

# Scout Skills

## Ceremonies

**info**

Scout  
Information  
Centre

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### INFORMATION SHEET

Ceremonies are an important and traditional part of Scouting. In the Scout Section, they include the Investiture, Flag Break and Flag Down, Going Up Ceremony and Inspections. They need to be short, simple and sincere, and follow an established pattern, so that individuals know what to expect and do. Many Troops and Groups have evolved their own particular way of doing things but it is important to ensure that any ceremony does not become complex, overlong, or, indeed, intimidating for those involved. Ceremonies are usually more important to adults than to young people and as such, we have no right to impose what we want on them if it has no real value!

#### Purpose of ceremonies

In Scouting, whilst many ceremonies may have quite a history to them, they still play an important part today. They provide the opportunity to welcome people into Scouting, into another Section, recognise someone's achievements, and at the same time encourage self-discipline and mark a clear beginning or end to events.

#### Scout Investiture

The Investiture, or joining ceremony, is one of the most important events in a Scout's life and should be treated with respect. It is vital that the recruit is well prepared and fully aware of the Investiture ceremony procedure. The timing of the ceremony is important. It should not come at the end of a busy and exciting evening, it would be better at the beginning of the evening in the most attractive setting that you can find.

#### Going Up Ceremony

This ceremony has real value as it clearly marks the transition between being a Cub Scout and a

Scout, not only in the mind of the young person but also in the minds of their fellow Cub Scouts. It needs to take place at a convenient time for both the Pack and the Troop. Some Groups, who have regular church parades, use this as an ideal time. It may be that the Section Leaders agree to have Going Up ceremonies on a regular basis, for example, every three - four months. The important thing is that the Cub Scouts involved are not made to feel self-conscious, but seen as Members of the Group who have proved themselves as Cub Scouts and are looking forward to having an exciting time in the Scout Troop, with all its challenges and opportunities.

#### Flag Break

The ceremony of 'breaking' (that is to unfold a flag and hang it from a flag-pole) the Union Flag at the beginning of a meeting, event or camp is a sign of respect and reminds us of our duty to the Queen and ultimately our country. It is a good aid to discipline as it provides the opportunity to start a meeting formally.

#### Flag Down

This is done at the end of a meeting or event and marks the occasion as such. The flag is lowered at this time.

#### Inspections

These are one way of encouraging a high standard at meetings and at camp. They are also about encouraging young people to take responsibility for themselves. They should be short, friendly and helpful. Scouts should be aware that they may be inspected on attendance, uniform, general smartness, personal cleanliness and on certain occasions, on individual items, such as handkerchiefs. Adverse comments should be constructive and given in a friendly manner, not as a negative criticism which may be resented.

It may well be that the Troop wishes to introduce a competitive edge and encourage Scouts to do their best, by giving points for inspection. It is very important that these are allocated on a fair system and if it is part of an inter-Patrol competition, the system needs to be monitored to ensure that it doesn't become all important. It is what underlies inspection that is important, not whether one Scout is essentially cleaner and tidier than another.

### **Further information and resources**

Chapter 16 in *The Scout Leader's Handbook* outlines the details of ceremonies and other aspects such as the Scout handshake and salute. *The Pathfinder Award* handbook outlines the use of the Union flag and Troop flag or colours.

Speak with experienced Scout Leaders about the ceremonies undertaken in your Troop and other Troops in the District. They may have some hints and tips which will help you.

# TEACH YOURSELF

Ceremonies have an important and traditional place in the Scout Troop and there may be some slight variations in how these are performed from Troop to Troop. The essential factors are that they are short, simple and sincere. Simple so that everyone can understand what is going on; short because if it is too long, Scouts become bored and fidget; sincere because unless taken seriously and the Scouts appreciate their value, there is no point in having them.

## Time

This is variable because some ceremonies, like Flag Break, are relatively simple and used regularly in the Troop. Others, like Investitures are a little more complicated and not used as often. However, an hour or so would allow you to become familiar with the basic principles.

## Equipment

Troop, National and Union flags.

## Learning all about it

Before having a go, you will need to read the Information Sheet if you have not already done so.

