

Thoughts on the Scout Law and Oath

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A Scout is [Trustworthy](#), [Loyal](#), [Helpful](#), [Friendly](#), [Courteous](#), [Kind](#), [Obedient](#), [Cheerful](#), [Thrifty](#), [Brave](#), [Clean](#), and [Reverent](#).

TRUSTWORTHY

A Scout is trustworthy. A Scout tells the truth. He is honest, and he keeps his promises. People can depend on him.

The first of the twelve points of the Scout Law sets a high bar for scouts. Being helpful, friendly, or courteous are simple, easily described behaviors compared to being trustworthy. Being "Worthy of Trust" means a promise made is a promise fulfilled. It means a scout will do what he says he will do. It means the scout will see things through to the end.

It is easy to trust someone, even strangers. We do it every day. I trust that drivers will stop at red lights. I trust the cashier will not steal my credit card information. I trust the garbage man will collect the trash every Tuesday. This trust is in place because I've experienced the correct behaviors over and over. Drivers ALWAYS stop at red lights, so I trust they will continue to do so. But, the behavior is forced by laws, not by some belief held by all drivers that stopping at red lights is the right thing to do. All trust that we have of strangers is forced, either by laws, contracts, or some similar regulations.

That is where a Scout is different. He is trustworthy not because he is forced to be that way, but because he chooses to be. His honor is the only regulation that enforces his trustworthiness. That is why the words, "On My Honor", are so important to a Scout - his honor is the only collateral he has to offer to ensure that he can be trusted. If a Scout has no sense of honor, then the Scout Law and the Scout Oath lose their meaning and strength. For that reason, it is a critical task for leaders to explain and demonstrate honor and then nurture and strengthen it in Scouts. By establishing a strong sense of honor, all the other aims and goals of scouting can take place.

When a boy is asked what honor means, the general reply will include doing what is right in difficult situations or making the right choice because it is known to be right. Honor tends to be associated with challenges of moral crisis, such as being tempted to cheat, steal, or betray. Many men, when confronted with obviously immoral opportunities, will choose what is right. The choice is clear and the possible repercussions of being discovered are great. But, personal honor comes into play in everyday decisions as well. In every choice, promise, and action taken, personal honor plays a role.

A trustworthy person arrives on time, commits to tasks he can handle, and completes both boring and difficult tasks on time. He is punctual, prompt, and perseverant. He realizes that fulfilling simple, basic commitments and expectations every day lays the foundation of trust that extends to more challenging situations. When others see that he completes tasks, they trust him with more and more responsibilities

because he has earned that trust.

Building the basic sense of honor in everyday situations is a key part of a scout-run troop. The youth leaders should be encouraged to start and conclude meetings on time, not to demonstrate their power of being in a leadership position, but to be honorable. The expectations of a start and stop time are in place and it is our honorable duty to adhere to those expectations. We made a commitment to the scouts that are there on time and to the parents that expect to take their son home at a certain time.

When a scout takes on a task, specific expectations should be set, such as milestones, completion time, and costs. A leader, either adult or experienced scout, should check on progress at pre-defined times to ensure the scout's success. As a scout builds his trustworthiness by demonstrating his ability, he is given more responsibility and is checked on less often. He does what he said he will do - he is trustworthy.

Once honor is understood and a scout can be trusted, the usefulness of honor can be expanded. Rather than just fulfilling assigned tasks, a scout with honor will begin to look for ways in which he can be of use. His honor requires him to not just complete a task, but improve on what was expected; not just lead a meeting, but make it exciting; not just finish a hike, but encourage others on the hike. As his honor grows and tempers, he develops initiative and becomes a leader.

Of course, not all people have the charisma and desire to lead a group. That is not required to be trustworthy. Whether a president or a plumber, a king or a cook, a senator or a scout, every man can fulfill his role in life with honor and be worthy of trust. When a boy makes a habit of being honest, doing his best, and helping others, he is setting a solid foundation on which he will build his life. Whatever career he takes and whatever challenges life sends at him, his dignity and character can remain solid if his inner sense of honor has deep roots. Those roots should be formed in scouting every day, on every campout, at every meeting, and in every interaction with his leaders.

A Scout is Trustworthy.

LOYAL

From the Scout Handbook - "A Scout is loyal. A Scout is true to his family, friends, Scout leaders, school, and nation."

Loyalty means to be faithful. When we say a Scout is Loyal, it means he remains steadfast in his adherence to what is right. Being loyal is a character trait that can be often tested, and often misdirected.

When a friend of a Scout steals and then asks the Scout to keep it a secret to prove his loyalty, what should the Scout do? Is he being disloyal if he lets authorities know who stole? Similar dilemmas can occur when a Scout wants to be loyal to family or leaders.

If someone lies to protect another through a sense of loyalty, he smudges his own honor and he only prolongs the time until that other person gets into worse trouble. By being truthful, he may lose a friend, may lose love, and may lose popularity, but with his honor intact, he can live the Scout Law and know that, in the long run, he has done the right thing.

A Scout, as any other boy, wants to be part of something important, something great, something that is 'the best'. As young boys might argue that "My Dad can beat up your Dad", so older boys might debate about whose school football team is better. That kind of loyalty is more of a self-promoting exercise rather than being firmly supportive of the person or organization. True loyalty happens when nothing is personally gained.

A Scout, when he hears some boys putting down a friend, should step up and defend that friend's name. He should never join in laughing at slanderous jokes and should let the jokers know when he feels they are being unfairly harsh or malicious. This can be one of the most difficult demonstrations of a loyal friend - sticking up for an absent friend against other friends or popular people.

