

# Frequently Asked Questions: Scouts Canada Code of Conduct

Scouts Canada has updated the Adult Code of Conduct for the 2017-18 Scouting Year as part of our ongoing effort to help Scouters to work safely with youth. We have also introduced a new Code of Conduct for Scouters aged under 18 that responds to the increasingly greater roles that Scouting youth are taking in program leadership. Both Codes of Conduct are an integral part of our youth protection measures and present clear guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behaviours.

**It is important that all Scouters and youth in leadership roles understand the Code and are aware of the updates, summarized below:**

- **Online and electronic communication:** The Code provides clarity that safety guidelines, including the Two-Scouter Rule, apply to both online and in-person engagement with youth.
- **Drugs and other substances:** The Code has been updated to include the guidelines and expectations that are detailed in Scouts Canada's Drug and Alcohol Policy.
- **Youth Code of Conduct:** To ensure that we respond to the increased presence of youth aged 14-18 in leadership roles, Scouts Canada has introduced a Youth Code of Conduct for the 2017-18 Scouting Year. This Code details youth protection measures and safety guidelines that are consistent with the Adult Code of Conduct, but also recognizes that those who sign it are still youth, and it is important that they understand that they are still entitled to protection, particularly in their interactions with adults. The Youth Code of Conduct addresses both the individual's responsibilities as a Scouter and their protections as a youth.
- **Reporting:** The updated Code provides clearer guidance for reporting behaviour that is not consistent with Scouting values, and emphasizes the importance of encouraging an environment whereby those with concerns about safety feel free to speak up. Guidance on self-reporting has also been updated should a Scouter find himself or herself in a situation that may impact his or her ability to participate in Scouting activities.

Frequently asked questions are organized within five categories:

- [Questions about the purpose of the Code of Conduct](#)
- [Questions about the Adult Code of Conduct](#)
- [Questions about the Youth Code of Conduct](#)
- [Questions about following the Code of Conduct online](#)
- [Questions that clarify interpretation of the Code of Conduct](#)



## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

### What is the Scouts Canada Code of Conduct?

Scouts Canada's Code of Conduct is a short, clear, and broad set of written statements that establishes boundaries for all staff and Volunteers and outlines expectations for interactions with the Scouting youth in their care. It is a simple, easy to understand and easy to refer to document.

What our Code of Conduct is NOT. Scouts Canada's Code of Conduct is not an exact measure of behaviour and contravening it does not necessarily mean expulsion from Scouts Canada. It is also not necessarily meant to punish staff or Volunteers nor necessarily to constrain or define all potential activities and circumstances. Consistently contravening Code of Conduct guidelines or placing children at risk of harm by doing so, however, suggests that an individual may not share the organization's values and, upon review, they may be asked to leave.

### Why does Scouts Canada have a Code of Conduct?

Scouts Canada's Code of Conduct is a broad agreement, primarily between Scouters and Scouts Canada, establishing that Scouters will act in a manner consistent with the spirit of the Scout Promise and Law (organizational principles) and that they will protect the youth in their care. As Scouts, it is our duty to look after others; as Scouters, it's our duty to look after youth. The Code of Conduct establishes what that generally looks like and gives some specific examples.

For example, many Canadians consume alcohol around a campfire in the summer with youth present. The Code of Conduct specifically identifies that this behaviour, while on any Scouting activity, is not in keeping with our organizational values. It's important to include this in the Code of Conduct because new Scouters or parents may naturally assume that it's okay to drink around a campfire.

### Why has the Code of Conduct been updated?

The Scouts Canada Code of Conduct is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains current in a rapidly changing youth safety environment. As part of these annual reviews, Scouts Canada obtains input from external youth safety partners, including the Canadian Red Cross and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. As part of this year's review, a number of changes were suggested to improve overall youth and Scouter safety practices.