Being proficient and responsible for ceremonies in the Troop comes with practice and experience, and unfortunately it is difficult to practise as such and set up false situations in which to teach yourself. It may be a case of watching or 'shadowing' experienced Leaders during various ceremonies and perhaps taking the opportunity before or after a Troop meeting or a quiet moment at camp, to practise a few aspects.

It is worthwhile taking time for the proper preparation for all ceremonies since atmosphere and 'stage management' are important to the overall effectiveness. Everyone who is taking part should know what to do and when to do it. Wherever and whenever possible ceremonies should be conducted outdoors.

## Scout Investiture

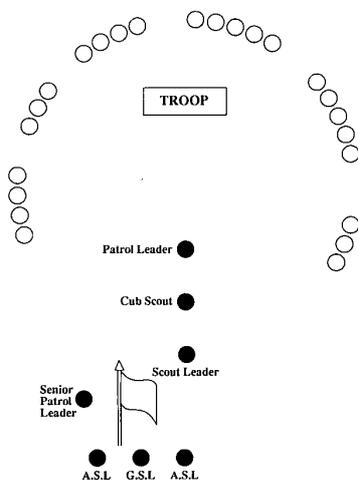
This is the most important Scout ceremony and is one which should be treated with dignity and respect. All of your Scouts need to be aware that you expect this from them. You will probably be feeling apprehensive before you conduct your first Investiture, but remember that the new Scout is probably feeling even more nervous!

The main thing to remember is to ensure adequate preparation and briefing of the Scout, any Assistants and other Leaders present, and not forgetting yourself. It may be useful to carry a small card with the Scout Law and Promise on, in case of any hiccups in the middle of the ceremony. It may also be attended by parents or particular friends of the Scout, and for that reason, should be well planned in advance.

The Investiture may vary slightly from Troop to Troop but here are the basic steps:

- Sometime before the ceremony, the Leader will chat with the Scout and discuss the meaning of the Promise and Law and help the Scout to understand what is meant by 'honour'. The ceremony itself should also be explained so that it does not come as a complete surprise!
- Immediately before, the Leader takes the opportunity to remind the rest of the Troop what will happen in order to set the scene. They may need to be reminded what it felt like when they became Scouts!
- The Scouts then stand in a horseshoe with the Scout Leader in the mouth of the horseshoe. The Assistant Scout Leader then calls the Troop to the alert and stands to the right of the Scout Leader and a little to the rear.
- The Patrol Leader brings forward the new Scout and they both face the Scout Leader. The Patrol Leader then takes one pace backward.
- The Scout Leader then asks the new Scout if he or she understands what is meant by honour and the importance of the Promise and Law.
- If the answer to this is 'yes', a (senior) Patrol Leader holding the flag, lowers it so that it is waist high between the Scout Leader and the new Scout who both place their left hands on the flag and make the Scout Sign with their right hands.

- At this time, the Troop is also making the Scout sign and the new Scout then repeats the Promise after the Scout Leader. (It is usual for the Scout Leader to say the Promise line by line with the new Scout repeating it afterwards as it can be a daunting time without having to worry about forgetting the words.)
- After the Promise has been said, everyone drops their hands from the Scout Sign and the flag bearer lifts the flag.
- The Scout Leader then presents the badges (except the Patrol Badge) and welcomes the new Scout into the Troop and may shake hands. If the Scout is completely new to the Movement, the Scout Leader should also present the Group scarf and welcome the new Member to the world-wide family of Scouting. (If the Group Scout Leader is present, they may wish to do this).
- The Scout's Patrol Leader then gives the Patrol Badge to the Scout to show that he or she is a member of that Patrol.
- The Scout Leader salutes the new Scout who returns the salute. The new Scout then turns to face the Troop, salutes and the Troop returns the salute.
- The new Scout then goes with the Patrol Leader to join the Patrol.



