

ONLINE SCOUTING SKILLS CENTER



Dutch Oven Mountain Man Breakfast

INTRODUCTION - Scouting skills are a central part of “Outdoor Programs”—the one method of Scouting that has bearing on the other seven. Conclusions regarding the positive outcomes inherent in [putting outdoor skills into action](#) are irrefutable. Several years ago, the importance of enabling Scout leaders to plan, prepare, and present fun meetings with positive outcomes was one of the top objectives at the forefront of Scouting’s strategic plan. When it comes to increasing membership and retention, that important goal is as essential and important as ever. Putting Scouting skills into action in ways that are engaging and fun is central to the realization of this objective.

When the link for a skill-related resource first appeared on the BSA’s official website, one couldn’t help but stand up and take notice. What a capital idea—a *top-level*, go-to repository for information and inspiration related to Scouting skills!

<i>Scouting.org</i>	<i>Scout Life</i>	On Scouting blog (Scouting magazine)	<i>Scout Shop</i>
Authoritative resource for the core aspects of becoming or being a Scout	Seasonal and timely news and activities about being a Scout	Seasonal and timely news for Scout parents and leaders	Authoritative place to purchase Scouts merchandise

There’s a well-defined approach for sharing a broad spectrum of content found in the online Scouting Skills Center with Scouting’s other official media channels.

WEB TEAM'S STATED OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVE - The stated Overview from the web team's initial proposal for the Scouting Skills Center is as follows: *"The Scouting Skills Center (SSC) would be an entirely new, robust section of Scouting.org, geared to serving as the authoritative repository of all skill-based knowledge and experiences, as well as showcase the Scouting way of life and 110 years of outdoors expertise."* This overview is "right-on!"

These are the web team's stated objectives:

- *"better convey the richness of the Scouting brand and 110+ years of history by featuring the people and stories behind the Scouts*
- *"give prospective Scouts a better understanding of what the Scouting life entails prior to joining (and improving sign-up conversion as a result)*
- *"attract a new audience via organic search to the Scouting.org site through rich, nonbranded skill content*
- *"enhance existing Scouts' experience by providing an authoritative source of information related to the acquisition of skills (presently, this information is spread across multiple properties, subdomains, sibling properties and 'competitor' sites)"*

Here is some critical commentary pertaining to the first and third bullet points of the web team's stated objectives:

- *"better convey the richness of the Scouting brand and 110+ years of history by featuring the people and stories behind the Scouts"* In the web team's proposal, the section referring to *Expert Scouts* states: *"Each expert would have a profile page with their biography and list of content authored"*. One has to ask, what is the purpose of featuring "experts"? The emphasis should be on sharing information that Scouts and Scouters can use to improve their program, not on calling attention to a handful of individuals who have the same level of expertise as hundreds of other BSA volunteers. Scouting's rich legacy can be effectively conveyed in more attractive ways. (Refer to "Fourth Objective" on page 5.)
- *"attract a new audience via organic search to the Scouting.org site through rich, nonbranded skill content"* "Nonbranded skill content" often runs counter to Scouting's best practices. The BSA has a very particular way of presenting outdoor skills in accordance with proven best practices for Scout-age youth. Also, depending on what they are searching for, internet users are already attracted to scouting.org and its subdomains.

UNDERLYING GOAL - Of course, the real underlying goal is to satisfy the Mission of the Boy Scouts of America and realize its Aims. In examining the web team's objectives, it's clear that it would be efficacious to present objectives that are defined from a more focused perspective. Before elucidating what these objectives should be, let's bring to light a basic premise. The ever-present emphasis on the "Three M's" (Membership, Manpower, and Money) is easy to understand. But, all three actually hinge upon one important element . . . PROGRAM! In a very real sense, the Scouting program can be defined as *what Scouts do!* If our Scouts are enjoying an outstanding program—one that is truly rewarding and fun, then membership will increase, more adults will be attracted to join, and subsequently, more money will be channeled into the movement.

With the intention to ultimately increase membership and retention, what the Scout Skills Center needs is content that is straightforward and readily-deliverable! It needs content that is easily accessible, providing useful information Scouts and Scouters can implement, to help deliver the promise of Scouting in their units, districts, and councils.



ENTER SCOUTING SKILLS - Before our members can embrace the fun and adventure inherent in our multifaceted program, they have to acquire the related skills that come into play during the experiences. This is one important way the Scouting Skills Center can play a vital and beneficial role!