### When do these changes take effect?

They take effect immediately. We have coordinated these changes with spring registration to simplify the process. The New Scouter Welcome Kit has also been updated.



## How do I sign the Code of Conduct?

Each Scouter will receive an email asking them to acknowledge that they have read the Code of Conduct. Also, when a Scouter or youth over the age of 18 logs into MyScouts, they will be prompted to sign the Code if they have not done so already. You can simply click “Agree” in the email, or log in to MyScouts and click “Agree” when prompted. Your MyScouts records will be updated automatically. The updated Code of Conduct came into effect on May 1, 2017.

All Scouts Canada adult members over the age of 18 and youth under age 18 in leadership roles have a maximum of 90 days in which to sign their respective Codes. Note that if you decline to sign the Code of Conduct during this 90-day period, you will not be able to access MyScouts records and will not have access to training programs that you may require for the 2017-2018 Scouting Year.

If you decline to sign the Code, you have the option to return to MyScouts and accept it within the 90-day period.

## How does the new Code affect spring registration?

There is no change to spring registration. Each Scouter will receive an email asking them to read and sign the Code of Conduct. Also, when a Scouter or youth over the age of 18 logs into MyScouts, they will be prompted to sign the Code if they have not done so already.

## Whom does the Adult Code apply to?

There is no change to whom the Code applies to—all members over the age of 18 must sign the Code of Conduct.

## Are there any changes to the Two-Scouter Rule?

No, there are no changes to the Two-Scouter Rule. You can view the [Two-Scouter Rule FAQ here](#).

## What happens if either the Youth or Adult Code is breached?

It is important that all breaches of the Code be addressed: Minor infractions might be addressed by a fellow Scouter pointing out the breach to the individual and speaking then with their Group Commissioner.

The Group Commissioner can then have a more formal conversation with the Scouter. Serious or persistent breaches of the Code require formal action and must be reported to your Council or Safe Scouting. If in doubt, you can seek advice from your Council or Safe Scouting.

Remember: It is not your role to determine why someone has breached the Code; it is your responsibility to report it.

## Should we make parents aware of the Codes?

Yes, it is good practice to ensure all parents are aware of how we keep youth safe. If parents are assisting with activities or attending camps, they need to sign the Code.



## What is the minimum age to be a Scouter?

Section Scouters are Volunteers that are 14 years of age or older and are appointed by a Group Commissioner or more senior Commissioners on behalf of Scouts Canada, following approval as a registered member. Approval for appointment should be based on maturity, personal example and the ability to work effectively with the selected age group and other members of the Section Scouters.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ADULT CODE OF CONDUCT

### Is the Code of Conduct intended to apply to my life 24/7, or only when I am involved in Scouting activities?

The Adult Code of Conduct applies when you are participating in Scouting activities or acting in your Scouting role on behalf of Scouts Canada.

For example: This would include when you are actively participating in a Scouting activity such as a weekend camp, or when you are preparing for the weekend camp and communicating with youth face-to-face, on the phone or internet, or accompanying youth other than your own child as they shop for food.

### When I am acting in my role as a Scouts Canada Volunteer, are my rights and responsibilities as a parent in conflict with the Adult Code of Conduct?

No. Your rights as parent/guardian take precedence. For example: You and your child can drive to a Scout camp together and without another Scouter present.

### Is the Adult Code of Conduct intended to apply when I am at work or volunteering with another organization?

The Adult Code of Conduct applies when you are participating in Scouting activities or acting in your Scouting role on behalf of Scouts Canada—whether in person, online or on the telephone. When you are acting in your volunteer role with another organization, it is their Code of Conduct that applies. For example: If you also volunteer with the Girl Guides of Canada and you are at a weekend Guide camp, then the Girl Guides of Canada Code of Conduct applies.

### If a relative of my child (such as a grandparent or sibling) is a Scouter, will he or she be in conflict with the Adult Code of Conduct if he or she drives my child to camp without a second Scouter in the vehicle?

