

Computers in Scouting
University of Scouting 2006



NORTHERN STAR COUNCIL
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA



2006

GC122 Computers in Scouting

Use modern tools to simplify record keeping, make your newsletter a snap or keep your scouts and parents up to date. Learn how to use the internet and where to find appropriate resources.

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Disclaimer

While many Microsoft products are mentioned, this is not a push to buy from Microsoft. In real life, I am in software development and we only use Microsoft products. I recognize there are other products and platforms in use, but I do not have any access to them either at the workplace or at home.

Some of the products listed are included based on comments from other individuals and I have not personally used them.

Most web sites cited in this document were found using the Google search tool. Again, other tools exist and may include or exclude other products. The exclusion of any given product does not reflect on the product, just on my ability to find out about them.

There are many additional web sites related to scouting. The sites listed just scratch the surface. I encourage all to use your search engine of choice and look for any sites. Try keywords such as "Boy Scout Clipart", "Boy Scout Software".

With that said, let's get going!!

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What are the main uses for Computers in Scouting

- A) Communication
- B) Record Keeping
- C) Something to plug into the Current Bush at camp
- D) Other Uses

Answer A, B and D (Some scouts continue to think they can find a current bush to plug in their electronics)

Example of Communications

- A) Newsletters
- B) Web Sites
- C) E Mail
- D) Programs
- E) Announcements / Flyers
- F) Picture Presentations

Examples of Record Keeping

- A) Awards
- B) Attendance
 - a. Meetings
 - b. Events
- C) Finances
 - a. Troop
 - b. Scout Accounts
- D) Equipment
- E) Phone Lists

Communications

You can have the best program in the state, but if no one knows about it, you may as well have saved your time and effort. Communications is the number one stumbling block to having a successful program. Whether it is about exciting events, or a mundane task such as rechartering, you need to “get the word out”!

How do you make sure everyone in the unit is on board?

Newsletters

Every Pack or troop should have a monthly newsletter. Why?

- A) Get the word out – Don’t rely on scouts to deliver critical information to home. Remember the telephone game?
- B) Include forms for camp, shooting ports etc
- C) Recognize adult leaders (recognition at meetings should be reserved for scouts)
- D) Forward looking calendars
- E) Historical information (what did we do three years ago?)

How to create a newsletter?

- A) Use Microsoft Word or Publisher
- B) Have a volunteer assigned to the newsletter.
- C) Gather input from everyone in the unit
- D) Newsletter articles can be used to fulfill a requirement for the communications merit badge (required for Eagle)
- E) Have a scout work on the newsletter – They are probably better on the computer than most of us!



Suggested Software

Microsoft Word	PrintMaster (Does Trifolds)
Microsoft Publisher	Microsoft WordPad
Notepad	CutePDF (changes newsletters to PDF format)

Kaposia District puts trifolds of troops / packs in the district into libraries and other public places.

Web Sites

A unit web site can be a great way to supplement the monthly newsletter. A good web site can showcase the unit using pictures, stories and events. This is a great recruiting tool. It gives new parents a sense of what the unit is like.

How to create a web site? Google "boy scout units web site hosting"

Web sites are easy to set up, and there are free hosting sites available for scouting units. A couple of these are:

www.scouters.com/hosting

www.scouttroop.org

In 2006, a participant said www.pressenter.com would host for free if you sent them a letter.

Sites that charge

www.packsonline.com

Uses a template for a web site
\$150 per year

Different web development software exists. See the Google Directory page www.google.com/Top/Computers/Software/Internet/Authoring/HTML/WYSIWYG_Editors

One of the easiest to use is Microsoft FrontPage – Cost is approximately \$60 used, \$160 new. I used Front Page for Dummies as a learning tool.



If you have a web site, share the address. Make sure your District Webmaster knows the address. He may have a link to sites on the District Web Site.

Using a template site and / or outside hosting site makes it easier to pass the web site to the next webmaster.

Also, look into setting up a unit "blog" site.



Suggested Software

Microsoft FrontPage

E Mail

For those families that use E mail, an E mail “blast” can be a great way to:

- a) Get out information that was not included in newsletters
- b) Point the family to a web site for further details
- c) Remind families of upcoming events
- d) Do surveys



In my house, my wife checks e mail immediately when she gets home, prior to saying hello! In other homes, email may only be checked once a week. Some E mail services delete unread e mail if not opened in xx days. If you are relying heavily on E mail, make it known to the families in your unit. Otherwise, some people may be left out. Unlike US Mail, it is not “in your face” and easily overlooked.



