

Re-TEN-tion

**The Ten Defining Moments in a Scout's Life
Where Retention is Critical
and
*What You Can Do About It***

“Be Prepared.” The meaning of the motto is that you must prepare yourself by thinking out and practicing how to act.”

Sir Robert Baden-Powell
Founder of Scouting

Defining Moment One

THE FIRST THREE MONTHS IN TIGER CUBS

Here are some ideas given to us by those who are beating the odds and retaining their Tigers.

1. Understand that one of the most important positions in all of Scouting is the Tiger Den Leader. Don't change Tiger leadership every year with a new adult. Find someone with a heart for Tigers and do what you can to keep that person in that position. An experienced, consistent leader keeps the boys coming back.
2. Ideally, this person would commit for three years. During the third year an assistant would be selected to apprentice or "shadow" the leaders and would then become the next leader, who would serve for three years.
3. Great planning makes for a great program! Planning for the Pack should be in May. Use lots of parents.
4. The Tiger program must be fun and crazy, geared for first grade boys. Integrate goofy stuff and never take yourself too seriously.
5. "Hands on" activities should be used liberally. When something tangible can leave the meeting, it adds a new level of enthusiasm. Something as simple as a refrigerator magnet works wonders.
6. Create and print a Pack calendar. Hand it out to parents and include the Pack rules.
7. Make Tiger Cubs a part of the whole Cub Scouting experience. Tigers should be just as much as part of the pack as the Wolves, Bears, and

WEBELOS. Tigers should be at every Pack meeting and recognized for their accomplishments.

8. Begin “when” language right away. This is a reoccurring theme which must be emphasized throughout a boy’s Scouting experience. Begin saying to the Tigers, “Now when you become a Wolf,” or “When you become a Bear,” or “When you become a WEBELO.” No “ifs.”
9. A good Tiger recruiting process begins in the spring. Sponsor an Open House shortly before school is out for Kindergarten boys and their parents. Create a colorful brochure just for Tigers, with information for parents as well.
10. Implement a summer Tiger program. Two or three good summer programs for the Tigers gets the boys interested and involved. This could include: family picnics, day camp visits, rocket day, etc.
11. Recruit Tiger leaders in the spring and let them in on planning sessions.
12. Leaders must build relationships with parents. They must be “people persons” and talk to parents. If parents aren’t welcomed and don’t enjoy being a part of the Pack in some way, their boys won’t stay. This is true in every level of Scouting as well.
13. High-five every boy as he arrives at a meeting.
14. Learn each boy’s name quickly and use it. Learn parents’ names as well.
15. Have the Tigers wear the Cub Scout blue shirt right away.
16. Present the boys with their Tiger neckerchief in front of the entire Pack at the first opportunity. Make it a big occasion.
17. Have a table set up at a school's open house. Ask the principal, far in advance (they come back to work in early August), for permission to do

this. Have lots of brochures about the Pack and have BSA literature available.

18. Talk with a first grade teacher to try and understand six and seven year old boys. Understand their learning styles and their likes and dislikes.
19. Put “Join Cub Scouts” yard signs in the yard of the charter organization. Stock up by getting new ones each year because they can blow away or get stolen.
20. Get a “Join Cub Scouts” message on the church or school sign every year the week before the Rally Night. Most churches would do this if someone just asked.
21. At least one parent is involved with a school’s PTA. Submit a paragraph about joining Scouts in the PTA’s monthly newsletter. Remind them they can join at any time, not just on the Rally Night.
22. Get a bulletin board at the charter organization and update it monthly with lots of photos and information.
23. Never arm-twist parents into being Den Leaders at a Rally Night. Instead, look for extra help for an event or two and ease them into leadership.
24. Have parents fill out a “Family Talent Survey” early on to know their strengths and interests.

Defining Moment Two

THE FIRST TWO MONTHS AS A WOLF CUB

So what can you do to keep your boys in Wolves and then on to Bears?

