

Age-Appropriate Guidelines for Scouting Activities

Criteria for Assessing Whether an Activity Is Age-Appropriate

These criteria are designed to assist unit leaders in determining what activities are age-appropriate. Activities that do not appear on the chart should be reviewed using these criteria.

- * The group-based activity matches the training and experience of participants. The group has the ability to successfully complete the activity.
- * The activity complies with the policies and procedures in the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#) - No. 34416C.
- * The activity supports or is in harmony with Scouting values.
- * The activity adds to the life experiences, knowledge, or abilities of participants.
- * The unit or group receives training appropriate to the activity.

In addition to the general criteria, the following program-specific criteria apply

Cub Scouting

- * The activity is parent/youth- or family-oriented.
- * The activity is conducted with adult supervision.
- * Cub Scouts are asked to do their best.
- * The activity is discovery-based.

Boy Scouting

- * Activities are led by youth and approved and supervised by adults.
- * Activities are patrol- or troop-oriented.
- * Activities meet standards and advancement requirements.
- * Activities are experience-based.

Venturing/Varsity Scouting

- * Activities are led by youth and supported by adults.
- * Youth participants develop and plan activities and set and meet their own challenges.
- * Activities are socially based with coed participation.

Why have these guidelines been developed?

1. To provide national consistency for what is offered for BSA youth programs and activities
2. To match the degree of difficulty of activities to the age and rank of participants, thereby helping to avoid accidents and injuries
3. To help retain youth membership in BSA programs by offering activities with a progression of challenge, duration, and intensity
4. To help strike a balance among parent, leader, and youth expectations
5. To provide some protection for unit leaders by establishing parameters for programs and activities

The BSA recognizes that youth in various parts of the country develop at different rates. These guidelines are designed to demonstrate the mainstream of youth capabilities.

For instance, Cub Scouts may be involved in winter camping in Alaska, where cold-weather activities are part of the culture. On the West Coast and Gulf Coast, surfing may be appropriate for Boy Scouts. In the Northeast, youth begin playing street and ice hockey at an early age.

Because of the varying development rates among youth, these activity guidelines are flexible and should not be perceived as requirements or rules. They address the mainstream of youth abilities while allowing for exceptions for Scouting units and groups based on the consideration and judgment of unit, district, and council committees and boards. Older Boy Scouts should be at least 13 years of age by January 1 of the year they participate.

All participation in activities must comply with federal, state, and local regulations.