



# How to Organize a Sea Scout Ship





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## WELCOME TO SEA SCOUTS

Sea Scouts is a program of the Boy Scouts of America for young men and women 14 years of age, or 13 years of age and completion of the eighth grade. The maximum age for participation is under 21 years of age. The purpose of Sea Scouts is to bring a program of character building, citizenship training, and personal fitness to the youth of America. Sea Scout ships are organized by churches, civic clubs, schools, maritime organizations, businesses, unions, and other community organizations that provide adult volunteer leaders, program resources, and meeting facilities. These ships plan programs related to maritime careers, seamanship, and service.

Sea Scouts started in 1912 and has a long and colorful tradition. Thousands of young men and women have had the opportunity to follow the traditions of the sea while learning what the future holds, whether it's a career related to the sea or a lifelong hobby of recreational boating. Many Sea Scout ships maintain sail or power vessels; follow a challenging rank advancement program; and have nautical uniforms, customs, and ceremonies.

## What Does a Sea Scout Ship Do?

The program of a Sea Scout ship is based on matching the interests of members with the skills, equipment, and resources of the chartered organization. Most ships follow the traditional advancement program found in the *Sea Scout Manual*. The ship's program follows the customs and traditions of the sea and encourages members to earn the ranks of Apprentice, Ordinary, Able, and Quartermaster (equivalent to the Boy Scouts' Eagle rank).

Sea Scout advancement includes uniforms, safety, customs, swimming, boating, marlinspike seamanship, piloting, signaling, drill, cruising, galley, sailing, boats, tackle, first aid, navigation, boat maintenance, engines, sea history, lifesaving, equipment, weather, radio, customs, and ideals.

Some Sea Scout ships prefer to plan their program around a specialty such as sailing, careers, scuba diving, or an aquatic sport. They may not utilize Sea Scout uniforms and advancement, but still offer a flexible program to those young adults with a specific career or hobby interest.

# Steps to Organize

## Step One

When an appropriate organization is selected to charter a Sea Scout ship, the BSA council assigns an organizer to guide the following steps. This organization may be a church, civic club, school, labor union, maritime association or business, or other community group.

## Step Two

The organizer and a council staff member visit the top person in the organization (pastor, president, CEO, etc.). They review the purpose and program of Sea Scouts and the responsibilities of the organization in chartering a ship. The top person agrees to:

- Commit the organization to support a Sea Scout ship.
- Inform the key leaders of the organization about Sea Scouts.
- Recruit adult ship leaders.
- Provide program resources and a meeting location.

## Step Three

The organizer meets with the organization's key leaders. This may be an executive committee, church board, group of department heads, etc. The purpose and program of Sea Scouts are reviewed. The top person asks the key leaders to:

- Support their Sea Scout ship.
- Help secure program resources and equipment.
- Identify prospective adult leaders. These are men and women over 21 years of age who are of good character and have the ability to lead a quality Sea Scout program for youth.

## Step Four

The top person and the key leaders invite prospective adult leaders to an organizational meeting. The purpose, program, and leadership of a Sea Scout ship are reviewed using the *Sea Scout Manual*. A leader basic training session is scheduled to cover the material found in the *Sea Scout Adult Leader Basic Training Instructor's Guide*. After these training sessions are completed, the organizer guides these prospective leaders to select a skipper, two or more mates, and the ship committee. The organization's top person is involved in this selection. The job descriptions for these positions are found online and in the *Sea Scout Manual*.

## Step Five

The Sea Scout ship program capability inventory is completed. This is a list of adults in the organization who can help with instruction, resources, and equipment for ship meetings, activities, and cruises. The ship committee secures the use of watercraft, as needed, for the ship program, keeping in mind that the cost of operating and maintaining a large vessel may be prohibitive for a new ship.