Over the years, the BSA has created outdoor skill-related resources through a special, online media task force comprised of a team of volunteers with decades of field experience. The most recent collection of online resources was created with input from a host of veteran subject matter experts, and in conjunction with oversight from various national, outdoor committees. It would be a worthwhile and obvious course of action to present these well-catalogued resources in the Scouting Skills Center.

FIRST OBJECTIVE - At the top of the list of objectives should be to provide a useful, well-catalogued [resource library of outdoor skills](#) revealing how each skill can be explained and demonstrated.

SECOND OBJECTIVE - Furnish an attractive resource that offers our membership a [library of Scout skill activities](#) that contribute to making Scout meetings unforgettably fun with positive outcomes! Once the skills are acquired, nothing will increase a unit's rate of retention more than an engaging challenge that reinforces the skill's acquisition, illustrates how the skill is used, and provides an opportunity to rely upon the skill in order to experience success.

THIRD OBJECTIVE - The core of basic Scouting skills consists of the ones included in the Scouts BSA early rank requirements. Even more elementary are the ones that will soon be a part of the new Cub Scout program. The third objective should be to include a useful resource that provides skill sets pertaining to a wide range of *additional* outdoor program opportunities. The online version of [Program Features for Troops and Crews](#) does just that. *Program Features* consists of 48 themed modules to help make program planning easier. Each module contains its own set of useful skills.

Regarding Merit Badges, which are currently active as part of the Scout Skill Center, the merit badge hub already lives appropriately within the pages of the Scouts BSA division. This of course is where it belongs. In terms of relevancy, it should be noted that only a very small representation of the 138 merit badges are Scout skill based: Canoeing, Fishing, Climbing, etc. However, because there is such a wide range of skills associated with earning merit badges, and the pamphlets are so content rich, it would be most appropriate to include a link to the merit badge hub in this third section, along with a comprehensive listing of those merit badges that require demonstrating related skills.



CAMPING



BACKPACKING



PIONEERING



WILDERNESS SURVIVAL



ORIENTEERING



Outdoor Skills

By using their acquired outdoor Scouting skills, Scouts make accomplishing tasks in the outdoors more safe, convenient, and fun!

[Learn More](#)



Scout Skill Challenges

There's a wealth of fun activities where Scouts can put their skills into action in ways that illustrate how the skills are used, reinforce the acquisition of the skills, and rely upon the skills in order to complete a challenging task.

[Learn More](#)



Additional Skills

Engaging in a wide range of exciting, outdoor adventures requires acquiring additional sets of skills.

[Learn More](#)



Putting Skills into ACTION!

Scouts can rely upon the skills they've gained to have fun and get things done. By using their acquired skills, all kinds of accomplishments are theirs to enjoy.

[Learn More](#)

FOURTH OBJECTIVE - Provide an impressive repository of helpful and/or inspiring examples of real Scouts in action, bringing to life activities that utilize specific Scout skills, e.g. the skills featured in these three activities: [Rope-Toss-Log-Lift Challenge](#) / [Supreme String Burning Race](#) / [Everyone on the Tripod](#).



Rope-Toss Log-Lift Challenge



Supreme String Burning Race



Everyone on the Tripod

This section would also cover the web team's notion of submitted "Scout Stories." There are thousands of Scouting stories laced with fun and adventure, *but* a focus on related Scout skills is seldom a part of the story telling. A much more focused inclusion would be videos of real Scouts engaged in a particular outdoor scenario that includes a depiction of related skill sets, e.g the skill sets featured in these three scenarios: [Large Patrol Raft](#) / [Dutch Oven Apple Dumplings](#) / [Setting Up a Simple Patrol Dining Fly](#).



Large Patrol Raft



Dutch Oven Apple Dumplings



Setting Up a Simple Patrol Dining Fly

CONCLUSION - For several years, there has been the need to provide easier access to official, online resources relating to Scout skills. The Scout Skill Center, with its top-level placement, will make these valuable resources more available. Because of its placement and content, it will serve our membership by satisfying the ongoing need for useful, skill-related information, and by providing ideas for meetings and outings that are rewarding and fun.

Also, the creation of the Scout Skill Center will help to reemphasize the value of putting acquired Scouting skills into action—for the benefit of Scouts, and to increase Scouting’s impact in the eyes of the public.

What a great idea!



Lifeline Relay

Prepared under the auspices of Outdoor Programs and Properties, by Larry Green

Author: 2023 Edition Pioneering Merit Badge Pamphlet

Author: Outdoor Skills Section, National Camping School

Author: Camping and Pioneering Program Features for Troops and Crews

Author: *Scout Pioneering - Good Ol' Fashioned Outdoor Fun*