



Jumpstart to GROWTH

How to Run a Registration Event

Introduction

A group Registration Event is simply a time when parents, youth and volunteers come together to complete the administrative process for becoming a member of Scouts Canada. Those who attend, typically fit within one of the following categories:

- Returning members from previous year;
- New, committed youth and parents;
- New, curious youth and parents;
- New, curious potential volunteers.

Each of these has different expectations. A Registration Event is considered successful when everyone leaves feeling that their time was well spent and all the necessary administration was completed.

Jumpstart Tip

You will find all of the referenced sample templates and resources in the appendix of this booklet. Downloadable and customizable versions are available online at: www.scouts.ca/JS2G.

Why Hold a Registration Event?

It is important to hold a separate Registration Event from regular section meetings. Group Committee members and leaders can be available to meet the parents and youth, answer their questions and help them become members. An event dedicated to registration allows the group to be well-organized in getting all of the appropriate forms filled out, and in gathering payment from parents. A Registration Event significantly reduces the amount of time it takes to follow-up incomplete forms and payments. Ideally, leaders should be focused on delivering program rather than being distracted by administration.

Growth

Holding a Registration Event can help groups to grow. The exchange of information, particularly relating to the program for the upcoming year, helps parents and youth make an informed decision about Scouting and potentially removes any hesitation they may have about joining.

A Registration Event is also an opportunity to begin recruiting new volunteers by providing parents with information about ways they can participate, what is involved in becoming a leader and allowing the other leaders to share their enthusiasm and experiences. The "Talking Points for Speaking to Parents/Guardians" resource provides a number of ideas and tips on how to talk to the parents. It is included in this booklet's appendix or online at: www.scouts.ca/JS2G.



Checklist of Activities for the Registration Event:

ITEM	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/>
Select date, time and secure location for Registration Event	Group Commissioner	
Plan games/craft activities		
Plan and organize advertising and promotion		
Recruit leaders to run event		
Assign someone to call last year's members and invite them back		
Create a calendar of events for the year		
Assign tasks (i.e. greeter, registrar, running games, etc.)		
Make a list of supplies and assign people to bring them		
Photocopy and prepare all necessary paperwork		
Assign someone to follow-up with no-shows, etc.		

Planning a Registration Event

Timing

The best time to have a Registration Event is as close to the start of the school year as possible. Many parents are organizing their child's fall activities at that time, so the sooner Scouts Canada can help them in this the better. It may be worthwhile or necessary to hold a secondary Registration Event so that busy parents are provided a scheduling option.

Jumpstart Tip

A Scouts Canada Open House is a great way to accomplish a secondary Registration Event. See "How to Host an Open House" online at www.scouts.ca/JS2G.

Advertising and Promotion

There are many ways to ensure a good turnout for a Registration Event. Advertising too early could risk people forgetting, and if left too late, people may have trouble fitting it into their schedules. There are lots of options to promote the event. It is recommended that the group does a number of these activities during the three weeks leading up to the event. Here are a few suggestions to help promote a Registration Event:

- School, Institutions and Church Bulletins. Ask school principals if they could include the event information in the school bulletin/website. Most schools have morning announcements so you can ask the principal to add the event to this list. If you ask, most religious institutions in your neighbourhood will have no problem adding the event information to their worship service bulletins for a few weeks.
- Local Newspaper Community Events Page. Newspapers accept and often publish community events. Check with the newspapers to determine their policy and requirements.
- Cable Channel Community Events Notice. Many local cable stations will provide scrolling announcements on community events. Check with the stations to determine their policy and requirements.
- Radio Advertisement for Community Events. Many local radio stations will announce community events. Check with the stations to determine their policy and requirements.

Jumpstart Tip

When advertising through third party notices, it is best to keep it simple. Example: The 3rd Adanac Scout Group is hosting a Scouts Canada Open House on Tuesday, September 21st, 2010 from 7:00 pm — 8:30 pm at the Adanac Public School. Bring the whole family and begin the adventure. There will be plenty of opportunity to meet the leaders, try some activities and get more information. To find out more about this event or registration, contact John Doe by e-mail at: johndoe@scouts.ca or by phone at 555-555-5555.

