



2025
National Capital Area Council
University of Scouting -
College of Cub Scouting

CUB 185: The Den Chief Role Model

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The Den Chief's Role – From All Angles



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February 2025

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What is a Den Chief?

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What is a Den Chief?



- When Cub Scouts of America began in 1933, original Den Leaders were Den Chiefs
- Executed den meeting plans at direction of Cubmaster and Den Mother

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What is a Den Chief?



“A Boy Scout or Explorer who leads the Cub Scout in their games and handicraft work in a Den and helps the Den Mother. The Den Chief is a big brother or friend, but never a boss. The office of Den Chief is a high honor for a Boy Scout. He is a hero to the smaller boys.”

- *The Boy Scout Encyclopedia*, 1952

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What is a Den Chief?



“Your Cubmaster will help you. The Den Mother and Den Dad, probably parents of one of your Cub Scouts, are also ready to help. One of the Cub Scouts is a Denner, something like the Patrol Leader of your Patrol, but the chief responsibility in den leadership is yours.”

- *Den Chief's Denbook*, 1954

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What is a Den Chief?



“The Den Chief serves as the activities assistant for a Cub Scout or Webelos Scout den. The Den Chief meets with the Den Leader to review den and pack meeting plans and helps out however possible. A Den Chief projects a positive image of Scouting and, if serving as a Webelos Den Chief, helps the Webelos Scouts to transition into Scouting in a troop.”

- *Scouts BSA Handbook for Boys*, 2019

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What is a Den Chief?



- Scout from troop, crew, ship
- Appointed to help direct activities of Cub Scout den (Wolf, Bear, Webelos, AoL)
- Designated unit leadership position
- Service to Cub Scouts simultaneous with scout's participation in home unit

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The Value of a Den Chief



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Den Chief Value



Scouting Goals:

- Character Development
- Citizenship
- Personal Fitness
- Leadership Development

Vision:

To prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law.

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Den Chief Value



- To meet Scouting goals requires leadership by credible role models.
- A responsible Den Chief is the definition of an ideal near peer-age credible role model for Cub Scouts.

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Den Chief Value



"As you know, boys of Cub Scout age have heroes and secret ambitions. However, there is hardly a Cub Scout alive whose secret ambition is to be a Den Mother. On the other hand, almost every eight- or nine-year-old boy would like to be eleven or twelve. They would like to be Boy Scouts if they could. This means that the Den Chief already is what the Cub Scouts themselves would like to be. That puts him in an ideal position to give leadership to the boys."

- *Den Mother's Denbook*, 1951

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Den Chief Value



Why entrust program delivery to a young scout?

- Program and Campcraft Knowledge
- Cub Scout Program Knowledge
- Skill Instruction Capability
- Relatability to Cub Scouts
- Enthusiastic Participation in Activities
- Scout Role Model
- Troop Ambassador
- Leadership Development
- Icebreaker for Troop Transition

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Den Chief Qualifications



"...more what you'd call
'guidelines' than actual rules."
– Hector Barbossa

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Qualifications – First Class Rank or Above



- Waiting until First Class enables:
 - Early focus on troop experiences, bonding with peers
 - Time for growing maturity, self-reliance, leadership
 - Mastery of scouting, interpersonal skills
 - Reserving application of Den Chief service to meet troop position of responsibility requirements for advanced rank

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Qualifications – First Class Rank or Above



Is First Class essential? Perhaps more vital:

- Den Chief's maturity
- Cubs' perception of Den Chief's authority
- Den Chief's den responsibilities
- Den Leader expectations

Suggested rules of thumb:

- One-year tenure in troop
- Younger Den Chief for Wolves-Bears
- Older Den Chief for Webelos-AoL
- Den Chief training
- On-going assessment

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Qualifications – Preferably Former Cub Scout



A former Cub Scout:

- Knows program, format, language
- Knows leadership structure
- Relates well to Cub Scouts

If not a former Cub Scout, use pre-service acclimation period:

- Familiarize with program, literature, jargon
- Observe den, pack meetings
- Make friends

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Qualifications – Youth Protection



Youth protection rules:

- Two-deep leadership does not include Den Chief
- With appropriate two-deep leadership, Den Chief may serve den of opposite gender
- Den Chief may not tent with a Cub Scout, nor with an adult.
- Den Chief must always respect right to privacy of others.
- Den Chiefs not required to complete youth protection training.