### Going Up Ceremony

The Cub Scout Leader and the Scout Leader need to agree and organise a suitable place and time for this to happen. If the Troop meeting follows the Pack meeting it means that this ceremony can take place with both Sections being present, but if they do not follow one

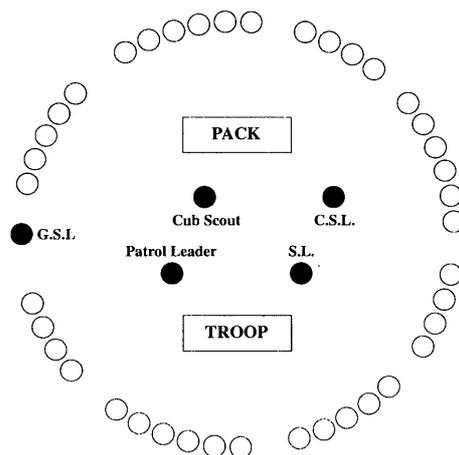
another, an alternative occasion should be arranged. It could be conducted towards the end of a Pack meeting with as many representatives of the Troop that can be present. At least the Scout Leader and the Patrol Leader of the Patrol that the Cub Scout will join should be present.

Going up ceremonies in Scout Groups often follow local traditions built up over several years. Do not, therefore, assume that they are all the same! Find out what your Group does and maybe others in the District do.

Here are some steps to a standard approach:

- The Pack and Troop both form a horseshoe formation opposite one another with a gap across the centre line.
- The Group Scout Leader, if present, calls the Group to the alert and briefly explains the purpose of the ceremony.
- The Cub Scout who is going up is called out in front of the Akela who may briefly mention any highlights of the Cub Scout's life in the Pack and to wish him or her luck for the future.
- The Akela then leads the Cub Scout to the dividing line where the Scout Leader and Patrol Leader are already waiting.
- The Scout Leader then greets the Cub Scout with a word of welcome and the Patrol Leader takes the Cub to join the Patrol.

Again, this may vary from Group to Group, but the basic principles are the same.



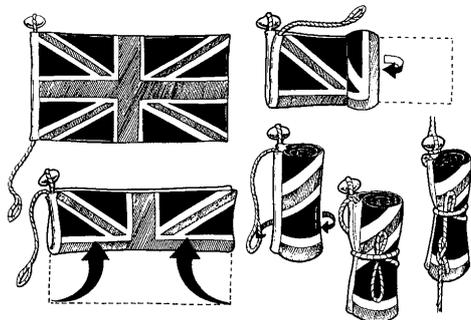
### Flag Break and Flag Down

These are part of most Troop meetings and you will find it valuable to have practised folding and

hoisting the flag and breaking it, so that no embarrassing situations arise on Troop night. This is something that you can practise when everyone else has gone home!

Here are the steps to be taken:

- Fold, prepare and hoist the flag.



- The Troop members are asked to fall in and form a horseshoe facing the flag and standing at ease (any Leaders present stand on either side of the flag-pole).
- The duty Patrol Leader or Scout Leader brings the Troop to the alert and all those not directly facing the flag (the Leaders for example) should do so at this point.
- The duty Patrol Leader walks up to the flag and pulls on the halliard or 'breaking' rope to 'break' or let the flag unfold.
- Once it has unfolded, the Troop salutes in time with the duty Patrol Leader.
- The duty Patrol Leader then returns to his or her Patrol and the Troop is stood 'at ease'.

Notices or information are often given out at this point before the Troop is brought back to the alert and then instructed to fall out that is, move away from the horseshoe.

Flag down ceremony is undertaken in a similar way:

- The Troop is assembled again in the horseshoe shape and brought to the 'alert'.
- The duty Patrol Leader walks to the flag, unties the rope holding it in position and lowers the flag slowly, ensuring that it does not touch the ground which is considered disrespectful.
- The duty Patrol Leader then stands back, still facing the flag, and at the alert for a few seconds. No salute is given at this time. He or she then returns to their Patrol before the Troop is dismissed.

- The flag may then be folded and prepared for the next time. This will depend upon each Troop's own situation.

At camp, the procedure is much the same with Flag break at the start of the day being carried out in the same manner as for an indoor meeting. It is quite appropriate for everyone to be dressed in camp kit at this time rather than have to change into uniform.

For Flag down, which should be at a fixed time before sunset, the duty Patrol Leader and Assistant Patrol Leader go to the flag pole. A long blast on a whistle or ring of a bell is given and everyone stops where they are, what they are doing, and stands to attention and faces the flag. The flag is then lowered. Then another signal, such as two short blasts on the whistle, is given as the signal to 'carry on'. The duty Patrol Leader then attends to the flag by folding it and preparing it for the next day.

