WOODLANDS TRAIL LEADER GUIDE

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2017 Digital Edition

FORWARD

There's a cry rising in the hearts of men and women across this country. It comes from a deep place that recognizes there is a virtual war on boys.

Politically-correct messaging challenges thousands of years of biologically-evident differences between boys and girls. Any aware parent can tell you boys are different.

Meanwhile, our social systems are designed for girls. The "sit down, be still, listen" demands of our organized gatherings suffocate the "wild at heart" strengths of a boy.

We know boys come with their challenges. Proverbs 14:4 reminds us, "Where no oxen are, the trough is clean," and ministry to boys can be messy! But the rest of the verse says, "… But much increase comes by the strength of an ox."

Our sincere hope is that the principles, guidelines, and heart of the mission of Trail Life USA inspire you to let boys be boys. And that the operation of the program on a Troop level allows them to be all God created them to be … strong (in spirit, soul, and body) as an ox.

While we recognize rules, structure, and boundaries are essential to social interaction, we would pray you make room for the innate wildness and desire for adventure that is present in every boy.

Parents love the character and leadership opportunities the Trail Life presents. Thank you, Leader, for making sure the adventure and fun keeps the boys coming back.

Walk Worthy,



Mark Hancock, CEO Trail Life USA

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A FIRM FOUNDATION

Trail Life USA is an exciting outdoor youth development organization steeped in the values and priorities of the Christian faith. It is dedicated to a mission "... to guide generations of courageous young men to honor God, lead with integrity, serve others, and experience outdoor adventure."

The influencing concepts behind Trail Life USA are not new ideas.

In the opening decade of the 20th Century, British General Robert Baden-Powell pondered how to use his fame as the Hero of Mafeking to inspire English boys to be prepared to face life with a can-do attitude of self-reliance, courage, and honor. Lord Baden-Powell consulted with two great leaders in youth development: Ernest Thompson Seton of the Woodcraft Indians, and Daniel Carter Beard of the Sons of Daniel Boone.

The most important result of this collaboration was the idea of utilizing certain classical aims and methods to help boys forge through adventures, fun, and inspiration into manhood.

The problem was, Baden-Powell's approach relied heavily on society to help supply the single most important attribute of maturity—spiritual development.

In failing to found the movement on the solid rock of God's revealed word, it was left resting solely on the shifting sands of popular culture. In the opening decade of the 21st Century Baden-Powell's movement was influenced by growing opposition to its conservative course and, without the Solid Rock of Christ, the movement succumbed to cultural winds and tides and drifted off course.

The need to specifically include Christ rather than relying on a "define your own faith" model had been talked about for years. It was an idea waiting for a defining moment, a catalyst, a spark. In the spring of 2013 a spark ignited tinder that had been accumulating for some time.

CHAPTER I - GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Objectives

Review the Key Elements of Trail Life USA
Be Familiar with the Trail Life USA Core Values
Learn the Oath, Motto, Salute, and Handshake
Learn the Uniform Options
Understand Our Relationships with Family and the American Heritage Girls

Who We Are

We Are a Movement

A hiking and camping club is solely an organization: a group of people dedicated to an activity.

In addition to being an organization, Trail Life USA is also a movement, sprouted at the grassroots level by people dedicated to traditional and timeless biblical values.

No movement has ever enjoyed universal support and you will certainly meet people who oppose Trail Life USA. They enjoy the outdoors, but they don't understand our need to feature faith, values, and standards.

For us, Jesus is the answer—not only as our Savior, a teacher, an example, or even a healer, but also as the only begotten Son of God.

Although elements of program offerings will continue to evolve over the years, one thing will not change, and that is the revealed Word of God. It is to His glory we humbly dedicate this program. It will always be the standard of those who would "Walk Worthy."

The Essentials

There are a number of key elements that are foundational in Trail Life USA. Some are unique in raising a standard to carry the movement forward, ensuring our purpose for being, and establishing the tenets that preserve our rights to exist and carry out ministry in this particular way.

Our Mission

To guide generations of courageous young men to honor God, lead with integrity, serve others, and experience outdoor adventure.

Our Vision

To be the premier national character development organization for young men which produces godly and responsible husbands, fathers, and citizens.

Our Statements of Faith and Values

Trail Life USA is a Christ-centered outdoor adventure, leadership, and character development ministry. Within the operations of the local Troop, the primary statement/profession of Christian beliefs, faith, and/or doctrine is that belonging to the Charter Organization. As with any of its ministries, the Charter Organization should take steps to ensure the Troop appropriately reflects these beliefs. Furthermore, all Trail Life USA Charter Organizations and Registered Adult Members must concurrently adhere to the Christian principles stated in Trail Life USA's Statements of Faith and Values:

Statement of Faith

We believe there is One Triune God – God the Father; Jesus Christ, His one and only Son; and the Holy Spirit – Creator of the universe and eternally existent. We believe the Holy Scriptures (Old and New Testaments) to be the inspired and authoritative Word of God. We believe each person is created in His image for the purpose of communing with and worshiping God. We believe in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Who enables us to live godly lives. We believe each of us is called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We believe God calls us to lives of purity, service, stewardship and integrity.

The Statements of Faith and Values are designed to affirm the need for those in leadership to follow biblical standards. Leaders are held to a higher standard than those who are not in leadership and must agree to the tenets contained in the Statement. All adults in leadership roles—whether staff or volunteer at any level—must agree to sign and adhere to the Statement of Faith. Youth members are not required to sign this statement.

Statement of Values

We clearly define the following words in the Statement of Faith which are integral to the Trail Life:

Purity – God calls us to lives of holiness, being pure of heart, mind, word and deed. We are to reserve sexual activity for the sanctity of marriage, a lifelong commitment before God between a man and a woman.

Service – God calls us to become responsible members of our community and the world through selfless acts that contribute to the welfare of others.

Stewardship – God calls us to use our God-given time, talents, and money wisely.

Integrity – God calls us to live moral lives that demonstrate an inward motivation to do what is biblically right regardless of the cost.

Membership Standards

Membership in the program has both youth and adult elements. Youth membership in the program is open to all who meet the membership requirements, and is currently designed for biologically male children under the age of 18. The adult applicant must be at least 18 years of

age and subscribe to and abide by the Trail Life USA Statement of Christian Faith and Values as well as the Oath and Motto of the program. While the program is undergirded by Biblical values and unapologetically reflects a Christian worldview, there is also a clearly defined inclusion policy for youth. Accordingly, all boys are welcome irrespective of religion, race, national origin or socio-economic status. Our goal is for parents and families of every faith to be able to place their boys in a youth program that endeavors to provide moral consistency and ethical integrity in its adult leaders.
Charter partners own and operate local groups, selecting leaders and admitting members as they deem beneficial to their group and within the parameters of the national policy. The basis for the program's ethical and moral standards is found in the Bible. In terms of sexual identification and behavior, we affirm that any sexual activity outside the context of the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman is sinful before God and therefore inconsistent with the values and principles of the program. Within these limits, we grant membership to adults and youth who do not engage in or promote sexual immorality of any kind, or engage in behavior that would become a distraction to the mission of the program. We welcome boys whose parents are seeking a faith-based outdoor adventure program that places an emphasis on character development, leadership, and moral purity, and who aspire to live in accordance with the values expressed in the program's Oath and Creed.

Core Values

Our Core Values offer a perspective on why we do what we do. These values are upstream from every decision, policy, and program addition or element in Trail Life USA.

Click here to read our Core Values.

Trail Life USA Distinctives

Trailman Oath

On my honor,
I will do my best
to serve God and my country;
to respect authority;
to be a good steward of Creation;
and to treat others as I want to be treated.

Trailman Motto

Walk Worthy!

From Colossians I:I0 "... that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;..."

Trailman Law (Creed)

There is no Trailman Law or Creed outside of the Bible, the inspired and holy Word of God. Youth members are not required to accept Christianity, but they are expected to adhere to Christian standards of behavior.

The Trailman Sign



The Trailman sign is made with the right hand held open, palm forward, raising your right arm with your elbow at a right angle. It is raised when reciting the Trailman Oath, and also used as a sign to bring Trailmen to silence to focus on business at hand.

The Trailman Salute

The Trailman Salute is used by members in uniform[1], when:

- They recite the Pledge of Allegiance (stand at attention and face the flag)
- The flag passes in a parade, or ceremony (at the moment the flag passes, stand at attention facing the flag)
- While in a parade or procession, you pass a flag posted on a stage/podium erected for the event (continue moving forward, turning head so eyes are on the flag until you have passed)
- The flag is hoisted and lowered (the salute is held until the flag is unsnapped from the halyard or through the last note of the national anthem, whichever is longer)
- The national anthem is played or sung (stand at attention and hold the salute through the last note. The salute is directed to the flag, if displayed, otherwise to the music)
- The flag is retired at flag retirement ceremonies. (Men will remove hats when saluting, except for a uniform hat. Women do not have to remove head covering)



How to do a Proper Hand Salute

(from www.usarmystudyguide.com)

A proud, smart salute shows pride in yourself and your unit and that you are confident in your abilities as a soldier. A sloppy salute might mean that you're ashamed of your unit, lack confidence, or at the very least, that you haven't learned how to salute correctly.

[1] uniform – whatever official Trail Life USA uniform piece(s) is deemed appropriate for that activity by Troop Leadership.

In saluting, turn your head and eyes toward the person or flag you are saluting. Bring your hand up to the correct position in one, smart motion without any preparatory movement. When dropping the salute, bring your hand directly down to its natural position at your side, without slapping your leg or moving your hand out to the side. Any flourish in the salute is improper. The proper way to salute when wearing the beret or without headgear is to raise your right hand until the tip of your forefinger touches the outer edge of your right eyebrow (just above and to the right of your right eye). When wearing headgear, the forefinger touches the headgear slightly above and to the right of your right eye. Your fingers are together, straight, and your thumb snug along the hand in line with the fingers. Your hand, wrist, and forearm are straight, forming a straight line from your elbow to your fingertips. Your upper arm (elbow to shoulder) is horizontal to the ground.

The Trailman Handshake



The Trailman's handshake is like a regular right handed handshake, except that you reach further forward and grasp the other's wrist or forearm.

Uniforms

There are three distinct levels of uniforms within Trail Life USA.

It is preferred that youth and adult Trainmen wear the official Trail Life USA formal uniform (called the "Troop uniform") to all meetings, activities, and ceremonies. However, the Troop may prefer that youth and adults wear the Trail or Travel Uniforms. Handmade or locally produced uniforms are not permitted.

Trail Uniform



Woodlands Trail
Trail Uniform

An inexpensive t-shirt bearing the Trail Life USA logo and Troop Level insignia. The Trail uniform shirt is the least formal of the three uniform selections. It consists of the forest green Woodlands Trail T-shirt and Troop approved pants. As its name implies, this informal uniform is suitable for hiking, camping, service project or other outdoor event where comfort is key but Trailman identification is desired.



Woodlands Trail
Travel Uniform

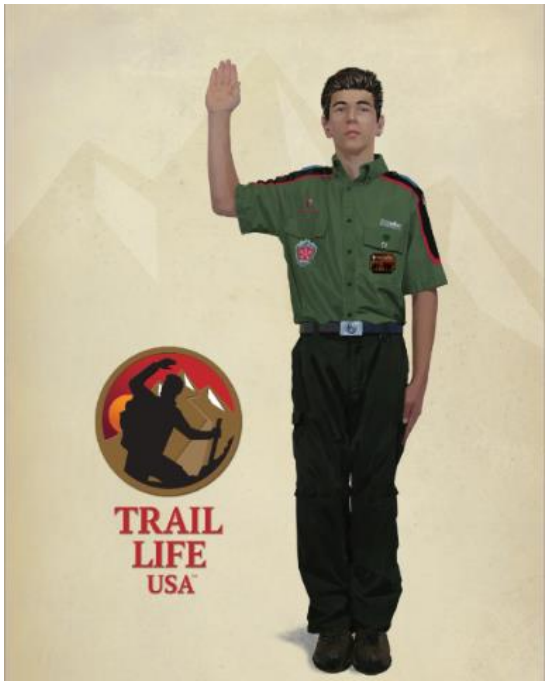
Travel Uniform

A nice polo for use in traveling or for wearing to Troop meetings. Embroidered with the Trail Life USA logo and bearing the Troop level insignia on the sleeve. The Travel uniform is more formal than the Trail uniform and is an option suitable for Troop or patrol travel, certain meetings, or events where the full Troop uniform is not desired or would be impractical.