"You should check your e-mails more often. I fired you over three weeks ago."



Create lists of E mail addresses, just like phone numbers. Set them up in your contacts as a separate group. Then, when you need to “blast” an E mail out, you just need to send it to the group.



People change their E mail often. Be sure to follow up on any “rejects” to get the new E mail address.



Suggested Software

Microsoft Outlook

Microsoft Outlook Express

Your Network Provider’s E Mail Software

www.Scoutrack.com will manage E mail lists

Programs

Recognition of a Scout's accomplishments is one of the most important things to do at a Pack meeting or a Court of Honor. It is much better to have a written record of their rank advancement and participation in events, rather than just an oral "Johnny got his Bear badge tonight". Have a program for every pack meeting with the scouts names and achievements. This gives the parents something to keep and the scouts something show off with pride to anyone who did not attend.

The other reason for programs is to keep meeting on schedule. If there is a written program, each den or patrol knows exactly when they are scheduled to be a part of the program. Also, nothing gets skipped (Yes, I have seen awards go wanting, just because someone forgot to give them out)

Programs may be as simple as a one page Word document, or as fancy as a newsletter done in Publisher.



For those with access to projectors, PowerPoint slides are also a great way to keep the program going. A PowerPoint presentation can include graphics and pictures. See Picture Presentations below.



Suggested Software

Microsoft Word
Microsoft Publisher
Microsoft WordPad
Microsoft PowerPoint
Notepad

Announcements / Flyers

As noted above, you need to get the word out on upcoming events. These can be a simple announcement or flyer. Don't think that handing out the flyer once is sufficient. You would be amazed how many never make it home. Try for at least two times prior to the event. Also, setting the flyers out on the table usually means most will stay there. Actively seek out participants or parents and place it into their hand.

Flyers do not need to be fancy, a simple Word document, or even Notepad is sufficient. Make sure to include the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How (just like they taught us in English class). Also, important, any cost associated.



Suggested Software

Microsoft Word
Microsoft Publisher
Microsoft WordPad
Notepad

Picture Presentations

There is nothing better than presenting a montage of pictures on a big screen during a pack or troop meeting. The look on the scout's faces as they hunt for themselves in the pictures is great. This not only reinforces the great time they have in the pack or troop, it lets Mom and Dad know that their son is learning new skills and enjoying the program.

If possible, a computer projector can make this a true multi media experience. Many software packages help put together slide shows, complete with commentary or music. Your scouts can probably already do this. Check with them.



Suggested Software

Microsoft PowerPoint
Microsoft Picture and Fax Viewer
Picassa



Other Communication Ideas computers can help out with?



Get yourself on your District E mail list if your district has one. This is an easy way to stay connected via the internet. I know the following districts maintain E mail lists.

Northern Lights	northernlights.nsbsa.org
Dan Patch	http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DanPatch
Chief Black Dog	chiefblackdog.nsbsa.org/email.asp



Record Keeping

Keeping accurate records of scouting activities is an important part of scouting.

Awards

All awards a scout earns should be recorded and accessible at future dates. When the scout completes the Eagle Rank, he must provide documentation on merit badges earned, ranks achieved etc. In many units, an Eagle Window is created showing his entire scouting career, including Cub Scouts. At an Arrow of light Ceremony, many packs present a “graduation arrow” showing a boys' Cub Scout Accomplishments.

Even after scouting, background checks and resumes may mention Scouting as a way to show character. In case of a reference call, the unit should be able to provide the information showing the scouts accomplishments.



Suggested Software

Troopmaster

Packmaster

Troopmaster .NET

Packmaster .NET

Scoutrack

Excel Spreadsheets

Tiger Tracker

- Web based so everyone can access it

- Web based so everyone can access it

- Web based so everyone can access it

<http://trax.boy-scouts.net/> (Free)

www.pack846.org/leaders/TigerTracker.htm

Suggestion – Print out entire Den records, send to parents. They can see how there son is doing compared to other boys, and maybe give some incentive to keep up with the others.

Attendance

Keeping track of attendance at troop, pack or den meetings is a measure to the involvement of the youth. Poor attendance may mean the scout is not getting the activities he needs from the program. This is a great way to single out scouts and work with them to enhance their scouting experience.



Suggested Software

Troopmaster

Packmaster

Troopmaster .NET - Web based so everyone can access it

Packmaster .NET - Web based so everyone can access it

Scoutrack - Web based so everyone can access it

Meetings

Notes at committee meetings help guide the unit and keep the yearly plan in mind. Rather than guess at what was decided in previous meetings, simply go back to the notes. Notes can be taken in Word or even Notepad. Having a unit secretary key them into a laptop during the meeting saves time and eliminates transcription errors.