- School Flyer. Many school principals will allow a half sheet flyer to be sent out a few days before the event. Check with the local school to find out. (See “Scouts Canada Registration flyer” template in the appendix of this booklet or online at: www.scouts.ca/JS2G.)
- Community Flyer. Spending a couple of hours to deliver an event flyer would not take long if all of the group’s members did it on a Saturday morning. Finishing up with a lunch, games and some treats is an inexpensive way to get the word out. (See “Scouts Canada Registration flyer” template.)
- Posters at the library, school, recreation centre, mall, businesses, etc. Using Scouts Canada posters to promote this event can be very effective. Placement should be where there is high parent traffic. (See “Registration Poster” template.)
- Communicating with parents and youth from last year is vital for good retention. Inviting last year’s members is as simple as a postcard, e-mail, phone call or letter inviting them to attend the Registration Event.

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Hosting A Successful Registration Event

Human Resources

The Group Registrar will need assistance and it is advisable that all the Group Committee members attend. The Group Commissioner and one leader from each of the sections should be there as well to answer any questions. Having a quick and easy activity for youth to do is very helpful as it allows parents to focus on registering their child and the gathering of information. See the “Suggested Registration Event Activities” included in template resources.

Jumpstart Tip

Help parents be prepared by ensuring they know what to bring to the Registration Event (i.e. payment type and amount, any important numbers such as Health Card numbers, emergency contact information, etc.). Be sure that registration can be completed and that parents won’t need to be contacted afterward to collect missing information.

Set-Up

Create an atmosphere of kicking off the year! Have balloons and light refreshments. For most, this will be the first taste of Scouting for the year.



Ensure parents can easily find their way to the location of the event. If not obvious, make sure there are signs indicating where parents should go when arriving at the location to register. It is helpful to have a greeter at the door to warmly welcome both youth and adults and to guide them to where they need to go next.

Jumpstart Tip

Have a calendar of the group's events and programming for the year printed out to give to parents as they arrive. Indicate on the calendar those events that parent helpers will be required.

Depending on space, there should be a designated registration area and another as a youth activity area. Have table and chairs available for leaders and parents to use while filling out paperwork.

If expecting a large number of people to show up, have a sign-in sheet at the front door. This ensures that everyone registered. Follow-up with anyone who may not have registered.

It is a good idea to have a money float for people who wish to pay in cash and may need change. Have a cash box with a lock for the money and cheques. Remember to provide receipts for all money that is collected and be ready to provide a Child Fitness Tax Credit Receipt. Be sure to have a good supply of pens, white-out, a stapler, paperclips and elastics.

Allow enough time for registrations to be completed. If the event is advertised as running from 6:30pm – 8:00pm, be prepared for parents to show up at the very last moment. A 90-minute window of time should be sufficient to accommodate most people who would like to register, but be prepared for some latecomers. Make sure to stay for the whole duration of the time you advertised.

Many parents will ask what they get for the money. The best response is to ensure each of the sections have a program plan for the year that can be shared with the parents and the youth. Parents can also be provided with "What Do You Get for Your Money", an article written to help our members understand the features and benefits of the program. (See resources.)

Jumpstart Tip

No apology is needed for the cost of Scouting when a good program plan speaks for itself.

From time to time a family may be in need of financial assistance. The Council Administration Centre can outline what subsidies are available. Remember to speak privately with a parent who may be asking about this.

Adult Recruitment

The Registration Event isn't the best time to be recruiting new leaders and resource people. However, it is a good opportunity to engage parents in conversation and to identify candidates. Have information advertising the need for leaders (if this is the case) and how parents can inquire about getting involved as a leader with the group posted. The "Parent/Guardian Resource Survey" (see template) is useful for letting parents know what volunteer positions the group is looking to fill.

New Scouter Welcome Kits are handy to have to refer to or show to a potential volunteer leader. Check with your Council Administrative Centre for availability of printed copies or visit www.scouts.ca/NSWK.

Follow-up

After the Registration Event, make sure that everyone you expected to come made it to the event and that everyone on your sign-in sheet did register. If someone is missing – send them a follow-up email or phone call and find out the reason.

A successful Registration Event will ensure a good start to your Scouting year.