

GUIDED DISCOVERY

The Guided Discovery Process is a fancy term for what? Guided Discovery is an approach where Scouts are asked a question which leads them to examine a situation, and then discover the best way to proceed. Put another way, Guided Discovery enables Scouts to think for themselves in order to solve problems and find solutions. This approach is Scout-based. By Scout-based it is meant the focus is on the learning and the Scout, not on the teaching and the teacher.

Asking a question is a big part of this process. Asking the right questions takes as much skill as giving the right answers. The idea is, the right kind of question is going to get the Scouts thinking. It's this thinking that leads them through a path of discovery where they can figure out for themselves what they need to do.

When Scouts are faced with a challenge or have a problem, it is natural they will frequently have their own questions. But, with Guided Discovery, we, don't just spoon feed them the answer. Instead, in order to guide them through this path of discovery, we present them with a counter question—a question which requires them to find their best answer by applying what they know, using their resources, and coming to their own valuable conclusion. And why is their conclusion so valuable? It's, because whatever a Scout learns through a process of discovery is there's. It's something they've arrived at through their own efforts. So, they own it.

Guided discovery as a process. There's a lot that youth leaders have to go through before they can take the reins and run the troop. All through their ranks and as they mature, Scouts are gaining knowledge. Not just facts, but skills and techniques too. Let's talk about a brand new troop where we want to enable the newly elected SPL to run things. With the Guided Discovery Process, the first thing they need is a vision. They can be given a picture of a troop that's involved with an exciting program that reflects what they want. They're learning, they're advancing, and they're having a lot of fun. Also, everything's planned and carried out by them. In this vision, the only time the Scoutmaster is in front of the troop is for a minute at the end of the meeting. The rest of the time, it's all up to them.

Now once the Scout is given a vision like this, the second thing they need is the strong desire to make it happen—they're motivated to be an effective Senior Patrol Leader.

The third necessary thing any youth leader needs is the prerequisite tools to carry out their job. And here, it is the Scoutmaster's responsibility to make sure they learn, or at least have access to, all these necessary tools. For example, the new SPL needs to know that putting up the Scout sign is a means to getting the troop's attention. This is a basic tool. Now, discovering how to use this tool most effectively is something else. This is a technique, and techniques can be gained... through Guided Discovery.

Back to the Scout sign. Maybe the SPL had a terrible time at a meeting to get the troop quiet when they held up the sign. After the meeting, the Scoutmaster might ask, "So, how do you think things went tonight? Were you able to control the troop the way you'd like?" And the SPL might answer, "The troop doesn't ever really get quiet when the sign goes up." The Scoutmaster might then ask a guiding question like, "Well, when you hold

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up the sign, what do you think the Scouts see?” Now, after mulling this over, if the SPL just scratches their head, the Scoutmaster might ask, “What do you want them to see?” That question should serve to further guide him and get their wheels turning. Through this process, they can start zooming in and find their own answer. If they picture the troop as they’re holding up the sign, they might remember how even some of their own leaders were still carrying on. Ah-ha! There’s a key! They’ve got to make it clear to their leaders that as soon as they put up the sign, they need to quickly get quiet and put up their’s. This way, the rest of the troop is going to have a good example to follow. What’s important here is that this SPL comes to the conclusion on their own. They are guided to find a solution, but it’s actually their discovery. See how this is different than just telling them that the Patrol Leaders Council leads by example!?

So, through guided discovery, a youth leader can find the solution to their problem and gain needed techniques. Learning these techniques by discovering them is a way they can make these techniques their own. When they find a solution to their own problem, through their own efforts, they own that solution!

So, now as they gain techniques, they can use them to do a good job. This is good because doing a good job gives them confidence. With confidence, a motivated youth leader can start using their own initiative to make everything better. Youth leaders using initiative is amazing. When this happens, it’s awesome!

THIS IS THE PROCESS: A vision / a desire / the tools and the techniques to use them / gaining confidence / using initiative.

How does a Scoutmaster shift the attention off themselves as the leader to the Senior Patrol Leader? When a Scoutmaster is approached by the SPL with a question or problem, with guided discovery, they won’t just dole out hard and fast answers. Instead, again, they ask a counter question. “This is your troop. What do you think needs to be done?” If it’s not a matter of health and safety, then reflecting the situation back onto the SPL with a question, is shifting the attention off of themselves. As for the rest of the troop, have you ever seen T-shirts for the adults with the back saying, “Ask the Senior Patrol Leader?” There’s even a little, round, patrol medallion sized patch for a Scouter’s right sleeve saying, “ask the SPL.”

