

Den Chiefs in Your Den and Pack



What is a den chief?

A den chief is a Scout or Venture Scout who assists a Cub Scout den leader, Webelos den leader or Arrow of Light den leader with den meetings and activities. This trained Scout acts as an “activities assistant” to the den leader and a role model to the Cub Scout. The den chief can help with den activities, advancement, ceremonies and other den events. Den chiefs are especially helpful with teaching Scout skills to Webelos and arrow of lights as they prepare to bridge to a Scouts, BSA troop.

How is the den chief useful to the pack and the troop, or crew?

The den chief acts as a link between the pack and the troop or crew, strengthening the bond and encouraging Cub Scouts to continue their Scouting careers. The den chief is already the ideal the Cub Scouts are working towards, a Scout in a troop or crew and Cub Scouts are more likely to follow the Scout into his or her home unit. The den chief is also a friend and familiar face within the troop or crew once the Cub Scout has bridged.

Being a den chief gives the Scout a position of responsibility within the troop or crew that satisfies rank requirements in Scouts, BSA and Venture Scouts. The den chief’s presence in the pack serves as the link between the pack and the troop or crew. The den chief promotes Scouting in general and the local troop or crew in particular; encouraging Webelos to transition into Scouting or Venturing.

Adult leaders need to make sure the role is seen as important and necessary. In agreeing to accept a den chief’s assistance, they ensure the den chief has meaningful opportunities to support the den and assist with activities, to the best of the den chief’s ability. In this way, the den receives the many benefits of having a den chief while the den chief has opportunities to learn and grow as a leader and as a Scout. Cubmasters request den chief help from scoutmasters or crew advisors. These adults need to acknowledge the importance of den chiefs to the whole troop or crew and make sure all members understand that the den chief holds a leadership position of responsibility.

What are a den chief’s Qualifications?

- The den chief is an older Scout or Venture Scout registered to a troop or crew respectively.
- The den chief is selected by the senior patrol leader and scoutmaster or venturing advisor at the request of the cubmaster.
- The den chief is approved by the cubmaster and pack committee for recommendation to the Den Leader.

What are the den chief’s responsibilities?

- The den chief knows the purposes of Cub Scouting and understands the Cub Scouting program and the differences between Cub Scouts and other Scouting programs. The den chief helps Cub Scouts achieve the purposes of Cub Scouting.
- Help lead weekly den meetings. The den chief knows a variety of resources for age-appropriate activities for Cub Scouts in the den.
- Serve as the activities assistant at den meetings. The den chief understands the den leader’s duties and confidently helps lead portions of the den meeting program. The den chief also assists the den leader with planning and conducting den meetings.
- Set a good example through attitude and uniforming.
- Help the denner and assistant denner to be leaders. Be a friend to the boys and girls in the den.

- Help the den in its part of the monthly pack meeting. Know the importance of the monthly theme and pack meeting plans.
- Meet regularly with the den leader to review den and pack meeting plans. Meet as needed with adult members of the den, pack, and troop.
- Attend Den Chief Training.
- Encourage Arrow of Light Scouts to become Scouts, BSA or Venture Scouts when they are eligible.

Why is Den Chief Training important?

Robert Baden-Powell believed that every Scout deserves a trained leader. It is just as important that youth leaders are trained. Den Chief Training allows the new den chief or an experienced den chief looking for new ideas to have fun and learn the role.

What do Scoutmasters and Cub Scout Leaders have to say about den chiefs?

"While I was a cubmaster, we had several dens lucky enough to have den chiefs. Those Scouts added knowledge of Scout skills, and brought fun and cheer to every den they worked in. The den chief brought experience, and knowledge that the den leader often did not have; from knots, to starting a fire, the Scouts were a boon to my den leaders. But it was not just the program which improved. The behavior of the Cubs improved; they now had a role model close to their own age, with similar experiences to them, who knew that the latest games where and what they were going through in school; they were accessible in ways that an adult never could be. -Adam Sonzogni, past Cubmaster of Pack 215, Fishawack

"My older son had a den chief while he was a Webelos and my younger son had one starting as a Bear in third grade. In both situations, the den chief had a huge impact on which troop the scouts attended as Scouts. The Cubs really enjoyed learning from the older Scouts and learned a lot about what being a Scout meant. The older Scouts made great connections with the den, which continued when the Cubs crossed over into the troop. My older son is now a den chief and is making an impact on the cubs in a similar way his den chief made an impact on him. The den leader has told me on several occasions how helpful my son has been in getting the younger boys engaged and focused on the skills being taught that week, while at the same time teaching them silly songs and skits that I remember he was taught by his den chiefs. Overall, I believe that the den chief program is a great way of connecting the Cub Scouts with Scouts BSA. Older Scouts have an incredible effect on younger Scouts, some of which are made simply by being a part of their lives. I learned a lot about what Scouts BSA was all about from our den chiefs, which was helpful since there are so many differences between Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA. I appreciate the lessons they taught my sons and the bond they formed in their shared experiences." -Heather Walker, Committee Chair, Pack 147, Black River

"As a scoutmaster, finding Scouts willing to be den chief is a challenge; to start it is a year-long commitment, and it's with "kids". Once you have a good candidate it is amazing. The transformation of that Scout during his year as a den chief is profound. The change in attitude as they realize just a year or two ago they were a "kid" who did not know everything they do now, they have adults who trust their opinion and defer to their knowledge of Scoutcraft. These Scouts seem to be more patient, have more Scout spirit, and self-confidence, than their peers. My most successful senior patrol leaders are those whom have served as den chiefs." -Adam Sonzogni, Scoutmaster of Troop 72, Fishawack

"This position gives the Scout an opportunity to be a helper & leader, as well as initial training experiences working with other Scouts. The responsibilities the Scout assumes are with a new adult leader. Our troop has had den chiefs for 9 years now. I have found that the dens that cross over have a closeness & familiarity with both our Scouts & activities. As a result, the new Scouts are more aware of Scouts BSA, which has led to a higher retention rate. Our troop has grown from 8 scouts to 40. As the Scouts within the troop vote for the senior patrol leader, the younger Scouts already are aware of the leadership qualities of the candidates and participate eagerly in selecting their next leader." -Debbie Naley-Minenna, Committee Member, Troop 160, Black River