**ALL SECTIONS**

# How Should my Section Link with Others?

Linking adds fun and new adventures to your Scouting Year. It is a great opportunity for youth to see that their Section is part of a much bigger Scouting program and Scouting movement. It provides an occasion for older youth to mentor and teach skills to younger youth, one of the many times in Scouting that leadership skills can be developed. Younger youth see the possibilities awaiting them as they move through the program.

Youth who are comfortable in Scouting tend to also stay in Scouting. Members in the middle year (or years) of a Section seem to be our happiest, most committed members. We want all of our youth to be happy and committed to the program. Linking helps youth stay in Scouting and have fun in Scouting.

The most important part of linking is the opportunity for Sections to share adventures and fun. Beavers can invite the Scouts to join them in tobogganing. Venturers can plan a haunted house to help the Cubs celebrate Halloween. Rovers can create a magic campfire to surprise the Beavers. All Sections can gather for an end-of-year camp. Linking activities should happen throughout the Scouting Year, and need not only be with the closest older or younger Section.

The Canadian Path is a program that's designed to look at the big picture and ease the transition from one Section to the next. There are more touchstone components for youth in every Section than in the past. For example, an adult volunteer is called a "Scouter" in every Section—not a "Leader" in Beavers, Cubs, and Scouts, then an "Advisor" in Venturers and Rovers. This might seem like a small change, but for youth new to Venturers the familiar title for the adult Volunteers will reassure them that their Scouters are still committed to supporting them as much (or as little) as they need. As a Scouter, be aware of some of the common terms and elements for all of the Sections. Referencing these terms and elements will help alleviate some of the anxiety youth might feel ahead of or just after moving from Section to another.

Youth in all Sections now have some of the same opportunities. The Canadian Path has introduced Top Section Awards to every Section. Scout-aged youth will not be intimidated by the Chief Scout's Award, as they might have attained the Seeonee Award in Cubs and North Star Award in Beavers.

Familiarity with the Outdoor Adventure Skills should also serve to ensure youth are comfortable when they move from one Section to another. The Outdoor Adventure Skills are not affiliated with any one Section, so youth can always look forward to developing the competencies for higher stages. The Outdoor Adventure Skills provide a solid footing for any enthusiastic youth who is brand new to a Section. He or she will already have goals to pursue. Just as important, the Outdoor Adventure Skills provide a great framework for older youth to mentor younger Scouts honing competencies for earlier stages. What a great linking opportunity!

Linking exclusively with the senior youth from a younger Section, especially late in the Scouting Year, is a good way to encourage youth that the transition from one Section to the next will be a smooth one. It's important that the next Section for a youth is not mysterious and intimidating. A young person should know the names of the Scouters in the next Section, and feel comfortable with the older youth before he or she moves up. This approach to linking also ensures that the adventure the youth in the older Section have planned will not be undermined by too wide an age gap with the youngest members of the other Section.

Make linking a part of your Section's long-term plans. When your youth are brainstorming adventures for the next program cycle, encourage them to find an opportunity or two to link. Ideally, this should happen with adventures the youth are already excited about. Linking should never be a chore! Instead, it should mean great new opportunities for both older and younger Scouts.

**Online Resources:**
**Outdoor Adventure Skills**

## Canadianpath.ca

**It starts with Scouts.**