

How do I Plan for the Scouting Year?

Most Scouter teams will get together before their Section's first meeting to both prepare for the upcoming meeting and to share some ideas for the Scouting Year ahead. This is an opportunity to identify events that should be on the Section's calendar, like jamborees. It is also an opportunity for Scouters to coordinate their Scouting schedules with their personal and work schedules. Giving thought to weekend and week-long camps well in advance will ensure that most (if not all) of the Scouters can attend the Section's major events.

Planning to Facilitate—Not Planning to Plan

When your Scouter team meets late in August or in early September to prepare for the Scouting Year, it is important to remember that The Canadian Path is a youth-led program. Primarily, the Scouter is a mentor, guiding youth members in their development and helping them engage effectively with the program. This means that it is up to the youth (not the Scouters) to choose and plan the Section's adventures.

In youth planning, Scouters review the plan as it is created. Scouters ask questions and offer comments that guide the youth to think about the decisions they make. While this principle could send Scouters for a loop, a healthy balance between the youth's aspirations and the Scouters' flexibility should ensure a Scouting program that the youth love. The youth need to appreciate that there are limits to the demands they can place on their Scouters, but they should have the opportunity to create a program within reasonable boundaries.

For example, every Section should aspire to have a camp or sleepover early in the Scouting Year. It makes good sense for your Scouter team to identify a weekend that works for your schedule. Let the youth know when the camp will take place. You should also give some

thought to some prospective locations for your camp, and think about what activities can be done at each location.

If at all possible, resist settling on the location for the camp, and do not determine what adventures the youth will pursue on the weekend. It should be up to

the youth to identify what they would like to do on the camp, and you as a Scouter should be ready to let them know what location is the best fit for the youth's plans.

Scouters can also enhance the plan by suggesting activities or asking questions that lead the youth to consider activities that would involve other Program Areas or more of the SPICES. You and your fellow Scouters will have many great ideas, and you should not hesitate to present them to the youth when they're planning their adventures, especially if they seem to be struggling to generate their own ideas. Your Scouter team can generate its ideas well in advance and think ahead to how you will support any adventures that the youth choose. However, you should not sell your ideas. If the idea comes from the youth, skilfully shaped by Scouter guidance, the youth will more effectively retain what they learn.

Remember that youth-led Scouting does not just mean that youth choose their adventures—they plan them, too. You will need to identify what is reasonable to expect of the age group with which you are working. Even Beaver Scouts can contribute to planning their adventures (by planning activities and menus, for example), but they need a great deal of support from their Scouters. Help them to think through their planning by asking guiding questions. For older Sections, coach the youth to generate adventure-specific gear lists, perform safety assessments and even manage finances and paperwork. Be prepared with answers, but wait to be asked.

The role of the Scouter in guiding the youth plan is a critical one. Taking the time early in the Scouting Year to mentor your youth in how to plan will make your job easier in the future. More importantly, supporting your youth and giving them opportunities to fail, to learn and to grow is the best possible way to foster their personal progression.



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