Troop Uniform

A formal uniform for Troop meetings or formal dress occasions. This same uniform is used by all levels of Trailmen including male adults. The official Trail Life USA Troop Uniform is the preferred selection, is the most formal uniform and is designed to display Troop and other identifying information, as well as the rank and awards of the Trailman. It is suitable for Troop or Patrol meetings, leader meetings, award ceremonies, and fundraising.

All officially sanctioned uniforms, including options for women, are available at the online Trail Life USA store: [www.TrailLifeUSAstore.com.](http://www.TrailLifeUSAstore.com)



The Trail Life USA
Official *Troop Uniform*

There are standard uniform insignia guidelines that apply to any uniform insignia placement.



Slide the appropriate **Shoulder Loops** for your program / leadership position on to the shirt epaulette bars.

Sew the **Troop Numeral and State Patch** on the right shirt sleeve (1/4 in. below the shoulder seam). Troop and Numeral Patches can be purchased at www.embroideryondemand.com/trail-life-usa-patch/

Sew an optional **Denomination/ Faith Tradition Patch** on the left shirt sleeve just below the USA flag *(if available from your organization).*

Sew the **Mountain Lion Timberline Patch** centered above the left pocket.

Pin these to the left pocket flap:
- **Worthy Life Award**
- **Religious Recognition**

Sew **Vanguard Award Patch** to left flap.

Hang these patches from the right pocket flap button:
- **Woodlands Trail CURRENT LEVEL Branch Patch or Forest Award**
- **Navigators Rank**
- **Adventurers Award**

If desired, hang these patches from the left pocket flap button:
- **Previous Woodlands Trail Branch Patches or Forest Award**
- **Navigators/Adventurers Discipleship Program Participation Patches** *(ie. Manhood Journey and Band of Brothers, Faith Tradition Program)*
- **Trail Life Activity or Collected Patch**

Our Relationship with Families and the American Heritage Girls

Parents, Father-types, and Families in Trail Life

Trail Life USA recognizes the responsibilities and benefits of caring and engaged parents in the development of boys, particularly those of fathers and other male family members.

It is important that fathers and male Troop leaders support and show interest in a boy's participation in the Trail Life USA program. For families where fathers or other male role models are not present, male Troop leaders can serve as role models and mentors for boys as they grow into young men. The 'father-type' is a powerful role in Trail Life USA and, perhaps, one of the greatest opportunities to impact a boy's life.

Trail Life USA is specifically a Christian organization with Christian leaders believing in a Triune God and operating within a Biblical worldview.

Some fathers may not be ready to take the step to become a Registered Adult and sign the Statements of Faith and Values but they can still attend meetings or events with their sons. If they intend to regularly attend meetings or take active part in the camping program they will need to, at a minimum, read and sign Trail Life USA's Child Safety and Youth Protection Policy to ensure their compliance with appropriate youth interactions. The Charter Organization may also decide to have them submit to a background check. However, only duly Registered Adults may hold leadership positions, serve in a leadership position, provide two-deep leadership, and deliver the program as a recognized Christian mentor to the youth.

The Charter Organization Representative should ensure that there are open avenues of communication with Troop families, not only about Troop activities, but also about activities of the church or organization that would be of value to families as they develop their relationship with the Troop.

Relationship with the American Heritage Girls

The American Heritage Girls (AHG) was formed over two decades ago to offer a Christ-centered leadership development program to build character and moral values in young women. AHG has recognized the shared values and goals of Trail Life USA and has provided tremendous assistance to help in its formation.



The American Heritage Girls and Trail Life USA signed a Memorandum of Ministry Alliance, the highest form of relationship for each organization, in June 2015.

While Trail Life USA (TLUSA) and American Heritage Girls are separate organizations with differing operational policies, local

churches are encouraged to operate Trail Life USA Troops side-by-side with American Heritage Girls Troops.

As more families have members in both programs at the same location, it will naturally lead to cooperative scheduling of meetings and activities. Many churches will have their TLUSA and AHG Troop meetings on the same night so families can use that night to meet at the church with all of their children to provide a church-based, family-oriented, Christ-centered program. Some churches that charter both TLUSA and AHG Troops may decide to share a common opening ceremony at these meetings before they go to their separate areas of the building.

While collaborating on activities, it is required that both the TLUSA Leaders and Members and the AHG Leaders and Members fully adhere to the rules and regulations of their respective organizations. For example, each group must supply their own registered leadership, and the different camping rules and regulations of each group must be observed and respected. Troops can find out more about the American Heritage Girls at www.AmericanHeritageGirls.org.

CHAPTER 2 - ORGANIZATION

Objectives

Get the Big Picture of how Trail Life USA is Organized
Understand Age Restrictions in Leadership and Leader Identification Absolutes
Review Common Terms and Phrases in the Organizational Field of TLUSA
See the Relationship between Area, Regional, and National Leadership
Understand How to Utilize Levels of Troop Support

Organization Overview

A Troop is a locally chartered, locally owned body of Trail Life USA, usually belonging to a church or religious organization that delivers the program directly to boys (Trailmen).

See How a Troop is Chartered and Operates.

Units

Units are the age-specific program divisions of a Troop that meet the changing needs of growing boys.



A **Woodlands Trail** unit serves boys from Kindergarten through fifth grade. Age Groups are subdivisions of the Woodlands Trail unit; Foxes (K-Ist grade), Hawks (2nd-3rd grade), and Mountain Lions (4th-5th grade). Age Groups are important because Woodlands Trailmen grow rapidly in mind and body and the program grows with them. The program emphasis is *Knowledge*.



A **Navigators** unit offers greater challenge and independence to boys from sixth through eighth grade. This three-year outdoor program teaches boys the basics of the patrol method, hiking, and camping. The program emphasis is *Understanding*.



An **Adventurers** unit recognizes the increasing maturity and leadership skills of young men from ninth grade until their eighteenth birthday. This program builds on the self-reliance and outdoor skills learned in Navigators, giving boys more independence and more opportunities to customize the outdoor program. The program emphasis is *Wisdom*.



Guidon (Ages I8-25): This developing eight-year co-ed program is for young Christian adults who want to engage in travel, high-adventure activities, and events, while holding each other to a higher level of spiritual accountability. A separate document is available for Guidon participants. Guidon members in the I8 to 25-year-old young adults' program must be Registered Adults in Trail Life USA, and therefore must be professing Christians that sign and agree to abide by our Christian Statement of Faith and Values, complete Child Safety and Youth Protection Training, and COR and Home Office approval. The program emphasis is *Life*.

Trail Life USA Common Terms and Phrases

Here are helpful terms and descriptions for understanding Troop structure:

Charter Organization (CO):

A Christian Church or Christian Organization established as a legal entity with a Statement of Faith and Values which agrees with that of Trail Life USA, and recognizes the Troop as a youth service or outreach ministry. It is our desire that the Charter Organization be actively engaged in the Troop by keeping the charter current and remaining engaged and aware of Troop activities and functions. Our hope is that the Charter Organization would not just allow the Troop to meet in one of the rooms at the facility, but would view it as an active outreach ministry of the Charter Organization.

The Institutional Head (IH):

The highest authority in the CO (for example, the Senior Pastor/Priest of a church/parish). He approves the existence of a Trail Life Troop and ensures it is an active ministry of the organization (usually a church). He understands the mission and policies of Trail Life USA. He appoints or serves as the Charter Organization Representative (COR).

Charter Organization Representative (COR):

The COR is appointed by the Pastor or Institutional Head of the CO to represent the CO to the Troop and the Troop to the CO. The COR helps manage the relationship between the Troop and the CO and reviews and approves all members on behalf of the CO. He or she is also the voting member of the Troop, representing the Troop in matters of national interest. The COR is an active member of the Troop involved in week-to-week operations.

Registered Adults (RA):

These are all adult members of Trail Life USA, meaning they are currently registered, sign, agree with, and will abide by the Trail Life USA Statement of Faith and Values, have passed a criminal background check and subsequent checks as mandated, and have successfully completed and are current in Child Safety and Youth Protection Training offered by Trail Life USA. We encourage all parents to become Registered Adults so they can assist with the program and fully enjoy their son's participation. All members over 18 years of age are Registered Adults. Many will fill other roles, too.

Registered Adult Leaders:

These are Registered Adults who have committee or direct contact roles with the boys through the Trail Life USA program. These adults not only lead and instruct, they are role models of mature Christianity. All Registered Adult Leaders at the Troop, Area, Regional, and National levels must be at least 21 years of age, with the following exceptions: Trail Guides can be 18-20 years-old and qualify for two-deep leadership (explained later) only when the other leader is 21 or older (25 on outings).

Trailmen:

Although this term initially referred only to duly registered boys who agree to live by the Trailman Oath and Trailman Motto, it is neither incorrect or unusual to hear or use the term to refer to all male members, no matter their age. Trailmen who earn the Freedom Award are referred to as Rangemen.

Troop Level Leadership:

Make no mistake about it, the Troop is where the Trail Life is lived, and local leaders are its back-bone. The positions required for initial chartering of a Troop are the Charter Organization Representative, Committee Chair, Treasurer, Chaplain, and Troopmaster. Here are helpful descriptions of the various leadership positions. Link

A Troop is a small community. As a member of this community, you will contribute to its success. As you work with these people, they will become very important to you. The more deeply this sense of community brings you together, the more you will experience the benefits of the Trail Life.

Woodlands Trail leaders would ideally make a two-year commitment. The Troopmaster and the heads of each unit (Ranger, Trailmaster, and Advisor) would have only one job within the Troop, though you may combine positions if required.

Troop Contact Leaders:

Troopmaster: oversees the leadership of the entire K-I2 program
Ranger: oversees the K-5th grade Woodlands Trail program
Trailmaster: oversees the 6th-8th grade Navigators program
Advisor: oversees the 9th-I2th grade Adventurers program
Guidon Coach: serves the I8-25 years-old Guidon Program
Trail Guides: serve under Rangers, Trailmasters, Advisors, and Coaches to assist with program delivery to patrols.

Troop Committee:

The Troop's governing board is a committee composed of Registered Adults. Required positions include the Charter Organization Representative, the Committee Chair, the Treasurer, the Chaplain, and the Troopmaster. Additional members may serve as coordinators for Camping, Advancement, Training, Community Service, Membership, etc. but are not required. A fully functional Troop Committee handles the tasks of Troop business and support functions so the direct contact Registered Adult Program Leaders can focus on the program delivery to the boys.

Why a Troop Committee?

The Troop Committee supports the work of direct contact leaders by stewardship of Troop equipment and funds, managing business affairs, ensuring that trained leadership and adequate facilities are provided, and administering advancement. The more Troop Committee

members know about the general working of the Troop, the better. This is particularly true for an Advancement, Equipment, or Activities Chair.

Adult and Leader Identification

All Registered Adults and Registered Adult Leaders are required to wear a Member ID, received on initial registration and annually when renewing their membership. It is critical to the safety of our boys that they wear this lanyard and Member ID, which identifies them as a qualified, trained, and background-checked adult. The other leaders, boys, and visiting parents must know who qualifies for two-deep leadership. The ID is not valid without the COR's signature. Members should not delay in obtaining their signature after receiving their ID.

Haven't received a lanyard? Contact your Troop leadership to obtain one.

The recruitment of leaders is one of the greatest functions of the Troop Committee, with the COR carrying the highest responsibility for providing effective leaders. Here is a document that offers a proven strategy for recruitment. Link

Contact Positions for the Woodlands Trail

Ranger: (male)

The Ranger is the team leader of Woodlands Trail Trail Guides. The smart Ranger recruits good Trail Guides and delegates responsibilities to involve a wide range of talent and experience, and to keep from becoming overwhelmed. How the Trail Guides are deployed depends a lot on circumstances but, in general, Woodlands Trailmen will benefit from having good Trail Guides assigned to each Patrol. Trail Guides may also be used as experts in various skill areas.

The Position

The Ranger's leader is the Troopmaster. He relies on the Ranger to manage the Woodlands Trail Program and to be the officer in charge after dismissal to programs.

His Major Focus

The Ranger's program efforts keep the Trail Guides inspired and inspiring. The Trailmen in the Woodlands Trail will thrive because he sets the right tone with the leaders by being supportive, encouraging, and resourceful.

Trail Guide: (Male or female. Recommended male for Mountain Lion Patrol)

Trail Guides are the hands-on leaders at the Woodlands Trail level. The Troop will usually have many Woodlands Trail Guides. They oversee a particular age-group patrol and are responsible for all management of the advancement of their patrol. A good Trail Guide keeps his Ranger informed of patrol activities and issues and works with other Trail Guide to plan Woodlands Trail level activities.

The Position

Trail Guides assist the Woodlands Trail Ranger. Depending on circumstances, they may be assigned to a particular patrol or to teach a particular skill to all patrols. They may have an ongoing job assignment or they may simply go where needed. They have the most direct contact with youth, and that makes their job very rewarding and very challenging.

