

Scout Skills Ceremonies



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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, Moving On 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! Perhaps you could discuss them with the Troop Forum to check that they are still relevant.

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.

Moving on Ceremony

It is considered to be good practice to hold a ceremony to mark the transfer of a young person between sections. Good transfer arrangements encourage young people to continue with Scouting, and this is a responsibility of all Leaders. These ceremonies need to take place at a convenient time for both sections. Whether it is a Cub Scout moving on to Scouts or a Scout moving on to Explorer Scouts, they must not be made to feel self-conscious, but seen as members who have enjoyed their time in the section and are now looking forward to the challenges, opportunities and fun they are going to experience in the next section.

Flag Break

The ceremony of 'breaking' (that is to unfold a flag and hang it from a flagpole) 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.

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A prayer or an opportunity for quiet reflection may be used either at the beginning or end of a meeting.

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 might 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 3 of Troop Essentials "Organising the Scout Troop" outlines the details of ceremonies and other aspects such as Badge, Award or other presentations.

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 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 section at the start of this factsheet 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 that should be treated with dignity and respect. All of your Scouts need to be aware that

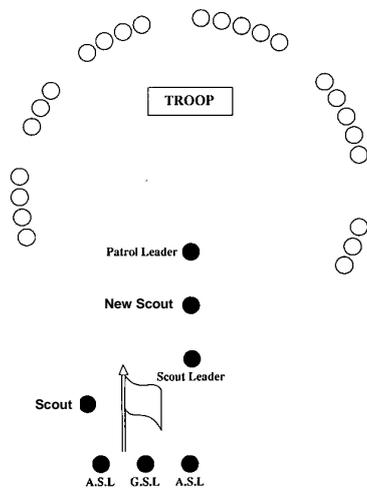
you expect this from them. You will probably be feeling apprehensive before you conduct your first Investiture, but remember that the new Scout is probably feeling even more nervous! It needs to be a memorable experience for the Scout so try different opportunities for instance dawn during a winter camp.

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:

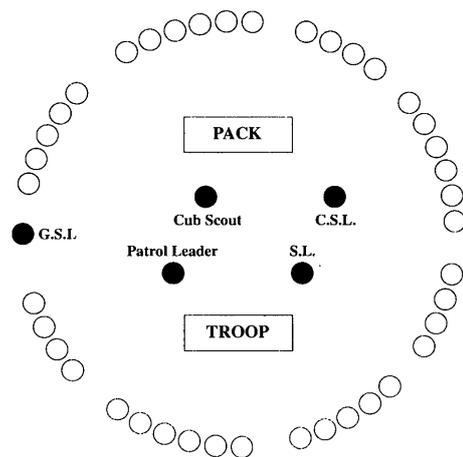
- Sometime before the ceremony, the Leader will chat with the Scout and discuss the meaning of the Promise and Law and help the Scout to understand what is meant by 'honour'. The ceremony itself should also be explained so that it does not come as a complete surprise!
- Immediately before, the Leader 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. Any Assistant Scout Leaders stand to the right of the Scout Leader and a little to the rear. A Scout stands holding the flag between the Scout Leader and their Assistants. The Scout Leader or an Assistant then calls the Troop to the alert.
- The new Scout moves forward and faces the Scout Leader. If the Troop operates with a Patrol system it may be that the Patrol Leader brings the new Scout forward. 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 Scout 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 and any other person in the room, who has made their Promise, is asked to make 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 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 worldwide family of Scouting. (If the Group Scout Leader is present, they may wish to do this).
- If a Patrol Leader has accompanied the new Scout they may give 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.

See diagram below for Investiture Ceremony



with the Scout handshake and a few words.

- If the Cub Scouts have already completed the requirements for the Scout Membership Award they could also be invested. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to invest them at the next Troop meeting.



Moving On Ceremony

The Moving-On Ceremony from Cub Scouts to Scouts

The Cub Scout Leader and the Scout Leader need to agree and organise a suitable place and time for this to happen, this may be at the end of a pack meeting if the troop meeting follows on. It is preferable for more than one Cub Scout to transfer at any one time. The parents/carers of the Cub Scouts who are transferring to the Troop should have been invited.

The Moving-On-Award may be presented by the Cub Scout Leader or the Group Scout Leader.

Here are some steps to a standard approach

- The Pack and Troop assemble in an open circle.
- A Leader calls the Group to the alert and briefly explains the purpose of the ceremony.
- The young people that are transferring should then be presented with their Moving-on-Award.
- They move into the centre of the circle and receive a fond farewell from the Cub Scout Leader.
- The Scout Leader and the Patrol Leader then welcome them to the Scout Troop

The Moving-On Ceremony from Scouts to Explorer Scouts

The Scout Leader and the Explorer Scout Leader need to agree and organise a suitable place and time for this to happen. This may be at a Troop meeting or other Group event.

The Moving-On-Award may be presented by the Scout Leader or Group Scout Leader.

Things to consider when planning the Ceremony

- Some of the Explorer Scouts in the District and the parents/carers of the Scouts who are transferring to the Unit may have been invited.
- When wishing the Scout good luck you may want to talk about the achievements of the individual during their time in the Troop (taking care not to cause embarrassment).

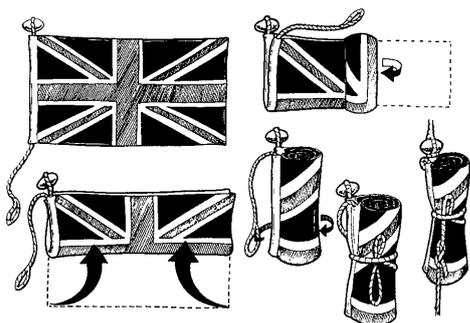
- The presentation should be made when and where the young person is happy to have it made. Some examples of such places include: On the summit of a local hill, at the bottom of the local swimming pool, during a night activity, as part of a religious ceremony.

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 Troop is brought to the alert and all those not directly facing the flag (the Leaders for example) should do so at this point.
- A Scout (briefed beforehand) 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 Scout.
- The Scout 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 Scout 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 Scout 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, two pre selected Scouts go to the flagpole. 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 Scouts then attend 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.

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 that 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
Moving-On 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
Moving-on 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 TRAIN 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. Moving-on 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, the subject can be introduced by a discussion of the participants' 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 showing correct and incorrect methods, could be demonstrated by some participants, with the session leader briefing them in front of the others. Following this, participants, in small groups, could have 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

Moving-on ceremony

Flag break and Flag down

Inspections

- Can I undertake the following ceremonies?

The Investiture

Moving-on 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.
- Contact current or ex-military personnel who may be able to help with such topics as commands and carrying and presenting colours and flags.