Leadership Development

ABC’S OF DECISION MAKING

Session Length: 50 Minutes

Learning objectives:
- Understand the impact of the Scout Oath and Law on decision making.
- Be able to utilize the Strategic and Annual Plan in decision making.
- Be able to incorporate values and expectations of new members in decision making.

Required Materials:
- Flipcharts

TRAINER PREPARATION

Prior to this session, the trainer should be familiar with the mission of the Order of the Arrow and the Boy Scouts of America.

*Trainer Tip:* The mission of the OA and BSA should be visible in the room on a flipchart or poster so it can be referred to during the course of the session.

SESSION NARRATIVE

This session will help us to look at the process of decision making and some of the factors that go into making the right decisions. To help us begin thinking about how we make decisions, perhaps we can consider this question:

Ask: Why do boys decide to join scouting? Why do scouts decide to stay active in the Order of the Arrow?

Answers may include: Fun, Outdoors Activity, Eagle Scout, Try New Things, Go Camping, Service to Others, Meet New People.

Ask: Does any boy join scouting because he “wants to learn to make good decisions?”

*Trainer Tip:* Use a flip chart to record the answers of the participants. Post the answers in a part of the room, so they can be referred to again later in the session.

The Boy Scouts of America and the Order of the Arrow provide many opportunities to young men and women to develop and grow into young adults. Decision making is an integral part of that development. Let’s take a look at how we do that.

As we consider the importance of decision making consider this statistic from a Cornell University study published in the January 2007 issue of *Environment and Behavior*:
“On average participants estimated they made about 15 food decisions per day. But when they answered specific questions about when, what, how much and where they ate and who made decisions about meals the participants actually made an average of 221 food-related decisions each day.”

If we are making upwards of 221 food-related decisions per day, imagine how many other decisions we make per day! The Boy Scouts of America has made preparing young people to make good decisions a central part of its program.

The Mission of the Boy Scouts of America states:

“The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.”

Decision making isn’t a part of the Boy Scout program; it is the mission of the program! The mission of the BSA is to prepare young people to make good decisions! Everything we do in the scouting program should be focused towards this part of our mission. The Order of the Arrow attempts to do the same.

The third part of the Purpose of the Order of the Arrow states:

“Develop leaders with the willingness, character, spirit and ability to advance the activities of their units, our Brotherhood, Scouting, and ultimately our nation.”

Part of the Order of the Arrow program is to develop leaders who can make the decisions necessary to successfully serve the groups they are put in charge of leading. Good decision making is key to the OA program as well!

Perhaps one of the most important tools that Scouting and the Order of the Arrow provides are a set values we can refer to when making the most simple or the most complicated decisions.

The Boy Scout Oath, Law, Motto and Slogan along with the Order of the Arrow Obligation provide a set of values which can be used as the foundation for all our decisions. Every scout regardless of their maturity, leadership ability, or experience shares a common ground for what it means to be a scout. We no longer have to ask ourselves “Is this right?”, “Is this good?”, or “Should I be doing this?”. We have the Scout Oath, Law, Motto, Slogan and Obligation to be our guide.

Ask: What else in scouting helps us to make good decisions?

Answers may include:

Scouting:
- Patrol Method
- Adult Association
- Leadership Opportunities

Order of the Arrow:
- Youth Leadership
- Capable Adult Advisers
- Living the Admonition

When speaking about decision making, Roy Disney said

“It’s not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are.”

The values that scouting teaches should be the most important thing to consider when making decision.

While each of us as leaders is tasked with making decisions, we must often work with others to make decisions. The Lodge Chief of your lodge must work with all the members of the Lodge Executive Committee to ensure the lodge is successful. Working with a group can be difficult. The Chief no longer can make decisions for himself.
Ask: What must the Chief consider when working with the Executive Committee?

He must consider the opinion of the entire group, the best interest of the entire group, the goals of the lodge as a whole.

Ask: What difficulties can a Lodge Chief face when working with a group to make a decision?

Answers may include differences of opinion, differences of motivation, unmotivated members of the group, pressures of making the right decision, too many ideas, poor/infeasible ideas, etc.

When working with a group the leader of the group must work with the entire group to come to a decision. Communication is key in this situation. It is the job of the leader to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to present their point of view and their suggestions. Only then can you make a decision. You may not be able to make every member of the group happy, but it is important to come to a decision that everyone can live with.