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Managing the Match



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Manage the Match



- Identify needs of scout, pack, troop
- Continue with honest dialog among scout and pack/troop leadership
- Considerations:
 - ✓ Maturity of Den Chief and Cub Scouts
 - ✓ Size, maturity of pack, troop
 - ✓ Types of anticipated activities/skills
 - ✓ Den meeting schedule



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Manage the Match



- Some youth should be coached away from Den Chief service.
- Others may be a good match otherwise but are still working on self-confidence, introverted personalities
- Troops, packs strongly encouraged to have reasonable process and written set of expectations.



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Managing the Match



Try to avoid:

- Misbehavior history
- Immature disposition
- Disposition not suited to den age/rank
- Overcommitted/unable to attend
- Recently graduate from pack
- Sibling
- Your own son or daughter



But remember Captain Barbossa.

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Managing the Match



- Meet with Den Chief, become acquainted
- Agree upon shared expectations, develop rapport
- Ask Den Chief for input often
- Share program resources
- Meet Den Chief's needs
- Communication is key
- Remember: den needs are not known until they are voiced
- Den Chief doing a good job? Pass your praise on.

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Manage the Match



- Mismatch between expectations, capabilities distinctly possible, even likely.
- Time commitments, conflicts always a concern.
- Communication, transparency among all affected parties is vital. Seek consensus, flexibility.
- Try to avoid spending energy on:
 - ✓ Disconnects in expectations/priorities
 - ✓ Atmosphere of conflict/ultimatum



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Den Leader/ Den Chief Relationship



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Den Leader/Den Chief Relationship



Congratulations - you are just starting a new job! You are the new manager of a department with a staff of eight people, all of whom are entry-level, inexperienced, and half your age.

You are somewhat familiar with what your company does, but you have never been a manager before, and you have never before been responsible for directing the schedules, activities, and workloads of others.

Your new boss is 20 years older than you are, and has known, worked with, and enjoyed success with the members of your new department for the past 2-3 years.

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Den Leader/Den Chief Relationship



How does this situation make you – as an adult – feel?

- Anxious
- Insecure
- Alone
- Positioned for failure
- Wanting help
- In need of training

Your Den Chief is likely 12-16 years old. Why do we assume he will just “figure it out” unaided?

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Den Leader/Den Chief Relationship



Meet your Den Chief's needs:

- Praise
- Appreciation, confidence, satisfaction
- Tenure in position of responsibility
- Den Chief Service Award

You are your Den Chief's leadership mentor/guide.

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Den Chief Service Award



1. Serve the pack faithfully for one full year.
2. Attend Den Chief Training (if available within year of service) OR be trained by the assistant Cubmaster and den leader.
3. Know and understand the purposes of Cub Scouting.
4. Help Cub Scouts achieve the purposes of Cub Scouting.
5. Be the activities assistant in den meetings.

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Den Chief Service Award



6. Set a good example by attitude and uniforming.
7. Be a friend to the Scouts in the den.
8. Take part in weekly meetings.
9. Assist the den at the monthly pack program.
10. Meet as needed with the adult members of the den, pack, troop, or crew.

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Den Chief Service Award



11. Complete four of these projects:
 - a. Serve as a staff member of a special Cub Scouting event, such as a Scouting show, bicycle rodeo, etc.
 - b. Serve as a staff member of a Cub Scout day camp or resident camp.
 - c. Advance one rank.
 - d. Assist in recruiting three new Cub Scouts.
 - e. Assist three Cub Scouts to become Webelos Scouts.
 - f. Assist three Arrow of Light Scouts to join a troop.
 - g. Help to plan and carry out a joint pack-troop activity.
 - h. Recommend to your Scoutmaster or Venturing Advisor another Scouts BSA member or Venturer to be a den chief.