## Step Six

The first three months of meetings and activities are planned and scheduled. These should include weekly or bimonthly ship meetings, Saturday or weekend activities or cruises, and monthly ship committee meetings. The program for the first few ship meetings might include the following:

- Introduction to the Sea Scout program
- Instruction related to Sea Scout advancement, particularly the Apprentice rank
- Discussion of ship uniforms
- Election of officers
- Boating safety—swim checks
- Basic nautical skills instruction

## Step Seven

Young adults are recruited to join the ship. Names from the council career interest survey may be used. Announcements and publicity are developed. Prospective members can be recruited through schools, churches, and community organizations. Sons and daughters of members of the chartered organization can be invited.

The first ship meeting (called an open house) is carefully planned to provide an exciting program to attract prospects to join. Hands-on maritime activities should be featured. The ship leaders review the schedule of meetings and activities, along with the structure, activities, and advancement opportunities in Sea Scouts. Leaders and members from nearby ships may be invited to help. All new ship members should purchase a *Sea Scout Manual*. Sea Scouts must be 14 years of age, or 13 years of age and completion of the eighth grade. The maximum age for participation is under 21 years of age. The organization determines if its membership is coed, all-female, or all-male.

## Step Eight

The ship is chartered by the BSA council. All members and leaders must be registered. Registration forms and information will be provided by the organizer. The charter and membership cards will be presented to the chartered organization at an appropriate occasion.

## Step Nine

The new ship members elect officers as soon as possible. The skipper may appoint temporary officers until the ship members know each other well enough to elect.

## Step 10

The skipper trains the new officers using the *Sea Scout Manual* and the *Sea Scout Leaders' Manual* (available online only at [www.seascout.org](http://www.seascout.org)). A year's schedule of meetings and activities should be developed to avoid any conflict with school, church, or community events.

## For Further Information

Full details of Sea Scout ship organization, training, and Sea Scouts are found in the following publications available from the BSA council service center.

### For new Sea Scouts and leaders

*Sea Scout Manual*

### For ship leaders

For council organizers and trainers:

*This is Scouting* (online)

*Venturing Youth Protection* (online)

*Sea Scout Adult Leader Basic Training*

Program support for Sea Scouts may also be found online. For those with access to the Internet, visit [www.seascout.org](http://www.seascout.org) to consult the Sea Scout Web site. Additional questions about the program may be answered by calling your local council service center.

## First Ship Meeting

### *Open House Sample Agenda*

1. Greetings and welcome (Greet the young people at the *Ship committee*  
*members*  
door, welcome them, hand out nametags.)
2. Introductions and welcome *Ship committee chair*
3. Greetings from the host (Express the chartered *Head of chartered*  
Organization's interest in youth and enthusiasm for *organization*  
Sea Scouts. It is important to coach this individual  
in the use of proper Sea Scout terms.)
4. What is Sea Scouts? (Have youth speak to youth *Sea Scout representative*  
about Sea Scouts and its relationship to the BSA.  
This is the best way to get across the meaning of  
the program.)
5. Ship committee support (Explain how the ship *Ship committee chair*  
committee supports the ship program.)
6. Description of the program and activities planned for *Skipper*  
the next six meetings (Give out copies of the program  
outline and explain how officers will be elected from  
membership. Briefly describe the duties of officers.)
7. A hands-on activity in which everyone can participate *All*

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|---|-----------------------------|
| 8. Question and answer session (Divide young adults into groups of eight or 10. Assign each group an adult committee member who is prepared to answer questions about Sea Scouts and the chartered organization.) | <i>Ship committee</i>       |
| 9. Reassemble small groups. Explain the national registration fee, which includes participation in local and national activities. Have copies of the <i>Sea Scout Manual</i> for display or purchase.             | <i>Skipper</i>              |
| 10. Invitation to join (Hand each person a membership application, collect fees from those wishing to join tonight, and ask others to bring their application and fee to the next meeting.)                       |                             |
| 11. Closing comments (Be sure everyone knows date, place, time, and program for next ship meeting.)   | <i>Ship committee chair</i> |
| 12. Refreshments and fellowship   | <i>All</i>                  |

**NOTE:** If a number of parents attend, a ship committee member might take them aside and explain the purpose and program of the ship, and the tie to the BSA. Parents might be included in the program capability inventory and enlisted to provide transportation, serve as chaperones, and offer support for ship activities.

