

# Interest Topic: Den and Pack Behavior and Discipline

| Time Allotted | Activity                             | Assigned to                                | Content   |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| 30–40 minutes | General session for all participants | Cub Scout roundtable team and participants | <p>Have a discussion on different ways to explain den and pack behavioral expectations to Scouts and parents. Share ideas and best practices.</p> <p>Discuss conducting a parent orientation meeting where the pack's expectations for den and pack behavior can be discussed with parents. This discussion is in addition to other information presented at the parent orientation meeting.</p> <p>Discuss distributing the den and pack expectations in handouts to parents and on the pack's website or social media.</p> <p>Discuss what age-appropriate behaviors are.</p> <p>What is the best way to establish those behaviors in a den, and when?</p> <p>What is the den code of conduct?</p> <p>What is the best way to maintain control in a den meeting?</p> <p>What is the best way to maintain control in a pack meeting?</p> <p>Discuss the importance of leaders modeling appropriate behavior for everyone else attending the meetings. If the leaders are talking among themselves while the Cubmaster or someone else has the floor, what kind of example does that give to others?</p> <p>For Webelos Scouts, discuss beginning the patrol method of running the den to help prepare for transition to a troop.</p> |
| 10 minutes    | Q&A                                  | Cub Scout roundtable team                  | Opportunity to answer any additional questions  |
| 5 minutes     | Closing                              | Cub Scout roundtable team or participants  | Conduct the Leadership Ceremony located in the Resources section.   |

## Topic: Den and Pack Behavior and Discipline

**Takeaway:** One of the developmental tasks of childhood is to learn appropriate behavior. Children are not born with an innate sense of propriety, and they need guidance and direction.

### GENERAL SESSION

Every parent starts somewhere when joining the Cub Scout pack. Sometimes they have no idea what Scouting is or what is expected of them and their child. Units will find that it helps both parents and the unit to hold a parent orientation meeting so everyone can share a common understanding. Choose a date for this at the beginning of the program year, soon after recruitment night and preferably before the first den or pack meeting. Parents find it helpful to receive an orientation handout or booklet at this meeting. It may include the topics listed below and parents can keep it for future reference. Be sure to distribute the

handout to any parents who are unable to attend the meeting.

Plan to cover the following topics:

- Introduce the pack leaders and have the parents introduce themselves.
- Describe the Scouting program.
- Explain what a den meeting is and what a pack meeting is.
- Discuss expectations, including participation expectations and behavioral expectations for Scouts and parents.
- Discuss any rules set by the chartered organization.
- Discuss any rules set by the meeting place.

Show the parents what handbook, uniform, and insignia will be needed. Have a sample uniform and handbook at the meeting.

- Explain the registration processes and fees.
- Provide a pack calendar for the full program year.
- Allow time for questions and answers.
- Provide the leaders' contact information to the parents. Try to keep the meeting as brief as possible, in consideration of the busy schedules of both parents and volunteers. You can also provide all of this online through a pack website or social media page where parents can easily reference information and communicate with pack leadership.

### Den Code of Conduct

The den leader and the Scouts in the den should develop a den code of conduct. Introduce this concept during an open discussion of how friends act toward one another. The Scouts may contribute rules for the code of conduct that relate to safety, respect for property, and relationships with others. Ask each Scout to contribute a rule. By creating the rules, the Scouts take ownership of them. You can make suggestions, too, if the Scouts need help creating the list. Some suggestions are:

- Do not interrupt when others are speaking
- No bad language
- No running, unless running is part of our activity
- Help with cleanup

They also need to learn about caring. Just as they can make up rules, they can decide on some of the caring values that they want to represent in their den. The ideas of fairness, helpfulness, and cooperation are all found in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. These important values can be a good start for discussions about conduct. With guidance, even young Cub Scouts can discuss their actions and decide how they fit with the den's chosen values. Such exchanges not only reinforce these values but also help Scouts develop critical thinking skills. Some dens have the members sign on a line at the end of the code.

Praise and positive reinforcement of good behavior will lead to more good behavior. When someone in the den behaves well, tell the den they are the best behaved den you have ever seen and then watch what happens. (The Scouts all become even better behaved!) Other ways of encouraging positive behavior include using positive recognition or reinforcement aids such as good conduct candles, marble jars, and stickers. This can be shared with parents and guardians.

Young Scouts tend to be noisy, active, and full of energy, but you can keep your Cub Scouts under control and handle the noise they create. Be sure to have a meeting

location where some noise is not an issue. Be thoroughly prepared for every den and pack meeting. Make certain the planned activities are appropriate for the group. Lack of preparation can lead to some confusion or even chaos. When that happens, it is difficult for the Scouts to maintain good behavior.