Although Flag break and Flag down are not normally undertaken by a Leader, it is obviously important that he or she knows what happens and how to help if something goes wrong!

## Inspections

Inspections may be used at Troop meetings or at camp. Inspections on a Troop night tend to be about a Scout's personal appearance whereas at camp, an inspection is based on more practical aspects of the camp itself.

You must decide what is going to be included in your Troop inspection and ensure that the Scouts know as well. It might include; smartness, personal cleanliness, correct uniform and so on. This, of course will mean you will need to be aware of correct uniform and the placing of badges.

At camp, you might be looking at the tidiness of personal kit, sleeping gear, tents, Patrol areas and so on.

Once you have worked out what you are looking for, you should also consider what the standards should be. Again, you should inform the Scouts of what they are. They will not gain anything from Inspections if they do not know what they are supposed to achieve.

## Your notes on this session

It is also important to think about how you might supportively help a Scout to improve standards. Inspections have to be constructive; offer suggestions of how to improve, and encourage the Scout to consider ways in which they might help themselves. This should include a time limit by when something will be re-checked.

Here are some steps which might be considered:

- List the areas that are to be inspected (such as uniform, cleanliness and so on). Consider the standards that are/are not acceptable.
- Inform the Scouts of these standards.
- Consider constructive ways in which to help the Scouts improve.
- Implement any points system or competition that you said you would!

### Can you do it?

When you feel confident about ceremonies, see how many of these questions you can answer:

- Can I state the purpose for, and describe the following ceremonies?

The Investiture

Going Up Ceremony

Flag break

Flag down

- Have I observed and assisted at another Troop's ceremonies as listed above?

- Have I been responsible for the following within the Troop meeting?

Investiture

Going Up Ceremony

Flag break

Flag down

Inspections

Sometimes it is useful to have a more experienced Leader in the Section, perhaps the Assistant District Commissioner (Scouts) to come and give you an unbiased view of the ceremonies within your Troop and, if possible, how they can be improved upon. The final word is that 'practice makes perfect' and with these ceremonies that are happening constantly throughout Troop life, a Leader is sure to become more experienced and confident.

# HOW TO TEACH OTHERS

This section is designed to give you some practical ideas about how you can help other people to learn about ceremonies in the Troop. This might be Leaders or Scouts either in an informal way on a Troop night or more formally on a skills workshop, training course or something similar.

## Objectives

By the end of this session, the participants will be able to:

- I. State the reason for ceremonies in the Troop;
- II. Demonstrate the following ceremonies:
- III. Investiture
- IV. Going up ceremony
- V. Flag break and Flag down
- VI. State the purpose and methods of inspection in the Troop.

## Time

About two hours should be allowed to learn the ceremonies described, but confidence will only come with familiarity and experience.

## Equipment

Troop, National and Union flags.

## Training method

There are very few methods that can be used to learn about ceremonies - undertaking the ceremonies themselves or watching them is the most valuable. However, if this is not possible at the time, the subject can be introduced, initially, by participants discussing their experiences of various ceremonies both good and bad. The session leader should help participants identify why these happened so that these experiences should, or shouldn't happen again! This could then be followed by some discussion about the purpose and value of ceremonies in the Scout Troop.

The actual ceremonies (correct and incorrect methods) could be demonstrated by some

participants having been briefed by the session leader in front of the others. This could then be followed by participants, in small groups, having a go at role playing different ceremonies. Care must be taken not to 'make fun' of the ceremonies within the role play and it will be useful to allow each participant to have a go at all the main roles. For young people, it is probably only appropriate for them to practise Flag break and Flag down.

## Checking their progress

Ask participants if they can answer the following questions:

- Do I know the reason for having the following ceremonies in the Troop?

The Investiture  
Going up ceremony  
Flag break and Flag down  
Inspections

- Can I undertake the following ceremonies?  
The Investiture  
Going up ceremony  
Flag break and Flag down  
Inspections

## So they want to know more?

- Suggest that they visit another Troop to see if there are any variations to the methods used.
- Read *Back to Basics* available from the Information Centre, Gilwell Park which outlines the use of flags.
- Contact current or ex-military personnel who may be able to help with such topics as commands and carrying and presenting colours and flags.

## Your notes on this session