When a Scout is asked to be loyal to his leaders, he needs to support them and their decisions. When the leaders decide to have a fishing outing and a Scout lobbied for a water-ski outing, he may be tempted to undermine the plans by staying home or even inviting other scouts to a party that same weekend. A loyal Scout will support and promote the plans of the troop, even when they are not his favorite choice. He will continue to follow the lead until he earns the position of leadership that allows his plans to take fruition.

Scouts need to be loyal to the laws of our country and the people that represent those laws. Whether or not a Scout agrees with the way a mayor, governor, or president governs, he must demonstrate respect to that position. Debating the merits and effectiveness of policies put in place by the current administration is a healthy, useful way to bring about change, but degrading the person currently holding an office demonstrates a lack of respect to the country.

By being loyal to the Scout Law, and holding its points dear, a Scout is naturally loyal to those around him in a right and good manner. Blind loyalty is not loyalty at all, but loyalty founded on truth, compassion, and honor is truly loyal.

A Scout is Loyal.

HELPFUL

From the Scout Handbook - "A Scout is helpful. A Scout cares about other people. He willingly volunteers to help others without expecting payment or reward."

From a baby's first cry of hunger, he continually looks out for himself with a self-centered view of things. Human nature is to preserve oneself. A Scout is challenged to put others first, possibly at odds with his own needs. This being helpful is an outward demonstration of the inner honor being developed in a Scout. Doing a Daily Good Turn takes real effort to search for need and then commitment to fulfill that need. A Scout that has not learned to care about other people and be willing to sacrifice some of his time can not live this part of the Scout Law. Guidance, explanation, continual modeling, and planned service opportunities in the troop give a Scout the learning moments to understand the importance of this law.

In order to be helpful, a Scout must be ready, able, and willing to help. Many things can be done to aid others, such as mowing a neighbor's yard, shoveling a sidewalk, or cleaning windows, by untrained boys. But, in order to help in many ways, a Scout needs special knowledge, skills, and abilities. To walk a dog, he needs to understand animals. To drive an elderly neighbor to the store, he needs a license. To prepare a meal for a family in grief, he needs cooking skills.

Many a Scout might use the excuse of "I don't know how" when faced with an opportunity to provide aid. He must be trained and confident so his attitude changes to "I'll give it a try". Without First Aid skills, how can he properly bandage a serious cut? Without Swimming and Lifesaving skills, how can he rescue a drowning swimmer? How can a Scout prevent panic? How can he direct traffic, extinguish fire, carry an unconscious person, or any of the dozens of tasks that may be required in an emergency? By participating in Scouting activities, that's how. Advancement through the ranks shows a Scout is participating and building skills. Merit badges give him reason to learn more skills. Leadership roles allow him to practice taking control in different situations.

Having skill and confidence is necessary for specific aid, but at least as important is the skill of being observant. In our society, making eye contact, especially in larger cities, can be dangerous. We are more and more becoming indrawn with minimal contact with strangers and that causes more and more people to become strangers. But, a Scout needs to be constantly observing what occurs around him so he is Ready and Prepared to act if needed. Knowing where fire exits, alarms, and phones are in school and other buildings he enters will make it easier for him to help in case of trouble. A person walking down the street having difficulty carrying groceries, or some kids worried to cross the busy street, or a person sitting on a park bench having problems breathing can only be recognized by an open-eyed, observant person. If a Scout walks down the street, head down, eyes ahead, like so many of the people around him, he misses life and misses opportunities to lend a hand.

To broaden the scope of being Helpful, a Scout is also helpful when he supports the leaders of his troop. It is a difficult position to be in when leading a group of peers. By obeying directions and supporting decisions, a Scout helps his Senior Patrol Leader or Patrol Leader. Being respectful of and caring for those leaders, a Scout strives to help them at all times.

I believe that Scouts today have a huge responsibility to emphasize being Helpful in their communities. Ask the average person what they envision when you say "Boy Scout" and they will still say something along the lines of a boy in uniform helping a little old lady. But, that is not what they actually see in their mind when they see a real, physical Scout at their door. They see someone wanting to sell them something - popcorn, wreaths, spaghetti dinner tickets, mulch, nuts, flower bulbs, or some such thing. That is not the image of Scouts that I want people to have.

A patrol of 8 scouts in our troop just spent a couple hours this weekend clearing snow from fire hydrants in the neighborhood. They knocked on the door of the house on whose property the hydrant sat and asked if it would be alright for them to clear the snow so the fire department could access it in case of an emergency. Of the 20 houses, every single one asked about giving a donation - every one! No one thought, "Oh, the scouts are being helpful again." They all figured the Scouts were trying to raise funds in a new way. Now, after the next snow, when they do it again, these people will hopefully not expect to give a donation - they will just think, "Oh, the scouts are being helpful again", and that's how it should

be.

A Scout is Helpful.

FRIENDLY

From the Scout Handbook - "A Scout is friendly. A Scout is a friend to all. He is a brother to other Scouts. He offers his friendship to people of all races and nations, and respects them even if their beliefs and customs are different from his own."

Friendship is a strong relationship between two people. Sometimes it grows over years while other times it springs up in a short time. In my life, I've had few close friends, though I've had many acquaintances and been friendly to many more people. Friends are people you cherish and care for and enjoy being around. You know them and they know you.

A Scout should be friendly to everyone he meets, giving them the benefit of the doubt and believing them to be worthy of friendship first until their character becomes known. If a Scout pre-judges someone on their skin color, language, clothes, looks, family name, or other superficial aspect, then he is not following the Scout Law. Offering his friendship to be taken, rejected, or lost to all people is expected of a Scout. It is going out on a limb and knowing that some people will reject you.

