

# The Dog Scout Handbook

## Mission Statement

The mission of Dog Scouts of America is to promote responsible dog ownership and teach the importance of the human/canine bond. The things that you and your dog must learn, in order to pass the dog scout test are all examples of responsible dog ownership. The things you can do beyond that, to earn merit badges with your dog, will enhance the your bond and build an even better relationship between you and your dog.

## The Dog Scout Laws

1. Our dogs must be friendly with people and other dogs. Owners: always be courteous when you are with your dog in public--set a good example as a responsible owner and a well-trained dog. Socialize your puppy so that it will not fear novel stimuli, strange people or new dogs.
2. Our dogs must be well mannered, so that they will be accepted in public places (owners must be able to make their dogs behave well with basic obedience).
3. Our dogs must not be allowed to eliminate in an unseemly manner (refrain from letting your dog urinate on buildings, statues or other people's things), and fecal matter must be picked up (owners should always carry plastic bags and clean-up materials).
4. We must obey leash laws and other rules when accompanying our dogs to a park or other place where dogs are allowed. Owners: do not let your dog be a nuisance. You must keep your dog under control at all times.
5. Our dogs should be helpful whenever they can be (owners can utilize obedience skills to allow the dog to help with certain tasks and become more utilitarian). Strive to have your dogs learn all that they can.
6. Our dogs must not be allowed to harass wildlife (see #2)
7. Our dogs must never be tied up and left unattended. Owners: never leave your dogs in a vehicle unattended with the windows rolled up on a warm day.
8. We must always show kindness and caring toward our dog, so that others can observe the joys of dog ownership and appreciate the bond between an owner and a well-behaved dog.
9. Remember our goal of education with the Dog Scout's educational motto: "Let us learn all that we can, so that we may become more helpful."
10. Remember our goal of prevention of cruelty with the Dog Scout owner's motto: "Our dogs' lives are much shorter than our own--let's help them enjoy their time with us as much as we can."

## Dog Scout Class Outline

(treats are used for training—no treats allowed for check-out attempt)

- I. **Class 1:**
  - A. Leave it!
    - 1. The importance of a good leave it
      - i. Food – avoid accidental poisoning, fish hooks, food stealing
      - ii. Animals—avoid dangerous encounters, wildlife preservation
    - 2. The Walk-away game
      - i. The dog CHOOSES; you don't "correct" (no leash jerks)
      - ii. Back away when dog chooses correctly
      - iii. Give dog a better treat
    - 3. Impulse Control and Indirect Access
      - i. Dog will "check" with you before proceeding
      - ii. Dog learns that pulling doesn't win him the prize
      - iii. Dog learns that OBEDIENCE wins him the prize
      - iv. Dog defaults to YOU rather than to the environment
  - B. Heeling
    - 1. Loose leash is rewarded by continued forward motion
    - 2. Pulling results in starting over—play the heeling game
      - i. Use a no-reward marker if dog knows one
      - ii. Back straight up; dog follows left (heel) side
      - iii. Get dog back into position to start again quickly
      - iv. Be as persistent as the dog (repeat as many times as necessary)
      - v. Use "lure" to teach heel position initially
      - vi. **Switch to "see the food—don't get the food"**
- II. **Class 2:**
  - A. Sit and Lie Down on Command
    - 1. Use a food lure to get the dog into position
    - 2. Reward compliance with command
    - 3. Fade the Prompt
      - i. ABC's of dog training
  - B. Stay in place
    - 1. Use the no reward marker to practice STAY
    - 2. Build on Distractions, Duration and Distance (one "D" at a time)
    - 3. Use a "keep going" cue to let the dog know he's right, but not done yet
- III. **Class 3:**
  - A. Come when called
    - 1. Always reward a good recall
    - 2. Play the distraction game (obedience works! Choosing correctly wins!)
    - 3. Encourage a tuck sit by using a food lure (no sit required for test)
  - B. Friendly with people
    - 1. Use of calming signals to reassure shy or frightened dogs
    - 2. Dog should approach stranger and make contact
    - 3. Rule of thumb: Never approach a dog that hasn't approached you first
- IV. **Class 4:**
  - A. Friendly with other dogs
    - 1. BY now, we should have been able to observe dog interacting with other dogs (that's why we save this one for last)
    - 2. If not, we can quickly observe a mini-play session in the fenced area
    - 3. Dog is not required to like other dogs, but should know sufficient dog language to get himself out of a potential situation
    - 4. Owner should have acquired several skills to help dog show deferential behavior or calming signals to other dog
  - B. Leave it with another animal
    - 1. Other animal should include dogs and one other animal
- V. **Class 5:**
  - A. Simulated clean-up of waste is necessary only if we have not seen owner picking up poop already over the past 5 days
  - B. "Show me your baggie" is usually done at class 2, but you should have one with you at all times

