Mission
BSA Troop 1028 is a Scout-led unit. Ours is a value-based community, a proud and encouraging team. We foster and train engaged citizen leaders amidst an exciting atmosphere of fun and real adventure! Our very diverse and skilled Scouters provide strong support for boys seeking true self-reliance. We hope that Scouts ultimately become ready and prepared to do the right thing, doing their best wherever they are, whenever they can, with whatever they have.

“A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Overview
Our troop has embarked on many backcountry campsouts, bicycle trips, canoeing, sea kayaking, rafting, climbing, Scout camps, etc. We believe in fun, fulfilling challenges.

This document is intended as a general activity overview and planning tool. Troop 1028 seeks to create a fun, diverse, inclusive, challenging, and engaging activity program. Ours is a content-driven plan to help Scouts enjoy their quest toward the development of self-respect and self-reliance.

General Activity Program
As a boy-led troop, we must permit the Scouts a say in their annual program and calendar. At the same time, we can provide them with a flexible, durable framework. That is the purpose of this very general Activity Guide. It is a foundation upon which the Scouts can build their specific activities, monthly themes, and annual calendars.

Annual Planning
Each year, we conduct semi-annual elections on the first or second Monday of May and November. These elections set the rhythm for our annual planning meetings. They also form the frame for our Scout leadership training. This drives our Scout-led program.

Planorees
Following the November election, we conduct an annual Planning Conference (Planoree) devoted to roughing out the monthly themes and major activities for the coming year. This Planoree involves the newly-elected boy Scout leadership, together with the outgoing SPL and JASMs.

Following the May election, we like the newly elected Scout leadership to gather for a Spring Planoree. Here, we tweak the program for the second half of the year, taking into account the progress of the new Scouts. This gives the PLC, again together with the outgoing SPL and JASMs, a chance to review plans for Summer Camp, our major Annual Adventure (generally in Summer and sometimes at a BSA High Adventure Base), and the more challenging Autumn-Winter activities.

Troop Leadership Training
Prior to each Planoree, we review the principles of youth leadership. Besides encouraging participation in BSA’s NYLT program, we must find time to more frequently and informally tackle key leadership basics. After all, our youth leadership desperately needs to constantly learn/review core leadership principles. This includes concepts like proactivity, preparedness, the four basic teaching methods, and effective delegation. This fosters a more self-reliant PLC. It’s the key to getting the troop running properly, getting our kids trained as leaders, and providing the younger guys with peer mentors.

Given a General Activity Program, a school calendar, a council calendar, some basic leadership training, and a dash of adult assistance, the new Planoree team can more effectively develop the program they want to embrace for the next 6 months.

Scheduling Planorees
We conduct quarterly Planorees in November, February, May, and August. Unless scheduled otherwise, Planorees take place at the
Moose Lodge on school holiday Mondays (when we do not host troop meetings).

Calendar Development
As noted in both our Troop Overview and Welcome Guide, we try to balance broad Scout community activities such as service projects, camporees, and summer camps with more challenging backcountry activities better tied to nature.

Activity Balance
Since the troop’s average age and experience level vary from year to year, we must adjust our program accordingly. That’s the purpose of “grading” activities on a 1 (easy) to 10 (challenging) scale and in some cases restricting Scout participation according to age and/or rank.

Our activity balance extends to monthly themes and activity content. We promote a healthy mix of skill and character development within an aggressive program of rank and merit badge advancement.

We must, however, try to keep things fun for Scouts of all ages all of the time. It is important to remind ourselves that Scouting (like life in general) should be “fun with a purpose.”

Annual Rhythm
Scouts may join the Troop at any time, but we have our greatest influx of new recruits in late Winter. So, we emphasize basic skill development each Spring. This prepares Scouts for their first taste of the backcountry and then Summer Camp. We save most of higher skill activities for later in the year.

Cyclical Rhythm
We currently employ a multi-year activity cycle geared to discourage repetition in less than a 2- or 3-year period. Ideally, we should try to create a good 4-year planning arc, involving two even- and two odd-year cycles. This 4-year rotation should include 4 Annual Adventures such as a visit to Boundary Waters, Sea Base, Philmont, and one other extraordinary adventure (e.g., Jamboree, or even a 1+ week-long trek to a wilderness site of our own choosing).

So, Scouts staying within our troop for 4-7 years get a great taste of variety. Except for some district camporees and our annual “New Scout Campout,” we try not to revisit the same site in consecutive years.