Being friendly is demonstrated in many ways, depending on the situation in which a new person is met. Being friendly to a new boy in school struggling to find his next class might require escorting him there. If he were seen sitting alone at lunch, it might just mean asking to join him. If a gang of boys were laughing at his strange accent, a Scout might step in and deflect the abuse.

It is easier to relate to people of our own race, beliefs, and social standing. It can be more of a challenge to befriend someone poorer or wealthier, either because of our snobbery or jealousy. Looking past social standing to see the value of the person is required of a Scout. Scouts come from all ranks of life and they accept others based on their character and actions.

Finding common ground with those people having beliefs and customs that vary from our own is more challenging, but also more interesting. Imagine how your knowledge and understanding expands as more is learned from a friend from a foreign land. We also learn that we have far more in common than we have differences. We can ask for explanation of behaviors that seem odd due to no understanding of the norms of a foreign society, but make sense when explained. If we ignore the possibility of friendships like these, we remain ignorant and close-minded.

Once a Scout shows his friendliness, it is up to the other person to follow through. A person's actions and behaviors will demonstrate his character and we can determine if it is wise to continue building on the relationship or discontinue it. Observing how the person works, plays, treats others, talks about others, and generally behaves, shows us what sort of friend he is. When someone is clearly of poor character, a Scout should continue to be friendly to him in the hope of turning him around. But, a Scout should not have a friendship with such a person, since doing so would associate him with the same character.

The law says that a Scout is friend to all. Sometimes the best way to be a friend is to demonstrate high values and refuse to join in those activities and behaviors that are of low character. A friendship will not grow in such a relationship, but the low character may rise when faced with the choice of continuing inappropriate actions or relating with a Scout of high character. And, later on, a real friendship may slowly grow.

A Scout is Friendly.

COURTEOUS

From the Scout Handbook - "A Scout is courteous. A Scout is polite to everyone regardless of age or position. He knows that using good manners makes it easier for people to get along."

When someone sees a Scout in uniform, they visualize him helping a little old lady across a busy street. That is the essence of being courteous as well as helpful, cheerful, friendly, and kind. They are all tied together and that image is exactly what scouts should work towards.

Being courteous is being a gentleman. It is opening doors and holding them open for the next person. It is noticing that the bus you are on is filling up and you have a seat while a woman is standing. It is saying "Pardon me" when you bump into someone in a crowd. It is giving a firm handshake when you make the acquaintance of someone.

Courtesy often seems to be a thing of the past; something for old people or something out of old black and white movies. In our age of email, instant messaging, and online chats, courtesy becomes a more difficult behavior to learn and practice. And, make no mistake, it takes practice to become good at it. Courtesy requires personal interaction where the value of the other person can be demonstrated. After all, courtesy occurs out of respect for other people.

When we have respect for the other person, we show that respect through courtesy. We shake hands with men. We remove our hats to women. We stand and converse when someone approaches us and begins talking. We say Please and Thank you. All of these are ways in which we show that we respect the other person. All together, these are known as 'etiquette' - the proper way of behaving politely. Etiquette is how Scouts should manage their behaviors.

It is important that Scouts show courtesy to all people. Whether it is a cute, young girl or an old, stooped woman, a Scout treats her courteously. Whether a rich businessman or school janitor, the Scout greets him cheerfully and sincerely.

And, that can be the challenge. Courtesy without an underlying respect and thoughtfulness is a lie. To be courteous requires us to first be caring; to be concerned with the people around us and on the lookout for their wellbeing. Many people, hoping to get ahead, will be very courteous and friendly to people above them in social standing, while at the same time treat lesser ranked people with disdain. We see this often in business where a salesman will be outgoing until he realizes there is no sale to be made and then turns his attention elsewhere. But, the same occurs daily in all social circles. A Scout needs to overcome this

temptation and be sure he treats all people with equal respect and courtesy.

The next time you go to a restaurant with a group of friends, make an effort to listen to how many of them say a simple Please or Thank You to the waitress when she takes the order or brings food or water. My experience has been that I am often the only one, and I sincerely make an effort to do it. The first thing I do is read their nametag if they have one and then use their name from then on. I also look at their face and eyes while they are taking the other diners' orders just to get a feel for what they are like. I do this not in the hopes of better service, but so I remind myself that the person waiting on me is just as important as I am and deserving of my respect, courtesy, and appreciation.

One other courtesy exercise that might be enlightening is to have a patrol dinner. At summer camp last year, our troop ate in the dining hall rather than cooking our own meals for the first time in at least six years. Each patrol sat at a different table. I was appalled at how the scouts behaved at the tables! This summer, the month before camp, I will be hosting a series of patrol dinners. Scouts will be invited to eat and will be instructed on proper table manners and courtesy in general. Is that the Scoutmaster's job? Sure, my job is to train and let them lead - besides, it will be fun.

The Daily Good Turn is founded partially on courtesy. Helping the little old lady across the street is the epitome of Good Turns, but countless other opportunities are available when a Scout keeps his eyes open and his thoughts on helping others.

Finally, I want to point out that true courtesy is done cheerfully and sincerely. Someone may be trained to do all the correct actions, but without a heart that cares for others, they are hollow actions. Sincere courtesy raises the social level and rubs off on those around a courteous person. And, courtesy should begin at home where it may be the most difficult to demonstrate. Remembering to be polite to parents, brothers, and sisters can be a true challenge for a Scout, but one which he needs to overcome to become a man of strong character.

A Scout is Courteous.

