Ceremonies

Time Available

10 minutes.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

• Understand the importance of ceremonies
• Know where to find Ceremonies

Suggested Presenter(s)

A Scoutmaster or Senior Patrol Leader of a troop known for its ceremonies

Presentation Method

Discussion

BSA Reference Materials

• Sample Opening Ceremony
• Sample Closing Ceremony
• Troop Program Resources: Ceremonies

Presentation Content

During a Scout meeting, court of honor, campfire program, or special gathering, a well presented ceremony will add meaning and enhance the experience.

Troop Meeting Opening Ceremony

• A troop meeting’s opening ceremony officially signals the start of a troop meeting. As in all Scouting ceremonies, it can be very simple or more complex. Many troops will start things off with a presentation of the US Flag along with repeating the Pledge of Allegiance. Very often, troops also include the recitation of the Scout Oath and/or Law. As reflected in the Troop Planning Sheet, the meeting should formally begin with a ceremony.

• There’s no rule as to what it must be, but troops might want to consider taking measures to ensure their opening ceremonies don’t fall prey to becoming repetitions of the same words and actions week after week. There are ways to vary what’s presented and breathe new life into this important segment of the meeting. Besides adding meaning, doing this will spark interest. If the Patrol Leaders Council so decides, for each troop meeting a different patrol can come up with, practice, and present an impressive opening ceremony to represent the troop and do themselves proud.

• View a sample Troop Meeting Opening Ceremony video: Sample Opening Ceremony

Troop Meeting Closing Ceremony

• Scheduling a meaningful ceremony as a closing for the troop meeting serves to comfortably round out what has preceded. It also contributes to a consistent meeting structure. As reflected in the Troop Planning Sheet, the meeting should formally end with some form of closing. There’s no rule as to what it must be, and troops have a lot of leeway as to what they present and how they present it. They can be assembled in their "U" formation and the ceremony conducted up front, or a troop might make it a practice to form an intimate troop circle. The PLC can assign a patrol to present a specially-prepared closing, or the troop might adopt one they really like, and use it every week, following a unique Scout Master’s Minute.

• View a sample Troop Meeting Closing Circle Ceremonies video: Sample Closing Ceremony

General Information

Ceremonies serve Scouting in a variety of ways. A simple or elaborate ceremony can:

• Communicate something significant is taking place
• Accentuate an event or accomplishment
• Entertain
• Provide inspiration

We all feel uplifted when we experience an impressive ceremony. Through the years, creative ceremonies have perpetuated Scouting’s unique fascination, attraction, and timeless mystique. There’s a marked difference between, on one hand, saluting the American flag while repeating the Pledge of Allegiance in the same way for each meeting, and, on the other hand, adding a new dimension by impressively bringing out the colors in a well-rehearsed fashion followed by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in conjunction with an informative narration describing its meaning.

Scouting ceremonies are regularly presented during troop meetings, and special occasions attended by parents and guests. Their aim is to recognize, impress, and inspire. Whether a simple presentation or an elaborate production, ceremonies should be well-paced and flow. A ceremony flows when the audience remains comfortably focused throughout. No one should ever get restless or bored while the presentation is taking place.

There are many long, pre-worded ceremonies that can be found in publications and Scouting websites. In most cases, when delivering these scripted ceremonies, the youth or adult presenter laboriously reads and often struggles to get through the lengthy script, word-for-word. This can result in an expressionless presentation that loses meaning. The important thing is to make them your own. Keep the presentation natural, meaningful, and real.

In order to make the most of the opportunity that a well-presented ceremony can afford, the following, simple, preparatory guidelines should be addressed:

Preparation

• It’s always much better to deliver a ceremony from the heart, without reading lines. Besides feeling much
more natural, doing so provides a welcome sense of familiarity.

- If lines must be read, or parts are meant to be read, in order to avoid awkward moments, the presenter should practice them. Good ceremonies contain meaningful content, and the meaning can be lost if the reader stumbles and fumbles over the script.

- Presenters often mistakenly assume that if they can hear themselves talk, the people in the back row can, too. If microphones are needed, get them and use them.

- It’s also easy to assume that someone else is bringing essential props. Double check that everything is ready to go well prior to the actual presentation.

- When more than one presenter will be involved, acting out different parts, or assuming special roles, it’s just good practice to schedule some run-throughs. Again, to maintain that impressive “flow,” everything should take place smoothly. Confusion during a ceremony is a good way to create discomfort in the audience.

**Staging**

- Scouts are always prepared. All props, materials, microphones, projectors, and visual aids should be ready and properly positioned prior to the presentation.

- Lighting should be checked and any helpers briefed and ready.

- If there will be any special activity, presenters should be acquainted with where they will need to be, what they need to do and when they need to do it.

**Group Dynamics**

- Position seating or adjust the setting to assure everyone in attendance will be able to see and hear what’s taking place, so they can enjoy and appreciate the presentation.

- If individuals will need to know where to stand during an elaborate ceremony, tape their “mark” on the floor.

At [Troop Program Resources: Ceremonies](#) you will find ceremony ideas for:

- Troop Meeting Openings
- Troop Meeting Closings
- Investitures
- Camp Fires
- Crossovers
- Courts of Honor

All of these can be adapted and applied for use during Scouting events that will elevate the occasion and provide positive outcomes.