Core Activities
Each year’s program must include and revolve around certain “Core Activities.” These include elections and Planorees. They also include the annual Cub Scout Crossover, Summer Camp, Camporees, and Annual Adventure. They should include quarterly service, quarterly advancement, and quarterly adventure activities.

During even years, we usually attend Stonewall Jackson Area Council’s home reserve at Camp Shenandoah. Every odd year we typically travel out of Council for Summer Camp.

Typical Annual Activity Program Requirements

Even Years:
- At least one outdoor activity a month
- At least one hike on the first open Saturday of every “even” month
- One “crossover” month devoted to New Scout Camp
- At least three months devoted to backpack camping
- At least two months devoted to aquatics-related camping
- At least one Senior Scout Weekend
- 1-2 district camporees (one out of district)
- SJAC camporee
- Summer Camp at Camp Shenandoah (2nd week in July)
- One major outdoor event per quarter
- Four quarterly service activities
- Four quarterly advancement activities (e.g., Merit Badge University, Moose Camporee, Summer Camp, etc.)
- One Annual Adventure (in June or August)
- Quarterly Courts of Honor (March, June, September, December)
- Holiday Party (with December CoH)

Odd Years:
- At least one outdoor activity a month
- At least one hike on the first open Saturday of every “even” month
- One “crossover” month devoted to New
October
—Theme= Aviation.
—Content= District Camporee, Visit to National Air & Space Museum Annex at Dulles Int’l Airport.
—POC = Committee Advancement Chair Ed Murphy.
—Major Activity Site= “Apple Harvest Camporee” Pleasant Grove Park, Fluvanna County.
• All scouts will build doghouses for service to “Houses of Wood and Straw” program.
• All Scouts will work on the Aviation and Rocketry MBs.

November
—Theme= Super Cooking Month
—Content= Cooking MB and skills
—POC= ASM Rahul Sharma
—Activity Site= PATC’s Blackburn Cabin on AT near VA/WV line in Loudon County
• New Scouts will work on pack and camp preparation requirements.
• Experienced Scouts will work on the Hiking and Backpacking Merit Badges.
• All Scouts will work on backcountry cooking.
• The PLC will work on program plans for Christmas fund raising and service.

December
—Theme= Engineering
—Content= Engineering and Robotics MBs
—POC= ASM Eric Cutright
—Activity Site= Bridge and Shelter Construction at Doyle River Falls off AT.
• New Scouts will work on Pioneering Skills
• Experienced Scouts will work on the Engineering and Robotics Merit Badges.

January
—Theme= Fire
—Content= Troop Klondike Camp, firebuilding skills
—POC= ASM Trey Steigman
—Activity Site= Fullfillment Farms, near Hardware River in southern Albemarle County
• New Scouts will work on fire preparation, safety, and cooking requirements.
• Experienced Scouts will work on the Cooking MB and cooking skill mentoring.
• The PLC will work on program plans for a major summer outing.

Ideally, each week’s troop meeting should have a sub-theme that fits with the given month, and perhaps a rotating patrol presentation based on a station rotation structure.

Sample Themes
Monthly themes should focus on core Scouting skills and merit badges, especially Eagle merit badges (especially those not easily attainable at camp, such as Citizenship in the World, Citizenship in the Nation, Swimming, Lifesaving, etc.). Some samples include:
Activity Archive 2003–06

Here is a list of sites/activities during Troop 1028’s early years, specifically our first 4-year cycle (2003-06):

2003 Activities

- 1st Campout — Camp Shenandoah (CS), Campout
- Crabtree Hike — Crabtree Valley (Training)
- New Scout Camp — Camp Shenandoah, Skills Training Campout
- Horse Camp — Seneca, WV, Riding Campout
- St. Mary’s Trail and Falls — Rockbridge County, Hiking Campout
- White Water Rafting — New River Gorge, WV, Rafting Campout
- Signal Knob Trek — Elizabeth Furnace (Fort Valley), Hiking Campout
- St. Mary’s Trail and Falls — Rockbridge County, Hiking Campout
- Blessing of the Hounds — Albemarle Cty, Service
- Frozen Turkey Fest — Sherando Lake, Campout
- Toy Lift — C’ville, Service

