

OPENING CEREMONIES

The 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. What follows are some ideas for troop meeting opening ceremonies.

Flag Ceremonies

The US and troop flag can be already positioned at the front of the room or brought in with a color guard. Bringing in the colors can be done in a simple way or in a more formal manner.

Standard Flag Ceremony

(Flag stands are in place at the front of the room. Color guard is in position at the rear of the room. Narrator is conveniently near by. The senior patrol leader calls the meeting to order. The narrator (if other than the SPL) advances to the front.

– **Narrator:** Troop, attention! *(Pause.)* Color guard, present the colors! *(The narrator's commands should be loud and clear.)*

– *(The color guard advances with the colorbearers in front. The U.S. flag should always be on the marching right in the procession. As the procession begins, the narrator gives their next command.)*

– **Narrator:** Hand salute! *(They salute, and the audience does likewise. The narrators eyes follow the U.S. flag until it is in position at the front of the room. Just as the colorbearers reach the front, the U.S. colorbearer and guards first cross to the left and the troop (or state) flag colorbearer and guards follow crossing to the right, positioning themselves so that each flag is in place surrounded by its respective guards. Each member of the color guard stands at attention, facing the audience, colorbearers holding the flags vertically.)*

– **Narrator:** Please repeat with me the Pledge of Allegiance. *(They begin the Pledge of Allegiance. The audience joins in, and the troop (or state) flag is lowered slightly. The colorbearers and other guards do not salute or repeat the pledge. When the pledge is finished, the narrator gives the signal to drop all salutes.)* Two. *(The troop flag is raised to a vertical position again.)*

– **Narrator:** Color guard, post the colors!

(The troop flag is placed in its stand first. The troop (or state) flag bearer and other guards salute it and step back into previous position. The U.S. flag is then posted. Its bearer and guards salute it and step back into their previous position.)

– Narrator: Color guard, dismissed! *(The colorbearers lead the procession to the back of the room, with the narrator following last.)*

The Pledge of Allegiance with Meanings

(Lines are divided between different Scouts, as seen fit.)

– I

(me, an individual, a committee of one)

– PLEDGE

(dedicate all of my worldly goods to give without self pity)

– ALLEGIANCE

(my love and my devotion)

– TO THE FLAG

(our standard, Old Glory, a symbol of freedom, wherever she waves, there's respect, because your loyalty has given her a dignity that shouts freedom is everybody's job)

– UNITED

(that means that we have all come together)

– STATES OF AMERICA

(States: individual communities that have united into 50 great states. 50 individual communities with pride, dignity, and purpose. All divided with imaginary boundaries, yet united to a common purpose, and that's love for country.)

– AND TO THE REPUBLIC

(Republic: a state in which sovereign power is invested in representatives chosen by the people to govern, and government is the people, and it's from the people to the leaders. Not from the leaders to the people.)

– FOR WHICH IT STANDS, ONE NATION, UNDER GOD

(meaning, so blessed by God)

– INDIVISIBLE

(incapable of being divided)

– WITH LIBERTY

(which is freedom: the right of power to live one's own life, without threats, fear, or some sort of retaliation)

– AND JUSTICE

(the principle or qualities of dealing fairly with others)

– FOR ALL

(For all: which means, it's as much your country as it is mine.)

Scout salute, please repeat with me the Pledge of Allegiance.

Two Lines

– The troop is formed by patrols in two lines facing each other. The flag is marched up the aisle between the lines, with the Scouts saluting. The flag bearers halt at the head of the lines, post the colors, and march to the rear, whereupon the troop gives the Pledge of Allegiance.

Spot Light

– The troop is in single-rank formation. The Scouts are brought to attention and all lights are turned off except a single spot or flashlight focused on the US flag. A Scout from the color guard patrol recites (doesn't sing) the first verse of "The Star-Spangled Banner". The lights are turned back on and the troop gives the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Scout Oath

– The Boy Scout Promise is the world's most oft-repeated oath, and it's recitation is very frequently included in the opening ceremony of troop meetings.

Three Candle Opening 1:

(On a table in a three-candle holder at the head of the room are three candles and a lighter or matches.)

– Leader: Like the three fingers of the Scout sign and salute, and the three pointed design of the Scout Badge, the Scout Oath has three parts: duty to God and Country (*first candle is lit*) duty to other people (*second candle is lit*) and duty to ourselves (*third candle is lit*). Please repeat with me the Scout Oath. Scout sign...Scout Oath.

(Everyone recites the Scout Oath.)

Three Candle Opening 2:

(On a table in a three-candle holder at the head of the room are three candles and a lighter or matches.)

– 1st Scout: On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to: God and my country, and to obey the Scout Law (*first candle is lit*).

– 2nd Scout: On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to: help other people at all times (*second candle is lit*).

– 3rd Scout: On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to: keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight (*third candle is lit*).

The Scout Law

Single Point Focus

– Following the Pledge of Allegiance, instead of repeating the entire Law, the SPL states one point, and then another Scout reads the explanation. If decided, this approach can be featured for twelve meetings:

- 1 TRUSTWORTHY: "A Scout tells the truth. They keep their promises. Honesty is part of their code of conduct. People can depend on them."
- 2 LOYAL: "A Scout is true to their family, Scout leaders, friends, school, and nation."
- 3 HELPFUL: "A Scout is concerned about other people. They do things willingly for others without pay or reward."
- 4 FRIENDLY: "A Scout is a friend to all. They are a brother or sister to other Scouts. They seek to understand others. They respect those with ideas and customs other than their own."
- 5 COURTEOUS: "A Scout is polite to everyone regardless of age or position. They know good manners make it easier for people to get along together."

