Summer Camp

Cub Pack Program Guide | Where next year's electives can get earned

A guide to best practices, not policy. Meant to be adapted to your pack and your council. This is the section built to be rewritten: replace the general guidance here with your own camp's. Where anything here differs from current Scouting America policy, your council's guidance, or the Scout's handbook, those govern.

IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE

Council Cub camps generally run a separate camp for each rank, and a Scout attends the camp for the rank they are moving into. This summer's Wolf goes to Bear Camp. Most camps run each session several times over.

In one session a Scout may earn both elective adventures the next badge needs — and at Tiger, Wolf and Bear camp, most of the next required Outdoors adventure as well.

BB gun, archery and slingshot can only be earned at a council or district program with certified range staff. Camp is the only place your Scouts get them. A den meeting cannot substitute.
A den that goes to camp can start September with its electives already done and nothing but Bobcat between the Scouts and their first badge of rank. Several sessions of the same camp usually means a conflict with one week is not a no.

1. Which camp your den attends

Most councils run each camp several times over, the bulk of it in June and early July. Find the row for the den you have right now — the camp belongs to the rank they are moving into, which is why what they earn there counts toward next year's badge.

Your den now	Camp they attend	What Scouts may earn — fill in from your camp's list
Lion (K)	Tiger Camp	Usually the required Tiger Outdoors adventure, in whole or in part, plus several electives and the range sports. Ours: _____
Tiger (1st)	Wolf Camp	Usually the required Wolf Outdoors adventure, in whole or in part, plus several electives and the range sports. Ours: _____
Wolf (2nd)	Bear Camp	Usually most of the required Bear Outdoors adventure, plus several electives and the range sports. Ours: _____
Bear (3rd)	Webelos Camp	Usually electives only — the required Webelos adventures stay den work — plus shooting pins. Ours: _____
Webelos (4th)	Arrow of Light Camp	Usually electives only, plus range, climbing and C.O.P.E.-style awards where camp offers them. Ours: _____

Your den now	Camp they attend	What Scouts may earn — fill in from your camp's list
Arrow of Light (5th)	A troop's summer camp	Not a Cub camp. These Scouts should spend the week at summer camp with the Scouts BSA troop they are crossing into — it is the strongest predictor that a crossed-over Scout is still registered a year later.

What a camp covers differs from council to council, so the right-hand column is deliberately general. Your camp publishes an advancement list naming the exact adventures and requirement numbers its sessions cover — get that list, write the specifics into the blanks, and hand the page to families. Nothing here is a promise until your camp's list says it is.

2. What camp is worth to a den leader

- You plan nothing. Camp staff runs the program, the range and the pool. You supervise and you go home tired instead of prepared.
- Both electives for the next rank may come home finished. That is up to two den meetings handed back to you in a year that only has fourteen.
- At Tiger, Wolf and Bear camp, most of the next required Outdoors adventure may come home finished too — the hike, the Six Essentials, the buddy system, the outdoor code.
- Range sports cannot be run anywhere else, at any price, by any volunteer. If your Scouts do not go to camp, they do not shoot.
- Summer is when packs lose families. A den that camps together comes back together in September; a den that scatters in May does not. Camp also counts toward Summertime Fun — the elective every rank from Tiger up earns for three Cub Scout activities between May and August. Camp is one of the three; two more across the summer finishes it.

3. What to say, and when

Camp turnout is decided in the fall. Registration opens in January and February, which means January is when you collect the yes — not when you ask for it. The families who go are the ones who put a week on the calendar back in October, when there was still a summer left to plan.

When	Who you are talking to	What you say
September, at the first parent meeting	Every family in the den	"This den goes to camp. It is a week in June or early July, it is where your Scout can earn both electives for next year, and it is the only week all year they can shoot a BB gun or a bow." Ask for nothing yet. Families plan summers early, and the ones who first hear this in May have already booked something else.
October, at the parent and leader meeting	Every family in the den	Pick the week together. Put two or three candidate weeks in front of the parents and let them tell you which one clears. A den that picks its week together goes together.
November	Every family in the den	Name the number. What it costs, what is included, and — plainly — that campership help exists and is confidential. Say it before anyone has to decide, so cost is a problem you solve rather than a reason a family quietly goes quiet.
December	Every family in the den	"Registration opens next month and we go as a den. I need a yes or a no by ____." Put the date in writing and set it earlier than the camp's own deadline.

When	Who you are talking to	What you say
January and February — registration opens	Everyone not yet signed up	The month of the ask, not the month of the pitch. Registration does not open on one date for every camp, and the older ranks often open weeks before the younger ones. Know your camp's date, be at a keyboard for it, and register the den together so everyone lands in the same session. Chase the non-answers by name and by phone; a group email is where a maybe goes to die.
March	The two or three still deciding	Campership money and payment plans, arranged before a family has to raise cost themselves. Ask by name and in private: "What would have to be true for your Scout to come?" Get the health forms out to families now, so April is collecting them rather than starting them.
April — the early-bird deadline	Everyone who is going	Camps normally set an early-bird deadline in spring, and the fee jumps after it. Paying in the window is the cheapest thing you will do all year. Forms in, adults confirmed, carpool set.
May	Everyone who is going	Logistics only — packing list, drop-off, what to expect. Selling is over; sections 5 and 6 are the whole job from here.