2004 Activities

- Winter Fire Camp — Wolf Gap & Tibbet’s Knob, Hiking Campout (-3 F)
- Orienteering Weekend — BRMSR (Camp Powhatan), Orienteering & Hiking Campout
- New Scout Camp — Camp Shenandoah, Skills Training Campout
- Fishing Campout — Sherando Lake, Campout
- White Water Rafting — New River Gorge, WV, Rafting Campout
- Moose Camporee — Covington, Southern District MB Campout
- Kings Dominion — Stafford County, Fun Day
- BSA Summer Camp — Goshen, Extended Campout
- Scouts Baseball Day — Diamond, Richmond, Fun Day
- Mt Pleasant Backpack Trek — Rockbridge County, Backpacking Campout
- Apple Harvest Camporee — FUMA, Monticello District Camporee
- Moose Halloween Party — Moose Lodge, Service
- Thanksgiving Blessing of the Hounds — Albemarle Cty, Service
- Frozen Turkey Fest — Sherando Lake, Campout
- Toy Lift — C’ville, Service

2005 Activities

- Winter Fire Camp — James River State Park, Campout
2006 Activities

- Klondike Camporee — Palmyra, Monticello District Camporee
- North Creek Falls — Rockbridge County, Hiking Campout
- VA State Capital Tour — General Assembly, Rob Bell Interview & Tour
- New Scout Camp — Camp Shenandoah, Skills Training Campout
- Moose Camporee — Covington, Southern District MB Campout
- MS Bike Ride — Albemarle Cty, Service
- Fishing Day — Chris Greene Lake, Training
- July 4 Liberty Bell Ringing — Fire Station, Service
- Scouts Baseball Day — Diamond, Richmond, Fun Day
- Pre-Jambo Shakedown — Camp Shenandoah, Orientation Campout
- BSA National Jamboree — Fort AP Hill, Extended Campout
- Ocean Kayaking — Cape Charles, Ocean & Bay, Kayaking & Ecology Campout
- Thanksgiving Blessing of the Hounds — Albemarle Cty, Service
- Frozen Turkey Fest — Sherando Lake, Campout
- Toy Lift — C’ville, Service

Programming Guidelines

Patrol Camping

Patrol camping involves each individual patrol planning and executing its own unique camp outing, separate and apart from the rest of the troop. The ASM advising that patrol, and at least one other Scouter, should camp with the crew. Ideally, such a trip should occur near the end of a patrol leader’s term. That way, the PL and APL can put together a solid plan.

New Scout Camps

New Scout camping occurs very soon after the annual migration of Webelos. Other than summer camp and various non-troop camps like OA retreats, this should be the only time we think about camping at very familiar sites like Camp Shenandoah or Sherando Lake. In fact, we now plan to put together a separate rotation of new Scout campsites. We’re constrained by the fact that they need to be nearby, secluded from the public, and conducive to training and camping focused on very new Scouts.

Backcountry Camping

Backcountry pack camping requires a ≈1-5 mile hike in to the actual campsite. This distinguishes it from “frontcountry” camping, which involves parking at or near the campsite. All gear should be hauled in and out of a backcountry site via pack. Backcountry aquatics camping requires a ≈1-8 mile paddle (or in rare cases sailing or motor boating) to the actual campsite. All gear should be hauled in and out of camp via the prescribed mode of water-based travel (e.g., canoe, kayak, jon-boat, dory, etc.).
**Veteran Scout Camps**
Annual troop leader training and advanced backcountry outings may be confined to veteran, or even senior, Scouts. These “Veteran Scout Camps” are typically 1-2 night retreats. Depending on the mission, time of year, and troop roster mix, only Scouts with the rank of First Class or Star and above go on these campouts. Depending on the associated activity (e.g., shooting, rafting, etc.), we have to set the minimum age at 14.

**District Camporees**
District camporees occur annually in roughly the same locales and during the same months. They include Klondike (Monticello District in January), Moose (Southern District in May), Apple Harvest (Monticello District in October), etc. As in the case of the Moose Camporee, we often camp outside our home district.

**Council Camporees**
Council camporees occur bi-annually in varying sites throughout the SJAC. Even though it occurred in West Virginia, the council camporee at Seneca Rocks took place in the Massanutten District. The council favors returning to the heavily populated Monticello District every 4 years. That’s why we attended SJAC Camporees at Montpelier NHP in 2008 and 2012.

We often camp with troops from other councils at district and council camporees (as well as at summer camps and jamborees). This exposes our guys to kids from other locales and backgrounds.