Webelos Scouts are much more adept at developing rules and can generally be depended on to adopt reasonable ones for their group. They might want to change rules from time to time as circumstances change. By age 10, children are beginning to understand that even public laws are made by people and that people can change them. They are ready to discuss rules in a fairly businesslike manner and will engage in a lot of bargaining with peers and adults.

Webelos Scouts also need active encouragement if they are to continue developing a caring orientation in their lives. They are ready to begin exploring the meaning of responsibility for the welfare of others. You can use their growing ability to see the perspective of others as a tool in your guidance. For example, encourage them to talk about the "whys" of the Scouting for Food drive in terms of real human needs in their communities.

Give the Scouts responsibility to help them think more deeply about positive attitudes, beliefs, values, norms, and actions. Teach the Scouts how to learn from experience and how to gain some mastery over the events in their lives. This approach will take effort at the beginning but will soon begin to take hold as the Scouts learn to discipline themselves.

### Helpful Hints for Den Discipline

**Use the Cub Scout sign to get attention.** When Scouts and adults see the sign, each should stop talking and raise his or her arm in the sign. Eventually, the room will be quiet. Don't shout or yell for attention. Don't speak while you are using the Cub Scout sign. Wait until everyone is quiet before speaking.

**Keep den and pack meetings well-paced, and have many interesting activities.** Have activities for early arrivals, and alternate active and quieter parts of the meeting. Plan the meeting well so that you can accomplish everything you planned without being too rushed or having down time.

**Try to get to know each Scout.** Find out what the Scout likes and dislikes. Stay in contact with the Scouts' families and be responsive to what might be going on in other aspects of their lives.

**Behave toward the Scouts impartially, regardless of race, social class, religion, personal friendship, and any other difference.** Children expect fair treatment, and the example of all leaders becomes their model. If you make promises as a leader, you must make every attempt

to keep them. At the same time, point out that at times, promises may need to be modified for good reasons. Knowing that young Scouts don't have a clear idea of "maybe," you need to offer as much guidance as possible.

**Listen attentively and try to understand what is written or spoken.** If you have trouble understanding a Scout, ask to clarify. If possible, try to look at the situation from the Scout's point of view. Remember that they do not yet have the maturity of an adult.

**Don't criticize a Scout in front of his den or pack. Doing so will make the child feel betrayed and humiliated.**

Wait until you can talk with the Scout alone (yet in view of other adults, in accordance with Youth Protection policies). Get the Scout to tell you what went wrong from their perspective, and then explain how you interpret the situation. Make an effort to find some common ground and begin once more.

**Focus on the positives and minimize the negatives.**

Help Scouts to look for good in every situation. Remember to give praise when it is earned and even when it's not expected. Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, said, "A pat on the back is a stronger stimulus than a prick with a pin. Expect a great deal from Scouts and you will generally get it."

**Give Scouts opportunities to make choices.** Provide real options and involve them in the planning of group activities. Sharing the power as well as the fun gives Scouts a feeling of ownership of the group's success and responsibility for things that do not go well.

**Provide Scouts with appropriate challenges.** What is exciting to a 7-year-old might bore a 10-year-old. What is exciting to a 10-year-old might frighten a younger child. Focus on the strengths of each developmental stage, and develop the program with the Scouts. Remember that the youngster who tests your patience the most might need Cub Scouting the most.

**Take some extra time to reflect on each meeting and learn from your own experience.** Start with what went particularly well. What made it go? What part did you play? What parts did the Scouts and/or other adults play? How can this combination work again? Also focus on what didn't work well. What aspects of the meeting needed more planning, resources, and leadership? What could have been done to prevent problems? Could these ideas be put into action earlier the next time a problem arises?

Are there best practices that can be shared?

With Tigers, bring a definite set of rules. Explain to the Scouts how they are expected to behave at den meetings and activities as well as pack meetings and events. As the Scouts get older, give them a say on what the rules are so they feel they have a stake in how the den works. This could also start a discussion on what happens if a member constantly breaks the rules.

Discuss using the denner system as a way to let the Scouts help run the den. Remember, with younger ages, start with smaller tasks and as the Scouts get older give them more responsibility.

When they are Webelos Scouts and will soon move on to Boy Scouts, it may be time to start running the den as a patrol. Have the Scouts discuss roles of responsibility, and give them ownership of their patrol. The roles can be switched out several times over the course of the year to give everyone a chance. This will be a stepping stone to the boy-led model they will experience in a troop. Encouraging them to set rules that are age-appropriate will give them a "buy-in" to maintaining order and morale during a den meeting.