Their Major Focus

Trail Guides keep the program fun and engaging. They select and prepare for delivering the Meeting Plan according to the provided plans or by creating their own within the guidelines. Working with their team, they develop a calendar that allows for timely completion of the Branches as well as Hit the Trail! outings. Working with the Ranger, they help keep the parents informed and the boys smiling!

Area and Regional Level Leadership

Beyond the local Troop level of volunteers are Area and Regional leaders.

Area Leadership

All Troops are part of a local administrative zone called an "Area." Areas vary in size. They may be only one county in densely-populated places, but larger in rural places, where there is less population density or TLUSA participation. The purpose of Area leadership is to provide support, direction, and encouragement for local Charter Organizations and their Troops. Area volunteers are the local go-to resources for all things TLUSA.

Areas coordinate events like multi-Troop campouts, monthly Trail Gatherings (also called Leader "Roundtables"), Summer Adventures, and in-person Leader Training courses such as EQUIP or EquipYouth. Areas provide direction to help Troops plan calendars, develop budgets, and much more. Area leaders are full of ideas to help Troops thrive! See Resources Your Area Team Provides here!

Area Point Man (PM):

The Point Man serves as the volunteer administrator, mentoring a team of volunteers who make up the Area Committee (also known as the Area Team). As Chairman, he recruits and mentors these volunteers and facilitates and oversees the operations of the Area. Point Men are guided and mentored by their Regional Team Leader.

Direct Service Advisor (DSA):

Area DSAs are members of the Area Service Committee. They are experienced former Troop Leaders who coach and mentor current Troop leaders, visit Troop meetings, and provide resources and direction to help Troops thrive.

New Troop Organizer (NTO):

The NTOs purpose is to approach and advise potential Charter Organizations to form new, healthy Troops in the Area after which they pass off regular support to a DSA.

Power Team 3 (PT3)

The PT3 is the combined services of three essential Area Team members: the Point Man, the Direct Service Advisor, and the New Troop Organizer. PT3's, when properly formed and recognized by the Home Office, increase the potential impact of Trail Life USA on boys, families, and communities.

Regional Leadership

Areas get support from 6 volunteer Regional Team Leaders (RTLs) covering 6 regions of the country. They guide, mentor, and administrate a Regional Committee of volunteers, as well as provide support to the Area Teams.

Regional leadership may coordinate regional events for Trailmen to attend, but their purpose is to link together the organizational and programmatic portions of Trail Life USA across large parts of the country, and to understand and act upon issues of regional significance. They accomplish this by supporting and seeking assistance from both the Home Office and Area leadership teams to promote and deliver a quality program.

National Level Leadership

Trail Life's Home Office, with a small staff by design, provides the organizational support needed to carry out the Vision and Mission of Trail Life USA. Business and departmental functions are coordinated by full-time staff under the direction of the Board of Directors and National Advisory Council and alongside volunteers.

The organizational structure was designed with an emphasis on servant leadership, delivered by volunteers, with the national (Home Office) level providing strategies, policies, governance, uniforms, merchandise, publications, information, training, and communications.

The Regional Field Service Coordinator is a full-time staff member that supports the Regional Team Leaders and all regional operations (including developing Areas).

Levels of Troop Support

One of our 15 Core Values is "Volunteer-Driven." Volunteers are the lifeblood of Trail Life USA. Our support system, therefore, is delivered by trained, knowledgeable, qualified volunteers. Here are the levels of Troop Leader Support for Trail Life USA. Challenge yourself to find the resource you need before moving on to the next level!

1. **Yourself**. Become educated on everything...then lead others who need help to the same information!

2. **Online resources.** Read through the immense information available online through resources like JoinTheTrail.com and TrailLifeConnect.com. You can also access information at the Trail Life USA website including the FAQ and a member-only Facebook Forum.

3. **Other Leaders in your Troop.** Ask other Leaders in your Troop who may know the answer.

4. **Other Leaders in nearby Troops.** Find them on the Troop Locator located at the Trail Life USA website or attend your local Area monthly Trail Leaders' gathering for ongoing leader training and information updates. If your Area has not started these monthly meetings yet, find your Point Man on the Point Man Locator—same graph as the Troop Locator—and work together to initiate a monthly Trail Leader gathering.

5. **Your Troop's Direct Service Advisor.** One has been assigned to be your Troop's helper—a Coach or Guide for your Leaders.

6. **Area Team specialist.** Experienced volunteers who deal with questions on Advancement, Camping, Activities, Finances, Public Relations, and Community Service. These area Leaders are close enough to spend the needed time to work with you.

7. **Point Man.** If you do not know who the Direct Service Advisor or specific Area Team member you need is, your Point Man can connect you with them. Find your Point Man on the Point Man Locator at TrailLifeUSA.com.

8. **Regional Team Leader.** Providing oversight, encouragement, and direction to Point Men, our six Team Leaders at this level are also volunteers. They are successful Point Men who are committed to helping further our mission and grow Trail Life USA.

If none of the resources listed in the steps above can provide the needed help (which is quite unlikely!), your Regional Team Leader will connect with the Home Office and get the information back to you right away.

CHAPTER 3 – THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE FUN

Objectives

See God in the Philosophy behind the Woodlands Trail
Learn How a Typical Troop Meeting Works Best
Understanding that Learning Can be Fun
Ideas for Planning Your Program Year
Being Familiar with Important Behavior Policies
Knowing How We Maintain Mission Focus
Knowing How We Address Sin with Youth

The Woodlands Trail Philosophy

You are starting an exciting new journey. With your Trail Life Troop, you'll enjoy outdoor adventure, leadership opportunity, and fellowship in a robust yet flexible program built on the enduring foundation of God's Word. Woodlands Trail is where the youngest members start their trek.

This program was developed with four goals: First, it values personal growth over recognitions. Second, it creates a sense of belonging and familiarity among all Woodlands Trail age groups, so that a young boy joining the program at the kindergarten level will understand the concepts that prepare him for the Navigators and Adventurers programs ahead. Third, it allows younger boys to benefit from the experience of older youth while giving more mature boys a chance to become mentors. Finally, it is easy to administer under a variety of circumstances.

As he moves forward through his Woodlands Trail years, a Trailman conveys his thoughts and feelings with more sophistication and his social skills broaden and deepen.

Physically, he is growing more coordinated as well as taller. As he develops new abilities he wants to try them out. Unfortunately, his body and mind will not always mature at the same rate. He may be physically ready for tasks requiring more mental maturity and intellectually ready to bite off more than he can chew. In fact, boys not only grow mentally and physically, they also grow emotionally and morally, all at different rates as compared to other boys their age.

One of the main reasons for having a "younger boy program" such as Woodlands Trail is a subtle but important difference in the way Woodlands Trailmen organize and use what they have learned. These differences are a part of the growing process and they operate the same whether it's a boy raised in a Masai village, a Norwegian port, or an apartment in Manhattan.

Without delving into advanced educational psychology, you will notice how your Foxes, Hawks, and Mountain Lions describe complex ideas like "faith" or "patriotism" as a list of things and behaviors. Ask a boy what makes him a good citizen and he will recite a litany of patriotic behaviors like serving in the armed forces, respecting the flag, and obeying the laws.

Once he crosses into the Navigators and Adventurers his answers will involve more abstract values like community building, fostering goodwill, and securing human rights.

Why This Matters

The Woodlands Trail program was designed with the characteristics of younger boys in mind. When you see the pattern, it will help guide you through reacting to unique situations you will encounter. Here are some unique characteristics to boys on the Woodlands Trail that will help you structure your meetings:

Attention Span: Younger boys will have shorter attention spans. Woodlands Trail activities should be fast-paced, layered, and present information in small bites. Patrol activities give boys a variety of things to do. If you are going to teach a skill, bring more than one kit if practical and see if you can have more than one instructor working at a time.

Learning by Doing: Woodlands Trailmen always prefer a demonstration to a presentation, and a presentation to a lecture.

Consistency: While meetings present new ideas, they have a predictable structure. They help the boy quickly get into the right mindset. Consistent meeting structure, rules of good behavior, and creative approaches to solving problems keep your patrol meetings on track.

Adult Leadership: It is desirable to have the boys help with setting up and winding down meetings. Still boys this age need adult leaders who make decisions rather than merely mentoring. The most effective adult leaders always listen to ideas and opinions from the boys.

Parental Involvement: The Woodlands Trail Program works more closely with parents—even those who are not Registered Adult Leaders—than older boy programs. The success of your patrol will depend somewhat on how invested the parents are in the ideas and ideals of Trail Life. Behind every successful Fox, Hawk, or Mountain Lion is a parent or guardian who sees the importance of what you do and how you do it.

Together and Apart: Trail Life Troops foster a community of boys of widely differing ages and capabilities, but it also provides a place where boys primarily interact with other Trailmen their age.

Play vs. Adventure: Woodlands Trailmen incorporate more play and fantasy into outdoor adventure than older boys. They are more prone to respond to morality tales, games, imagination, arts and crafts, and song.

Degree of Challenge: There is a sweet spot between boredom and frustration where a boy is most engaged by an activity or a skill. They progress most quickly when they are “in the zone." Since this differs from boy to boy, skill to skill, or meeting to meeting, you need to look for signs of boredom or frustration, treating each boy as an individual rather than simply a member of an age group. Be ready and willing to progress further than expected or to accomplish less to keep boys in the zone.

Role of Nature: You would expect a program named “Woodlands Trail” to have an excellent outdoor experience, and you’d be right. The actual “boots on the ground” experiences with Woodlands Trailmen differs in some ways to those of older boys in Navigators and Adventurers Patrols. Some of those differences are due to differences in physical strength and ability, but others are wrapped up in being a new human being in an ancient world, trying to take it all in and make sense of it.

Novelty Factor: Woodlands Trailmen are curious about the multitude of new experiences they see at each step. They are easily captivated by a bush covered with butterflies or an odd-looking bracket fungus on an old craggy tree.

Great in Small: Woodlands Trailmen need "ah!" moments. You can sit your fourteen-year-old down for a lecture on finding a good campsite, but your Hawk Trailman grasps big, complicated ideas best when broken down into small manageable bits. Don't miss the opportunity to expose impressionable young boys to the great ideas of nature and faith that can be represented in in small, teachable moments. Nature abounds with such things.

Permanence and Change: Woodlands Trailmen camp under the same moon that shone down on Davy Crockett, Admiral Byrd, and King David.

The things of man change year after year, and the smartphone you bought last year is already made obsolete by a new model before your device shows signs of wear.

Things of God in their depth and splendor are given continuity with certain eternal truths even as they constantly renew with the passage of seasons. Even as you look with longing at the next big phone or action camera, ancient promises made at the dawn of time are still being kept by God for you as they were kept for your grandfather and as they will be kept for your grandson. God's standards are his rule and his word is his bond.

The weather may be unpredictable, and so may God's answer to your prayers, but the same great forces are at work in both, and their wisdom and faithfulness endures forever.

Role of Arts and Crafts: Arts and crafts play a special role in Woodlands Trail. They help boys find new ways to express themselves, and they build confidence that, "Yes YOU can do this." The best arts and crafts are those that provide just the right amount of challenge to help boys grow in skill and confidence without frustrating them.

Role of Nurturing: It is greatly to be hoped that each Woodlands Trailman will have a good home life with strong family values, living faith, and good role models.

That may not be the case, and belonging to an extended Trail Life family may take on a whole new level of importance. The role model you set for him, the praise you give him, the attention you pay him and the kindness you show him may be his island of stability and warmth in an uncertain existence.

Role of Horizontal and Vertical Relationships: You surely want to have good vertical relationships with your boys as adult to child, but you also want the Trailmen to form vital horizontal relationships with other boys their age.

This is helped on somewhat by separating boys in their fastest years of change into three age groups. Foxes have much in common with other Foxes, as do Mountain Lions who hang out together and work on the same projects side by side. Between this horizontal and vertical framework come the relationship of role model to audience as older boys in Navigators and Adventurers meet together with Woodlands Trailmen at Troop meeting openers and some outdoor events.

Role of Group Dynamics: Boys naturally have more fun, learn more, and feel more deeply moved when they are exposed to new experiences with their friends around them. Woodlands Trailmen have a chance to enjoy the beauty and fun of nature with other boys their own age, a level of camaraderie they don't get in school where group experiences are usually about remembering dates, names, and multiples of seven.

These group experiences are very important at the moment, and their pleasant memories will be enjoyed many times in later life, and perhaps even reenacted with their own children.

Spiritual Evidence in the Outdoors: God has the house built by men that is called the local church.