**Quarterly Service**
Service projects occur once per quarter and may involve relatively frequent repetition. Annual toy lifts and food lifts are good examples. We should try at least one unique service project each year. The forthcoming Fourth of July Liberty Bell Ringing is a great example of such an opportunity.

**BSA Summer Camp**
Summer camp is an annual must. It involves ≈6 nights of continuous camping. Scouts enjoy immersion in an outdoor setting and within a large Scout community. They can earn a host of different merit badges, compete in inter-troop competition, and try out specialized wilderness adventures.

We traditionally endeavor to attend out of council summer camps every other year, or at worst every three years. Virginia alone offers ≈24 distinct BSA summer campsites (e.g., Camp Powhatan/Ottari, Camp Rock Enon, Camp Shenandoah, Goshen, Camp Lions, etc.). This can be challenging in light of family proximity and traditional discomfort with unknown sites and programs. Our Scouts like the staff, facilities, and programs at Camp Shenandoah. This is especially the case since the advent of the Ranger’s Challenge.


**Major Outings**
Major outings involve continuous camping for 5-13 nights. Local examples include visits to high adventure reservations event (e.g., High Knoll Camp or CVC C.H.A.S.E.) or custom treks (e.g., a 100-mile bike, 80-mile canoe or kayak trip, and a 50+ mile hike).

More ambitious examples include trips to BSA’s 4 High Adventure Bases: Northern Tier (MN), Florida Sea Base (FL Keys & Bahamas), Philmont Scout Ranch (NM), and the new Summit Bechtel Reserve. National Jamborees conducted at BSA’s permanent Summit facilities also qualify as major outings. We endeavor to explore each of the High Adventure Bases in coming years. They provide incomparable options.

We also want to begin development of our own troop-specific major outings. A troop-specific expedition allows us to control time, distance, expense, and content. These expeditions can rival the best High Adventure Base experience. Typically unique for any given Scout, they permit us to expose out guys to virtually any wilderness environment we can afford to visit (e.g., the Smokies, White Mountains, Adirondacks, Allagash Wilderness Waterway, Bridger Wilderness, Box Death Hollow Wilderness, etc.).

See:

**Scout-Led Outings**
We encourage our Scouts to bear most, if not most all, of the burden in selecting and planning their activities. This is especially the case with specific major outings and other high adventure activities. These are important opportunities for our Scouts to take ownership of the event, develop a deep understanding of what they want to do, and adapt to the challenges of execution. Nothing teaches a Scout than the development and execution of an expedition program. Some key tips follow.
Planning Group Adventure

The first step toward adventure is conception. What do you want to do? Any activity planning starts with activity selection. Activity selection requires knowing who is making the call:

- Who is going?
- Who is deciding what to do?

Who Is Going?

Before planning a high-adventure trek or any outdoor adventure, it is crucial to consider the capabilities of each team member. Ask questions like:

- Who should go?
- What are their ages?
- How much camping experience does each Scout or adult have?
- How does the troop deal with tough problems?

What to Do?

Once you know who is going, you can start selecting what to do. Consider the capabilities and interests of every member of your team. What do they want to do? What can they do? This will determine the nature of the activity.

Activity selection also requires answers to some other key questions:

- What do you want to do?
- Does this fit within the activity planning guidelines?
- What do you have to do?
- Do the activity guidelines include activity requirements?
- When are you going?

The SPL needs to match his team with the outing. In doing so, he should consider:

- Experience and knowledge
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Maturity
- Attitude
- Interest
- Physical capabilities
- Duration of the trip
- Determine the Distance

Based on these constraints, the SPL and his PLC should be able to determine what they CAN do. This will help them decide what they WILL do.

Where to Go?

Once you know what to do, it’s time to figure out where to go. Consider the trek distance and length of time you’ve got. Look at the size and nature of your team. Consider their desires and limits.

The SPL needs to manage and work with his team to get those answers. The PLC should determine where to go. Ideally, they’ve looked at the troop activity plan and, based on the planning guidelines (e.g., monthly theme, etc.), decided on a few good options from which to choose.

Without setting constraints and activity requirements, narrowing down things, you’ll be wrestling with too many options. Just think of how many different places you might go! You could explore national parks, national forests, U.S. Bureau of Land Management areas, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuges, state parks, state recreation areas, county parks, or privately administered lands, etc.

The composition of your team may limit your options about where to go.

Consider Team Fitness

The distance your team can travel depends on the terrain, each crew member’s physical condition, the nature of the gear, and the reasons for taking a trek. How rugged is the country? A mile of flat trail is far different from a mile that gains a thousand feet in elevation.

