

Join Scouting Night Unit Playbook

Fall 2021 and Spring 2022



Join Scouting Nights, or JSNs, have been a keystone for recruiting for years, and for good reason: They work! JSNs give parents and youth an opportunity to get to know Scouting at a personal level, face-to-face. Questions are answered, interest is built, and parents see how Scouting is for families like theirs, no matter what that family may look like. What is more, families often enroll their children right there on the spot. It's a win-win situation.

The Concept

Your unit will hold a JSN at a prominent location in the community, such as a school, church, or community center. You are strongly encouraged to hold your JSN at the school the youth attend. History tells us that the parents are more likely to attend a meeting at a place they and their youth are familiar.

At this JSN, you will provide basic information about what Scouting offers youth and families in the area. This could be done by using the *Rotational Model* or *Lecture Model*, using a more formal presentation. Both of these methods will be described in more detail later in this playbook. The important thing is to get the family's attention and let them see what Scouting is all about.

This playbook will act as your guide for planning, promoting, and carrying out a JSN event in your area.

Planning the Event

The following assumes the *Rotational Model* is used. However, almost all the planning steps are applicable to the *Lecture Model*, too.

The key to a successful JSN event is thorough planning. You will need to work closely with the school or community center you are using, organize volunteers, and be prepared with any necessary materials such as information fliers, sign-up forms, and even treats. Planning should begin at least eight weeks in advance of the event. Below is a suggested outline for planning your event.

1. **Get Help** - Many hands make light work, so if you have not done so already, assigning a unit membership chair and pack JSN Coordinator is a great first step to a successful recruiting season.
2. **Set Goals** - Work with your chartered organization to discuss Cub Scout JSN plans and set goals for your pack. How many youth and families do you want to sign up for Scouting? How will you do that?
3. **Get Trained** – Work with your district executive to get information on training that will be offered for Cub Scout JSNs.
4. **Reserve a Spot** - Sign-up events should take place during the first week or two of the school year. Avoid the Tuesday after Labor Day, Mondays, and Fridays. History tells us that join events held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are far more successful. Work with your district executive, as he/she will be meeting with local school principals or superintendents to discuss Cub Scout sign-up events and getting permission to promote them.
5. **Organize Volunteers** - Your pack JSN Coordinator should organize the sign-up event team for your unit, usually five to six people to act as “station chiefs.” These are simple jobs that anyone can fill, but it's best to use parents of current Cub Scouts who can talk from the heart about what Cub Scouting means to their family and their kids.



6. **Have Fun** - Keep the event fun and exciting. This not only makes it better for the parents attending, but also will make it easier for you, the organizer. Speak from the heart, don't stress, and just enjoy the opportunity to introduce new parents to Cub Scouting.

Volunteer Responsibilities

There are key individuals who play an important role in the success of your sign-up events, and they are:

- Pack JSN Coordinator – responsible for the pack sign-up event
- Station chiefs responsible for the five stations of the event.

The pack JSN Coordinator makes sure the pack is focused on registering new Cub Scouts and helps orchestrate the event. Here is an overview.

Note: The dates may change depending on your schedule. It is important to start planning early.

Six Weeks Prior to the Sign-Up Event

- Have your pack calendar, fee schedule, leaders' list and meeting times/dates/locations prepared.
- Provide information to your unit commissioner, district membership chair, or district executive.

Two Weeks Prior to Sign-Up Event

- Meet with five station chiefs (who are outgoing, knowledgeable, organized, friendly, and responsible).
- Coordinate with district membership chair and district executive.
- Review responsibilities with each station chief.

Sign-Up Event

- Arrive one hour early.
- Make sure station chiefs have their stations set up.
- Act as a "greeter and floater" during sign-up night window.
- Be available to answer questions.
- Play traffic cop – direct families to next available station.
- If back-up occurs, use your best judgment.
- Coach station chiefs if they are keeping families at their stations too long – process is meant to be completed in 30 minutes or less.
- Make sure the registration area does not get backed up.

After Sign-Up Event Concludes

- Help Cubmaster signature on all applications.
- Assist in separating "Local Council Copy" from applications and record dollar amount for fees and form of payment on each application (check #, etc.).
- Gather JSN materials.
- Make sure room is left better than you found it.
- Contact district membership chair and district executive immediately following the JSN to report your success and make arrangements for pickup of applications and fees.



Following Sign-Up Event

- Make sure EVERY FAMILY receives a welcoming phone call from their den leader, cubmaster, committee chair, or your unit membership chair.
- Remind parents of new Scouts of any upcoming district or council-wide activities.

Promoting the Event

Families today are overwhelmed with advertising and marketing messages. To ensure families get the message that it is time to sign up, use various methods of communication throughout this playbook and be sure to have a plan. You should start to build the buzz at least six weeks out from your sign-up event(s). Your council or district will help get the word out, but most of your success will come from unit marketing.

How much access you have to promote Scouting in your schools will help you decide the best ways to market your sign-up event. Here are some suggestions – but these are just thought-starters. Do not limit yourself. The more ways you reach parents, the more success you will have.

In-School Promotion

If you have full access to promoting your event at the schools, you can employ any of the following best practices.