KIND

From the Scout Handbook - "A Scout is kind. A Scout knows there is strength in being gentle. He treats others as he wants to be treated. Without good reason, he does not harm or kill any living thing."

Of all the points in the Scout Law, if the world at large experienced an overall increase in the level of Kindness it would have the most impact. The majority of news stories come about from a lack of kindness. People take advantage of the weak rather than assist them. Fanatics attack and kill rather than have compassion and a desire for resolution. On and on it goes as we make excuses and rationalize our aggression and hate.

Kindness should be first practiced by a Scout in his own home. It can be a difficult challenge to show kindness to those in your family. Whether it be irritating siblings or misunderstanding parents, making constant efforts to be kind to those people with whom you have a conflict is hard work. Each of us is bound to fail some times, especially when we are in such close quarters for such a large part of our time.

At those times of failing to be kind, kindness can still make a comeback through sincere apologies and forgiveness. The point of 'Forgiveness' is not in the Scout Law, but it is a real demonstration of kindness.

It's much easier to be kind to friends, teammates, other scouts, and family acquaintances that are seen occasionally. There is less personal commitment and less intimacy so it is less work to overlook their shortcomings and differences in beliefs and behaviors. Still, a Scout needs to demonstrate kindness to these people in order to build friendships and strengthen his character. Typically, showing kindness to these people results in a response of similar kindness in return.

A Scout should understand that kindness towards animals and the natural world in general will most likely result in no direct personal response, but will have lasting impact for others. By considering how actions today will effect the resources available to generations later on, we are being kind to those people that have yet to be born. Reducing waste, becoming more 'green', practicing good low-impact camping skills, and helping others understand the needs of our planet are great demonstrations of kindness to the world.

An enemy can also be shown kindness. Maintaining a gentle demeanor when provoked and refusing to lower your honor to fight or exchange insults takes a strong person. Seeing that another person has a different view from your own and trying to understand it through empathy and compassion can minimize or defuse many confrontations. That is not to say that one should never fight; defending someone that needs your help may require extreme measures.

I'm sure you've heard of doing *random acts of kindness*. That is a great thought to keep active in your mind. If we're continually looking for ways to practice kindness, opportunities will continually show up. Another thing to remember is that being kind with no expectation of getting something in return is the best way to ensure you will get more back than you could imagine.

A Scout is Kind.

OBEDIENT

From the Scout Handbook - "A Scout is obedient. A Scout follows the rules of his family, school, and troop. He obeys the laws of his community and country. If he thinks these rules and laws are unfair, he tries to have them changed in an orderly manner rather than disobeying them."

Obedience and discipline go hand in hand. An obedient Scout is not someone that blindly does what he is told, but he does have the discipline to carry out tasks assigned to him, even if he does not agree with the assignment. Once he has completed his duty, doing his very best, he can then discuss the fairness or appropriateness of the assignment with his leader. Obedience is necessary for a group, such as a patrol, to be effective. The leader should have a picture in his mind of what he wants accomplished and how each task fulfilled will bring that picture together. A scout in the patrol needs to do his duty to support the overall goal, whether he completely understands that goal or not.

Many Scouts are at an age where they are experimenting with independence and that can make being obedient more of a challenge for them. They see being obedient as being weak and subordinate. When

directed to do something, they may expend more energy arguing about the task than it would take to *just do it*. For example, "Why me?", "Why not have Charlie do it?", "Why do you need that done?", "Right now?", and so on. Boys would rather be independent, even if they are not yet mature enough, and they often interpret *independent* as meaning *free of commitment or responsibility* which is an immature interpretation. An independent person still has responsibilities, but he is able to take care of himself as well as make correct choices to honor his commitments.

Actually, an independent person has self-discipline enough to be obedient to his conscience. He obeys his moral and ethical honor and does what he knows is right, not because it is the easiest or most beneficial thing to do, but because his honor insists it be done. A Scout with a strong character, able to put the needs of others before his own and obey his conscience, can usually obey directions from leaders well because of his self-discipline.

As Scouts get used to the troop structure, they notice that the Senior Patrol Leader always seems to be handing out the orders and the Patrol Leaders in turn pass the orders down to the Scouts. They want to be on the top where they can give out orders instead of always taking them and that is often a motivation to hold a position. They don't yet realize that there is even more responsibility higher up the ladder of command and the leader needs to rely on those under him to accomplish a larger goal. Teamwork relies heavily on obedience, discipline, and trust.

The Scout leader also has the responsibility to arrange for the training of those on his team so they are able to perform assigned tasks. Within a patrol, scouts can teach each other, passing on knowledge to less experienced ones. In this way, a leader will also pass on the understanding of what is expected of the leader so all understand that he requires their help and is actually as dependent on them for support as they are on him for direction. The good leader also spends some time discussing the performance of the team in an effort to improve. The entire team should have input about how they might do better next time. This gives ownership of the success and failure of the patrol to the patrol rather than the patrol leader. Everyone has more of an interest in succeeding and obeying directions becomes easier.

In a Scout's family, obedience is a vital trait to develop. In many families, blind obedience is expected of children. Children are told to clean their room, perform household chores, stop fighting, use nice manners, comb their hair, wash their hands, and on and on. A child, learning life skills, needs these directions and reminders and is often too young to understand their significance. A boy of Scout age typically knows how to perform these dozens of daily activities and understands the need to perform them. He should be doing them out of habit without continual direction, which takes responsibility away from him and keeps him a slave of his parents' control. A Scout should be doing these kinds of tasks, as well as following other family rules, not only when he is told to but at all times to make life more pleasant at home.