Ask: What about new members? How can they be part of the decision making process?

New members can breathe new life into your lodge or chapter. They bring new ideas, new perspective, and excitement to the group. However they are inexperienced in the ways of the lodge, the processes and the rules. This is a great opportunity for them to learn about the Order of the Arrow. Involve them as much as you can and allow them to learn about the lodge. Perhaps they may be the future leaders of the lodge one day.

How does your chief know if the decision they are making is best for the lodge/chapter? The easiest way to tell is by looking at the lodge’s/chapter’s strategic or annual plan. The strategic/annual plan sets the long/short range goals of the lodge. All the decisions we make should be towards working to accomplish our strategic/annual plan.

If one of the parts of the strategic plan for your lodge states “the Lodge shall become more aware of the environmental concerns faced by the council summer camp.”, perhaps the decision of what to do at the upcoming lodge service day, should center around a conservation project at camp rather than a food drive in the local community. These decisions can help the lodge accomplish the goals set forth by the lodge.

Make your strategic/annual plan available to all your lodge members. Keeping everyone on the same page with respect to the goals of the lodge will help you to make good individual or group decisions.
Now that we have examined the values and the mission of the group, assembled a team of youth and adults to lead the group, and consulted the strategic plan of the group, it is now time to make some important decisions! Here are some tips to consider when making decisions.

- **Analyze your options**
  Thoroughly consider a wide range of possible courses of action. Making a decision implies that there are alternative choices to be considered, and in such a case we want not only to identify as many of these alternatives as possible but to choose the one that best fits with our goals, desires, values, etc.

- **Be aware of the consequences**
  Carefully weigh whatever you know about the costs and risks of negative as well as positive consequences that could flow from each possible course of action.

- **Consider other information**
  Search for new relevant information to help you evaluate your options. Gathering reliable information can help you to make the best decision possible.

- **Do what is best for the organization**
  Always keep the overall mission of the organization in mind. Work towards the goals of the group and keep the values of the organization at the forefront of your discussion.

- **Implement your decision**
  Make detailed provisions for implementing and executing the decision, including contingency plans for known risks.

- **Evaluate your decision during its implementation**
  Once you’ve made your decision the work doesn’t end there! Continually evaluate how your decision is working out. Make adjustments to your plan as needed.

Break up the group into smaller groups. Each group should analyze the situation and attempt to answer these questions:

1. What points of the Scout Law, Scout Oath, OA Obligation or OA Admonition must be considered when making this decision?

2. How can you best use the group to make this decision?

3. What is your decision? What are some alternative options?

“You are members of the Lodge Executive Committee. Your Lodge Adviser announces that someone has donated $1000.00 to your lodge. They have donated the money with one stipulation, that you use the money to help the members of your community. The Lodge Chief begins a discussion as to what to do with the money.”

Use the current OA Strategic Plan, your lodge’s strategic plan, and your lodge’s annual plan in your decision making process. Each group should be prepared to share your ideas with the group.

We are each tasked with making hundreds of personal decisions per day. As leaders in scouting, we are tasked with making decisions that affect all the members of our lodge, chapter, troop and patrol. We must always remember that the values of scouting are the bricks in the foundation on which we make all our decisions. We cannot choose which of the values to follow and which to ignore. The decisions we make should be rooted in those values and focused on accomplishing the mission and strategic plan of our lodge.
APPENDIX: SUGGESTED VISUAL AIDS

The following is a recommended list of flip chart pages that can be used for visual presentation.

The ABC’s of Decision Making

Why did you join Scouting?

Why do you stay involved in the Order of the Arrow?

The Mission of the Boy Scouts of America

“The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.”

Purpose of the Order of the Arrow

“Develop leaders with the willingness, character, spirit and ability to advance the activities of their units, our Brotherhood, Scouting, and ultimately our nation.”

Tips for Decision Making

- Analyze Your Options
- Be Aware of the Consequences
- Consider Other Information
- Do What is Best for the Organization
- Implement Your Decision
- Evaluate Your Decision During its Implementation

Group Scenario Analysis

1. What points of the Scout Law, Scout Oath, OA Obligation or OA Admonition must be considered when making this decision?
2. How can you best use the group to make this decision?
3. What is your decision? What are some alternative options?