## Second Ship Meeting

This meeting should be a high-powered one centered on the Sea Scout program. Plan to get Sea Scouts involved and doing things in their area of interest.

### ***Sample Agenda***

(Greet members at the door and hand each a name tag.)

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|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Welcome and introduction of those not at previous meeting   | <i>Temporary boatswain or skipper</i> |
| 2. Business meeting (keep brief)   | <i>Temporary boatswain or skipper</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete collection of registration fees and membership applications.</li> <li>• Announce plans to elect officers.</li> <li>• (Optional) Divide members into groups by school. Each group elects a representative to serve as a temporary officer and plan car pools to future ship meetings.</li> <li>• Other business. (Might include ideas on transportation to meetings—car pools, mass transit, etc., and a discussion of ship uniforms.)</li> </ul> |                                       |

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|--|---|
| 3. Introduction of program for the evening   | <i>Temporary boatswain<br/>or skipper</i> |
| 4. Program tour, demonstration, informative presentation, hands-on experience (This is the major portion of this meeting.) | <i>All</i>                                |
| 5. Announcement of date, place, and time of next meeting   | <i>Temporary boatswain<br/>or skipper</i> |
| 6. Skipper's comments  | <i>Skipper</i>                            |
| 7. Closing   |   |
| 8. Refreshments and fellowship   | <i>All</i>                                |

**After ship meeting:** The skipper and temporary officers (or school representatives) meet to plan the election of officers and the program for the next meeting. Complete the registration materials, and forward application forms and fees to the council service center.

## Third Ship Meeting

### *Sample Agenda*

(Temporary officers arrive early and greet others.)

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|---|---|
| 1. Introductions, if necessary  | <i>Temporary boatswain</i>              |
| 2. Business meeting (keep brief)  | <i>Temporary boatswain</i>              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yeoman reads minutes of previous meeting.</li> <li>• Purser collects any additional fees and membership applications.</li> <li>• Other business</li> </ul>   |   |
| 3. Election of officers (Established ships usually elect officers for a one-year term in January. New ships may want to adjust the term of office for their first-year officers.)   | <i>Nominating<br/>committee chair</i>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report of nominating committee on officers to be elected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boatswain</li> <li>Boatswain's mate—administration</li> <li>Boatswain's mate—program</li> <li>Yeoman (secretary)</li> <li>Purser (treasurer)</li> <li>Other officers as desired</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Election</li> <li>• Congratulations and challenge to new officers</li> <li>• Installation of new officers and presentation of books of office</li> </ul> | <i>Skipper<br/>Ship committee chair</i> |

4. Continuation of meeting	<i>New boatswain</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept position</li> <li>• Discuss plans for term of office</li> <li>• Review upcoming ship programs. Members are asked to write down and turn in their interests and ideas for ship activities.</li> <li>• Coordinate final selection of ship uniform.</li> </ul>	<i>Boatswain's mate— program</i>
5. Evening's program related to Sea Scouts (informative presentation, demonstration, etc.)	<i>All</i>
6. Announcement of date, place, and time of next meeting	<i>Boatswain</i>
7. Skipper's comments	<i>Skipper</i>
8. Closing	<i>Boatswain's mate— administration</i>
9. Refreshments and fellowship	<i>All</i>

**After ship meeting:** Skipper conducts officers' briefing following outline in the *Sea Scout Leader Manual* (online only at [www.seascout.org](http://www.seascout.org)).

## Suggested Program for a New Sea Scout Ship

### Meetings

Ship meetings can be held as frequently as the time of the leaders and members will permit. Many ships meet an average of once a week, not always on the same day and not always formally. For instance, one week the members may gather at the harbor to work on boats. Another week they may get together on a Friday night to go to a show, skating, bowling, etc. At least once every three months a business meeting is necessary to elect officers, plan the ship's next three month program in detail, make assignments, and transact other business. (See the *Sea Scout Manual* and the *Sea Scout Leaders' Manual* online at [www.seascout.org](http://www.seascout.org).)

