

Cub Scout Den Meetings

A den is a group of six to eight boys, within the pack, that meets several times a month between pack meetings. The boys in a den are usually all at the same grade level. The den structure allows boys to build relationships with leaders and other boys. The den provides opportunities for activities that would be difficult with a large group. The den also provides leadership opportunities for the boys.

The Den Meeting Location

The location of den meetings will vary, depending on the resources of the Cubmaster or den leader. An ideal meeting place is the home of an adult leader, if there is enough room for everybody. Meetings can also be held in a basement, garage, backyard, park, town square, or the activity room of an apartment building. Some dens meet at the chartered organization's meeting place or at a local school.

Den Meeting Attendance

The den leader and assistant den leader (or another adult) attend all den meetings with the Cub Scouts. (At least two adults must be present at all meetings.) Tiger Cub den meetings are also attended by each Tiger Cub's adult partner. Wolf, Bear, and Webelos den meetings are often attended by a den chief, a Boy Scout or Venturer who assists the adult leaders. An activity badge counselor who has been asked to help with a specific badge may also attend a Webelos den meeting. Sometimes, a parent, guardian, or other family member might be asked to help at a specific meeting, but family members do not normally attend Wolf, Bear, or Webelos den meetings.

The Den Meeting Agenda

All Cub Scout den meetings have the following parts:

- **Before the Meeting.** Before the Cub Scouts arrive, leaders gather to make preparations and handle last-minute details.
- **Gathering Activity.** As the Cub Scouts begin to arrive, they join in an informal activity or game, often conducted by the den chief to keep the boys interested and active until the entire group has arrived.
- **Opening.** The opening is the official start of the den meeting. It usually consists of a formal ceremony, such as a flag ceremony, a prayer or song, or a group recital of the Cub Scout Promise.
- **Program.** The program part of the meeting will vary by the age of the boys (see below), and may be broken into two or more parts. Generally, most of the meeting consists of craft projects, games, and activities that are all based on the monthly theme.
- **Closing.** The closing draws the meeting to an end. It's usually serious and quiet. Den leaders could present a thought for the day or give reminders about coming events.
- **After the Meeting.** The leaders review the events of the meeting, finalize plans for the next den meeting, and review their progress toward the upcoming pack meeting.

Wolf and Bear Cub Scout Program

Wolf and Bear Cub Scouts devote part of their weekly meeting to "business items" such as monitoring the boys' progress toward rank advancement and other awards and choosing, planning, and preparing their activity for the upcoming pack meeting.

Every den meeting should include at least one game, to be conducted by the den chief; craft projects that are started at the meeting and completed at home with the boys' families; and other group activities such as songs, stunts, and puzzles related to the monthly theme.

Often, den meeting activities enable the Cub Scouts to complete some requirements toward an award or rank. The den leader can initial the requirement in the boys' handbooks, but it must also be signed by a parent or guardian to indicate the requirement has been completed.

Den Meeting Activities

The range of activities that may fit into a den meeting is as wide as imagination itself. Many suggestions for activities can be found in the Cub Scout program literature, childrens' books and magazines, and many other sources.

Any activity you can imagine can be incorporated into a den meeting, so long as it is age-appropriate, safe, and—most of all—fun. Ideally, the activities included in a den meeting reinforce the values taught by Cub Scouting or match the monthly theme. But sometimes, "just for fun" is all the reason you need.

Here are some activities commonly included in Cub Scout den meetings.

Crafts

Crafts are an important part of Cub Scouting because they help a boy learn new skills, follow directions, work with his hands, appreciate and value materials, and use and care for tools. Boys usually start their craft projects during the den meeting and complete them at home with help from their families.

Crafts and projects in Cub Scouting may relate to the monthly theme; relate to achievements, electives, or activity badges; or be done just for fun. The monthly theme is designed to suggest opportunities for handicrafts and other activities. For a well-rounded program, two den meetings might be devoted to crafts. The other two can be devoted to games, fitness activities, a trip, or a service project.

Most dens operate on limited funds, so craft projects should be simple and inexpensive. Scrap materials can be put to good use and are readily available at little or no cost. Some den leaders ask boys to bring scrap materials or equipment from home. All den families can help fill a den craft-supply box. When tools are needed for crafts and projects, call on a parent, neighbors, or other adults to help.

For help with craft project ideas, see the *Cub Scout Leader How-To Book*.