How does the Scoutmaster instill their knowledge to the Senior Patrol Leader? First, by inspiring them with a shared vision, and of course encouraging them whenever appropriate. Then, by providing him with all the necessary resources so they can do things independently. Along the way, the Scoutmaster serves as a mentor, but a Scoutmaster really needs to lead by following one step behind. That means, they know where the SPL and the troop are heading and what they need, but from there, they enable them to discover things on their own.

Youth leaders should always have a Plan B. Plan-B-Prepared. A perfect example of a Guided Discovery question that will get a Scout thinking is: “What if?” Asking Scouts questions beginning with “what if” is a good way to ensure they have their bases

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covered. It gets them thinking about alternatives and also utilizing their troop's resources.

Some other examples of the Guided Discovery Process. Here's a couple more guided discovery scenarios: Two Scouts carry a third through a 4-foot wide track as part of a Handicap Obstacle Course activity. The two Scouts really struggle to carry the third because they hadn't learned the "two handed carry" or the "four-handed seat". Now, after their struggle, it could just be explained to them how to do these carries. But, it would be better to ask them, "How would you like to find out how to carry an injured person a whole lot easier, even if they're heavier?" and then guide them: "Where can you see how to do this in your own handbooks?" They're most likely gonna want to check this out, because after what they just went through, they're definitely ready to learn something better than what they did. But the emphasis is on them to discover it themselves. When we pour ourselves into finding our own solutions, we become invested in the process. When someone makes an investment, they're much more likely to feel involved. For example, a person is much more likely to read a book if you buy it, as opposed to someone just giving it to them.

Another scenario is about using woods tools to prepare tinder and kindling and then build and light a fire. As Scout leaders, before a Scout tries anything where safety enters the picture, we must make sure they have the necessary tools. In this case, the prerequisite tools are knowing how to safely use woods-tools, and knowing how to be careful with fire. So, here's a Scout who we observe knows how to properly use a knife and axe, and they've prepared tinder and kindling to start and feed a cooking fire. They've got everything they need, a safe area, a proper surface, a fire bucket nearby, but, before they try to light a fire, they put their tinder and kindling into the fire pit, all mixed together, and then, try as they will, each time they put a match to this mess, it goes out. They find they can't light a fire. They recognize they've come face to face with a stumbling block, and they're definitely ready to learn what needs to be done next. But, using guided discovery means we don't just show them how to do it, and we don't hover over them providing guidance every step of the way either. They need to get actively involved with learning how to do this, themselves. Remember, with this approach, it's all about the learning, not the teaching. Guided Discovery happens when we ask questions. Here, we might ask something like, "Why do you think this fire won't stay lit?" Let them think about this. A follow up question might be, "Looking at all your tinder and kindling here, what will burn the easiest when you touch a match to it?" The Scout will naturally answer the light weight stuff—the tinder. Now, after getting them thinking about what needs to be done, they should be given the opportunity to explain what they're going to do, and if their explanation is good, then let them do it.

Are there any resources available to assist Scoutmasters and Advisors on how to facilitate leadership? Beyond Scoutmaster Position Specific Training, Woodbadge goes more deeply into communication and leadership. But additionally, when it comes to assuring youth leaders are successful, Introduction to Leadership Skills for Troops serves as an invaluable resource. Another good resource is Scout leaders who themselves have well run, successful troops. Most any Scoutmaster or Assistant

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Scoutmaster, who is passionate about what they do, loves to talk about their troop, especially when it comes to talking about what their Scouts do to run things well.

Additional Information. The three basic roles of the Scoutmaster:

1. Make sure the rules of the BSA and chartered partner are followed,
2. The Scoutmaster should be a good mentor and positive role model.
3. The Scoutmaster trains and guides Scout leaders.

The Guided Discovery Process does this, by asking the right kinds of questions, and then getting out of the way.

Guided discovery provides the framework within which, Scouts can lead themselves to realize a vision they have.

Provide the Scouts the objective, equip them with the tools and the skills or the resources to learn how to use them, and turn them loose.

Scouts will learn to lead by practicing leading and experiencing the results of their hands-on leadership efforts.

“Why” and “How” questions enhance the Scouts’ ability to make decisions, which is one of the central goals of empowerment.

When Scouts run their own troop, they’ve been empowered to do this. A troop run by motivated Scouts who have the right skills, and techniques, is bound to have good membership and the highest retention rate.