As a Scout matures, the family rules should change along with his maturity. Some parents may hold on to control longer than is appropriate. In those cases, a Scout should work to change the rules rather than go against them. Examples such as curfew time, allowance amounts, when to do homework, driving privileges, or videogame limits are areas in which boys may request more freedom before parents are ready. Open discussions about the rules, expectations, and requested changes should demonstrate the Scout's increasing maturity, independence, and desire to be obedient which, in turn, would hopefully influence the parents' ability to allow more freedom.

By developing obedience in the family and in Scouting, the Scout is better able to handle the similar requirements of the workplace where orders are routinely given and expected to be completed. In all circumstances, whether family, school, work, or social, the obedient Scout must make sure that obeying a direction is not against his honor. If a boss tells him to cheat a client or a friend tells him to steal, he must compare the order to what he knows is right and wrong and first obey that inner compass.

A Scout is obedient.

CHEERFUL

From the Scout Handbook - "A Scout is cheerful. A Scout looks for the bright side of life. He cheerfully does tasks that come his way. He tries to make others happy."

Who couldn't be cheerful on a warm spring day in the hills, resting under a tree in a lush meadow with blue skies overhead, a snow-fed stream trickling by, and birds twittering above? I'll bet you have a trace of a smile just thinking of it. That is "the bright side of life" and we need to look for it in whatever situation we find ourselves.

Whistling while taking out the garbage, telling jokes while scrubbing the crusty cookpots, and sharing a story while carrying water back from the creek are all examples of a cheerful Scout. We don't often have time to sit under a tree, but it seems we have plenty of opportunities to do uninteresting tasks. A Scout is asked to approach those tasks with cheer.

Being cheerful is not the same as being happy. I'm certainly not happy about cleaning the latrine and I don't enjoy the job, but I can be cheerful while doing it. I can choose to grumble and complain and wallow in self-pity, or I can tackle the task with vigor.

The same choice is put before us for every challenge. Do I slog through the task, feeling sorry for myself, doing the minimum I can, being miserable, and most likely taking longer than required? Or, do I attack the task, doing it better than expected, and finishing quickly? Either way, I'm in the same situation, doing the same work. One way, the work drags on and I lose part of my life. The other way, I accomplish something and prove myself stronger.

A spirit of cheerfulness requires strong character and an understanding of life. When a Scout realizes that it is completely up to him to be depressed or cheerful, discouraged or resolved, cowardly or brave, then he can make the choice. Until that happens, boys will blame the world around them for their feelings. The amount of hardship required to adversely effect a person's demeanor is a solid test of that person's depth of character.

Sad occasions, such as a friend moving away, failing a test, or losing a pet for example, will understandably dishearten a person. Feelings of loss and sadness are normal and even a sign of respect. But, after an appropriate time, it is necessary to carry on with life and find goodness and cheer in other people and healthy activities.

Some people that lose their cheerful nature look for happiness in terrible ways, including alcohol and drug use. Those kinds of activities don't bring cheerfulness and purpose back to a life. They just obscure the world and temporarily dull the pain, causing more harm in the long run. Instead, addressing the cause of pain and sadness and overcoming the cause is a viable solution.

When situations are very difficult, many people are not able find happiness. They need support or counseling. A Scout is challenged to try and make others happy. When his patrol loses a competition, he can let them know he's proud of their efforts. When another scout must miss an activity to finish a chore, he can stay and help. There are many small ways in which a Scout can cheer up others. A Scout that goes into a career field of counseling can extend his influence and abilities in this area tremendously.

At the end of a day of Scouting, there is often a campfire program. At troop meetings, there may be songs, skits, or stories. I notice that the large majority of scouts sit back and are entertained by a few of the more charismatic scouts. A Scout's duty to the Scout Law should prompt him to contribute his own stories occasionally. Not only does this put him in a small leadership position for a few minutes and give good experience, it also lets him spread cheer to his other scouts and gives them a chance to enjoy the show instead of doing all the work.

In Scouting, the Order of the Arrow takes to heart this point of the Scout Law. The group's motto of "Brotherhood of Cheerful Service" shows that cheer in the face of work is their goal. I personally love the time I've spent doing OA service projects. It gives me time to refocus on this point of the Scout Law doing irksome labor while keeping a cheerful spirit. It also helps when I focus on the fact that my labor is helping other people and not myself.

We all have a threshold where the work we are doing becomes too much to remain cheerful. The trick is to push our personal threshold further every day. Having a buddy with a higher threshold doing the work with you is the best way to do this. A wise leader will understand this and pair up scouts for disagreeable tasks. That wise leader may even counsel the "more cheerful" one beforehand that his real goal is to be a role model of cheerfulness to the other scout.

I often hear youth (and adults) pray to God asking Him to keep problems away and to keep them safe. When I was 14, I realized that the only way I could grow was through problems and challenges. Since then, I have not asked God to remove challenges. I've asked only for the strength to overcome all the challenges that I encounter. So far, so good.

A Scout is cheerful.

THRIFTY

From the Scout Handbook - "A Scout is thrifty. A Scout works to pay his way and to help others. He saves for the future. He protects and conserves natural resources. He carefully uses time and property."

Of the twelve points in the Scout Law, I imagine that Thrifty is the one most difficult to quantify. A Scout in an affluent community may consider himself thrifty by saving his \$25 allowance for two weeks to buy a video game while a few Scouts in a less wealthy neighborhood might pool the change they

collected from turning in soda bottles to buy a bag of candy. Being rich or poor does not define the ability to be thrifty or not. A rich person can be thrifty without being a Scrooge and a poor person can be thrifty while still sharing what he has.