When planning a trek, estimate the length of time required to travel from place to place. Plan your distances conservatively. Project a reasonable pace based on the slowest participants.

Consider Team Size Limits

For safety reasons, every team should have at least 4 members. If you have more than 12 guys, make sure to organize by patrols. Your group size may exceed the size limit specified by the land management agency, so make sure to check on rules about groups moving and camping in the target area.

Developing a High Adventure Plan

Every high adventure activity starts with a vision or mission. Each mission involves one or more goals. To reach those goals and accomplish your mission, you need a plan. Work from a general foundation. Then fill in more specific details. Answer some key questions:

- What’s your mission?
- What are the general goals?
- Where are you going?
- Why are you going?
- Who is going?
- When?
- How?
Once you answer these questions, you have a foundation upon which to create a “blueprint.”

**Itinerary Development**
An itinerary serves as a blueprint of your trek. It serves as key goal in the planning process. Once you have the plan on paper, you may discover that it’s easy to see what meals you will want to prepare and what equipment you will need to take. You won’t be likely to forget essential details like transportation arrangements to and from the area. Devise an alternate plan for every itinerary in case of interruption by unexpected events.

**Create a Trip Plan**
When your crew arrives at a consensus about your itinerary and alternate plans, begin documenting the trip plan. Write your plan down. Include a full description of your intended route, where you plan to camp, and what time you will return.

A trip plan lets people know where you are going and when you intend to return. Communicate it carefully. Publish it to your team and the troop. Be sure everyone understands the plan. Then stick to it.

**Know Where to Find Help**
Once you know your trip plan, create an emergency action plan. This is a vital version of a “Plan B.”

Plan an emergency course of action in advance. Determine the location of the nearest medical facility and how to evacuate an injured member. Think about who you will contact and how. Determine who will pay the cost of evacuation if one is necessary.

Always operate within your training and abilities. If necessary, Scouts should seek adult advice and help about emergency planning, communications, and contingencies.

**Utilize the Comprehensive and Useful Appendix**
Both our troop and the BSA can offer help about high adventure planning. Don’t be too shy to ask. Feel free to consult BSA’s online Passport to High Adventure resources. They include many helpful forms and resources that make planning an outdoor adventure go smoothly. See:


**Being Prepared**
Scouts plan, lead, and execute the best high-adventure treks. In doing so, Scouts mature and learn how to be prepared. This happens when Scouts take responsibility for their own plans and for making their own decisions. There is great strength in being prepared and in knowledge and knowing.

**Being Smart**
Any good plan accounts for training and preparedness. A Scout leader should ensure that everyone on his team understands:

- How to dress properly in the wild (e.g., knowing about appropriate outdoor clothing such as polypropylene and polar fleece)
- About proper nutrition—a balance between simple and complex carbohydrates, proteins, and fats
- How to pace your team to help prevent overheating and sweating
- That drinking lots of properly disinfected water is crucial to your well-being
- How to conserve the environment and preserve the experience for future trekkers by LEAVING NO TRACE

**Being Fit**
To enjoy a trek, you must be fit. Part of preparing for marvelous outdoor experiences means undertaking a physical conditioning program to enhance your aerobic capacity and to tone your muscles. Being fit means feeling good about yourself not only physically, but mentally and emotionally, too.

Make sure that your team is fit. Understand their limitations. Point out that when accidents do occur, they frequently are related to unknown physical conditions or the unexpected result of some known physical problem. Good safety requires that the leader understand the risks or consequences of situations and circumstances such as individual limitations and inclement weather.

**Adult Leader Responsibilities**
Adult leaders counsel and advise Scouts, especially Scout leaders. If necessary, all Scouters should be prepared to instill discipline without verbal or physical abuse. During the activity planning process, adult leaders should:

- Make arrangements for transportation, overnight stops, and meals en route to and from the high-adventure activity.
- Assist Scouts with fund-raising efforts.
- Ensure the safety and well-being of every youth member.
- Address youth conflicts.
- Serve as counselor and coach by providing appropriate guidance to the group and youth members.

Always remember that ALL adult leaders should complete BSA Youth Protection training before participating in any event or activity involving Scouts.

**Inclusive Programming**
Good activity planning is inclusive in nature. Include everyone whenever you can. Selective activities may engage older Scouts and inspire younger Scouts. While important, mix selective activities into your program selectively. Use care. Create good spacing.