

**Pioneer Trails District
Denver Area Council**

*Webelos to Scouts Transition:
A Guide for Parents and Boys*

Welcome!

For those of you who are new to Scouting, welcome to the journey and experience of Scouting! Scouting has a rich history of helping boys learn skills, values and ideals to better enable them to live an enriched life. Boys Scouts of America (BSA) had its beginning in 1910 whereas Cub Scouting didn't officially start until 1930. The Webelos program, started in 1941, is part of Cub Scouting and is a transition from adult leadership to boy leadership with adult mentoring. It is this transition that may have many boys, and parents alike, confused and excited all at the same time. The purpose of this guide is to help the Webelos Scout and his parents better understand the differences as well as provide a guide to the Webelos leader on how to make this a smoother process for all involved.

Where Do I begin?

Webelos, which stands for **We'll Be Loyal Scouts**, addresses boys who are either in the fourth or fifth grade or are 10 years of age. The Webelos program is designed to start challenging the boys more physically and mentally with the achievements they start to earn. These 20 achievements actually mirror some of the requirements for Boy Scouts merit badges. In this way the Webelos program is already starting to prime the boys for what is to come later. Now, don't take that to mean that it's all just a repeat of the same things that have been taught thus far. Boy Scouts will improve upon many of the skills the boys have learned in Scouting but that is just the beginning.

To get a better understanding of what the Boys Scouts are all about, the Webelos leader should schedule Troop visits for local Boy Scout Troops in the area. The Webelos leader should work with the Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster of the various Troops to learn about when each Troop meets. The last thing that any boy wants to do is show up for a boy led meeting only to see that it is a Troop Committee meeting night. Where's the fun in that? Troop Committee meetings are a good place for parents to learn more about how the Troop operates, funds camping and other outings throughout the year.

How Do We Find Troops?

There is a great online tool for that very purpose! The website is called <http://www.BeAScout.org>. It's a very easy to use website where you type in your zip code and then it displays Boy Scout Troops in your immediate area. The top part of the web page is displayed in figure 1 for your convenience. You can further refine your search on the results page by using your address. The results page, shown below in figure 2, will have graphics for the Troop location as well as a description panel for more details include contact information. Many Troops have a dedicated person just for this task!



Figure 1

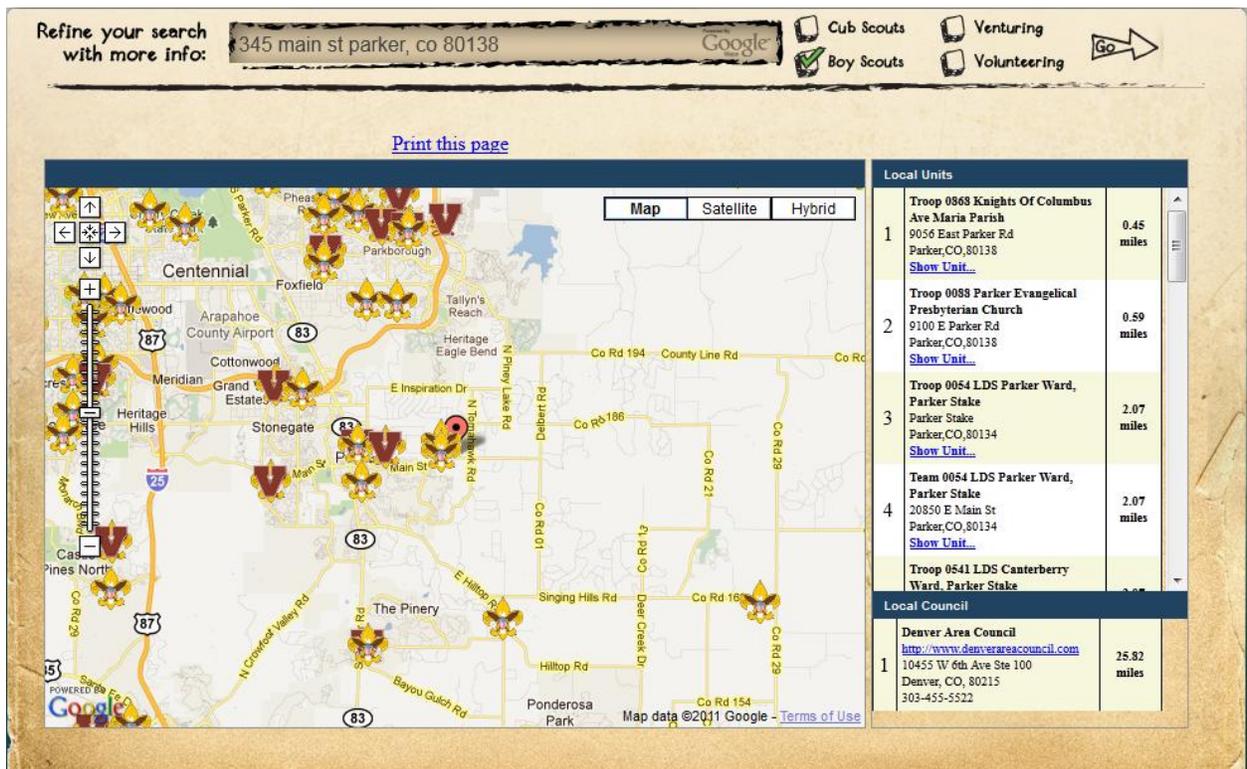


Figure 2

What Are The Requirements to Join?

The requirements to join Boy Scouts aren't difficult at all. In general, a boy must be at least 11 years old to join, must fill out an application to join so the Scoutmaster knows who the boys is, pay the national application fee and complete a general medical form to be used for determining his physical abilities at outings. For a boy who is in the Webelos program, he can join at 10 ½ years old if he has earned the Arrow of Light rank.