- Attend back-to-school events to promote scouting and the upcoming sign-up event
- Distribute sign-up event fliers a week or two before the sign-up event
- Posters and yard signs around school
- School rallies or Scout talks at the school
- Back-to-school open house events, school carnivals, and conferences
- Electronic backpacks
- Invite current youth and parents to attend lunch at school in uniform
- Videos on in-school video networks
- School newsletter or website
- School marquee signs

Scout Talks

Scout talks can make a huge difference when signing up new Cub Scouts! Schools that provide access to Scout talks are the way to go. A Scout Talk is simply visiting each classroom and getting the children excited about Scouting.

The Scout talk is where youth excitement is created. Scout talks work best by going class-to-class and giving a five-minute promotion on the fun that Scouting has to offer. If this scenario is not feasible then a school assembly will work; however, classroom talks are best.

Your district executive is responsible for scheduling Scout Talks while visiting with the school principal. He/She, or a trained volunteer, will deliver the Scout Talks to the youth the day before the scheduled JSN event. These energetic in-school presentations will dramatically increase the success of your recruitment!

Out-of-School Promotion

Here are several ideas for promoting the event outside of the schools. These tactics can be done either in tandem with your in-school promotions or on their own if you are not able to get full access to the schools.

- Ask current members to use social media to let their friends and family know about sign-up event nights
- Personalized invitations, emails, and personal phone calls to prospective parents
- Door hangers and door-to-door invitations
- Recruit-a-friend and other peer-to-peer recruiting initiatives
- Fliers and Scout talks at after-school programs or churches in the community
- Church and community websites, calendars, and bulletins
- Press releases
- Billboards, posters, and yard signs in the community (businesses, churches, etc.)
- Community fairs, parades, and other events
- Sidewalk chalk

Holding the Event

Rotational Model

Many units and districts are now holding come-and-go events, which are strictly sign-up events. These are faster for today's busy parents. The key to making them successful is preplanning. The following is an outline of how to execute this type of event. Capitol Area Council refers to this as the *Rotational Model*. We have found that this method:

- Provides a more personal experience for each family.
- Is more respectful of limited time families sometimes have.
- Table displays provided by the Capitol Area Council to make this easier for your pack.
- Needs an existing Scout family at each station to be successful.
- Makes the JSN fun and interactive for youth and adults.

This model features five stations that give parents information about Cub Scouting, get them signed up, and provide everything they need to know, including when the first meeting is, who the leaders are, and more.

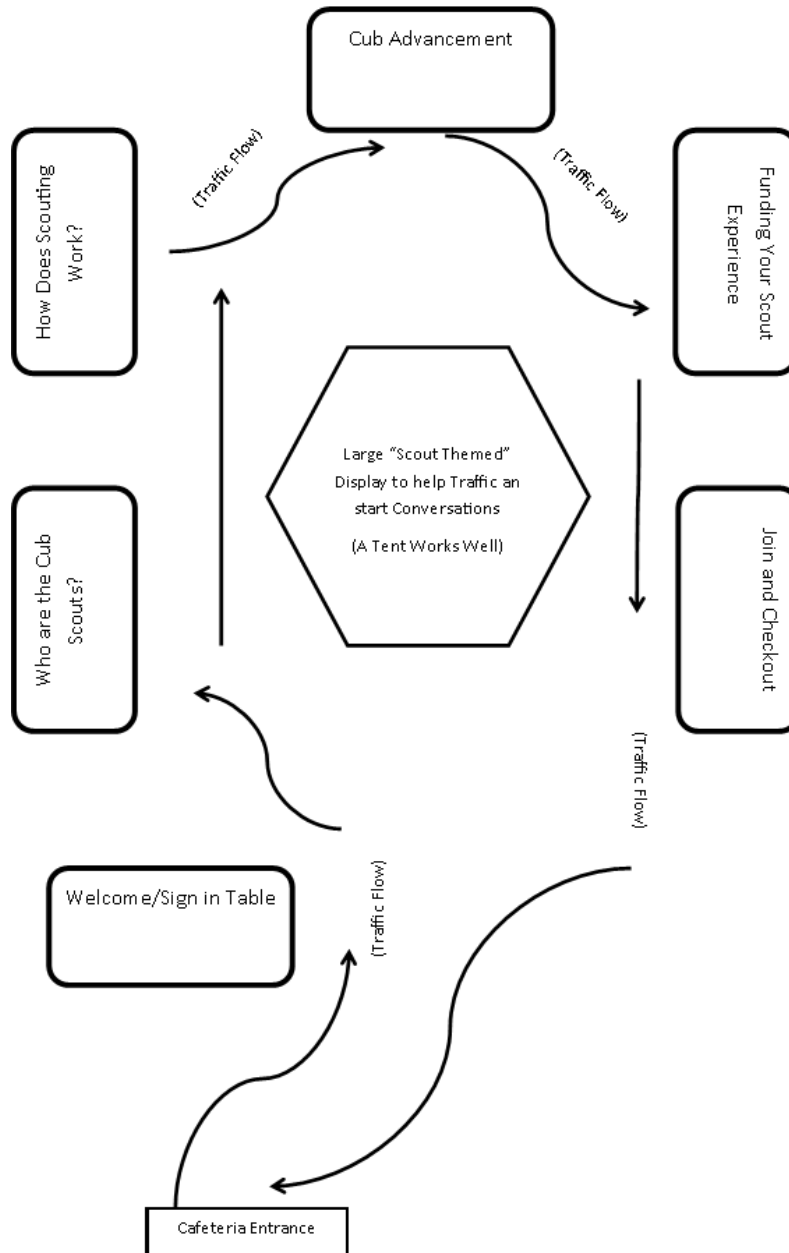
Your district executive can provide you with story boards to use at each station.

