

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

CUB 211: Character Development Through Cub Scouting

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A Cub Scout's Character

University of Scouting
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A Tale of Two Wolves



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Character Does Matter

"So there's the question, young graduates. What kind of soul will you have? What kind of person will you be? Will you do whatever it takes to get what you want? Or will you accept even great suffering to do what is right? Everything else in your life will flow from your answer to that question."



— Robert Barron, Bishop, Winona-Rochester Diocese
Address to Hillsdale College Commencement
May 13, 2023

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Character is Essential to Scouting



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Character is Essential to Scouting



"The basis of a successful career is not A, B, C nor the three Rs. It is the character of the man in 99 cases out of 100 that carries him to the top. Character should be one of the first aims of education instead of being, as in the old world, about the last. Now there has been such a thing as scouting in history and **it teaches character.**"

- Robert Baden-Powell
Message to Boy Scouts of America
Tremont Temple, Boston, MA
February 1, 1912

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Character is Essential to Scouting



BSA's Federal Charter, at 36 USC 30902

"The purposes of the [Boy Scouts of America] are to promote, through organization, and cooperation with other agencies, **the ability of boys to do things for themselves and others**, to train them in scoutcraft, and to teach them **patriotism, courage, self-reliance, and kindred virtues**, using the methods that were in common use by boy scouts on June 15, 1916."

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Character is Essential to Scouting

"A realization that to the boys Scouting is a game
--to you, a game with a purpose: **character building**
and citizenship training"

- William "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt
Ten Essentials of Scoutmastership, 1936

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Character is Essential to Scouting

Goals of Scouting:

- **Character** Development
- Citizenship Training
- Personal Fitness
- Leadership Development

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Character is Essential to Scouting

Mission Statement:

The mission of Scouting 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.

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What do we mean by
ethical and moral?

We mean the
difference between
right and wrong.

- **Morality**: personal set of principles separating intentions, decisions, or actions between those that are right and those that are wrong. **Character** is the composite of personal moral qualities.
- **Ethics**: expectations or standards of good and bad distinguished by a community or society. Ethics inform and help define personal morality. Virtue ethics are the ethics of traits deemed morally good.

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What do we mean by
ethical and moral?

We mean the
difference between
right and wrong.

An ethical person understands
stealing is wrong.

A moral person does not steal.

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A Scout Expects No Compensation



"There was some discussion on the part of those who felt that it would have an unfortunate effect if the boys reported their Good Turns in public. Accordingly, the policy was adopted and has remained in force ever since that the boy's individual Good Turns are not reported. They are a matter between his Scout conscience and himself."

1911 Committee on Standardization of the Scout Oath and Law

The History of the Boy Scouts of America,
1937, BSA, New York, New York, p. 58.

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**Where do our youth
stand today on
questions of ethics and
morality?**

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Summit Ministries National Survey 1000 Voters – October 2022

Question: There is absolute truth, or each person determines their own version of truth?

- Absolute truth: unalterable moral/ethical reality, applicable everywhere and for all time
- 39% said each person determines own version of truth
 - 55% among adults aged 18-29
 - 46% among adults aged 30-40
- Without absolute truth, one is free to self-define, self-justify any behavior as right/wrong, without consequence (absent a standard, who is to judge?)
- Judges 17:6 – “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”
- What are the consequences of individual relativism?

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Character Survey of American Youth Josephson Institute 2012 Survey

22,305 High School Students
10,440 Males; 11,865 Females

Within the past year:

- 14% confessed to have stolen from a friend
- 15% it's not cheating if everyone is doing it
- 17% mistreated someone for belonging to different group
- 18% stole something from parents/relatives
- 20% confessed to have stolen from a store
- 24% think it's okay sometimes to hit or threaten someone who makes them angry
- 32% copied internet document for classroom assignment
- 36% one must occasionally lie or cheat to succeed
- 36% used racial slurs or insults
- 38% confessed to occasional lying to save money
- 40% bullied, teased or taunted someone

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Character Survey of American Youth Josephson Institute 2012 Survey

