

11 Things I learned as Scoutmaster

by Larry Tuck

I remember those feelings when I became Scoutmaster. I have a four or five page list of things I wanted to accomplish and couldn't understand why it was all so hard.

Over time I learned a few things:

1. You can't do it all. Learn to prioritize. Don't take on more than you can successfully accomplish.
2. Your inability to do it all doesn't make you a failure. Learn to find satisfaction in the smallest success, and shrug off the stuff that doesn't work out.
3. There's always next time. Learn from your mistakes, and don't be afraid to try a different way of doing things.
4. Know that in a year, half the things you thought you just **had** to do, will no longer seem important. New concerns will take their place -- but at the same time, many good things will happen that you didn't plan on.
5. The 80-20 rule always applies: 80 percent of the work is going to be done by 20 percent of the people. Learn to live with it -- and cherish that 20 percent.
6. Look to the boys for appreciation, not the adults. It's the boys that count, and very probably they do appreciate you, even if they don't always show it.
7. When in doubt, go back to the book -- the Boy Scout Handbook, the Scoutmaster's Handbook, and/or Woods Wisdom/Troop Program Features, as appropriate. They contain the distilled wisdom of generations of Scouts and Scouters, and usually, what they suggest, works.
8. Never do anything for a boy, that you can teach him to do for himself. Better, never do anything for a boy, that **another** boy can teach him to do for himself. For that matter, never do anything for the troop, or for a patrol, that a boy can be taught to do.
9. Your biggest challenge as scoutmaster is to teach Rule 7 to the other adults in your troop. This will also be your biggest source of criticism from uninformed parents. When this happens, remember Rule 6.
10. Remember the Aims: Citizenship, Character, and Fitness. Everything else is Methods, and the Methods are just tools for you to use, not to trip over. Examine your use of each and every Method (there are 8 -- look them up) to be sure that you are applying it in a way that advances the Aims and contributes to the overall health of your troop.
11. Above all, remember that Scouting is supposed to be a Game. It's supposed to be fun for the boys, and for you. If it's not, figure out what you need to change to make it fun.