1. Remember that a great Bear Den begins with a great Wolf Den. A great Wolf Den begins with a great Tiger Den.
2. Try not to change the Wolf and Bear leadership each year. Sure, have parents serve as assistants but try to keep the same Wolf and Bear Den Leaders for at least three years. Consistency is a big factor.
3. Never underestimate the power of good planning.
4. Keep the boys interested and advancing. There are so many things to work on in Cub Scouting. Make the advancement lots of fun and very crazy. Like with Tigers, keep integrating goofy ideas and never take yourself too seriously. Remember the three words: program, program, program. Boys like doing and hate listening!
5. Keep the “when” language going. No “ifs” like “If you become a WEBELO” or “If you become a Boy Scout.” That is a negative, self-fulfilling prophecy. It’s “When you become and WEBELO” and “When you become a Boy Scout.”
6. Implement a summer Wolf and Bear program. See that it includes Day Camp and more.
7. Keep building relationships with parents. Keep being a “people person” and talk to parents. Know the parents by name.

8. Create a Pack email list to send out announcements every week with reminders about upcoming events. Many boys at this age already have their own email addresses. Include them and their parents.
9. In the spring, start to recruit parents to take over for those who may be leaving in the fall.
10. Track attendance. If a boy misses two weeks in a row and you don't know why, make a phone call, send an email, or write a note letting him know he was missed. The sooner the better.
11. Select a totem for your Pack. The theme should be one that brings everyone together or has some symbolic meaning that everyone can understand. Have that totem visible at meetings and create a graphic of it to include on all publications.
12. Remember that the best Packs and Troops have a high ratio of active adults to boys. Your best ratio is one adult for every three boys.
13. Remember that the Scout Shop may have Program helps.

Defining Moment Three

THE FIRST CAMPING EXPERIENCE

Here are some ideas to make that happen:

1. Have an information night a week or two before the campout at a Pack meeting. Get a digital projector and show pictures of previous campouts or show a scrapbook with photos. You do keep a history of the Pack, correct? Pass out a packing list to parents and include the leaders' names and phone numbers for questions. Take lots of time for questions and answers from parents.
2. Reserve a cabin for two nights and make it an option to stay one or both nights.
3. Reserve the camp's council ring for a big camp fire. Don't fly by the seat of your pants. Plan it out with lots of songs, goofy things, and smores. Light the campfire in an impressive way. Make memories.
4. Don't give the boys hot chocolate before bed. The sugar will pump them up and they won't sleep. They may also have to get up to find the scary latrine in the middle of the night.
5. Once the boys are in their bunks, stoke the fire and play a CD of Native American music. You could also read them a story, a long story filled with adventure. But, not scary! This can comfort those who may be scared and give the whole group something to listen to as they fall asleep.

6. Attend the Council Cub Adventure Weekend. Everything is planned for you.
7. Have each boy build his own big tin can camp stove and have him cook his supper on it at camp.
8. Find things for each parent to do on a campout. If parents are bored or feel like they are not wanted, you'll lose them. You need to get them involved, which will keep the boys involved as well.
9. When a Cub Scout shows up for his first campout, present him with his own hiking stick. These can be easily made. Use different wooden brands or other ways to mark each event on the hiking stick.
10. Impress on the older boys that they must make the younger boys feel welcomed.
11. Always have a Plan B and Plan C. Many first campouts have been ruined by a cold rainy day with boys cooped up in a cabin with nothing to do. Sometimes, its even better to postpone an event rather than create a negative experience.

Defining Moment Four

THE MOVE TO WEBELOS

1. Make the move to WEBELOS a big event. Let boys change from the Cub Scout blue shirt to the Boy Scout tan shirt right away. Present new WEBELOS with blue shoulder loops for the tan shirt and talk about the coming day when those blue loops change to red when they become Boy Scouts.
2. Keep the WEBELOS involved in the Pack. Don't separate them all the time. Meet as a total unit.
3. Allow the second year WEBELOS to immediately become a Patrol and attend some Troop meetings. You should alternate WEBELOS meetings between the Troop and Pack so boys aren't out two nights a week.
4. Never underestimate the power of a good Den Chief. A Boy Scout who gives up a second night a week to help a Cub Pack is a great gift. These boys are "secret weapons" in the process of moving WEBELOS into Boy Scouting. They develop positive relationships with the younger boys and become the WEBELOS' liaison to Boy Scouting.
5. Take "WEBELOS to Scout Transition" training at the University of Scouting.
6. Develop communication with a Troop and allow that Troop to communicate with the Pack. The Troop should become involved with

the Pack. A Boy Scout liaison on a Pack Committee and vice versa is a good idea. A good Charter Organization Representative should initiate this communication between Scouting groups in the same organization. Units need to exchange yearly calendars as well.