- 43% hit a person out of anger
- 45% confessed to have violated own religious beliefs
- 49% have been bullied, teased or taunted in upsetting way
- 52% confessed to cheating during a test
- 55% lied to a teacher about something significant
- 74% confessed to copying another's homework
- 76% confessed to lying to parent about significant matter
- and just 70% answered the survey completely honestly
- And yet:**
- 81% believe they are better than most in doing what's right
- 93% are satisfied with their ethics and character
- 95% say trust & honesty are essential in business/workplace
- 98% say trust & honesty are essential in relationships
- 99% feel being of good character is important

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Character Survey of American Youth

- “We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst.” – C. S. Lewis
- The society has done its best to obfuscate basic moral understanding.
- Our youth are both confused and unconcerned about what it means to have good character.
- We have a responsibility to try to reverse these trends.
- To make a difference, it takes constant, positive effort in the lives of our youth starting when they are young.

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Gary Hirte



Russell Henderson



Ross Ulbricht

Kenneth Gleason
(note Phillmont t-shirt!)

**All of
them are
Eagle
Scouts!**

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Scouting Influence on Character of American Youth

- Changes may be striking and permanent, or in spite of best efforts, temporary and superficial.
- Not all scouts, not even all Eagle Scouts, retain good moral character.

There are no guarantees except...If we do not act, nothing will change.

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What is Character?

The Scout Oath

On my honor I will do my best
To do my duty to God and my country, and to obey the Scout Law;
To help other people at all times;
And to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

Delineates duty to God and country, duty to others, duty to self.

The Scout Law

A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.

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What is Character?

Definitions in Religious Texts:

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you."

Paul, in his letter to the Philippians
Chapter 4, Verses 8-9

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What is Character?

Cub Scout Wolf Handbook: "...a good feeling about themselves and a genuine concern for others."

Frank Outlaw: "Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny."

J. C. Watts: "Character is doing the right thing when nobody's looking."

Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you...Love your neighbor as yourself."

Platinum Rule: "Do unto others as they would want done unto them."

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What is Character?

Character is living with honor.

"Probably the greatest thing a man can say to himself, or have as his philosophy when he has to tackle a tough job, or make a big decision, is the first eight words of the Scout Oath: On my honor I will do my best..."

- Roger Chaffee, Apollo 1 Pilot



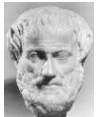
Honor is reputation - the good opinion of others concerning one's integrity. Scouting instills in the Scout a sense of honor. Honor is the stake a Scout wages each time they recite the Scout Oath and Law. Scouts are often described as "Knights of Today," upholding a code of honor similar to knighthood.

Cultivate honor in your Cub Scouts - pride that comes from being known for doing right and serving others.

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Aristotelian Concept of Character

Greek Philosopher: 384 – 322 BCE



Intellectual Influences: Socrates, Plato

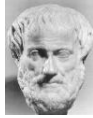
Tutor to Alexander the Great

Teachings Dominated Western European Thought Up To and Beyond Renaissance

Expounded on Character in Nicomachean Ethics, Lectures Dedicated to Son, Nicomachus

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Aristotelian Concept of Character



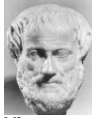
A virtue is the habit of choosing the mean between the extremes with respect to some emotion, behavior, or action.

A vice is the habit of choosing an extreme with respect to some emotion, behavior, or action. A vice can be in deficiency, or in excess, of a particular virtue.

Character is the composite of one's virtues and vices. One's character is always a work in progress.

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Aristotelian Concept of Character

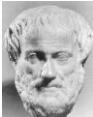


The quest for good character is the quest for moral excellence – the Golden Mean of Virtue:

Deficiency Vice	Scout Law Virtue	Excess Vice
Untrustworthy	Trustworthy	Unaccountable
Disloyal	Loyal	Blind Allegiance
Unhelpful	Helpful	Meddlesome
Hostile	Friendly	Cloying
Rude	Courteous	Obsequious
Harsh	Kind	Bleeding Heart
Defiant	Obedient	Submissive
Grumpy	Cheerful	Giddy
Wasteful	Thrifty	Stingy
Cowardly	Brave	Reckless
Filthy	Clean	Fastidious
Irreverent	Reverent	Holier-Than-Thou

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Aristotelian Concept of Character



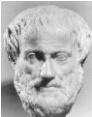
We become virtuous only by performing virtuous acts:

"...[V]irtue of character is a result of habituation...we acquire [virtues] by first exercising them...For by acting as we do in our dealings with other men, some of us become just, others unjust; and by acting as we do in the face of danger...some of us become courageous, others cowardly...In a word, then, like states arise from like activities...So it is not unimportant how we are habituated from our earliest days; indeed it makes a huge difference – or rather all the difference."