He also has the house that He made that is called the world. And since God made the world, it is a truly marvelous house and a splendid place to sing and pray. Since man's first relationships with God were formed in the wilderness, it is not inappropriate or odd to experience Him outdoors. Thought should be given to ways to turn what could be distracting sights and sounds into an integral part of a message about His creation and His character.

In nature, the enduring standards God built into the framework of the world are most evident. It is these enduring standards that we must urgently promote and instill in our children.

The Order Behind the Chaos - Troop Meetings

The Trail Life USA program is designed to instill six basic values: teamwork, leadership, character, heritage, wisdom, and faith. As Trail Guides emphasize different values through the meeting plans, boys develop these values and learn how to live them daily, building a strong foundation to live as godly men.

Troop meetings may sometimes appear to be barely controlled anarchy to an outsider. In fact, there is order and pattern underlying the enthusiasm and spontaneity of youth.

Socially, Troops represent a balance between the need for age-specific programs and the need to keep different age boys together as a larger community where the older ones inspire the younger. Trail Life USA's unique charter program allows for a Troop to operate age-specific Unit Programs from the elementary to the college level.

How often does a Troop Meet?

With careful planning on the part of Troop Leaders, the Woodlands Trail program provides the flexibility to meet weekly or biweekly during the school year or to meet year-round.

What does a Meeting Looks Like?

Common Opening

The concept of the gathering of all boys at the Troop Opening Ceremony serves several functions:

- It helps create a new culture and sense of community by combining all boys.
- It allows older boys to mentor younger boys.
- It allows younger boys the opportunity to watch older boys as they take an active role in the program.
- It provides a platform for the dissemination of necessary information.
- It allows siblings and family to observe any interim award presentations.

- If the Troop meets with an American Heritage Girls Troop, it gives the Trailman the chance to operate alongside the girls in planning and the parents can see both programs in action.

The First Officer of the Adventurers or, in rare circumstances, the Troopmaster, should be responsible for planning and presiding over the Common Opening involving all Units of Trailmen. Because this is primarily a function of the older boys, who should enlist the help of younger Trailmen, the details on Troop Openings are found in the "Navigators and Adventurers Leader Guide."

The opening ceremony should be very brief to grant maximum time for Unit and patrol meetings and should always include posting the colors with all hands at attention, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, giving the Trailman Oath, and an invocation or opening prayer. How precisely this is carried out is left at the discretion of the planners, but it should be approved by the Troopmaster.

Branch Patches, Branch Pins, Sylvan Stars or other recognitions may be presented either during opening Announcements, during closing, or in the Patrol Breakout segment of the meeting.

Woodlands Trail Patrol Breakouts

Ideally, the Fox, Hawk, and Mountain Lion patrols will meet separately after any joint program activities. This allows them to get more individual attention directed at their age and maturity level.

Woodlands Trail Patrol meetings follow Trail Life USA Patrol Meeting Lesson Plans. These plans include directly or indirectly the "Six F's": *Fun, Focus, Fingers, Faith, Family,* and *Forest Badge*.

FUN: This portion allows a time where Trailmen can burn off some energy. This is the time of the meeting for the Trailmen to play games or participate in a physical activity.

FOCUS: The Focus portion of the patrol meeting is to provide an academic or instructional element. This is the emphasis of the patrol time together to lay a foundation that the other F's will build upon.

FINGERS: This portion offers an opportunity for the Trailmen to experience a project with "hands-on" learning. This is based from the Focus teaching segment. It is understood that boys learn to apply a lesson better when they can see and build or make something that would remind them of what is being taught.

FAITH: This final portion of the meeting communicates pertinent biblical truths, values, and wisdom corresponding to the lesson.

FAMILY: The Family portion of the meeting is simply the family emphasis for the principle taught. As the Trailmen learn throughout the years, it is the desire of Trail Life USA and the Woodland Trails Program to inform and involve the family in the learning process as much as possible.

FOREST OR BRANCH: Identifies the Branches taught and Steps focused on during a meeting for each age group.

Making Learning Fun

Learning is naturally fun, but all the fun can be drained out of it when it becomes more discipline than discovery. The best way to teach skills is for each skill to stimulate curiosity about the more advanced skill that builds upon it. This turns learning a series of related skills into a voyage of discovery. One of the best ways to do this is to forget the chalkboard and slide projector entirely. Bring ropes, spars, canvas, and cookware instead. Roll up your sleeves and get involved.

Maybe you'll clear the meeting area of chairs and provide Legos or other objects for boys to handle while they learn. Remember, this is a generation raised on multiple layered communications. They can process more and tend to stay more engaged when they are addressed on several layers at once.

Show that the skills being taught will enable the Trailman to do something enjoyable later. That's what makes putting on a wetsuit more exciting than putting on an overcoat.

Reduce the time spent talking between hands-on experiences by breaking long lectures into a series of objectives. These should fit neatly within the attention span of the Trailmen. Remember, you can lecture older boys a bit longer than you can the younger ones.

Where possible, start with objectives that have immediate application. Think about your first lesson with a musical instrument where you were taught to play the simple tune "Hot Cross Buns" or "Mary Had a Little Lamb" so you could leave with a feeling of accomplishment from day one.

When you teach a skill, whether it is to boys or to other adults, know the skill cold. When you begin your explanation, the student will be paying careful attention. So if you start out with, "First turn the knob to the right," and then correct yourself, "No, sorry, I meant to the left," the jumble of conflicting images will interfere with learning.

There are two ways people demonstrate a skill; like a typist or a pianist. Both use a keyboard. But all that matters to the typist's mind is striking the right keys in the right order. The pianist gives more thought to how the keys are struck. Try hunting and pecking your way through a Beethoven sonata!

Successfully teaching a skill is a live performance, so be a pianist rather than a typist. Give thought to how you demonstrate the skill. Call the students by name. Show genuine enthusiasm about the topic and a genuine desire to help.

The Trail Life meeting can close with a prayer or a benediction. Some Troops may opt to dismiss directly from the separate age-level groups instead of trying to gather all the age levels back together in the big meeting room. However it is done, a closing prayer or benediction should be mandatory.

In all Troop activity, the Trail Guide should use the same Bible version preferred by the Charter Organization. If a different version is to be used, then permission should be obtained by the Troopmaster. What a great example it is to open God's Word, placing this on our lap as we teach Trailmen godly principles and values to build workmen who are not ashamed!

Planning your Program Year

A patrol should work on one Branch at a time. This way each boy will complete a Branch approximately every one to two months. A patrol may choose to intermix the Steps if the schedule warrants. For instance, if a patrol is working on the Outdoor Skills Branch in November they may add in a Values Branch Step for Thanksgiving and return to Outdoor Skills in December. When planning the program year, it is advisable to add in "extra" Steps for boys who may miss occasional meetings. If a Branch requires four Steps you may want to plan lessons for five or six Steps.

Annual Meeting Plan by Branch

The following annual plan is provided as an example:

Troop XX-#### Woodlands Trail Annual Meeting Plan

Months	Branch	Activities
January/February	Heritage	6 Meetings plus Hit the Trail!
February/March	Hobbies	5 Meetings plus Hit the Trail!
April/May	Life Skills	6 Meetings plus Hit the Trail! Outdoor Activity
June/July	Sports and Fitness	4 Meetings plus Hit the Trail! Camping Trip/Summer Adventure
August/September	Outdoor Skills	5 Meetings plus 2 Hit the Trail! Outdoor Activities Including One Camping Trip
October/November	Science and Technology	5 Meetings plus Hit the Trail!
November/December	Values	5 Meetings plus Hit the Trail!

This type of plan provides 42 opportunities to complete the 24 Steps and 7 Hit the Trail! Requirements for the Forest Badge or Sylvan Stars each year and includes a reduced schedule during the summer and in December.

*Note - The overall meeting schedule for the year will be decided by the local Troop and the

Woodlands Trail Ranger and Trail Guides.

Behavioral Guidelines and Policies

God gave each of us a unique personality, behavior, and needs. Sometimes a boy's behavior or needs presents a challenge in a group setting, a challenge you can meet. This section highlights how Trail Life provides all boys, regardless of circumstances, with the foundation they need to become godly men.

Some of the most common special needs are ADD/ADHD, mild behavioral difficulties, and boys on the autistic spectrum. These boys greatly benefit from the structure and consistency of Trail Life programs. Expectations are always clear, rules are never arbitrary, and discipline is proportional and constructive. Following the program as prescribed in the Leader's Guide is your recipe for success.

In the Woodlands Trail program, organizing each patrol meeting into the 6 F's (Focus, Fingers, Fun, Family, Forest Badge, and Faith) ensures the predictability of each meeting. This alleviates the need for the boys to guess what will happen next and eliminates free time that could be filled with undesired behavior.

Keeping the program consistent is critical for all young boys, regardless of need. Try to maintain a predictable meeting schedule in your Patrol and Troop. Consider rotating a small number of dedicated Trail Guides to ensure familiarity for the boys and flexibility for adults to substitute for each other. On meetings with a guest speaker, allow the regular Trail Guide to open the meeting as usual and discuss what changes the boys can expect for the rest of the session.

Reduce unwanted behavior by stating clear expectations upfront and reviewing them throughout the year. At the start of each year, the Troopmaster and Trail Guides should briefly discuss desired behaviors, such as respecting others, using appropriate language, keeping hands to self, and walking inside the building (which can be connected to stewardship of their charter organization). More explicit discussions may be needed for boys with behavioral difficulties. In such cases, the Trail Guides, using two-deep leadership, should not hesitate to instruct the boy aside from the large group and discuss inappropriate behaviors with the parents/guardians.

Respond to unwanted behavior consistently. For instance, a Trail Guide allows the boys to play rough during the Fun activity one week yet strictly enforces the "no rough play rule" another week, that sends a mixed message to the boys. They may have to guess what is allowed at the current meeting, triggering anxiety and undesired behavior.

When planning for the upcoming meeting, anticipate times that difficult behavior could occur. Preface those activities with clear expectations. For example, if the Meeting Option calls for a Fun activity that requires a lot of physical touch, consider prefacing the game with a short (2 minute) discussion regarding appropriate touch and respecting others. Make a positive statement such as, "I know we will not have any problems will we? (while shaking your head)" Allow the boys to respond (which they should automatically say, "no" shaking their heads with yours) and then state something like, "If someone does get too rough or out of hand, he will be asked to sit out of the game for a few minutes. If he makes good choices with his behavior then he will be invited back with the group." The most critical part to follow is that if a boy

does need a break from the group, enforce it, and allow him to rejoin the group as you promised.

Here are some helpful resources on how to handle specific undesired behaviors (such as a boy who continually disrupts the meeting):

https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/five-persistent-behavior-problems-and-how-handle-them-grades-6-8/(this resource targets middle school grades, but recommendations are applicable to younger boys.)

http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/25-sure-fire-strategies-handling-difficult-students

Guidance for a Worthy Environment

Do's and Don'ts

- Adult Leaders have the authority to confiscate all items deemed inappropriate or dangerous.
- Firearms will be permitted at a Troop meeting only if the Troop program calls for such activities and if it meets with all Charter Organization and Trail Life USA standards outlined in the Shooting Sports Guidebook.
- Each Trailman is responsible for making restitution for any damage caused by his actions or negligence. A Trailman treats others as he wants to be treated.
- Trailmen in vehicles to and from events will remember they are guests of the driver/owner of the vehicle. Trailmen will follow the rules set by the driver/owner, e.g., eating, drinking, seating arrangements, and noise levels. Insurance regulations require that seat belts shall be worn at all times.
- Fighting is not permitted and is grounds for immediate disciplinary action.
- Foul language, swearing, cursing, blasphemy and abusive/suggestive gestures are not in keeping with the ideals of the Trail Life and will not be allowed.
- Sexually explicit materials, including magazines, pictures, etc., shall not be brought to Trailman activities. Such materials will be confiscated and returned to the parents of any Trailman involved.
- Some Troops set guidelines for electronic devices that play music, video devices, electronic game devices and/or laptop computers on weekend camping trips.
- Modern cell phone usage can be a distraction at Troop events. Trailmen should mute phones and avoid texting or using phones during meetings. At events, Trailmen should restrict cell phone usage to those times during the event when organized Troop activities are not being conducted.
- Cell phones and other devices capable of capturing photos or video should never be used in bathrooms, showers, or other places where privacy is expected. It is a serious legal matter to take or circulate pictures in such circumstances. The cell phones or digital devices of any Trailmen with such pictures shall be confiscated by adult leaders and delivered to law enforcement authorities to determine whether a criminal offense has occurred.