If you have a unit website, post the committee notes on the web site so all can read, even if they were not at the meeting.



Suggested Software

Microsoft Word

Microsoft Publisher

Microsoft WordPad

Notepad

Events

Just as attendance is a measure of overall participation, so is Event participation. You want to record participation at events for many purposes:

- a) Reflection – Did a large number participate? Would more have come if the event was different, cost less, earlier or later in the year etc?
- b) Rank advancement in Boy Scouts depends on participation in camp outs.
- c) Order of the Arrow eligibility requires participation in campouts.



Suggested Software

Troopmaster
Packmaster



Finances

Keeping track of unit finances is a must do requirement. As fluid as a unit is (people coming and going every year), it is easy to lose track of funds.

A simple Excel spreadsheet can be used as a fund balance sheet throughout the year. It is important to make sure all agree on the funds balance every month. Everyone on the committee should know where the money is coming from and where it is being spent.

Troop

Troop finances are the easy part of record keeping. The troop account is perpetual. Every year, the balance from the last year carries over to the current year. A spreadsheet with ins and outs usually can suffice.

Scout Accounts

Many units have scout accounts. These accounts can be harder to keep up to date. Scouts earn money during fundraisers and spend money for camp or camping supplies. Since the money is coming and going at all times, doing a manual accounting is hard. Spreadsheets can help.

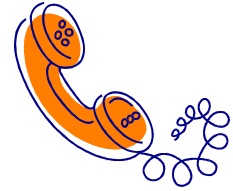


Suggested Software

TroopLedger
PackLedger
Microsoft Excel

Phone Lists

Having accurate phone lists is a must for getting in touch with members of your units. Simple phone lists in word or Excel work fine. Commercial packages also can keep and generate phone lists.



Suggested Software

Microsoft Word
Microsoft Excel
TroopMaster
PackMaster

Other Record Keeping Ideas computers can help out with?



I understand Troopmaster and Packmaster interface with the Council Web Site for Rechartering and advancement purposes. I am not familiar with this process, or whether other packages also interface.

Software Products

From www.scoutscan.net/scoutsoftware/software.html

Scout Troop Administrative Software

[SCOUT RECORDS](#) - - Commercial (**Palm Pilot**)

[WINSCRIBE 2000](#) - - Freeware (**WIN**)

[SCOUTMATE](#) - - Shareware (**DOS & WIN**)

[SCOUT TRACKER](#) - - Shareware (**WIN**)

[SCOUT TRACKER](#) - - Freeware (**MAC**)

[SCOUT TRACKER](#) - - Freeware (**WEB**)

[SCOUTWISE](#) - - Commercial (**DOS**)

[WINSOUT](#) - - Commercial (**WIN**)

[SCOUTSOFT](#) - **U.S.** LDS Scouting Admin. Software - Commercial (**DOS**)

[SCOUTER'S AID](#) - - Commercial (**WIN**)

Cub Scout and Boy Scout Software

[RANK N' FILE](#) - Commercial (**WIN**)

[TROOPMASTER/PACKMASTER/](#) - Commercial (**DOS and WIN**)

[SCOUTWARE](#) - Shareware (**WIN**)

Cub Scout Pack Software

[WINDOWS TO YOUR PACK](#) - Shareware (**WIN**)

[CUBMATE](#) - Shareware (**DOS & WIN**)

[SCOUT RECORD KEEPER](#) - Shareware (**MAC & WIN**)

[DEN / AWARDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM](#) - Commercial (**WIN**)

Other Software

[EAGLEQUEST](#) - - Commercial (**WIN**)

[TROOPER](#) - - Commercial (**WIN**)

[COUNCELOR KEEPER](#) - **U.S.** Badge Counselor Admin. Software - Freeware
(**MAC & WIN**)

Useful Web Pages

National Boy Scouts of America	www.scouting.org
Northern Star Council	www.northernstarbsa.org
Your District	<i>districtname</i> .nsbsa.org Ex. Northernlights.nsbsa.org
Merit Badge Information	www.meritbadge.com
Independent Sites	
General	www.usscouts.com
Cub masters	www.cubmaster.org
Scout Masters	www.Scoutmaster.Org
All	www.macscouter.com
All	www.netwoods.com
Clip Art	clipart.usscouts.com
Games	www.macscouter.com/games
Unit Commissioners	www.netcommish.com

Other good Web Sites