- Nicomachean Ethics
Bekker #1103b

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Aristotelian Concept of Character



Good moral character requires both knowledge and action.

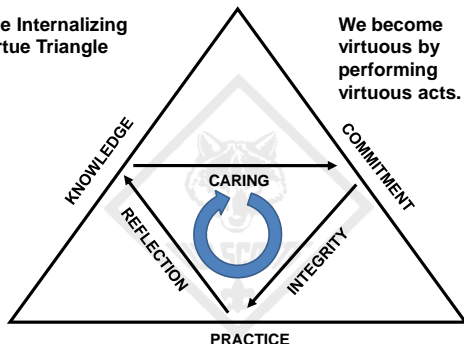
It is not sufficient merely to know the right behavior – one can fully understand virtuous behavior yet act otherwise.

One must act in accordance with one's knowledge of virtue to be virtuous.

We become virtuous only by performing virtuous acts.

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The Internalizing
Virtue Triangle



Provide opportunities for your scouts to know, commit, and practice virtues...as a matter of scouting routine.

We become
virtuous by
performing
virtuous acts.

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Scouting and Character

Refining character takes both experience and effort. We cultivate character by providing opportunities for *responsibility*.

Responsibility = Response + Ability

A scout's ability to respond well to the demands that have been placed on him/her.

Responsibility is the opportunity to demonstrate character.

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How Do Scouts Feel About the Virtues?

Den Chief Quiz – What is your favorite point of the Scout Law? Of 1,235 responses:

Trustworthy – 183 (15%)	Cheerful – 82 (7%)
Helpful – 157 (13%)	Kind – 76 (6%)
Friendly – 154 (13%)	Clean – 62 (5%)
Brave – 143 (12%)	Reverent – 61 (5%)
Loyal – 141 (12%)	Obedient – 24 (2%)
Thrifty – 106 (9%)	Courteous – 21 (2%)

Cardinal virtues: Scouts prefer fortitude, justice, and sometimes prudence...not especially fond of temperance.

A pure reflection of virtues society tangibly rewards.

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Den Leader Practices to Build Character

"Children are apt to live up to what you believe of them"

– Lady Bird Johnson

- Set the Example – No Double Standards
- Admit Your Character Mistakes – We are All Human
- Raise Expectations – Trust Scouts to Meet High Standards
- Respect Their Commitment – Call Them Scouts
- Hold Them to Their Oath and Law
- Apply Golden Rule or Platinum Rule
- Assign Denner, Asst. Denner on Rotating Basis
- Encourage Scouts to Earn Religious Emblems
- Reflect on Character as Cub Scouts Progress, Advance
- Give Den Leader and Cubmaster Minutes
- Be Proud of Scout Achievements and Growth!

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Den Leader Practices to Build Character

"Children are apt to live up to what you believe of them"

– Lady Bird Johnson

Do:

- Assign Virtues as a Trigger for Reflection
- See Character Growth Opportunities in all Activities
- Be Opportunistic – Look for Teachable Moments
- Set the Example, Say "Follow Me!"
- Be Upbeat, Encouraging, Cheerfully Instructive

Don't:

- Admonish or Scold
- Be Preachy or Obsessive
- Be Long-Winded – Prefer Actions Over Words
- Attempt to Define Virtues Precisely – Just Give Examples
- Raise Unrealistic, Abstract, Grey-Area Dilemmas
- Offer Tangible Awards as Incentive for Service

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Den Activities to Build Character

"Children are apt to live up to what you believe of them"