Improperly Leaving a Troop Event

A Trailman who leaves an activity without permission, runs away, or refuses to come when summoned by the Adult Leader, will be removed from the event, parents will be called, and disciplinary action by the Troop Committee will follow. This is a dangerous situation because a

boy who leaves an event effectively divides the adult leadership as they mount a search for the boy. This creates unplanned program changes and potential problems. The boy also puts himself in danger by leaving an event without using the buddy system and without accountability.

Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco

Any youth Trailman guilty of using, possessing and/or distributing a controlled substance (drugs and alcohol) will be dropped from the Troop roster upon the decision of the Troop Committee. Parents of the Trailman will be advised of all actions taken. The Trailman may later be reinstated once his problem has been resolved to the satisfaction of the Troop Committee. No Trailman will be allowed to use a controlled substance of any type at any Troop function. This includes alcohol and tobacco.

Parents of Trailmen that must take prescription medication over the period of a Troop event will discuss the requirement with the Troopmaster or Unit Leader. Serious medical requirements may require a parent to attend an event and administer medication. Medications must be held by an Adult Troop Leader with a permission note from the boy's parent. A Trailman may not possess medications on a trip except for as needed medications such as Asthma Inhalers.

Trailman Anti-Bullying Policy

It is understood that boys are subjected to many inappropriate situations every day in school and elsewhere. Children can be very cruel to each other. Inappropriate behaviors can include physical striking, aggressive or inappropriate gestures, sexually inappropriate behavior or gestures, name calling, ruffling the hair, sarcasm, insults, put-downs, exclusion from the group, laughing at a person, joking about a person, commenting on a person's physical attributes, imitating or mocking a person, inappropriate internet comments and more.

The Troop and the Trail Life USA program are supposed to be a refuge, a safe haven for boys from these types of abuse. Many of our children exist in a daily environment full of these abusive situations, but the Trailman shall not bring this behavior into the Troop. Trailmen and Troop leaders must work together to effectively identify and eliminate such behaviors from the Troop.

Here is a helpful strategy for dealing with infractions such as bullying:

First Defense:

Trailmen must refrain from bullying and other behaviors that have the effect of hurting another's feelings or making them sad. "A Trailman treats others as he would want to be treated." It is understood that a Trailman may occasionally be sarcastic or inconsiderate of another, but the Troop expects a Trailman to catch himself when he acts this way and make immediate amends without being told to do so.

Second Defense:

If a Trailman is subjected to bullying behavior by another, he should demand that the bully immediately stop the bullying behavior.

Third Defense:
If a Trailman observes another Trailman engaged in bullying behavior, the Trailman should immediately demand that the bully stop that behavior.

Fourth Defense:
If an Adult Leader observes a Trailman engaged in bullying behavior, the Adult Leader must immediately tell the bully to stop that behavior.

Immediate Solution:
Once a Trailman has been identified bullying, the Trailman should make immediate amends to the person he was bullying, including a Trailman handshake with an eye-to-eye sincere apology (saying, "I'm sorry"), and repairing or paying for any damages.

Let Each Defense Have a Chance:
If you are an adult leader, unless there is the threat of physical harm, count to three before you step in. Allow an opportunity for the bully himself, then the bullied Trailman, and finally any observing Trailman to identify the bullying behavior and demand that the bully apologize with a Trailman handshake. After three seconds, if no youth has acted, then step in as an adult, gather the facts, and make the appropriate demand for a handshake. (Remember, just as in sports events, sometimes it is the person who retaliates – rather than the first offender – whose behavior is caught!)

Catching the Little Things:
There is great benefit in catching the smaller insults, sarcasm, etc. before they escalate. Boys will become attuned to actions which are hurtful towards others, and you will largely avoid more extreme bullying situations by establishing an environment where smaller actions are identified and remedied.

Adults Need to Apologize and Give the Handshake, Too:
Adults are not immune to sarcastic remarks and joking comments. Set the environment for this system to work by identifying your own actions and offering the handshake freely. There is no shame in doing so, and when the boys see that you as an adult freely offer the handshake, they too will freely offer it! After a while, it is like a game to catch bullying behavior and demand a handshake. Even smaller Trailmen feel empowered and entitled to demand an apology from larger boys and adults.

Further Consequences:
If the bully does not make immediate amends as described above, it will be dealt with in the normal disciplinary fashion with conferences by the Patrol Leader, First Officer, and adult leader, with appropriate action to be taken by the Troopmaster as described on "Enforcing Trailman Discipline" on page I92 in the section titled "Enforcing Trailman Discipline".

Endangering Situations:
If a Trailman engages in bullying behavior that places himself or another in danger, immediate appropriate action must be taken by the Troopmaster as needed to ensure that Troop members are free from danger.

Special Needs Trailmen

Trail Life USA has developed a policy for meeting the needs of mentally and physically challenged Trailmen. This policy is administered by a Committee of qualified volunteers and has a defined process for evaluation. Please contact the Program team at Program@TrailLifeUSA.com to be connected to the Committee and for more information.

The following are among resources available for more information on specific needs:

ADHD: http://kidshealth.org/parent/medical/learning/adhd.html#

Autism (Autistic Spectrum Disorder)
http://kidshealth.org/parent/medical/learning/pervasive_develop_disorders.html#catl42

Emotional/Behavioral Difficulties: http://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/teaching-strategies/5-tips-for-handling-ebd-kids-emotional-behavior-disorder-in-an-inclusive-classroom/

Maintaining Mission Focus Document

Guidelines for dealing with inappropriate behavior at Troop meetings and events by youth or adults.

Addressing Sin in Member Boys Document

Guidelines for dealing with sinful behavior of all types involving Trailmen.

The Maintaining Mission Focus and Addressing Sin in Member Boys documents may be helpful in guiding your meeting behavior philosophy. They are both available online in the Leader Pages on the Troop Committee/Policy page.

CHAPTER 4 - TROOP ADMINISTRATION

Objectives

Learn How to Be a Good Neighbor to Your Charter Partner
Understand the Requirements for a Safe and Comfortable Meeting Space
Learn How Much Equipment You Need

Facility Requirements

The Troop is typically chartered by a church or Christian organization, usually with a few large rooms and several smaller rooms. The different age-level programs need separate meeting spaces. While this is most easily accomplished in different rooms, it could potentially work using different corners of a large all-purpose room.

The Troop should meet in a place that is safe and comfortable, but not luxurious. Avoid distractions in meeting rooms such as classroom equipment that may pose an attractive nuisance. It is important that the program itself holds the Trailmen's attention.

The main room should be large enough to accommodate boys as they are seated and as they work on projects and perform ceremonies. Give thought to spaces where different age groups can go after dismissal to programs. You will also need a place where you can safely and conveniently store props such as flags, flip charts, ceremonial items, and records.

Some rooms seem ideal in mild weather but become stifling in summer or chilly in winter. Work to ensure year-round comfort for Troop and committee meetings.

Weekly, Monthly and Special Facility Needs

The anticipated time and room requirements for the Troop weekly meetings range from 60 to l20 minutes in length and need a larger room for the opening, and smaller rooms for five distinct age-level groups (Foxes, Hawks, Mountain Lions, Navigators, and Adventurers).

Special event meetings held perhaps 4-6 times per year may need a larger space such as a multi-purpose room, basement, or fellowship hall. Special award nights and/or recruiting fairs (skill demonstrations and project displays) are generally held once or twice a year. Special projects (community service, fundraising support activities, etc.) occur perhaps 2-3 times per year.

Facility Conflicts

The Troop should clean up and leave the space at least as neat and orderly as it was found. Consider the needs of other groups that use the facility, such as Sunday school classes, social clubs, and other outreach ministries. They may occasionally have needs for the facility at the same time as the Troop does.

When time and space conflicts do inevitably occur, have a firm "Plan B" pre-arranged in the

event activities like Vacation Bible School commandeer your room. Communicate changes in meeting place in a timely manner to all Trailmen and Trail Leaders as soon as you learn of them. Even a room full of well-behaved boys is going to be noisy, so avoid possible conflict as you make arrangements for meeting space.

Consider ways your Troop can help with the Charter Organization's activities. Remember the Troop is part of the Charter Organization's community outreach. In keeping relations friendly and stress-free, the Charter Organization Representative will be a great help.

Bulletin boards in public areas, yard signage, and notices should be neat and reflect a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship with your Charter Organization.

Use of fire, woods tools, running water, or other potentially damaging or disruptive materials should follow organizational guidelines and be cleared in advance. The phrase, "Should you people be doing that here?" should rarely be heard. Move chairs, tables, and other items to their original locations. The rooms should look as good or better when you leave as they did when you arrived.

If any damage is done to Charter Organization property, it should be promptly reported to the Institutional Head through the Troopmaster or Charter Organization Representative and sincere, adequate reparation made at once.

Facility Access

Sometimes the difference between meeting and not meeting is hanging on someone's key ring. The ability to reliably access the building is a real issue in some Troops. Perhaps your Charter Organization fully understands your needs and allows you to keep a key. If they don't, make sure they have someone who is trustworthy to let you in.

Establish early on which parking spaces are open for use, and what to do when special events displace your slots. If you must walk through a room such as a cafeteria or gymnasium to get to your meeting place, figure out in advance what to do if those areas are occupied.

Comfort and Safety

Be sure to have adequate access to restrooms and drinking water. Arrange in advance to have adequate climate control—the Charter Organization may only run HVAC when the building is occupied and they need to accommodate you.

Learn and be ready to use fire alarms, fire extinguishers, and fire evacuation routes. Know where to gather outside the building after evacuation.

There should be a first aid kit available at all meetings and Troop activities. Also, if your building has an AED station, make sure adult leaders in your Troop are trained in its proper use. We encourage and stress that adult leaders should be trained and certified through organizations like the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, and The Wilderness Institute.

Meeting Equipment

The Charter Organization should provide you with tables and chairs. You will have to provide an American flag, a Troop flag, and their bases (all available in the Trail Life USA online store).

Your Charter Organization may also provide a flip pad, places to store records and equipment, and a computer with access to the internet for entering advancement records and conducting Troop business. You will also need a box of equipment commonly used during meetings for advancement requirements such as natural fiber rope, synthetic rope, a source of flame for fusing nylon rope, whipping cord, first aid supplies, Troop compasses, maps, and lengths of line for knot tying, and other equipment. It also helps to have paper and pens for older boys, and arts and crafts supplies for younger boys.

CHAPTER 5 – ADVANCEMENT

Objectives

Understanding the Practical Delivery of the Woodlands Trail Program
Understanding the Branch Patch and Branch Pins
Understanding the Forest Award and Sylvan Stars
Understanding Detailed Advancement Requirements
Learn about the Faith Building Activities
Learn about the Importance of Ceremonies

Progressing on the Woodlands Trail

While the Woodlands Trail Program includes numerous awards, acquiring awards is not its goal. Meetings and outdoor activities are used to inspire the heart and mind, convey essential life skills, and reinforce the good news of Jesus Christ. Boys develop in each of these areas at different rates. Some are natural leaders but need to develop teamwork. Some have mastered outdoor skills but need guidance on interpersonal skills. Regardless, advancing with boys their own age works best in Trail Life USA.

Boys remain at their age group until completion of their current school grade level. So, a first grade boy who enters the program midway through his first grade year is a Fox and will be eligible to become a Hawk upon completion of the first grade. Within the Mountain Lion age group, boys entering during their fifth grade year will be eligible to advance to Navigator upon completing the fifth grade.

How are the Boys Set in a Patrol?



Foxes: Kindergarten and 5 years old by 10/31



Hawks: 2nd Grade and 7 years old by 10/31



Mountain Lions: 4th Grade and 9 years old by 10/31

With the exception of the 5-year-old minimum age requirement by October 31st to join, a one year variance to the participation requirements above may be requested in writing to the Troop Committee.

The Branch Patch and Pins



When a boy joins any of the three Woodlands Trail program age Patrols, he may earn the Fox, Hawk, or Mountain Lion "Branch Patch." This joining patch will be worn on his right uniform pocket and shows that the boy knows the basics of Trail Life USA.

Branch Patch Requirements

Memorize the Trailman Oath

The Trailman Oath is recited at the beginning of each meeting and at most gatherings. It is the shared commitment to traditional biblical values that binds all Trailmen.

On my honor, I will do my best

To serve God and my country;

To respect authority;

To be a good steward of creation;

And to treat others as I want to be treated.

Helpful lessons on what the elements of the Oath mean can be found in new Woodlands Trail Handbook.

Learn the Trailman Sign and when to use it

The Trailman sign is made with the right hand held open, palm forward, raising your right arm with your elbow at a right angle. The sign is used during reciting of the Trailman Oath and is also used by Troop leaders as a signal to be silent.

