

Senior Patrol Leader

Introduction

Congratulations on being elected SPL! In order to reach this point, you have attended Bighorn, received the approval of the Scoutmaster, and been voted a leader in your troop by your peers. This is an important accomplishment and not one to be trivialized. At the same time, this comes with responsibilities and tasks to be completed. As the leader of Troop 794, you will represent the troop and should do so with honor. Take pride in your daily tasks, and be a role model for all those who look up to you.

Early Term

When starting your term, you may find it helpful to rely on more experienced senior scouts. It may be helpful to contact the previous SPL or assign a senior scout as your ASPL. Use this guide, in conjunction with the PLC Guide, as a resource. You may also want to draw up a list of term aspirations to refer back to throughout your tenure. Your team will be your most vital asset, and so do not hesitate to use them. If possible, set up an easy means of communication between your leadership team, such as a group text. This position will be overwhelming at first, but that's OK. As time goes on, you will settle into your role and grow to become a natural leader. However, this won't happen overnight. Know your limits and rely on those you trust—they're there for you.

Responsibilities

From the PLC Guide:

Senior Patrol Leader

The senior patrol leader is the top leader of the troop. He is responsible for the troop's overall operation. With guidance from the Scoutmaster, he takes charge of troop meetings, of the patrol leaders' council, and of all troop activities, and he does everything he can to help each patrol be successful. He is responsible for annual program planning conferences and assists the Scoutmaster in conducting troop leadership training. The senior patrol leader presides over the patrol leaders' council and works closely with each patrol leader to plan troop meetings and make arrangements for troop activities.

- Is in contact with the Scoutmaster by phone on Sunday evenings
- Has communicated with all Patrol Leaders no later than the Monday before a meeting
- Has written plan of what is to be accomplished at each troop meeting
- Makes sure enough is planned that there is no down time

- Makes sure all scouts are participating in either the troop activity, merit badge work, etc. including all ranks during the meeting.
- Makes an account of what is going on during scout meetings
- Sends Troop emails by the Sunday before the meeting on Thursday
- Checks with the scout who is leading the meeting by the Monday before Thursday
- Assigns Patrols to Color Guard duty
- He is responsible for a prayer at the beginning of the PLC

Is in contact with the Scoutmaster by phone on Sunday evenings:

Each week, the SPL is expected to meet with the current Scoutmaster and discuss the upcoming week's meeting and the next several meetings. This can be at whichever time the Scoutmaster and SPL find convenient for the both of them. This is also a good time to bring up any concerns the SPL or Scoutmaster has. Finally, there should be a clear and accessible method of communication between the SPL and Scoutmaster at all times. This can be through iMessage, GroupMe, Slack, or any other method of communication that is convenient for the both of them and will bring a rapid response.

Has communicated with all Patrol Leaders no later than the Monday before a meeting:

Every patrol leader (and ASPL) needs to be aware of the upcoming meeting's topic. In addition to this, each patrol leader/ASPL should be prepared for the patrol meeting segment of the weekly troop meeting.

Has written plan of what is to be accomplished at each troop meeting:

The SPL should communicate with the leader of each week's meeting at least 3 weeks in advance. Anything involving adults may need more than this. This requires each PLC to plan a minimum of the upcoming month's meetings. I've found that 2 months is better. A workable plan should be sent to the SPL no later than 2 weeks before the meeting. This allows for the SPL and Scoutmaster to approve or deny the meeting plan and allows the meeting leader to easily delegate to another leader if a last-minute change occurs.

Makes sure enough is planned that there is no down time:

This can and should be delegated to the meeting leader or patrol leaders. Any extra time should not be used for games, but instead can be used for patrol-based requirement needs.

Makes sure all scouts are participating in either the troop activity, merit badge work, etc. including all ranks during the meeting:

This is key- all scouts need to be engaged. If needed, separate scouts who are causing problems. Don't do this publicly- on the contrary, quietly separate troublemakers so as not to cause a scene. If further problems arise, pull the scout away from their friends and talk individually. If this does not work, talk to the Scoutmaster or the scout's parents. Also, it is imperative that Life and Eagle scouts are engaged. Consider hosting older scout campouts to keep people engaged within the troop, and reach out to senior scouts on a consistent basis. Mentorship programs can also be helpful.

Makes an account of what is going on during scout meetings:

This can be verbal. I recommend meeting with your ASPLs after the meeting and reviewing successes and failures of that particular meeting. In addition, make sure that attendance has been recorded by the Scribe.

Sends troop emails by the Sunday before the meeting on Thursday:

Communication is arguably the most important responsibility of the SPL. When sending troop or PLC emails, make sure to overcommunicate. Repeat information, but also keep the email clear and concise. It is also important to check your inbox frequently, as you will get many emails and should respond promptly to them. Consistency may help, and so below I have included a sample email template.

Hello all-

This week will be a (meeting name or topic) at 7PM at Mission Hills led by (meeting leader's name). You should bring (items) to this meeting as you will need them for (activity). Note that (any other relevant details). This meeting will fulfill (requirement [if applicable]). The patrol responsible for this week's flags is (patrol name).

(Include any relevant PLC information here)

Last weekend (date) was the (campout name) campout! Thanks to (AIC and SIC) for making this campout a reality. Registration for the next (campout name) can be found (here).

