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Discipline in the Scout Troop

Specific answers about discipline can rarely be given. So much depends on the circumstances and the persons involved. But there are some hints, which may help prevent problems arising.

Some tips

- ? A well-disciplined Troop has sound and effective leadership.
- ? Your own behaviour is your best tool.
- ? Get to know the boys/girls and treat them all the same - avoid favourites.
- ? Be honest and fair.
- ? Always expect courtesy and good manners.
- ? Make it known that you will not accept cheek and talking back.
- ? Use positive reinforcement - praise good behaviour rather than criticise.
- ? Make it known that the Scouts are to be trusted at all times.
- ? Don't be afraid to admit that you have made a mistake the Scouts appreciate this
- ? Give 'troublemakers' some special responsibility keep them busy
- ? Be available to talk to the Scouts - be a good listener.

Promise and Law

Scouting has a code of behaviour for its



members. Be sure that the youth members are aware that everything they do can be referred to the Promise and Law. Young people appreciate knowing right from wrong. Discuss issues when they occur, let

them know that they are expected to do their best at all times. Follow the patrol system to develop self-discipline. Trial and error is important stand back and let them have a go.



Motivators

These are not 'bribes', but incentives. Give rewards to individuals or patrols from time to time, Small items such as stickers (, badges for prompt action. Special rewards like being in the colour party for an important function can bring results in good attendance, smartness in uniform, particular loyalty or may be placed as a 'reward' because the Scouts were all punctual, specially helpful or all in correct uniform. Don't underestimate the power of McDonalds as an incentive.

Patrol Leaders

Expect good behaviour of patrol leaders; encourage them to expect it in all members of their patrol. Train the leaders well, so they keep all members of their patrol occupied in interesting ways, help them to work together as a patrol and as members of the Patrol Leaders' Council. Read the *Fieldbook of Australian Scouting* for helpful advice in this regard.

Problem Troops

Perhaps you have taken over from another leader or you have allowed bad habits to creep in - maybe it is time to have a good hard look at the way the Troop is going. Perhaps a frank and open discussion would help. Ask the Troop to outline to

what they expect from you, the leader, their patrol leaders, themselves and the Troop. Jot down all their comments on a large sheet of paper on the wall, and then discuss them. Get a consensus of what they would like to do. Put the list up each week and check if their aims are being achieved. Talk about them. You have to try too.

Difficult kids

Quite often this is attention seeking, in which case it is best ignored, but keep him/ her busy. Maybe its boredom, then look to the program, ask yourself is it really interesting for that particular Scout. Give them an opportunity to succeed by developing their strengths they must be good at something. Let them follow a particular interest. Find out what it is and expect improvement.

Avoid overreacting to bad behaviour. Never 'tick' a child off in front of others, take them aside. Show confidences in their ability and throw responsibility back to them by letting them make their own decisions. Remember that all bad behaviour has a cause. Perhaps the fault is, maybe, more deep-seated and there are problems at home or school. If so, never try to be the expert but seek help if it is needed.

When all else Fails

In a very few extreme cases it may be necessary to take action towards a particular Scout who persistently and deliberately breaks their Promise, in a way that is bad -for them, bad for the Troop and bad for the good of Scouting in the community.

A Troop council should be called to discuss the matter and depending on the severity of the problem the council should decide the discipline. Perhaps this could be loss of something the Scout would really enjoy, for example, an activity or camp. On the other hand by their attendance at that camp it could be the means of correcting their behaviour. Great care needs to be exercised and every aspect considered. If the Scout is a PL, the council may decide that a new election should take place to replace the PL. It is the Scouts decision. No Scout should be suspended for unsatisfactory behaviour without discussion at Troop council and in consultation with the leader.

A BUSY PROGRAM AVOIDS PROBLEMS.