Learn the Trailman Salute and when to use it

The Trailman salute is made by raising your right hand. The tip of your fingers should almost touch your right temple. If you wear glasses, the tip of your fingers should almost touch the frames of your glasses. If you are wearing a uniform hat, the tip of your fingers should touch the brim.

Learn the Trailman Handshake

The Trailman Handshake is a forearm to forearm or wrist to wrist handshake. This handshake was chosen because it is an effective way to assist another person in need.

Memorize the Pledge of Allegiance (Fox recite only)

I pledge allegiance to the flag

of the United States of America,

and to the republic for which it stands,

one nation under God, indivisible,

with liberty and justice for all.

Understand how to properly fold the American flag (Mountain Lions only).
See the following links for instruction on how to fold an American flag properly.

https://www.legion.org/flag/folding

http://www.usflag.org/foldflag.html

http://www.wikihow.com/Fold-an-American-Flag

https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/celebrate/flagfold.pdf

Branches

The Branches on the Branch Patch correspond to the seven primary instructional areas of the Trail Life USA program for all ages. Branches in the Navigators and Adventurer Units are called "Frontiers."

Here is a helpful description of each Branch. The color corresponds to the leaves color on the Branch patch, as well as the Sylvan Star colors on the Forest Award (discussed later):

Heritage Branch (Brown): An exploration of a boy's family heritage, American heritage, and Christian heritage. Emphasis is placed on upholding the finest traditions of the heritage we obtain from our forefathers. This branch would include such items as visiting historical sites, learning about the early church, conducting genealogical research, and exploring American history.

Hobbies Branch (Black): An exploration of various indoor and outdoor hobbies that demand varying levels of knowledge, skill, or aptitude. This branch would include such items as bowling, horticulture, photography, bird watching, model building, strategy games, creating collections, and art. Trail Guides plan and organize local events and overnight outings for Trailmen to learn about hobbies both common to many people and unique to the Troop's geographical region. While some lesson plans involving hobbies have been provided, it is anticipated that most activities for this branch would center on events planned by the local Trail Guide.

Life Skills Branch (Burgundy): Life lessons ranging from the practical to higher-level interpersonal skill sets make up this branch. This branch would include such subjects as food preparation, home or personal item repairs, construction, mechanics, public speaking, knowledge of safety practices, health and fitness, first aid, and dealing with difficult people or situations.

Sports and Fitness Branch (Green): Having fun in the outdoors with sports and other activities, this branch would include such items as baseball, football, soccer, bicycling, track and field, and group or team games.

Outdoor Skills Branch (Blue): Providing basic understanding of woodcraft, hiking, exploration, and camping skills, this branch would include such subjects as knots and lashings, proper use of knives (Mountain Lions only), Tread Lightly (outdoor principles), navigation, and plant/animal/hazard identification.

Science and Technology Branch (Yellow): An exploration of physical and natural science

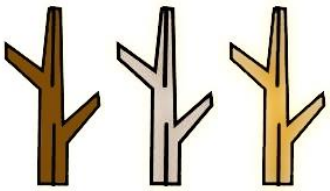
concerning our created world makes up this branch. Several meeting plans involving science and technology are provided. Additional meetings for this branch would involve outings to unique local sites. Trailmen could take advantage of such things as: science labs, factory tours, mines, beaches, ships, quarries, planetariums, museums, observatories, aquariums, hospitals, airports, aquaculture farms, veterinarian office, broadcasting stations, children's hands-on science centers, nature centers, commercial caves, and farms. In the absence of these options, the Troop could plan science and technology fairs or other events

Values Branch (Red): This branch involves instilling biblically based values within the boys. A central focus of this branch is teachings of the Christian faith.

Branch Pins

Branch Pins are earned by completion of Steps (see below). A Branch Pin will be given for each Branch completed for a total of seven Branch Pins, which are attached to the color-coded Branch on the Branch Patch.

The color of the Branch Pin itself corresponds to the age group so that there is differentiation between Branches earned as a Fox (bronze), a Hawk (silver), and a Mountain Lion (gold).



The Forest Award and Sylvan Stars



The Forest Award is earned by earning the 7 different Branch Pins for the Branch Patch, typically in one program year. This patch replaces the Branch Patch on the right pocket of the Trailman's uniform. It is here he will attach his Sylvan Stars as he continues advancing.







A Trailman who receives his Forest Award is eligible to earn Sylvan Stars through continued participation in the program within his age group. Sylvan Stars are earned by completion of the requisite number of Steps (see below) in each branch. One Sylvan Star is awarded for each branch completed, for a maximum of seven stars. The background embroidered Star colors on the Forest Award match the colors of the leaves on the Branch Patch.

The color of the Branch Pin itself corresponds to the age group so that there is differentiation between Branches earned as a Fox (bronze), a Hawk (silver), and a Mountain Lion (gold).

The Forest Award with its Sylvan Stars is set aside as a keepsake once the Trailman advances to the next patrol or crosses over to the Navigator Unit.

The 'Steps' along the Woodland's Trail

'Steps' are skills or points of knowledge that make up the branches in the Woodlands Trail program. They are not necessarily intended to show a mastery of a skill or topic but, instead, a progressive movement from exposure to practice to proficiency.

The type and number of Steps required may vary by branch. There are both Core (required) and Elective (choose from several) Steps in each branch.

The Steps:

- Encourage the boys to fellowship with each other
- Teach relevant and appropriate skills
- Develop knowledge that the boys will apply as they mature
- Allow the Trailmen to experience both teamwork and competition
- Reinforce the Bible teaching provided at church and home
- Guide the boys as they start their journey to manhood
- Prepare the boys to become Navigators

The Steps provide a well-rounded program. If certain requirements are ill-suited to a Troop's location or available resources the Troop may substitute something more appropriate for that patrol. It is up to the Trail Guide to determine appropriate substitutions.

The requirements may be amended or replaced to suit the needs of special needs Trailmen. Any modifications to the requirements should be verified with the Ranger.

Each Program year and for each Branch, the Trail Guide chooses what to deliver from the Required Core and Elective Steps. For the Required Core Steps, keep in mind that any remaining Required Core Steps for that Branch would be delivered in the next year. Given the two years a Trailman remains in each level (Fox, Hawk, or Mountain Lion), he has the opportunity to complete all the Required Core Steps of every Branch in a two-year period before moving to the next level.

Steps can be completed at a meeting, campout, field trip, or other Troop or Patrol gathering. Trailmen may receive only one Branch Pin or Star per Branch per level. Branch Pins and Stars are not transferable to the next level Branch Patch or Forest Award.

Some Steps are less time-consuming than others. Therefore, it is possible that more than one Step may be completed at an individual meeting. The goal, however, is not to see how many Steps can be accomplished, but to have quality lessons where the boys can gain knowledge and wisdom while having fun and growing in Christ.

Core and Elective Steps

Core Steps and Elective Steps have been defined as well as Helps documents created for each for use in planning meetings. It is anticipated that additional Elective Step topics/Help documents will be developed by volunteers as they conduct and experience the program.

Helps documents are written for every Step and include the Step Questions, a progression chart through the program levels, as well as ideas, tips, images, websites, videos, songs, games, activities, and hints for planning a meeting for each level.

Helps documents can be found on the Leader Pages online. Use a Helps document and create your own meeting (see below) or use a prepared Lesson Plan (see below).

Hit the Trail! Activities

Hit the Trail! activities and projects are also required elements for advancement in the Woodlands Trail program. These activities can take many forms. Consider weekend events, after-school events, overnight events, camping trips, service projects or a summer adventure. If different age groups or Patrols are going to be attending the *Hit the Trail!* event together, it is suggested that the Trail Guides work together to schedule which Branches will be worked on over the program year.

Program Requirements and Resources

To earn a Branch Pin OR a Sylvan Star, a Trailman will complete the following in a particular Branch:

- The required number of Core Steps, and
- The required number of Elective Steps, and
- One Hit the Trail! Activity for that Branch

Requirements Per Level

	Branch Pin	Sylvan Star		Branch Pin	Sylvan Star
Heritage Branch			**Hobbies Branch**		
Core Steps	2	2	Core Steps	1	1
Elective Steps	1	1	Elective Steps	2	2
Hit the Trail! Activities	1	1	Hit the Trail! Activities	1	1
Life Skills Branch			**Outdoor Skills Branch**		
Core Steps	3	3	Core Steps	3	3
Elective Steps	1	1	Elective Steps	1	1
Hit the Trail! Activities	1	1	Hit the Trail! Activities	1	1
Science and Technology Branch			**Sports and Fitness Branch**		
Core Steps	2	2	Core Steps	2	2
Elective Steps	1	1	Elective Steps	1	1
Hit the Trail! Activities	1	1	Hit the Trail! Activities	1	1
Values Branch			2 FHA = 1 Step or HTT per Branch 7 Branches completed = Forest Award		
Core Steps	3	3			
Elective Steps	1	1			
Hit the Trail! Activities	1	1			

Steps/Helps Provided

Core Steps and Elective Steps have been defined as well as Helps documents created for each for use in planning meetings. It is anticipated that additional Elective Step topics/Help documents will be developed by volunteers as they conduct and experience the program.

Helps documents are written for every Step and include the Step Questions, a progression chart through the program levels, as well as ideas, tips, images, websites, videos, songs, games, activities, and hints for planning a meeting for each level.

Helps documents can be found on the Leader Pages online. Use a Helps document and create your own meeting (see below) or use a prepared Lesson Plan (see below).

Heritage Branch

Required Core Steps

I. Christian Heritage
2. Flag Etiquette and History
3. Founding Fathers
4. My Family

Elective Steps

5. My Community
6. Early America
7. National Symbols
8. Armed Forces
9. American Culture
10. My State

Hobbies Branch

Required Core Steps

I. General Hobbies

Elective Steps

Several sample electives Steps are shared but this is essentially a design your own activity using a defined method outlined in the Steps Overview and Helps documents for Hobbies.

Life Skills Branch

Required Core Steps

I. First Aid - Traumatic
2. First Aid - Medical
3. Map Skills
4. Personal Safety
5. Stewardship
6. Manners

Elective Steps

7. Water Safety

8. Home Maintenance
9. Animal Care
10. Gardening
11. Indoor Cooking
12. Repairs

Outdoor Skills Branch

Required Core Steps

1. Ropes & Knots
2. Orienteering
3. Outdoor Cooking
4. Camping & Hiking
5. Edge Tools / Woodsman Card for Mountain Lions
6. Fire Safety / Fireguard Card for Mountain Lions

Elective Steps

7. Fishing
8. Tread Lightly
9. Tracking
10. Communications / Signaling

Science and Technology Branch

Required Core Steps

1. Know Your Environment
2. Science in Weather
3. Simple Tools and Machines
4. Astronomy

Elective Steps

5. Rocketry
6. Ancient Weapons
7. Improvised Tools
8. Botany

Sports and Fitness Branch

Required Core Steps

1. Nutrition & Fitness
2. Learn about Sports

Sample Sports Elective Steps

The Elective Steps should be built by the Trail Guide. There are a wide range of sports to select from and even many fitness events to participate in. Trail Guides will the CLEAR Method to develop these Elective Steps outlined in the Steps Overview.

3. Uncommon Sports
4. Soccer (sample team sport)
5. Bowling (sample individual sport)
6. Swimming (sample sport)

Values Branch
Required Core Steps

I. Godly Values
2. Our Faith
3. Godly Citizenship
4. Service
5. Teamwork
6. Truthfulness/Integrity

Elective Steps

7. Courage
8. Obedience
9. Righteousness
I0. Wisdom
II. Dedication
I2. Repentance

See the Leader Pages online for a detailed listing of each Branch and Step.

Hit the Trail! Activities

Example *Hit the Trail!* suggestions are provided for every Branch. At least one *Hit the Trail!* activity is required for each Branch Pin and each Sylvan Star.

See the Leader Pages online for a listing of Hit the Trail! Activities for each Branch.

Helps Documents

Helps Documents are provided for every step of every Branch. These documents can be used along with the Lesson Plans in creating the best meeting plan for your Troop.

See the Leader Pages online for a listing of Helps Documents for each step of each Branch.

Lesson Plans

Lesson Plans corresponding to a Branch and Step will be written for all age levels according to the 6 F's Woodlands Trail format. Lesson plans are designed to reduce your preparation and planning time for meetings and generally require little preparation beyond securing supplies for activities. Completing a lesson for a Step will fulfill the requirements for the Step for the defined age-level. Lesson plans include pre-meeting preparation (if necessary), materials and props needed, etc. They will be posted on the Leader Pages as they become available.