In the case where another family member is a Scouter, they should be added to the list of additional adults authorized to transport your child. This can be done in the emergency information section of your child's membership information in MyScouts. By authorizing these adults in advance, you will avoid any conflicts with the Code of Conduct.



## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE YOUTH CODE OF CONDUCT

### Why is a Youth Code of Conduct needed?

As Scouting youth take on increasingly greater roles in program leadership, it is important to support them wherever we can. A 14-year-old Scouter in a position of leadership and responsibility needs an easily understood Code that helps guide their interactions with youth. At the same time, they are still a youth themselves, and it is important that they understand that they are entitled protection, particularly in their interactions with adults.

The Youth Code of Conduct addresses both the individual's responsibilities as a Scouter and their protections as a youth.

### What happens if I do not want to agree to this Code? In order to serve in a Volunteer leadership role, you must agree to the Code of Conduct.

If you do not wish to agree to the Code, then you must remain in a participant role.

### When do I sign the Adult Code of Conduct?

You must sign the Adult Code of Conduct as soon as you turn 18.

### Why don't I sign the same Code of Conduct as adult Scouters in the organization?

Although you are taking on a role in program leadership, you are still a youth, and it is important that you understand that you are still entitled to the same protections as other Scouting youth, particularly in your interactions with adults. The Youth Code of Conduct addresses both your responsibilities as a Scouter and your protections as a youth.

### What will happen to me if I break one of these rules?

If you break one of the rules, you will be spoken to about what you did and why it is unsafe. If your behaviour is dangerous to yourself or others, you could be disciplined.

### I'm a Scouter and a youth member—does this Code of Conduct apply to me even when I'm participating in an activity as a youth?

If you are taking part as a youth participant, the Code does not apply to you. However, remember that even as a participant you should always be demonstrating the Scout Promise and Law. If you do not follow the Promise and Law as a participant, that could influence your ability to serve as a Scouter.

### What will happen if I break one of the rules while I'm participating in an activity as a youth?

The Code is designed to help you work safely with youth you supervise, and it does not apply if you are participating in an activity as a youth. However, remember that even as a participant you should always be demonstrating the Scout Promise and Law. If you don't follow the Promise and Law as a participant, it could still affect your ability to serve as a Scouter.



## Do I need to ask my parents' permission to sign the Youth Code of Conduct?

Yes, your parents should be involved in all of the stages as you become a Scouter and you should speak with them about the responsibilities and rewards of serving as a Scouter.

## What happens if my parents don't want me to sign the Code? Can I still volunteer?

If your parents have concerns about the Youth Code of Conduct, you should ask them to discuss those concerns with your Group Commissioner. All Scouters must sign the Code, and if you don't sign it, you will not be able to serve as a Scouter.

## I'm a Youth Commissioner for my Council/Area – does that mean I 'supervise' all the youth within my Council/Area? What if I'm in a relationship with another youth from my Council/Area?

As a Youth Commissioner, you do have some responsibility for all of the youth in your area. If you are a Venturer attending an event that includes multiple Sections (Venturers, Scouts, Cubs or Beavers), then you cannot attend as a participant. This is because you occupy a position of trust through your role as a Youth Commissioner. If you are in a relationship with another youth from your Section, then you can only attend events for that Section as a participant.

For example, if you are a Venturer and in a relationship with a fellow Venturer, you can only take part in the Venturer program as a participant.

## How does the Two-Scouter Rule apply to me?

If you are carrying out your Scouter role, then the Two-Scouter Rule applies to you. If you are attending as a participant, it does not.

## Am I allowed to be alone with a youth that I supervise?

No; the Two-Scouter Rule applies.

## Am I allowed to be alone with an adult Scouter that I volunteer with?

Yes, although you should be comfortable with this and it should be restricted to Scouting activities only.