7. An ideal situation would be that the Pack and the Troop both meet on the same night in the same place. That makes it very easy for the WEBELOS to visit the Troop. It is also good for the parents because they get used to the same night for meetings. Parents with a boy in both the Troop and the Pack appreciate the “one-stop shopping,” thus not having to go to two different places or on two different nights.
8. A good Troop realizes that its success depends on the success of a good Pack.
9. Give a list of second year WEBELOS to the Scoutmaster along with their parents, addresses, phone, and email. The Scoutmaster can contact the WEBELOS.
10. Remember that it is in WEBELOS that the world of outdoor Scouting begins to open up. The WEBELOS are able to camp and go on other outdoor activities. So, camp and go!
11. At the end of the WEBELOS program, the boys should have a “taste” for what Boy Scouting is about and have a head start in proceeding through the Boy Scout program.
12. The WEBELO Leaders should think of themselves as guides that lead the boys through the transition from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts. Leaders keep the boys’ interests going in the direction of Boy Scouts by playing more of a supportive role than a directive role.
13. Help WEBELOS become more involved in planning the program for the den. They will learn simple leadership skills.

Defining Moment Five

WEBELOS TROOP VISITATION

Here are some ideas to help:

1. Remember that there is no second chance at a first impression. If the WEBELO Scout does not have a good experience, why should he come back? Make sure there is lots of activity.
2. Parents want and need lots of information about the Troop. Provide a brochure listing contact persons, events, what is expected of the Scouts, and what is expected of the parents.
3. Scoutmasters need to spend some time with the WEBELO parents and leaders who visit with their boys. They need to spend time explaining the differences between Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts and answering questions.
4. Remember the “WOW” factor. WEBELOS are looking for fun units that are busy doing things and no one is bored. Program, program, program!
5. If WEBELOS are welcomed by the older Scouts, it makes a huge impression. Scoutmasters need to talk with the older Scouts to emphasize welcoming and including the WEBELOS.
6. Den Chiefs should stay with the WEBELOS during the meeting, if it is their Den.

7. Make the meeting an honest representation of a typical meeting. Don't present something that you are not.

Defining Moment Six

THE TRANSITION TO SCOUTING

Here is a brief overview of the WEBELO to Scout Transition Plan:

1. Every graduating WEBELOS Scout deserves the opportunity to continue his Scouting experience as a member of a Boy Scout Troop. No WEBELOS Scout should start his fifth grade year without a clear path that leads directly to a specific Boy Scout Troop.
2. The WEBELOS-to-Scout Plan offers a clear path into Boy Scouting for every WEBELOS Scout by linking his WEBELOS Den (as a WEBELOS Patrol) to a specific Boy Scout Troop.
3. The WEBELOS Patrol, formerly referred to as the Pack's 2nd year WEBELOS Den continues to be registered with the Cub Pack and continues to attend monthly Pack Meetings.
4. The WEBELOS Patrol would continue to be led by the WEBELOS Den Leader, but would be assisted by a WEBELOS Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster from the Troop.
5. Weekly WEBELOS Den Meetings would now be replaced by weekly Boy Scout Troop meetings with the WEBELOS Patrol acting like a regular patrol in the Troop under the leadership of the Den Leader and WEBELOS Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster.
6. The new WEBELOS Patrol would be included in many, if not all, of the Boy Scout Troop's monthly activities.

7. The new WEBELOS Patrol would continue in this fashion until the February Blue and Gold Banquet at which time the WEBELOS Scout receives his Arrow of Light. A formal Crossover Ceremony welcomes him and his complete Patrol into the Scout Troop.
8. The key factor in this plan is the establishment of a working partnership between the WEBELOS Den and the Scout Troop long before the WEBELOS Scout is ready to cross-over.
9. Since summer camp is a vital part of the Boy Scout experience, especially with the new Scout, the plan provides for an early graduation (January or February) and complete transition from the Pack into the Troop, allowing enough time for the new Scout to prepare for summer camp.
10. The WEBELOS Den Leader works with the Scoutmaster and WEBELOS Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster to implement the WEBELOS Patrol concept. The Leader conducts weekly Den/Patrol meetings with the Troop using the advancement programmed outlined. The Leader also plans and conducts an impressive graduation ceremony as they move from WEBELOS Den to New Scout Patrol.
11. The Scoutmaster directs the establishment of a working, cooperative link between the Troop and Pack. He appoints a WEBELOS Den Chief and encourages use of WEBELOS-to-Scout Plan. The Scoutmaster also appoints and directs the WEBELOS Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster early in the program.
12. The WEBELOS Patrol Assistant Scoutmaster serves as the link between the Troop and the WEBELOS Patrol. With the WEBELOS Den Leader, the Assistant conducts the advancement program at weekly Troop meetings and helps promote the Arrow of Light Award. This leader also assists in preparing the WEBELOS Patrol for participation in outdoor activities and other events with the Troop.

