

**PARENT GUIDE**  
**BOY SCOUT TROOP 654**  
**ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
**MT. VERNON, VIRGINIA**

Who are we?

Troop 654 is one of over 650 troops of the National Capital Area Council (which includes portions of Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia) having a total membership of over 18,000 Scouts. Troop 654 is located within the Colonial District of the National Capital Area Council, which includes the Alexandria, Mt. Vernon, and Franconia areas of Northern Virginia, among others. Troop 654 was founded in 1951 and is one of the older troops in the Council.

Who is our Sponsor?

St. Luke's Episcopal Church sponsors Troop 654. St. Luke's provides meeting space and other support to the troop.

How is the Troop organized?

A Troop Committee, consisting of a number of parents of Scouts in the Troop, and other adults, runs the Troop. The members of the Committee serve as Committee Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, among other positions. Troop committee members monitor the Troop program and financial affairs of the Troop. A Scoutmaster coordinates the Scout program together with the boy leadership of the Troop. The boy leadership of the Troop includes Senior Patrol Leader, Assistant Senior Patrol Leaders, Patrol Leaders, Scribe, Historian, Quartermasters, Troop Guides, and Chaplain's Aide, among others. The boy leadership is elected annually in September.

When does the Troop meet?

Troop meetings are held on Monday nights at 7:30 p.m. at St. Luke's Church. The meetings are generally held in Parrish Hall, but may be elsewhere in the Church if a conflict arises with the use of the Hall. Meetings last approximately 1-1 ½ hours depending upon the program. The Troop does not meet the Monday following a Troop weekend outing, as that date is reserved for the Troop Committee. Recognizing that our troop has scouts that attend both public and private schools, the Troop will try to not meet on school or national holidays.

### What does the Troop do?

The Troop's activities consist of a variety of activities designed to foster and promote Boy Scout principles and ideals, including outdoor activities, service projects, field trips, etc.

### How do Scouts/parents know the schedule of events?

The Troop publishes a calendar on it's website [www.Troop654.org](http://www.Troop654.org) which is updated on a continual basis. Please check this site frequently.

### Does my son have to participate in all activities?

Troop activities are intended to serve many purposes: Scouting skills are taught for purposes of advancement, leadership skills are learned, service is provided to others, special activities are provided related to specific merit badges, etc. The training process is somewhat cumulative, so regular attendance and participation is important to the progress of the new Scout.

### What is "Summer Camp"?

The Troop generally participates in two long-term outdoor activities each year (Summer Camps). These are weeklong resident camps affiliated with various Councils of the Boy Scouts of America during which each Scout may focus on scouting activities for the entire week under the guidance of trained Boy Scout counselors/staff. Attendance at camp is a Troop activity, with the Troop camping together in a campsite at the camp. First year Scouts during summer camp will focus on scouting skills pertaining to the ranks of Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class. Experienced Scouts focus on merit badges and high adventure activities at camp. Attendance at summer camp each summer is strongly encouraged for each Scout.

### What equipment does my son need to participate in Scouts?

Remember, Scouts spend the majority of their time outdoors. While a tent is not required (as the Troop has tents which Scouts may use), each Scout must have a sleeping bag, water bottle, Class A shirt, sturdy outdoor shoes, rain gear, etc. More information is provided to Scouts by the Troop prior to outdoor events regarding equipment that is necessary to bring.

### Do Scouts need a tent?

As noted above, Scouts are not required to have tents to participate in overnights. Many Scouts have tents, which are shared by 2-3 Scouts depending

upon the size of the tent. It is, however, permissible for a Scout to use his own tent as long as it passes inspection by the adult leaders of the Troop (some family tents are not sufficiently weather-proof.) Two or three man tents are acceptable - larger tents are generally not permitted on outings. If you don't have a tent now, we would not encourage you to purchase a tent as yet.