- C. Handler should know the dog scout laws and agrees to abide by them
- D. Make-up of any previously unsuccessful attempts at parts of the test

## The Dog Scout Test

To become a Dog Scout, each handler and dog must pass a test which will show that the handler has taught the dog a modicum of obedience and that the scout's companion is a responsible dog owner. The handler must do a good job of controlling the dog, and the dog must display a sound temperament. This is a pass/fail test, based on performance which is either acceptable or unacceptable. (The test will be held after the tester has had several days to observe the dog interacting with people and other dogs, and after the handler has received training on how to calm his dog and prevent aggression.) The owner must also understand the "Dog Scout Way", and have had training in the use of operant conditioning, calming signals, proper dog greetings (dog language), aggression prevention, and everything else that goes along with being the "smart end of the leash."

1. **Friendly with people:** The handler and dog will be greeted by a friendly stranger (the kind you might meet on the street). He or she will bend down and talk sweetly to your dog, and try to pet your dog.

To pass, the dog must accept or remain neutral to the stranger's advances.

A dog which shows undue panic or unfriendliness with body posture, vocalizations or aggressive displays is not suitable to take in public near other people.

2. **Friendly with other dogs:** The dog must demonstrate that he is not dangerous to other dogs. We can do this by observing your dog with other dogs in a natural setting, or by placing him with several (up to 6) other loose dogs for several minutes of interaction (or long enough to determine whether there will or will not be a problem). The group will be supervised by one or more testers, and the owners will be outside, preferably out of sight. DSA staff will select the "group" of suitably non-aggressive playmate dogs, and supervise the test.

To pass, the dog must not show any unwarranted aggression toward innocuous other dogs. Some growling would be acceptable, if being pestered by another dog. It's ok for a dog to say to another dog, "Leave me alone!" Overly friendly or dominant dogs will be prevented from pawing, mounting or "bullying" other dogs, so that those dogs are not forced to reply with a snarl, which could escalate to something else. When interacting in public places, owners would be able to prevent such interactions, also. These displays do not necessarily mean a dog is inherently aggressive. The behavior of the dog in its interactions with other dogs all week at camp will be taken into consideration. Dog Scouts of America reserves the right to refuse to test any handler and dog based on observations. And a Dog Scout designation can be taken away at any time in the future if the dog is deemed aggressive.

3. **Well mannered:** The handler must demonstrate that he or she has taught the dog to perform certain basic obedience skills. Handler will demonstrate the following skills: walk at heel, sit and lie down on command, stay, come when called.

To pass a dog must perform as directed by his owner. Additional commands are permitted. No food is allowed. Head collars should not be necessary, and pronged collars are not allowed.

4. **Under Control:** The handler must demonstrate that his dog can perform a "Leave it" on command, to be used for food refusal or in an effort to prevent molestation of wildlife.

To pass, a dog must not touch something after the owner as told him to "Leave it"

5. **Responsible Dog Ownership:** The owner must demonstrate proper clean-up of the dog's waste.

To pass, the handler must have clean-up materials and demonstrate the proper use of them. Or, we must have observed the owner cleaning up after his dog in day to day situations.

## The Merit Badges

Earning merit badges is not a requirement. The merit badges are offered as recognition for handler and dog teams who have shown that they have mastered a particular skill.

At each camp, various merit badge activities will be presented for the campers to learn. Some will be standard, others will change from camp to camp. There will be 4 standard merit badges offered at each 6-day camp, each having multiple levels of achievement, offering the camper a chance to come back to camp each year and learn new skills (and earn additional badges). Mini-camps will offer two badges (backpacking and shaping), and offer a brief introduction to some of the other activities (water safety and agility).

The standard badge categories will be: Backpacking, Obedience, Obstacle Course, and Water Safety. Each of these categories offers an opportunity to earn badges for various levels of achievement in the given activity. Badges can only be earned for the specific levels of activities offered in each category at any particular camp.

Elective activities for repeat campers could be anything interesting and fun which the students can learn the basics of in 6 days, and are based on instructor availability.

We recommend that each year, a camper set his or her goal to obtain **two** merit badges. Badges which are not earned at one camp can be completed at a later camp when that activity is offered again. Repeat campers will soon have most of the standard badges, and can have an opportunity to take “electives” which are only available to repeat campers.

### To earn the merit badges, there are a few requirements.

First, you must have passed the Dog Scout Test, before you can receive any merit badges whatsoever.

Secondly, there may be pre-requisites for certain badges (like before earning advanced water rescue, you must have water rescue 1).

Thirdly, you must attend the orientation and safety lecture for each activity before you undertake the training for that activity. If you have any doubt as to whether or not you will be trying for that badge, you should play it safe and go to the orientation lecture.

Finally, you must have completed **all** of the required steps on your goal-oriented check-off sheet, and must have your merit badge achievement record **signed** by a scoutmaster who witnessed it. This will allow us to verify and issue the certificate and embroidered merit badge which is described in this manual.