– Lady Bird Johnson

- Carry out Community Service Projects Often
- Visit Fire, Police, EMT, Food Bank, etc.
- Visit Veterans Memorials, Battlefield Sites, etc.
- Encourage World Conservation Award
- Assign Duties at Pack Overnights
- Role-Playing Skits – What Would You Do?
- Den Sets Up, Cleans Up at Pack Meetings
- Scouts Make Their Own Den Behavior Rules
- Den Character Totem – to Build Den Pride
- Maintain Character Record on Each Scout – Share with Parents
- Capstone Service Project Before Rank Advancement

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Bullying – A Chronic Concern

Josephson Institute 2012 Survey:

- 40% bullied, teased or taunted someone
- 49% have been bullied, teased or taunted in upsetting way

What causes bullying? Obsession with winning!

- Vince Lombardi: "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing."
- General George Patton: "Americans love a winner and will not tolerate a loser."
- Al Davis: "Just win, baby!"
- Freddie Mercury: "We are the champions – no time for losers!"
- "Close only counts in horseshoes."
- "Nice guys finish second."
- Charles Schulz: "Nobody remembers who came in second."
- Tom Seaver: "There are only two places in this league – first place and no place."

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Bullying – A Chronic Concern

"How Can I Matter if I Don't Win? Coaches, Parents, and Character Development in Sport"

- Amy Baltzell, Character Newsletter, Volume 13, Number 1, Boston University, Fall 2005

Bullies want to win! Insecurity leads to leveraging strength, speed, coolness, popularity...any skill or trait to come out on top.

"Without believing that you matter, it is difficult to believe that others matter...When athletes believe that winning is the only thing that matters, they become willing to hurt themselves or others for a victory...Our kids will value what the adult mentors around them value. If we concentrate on their focus, effort, and respect for others, they, too, will begin to value such virtues."

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Bullying – A Chronic Concern

- **Talk and Listen:** be engaged with your scouts.
- **Be Present:** most bullying is out of sight of adults.
- **Lead by Example:**
 - Be kind to others, even when angry!
 - Do not emphasize winning, verbally or emotionally.
 - Emphasize taking part, striving, playing by the rules, good sportsmanship, empathy, doing your best.
 - Value everyone.
- **Learn the Signs of a Bullying Environment:**
 - Look for perceived cliques, power/status distinctions.
 - Bullying requires perceived power/status inequity.
 - Recognize scouts can be bullies!
 - Insecure about social dynamics
 - Uniform implies power
 - Competitive environment/Darwinian thinking
 - Observe scout behavior, demeanor.

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Bullying – A Chronic Concern

- **Learn Scouting America Policies:** youth protection, Oath/Law, etc.
- **Establish Rules:** create pack and den rules.
- **Create Healthy Habits:** coach against bullying behavior. End the cliques.
- **Teach Scouts Ways to Respond** – safely and without reciprocity. Never blame the victim.
- **Talk about Cyberbullying.**
- **If You See Bullying - Stop the bullying, firmly but dispassionately.** Reproach the behavior. Report and follow up.
- **Bullying Will Not be Tolerated** – Spread the Word: to parents, other leaders, etc.

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Okay, Does Scouting Build Character?

Tufts University Survey:

- 1,800 Philadelphia-area Cub Scouts
- 400 Non-Scouts age 6-12
- Three-year study
- Baseline and subsequent repeat surveys on inculcation of basic virtues:
 - Hopefulness
 - Helpfulness
 - Obedience
 - Cheerfulness
 - Kindness
 - Trustworthiness

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Okay, Does Scouting Build Character?

Tufts University Survey Findings:

- No significant difference at baseline
- Cub Scouts demonstrated increasing embrace of virtues over time
- Non-Scouts' responses remained unchanged
- Frequent-attending Cub Scouts showed higher increases than less frequent attenders
- Increases also correlated to tenure, engagement (active participation)
- Cub Scouts valued helping others, doing the right thing, more highly over playing sports, being smart, than did non-scouts

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“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.”



- Franklin Roosevelt
Address, 200th Anniversary of UPenn
September 20, 1940

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