"Create Your Own" Lesson Plans

The Trail Guide may also utilize the "Create Your Own" lesson plan option to take advantage of local opportunities for completing Steps in the planned Branch. In recognition of the wide variation in climate, geography, and available resources throughout the nation, the Woodlands Trail program allows boys to complete Steps for meetings, activities, or projects which are not specifically outlined within the provided lesson plans.

For example, Troops may not have access to bicycles for a bicycle rodeo, or Troops within heavily urbanized areas may not be able to go camping in the great outdoors.
While it is the intention of the program that provided lesson plans are followed whenever possible, latitude is given to the local Troop as outlined below.

Approval of 'Create Your Own Meeting' Plans

Create Your Own meeting plans should follow the meeting outline of the 6-Fs (Focus, Fingers, Fun, Family, Forest Badge, Faith). Trail Guides should submit a written summary of these meeting plans including the 6 F's to their Ranger for approval.

A Create Your Own Meeting Planner can be found in the online Leader Pages.

The Ranger should ensure that lesson plans, activities, or projects are

1. Safe for all involved;
2. Age-appropriate;
3. Adequately fulfils the goals of a defined Core or Elective Step appropriate for the level desired; and
4. Consistent with the values and purposes of the organization. If any doubt exists, the Ranger should consult the Troopmaster or the Troop Committee.

Deviating from the 6 F's format or focusing on only one of the 6 F's in your meetings neglects a part of the defined emphases of the Trail Life USA program and should be avoided. Doing so may neglect age-appropriate attention spans and energy levels causing behavior issues.

A copy of the plan must be kept on file with the Ranger for the remainder of that program year. At the discretion of the Ranger, previously approved lesson plans may be reused. Lesson plans may also be submitted to the Home Office, where they will be considered for distribution to all Troops.

Family Home Activities

Two Family Home Activities (FHA) may be completed in place of a maximum of one Step or one Hit the Trail! (HTT) in each Branch. Family Home Activities are to be done with the family. Some families may team-up to do these together. Some may even be done as a Hit the Trail.

When completing Family Home Activities, they do not need to line up with the theme of this week's lesson though it is suggested. The Trail Guide determines the criteria for evaluation of completion and has the sole discretion to allow credit for Family Home Activities.

Evaluation methods may include discussion with the Trailman about how he completed the activity or evidence of completion (pictures, paperwork, and memorization) as appropriate for the activity but should be clearly communicated to the Trailman when the activity is discussed. Trail Guides may determine which Branch to award credit for the Family Home Activity.

Family Home Activities are available online in the Leader Pages.

Preparing for your Woodlands Trail patrol meeting:

1. Determine which Branch is scheduled based on Troop Annual Meeting Plan (see Chapter 3).
2. Determine if you need to complete a Core or Elective Step and select one.
3. Use a prepared lesson plan or create a lesson using the Helps and 6 F's format.
4. Gather the necessary supplies, preview videos, familiarize yourself with games scheduled, etc. Review the Focus and Faith sections of the plan.
5. Arrange for the assistance of other leaders, parents or other subject matter experts if necessary.
6. Pray for the Trailman, their families, and your meeting.
7. Make sure to take all supplies and your plan with you to the meeting,
8. Have fun!

Communication with parents about what you completed and what is coming up on the patrols schedule is essential. Be sure to include any location changes, Hit the Trail! Information, service projects, fundraising expectations, and ways they can reinforce your lesson at home (the Family section of the meeting plan).

Advancement Tracking

Advancement can be tracked using the Woodlands Trail Handbook for each Trailman, lanyard Branch Tracking Cards (in development), a classroom tracking chart (in development), or on a spreadsheet. Only completed Branches may be entered in the advancement system online.

Additional Awards and Ceremonies

Fireguard and Woodsman

These are now Elective Steps in the Outdoor Skills Branch for Mountain Lions. Additionally, safety lessons for these activities are included for younger Trailmen. See the online Leader Pages for detailed requirement information as well as a checklist for the Trail Guides.

Timberline Award



The Timberline Award is the highest award a Trailman can achieve in the Woodlands Trail program and it is available only to Mountain Lion Trailmen. It was developed to celebrate a boy's entrance into the new world of Trail Life USA's Navigators program.

There are four Manhood Principles and requirements for the Timberline Award.

MANHOOD PRINCIPLES

(adapted from Raising a Modern Day Knight)

To live boldly and avoid being passive

To live responsibly

To lead courageously

To live for the greater rewards of God

Timberline Requirements

To show that he is living boldly and is avoiding being passive he has

- Earned his Mountain Lion Forest Badge
- Earned all 7 Sylvan Stars (one from each branch) at the Mountain Lion level
- Invited a friend that is a potential member to a Woodlands Trail meeting, outing or activity.
- Attended an overnight campout with the Troop during his Mountain Lion year(s).

To show that he is living responsibly he has

Discussed, defined and developed with his parents a plan to meet a measurable, quantifiable goal or fulfill an area of responsibility.

- Minimum duration: 2 months and requires prior Trail Guide approval
- A goal might be improved physical fitness or improved academic success.
- An area of responsibility might be specific jobs or chores to do.

To show that he is leading courageously he has

Helped plan and lead a service project in his community and enlisted help from his fellow Trailmen to complete it. His service project helped to make his community cleaner, better, safer or fulfilled a need. Requires prior Trail Guide approval. Service exclusively to members of the Trailman's family are not eligible.

To show that he lives for the greater rewards of God he has

Completed an approved faith based option for the Mountain Lion level. Approved options include:

The ***Worthy Life Award*** for Mountain Lions (available online in the Leader Pages)

OR

One of the following approved religious recognitions: *Joyful Servant* by MCCS, *Familia Dei Emblem* by NCCTL (in development), *Chi-Rho Award* by EOCS.

OR

A faith-based study similar in scope and depth to the above programs and approved by the Troop Chaplain and the Charter Organization.

Elements of a Ceremony

Ceremonies help our understanding and our emotions come together to highlight important moments along the Trail Life. A well-planned ceremony gives an occasion the dignity and drama it deserves. In Trail Life USA, Troops have the opportunity to create and conduct a number of ceremonies at different points of the program year. It's important to pay attention to elements of good ceremonies.

Elements of a Ceremony

There is no hard and fast rule on what constitutes a perfect ceremony, but most successful ceremonies have certain things in common. You can find many ceremony samples in our online resources and forum, but there are some elements common to most.

Things Set Apart

Certain things may be associated primarily with ceremonial activity, such as lighting candles, setting up props representing rank advancement or award achievement, or going to certain places (perhaps the sanctuary of a church or a clearing in a wooded location nearby).

Obligations

Whether it is taking an oath of office, acknowledging a set of expectations, accepting new responsibilities, or praying for God's guidance, most well-done ceremonies indicate some change in one's life that has an equal measure of rights and responsibilities.

Audience

The ceremony takes place in front of a significant audience, whether it is the parents, other members of a rank or award, or the members of a patrol or Troop.

Opening

The opening of a ceremony should set the tone for what follows, including setting the expectations of the participants and the audience. It may include such features as turning down the lights to light candles or reciting the Trailman Oath.

Symbology

The colors and names of ranks and the designs and names of awards all carry symbolic value. A symbol is a comparison between two things that makes a meaningful statement. The color red in an award can be a symbol of courage. The name of the Freedom award refers both to the enjoyment of human rights provided by good government and to the freedom from sin and death made possible by Jesus Christ. Symbols appropriate to the occasion should be explained to the recipients and members of the audience.

Costuming

For the majority of major ceremonies, appropriate costuming would be full uniform for participants and presenters. There may be times when an appropriate costume may be something unique to the ceremony.

Presenters

Awards should be presented by someone with a relationship to the recipients. The presenters may be Troop leaders or family members. Be sure to clearly explain to the presenters the proper way to carry out their role in the ceremony.

Recitation

A spoken piece that carries the appropriate message. For recipients of pinnacle awards such as the Freedom Award or Religious Emblem, it may be desirable to include a guest speaker who will follow the recitation with an address of their own.

Closing

The two best remembered parts of any ceremony are its first and final impressions. A reverent closing gives the participants and audience an appropriate sense of closure.

Presentation of Ranks and Awards

Typically twice per year, Troops will hold a special awards ceremony to recognize the achievements of the Trailmen. The local unit should use its own creativity in planning the presentation of ranks and awards. One thing that should be strictly avoided is just calling people up to the podium, handing them the emblem and shaking their hand.

The ceremonies linked here are suggestions only. You are free to create your own Troop ceremonies. Additional ideas may be found on the online Leader Pages or the Facebook Member Forum.

CHAPTER 6 – TROOP ADMINISTRATION

Objectives

Learn Best Practices with a Troop Trailer and External Storage
Understand Fundraising and Asset Ownership
Understand Branding, Licensing, and Commercialism

Equipment

How Much is Enough?

God gave you a wonderful world to explore, and wonderful boys to enjoy it. Troop equipment is what you use to bring these together safely and comfortably. To keep too much equipment from becoming a distraction, or too little of it from becoming a handicap, you need to identify a happy medium. Money can never truly compensate for a lack of creativity and forethought in program planning. On the other hand, minimal or cheap equipment will spread misery and discourage attendance. To find your happy medium, start with the most essential items, selected wisely to balance quality and economy, and work your way out to a well-rounded Troop. To prevent constant rebuying, put this equipment in the care of a trained, reliable person. In doing this, a good Quartermaster is not optional.

Do not purchase exactly enough items to service your current membership—allow for growth of the Troop and for breakage or loss. Depending on your outdoor program emphasis, you may need other things not found on the suggested lists.

Troop Trailer(s)

If you have a Troop trailer, select a leader's home or a place on the Charter Organization's property that can hold it safely. Look into insurance issues to make sure your investment is protected. If possible, keep photographs of all covered items and retain sales slips for ease in establishing your claim. Sadly, in today's world a trailer that is not protected by a good lock may as well not have a roof or sides. Do not count on the basic decency of a burglar not to steal equipment used by children.

Additionally, a "trailer hitch lock" will reduce the possibility of someone simply stealing the entire trailer!

Thought should be given to how things are stored in the Troop trailer to encourage people to put things back in an orderly manner the way they got them out.

Depending on state laws, your trailer may need a license plate. It may need a working brake (as required by law), signal lights, and a chain to ensure it does not separate from the hitch on the road. The tires should be in good condition and properly inflated, and the load should be evenly distributed. It is also advisable to have a spare (inflated) tire on all trips.

External Storage

You may need storage space for tents, camping gear, props, and other essentials. This should be a secure location which the group and the church staff can access through lock and key. Depending on the size of the group's membership, this space may be as small as a locker in a garage or basement or as large as a small I0xI0 room (for larger groups).

There are practical considerations for suitability such as extremes in temperature, humidity, harmful pests, etc. If it is a prime location, no doubt there will be other people in the Charter Organization that have an eye on using it as well.

Equipment should be clearly marked and neatly stored in a way that encourages Trailmen—and Trail Leaders—to put things back the way they got them.

Business Functions of a Troop

As a ministry of the Charter Organization, a Troop's legal and non-profit status flows from the CO, not TLUSA. Therefore, all legal and business functions including contracts, banking, donations, etc. are overseen and administered by the CO as they see fit. Troops have no legal status to execute these transactions on their own apart from the CO. Troops cannot use TLUSA's Taxpayer Identification Number for donations or banking but can use their CO's or apply for a number at www.irs.gov.

Fundraising

Charter Organizations, leaders, or youth members are not restricted from earning money to obtain their own equipment or to assist in fulfilling the charitable, non-profit mission or purpose of the Charter Organization, provided that all money-making/fundraising activities are consistent with the Statements of Faith and Values of Trail Life USA, and consistent with the branding and licensing requirements of Trail Life USA.

Other than raffles legally permissible in your area and approved by the Charter Organization, games of chance are not allowed. Consistent with Trail Life USA's mission, focus, and purpose, the Charter Organization – not Trail Life USA – owns and operates the Troop and is the legal owner of all property, funds, and/or assets of the Troop. Further guidelines for fundraising and banking are available in the Role of the Troop Treasurer document online.

Branding and Licensing

The use of Trail Life USA's brand, marks, or other intellectual property on or in relation to any commercial products, merchandise or services ("commercial purposes") require licensing by Trail Life USA.

This is to provide protection to the organization in the case an outside entity decides to plunder our good name. If we have established there is a procedure for protecting the brand marks, it makes the case for the permitted-only use of marks in the general market much more likely to prevail. Any manufacturer or supplier of products, merchandise or services who wishes to be a Trail Life USA Licensee, or any party that wishes to manufacture, produce

and/or provide promotional materials or items should complete and submit the *Application for Trail Life USA Trademark License Agreement*. Upon receipt of that completed form, Trail Life USA will make a determination whether to grant said license and the terms and conditions of said license, including any appropriate licensing fees, license duration, and scope of license.