4. Your camp dates — fill these in and hand this page to families

Camp week or session (June or July): _____ Location: _____

Registration opens: _____ Early-bird deadline: _____

Our den commits by: _____ Cost per Scout: _____ Per adult: _____

Cost-help deadline: _____ Who to ask: _____

Medical forms due: _____ Den leader going: _____

5. Before camp — preparing your families and Scouts

A good week at camp is mostly decided before anybody gets in a car. The families who enjoy it are the ones who knew what to expect three months out, and the Scouts who enjoy it are the ones who packed their own bag.

Which camps need a parent in the tent — ask this first

This is the question that decides whether a family can come at all, so it is an October question, not a May one. At most council camps Tiger, Wolf and Bear camp are parent-and-Scout programs: the Scout attends with a parent or guardian, and a Scout tents ONLY with their own parent or court-appointed legal guardian — nobody else may share a tent with a youth, even someone living in the same house. Webelos and Arrow of Light camp are usually different: they take full-time and part-time adults, so the den can be covered by two adults rather than one per Scout. Tiger camp is often a day camp; the older ranks are usually resident. Your camp publishes which of its sessions are which — check before you answer a family.

The paperwork, and when to chase it

What	Who does it	When
Registration and deposit	Family	By the date you gave them in December. Camps normally take a per-camper deposit at reservation and it is usually non-refundable, so the December date matters.
Annual Health and Medical Record — a Cub camp week normally asks for Parts A and B; check whether yours also wants a current tetanus date	Family	March. No physician exam and no Part C for a Cub camp week. Bring the signed original to check-in and keep your own copy.
Swim test	Camp, on arrival	Most camps swim-test every camper on arrival and issue a wristband by ability group. Pack the swimsuit and towel on top, not at the bottom.
Medications in their original pharmacy-labeled containers	Family hands them to you or to camp	Two weeks out. Camps normally give you a choice: the unit dispenses from a locked box with a written log, or you check them into the health lodge. Decide which, and tell families which.
Special needs, allergies, dietary needs	Family tells you, you file camp's form	Camps normally have their own special needs request form with a spring deadline. File it early — camp needs lead time to actually do something about it.
Safeguarding Youth Training current for every adult coming, and a registered female adult leader 21 or older in the party if any girls are attending	Each adult, you verify	April. It must be current through the LAST day of your session, including for parents and guardians who are not registered leaders.

Your camp publishes its own forms, deadlines and medication policy, and those govern. The specifics above are typical rather than universal; confirm your own camp's current leader guide before you tell a family what they need — a day session and a resident session do not ask for the same things.

What parents will ask, in the order they ask it

- What does it cost, and what is included?
- What does a day actually look like — drop-off, rotations, lunch, pick-up?
- Does an adult have to stay? See above — at Tiger, Wolf and Bear camp the answer is yes, and that is a work-schedule question a family needs months to solve.
- What will my Scout do, and what may they earn?
- What happens if it rains? It does not cancel. Say so once, now, to everybody.
- How do I reach you during the week, and how do I reach camp?

Answer all six in one written note in April. Every question you leave unanswered comes back as a phone call in May, usually at nine at night.

Preparing the Scout, not just the parent

- **Pack with the Scout, not for them.** A Scout can only find what they put in the bag themselves. Do it together, in one pass, the week before — and have them carry the bag from the car to the door so they know what it weighs.

- **Label everything,** including the water bottle, the towel and both shoes.
- **Rehearse the boring skills:** putting on their own sunscreen, refilling their own bottle, finding their buddy, and telling an adult when something is wrong.
- **Talk about homesickness before it happens,** and never promise “I’ll come get you if you don’t like it.”
- **Set the expectation:** they will be hot, tired and filthy, and that is the point rather than a sign it went badly.
- **Say which uniform, and when.** Field uniform for opening and closing, den or camp t-shirt for the day. No Scout should be the only one in the wrong shirt.
- **Agree one trading post amount across the den.** A Scout holding forty dollars standing next to a Scout holding none is a problem you created by not naming a number.

The two answers that lose families

- **“It costs too much.”** You solved this in November and March or you did not solve it. Camperships, pack funds and payment plans are all real — and none of them work as a reply to a no already given.
- **“We’re busy that week.” Most camps run each Cub session several times over. One week conflicting is not all of them conflicting.** Offer a second session before you accept a no.

6. What you bring and provide

Two lists. The first is what the camp expects your unit to turn up with and will not hand you at the gate. The second is the den bag nobody tells you to pack, and the two items in it that matter most weigh almost nothing.

