

Senior Patrol Leader

The youth leader with the most responsibility in a troop is the *senior patrol leader*. He is elected by all members of the troop. Each troop sets all its own requirements and schedule of elections, though senior patrol leaders are usually chosen at a six- to 12-month intervals and can be reelected. During a Scout's tenure as senior patrol leader, he is not a member of a patrol.

The senior patrol leader of an established troop is often selected from among experienced Scouts of a certain age and rank. In a new troop or a troop without older members, boys are still likely to choose a Scout whom they respect and believe will provide the best leadership. The patrol leaders' council might offer an opportunity for those in the running to make short presentations to the troop, explaining their qualifications and reasons for seeking office. This provides good practice for the candidates and enables those who do not know them well, younger Scouts in particular, to gain a better sense of what they propose to do for the troop.

The senior patrol leader is in charge of troop meetings from beginning to end. He chairs meetings of the patrol leaders' council as they plan troop activities and programs. In short, the senior patrol leader's job is to that the troop runs in an orderly and timely manner. To help the senior patrol leader achieve that leadership goal, you as a Scoutmaster should work with him before and after troop meetings to mentor him, encourage him, and provide him with the tools to succeed. You might want to meet with him at other times, too, in order to discuss issues that will enhance his ability to lead the troop and improve the quality of experience the Scouts are enjoying.

The relationship between a senior patrol leader and his Scoutmaster is often one of friendship and mutual admiration. A great reward for a Scoutmaster is in helping a young man who has accepted a position of responsibility to develop into a leader capable of fulfilling the high expectations placed upon him.

