During the Cub Scout years, peer groups become increasingly important to boys. Many of the peer-group settings in which boys interact—the classroom, the sports team, the playground—become scenes of competition that range from

subtle judgment to open hostility. It is no wonder that so many boys come to believe that honest expression of true feelings can leave them open to attack. Cub Scouting tries to set forces in motion within packs and dens that will foster positive expression and growth for each member.

But boys learn to guard their feelings well. And at times, you, as a leader, might think that you are wasting your time as you confront the media and other cultural influences that define masculinity in terms of “hanging tough” and controlling emotion. But an unwillingness to reveal feelings and an attitude of self-defense learned in childhood can exact a lifetime toll on family relationships and future adult friendships.

Cub Scouting tries to provide new models for growing up. It inspires youngsters to try to do their best and also encourages cooperative efforts and mutual support that can grow into self-respect and genuine caring for others.