Sincerely,

(SPL)

Checks with the scout who is leading the meeting by the Monday before Thursday:

Although covered previously (see [Has Written Plan](#)), planning is important, as it makes a meeting run smoothly. Confirm that a scout can be present and lead a meeting, and that nothing will prevent this from occurring. Be generous with timing, since many things will take longer than you expect. Also make sure a written plan is in place and can be handed off to another scout easily. Finally, all patrol leaders should attend every meeting. If they cannot, another patrol member (preferably their assistant patrol leader) must be delegated.

Assigns patrols to Color Guard duty:

Each patrol leader should have four members of his patrol present and prepared to present the colors. This may require advance notice, so consider including it in your email or discussing it at the PLC. These scouts should have a clear understanding of how flags work and perform the

ceremony with the respect the flags deserve. In addition, each flag ceremony should start promptly at 7, with no exceptions. This requires sending scouts to retrieve the flag at least 10 minutes prior to the flag ceremony. Patrol flags should also be present and lined up in front of where each patrol is standing.

He is responsible for a prayer at the beginning of the PLC:

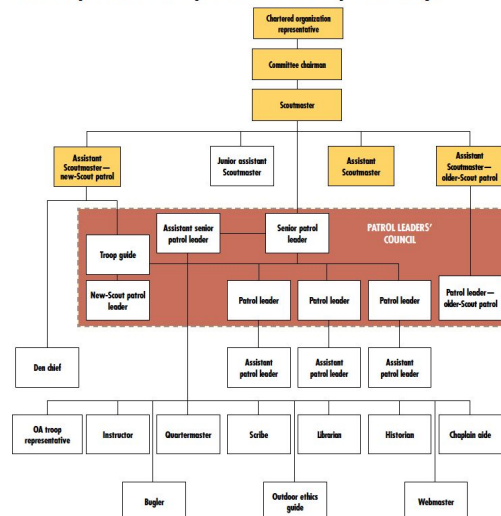
Although this has historically been the SPL's duty, it can be delegated to the Chaplain's Aide when necessary. However, make sure that we are conserving the standard of a Christian troop and observing all respects due thereof.

Troop Hierarchy

It may be helpful to make sure each member of the PLC is aware of how the troop hierarchy functions. An image is attached below.

SAMPLE YOUTH LEADER ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR A LARGE TROOP

In this sample, there are enough members to fill all of the patrols and positions of responsibility.



Additional Responsibilities

Outings

Although the SPL rarely acts as the SIC for an outing during his term, the SIC (and occasionally the AIC) will rely on you during outings. You will certainly have free time, but expect people to ask you questions and for your advice. Now that you are a senior scout, people will come to you with problems, regardless of when or where. You should listen to them and direct them to the appropriate leader.

ILST

One of your first responsibilities as SPL will be to lead ILST. The primary objective of this weekend will be to educate your PLC as to how they should lead and what really matters during their term. Materials from Bighorn can and should be used. You should work in conjunction with your ASPLs, the JASM (if applicable), and the Scoutmaster to lead this outing. The primary responsibility, however, will be on you. Below I have included a sample ILST itinerary. Note that this should be customized based on what you plan to accomplish during your term.

Setup camp as a patrol
Icebreaker
State of the Troop (build excitement!)
30 minute skit, song, yell
Campfire
Cracker Barrel (maybe coincident)

Move by patrol to training room
Breakfast @ training room or outside
What is a Patrol and Why is it important? (Identity)
Patrol Operations & expectations
Team building patrol activity (mousetrap/blindfold) (bucket game)
Plan Patrol meeting activities for 4 meetings (yell, flag, name, campfire, get to know you, teambuilding, "forming" activities, some advancement)

Lunch

Positions and Expectations
Types of leadership
More planning for first month of term
Leadership game
Storming/Forming/Norming/Performing & Activities
Games & PLC Yell & PLC Name
Break (plan campfire)
model PLC Meeting
Dinner

Campfire

Breakfast
Break camp
Worship (10:10)
Rose/Bud/Thorn
Depart 11:00

PLCs

The SPL is responsible for overseeing all PLCs, and should guide the meeting. He may want to appoint an ASPL to take notes on the whiteboard. Each PLC should convene precisely at 6PM, opened by prayer. Have each patrol leader give their patrol reports. You then should review the

upcoming month's meetings, confirming that each meeting leader is ready. Finally, you should plan at least the next month of meetings, although two months may be more helpful. It may be helpful to ask each scout to come with meeting ideas, as this has historically been difficult.

ASPLs

Your Assistant Senior Patrol Leaders are your most valuable resource during this time. They should be approximately equal in rank to a patrol leader, and can help you in your absence (which should be rare). I recommend allowing each ASPL to lead a meeting and give the SSM (in the role of the SPL) at least once, because that will allow them to gain valuable leadership experience.

Senior Scout Minute

The Senior Scout Minute (SSM) should be given after announcements and before the Scoutmaster Minute. Good topics to include are points of the Scout Oath and Law, as well as poems and hymns. The SSM should be no longer than 5 minutes and more than 1 minute. This is a great opportunity to improve public speaking skills.

Mentorship

It may be helpful to institute a mentorship program. This will keep older scouts engaged and allow younger scouts to advance more rapidly in rank. If the prior SPL has instituted a program, make sure to reach out to them and continue whatever program is currently in existence.

Conclusion

Your term as SPL may seem daunting, but you will grow into the role. By the end of your term, people will rely on you and you will have mastered the leadership ability. Have faith that you will adjust, and enjoy the time you have in your position. It will go by quickly. Take pride in your accomplishments- leadership can be fun! With hard work and close attention to your tasks, you can complete your term as a successful SPL. Happy trails!