#### What about knives, hatchets and axes?

No Scout needs a hatchet or axe. We do, however, train Scouts in the proper use of these tools. Little need exists for hatchets or axes on outings, as any wood to be cut is generally cut with a bow saw. Scouts may have a pocket knife once the Scout successfully completes the "Totin' Chip" safety program (generally at summer camp.)

#### What activities are prohibited by Scouts in the Troop?

The use of tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs by Scouts in the Troop is, of course, strictly prohibited. The troop requires each Scout to behave in an acceptable, respectful and cooperative manner at all times during Troop activities. In the event that a Scout's behavior is not consistent with the above, the Scout will be removed from contact with the Troop and his parent(s) may be required to pick him up during the event. In extreme circumstances, the Scout may be asked to leave the Troop.

#### What are the parent's responsibilities?

It is the Troop's expectation that the parents will assist in some way in the activities of the Troop. It is recognized that not all parents are "campers." However, there are many other ways that parents can help the Troop program succeed for the benefit of their scouts. Parents may also participate on the Troop Committee, provide transportation to and from events, assist with service projects, attend training sessions, assist with the fundraiser, assist as a leader at summer camp, etc. The Troop believes that it is also the responsibility of the parent to learn as much about Scouting as possible so that the parent may encourage participation by their son and provide suitable praise as they advance in Scouting.

#### What about conflicts (my son's pretty busy?)

All families are busy. All boys are busy. The Scouting program requires time and effort by each Scout to be successful in the program. Tough choices will sometimes have to be made. We believe that conflicts should be resolved in a

manner that will maximize your son's scouting experience. For instance, many of our outings extend over an entire weekend. Should there be a conflict, please contact the Scoutmaster or designated Trip Captain to determine if alternate arrangements can be made, so he won't miss the entire event. It is also important to participate in service projects so that the Scout learns to extend himself toward his community – service hours are required for advancement. Remember- your son is entering a new stage in life that may benefit from new challenges.

#### Does the Troop have adult training?

It is important for the Troop to have trained leaders. A variety of training is available during the year, including basic leader training, youth protection training, safe swim defense, safe boating, health and safety, etc. The Troop is required to have trained leaders, and it is the expectation of the Troop that its parents will participate in such training to the extent possible. Such training will also enhance the parent's ability to enjoy their son's Scouting career.

#### How long will my son be in Scouting?

This depends on the individual Scout as well as his family. Scouting is open to boys of ages 11 – 18. Typically, a boy will stay in Scouting through the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade before other time conflicts take precedence. Frankly, some boys may depart scouting at an earlier age due to conflicts with other activities (e.g., it is difficult to manage both an active Scouting career and a full time sports interest.) It is also certain that a boy will remain in scouting longer if his parents are supportive and take an interest in his activities.

#### What is the Scout's financial obligation to the Troop?

Each Scout must pay \$25 annual registration fees and a \$60 activity fee to the Troop at the beginning of the charter year. For first year scouts the Troop also charges \$5 for their Scout Handbook & Class B uniform shirt. Most outings also require payment of a fee to defer food costs, lodging, etc. The Troop requires a healthy treasury to subsidize outings, purchase equipment and awards, etc. The Troop has one fundraiser per year during October-November during which Scouts sell "holiday greens" (wreaths, garlands, centerpieces.) It is the Troop's expectation that each Scout participate in this fundraiser. A Scout may earn "greens credits" to be applied to the registration and activity fees by selling a sufficient amount of greens. "Greens credits" may also be used to pay for other expenses such as camping and outing expenses.

What type of activities will the Troop sponsor?

The Troop sponsors a wide variety of activities during the year, including the following?

Weekend camping trips	Ft. Belvoir indoor swimming
Service projects	Rappahannock kayak trip
Summer camp	Spring and Fall Camporees
"Cosmic" bowling	Bike trips
Ski trip weekend	Trips to Civil War battlefields
Merit Badge programs	Rock climbing
"Cope" confidence course	Orienteering

What about Youth Protection?