Defining Moment Six

WEBELO TO SCOUT CROSSOVER AND OTHER RITES OF PASSAGE

Here are some ideas from those who are retaining boys:

1. Usually, the night a WEBELO Scout crosses over into Boy Scouting is the same night he receives his Arrow of Light. The Arrow of Light is the Eagle Scout of Cub Scouting and needs to be lifted up as such.
2. When a WEBELO crosses over into Boy Scouts, make it a big deal. Use a bridge, remove his blue shoulder loops on one side and replace them with red after he crosses the bridge.
3. Get Cub Scout leaders involved as well, if they are moving into Boy Scouting with their sons. Have them also cross the bridge and remove their blue loops and replace them with red shoulder loops.
4. Write out the ceremonies and rehearse them. Never just “wing it.”
5. Create digital videos. Borrow a projector. This is very impressive for an Eagle Court of Honor or Arrow of Light recipients. Get photos from parents and use them to create a visual biography of the new Eagle Scout.

6. Consider Eagle Court of Honors the same evening as Troop Court of Honors. The younger scouts will be there to see one of their own become an Eagle Scout. This can become a huge incentive for them.
7. Allow plenty of time to set up for big events. Use a microphone and make sure someone knows how to operate it. Use a spot light if you can borrow one.
8. Get parents involved in the Court of Honors. For every rank, invite the boys' parents to come forward and have a small rank pin for boys to pin on their moms. This way, when they become Eagle Scouts, moms and dads will be comfortable
9. Some troops provide a pin-ribbon for mothers to display their pins. It can be worn at all Courts of Honor and inspire the Scouts to work for another pin.
10. Have a pot luck before the Blue and Gold or Court of Honor. This is a great time for leaders to talk with parents in a fellowship environment.
11. Create big events. Begin with an impressive flag ceremony. Use a candelabra ceremony. Incorporate Scouts and Scouters.
12. Remember that these are formal events held in a formal environment. Invite special guests like a unit commissioner, district executive, clergy, or principal and introduce them.

Defining Moment Seven

THE FIRST SEVERAL TROOP MEETINGS

Here are some ways to help keep them in the Troop:

1. Understand this is the first time since Tigers that the new Boy Scouts are feeling like the “low man.” Most of them will be in fifth grade and they are the “kings” of their elementary schools where fifth graders rule. They haven’t entered middle school yet were they quickly become the “low man” in a new school. They were also the second year WEBELOS who dominated their Pack. There are some emotional changes going on and most boys don’t know how to deal with this change of status. They may choose “fight or flight.” Some may choose flight.
2. Avoid publically labeling new Boy Scouts as “the new boys” or the “new boy Patrol.” If you use a new boy Patrol, refer to it publically by its name (Panthers, Hawks, etc.)
3. Get new parents involved as leaders.
4. If you used a Den Chief, make him the Patrol Leader of the new Patrol.
5. Have a campout with just the newer scouts and some of the older, trusted boys.
6. Program, program, and program. Keep meetings moving and allow interaction for all the boys. Don’t have boys sitting and listening to a boring lecture.

Defining Moment Eight

FIRST TROOP CAMPOUT AND FIRST SUMMER CAMP

Here are some ideas from Troops with very successful camping programs:

1. Prepare a packet about summer camp that gives as much information as possible. Include a copy of the medical form and a packing list.
2. Hold a parent information meeting during May that deals with summer camp. Distribute the information packet. Have the Senior Patrol Leader run this meeting.
3. Understand that the first camping experiences need to be positive, but also remember that boys do need some struggle in their lives. There is value in some struggle. If we can lead boys carefully through the pains of growing up, we can expect them to live less painful and more joyful lives in adulthood. Leaders let their boys struggle just enough. No boy is going to be harmed under the eye of a watchful leader, but he will grow a little taller as a result of the experience. Not only do boys need it, they actually want it.
4. Create and print a monthly newsletter with information about the next campout.
5. Hold a cabin campout rather than tenting for the first camping experience. Since many times the first campout for new boys is in the

early spring and the weather can be so unpredictable, make it a cabin. Yucky weather can contribute to a yucky experience if you are a brand new Scout.

