

Stuck in the Troop Meeting Rut?

June 10, 2014 By [Clarke Green](#)



Like Hannibal Smith “I love it when a plan comes together” and I think planning is an important skill, but the repetition of the same plan, over and over again, can wear a rut in the floor.

Somewhere in the dim, dark past the Troop meeting plan was created; preopening 10 minutes, opening 5 minutes, instruction 20 minutes, patrol meeting 20 minutes, game 20 minutes, closing 5 minutes.

There’s a lot Scouts can get out of meetings that follow a predictable plan, but there’s also room for breaking the mold now and again. Breakout meetings can be just for fun, but any savvy group of Scouts can build in lots of skill-based elements to help Scouts advance.

With a little imagination your Patrol Leader’s council can plan something new, here’s a few ideas;

Trek Meetings

Get out and about! If your regular meeting place isn’t ideally situated for a trek think about using a local park or other open location.

Challenge Trail

Patrols begin at the meeting place and follow a map that takes them to different destinations where an activity is planned (a skill demonstration, game, or challenge) and loops back to the meeting place.

Scavenger Trail

Patrols are given a list of locations and or objects to find in the area around the meeting place. They can take a snapshot of the item or answer a descriptive question to prove they've found it.

Man Hunt

Several people have become lost in the neighborhood of the meeting place. Here's where they were last seen, what they were wearing and what they were doing, the patrol who rescues them (a couple may need to be carried on a stretcher!) wins.

Covert Operations

Your Patrol must arrive at the rendezvous point marked on this map in 30 minutes without being detected by the agents dispersed throughout the area. You lose ten points each time an agent detects and photographs your patrol. The agents are equipped with cameras, and report to the rendezvous point in 30 minutes to tally the score for the winning patrol.

Beat the Clock

A race to move your patrol (with their backpacks, a stretcher or what have you) from point A on the map to point B.

Maker Meetings

Set aside the whole meeting time to make something useful or something fun. The choices are endless but here are a few suggestions:

1. [Paracord bracelets](#) or [neckerchief slides](#).
2. [Fire starters](#)
3. [Kites](#)
4. [Pioneering projects](#)
5. [Hiking Sticks](#)
6. First aid/survival kits.

Campfires

Build fires and cook dinner, end with a campfire program.

Parent's Open House

Each patrol prepares a couple of demonstrations, games or events that parent's can participate in.

Inter-Patrol Scoutmaster's Challenge

Every so often we dedicate one Troop meeting to an Inter-Patrol Scoutmaster's Challenge; an evening of skill, spirit and leadership competition. [Here's the details.](#)

Do those ideas get the wheels turning? At your next patrol leader's council meeting ask the Scouts what ideas they have for getting out of the troop meeting rut.

Let me know what they come up with, and share your ideas in the comments below. Caution: once you start breaking the mold, you may never get back in!