All Scout leaders are required to participate in Youth Protection training every two years to ensure that each Scout's privacy is respected. At least two leaders are required to participate in each event to comply with Youth Protection guidelines.

Can parents attend Troop meetings?

Parents are always encouraged to attend Troop meetings to meet the Troop's adult leaders, watch the program for that meeting and/or pick up information about upcoming events.

What uniform does each Scout wear?

The basic uniform of Scouts in Troop 654 is a Class A uniform consisting of a uniform shirt (tan in color) bearing the appropriate patches. The Class A shirt is worn during "formal" activities such as Courts of Honor. The Class B Troop 654 t-shirt (maroon in color) is worn during most other Troop activities including Troop meetings, service projects, etc. Each Scout will receive a Class B t-shirt upon joining the Troop, and will receive a replacement t-shirt after 2 years in the Troop.

What do parents need to know about advancement?

It is the Troop's "goal" to provide sufficient opportunities during the first year of scouting to enable first year Scouts in the troop to achieve the rank of first Class. This is merely a "goal" because each Scout will advance at his own rate. Some Scouts will not be able to take advantage of all of the opportunities that the Troop will provide to achieve this "goal," nor will some Scouts be able to complete some of the requirements for various reasons. While we attempt to monitor each

Scout's progress and provide encouragement as necessary, Scouting is not a "pass/fail" program. Nor is success in Scouting judged on a timeline. We will always favor participation as opposed to rank advancement given the choice of the two. However, rank advancement should be the natural result of participation.

Parents should be aware that the first year advancement program has several requirements apart from basic Scouting skills. Once a Scout completes his rank skill requirements for Second Class and First Class, he must still be signed off on "Scout Spirit." Participation in service projects is one of the Troop's measures of Scout Spirit. For the ranks of Second and First Class, we require at least 6 hours of service projects per rank. The Troop will provide sufficient opportunity for participation in service projects.

Any Scout who believes that he is ready to complete a rank requirement should discuss this with the Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmasters, Senior Patrol Leader, Assistant Senior Patrol Leaders, Patrol Leaders, or Troop Guides. Any of these Troop Leadership positions will determine if the Scout has met any rank requirement. Please note that your son may work on rank requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class simultaneously.

Once all requirements for a rank are met, each Scout must participate in a Scoutmaster Conference (in which the Scoutmaster conducts an interview with the Scout to confirm that he has completed his requirements.) The Scout must then attend a Board of Review with three adults of the troop appointed by the Troop Committee Chairman, after which the Scout has officially earned his rank. Both the Scoutmaster Conference and the Board of Review are "formal" meetings that require a Class A uniform to be worn by the Scout. The Scout will then be awarded his rank at the next Troop meeting, with the formal award being conducted at the next Court of Honor.

We conduct Courts of Honor in February, June, and September. At the Court of Honor the Troop officially recognizes any prior advancement of the Scout, including any ranks that may have been awarded at Troop meetings. A Scout's family should be in attendance to honor the Scout's achievements.

First year Scouts will also earn "merit badges" at summer camp, as well as during the year. Some of these merit badges may be earned on a "self-study" basis in conjunction with a merit badge counselor, or as part of an official Troop

program. Merit badges are not a rank requirement for Tenderfoot, Second Class or First Class. Merit badges only become rank requirements for Star, Life and Eagle ranks.

A final point – there is always a certain amount of peer pressure in rank advancement for first year Scouts, which we attempt to discourage. As our goal is long-term, we do not place pressure on the Scouts to achieve any particular rank by a certain date, nor do we suggest to any Scout that he has “failed” by not achieving any particular rank by a particular date. We ask that the parents take the same view.

IF WE HAVEN'T ANSWERED ALL OF YOUR QUESTIONS, FEEL FREE TO CONTACT THE FOLLOWING PERSONS ABOUT ANY THAT REMAIN:

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Check us out!!

[www.Troop654.org](http://www.Troop654.org)