### Program Planning

At a program planning meeting, it is essential to have school and council calendars available. When the ship's members have agreed upon the program content they desire, the officers appoint chairs for the selected activities and help them name a committee. An adult officer or committee member is selected to serve as an adviser to each committee. These committees have the responsibility for the complete planning, promotion, and conducting of the activity in their charge. (See the *Sea Scout Manual*.)

### Program Content

The following program outline has been developed as a suggestion for a new ship just getting under way. It is based on two meetings a month of the entire ship, an officers' meeting (quarterdeck), plus an activity or field trip. It can be modified or adapted to fit the needs and interests of members and leaders. It is

also assumed that May is the first month. Modify the program accordingly if the ship begins in another month.

In some locations, council and/or area Sea Scout events are conducted. These dates should be included in the ship's calendar.

## Program Outline

(See the *Sea Scout Manual* for chapter references.)

### FIRST MONTH (May)

**Ship meetings**—Open House to recruit new members; cover the basic organization of the ship, election of officers, orientation on Sea Scouts, and the planned program for the first three months; ship members and leaders should determine uniforms or ship identity items such as T-shirts, jackets, etc.

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Review duties of the officers; acquaint everyone with the calendar, training courses, etc.; prepare for next month's ship meetings and activity.

**Activity**—Visit another Sea Scout ship or conduct a boating safety program.

### SECOND MONTH (June)

**Ship meetings**—Safe boating course consisting of three, two-hour sessions; hold orientation sessions on ship organization and duties of the commissioned and elected officers; practice "coming aboard" and a few simple ceremonies; start learning the language of the sea (glossary of sea terms).

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Review ship meetings and their effectiveness; plan outlines of "formal" and "informal" ship meetings; check on arrangements for planned activity; prepare for next month's ship meetings.

**Activity**—Schedule a session at a swimming pool; check the swimming ability of every member; practice simple safety and rescue techniques; review *Safe Swim Defense*, review *Safety Afloat*. (These are available online at [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org) in the online learning center.)

### THIRD MONTH (July)

**Ship meetings**—Construct a landship; conduct classes in water safety and rescue methods—rescue lines, rope work, artificial respiration; hold several skill-teaching contests; plan next three months of meetings, assignments, etc.

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Critique meetings; check on programs, activities, etc.; prepare for next month's ship meetings.

**Activity**—Weekend trip to camp, lake, etc.; practice boating and aquatic skills.

### FOURTH MONTH (August)

**Ship meetings**—Continue work on landship; review customs and courtesies of the sea; practice ceremonies; review advancement program and schedule classes; conduct uniform inspection; hold skill-teaching contests.

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Critique meetings; check on program committees, coming activities, etc.; prepare for next month's ship meetings.  
**Activity**—Long cruise or superactivity.

**FIFTH MONTH** (September)

**Ship meetings**—Orientation on boats and boat handling; practice session on water if possible; learn boat etiquette.

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Critique meetings; check on program committees, coming activities, etc.; prepare for next month's ship meetings.

**Activity**—Participate in district or council activity, or plan one for ship.

**SIXTH MONTH** (October)

**Ship meetings**—Orientation in marlinspike seamanship (rope work); practice sessions in knots and knot tying; classes in advancement subjects; knot tying contests; plan next three months of meetings, assignments, etc.

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Critique meetings; check on program committees, coming activities, etc.; prepare for next month's ship meetings.

**Activity**—Small boat sailing or Halloween party.

**SEVENTH MONTH** (November)

**Ship meetings**—Continue marlinspike seamanship; instruction in splicing, practice sessions; classes in advancement subjects; skill-teaching contests; practice session at swimming pool.