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Den Leader/Den Chief Relationship



Den Chiefs will make mistakes!

- Den Leaders: coach/mentor rather than scold/dismiss
- Parents: talk to Den Leader, not Den Chief or other parents
- Pack/Troop: establish mechanism of course correction for struggling/failing Den Chiefs, unsupportive parents, and/or apparent misfit



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Den Leader/Den Chief Relationship



Den Chiefs:

- Not expected to manage difficult situations alone
- Never should be publicly embarrassed
- Better to terminate Den Chief assignment than to continue bad experiences for Cub Scouts or Den Chiefs.



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Den Leader/Den Chief Relationship



Talking about possible difficulties and responses in advance helps us Be Prepared in the event that they occur.



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Den Leader/Den Chief Relationship



- Pack wants Den Chief continuity.
- Troops often specify six months in position of responsibility.
- Often Den Chiefs serve for one year...then decide.
 - What does Den Chief want?
 - What can Den Chief's schedule accommodate?



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Using Your Den Chief



Using Your Den Chief



First assignments:

- Become familiar with Cub Scout literature
- Attend, observe den, pack meetings
- Meet, get to know Cub Scouts
- Assemble den activity chest

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Using Your Den Chief



Activity chest:

- Games, puzzles, diversions
- Supplies for contests, races, etc.
- Magic trick props
- Puppet-making materials
- Leatherworking kit
- Handicraft (glue, tape, crayons, etc.)
- Prizes
- Costumes

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Using Your Den Chief



- Rehearse for pack meeting
- Coach Scout Oath and Scout Law
- Teach flag protocols
- Assist with Whittling belt loop
- Help Cub Scouts with derby cars
- Day camp (assist den walkers)
- Bike rodeo and other den events
- Teach camping skills
- Assist on pack overnights, Webelos/AoL den camping

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Using Your Den Chief



Den Chief logistic duties:

- Run errands to prepare for meeting
- Set up before meetings
- Clean up after meetings
- Ever-watchful pair of eyes

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There Must be 50 Ways to Use Your Den Chief



Allow the Den Chief's duties to expand as your confidence in his/her capabilities grows.

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Den Chief Training



Den Chief Training



- Cub Scout program refresher
- Delineation of Den Chief role:
 - ✓ Responsibilities and expectations
 - ✓ Need for collaboration
 - ✓ Status as role model
- Den Chief do's and don'ts
- Real-world problem solving
- FUN! songs, skits, games, activities

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Den Chief Training

<p>Den Chief do's: STAIRS</p> <p><u>S</u>afety <u>T</u>eamwork <u>A</u>ctivity Planning <u>I</u>deas <u>R</u>ole Model <u>S</u>pirit</p>	<p>Den Chief don'ts: PICKLE</p> <p><u>P</u>nish <u>I</u>gnore <u>C</u>ontrol Too Much <u>K</u>id Around <u>L</u>eave Jobs Undone <u>E</u>xpect Too Much</p>
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Den Chief Training

A Den Chief's "Can of Worms"...examples:

It's softball day. A close play at third base. The two scouts get up and start punching each other, calling each other names, and swearing at each other.

A scout steals another scout's cap and starts teasing, "Na, na, you can't catch me!" 

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Training

- District Trainers identify opportunities.
- Packs can run their own Den Chief training.
- Scouts can take Den Chief training even if they do not have a Den Chief assignment.
- Den Chief Training, once taken, never expires.



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Den Chief Insignia and Recognition

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Uniform Insignia and Recognition

Insist Den Chief wears his/her uniform – correctly:

- Den Chief badge
- Cub Scout Den Chief cord
- Webelos/AoL Den Chief cord
- Trained patch 
- Den Chief service award cord



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Final Thoughts

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Make the Best Use of Your Den Chief



A Den Chief is not:

- A Den Leader or other adult leader
- A Cub Scout
- A drudge
- A mind-reader
- A miracle worker



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Make the Best Use of Your Den Chief



A Den Chief is:

- Hard-working
- Responsible
- Enthusiastic
- Motivated
- Skilled in many areas
- But still a boy/girl



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