## QUESTIONS ABOUT FOLLOWING THE CODE OF CONDUCT ONLINE

### Why does the Code apply on- and offline?

Modern media and communication methods have become an important part of Scouting and our safety guidelines need to keep pace. As with in-person interaction with youth, online contact must be in accordance with our values, and our Code of Conduct provides guidance in this area.

### How do we interact safely with youth online?

The Code of Conduct provides clear guidelines for interacting safely with youth online and via email. In essence, you can interact safely by either copying another Scouter on all emails, messages and posts (thereby maintaining the Two-Scouter Rule) or by copying the youth's parents.

## CLARIFYING POINTS IN THE CODE OF CONDUCT

### What if an emergency situation arises and I need to act quickly to protect or offer first aid to a youth or child and touch them without asking their permission? Could someone complain about my behaviour under the new Adult Code of Conduct?

If you are following the Two-Scouter Rule, and other Scouters can see and hear that you were working to protect or care for an injured youth, then there should not be an issue. Please note that if the injured youth is conscious and capable of making a decision, you need to ask their permission. If your care is refused, the safety of the child remains paramount, and if you feel that the situation is life-threatening, then you should take action. If the situation is not life-threatening and care is refused, then you should seek medical advice or contact the child's parent.

### What does it mean to “behave in such a way that anyone could misinterpret my actions no matter how well-intended”?

This means ensuring that our behaviour as Scouters is open and transparent. This includes ensuring that we are talking to parents, explaining to them what we are doing and why, and ensuring that decisions are discussed with other youth and Scouters and agreed upon by the Group Committee.

For example, a Scouter buying a youth a piece of equipment for a camping trip or paying for a youth's camp fees may seem like a selfless act, especially if the youth's family cannot afford it. However, if it was not broadly discussed and understood, other members of the Group may perceive it as favoritism. A parent could also misinterpret the gesture.

Discussing actions upfront with parents, other Scouters and especially the Group Committee ensures that your intentions are known and understood by all.



## How should I question behaviours about which I have doubts?

Scouting at its heart is about treating others like you would like to be treated (or treated when you were a youth) and about keeping everyone safe. If you believe a behaviour is not consistent with Scouting's standards of individual respect and safety, use it as an opportunity to talk with your fellow Scouter using respectful language.

Keep in mind that you may not have all the information.

However, if the behaviour continues and especially if it is unsafe (physically or psychologically), involve others in the discussion, bring it up to your Group Commissioner, or find a way to talk with the entire group about it. Youth are harmed in our society because caring adults hesitate to act on reservations and doubts.

Our new Respect in Sport training is about helping Scouters recognize and address behaviours like grooming youth for abuse and youth-on-youth bullying. If you haven't yet taken it, please do so. It is quickly becoming our country's standard for youth safety and protection.

## Does the new Code mean that I cannot play tag with youth?

Yes, and this is unchanged from the current Code of Conduct. Under our current guidelines, Scouters must not play any game that involves intentionally touching youth. Scouters can still play games with youth and in doing so there might be occasions when Scouters bump into or accidentally touch youth. There is nothing wrong with this.

## What does being a positive role model entail?

As a Scouter, your behaviour should match the Scout Promise and Law. You can be a positive role model by demonstrating our values through the Promise and Law.

## What is positive discipline? How do I use positive discipline in my Section?

Positive discipline reinforces good behaviour. You can achieve this by using positive language when applying your Section Code of Conduct with youth. For example, you can use a points system to reward good behaviour. Use positive statements; say, "We respect each other" (rather than, "We don't disrespect each other."). Good or improved behaviour can be acknowledged from time to time with awards.

## What is meant by "I will not rely on just my good name to protect me?"

It is important that our behaviour is appropriate and in accordance with this Code. Through your actions and words, you demonstrate that you behave safely around youth, regardless of what you have accomplished in the past or how well-known you are. We all have a duty to ensure that we demonstrate safe and respectful conduct at all times.