The boy with parents dishing out money for any and all scouting events he cares to participate in is a boy with no opportunity to understand thrift and the value of things. He begins to feel entitled to whatever he desires with no regard towards the necessity of the thing. Being required to do without is the best way to build a sense of thrift and value. Desiring something enough to be willing to work for it, and forego other things for it, gives that thing value and provides an understanding of thrift.

Someone with very little learns from early on that it takes effort, perseverance, and work to acquire those things that are desired. When you can't have everything, you prioritize and acquire first what you need the most, then work down the list acquiring the more important things. This is often food, heat, rent or mortgage, transportation to work, and clothing. When enough money is saved, then less important expenditures can be made occasionally.

A Scout should be given as many opportunities as possible to practice being thrifty within scouting. He can earn his camping gear by doing extra work around home or at a real job. He should have a budget for purchasing food for his patrol on campouts so he stretches the money as much as he can. Scouts should also work together to raise funds for patrol or troop gear, such as tents, cooking gear, stoves, and the like. Paying his way is an important part of a Scout's overall scouting experience. If a Scout joins a patrol and is given everything he needs, he sees no value in it and has no ownership of it.

Thriftiness is most often discussed in terms of money since we exchange work for money and money for those things we need and want. But, a Scout should be thrifty in all areas of life. Turning off unused lights, closing doors and window shades, recycling, and even planning driving routes around town are all ways to be thrifty with energy. Using things he has until they wear out or he outgrows them rather than wanting to be part of every fad that comes along is being thrifty with what he already has. Promoting conservation and natural environment restoration is being thrifty with nature. Using his time to accomplish goals rather than wasting it on idleness is being thrifty with his time on Earth.

The use and care of scout gear is a great example of being thrifty. A new tent assigned to a Scout should last seven years until he becomes 18 years old. By taking care of the tent, the Scout ensures his own needs are met, is conserving resources, and is helping the troop save for the future when new tents will some day be needed. Caring for gear also reduces the amount of repair needed. But, by repairing instead of replacing when feasible, the Scout further demonstrates his thriftiness and shows he can make do.

As Scouts and citizens in the most wasteful country in the world, we have a real challenge to raise our level of thrift. We are much like the child that is given everything and comes to expect everything. We consume more, conserve less, and expect better than we have. We know we should change, but few of us do.

Even worse, we have come to accept debt as a way of life in this country. A thrifty Scout should expect nothing and work for everything he desires. He should save the money for something before buying it, rather than buying on credit and sinking into debt. There are some large purchases for which going into debt makes sense, such as a home, but the debt needs to be managed with a reasonable payment plan

that can actually be accomplished. And, the Scout should, on his honor, make the repaying of the debt of highest priority.

Whether relatively rich or poor, a Scout that is thrifty will be ready and able to help others. He may share food, money, or labor with others in need since he has kept his own needs met.

A Scout is thrifty.

BRAVE

From the Scout Handbook - "A Scout is brave. A Scout can face danger although he is afraid. He has the courage to stand for what he thinks is right even if others laugh at him or threaten him."

From a young boy screwing up the courage to look under his bed at night to an old man sharing stories of his life while on his deathbed, bravery comes in many shapes, sizes, and degrees. Bravery is certainly not the lack of fear, but the strength to overcome that fear. Without fear, there's no need for bravery.

Fear is a feeling you have based on your surroundings. If you sense danger, you feel fear. It's a natural and useful feeling. When a Scout experiences fear, he can either control it or let it control him. Courage controls fear and allows a Scout to keep a cool head, rise above the danger, and act in a brave way. When fear controls the person, he loses his sense of honor and his gut instinct of self-preservation takes over, causing acts of cowardice.

Cowardly acts are wide-ranging. Any situation in which a Scout finds himself can result in an act of courage or cowardice. Does he try to save a drowning man or stay on the safe shore? Does he stand up to a bully or walk away while a small child is harassed? Does he volunteer to lead a hike or stay in the back of the pack?

As a Scout matures, he must understand the tense feeling that comes up in his body when he experiences fear. He needs to train himself to respond to that feeling with a courageous rather than cowardly response. The specific situation does not matter. What is fearful for one person with little experience may be of no concern for someone else that has been through it before. Shooting a rifle, swimming underwater, climbing a tree, giving a speech, hiking at night are all examples of tasks that may be quite comfortable to one person but terrifying to another. Bravery is not needed for the one, but necessary for the other.

A Scout needs to defend the weak, defend the truth, and defend his honor. Opportunities abound in daily life to demonstrate his commitment to these defenses. The brave Scout has a generous and kind heart, willing to put the needs of others ahead of his own. A person that is self-centered and brave may do courageous acts, but they will be based on the guide of self-preservation, much like the cowardly response to fear. When bravery is demonstrated in an act to aid others, that is admirable because the Scout has done his duty to others.

Since fear is a base human emotion, it is not a bad thing as is often thought. Fear gives strength and focus and, as long as it is controlled, is a powerful force to perform great feats. Scouts should be

encouraged to approach fearful situations, whatever they are for that Scout, head-on and with purpose. Taking on small challenges that are fearful to a young boy but have no real danger, such as looking under a bed or opening a closet door, helps him understand that *fear of the unknown* is most common. As he realizes with his mind that there is no real danger, his fear disappears. He also comes to accept that unknown or unseen possibilities should not be feared, but anticipated with relish to expand his experiences in the world. This is a big leap to take and a great step in maturity.

Most boys want to be strong and brave, much like movie heros, able to overcome any obstacle. To prove themselves, they may do foolish things that are actually dangerous, such as walking a fence, jumping a creek, or fighting a bigger boy. These reckless challenges have consequences but have always and most probably will always be a part of a boy's life in some form or another. When a boy does such a task to prove his courage to himself, it can strengthen his resolve in other situations. But, if he is prompted to the task to win approval from other boys, he is actually being cowardly in bowing to their pressure.