Rotational Model Stations

- Station 1: Who are the Cub Scouts
- Station 2: How does the program work?
- Station 3: Advancement
- Station 4: Funding the Program
- Station 5: Join and Check Out



Below is a diagram of how to set up the room and an outline of what happens at each station. A “Scout-themed display in the center of the room helps with traffic flow, but also provides a point of interest.



Station 5, the Join and Check Out station, is where the action happens. This is where the station chief helps parents complete the actual application.

- Have BSA Adult and Youth Application forms ready to be completed. Have pens available. Water and snacks can also be provided.
- Have copies of pack fees, activity calendar, and leader contact list available.
- Be prepared to answer questions about pack fee payment plans and/or financial assistance.

Leaders at this station are responsible for final “check out,” including payment.



- Make sure the applications are properly completed.
- Collect the proper fee amount for BSA membership fee and Scout Life (if added).
- Forms and payments should be collected, signed by the Cubmaster, and put in the envelope.

Leaders also make sure parents know when and where the first meeting is and answer any other questions parents may have.

- Try to have as many den leaders and assistant den leaders on hand to talk about their dens and give families a chance to get to know them.
- Answer questions about the type of activities their child will be doing.

Lecture Model

Here's a sample agenda to follow if your pack decides to use the *Lecture Model* for its Join Scouting Night.

6:50-7:10	Gathering and Greeting Greeters meet adults and youth Have them sign in Give them a name tag Guide them to their tables (each grade should be at a different table)
7:10-7:20	Opening Ceremony Introduce pack leadership Explain and demonstrate Scout salute Conduct a short flag ceremony
7:20-7:35	Youth Activity All current and prospective Cub Scouts break away to do an activity Leaders teach them the Scout Oath, Cub Scout Sign, Cub Scout Handshake, and Motto
7:20-7:35	Parent Involvement (while youth are doing activity) Brief overview of Cub Scouts (den meetings, pack meetings, advancement, etc.) Explain parent involvement and why it is important Emphasize that Cub Scouts is a family activity Discuss cost of membership – registration fees, pack dues, fundraising opportunities and financial assistance Answer general questions Fill out applications and recognize new adult volunteers
7:35-7:45	Youth return and share new skill Cub Scouts return and recite a Bobcat requirement together in the front of the room, then teach their parent the Scout Handshake Collect applications and present youth with joining incentive item Close with a brief flag ceremony
7:45-8:00	After the meeting Answer individual, or specific questions for families Visit with new Den Leaders to add important pack dates to their calendars

Do your best to keep the meeting to one hour! You will be tempted to provide a lot of detail about the pack and upcoming activities. Remember, the JSN is the opportunity for new families to join your pack. Use a parent orientation meeting to share that detail.

After the Sign-Up Event Is Over

Turn in the applications and money. Unit leaders and the JSN Coordinators should review and complete applications after the JSN event. Applications, registration fees, and one copy of the attendance roster are to be turned in to the district executive within 24 hours of the event.

Welcome your new families and members. **Do not wait!** Be sure to invite all families to first-night den and pack events the very next week. These meetings are a chance to make a great first impression, have fun, and involve new parents in the life of the pack. Den leaders should make welcome phone calls to the parents of the new Cub Scouts and/or send welcome email messages with meeting dates, location, pack calendars, and any other important information.

Follow up with those families who did not sign up. This is where the sign-in sheet comes in handy. Check your applications against the sign-in sheet and call those families that did not join. Address any concerns the person may have and offer to drop an application by their home or invite them to the first meeting so they can see Cub Scouting for themselves.

Second Chance Opportunities

How is a *Second Chance Opportunity* different from the JSN?

Just like us, the families interested in joining Scouting already have very busy schedules. And, like us, they cannot make it to every activity or opportunity that presents itself for their kids. Even when things are on the calendar, sometimes life happens, and things come up. To help make sure that we give every youth a fair chance to join, our solution is two join opportunities, and spring recruitment.

The second chance joining opportunity can be a repeat of the traditional JSN in the school cafeteria, but many packs use this time to put a personal touch on their activity, and at a different location than the school. If you have a pack picnic that could be an opportunity for new families to come out and see the fun of Scouting.

Families need this second opportunity for various reasons. It could be a subtle reminder that we are here, or showcasing the fun we have, or maybe the weather was bad for your first opportunity. No matter: every family deserves a chance to join Scouting.

Work with your district executive, as he/she can provide promotional materials for the second chance opportunity.