

# How to run a good Crew Meeting

The monthly meeting is the glue that holds an Invention Crew together. Well-planned meetings run by the crew's youth leaders can be full of excitement and satisfaction. Meeting time devoted to learning new skills and organizing future events, service projects, and other activities will help keep interest levels and enthusiasm high.

Crew meetings serve many purposes, including these:

- **Motivating Scouts.** From Scouts' points of view, crew meetings are chances for them to get together with their friends for fun and adventure. For Advisors, meetings offer many avenues to encourage Scouts to learn, to advance, and to improve themselves.
- **Strengthening.** Teams have opportunities at crew meetings to meet together, to learn as a team, and to share what they know. Whether they serve as the presenters of an Invention skill, or as the organizers of a challenge or activity, every team can contribute to every crew meeting.
- **Learning and practicing Invention skills.** A portion of a crew meeting may be devoted to the demonstration and practice of skills that will enhance Scouts' ability to create, build and to pass requirements for higher ranks.
- **Exercising leadership.** The crew's youth leaders take leading roles in planning, conducting, and assisting the success of crew meetings. Leadership is a skill that can be learned only by experience, and crew meetings serve as regular occasions for that to happen.
- **Promoting Scout spirit.** Crew meetings offer ideal settings for Teams to take part in contests and competitions that test their expertise and their abilities to cooperate with one another.

Most crews have a crew meeting or activity every month. Meetings should occur at the same time every month to help members and their families schedule effectively. Most crew meetings occur on week-nights and should not last longer than 90- minutes to get members home in time for homework and adequate rest. Crew meetings should not always be held at the same place. For example, now and then a crew may meet at a fire station or police headquarters so the members can learn about how their town is protected on a summer evening, they might gather at a local pool to pass some of the swimming requirements for a rank or merit badge.

Weekly crew meetings should be fun and full of action and excitement. They can be opportunities to learn new skills and plan future activities and service projects. Aside from the Scoutmaster's Minute, the content and conduct of each section of a crew meeting is the responsibility of the Scouts themselves.

## Planning a Crew Meeting

Responsibility for the conduct and content of a crew meeting falls to the Scouts themselves. Crew meetings are planned well in advance by the senior Team leader and the Team leaders' council.

Each crew meeting should have been planned the previous month at the meeting of the Team leaders' council. The senior Team leader will have assigned Teams and individuals to take care of portions of a meeting, giving as many Scouts as possible the chance to contribute. The seven-part crew meeting plan provides the framework for efficient, well-run meetings.

## The Seven Parts of a Crew meeting

The seven-part plan for crew meetings is an important guide, but use flexibly. The times noted in the plan are suggestions only and can vary to fit various situations. For example, the crew may be getting ready for a campout. The usual amount of time set aside for Team meetings might be expanded to allow Scouts time to complete their Team camping preparations. A crew nearing the date of a district camporee may devote extra time to skills instructions so that everyone will be ready for activities involving the theme of the camporee, and the interTeam activity can include an extended competition that also focuses on the key skills.

When the minutes allotted to one part of the crew meeting plan increase, consider shortening other portions of the plan. Every crew meeting should be interesting and useful, and it should begin and end on time.

### The Preopening

As Scouts begin to arrive for a crew meeting, a Team leader or an older Scout assigned by an Officer should get them involved in a preopening game or project designed so that additional Scouts can join as they show up. Those in charge of the preopening activity should be ready to start about 15 minutes before the scheduled beginning of the meeting. Varying the activities from meeting to meeting will keep the preopening fresh.

Scouts whose Team has been assigned to serve that week as the service Team should use the preopening time to prepare for the crew meeting. The meeting room may need to be rearranged, chairs set up, flags displayed, and other preparations completed before the meeting can begin.

#### **The Opening (5 minutes)**

Call the meeting to order on time, instructing Scouts to line up in formation by Team. The Team responsible for the opening ceremony may conduct a flag ceremony and then lead the crew members in the Scout Oath and Law and the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **Skills Instruction (15 to 20 minutes)**

This portion of the meeting is devoted to the mastery of knowledge that Scouts need to participate fully in an upcoming activity, or upon skills they must learn to complete advancement requirements.

The skills to be taught at each meeting will have been determined in advance by the Officers. Often the skills will relate directly to the month's program plan for crew activities. Instruction should be hands-on learning rather than lecturing. All skill instruction should follow a simple process called the Teaching EDGE. First the skill is explained, then demonstrated. Then the learner is guided as he tries the skill. Enabling, the last E in EDGE, means creating an environment for the trainee to continue to be successful (like providing an opportunity to practice and use the skill).

Those who may be effective in teaching skills are the crew mentors, instructors, officers, Advisors, and members of the crew committee.

Whenever possible, crew skills instructions should be divided into three levels:

- Basic Inventing skills instruction for the new Scouts
- Advanced instruction for the experienced Scouts
- Expert instruction for the Venture Team

Each instructional area should be separated from the others so there are no distractions.

#### **Team Meetings (5 to 20 minutes)**

End skills instruction on time and ask Teams to go their Team areas for their Team meeting. Team leaders will take charge of the Teams.

Matters to be dealt with during a Team meeting include taking attendance, collecting dues, planning the Team's involvement in upcoming crew activities, selecting menus for hikes and campouts, assigning Team members to specific tasks, and working out any other details for the smooth operation of the Team.

Circulate among the Team meetings and be ready to serve as a resource if a Team leader asks for your assistance. If you notice that Teams have completed their work, call the Teams back together and move on to the next part of the crew meeting.

#### **InterTeam Activity (15 to 20 minutes)**

You or someone appointed by you can lead this opportunity for the Teams to interact with one another in a competitive or cooperative effort. The activity might be a creative challenge that will test the skills the Scouts are.

#### **Closing**

The closing of a meeting is the Advisor's opportunity to step forward. Ask everyone to sit quietly, then turn the meeting over to the Advisor for reminders and announcements about upcoming events, and support of the Teams for their achievements and progress.

#### **The "After the Meeting" Meeting (5 minutes)**

Ask members of the Team leaders' council to stay a few moments after the closing to discuss with you and the Advisor the quality of the just-concluded meeting. Offer praise for portions of the meeting that went well, and talk about ways that future crew meetings can be improved. Make a few written notes so that suggestions can be explored more fully at the next Team leader's council meeting.

Here are some questions to ask:

- What should we start doing that would make the meeting better?
- What should we stop doing that didn't work for us or got in the way?
- What should we continue doing that worked well for us? This is an important question because it helps us identify our strengths.

Finally, review the crew meeting plan for the next meeting and make sure that everyone who will have a role is aware of the assignment and is prepared to do a good job.

While the Team leader's council is reviewing the meeting, the service Team can put away crew gear and return the meeting room to order.