## The Orientation and Safety Session (O & S)

Make sure you check in at the O & S. If you don't attend, you can't earn the badge. We don't want you out on the field breaking your neck or injuring your dog because you didn't properly learn how to perform certain basic skills or safety procedures required for activity in question.

At the orientation, you will learn all about the activity. You will hear the instructor go over the training steps, and cover any important information related to the learning of this activity. Safety procedures will be outlined. You may watch a video or have some other visual presentation. Listen carefully, and take notes.

This is the stuff you will need to do later out on the field. Most of the information provided in this lecture will be required for you to know or understand for you to qualify for the merit badge. The check-off sheet requirements will be discussed. After the O & S lecture, you will break out into a Field Session to perform what you have learned.

### **The Field Session**

At the field session, you will begin practicing the things which were talked about and instructed at O & S. Your instructor(s) will be there in the field with you to give you “hands on” instruction and help you through the actual physical requirement for the badge. Now that you know how to work with the goal-oriented check-off sheets, you may begin checking off each thing as your dog completes it, using the proper method of introduction and training. Be sure to ask any questions you may have of the instructor at this session. Subsequent sessions, which are labeled “Open Practice” may not provide the same opportunity for one-on-one with the instructor. If you have a question, and the instructor for that activity is busy or unavailable, direct your question to any DSA staff member, or ask a “Mentor.”

### **The Check-off Sheets**

These are provided for each merit badge activity. They are to help you monitor your progress in each area. As you and your dog complete each goal, you move on to the next one. You can check off your own achievements on the sheet as you do them, but keep in mind that an instructor or staff person must actually observe you performing certain activities, and must observe you during the check-out session of your training. You should keep your handbook with you at the training sessions, so that you can monitor your progress carefully.

### **The Open Practice Sessions**

After you have had a chance to learn about the activity at O & S and to physically do the stuff at your first field session, you will be given several additional opportunities to perfect your skills, and progress with your check-off sheets in what we call “Open Practice.” This is a time block when you can go to the field and work on your own to advance through the training and practicing which will be necessary to qualify for your badge. You can do this on your own. Everything is spelled out for you on your check-off sheets, and you have gone to O & S and your first field session. An instructor will be close by to help you, or answer questions, but may not actually be guiding the session or requiring that you do anything in particular. You can work on your own, and progress at your own pace this way. You may have several “Open Practices” scheduled for your activity. Please take advantage of them. If you have a question, and the instructor for that activity is busy or unavailable, direct your question to any DSA staff member, or ask a “Mentor.”

### **Free Time**

There is free time blocked into the camp schedule so that you can take advantage of some extra training in a particular activity. Once you have attended O & S and your first field session, you pretty much can be trusted to work on your own. There is no guarantee of any kind of instructor supervision or guidance whatsoever on the field during your free time--you are on your own. Please use the buddy system. Do not work alone on any of the camp activities. In addition, some of the equipment may be put away during non-scheduled times. If you take out equipment, please be very careful to put it back as you found it, and treat it like it was your own.

## Check-Out

After you realize you have completed all of the requirements for your badge, you should go to your instructor, and inform him or her of this. We need to know which activities you will be checking out on for your certificate. We need paperwork for each badge you're earning. Show your completed check-off sheet to your instructor. The instructor may ask you some of the questions related to the check-off sheet, like, "What are you using for a Reward Marker?" To help verify that you did complete a certain step. Your instructor may have to actually view you performing certain steps on the list, if they were not able to do so on the field. This must be done to check-out. Then your instructor will sign off on your form. The scheduled activity check-out is your last chance to show that you have taught your dog to perform the activity, and have earned the badge. If you have been trying, but have not completed the requirement before now, you can do it at this time. If you need an instructor to watch and verify your performance at some point, it is your responsibility to make sure that he or she is watching you when you go through your check-out. If you need the instructor's signature, please get it as soon as he or she has seen you complete the requirement, rather than asking for it later when the instructor may have forgotten if he saw you and your particular dog do that particular activity or not. When you are completely checked out, and have the instructor's signature, **turn in your merit badge form with payment** (you can put it on your camp tab, but your form must be stamped "PAID before turning it in to the camp office). [NOTE: Some activities do not have a separate, scheduled check-out. See your instructor.

## Awards Presentations

This takes place on the last day of camp. This is when you will receive your acknowledgement of having received the badges you were trying for. You will receive a certificate denoting the badges which were earned by your dog (we get this info from the completed form you've handed in). And, you will receive the embroidered patch depicting the activity. [Electives may not be noted on the certificate.]

## Additional Badges

Once you have earned a badge and we have it on record, you can order additional embroidered badges at a cost of \$3. per badge. You may want one for your training bag or club jacket or one for your dog's pack. Be sure to put it on your camp tab, so we can pull the badges and have them ready for you at the awards presentation.