That's it. That's all it takes to join. The hardest part is finding a Troop where the boy has a good fit for the types of things he likes to do.

What Do You Mean “A Good Fit”?

When the boys visit a troop for the first time, they may feel a bit intimidated. This is to be expected to some degree. After all, they are going from learning to being a leader in the Pack and setting the example to being the new kid amongst “the big boys”. Not only that, but not all Troops are the same. Some Troops will be built around camping and outdoors while others will be “High Adventure” Troops that hike 14ers all over Colorado and other Troops still may be geared towards being very community service driven and earning rank. Not every boy in a Webelos patrol has to move into the same Boy Scout Troop. Cub Scout Packs may be closely aligned with Boy Scout Troops and even have many Den Chiefs from one Troop but that doesn’t mean that every boy will join that particular Troop if they aren’t “a good fit”.

The best way to figure out if you want to join a specific Boy Scout Troop is to have a Scoutmaster conference. Aside from it being a requirement for the Arrow of Light achievement, it is a great way to get to know a Troop’s main mentor. The other way to get to know the Troop is to go on outings with them. This allows the Webelos to really see Boy Scouting in action. They get to be a part of the activities, experience the patrol method first hand and get a real taste of what that Troop is about.

When the Webelos patrol meets with a Troop they should have some ideas about what they want to get out of their Scouting experience. With that in mind, the Webelos should make a list of what things are important to him, what things he likes to do and what things he doesn’t like to do. The Webelos should also make a list of questions to ask the Scoutmaster and some of the boys in the Troop. Below is a sample of ideas and questions.

1. Ask a boy what are the most fun activities you have done in the troop.
2. Ask the Scoutmaster about costs like where does the money comes from for the activities.
3. Ask the Scoutmaster “What if I really want to join the troop but it’s too expensive? Is there a scholarship program?”
4. How often does the troop meet?
5. Do I have to attend every meeting?
6. How many boys are in the troop?
7. How many adult leaders are in the troop?
8. Does my mom or dad have to be a leader in the Troop?
9. Is the troop new or has it been around for a long time?
10. Do the adult leaders stay with the troop for a long time?
11. What about Eagle Scouts? Do they stick around after they earn Eagle?
12. How many Eagle Scouts are in the Troop?
13. How quickly do boys typically earn rank?
14. When can I join?

What Else Should We Consider?

Above we talked about some general elements to consider like how often the Troop meets, what type of “theme” does the Troop have and how rank advancement happens in general. One key factor for many is the size of the Troop – too big and will we get lost in the shuffle; too small and who is going to help with achievements and rank advancement? This is where Troop leadership and parental involvement are really important. The Troop should be led by the boys meaning they get to decide what they do, when they do it and how it’s to be done BUT the parental involvement dictates do we have anyone qualified to teach that skill, do we have funds to pay for that trip, etc. Parental involvement is a critical piece of the Troop’s success!

Along those lines, you need to consider the social element of the Troop. Do you already know any boys in the Troop? Do you know any of the parents in the Troop? Boys and parents must feel welcome and comfortable in the Troop if they are going to succeed in their Scouting experience and adventure.

Sometimes you really like two Troops and you have to pick one so here is a sample Score Card to help you decide. Please keep in mind that once you pick a Troop, nothing prevents you from changing your mind later!

Troop Score Card	Troop 1	Troop 2	Troop 3	Troop 4	Preferred Troop
Troop Overview					
Focus/Theme					
Meeting Time/Place					
Size (Small, Medium, Large)					
Rank Advancement Emphasis (Poor, Good, Great)					
Troop Leadership					
Boy Led?					
Adult Led?					
Parental Involvement					
How many parents at the meetings?					
Were the parents helping with activities?					
Social Element					
Were the boys friendly?					
Were the adults friendly?					
Was everyone having fun?					

How Many Troop Visits Should We Do?

The requirements for Arrow of Light state that the Webelos Scout should visit at least one Boy Scout Troop meeting and one Boy Scout-oriented outdoor activity. This would give the boy only a small view into that one Troop. I highly recommend that all Webelos visit at least three Troops and each of those Troops should be visited at least twice each. The meetings should be visited about six months apart. Why six months apart? Troop leadership at the boy level changes every six months, or it should change every six months. With new leadership comes new dynamics and new personalities. Change within the Troop may also be with the number of active boys, new boys may have joined since your last visit and others may have left. It may be sports season and attendance is lower with boys involved in organized sports. That would be a good thing because Scouting is just one part of a boy's life and the boys should be encouraged to pursue their passions and goals.

Keeping the scorecard above for your Troop visits will allow you to compare the first visit from the last. This will greatly help you and your Webelos Scout decide where the best fit is. It is important to remember that picking a Boy Scout Troop is not a lifetime decision. You are free to change Troops at any time if you feel the need or if the dynamics change with a Troop. The most important thing is that the Scouting Experience continues!

When Do We Cross Over to Boy Scouts?

Every year in February is when a unit, Cub Scout Pack or Boys Scout Troop, will renew their charter with the area council for Boy Scouts. Typically this is when parents pay yearly registration and dues to the unit. This is also about the same time of year that "graduation" happens and boys move from one rank to the next. During this same time is when Webelos will go through a "Crossover Ceremony" which symbolizes their transition into the Boy Scout Troop. It will be at this ceremony where members of the Troop that the Webelos decides to join will be there to officially welcome the scout into the Troop. There could be many different Troops present as each boy may decide to go to a different Troop.

Is That It?

Crossing over into a Boy Scout Troop is just the beginning! Now is when all of the fun happens. For more information on the types of fun that are waiting for you and your sons, please read The New Parent's Quick Guide also available on the Pioneer Trails website in the Webelos to Scout Transition section.