Games

Mention the word "game" to most boys, and their eyes light up. Whether they are physical outdoor events or simple mental challenges, games are an important part of Cub Scouting because they help a boy

- Learn good sportsmanship, self-confidence, and patience
- Develop consideration for others
- Learn to follow rules, to wait their turn, and to respect the rights of others
- Learn give-and-take and fair play
- Improve his physical and mental health

Many games combine fun and fitness. They provide a chance for every Cub Scout to learn the basic skills of a sport, game, or competition while learning good sportsmanship and habits of personal fitness. And all of this takes place in an environment where participation and doing one's best are more important than winning.

Skits

Tiger Cub, Cub Scout, and Webelos dens may be asked to present skits or demonstrations at the pack meeting. These can be pantomimes, sketches, or short plays. The main purpose of skits is for the boys—and the audience—to have fun. But as boys practice performing in these informal skits, their confidence and leadership skills begin to develop as well.

Skits usually are based on the monthly theme. A Webelos den skit or demonstration might be based on the monthly activity badge area. Boys will have the chance to plan, rehearse, and make props and costumes during den meetings. The final presentation can be made at the pack meeting.

Some Cub Scouts may want to just watch rather than take part in the skit. Ask them to handle the lights or offstage sound effects, or watch the time. Sometimes, playing a character who wears a mask or uses puppets helps lessen a boy's self-consciousness.

Songs

Group singing at a den or pack meeting adds to fellowship and a feeling of togetherness. Most boys enjoy singing. For a leader, music can help lift spirits and create a happy atmosphere for teaching the more serious parts of the program. You can use songs to help set whatever mood you want—serious, patriotic, inspirational, or theme-related. Boys especially like action songs that give them a chance to move around. They also enjoy seeing their families taking part in action songs at pack meetings.

Some packs have enough copies of the *Cub Scout Songbook* (No. 33222) to use at den meetings. When people know the song or have the words, they are more inclined to join the fun. Also, the singing at pack meetings is greatly improved if the dens know in advance which songs will be sung and can practice them in den meetings.

Storytelling

Storytelling is a good way for a den leader to introduce the theme for the next month. Depending on the theme, the leader might tell a true story from nature or an incident from the life of a famous person, a myth, or an American Indian legend. The Cub Scout Promise, the Law of the Pack, and the Cub Scout motto all can be explained and illustrated by stories.

A story can set the scene for a special outing or trip. It can meet a special need, such as a behavior problem. It can help you get a point across without singling out a particular boy or incident.

One of the best reasons for telling stories is because they are fun and boys enjoy them. Stories are sometimes just the right thing to change the pace of a meeting from noisy to quiet, or to put a finishing touch on a pack campfire.

Stunts, Tricks, and Puzzles

Stunts, tricks, and puzzles brighten meetings and put the group in a happier, livelier, more receptive mood. Use them as icebreakers to get the meeting off to a good start or as an element of surprise or excitement when people get restless. There are several different types of stunts:

- Those that the boys perform for an audience
- Audience participation, in which everyone joins in by making sound effects or some other type of response to a leader
- Applause stunts, which are especially useful for recognition

These activities should be fun for the boys as well as the audience. Because stunts are simpler than skits, they usually don't require as much preparation and rehearsal. All stunts, however, should be positive in nature and encourage a boy's self-esteem.

Ceremonies

Use simple ceremonies to open and close den meetings and to mark important events in the lives of the boys and the den. Den ceremonies should be short—no longer than two or three minutes—and varied. The same opening and closing each week will become boring. Occasionally, the boys should have a chance to help plan and lead den ceremonies.

Here are some types of den ceremonies to consider using in your den meetings:

- An **opening ceremony**, often a flag ceremony, signals the beginning of the den meeting.
- A **Progress Toward Ranks** ceremony can acknowledge a boy's progress toward his rank advancement.
- A **denner installation** ceremony recognizes a boy leader and the importance of this position in Cub Scout and Webelos dens.
- Special **recognition** ceremonies can mark special events such as birthdays and holidays.
- **Closing** ceremonies can emphasize Cub Scouting's ideals and bring a quiet, inspirational end to the den meeting.

Ideas for ceremonies can be found in *Cub Scout Ceremonies for Dens and Packs*.

Planning Den Meetings

A Cub Scout den leader is not expected to find and develop all of the ideas and materials needed to run lively den meetings. The Cubmaster and pack committee members work with den leaders to develop den meeting programs. Much of the planning for the den and pack is done at the annual pack program planning conference, the pack leaders' planning meeting, and the den chief planning meeting.

Den and Pack Meeting Resource Guide provides meeting outlines based on the monthly theme. Most leaders use these outlines as guides for planning their own den meetings, but they are also free to incorporate their own ideas in the den meeting plan.

Remember that sometimes a den trip or other special activity might take the place of a regular den meeting. If the den meeting program is well-planned, interesting, and fun, the boys will be more likely to attend.