

Internet Guidelines for Scouting Unit Web Sites

(Adapted from the Heart of America Council's guidelines)

Member/Youth Protection

1. Last names, last initials, or any identifying information about youth members shall not be published on the Web without a parent's signed approval. Names and information about any adult shall be published only with the written approval of that individual.
2. Pictures of youth may appear on the Web as long as no name or other personal information is associated with the picture.
3. Under no circumstances shall the address, personal phone number, or e-mail address of any youth be published on the Internet.
4. Phone numbers of adult leaders may be published only with written permission.
5. E-mail addresses of adults may be published, with the permission of the holder, if worthwhile benefit to the program would be achieved.

Be prepared by being aware; let's keep our kids safe!

Commercialism on the Web

1. The National Council's policy on commercialism states: "A site cannot contain any advertisements or commercial endorsements whatsoever." This means that in no way may a unit, district, or council page be involved in any type of commercial relationship, nor may units, districts, or councils endorse any business, corporation, commercial agency, or individual unless duly authorized by the National Executive Board.

2. The BSA logo may not be used on any product, flier, or advertisement in any way that implies the Boy Scouts of America or any of its entities is sponsoring a commercial product or company.
3. It is further suggested that a site should not use a provider like GeoCities or AOL because they *will* target advertisements to your page. Remember that a site is not free if the provider uses your page for advertising their product or services. Units should seek community support from their local neighbor/area provider, if possible.

Linking to Other Sites

1. The ability to use a hypertext link to connect your site to other sites is what makes it the “Web.” You have no control over who links to your Web page. A person in any country can link right to your unit’s front door for anyone who reads his page. You could do the same, pointing electronically anywhere. On the other hand, your links “downstream” could cause you embarrassment because you never know what files you may be linked to from that point on. The National Council’s concern is that your Scout unit’s Web page may be just two clicks away from an inappropriate Web site or adult XXX-rated material.

Your unit Web site will not link to any sites other than your council BSA site and the BSA’s national Web site.

2. Although we have a no-links policy for unit Web sites, we understand the importance of links to outside sites dedicated entirely to Scouting and other helpful information. These types of links to Scouting-related sites may not have a hot or direct link on a local council BSA site. You can, however, add the URL (address) to your page as a site to visit for good information.

3. The Heart of America Council guidelines on how to place a thank-you to your Internet provider for donated Web space is to do it in such a manner that it is still effective without using the company's logo or endorsing the business.

Political Concerns

1. The Boy Scouts of America shall not, through its governing body or through any of its officers, chartered organizations, or members, involve the Scouting movement in any questions of a political nature. However, this shall not be interpreted to prevent the teaching of the ideals of patriotism and good citizenship, as required to fulfill the Boy Scouts of America's purpose. This policy shall also not limit the freedom of thought or action of any official or member as an individual.
2. Basically this means to leave our political opinions out of the mix. Let's teach our children about the facts of our government. Make your political stands outside the Scouting arena, whether at a Scouting function or in the Web pages.

Liability

The Web site task force, like other council committees, provides general oversight of this program. Members operating Internet sites are responsible for their content. The council shall not be held liable for the contents of any Web site, whether or not such Web site has obtained council-approved status.

Helpful Hints

1. Be careful and monitor how you use sarcasm or humor on your page, because your message may not be received in the spirit in which it was meant.
2. Check your spelling. A misspelled word can change the mood of the message.
3. Keep paragraphs short and succinct. Focus on one subject per message area. Separate subjects by lines or spaces. Just make sure the themes do not run together, cluttering the view and conveying incorrect information.
4. Make sure calendars have correct information. If you're not sure, don't post. It is better to have no information and keep looking for it, than to have the wrong information and miss the event.

A good motto for Scouting Web design is KISMIF (keep it simple; make it fun).