This means if you want to use any Trail Life USA logo including those of the different program levels and awards on any item not specifically allowed on the Brand Permissions document for Troops, you must have a license to do so. This includes T-shirts, trailer decals, patches, pins, signs, fundraising items, or any other item with any logo on it. Allow several weeks for the approval process.

Read the Trail Life USA Licensing Policy and instructions online in the Leader Pages.

Commercialism

The use of membership or participation in Trail Life USA for the purpose of personal or business financial benefit is not permitted. No member may use the logo, insignia, terms of usage or descriptive marks related to Trail Life USA unless the relationship or contract is authorized by the Trail Life USA Home Office. Trail Life USA's logo, insignia, terms, descriptive marks, or other intellectual property are not to be used as an endorsement of any commercial product or venture except as specifically authorized by Trail Life USA. As a non-profit organization, any funds or assets raised by or through Trail Life USA, its members, or Troops or Charter Organizations are to be used for the benefit of Trail Life USA and/or the Charter Organization.

CHAPTER 7 – SAFETY

Objectives

Understand YOU are Responsible for Child Safety and Youth Protection and the Basics of Protecting our Youth
Knowing Ratios for Proper Supervision
Knowing Trail Life USA's Child Safety and Youth Protection Policies
Understand the Two-Deep and No One-on-One Policies
Preventing Youth on Youth Abuse
Understand the Importance of Regular Instruction on these Issues for Youth
Learn How to Properly React and Report
Knowing the Trail Life USA Firearms Policy

Child Safety and Youth Protection

Responsibility

Safety is everyone's business from the most experienced adult down to the newest youth.

When asked, "Who is in charge of child safety and youth protection?" your answer should be a resounding, "**I AM!**"

Always refer to and follow the current *Health and Safety Guide* available online in the Leader Pages when planning and conducting activities. Safety is no accident. Awareness and accountability keep children safe, and so there will never be fewer than two Registered Adults with the boys under any circumstances.

Registered Adults/Youth Ratios

Ratios of Registered Adults to Woodlands Trailmen at all age groups:

I adult to 4 boys in grades K-I
I adult to 8 boys in grades 2-3
I adult to I0 boys in grades 4-5

Child Safety and Youth Protection Policies

All members – both adults and youth – share the responsibility of protecting and safeguarding our youth. Leaders should annually review the current Child Safety and Youth Protection Policy posted online.

Following the 'Two-deep' and 'No One-on-one' Policies

What is the difference between the "two-deep" and "no one-on-one" policy concepts and how do they practically function within a Troop?

Generally speaking, the two-deep rule is in place for safety so there is always a minimum

of two Registered Adults in proximity to provide backup and oversight.

There should always be a minimum of two Registered Adults on premises and either within eyesight or earshot or both at all Trail Life gatherings and activities (including transport), with the recommendation being that, whenever possible, a minimum of 2 adults should be with every group of boys.

The no one-on-one rule is in place for youth protection so no boy is ever alone with an adult. This is for both the protection of the boy and the adult.

Within that context, for gathering in individual rooms, single building locations at a larger facility, or vehicles transporting boys in the conduct of a Trail Life activity, there should never be an adult alone with a boy who is not his or her own son.

Additional Policies to Prevent Youth-On-Youth Abuse

The following guidelines must be followed at all times including at the meeting location, camping, or during other outings.

Buddy system

- Inasmuch as is possible, and particularly in bathrooms and other sensitive situations, groups of three or four Buddies within the same program group (e.g., a group of Foxes, Hawks, Mountain Lions, Navigators or Adventurers).
- Buddies change frequently to prevent "favorites" for grooming by an abuser

Restrooms

- Youth should use the buddy system above for restroom visits
- Two youth should not be alone in the restroom; either they go in and come out as a group of three or more, or they go in one at a time.
- Usage by youth should be closely monitored by a leader outside the restroom for adherence to the guidelines listed here.
- Should be monitored by leadership before and after meetings when buddy system is often dropped because it is assumed that parents are "in-charge" of youth

Camping & Activities

- Trail Life USA standards restrict boys to only tent with buddies of the same program group (e.g. Navigators tent with Navigators, Adventurers only tent with Adventurers, etc.) unless they are siblings.
- Whenever possible, three or four boys should share a tent, rather than only two.
- The same rules above for restroom usage apply to bathhouse usage on overnight trips.

Troop Annual Safety Discussion

A safety discussion involving all the boys in the patrol and their parents should be done when joining and at least annually with the entire patrol. There are a number of things you should consider when introducing a new boy to your Troop policies and procedures:

For Troop safety, you should first go over the youth protection aspects of the program including:

- Two-deep leadership: Two registered leaders must be present at each event.
- No one-on-one: An adult can never be alone with a youth that is not his own child; additionally, no texting or on-line communication that is "one-on-one."
- Buddy System of three and how it relates to bathroom usage, tent camping, activities and after meeting supervision. (See Prevent Youth on Youth Abuse section below for details)
- Respect privacy
- No secret ceremonies, activities, or meetings
- Appropriate clothing
- No hazing, bullying, or physical hitting – Get help from an adult leader
- No use of technology to violate privacy
- Say No to requests for inappropriate behavior and then Go and Tell an adult
- Follow safety rules.
- Use common sense.

Other Safety Rules

- Safe Aquatics - Safety method used for all aquatics activities.
- Six-point good stewardship method to minimize our usage impact on the environment
- Lost - Most important objective is to stop moving around so you can be found.
- Woods Tools Safety Rules - You will be trained on safety and use of woods tools before you will be permitted to use them.
- In this discussion, mention (particularly as a reminder to parents) that medical history, conditions and forms must be current.
- All health and safety rules must be followed
- Each member must have on file a current (within the last I2 months) annual TLUSA Member/Participant Health and Medical Form
- All prescription medications to be taken on an activity must be kept by one of the adult leaders
- Proper clothing and footwear on activities is important for health and safety
- Any injuries at an activity must be reported to adult leaders and parents

Incident Reporting

In the event of an accident, injury, or violation of TLUSA policy, the following steps should be taken:

- Keep yourself, the affected youth and others calm;
- Encourage, affirm, reassure and communicate with the youth;
- Youth health, safety and protection are the main priority;
- Summarize in writing the details, facts and action taken;
- In addition to any required reports to law enforcement or other agencies, an incident report should be filed with Trail Life USA and the Charter Organization as soon as possible, certainly within 24 hours.

A Trail Life USA Incident Report can be found online in the Leader Pages on the Insurance and Health and Safety page.

Personal Weapons Policy

Trail Life USA requires permission from the Home Office to carry personal weapons including firearms to Trail Life activities. Please see the Policy document online for more information.

CHAPTER 8 - TRAINING

Objectives

See How to Train the Trainer
Learn the TEAM Method of Teaching Skills Make Learning Skills Fun
Understand Leadership Training

Training the Trainer

Necessary elements for the Trainer

It is critical for leaders in Trail Life USA at all levels to develop skills for passing on skills and experiences to other leaders.

Having a skill and teaching a skill are two different things. The necessary elements to make a good teacher out of a good tradesman are:

Communication Skills – The ability to express certain concepts verbally or manually that the student needs to succeed.
Avoid Distractions – This includes avoiding unnecessary digressions and distracting behavior such as annoying body language or a noisy/ inappropriate environment.
Have Patience – What seems easy to you may seem impossible to them. If you try to pressure them to pay attention or try harder when those are not the real problems, you may very well make the skill impossible for them to learn.
Relationship Skills – You are the teacher and he is the pupil, but both of you want the same thing to happen ... learning. You are full partners in achieving this goal.
Build on Previous Skills – If skills are taught properly, advanced skills are combinations of—or variations of—simpler skills learned earlier.

The Four Leadership-for-Growth Skills are:

Effective Communication – Ensure a good two-way flow of information by using good listening and speaking skills. When people know what they should be doing and how they should be doing it, they will function much better. As a leader, you will benefit from feedback, and you should listen as carefully to constructive criticism as you do to praise.
Leadership by Example – People are more apt to do what you do rather than what you say. Your actions should show that you are still very much a part of the group.
Sharing Leadership – Delegating authority frees you up to focus on the overall direction, but it is also an important part of continuing the growth of the people you lead.
Building Trust – The most important dynamic of a group is specialization, the ability of each member to bring his full attention to one task and do it well, relying on others to carry out the other needed chores. This system only works well where there is trust in the willingness and ability of others to do their jobs.

The "Team" Method

Every skill learned goes through three stages: when you can't get it right, when you can get it right, and when you can't get it wrong. You were born at stage one. To get yourself and your

students to stage two where you can get it right, use

TEAM-work:
TELL the student about the skill
EXHIBIT the skill
ASSIST them in doing it themselves
MEASURE success by testing them unaided

Tell – Avoid jargon, though you may need to teach Trailmen new terms so they can communicate clearly. One thing you want to tell the student is why it is important. Before you teach someone to tie a bowline, mention that it forms a non-slip loop for rescue.
Exhibit – When you exhibit a skill, don't just do it quickly. Make sure the individual parts that make up the entire skill are clearly shown. As you tie the bowline, you might recite a mnemonic (memory aid) such as, "The rabbit comes out of the hole, goes around the tree, and back into the hole."
Assist – You may stand behind the Trailman to show him how to tie a bowline on himself rather than tie one around yourself while facing him. By not having to reverse the knot, the Trailman learns the skill more easily. When it appears they can do it on their own, go to the next step...

Measure – You want your student to succeed, but success means they can perform the skill when you are not around to prompt them with hand gestures, little hints spoken to them, or any other body language. When they can pass the test cleanly, they truly have reason to be proud.

EQUIP Training

EQUIP Training events are THE in-person, hands-on way to train Trail Life USA Troop leadership. EQUIP events impart the mission and vision of Trail Life USA, teach needed skills, and instill a comprehensive understanding of the program.

EQUIP participants will be inspired as they see a bigger picture of Trail Life USA, and excitement will be generated as each participant discovers even greater purpose in their volunteer service position in Trail Life USA.

Whether an experienced scouter or a newcomer to outdoor leadership and adventure, all leaders will learn and grow from the EQUIP experience. For those who are seasoned scouters: What is greater than knowledge? The proper USE of that knowledge! Come to EQUIP and learn the techniques to share and teach the Trail Life USA program to your local area's Troops.

EQUIP Events include hands-on training for Trail Life USA Registered Adult leaders. Training is focused on the specifics of Troop operations, providing valuable and practical information that leaders can use in the day-to-day execution of their local program. Attendees learn together in a patrol setting, camping and eating together during the course of a structured weekend that incorporates classes on Outdoor Skills, Youth Mentorship, Troop Resources, Troop Weekly Meetings, and Troop Volunteer Service. EQUIP teaches the importance of how spiritual components are woven throughout our program. Our reliance on Christ as our Lord and Savior is the foundation of our program. All we learn and teach in TLUSA is built on this truth.

EQUIP training events are specifically for Trail Life USA members involved in already-functioning Troops. EQUIP courses are not geared to be promotional or to "come find out more about our organization", but instead are designed to empower and engage existing members as they serve in their volunteer roles.

Leaders who attend "first generation" EQUIP events commit to hosting and leading a course to train leaders in their local Area. These "next generation" EQUIP events take place all around the country and are hosted by Point Men (or their appointed Area Training Chairmen) who have been trained at the national EQUIP events.

Nationally-trained participants are the only ones authorized to conduct next generation events. So, participants of next generation EQUIP events (led by first generation EQUIP trainers) are EQUIP trained, but are not certified to conduct another local Area EQUIP event. Informal training events that include variations or partial sections of EQUIP training do not provide official EQUIP certification or "Trained" status.

EQUIP training will be tracked as a part of Trail Life USA member records.
Contact your local Point Man about an EQUIP event near you.

Other Helpful Resources

Trail Tracks

This tool was developed to help you track your progress as you strive to become a thriving Troop! Your Charter Organization Representative, Committee Chairman, and Troopmaster should review the following characteristics together, then self-evaluate to determine where your Troop is now—and where improvement is needed.
Trail Tracks Evaluation Tool

Others

In addition to online resources mentioned in this text, here is a partial list of other resources that are available to assist you in the program:

Trail Life University Online Training

Trail Life USA Leader Pages Online

JoinTheTrail.com

Trail Life USA Website and Blog

Trail Life USA Facebook Page

Trail Life USA Member-only Official Facebook Forum

Trail Life USA Store

The Trailman's Handbook for Woodlands Trail (available soon in the TLUSA store)

The Trailman's Handbook: Premier Edition