6. Effective Boy Scout Troops are not always the prettiest sight to behold. This is sometimes hard for new parent leaders to understand. Develop a system or code like, "Can I get you a cup of coffee?" which lets another leader know that he needs to step back and let the boys handle it.
7. Summer camp Parents' Night can be a disaster for a first year camper. If a boy goes home midweek, he will not be back. "Forewarned is forearmed" – be certain to speak with parents before camp to ensure the parents know what to expect and to ensure parents encourage their sons to remain in camp.
8. Boys hate to sit. If they aren't busy doing something they will be into mischief. If they are busy, they won't have time to be homesick.
9. Boys love nature. If they don't, it's because they have never had opportunities to love it. Get them out in the woods!
10. Allow a sense of mystery, awe, and accomplishment with the summer camp honor camper ceremonies. Keep the traditions going.
11. Poor boots make for poor campouts.

Defining Moment Nine

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS

Try these ideas:

1. Train and use older boys as Troop Guides.
2. Develop these Scouts into junior leaders and then let them lead. Boys appreciate input into the program.
3. Develop a fair and purposeful election process for boy leaders. Elect the Senior Patrol Leader and Patrol Leaders and then guide them in making appointments.
4. Have an older Scout program.
5. Praise in public. Criticize in private.
6. Make up awards to be presented to encourage the Scouts. Possible awards could be:
 - The “Almost There Award” for a boy who has worked hard but didn’t, for one reason or another, get finished in time for a Court of Honor.
 - The “Good Job Award” for a boy who went above and beyond or who kicked it up a notch.
 - The “Below Zero Hero” award for those who slept in tents in the winter where the temperature got into negative digits.
 - A special instructor award for those who teach First Class emphasis for the Troop during summer camp.

7. Keep adults trained and involved with a special adult leader only campout. Make it fun and memorable.
8. Get adults to the annual University of Scouting.
9. Promote Wood Badge training for adults.
10. Develop a program where only the older Scouts can sign off for requirements in Handbooks.
11. Develop a corps of instructors from the older boys.
12. Have the older Scouts set a uniform example.
13. It's still about providing a quality program with quality leadership and effective communication.
14. If your Troop hasn't done so, create a special adult Patrol. Adults enjoy the fellowship of other adults. Give the Patrol a name like the Java Patrol, the old Goat Patrol, or the old Buck Patrol.
15. Now, more than ever, the "when" language becomes critical. It's not "if" you become an Eagle Scout, it's "when" you become an Eagle.
16. High adventure, high adventure, high adventure.
17. Program, program, and program.

Defining Moment Ten

THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

Here are some ways to keep these Scouts in the program:

1. High school activities make it very difficult at times to be involved. Make it clear that Scouting is a year round program. Let the boy know, "We'll be here when you can make it."
2. Don't push the issue if other activities are interfering with Scouting. Don't give the boys ultimatums or guilt trips. You will lose them if you do.
3. Right leaders do the right things so continue to get the right leaders in the right positions.
4. Use peer pressure in a positive way to keep them involved.
5. Let the older Scouts realize that they are responsible for running the troop.
6. Let them also realize they are responsible for the younger Scouts.
7. Consider a Venture Patrol. Programs for Ventures should be separate from the rest of the Troop.
8. Secure a Venture Assistant Scoutmaster who has a desire to work with older boys.

9. Make the older boy program something for the younger boys to look forward to.
10. Have an older Scout program to keep them interested and encourage them to stay. The program is planned by the boys and should include:
11. Select Junior Assistant Scoutmasters and give them responsibilities.
12. Follow up on absentees. One phone call can make a world of difference.
13. Use the older boys at Cub Scout Rally Night so Cubs see Boys Scouts right away. These young men can help as greeters, passing out forms, and playing games with the Cub Scouts.

How to retain Scouts, by Sir Robert Baden-Powell:

I like to think of a man trying to get boys to come under good influence as a fisherman wishful to catch fish. If a fisherman baits his hook with the kind of food that he likes himself, it is probable that he will not catch many -certainly not the shy, game kind of fish.

He therefore uses as bait the food that the fish likes. So with boys; if you try to preach to them what you consider elevating matter, you won't catch them. The only way is to hold out something that really attracts and interests them.

Sir Robert Baden-Powell
Founder of Scouting