This easily demonstrated physical bravery is obvious - the boy attempts the task or chickens out. A more subtle, internal bravery is that which compels a Scout to uphold his moral ideals. When he is tempted to lie, cheat, steal, or cover for someone else doing those things, he must be brave to decline and even more brave to tell authorities if necessary. By not going with the crowd, he may be ridiculed, outcast, or harassed. When the group is heading down a course that goes against the Scout's beliefs, the Scout Oath and Law, he is brave to stand and offer a different course. If he is overruled, then he must make the brave choice of leaving the group.

A Scout's moral ideals also help him to be brave when faced with challenges whose outcomes may only ever be known by him. Whether walking past a crying child without stopping or glancing at a classmate's test, fear can make us take the easiest, safest path. Fear of failure, fear of the unknown, fear of looking foolish, fear takes many forms and may cause bad habits. Making excuses and blaming others for mistakes rather than accepting the blame for actions and apologizing for mistakes are habits formed of fear. The Scout brave enough to accept consequences for his decisions is brave indeed.

A Scout is Brave.

CLEAN

From the Scout Handbook - "A Scout is clean. A Scout keeps his body and mind fit. He chooses the company of those who live by high standards. He helps keep his home and community clean."

There's no way to camp, hike, and play in the outdoors and not get dirty. Getting dirty is half the fun, whether it's tramping down a muddy trail or wiping dust off a sweaty brow. Many honorable jobs also result in a dirty body - farmers, mechanics, miners, and so on. This natural kind of dirt is not the heart of this point of the Scout Law, but it still needs to be managed.

Scouts can also make a huge impact on the cleanliness of their environment. Our care for the natural world needs to be improved. Bad habits of consuming more than we need and having no concern for the next generation need to be broken. Performing service and conservation projects are great ways to build the sense of servitude toward the community that each of us need to nurture.

Scouts that fail to keep their gear clean and dry discover it wears out faster or becomes ruined. Washing and sanitizing hands before cooking ensures a safe meal for everyone. Bathing each day helps remove harmful germs, dirt, and odors from a scout's body. The discipline of daily cleaning demonstrates maturity and responsibility as well as a commitment to the Scout Oath of keeping *physically fit*.

If it's not dirt, earth, and grime that makes a Scout dirty, what does? It's a simple chore to scrub dirt off skin, but a much more difficult task to clean up filthy thoughts, habits, and behaviors that accumulate in our lives. First a feeling of jealousy or mistrust towards someone, then a derogatory comment about them, and soon a person is a fountain of malice spewing forth filth, vulgarity, and hate. Cleaning up such a mess is nearly impossible, but fortunately takes a long time to develop. By keeping the mind and heart clean and not allowing the emotional grime to settle in, the problem is kept at bay.

Associating with other people that demonstrate clean minds and hearts is the best way to keep clean. Adult leaders that encourage, praise, and support others are like strong detergent. Scouting with other scouts that cheerfully provide service to the community, help others at all times, and accept responsibility helps keep a scout sparkling clean. Outside of scouting, the choice of friends plays the same role. Hanging out with people that use foul language, have malicious fun, or care only for themselves will engrain those habits in the scout.

The term *filthy liar* is spot on correct. Lying, cheating, and stealing are all habits formed from an unclean soul. Resolving to speak the truth and resist temptation to lie is the basis of being Trustworthy. It is manifest as clean, honest words and actions. A clean scout tempers his tongue and only speaks the truth in a kind manner. This is based on a sense of caring for others. Self-centered people have no care for others or how actions may effect them. An unselfish scout caring for the needs of others out of compassion is an industrial-strength vacuum on the dirt of his soul.

Dirty jokes, vulgar comments, racial slurs, ridicule, and swearing are often heard in many situations. They have no place in scouting and no place in a scout's life. Besides choosing to not say those kinds of things, a scout should also make it known that he will not tolerate those things. A single scout will most likely not change the behaviors of a group, but he can make his feelings known and then remove himself from the crowd. He can also support someone he finds as the butt of these comments and demonstrate compassion to those unclean louts, possibly helping them recognize their ways.

A Scout is Clean.

REVERENT

From the Scout Handbook - "A Scout is reverent. A Scout is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties. He respects the beliefs of others."

As a scout experiences the wonders of the outdoors, stormy weather and calm blue skies, pounding surf and trickling streams, bitter cold and stifling heat, towering trees and barren desert, he experiences the work of God. Appreciating life in its multitude of forms, from the smallest insects to gigantic wildlife, a scout comes to terms with his place in the world. Though humans are the dominant beings on our planet,

we need to play the role of steward rather than king - tending and caring for our world instead of taking all we can for our own comfort.

As technology continues to become more and more prevalent and people visit the wild places less and less, our connection to and understanding of our natural environment lessens. We take shelter, food, comfort, and entertainment for granted rather than needing to work for it. When we never have to harvest an apple from a tree, kill a fish or animal for meat, or put on layers of clothes to stay warm, we lose the sense of awe and respect we should have for nature.

Many outdoors people claim that the wilderness is their 'church' rather than a specific structure or organization. These people revere in the awesome power of God by being in the thick of natural creation. The reverence expressed for the world and its creation is common ground that all scouts can reach when struggling to understand the last point of the Scout Law.