What camp tells the unit to bring — these are not optional

- ☐ **A cart or wagon** — Cars are not allowed at the campsites. Everything you brought gets walked in, and a den without a wagon carries it by hand.
- ☐ **A first aid kit, stocked** — Camp names the contents: bandages, sterile pads, tape, elastic bandages, scissors, gloves, tweezers, safety pins, sunburn lotion, pain reliever.
- ☐ **A lockable box for medications, and a second for valuables** — Required if the unit dispenses rather than checking medications into the camp health lodge, and you keep a written log of every dose.
- ☐ **Water containers, and a cup per Scout** — Individual or disposable — camp asks for this by name.
- ☐ **US flag and pack flag, plus your den flag** — The first two are on most camps’ resident-session campsite lists. The den flag is how a seven-year-old finds you in a field of two hundred people.
- ☐ **Trash bags, rope, a lantern** — Campsite kit at the resident camps.
- ☐ **A tarp or dining fly, at Webelos and Arrow of Light camp** — It is on that camp’s own campsite list. Some camps ban tarps, awnings and rain flies outright at the younger ranks, because camp supplies the camping equipment. Read your camp’s own list.
- ☐ **Something for the campsite bulletin board**

The den bag — what nobody tells you to bring

- ☐ **Printed den roster** — Scouts, parent cell numbers, emergency contacts. Cell service at camp is unreliable and a phone in a locker is not a roster.
- ☐ **Your own copies of every health form** — Camp keeps the originals. Yours is the copy you can put in a health officer’s hand in thirty seconds.
- ☐ **Sunscreen, and NON-AEROSOL insect repellent** — Aerosol strips the waterproofing off camp tents, which is why the camp bans it. Someone always forgets both, and it is never the same someone twice.
- ☐ **Snacks, nut-free by default**
- ☐ **Two or three spare rain ponchos** — Rain does not cancel camp.

- ☐ **A spare t-shirt, spare socks, and a plastic bag for wet clothes**
- ☐ **Camp map, session schedule, and your rank's completion list** — Camp hands out the session schedule when you arrive, so that one you collect at check-in rather than pack. The completion list is what you mark up as the week happens, not what you try to reconstruct in September.
- ☐ **A clipboard, a pen, and every Scout's handbook** — Camp staff will not sign the books. You do.
- ☐ **Wipes, hand sanitizer, paper towels, zip bags**
- ☐ **A little cash** — For the trading post problem you did not see coming.

Camp supplies the tents, cots, platforms, picnic table, latrine and water at the resident camps, and all program materials at the ranges and activity areas. **Hammocks are banned at most camps, and many camps also ban personal tents, awnings, tarps and rain flies at the younger ranks.** Put that in writing to families; it is the one thing a well-meaning parent throws in the car anyway.

What you provide that does not fit in a bag

- **Two adults, one of them 21 or over, with training that is current through the LAST day of your session.** Parents and guardians who are not registered leaders still need it. Arrange this in April, not the night before. No one-on-one contact with a Scout who is not your own — ever, and that includes rides.
- **A second adult who knows the whole plan.** The day you get pulled away is the day this matters.
- **A carpool plan in writing,** naming who drives whom, with a parent's written permission for any Scout not riding with their own family.
- **A group text thread for the week,** started before camp rather than during it.
- **Arrival at the time camp gives you, and not before.** Camps publish a gate time and hold to it. Turning up early buys you a queue, not a head start.
- **Somebody at the leaders' meeting.** Most camps hold a leaders' meeting on day one — sometimes every adult, sometimes the top leader only. Find out which, and be there.
- **A buddy count at every transition.** Every single one. At the younger ranks a Scout's buddy is usually their own parent or the whole den, and the rule applies everywhere on the reservation.
- **The advancement record afterward.** Camp staff will not sign a Scout's handbook — that is the leader's job, and it is the half of camp only you can do. See section 7.

What to tell families to leave at home

Sheath and fixed-blade knives, saws and axes. Personal firearms and archery equipment. Aerosols of any kind. Hammocks, at most camps — and often personal tents, awnings, tarps and rain flies at the younger ranks. Bikes. Fireworks, which get confiscated and destroyed. Liquid and jellied fuels. Car batteries. Pets, service animals excepted with documentation. Anything valuable or irreplaceable.

Pocketknives are the exception families will ask about. A BSA-approved pocketknife — folding, with a blade no longer than about two inches — is allowed, carried by a Scout who has earned their Whittling Chip. Camp supplies the materials for the Whittling and Knife Safety sessions, so no Scout has to bring one to earn the adventure. Your camp's own list outranks this one — read it before you tell families what to pack.

7. After camp — record it the same week

Camp hands out a completion list naming the requirements the Scouts covered. Get it before you leave the parking lot. Camp staff will not sign a Scout's handbook — camp leader guides say so outright, and it is true of every rank: staff deliver the instruction, you approve and record it. Go through the list with each family at the first meeting back and mark only what that Scout actually did, because the list is what was offered rather than a roster of what everyone finished. Enter the advancement within a week and tell the advancement chair what to order.

THE FAILURE TO AVOID

The most common way a pack wastes summer camp is not poor attendance. It is a den that goes, has a wonderful week, and never records any of it.

Nine adventures came home in a folder that went in a drawer, and in February a Scout does not get a badge that was earned in June. Ten minutes with the completion list prevents all of it.