- 6 KIND: “A Scout understands there is strength in being gentle. They treat others as they want to be treated. They do not hurt or kill harmless things without reason.”
- 7 OBEDIENT: “A Scout follows the rules of their family, school, and troop. They obey the laws of their community and country. If they think these rules and laws are unfair, they try to have them changed in an orderly manner rather than disobey them.”
- 8 CHEERFUL: “A Scout looks for the bright side of things. They cheerfully perform tasks that come their way. They try to make others happy.”
- 9 THRIFTY: “A Scout works to pay their way and to help others. They save for unforeseen needs. They protect and conserve natural resources. They carefully use time and property.”
- 10 BRAVE: “A Scout can face danger even if they are afraid. They have the courage to stand for what they think is right even if others laugh at or threaten them.”
- 11 CLEAN: “A Scout keeps their body and mind fit and clean. They go around with those who believe in living by these same ideals. They help keep their home and community clean.”
- 12 REVERENT: “A Scout is reverent toward God. They are faithful in their religious duties. They respect the beliefs of others.”

Newest and Oldest Scout

– Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the newest Scout and the oldest Scout lead the troop in reciting the Scout Law.

Twelve Scouts

– Following the Pledge of Allegiance, one point of the Scout Law is assigned to each of 12 Scouts. Each Scout, in turn, takes a step forward, salutes, recites their point of the Law, and steps back in line.

The Outdoor Code

– Featuring the Outdoor Code in addition to, or in lieu of the Scout Oath or Law is an appropriate option.

In Unison

– As an American, I will do my best to:

Be clean in my outdoor manners, be careful with fire, be considerate in the outdoors, and be conservation-minded.

Four Candle Opening

(On a table in a four-candle holder at the head of the room are four candles and a lighter or matches. Lines and tasks are divided between different Scouts as seen fit.)

1. As an American, I will do my best to: be clean in my outdoor manners *(first candle is lit)*.
2. As an American, I will do my best to: be careful with fire *(second candle is lit)*.
3. As an American, I will do my best to: be considerate in the outdoors *(third candle is lit)*.
4. As an American, I will do my best to: be conservation-minded *(fourth candle is lit)*.

With Explanations

Lines and tasks are divided between different Scouts as seen fit.)

As an American, I will do my best to: be clean in my outdoor manners.

- I will treat the outdoors as a heritage.
- I will take care of it for myself and others.
- I will keep my trash and garbage out of lakes, streams, fields, woods, and roadways.

As an American, I will do my best to: be careful with fire.

- I will prevent wildfire.
- I will build my fires only where they are appropriate.
- When I have finished using a fire, I will make sure it is cold out.
- I will leave a clean fire ring, or remove all evidence of my fire.

As an American, I will do my best to: be considerate in the outdoors.

- I will treat public and private property with respect.
- I will use low-impact methods of hiking and camping.

As an American, I will do my best to: be conservation-minded.

- I will learn how to practice good conservation of soil, waters, forests, minerals, grasslands, wildlife, and energy.
- I will urge others to do the same.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

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. What follows are some closing ceremony ideas.

Retiring the Colors

If a flag ceremony was used in the opening, it is appropriate to retire the flag as a closing ceremony.

Scout Law with a Prayer

Troop assembles in "U" formation for a Scoutmaster's Minute. When the Scoutmaster is done, the SPL leads everyone in the Scout Law, after which they call up the Chaplain's Aid to deliver a prayer of thanks.

Troop Circle Counting Off – Scout Oath or Law

The troop forms a circle and counts off, clockwise, around the circle. As each Scout says their number, they put their left hand on the shoulder of the Scout to their left.

When all have counted, each Scout puts up the Scout sign and recites the Scout Oath, or Law (whatever was not recited during the Opening Ceremony).

Class A Clap

Extolled by “Scoutmaster to the World”, Green Bar Bill Hillcourt, the Class A Clap has been around for many years and invariably sparks enthusiastic responses. After the clap, Scouts skip one beat and then, in unison, zealously shout something. This can be anything: the troop’s number, the name of a Scout camp, a chosen word, etc.



Scout Benediction

“May the Great Scoutmaster of all Scouts be with us until we meet again.”

Scout Benediction with Gestures

“May the great Scoutmaster” (*all make a gesture toward the heavens*)

“Of all Scouts” (*all make a sweeping motion from right to left at shoulder height*)

“Be with us until we meet again.” (*all bring their right hands to their hearts, and bow their heads.*)

Troop Circle – Scout Benediction

The troop forms a circle with each Scout making the Scout sign. With their left hand, each grasps the lifted right wrist of their neighbor on the left. The troop then gives the Scout Benediction or Scout Law.

Repetition

The troop forms a circle with each Scout making the Scout sign. With their left hand, each grasps the lifted right wrist of their neighbor on the left. The troop then repeats after the SPL as follows:

“May the great Scoutmaster . . .” (*troop repeats*)

“Of all good Scouts . . .” (*troop repeats*)

“Watch between . . .” (*troop repeats*)

“Me and thee . . .” (*troop repeats*)

“While we’re apart . . .” (*troop repeats*)

“One from one another . . .” (*troop repeats*)

“Amen” . . .” (*troop repeats*)

Counting Off – Scout Benediction

The troop forms a troop circle and counts off, clockwise, around the circle. As each Scout says their number, they put their left hand on the shoulder of the Scout to their left. When all have counted, each Scout puts their right hand over their heart and gives the Scout Benediction.

Taps If the troop has a bugler or trumpet player, playing taps right at the end of the meeting says it all.