No matter the specific religion or denomination, being reverent toward God should include our natural environment. In nature, there is no good or evil, just survival. Animals don't have the human vices of lust, pride, envy, gluttony, greed, sloth, and anger. We can learn a lot about simplifying and enjoying life from observing the wild creatures. We can also learn how our ability to care for and serve others puts us above the simple animals.

While in the wilds, a scout may come face-to-face with God. He may feel God around him in the wind, the water, the earth, and the open, wild beauty. When the scout returns home, he needs to continue that respect and awe toward God by participating in the practices of his religion. Becoming a complete citizen includes fulfilling expectations of the church to which a person belongs. What a great opportunity to share with other youth and adults in his church, when he returns from a backpacking trek. Faithfully performing his religious duties demonstrates his reverence while in civilization.

Respecting the beliefs of others can be a challenge. It does not mean to accept and believe those other beliefs. It means to allow other people the freedom to believe what they have found to be true in their lives. In a scout troop associated with a specific church, practices of that church can be used on scouting activities with everyone having the same belief structure. But, in troops with scouts from various beliefs, we need to be careful not to promote specific practices of one group. For example, requiring scouts to remove their hats at grace may be appropriate for some religions but may be a demonstration of disrespect to God for another.

Reverence fosters joy and a cheerful heart, able to appreciate and care for the good in life.

A Scout is Reverent.

SCOUT OATH OR PROMISE

On my honor I will do my best

To do my duty to God and my country
and to obey the Scout Law;

To help other people at all times;

To keep myself physically strong,
mentally awake, and morally straight.

The Meaning of the Scout Oath

When you say "On my honor," that's like saying "I promise." It also means you are the kind of person who always tries to do what is right and you can be trusted to keep this promise. No one can take your honor from you, but you can throw it away by breaking your promise and doing what you know is wrong.

Notice that the Scout Oath has three basic parts. Let's look at what they mean.

TO DO MY DUTY TO GOD AND MY COUNTRY AND TO OBEY THE SCOUT LAW

Your family and religious leaders teach you to know and serve God. By following these teachings, you do your duty to God.

Men and women of the past worked to make America great, and many gave their lives for their country. By being a good family member and a good citizen, by working for your country's good and obeying its laws, you do your duty to your country.

Obeying the Scout Law means living by its 12 points. The Scout Law is explained below.

TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE AT ALL TIMES

Many people need help. A cheery smile and a helping hand make life easier for others. By doing a Good Turn daily and helping when you're needed, you prove yourself a Scout and do your part to make this a better world.

TO KEEP MYSELF PHYSICALLY STRONG, MENTALLY AWAKE, AND MORALLY STRAIGHT

Keeping yourself physically strong means taking good care of your body. Eat the right foods and build your strength. *Staying mentally awake* means learn all you can, be curious, and ask questions. *Being morally straight* means to live your life with honesty, to be clean in your speech and actions, and to be a person of strong character.

THE SCOUT MOTTO is: **Be Prepared**

Someone once asked Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, "Be prepared for what?" Baden-Powell replied, "Why, for any old thing." That's just the idea. The Scout motto means that you are always ready to do your duty and to face danger, if necessary, to help others.

THE SCOUT SLOGAN is: Do a Good Turn Daily

This does not mean that you are supposed to do one Good Turn during the day and then stop. On the contrary - it means you do at least one Good Turn a day. It means looking for opportunities to help and then helping, quietly and without boasting.

Remember always that a Good Turn is an extra act of kindness, not just something you do because it is good manners.

THE SCOUT SIGN

The Scout sign identifies you as a Scout anywhere in the world. Use it whenever you give the Scout Oath or Scout Law.

The three upraised fingers stand for the three parts of the Scout Oath. The thumb and little finger together stand for the bond between all Scouts.



THE SCOUT SALUTE

The Scout salute signifies respect and courtesy. You use it to salute the flag of the United States of America. During some ceremonies, you may also salute your Webelos leaders or Boy Scout leaders.

To give the Scout salute, place the fingers of your right hand in position as for the Scout sign. Bring the hand smartly up to your head, palm sideways, until your forefinger touches the edge of your cap above the right eye or, if you are capless, your forehead above the right eye. When the salute is completed, snap your hand down quickly to your side.

THE SCOUT HANDCLASP

To give the Scout handclasp, use your left hand instead of the right. Do not interlock your fingers. The Scout handclasp is a token of friendship. That's why you use your left hand-the one nearest your heart.



"THE OUTDOOR CODE"

As an American, I will do my best to:

- **Be clean in my outdoor manners**
- **Be careful with fire**
- **Be considerate in the outdoors, and**
- **Be conservation minded.**

As a Boy Scout, you will spend a lot of time camping and hiking. So it is important that you learn how to behave outdoors. Be careful not to litter. Keep your cooking fires under control. Take good care of nature so that Americans who come after you can enjoy it, too.

THE SCOUT BADGE

When we speak of the Scout badge, we mean the badge of the First Class Boy Scout. It is shown here.



- The three-point design of the top half of the badge is like the north point of the old sailor's compass.
- The main part of the badge shows that a Scout is able to point the right way in life as truly as the compass points it in the field.
- The three points, like the three fingers in the Scout sign, stand for the three parts of the Scout Oath to which a boy pledges himself as a Boy Scout.
- The stars symbolize the ideals of truth and knowledge of the Scouting movement. They guide you by night and suggest a Scout's outdoor life.
- The eagle with the shield is the national emblem of the United States of America. It stands for freedom and readiness to defend that freedom.
- The scroll with the Scout motto is turned up at the ends to suggest the corners of a Scout's mouth raised in a smile as he does his duty.
- The knot attached to the bottom of the scroll is to remind you that, as a Boy Scout, you promise to do a Good Turn for someone every day.