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Critique meetings; check on program committees, coming activities, etc.; prepare for next month's ship meetings.

**Activity**—Plan a swim meet.

**EIGHTH MONTH** (December)

**Ship meetings**—Continue marlinspike seamanship; instruction in special knots, clinches, straps, lashings, seizings, worming, parceling, servings, whipping; practice sessions; preparation for parents' night and bridge of honor.

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Critique meetings; check on program committees, coming activities, etc.; prepare for next month's ship meetings.

**Activity**—Holiday party; parents' night; bridge of honor.

**NINTH MONTH** (January)

**Ship meetings**—Continue marlinspike seamanship; instruction in tackles, purchase, and blocks; practice sessions; skill-teaching contests; plan next three months of meetings, assignments, etc.

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Critique meetings; check on program committees, coming activities, etc.; prepare for next month's ship meetings.

**Activity**—Winter weekend: tobogganing, skiing, ice skating, ice fishing, etc.

**10th MONTH** (February)

**Ship meetings**—Sail training plan.

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Critique meetings; check on program committees, coming activities, etc.; prepare for next month's ship meetings.

**Activity**—Sailing instruction, Valentine's Day party, or ship banquet.

**11th MONTH** (March)

**Ship meetings**—Sail training plan continued; skill-teaching contests.

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Critique meetings; check on program committees, coming activities, etc.; prepare for next month's ship meetings.

**Activity**—Service project for chartered organization.

**12th MONTH** (April)

**Ship meetings**—Sail training plan continued; piloting; skill-teaching contests; ship inspection and drill; plan three months of meetings, assignments, etc. for second year.

**Quarterdeck meeting**—Critique meetings; check on program committees, coming activities, etc.; prepare for next month's ship meetings.

**Activity**—Participate in council/region activity, if available.

## **Suggested Subjects and Activities for Second Year**

**FIRST MONTH** (May)

Advanced seamanship course consisting of eight, two-hour sessions; continue orientation on sailing (subject: navigation).

**Activity**—Predicted log contest.

**SECOND MONTH** (June)

Complete advanced seamanship course; prepare for council or area regatta, if available.

**Activity**—Participate in council or area regatta.

**THIRD MONTH** (July)

Continue orientation on bridge and quarterdeck (subject: signaling—international Morse code); build blinker and buzzer sets; plan three months of meetings, assignments, etc.

**Activity**—Beach party or cruise.

**FOURTH MONTH** (August)

Continue orientation on bridge and quarterdeck (subject: signaling—semaphore), also flag signals and bell signals.

**Activity**—Long cruise or superactivity.

**FIFTH MONTH** (September)

Conduct open house to recruit new members; continue orientation on bridge and quarterdeck (subject: weather lore and weather forecasting).

**Activity**—Weekend cruise.

**SIXTH MONTH** (October)

Provide orientation for new members; continue orientation on bridge and quarterdeck (subject: types of vessels); plan three months of meetings, assignments, etc.

**Activity**—Weekend cruise.

**SEVENTH MONTH** (November)

Orientation on boat maintenance, safety equipment, and procedures.

**Activity**—Swim meet.

**EIGHTH MONTH** (December)

Orientation on cruising.

**Activity**—Holiday party; parents' night.

**NINTH MONTH** (January)

Orientation on safety; plan three months of meetings, assignments, etc.

**Activity**—Winter weekend or ski trip.

**10th MONTH** (February)

Open house demonstrations and recruiting.

**Activity**—Ship banquet.

**11th MONTH** (March)

Drill and uniform inspections; discuss construction of sailboats and sails.

**Activity**—Service project for chartered organization.

**12th MONTH** (April)

Plan the long cruise; begin construction of sailboats; plan three months of meetings, assignments, etc.

**Activity**—Council/region bridge of honor and dance.

The home of Sea Scouts is [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org) or [www.seascout.org](http://www.seascout.org)

National Sea Scout Support Committee  
Boy Scouts of America  
1325 West Walnut Hill Lane  
Irving, Texas 75038