

# Hooked On Scouting Playbook



# Hooked on Scouting

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The Hooked on Scouting program has been developed to leverage the fun activity of fishing in order to reel in new Scouts during the recruiting season. This program will teach young boys all the techniques they need to know to get started along with providing actual hands-on fishing experience! By participating in the program, parents will discover the adventure Scouting can provide their families with the anticipation of experiencing the first time their Scout catches the big one!

## Concept

Your council or district will host a community event for parents and youth to learn the basics of fishing and then get some actual hands-on fishing experience. All of the details (supplies, snacks, instructors, games) will be taken care of by the council or district. All the families need to worry about is having a great time. Through this simple interaction, parents will see the experience, friendships, and once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that Scouting can offer their children. It's sort of a "test drive" of the Scouting experience. Scouting employees and volunteers will be on-hand to help with the event, answer any questions, and of course, sign up new Scouts!

## Planning the Activity

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Similar to getting ready for an actual fishing trip, it's important that you have a well thought out plan of attack. Making sure you have all the pieces in place will ensure a successful event, even if the fish aren't biting. Here are some things you will need to determine ahead of time along with some suggestions to help get you started.

### Step 1 – Determine Your Strategy

The Hooked on Scouting program can be used as either a single, stand-alone event, or as part of a broader recruiting effort. For example, the program could be promoted at back-to-school nights or other similar presentations to incentivize families to join Scouting and receive their rod, reel and tackle pack when they sign up. Or you could plan to host this as an open community event and be prepared to recruit and provide rod, reel, and tackle pack at the event itself. Promoting the event at presentations beforehand while still having additional supplies available at the event is also an option.

## Step 2 – Set a Budget

Once you have committed to hosting a Hooked on Scouting event, budget the appropriate funds needed so you can provide each boy who attends a rod, reel, and tackle pack (some councils have been successful securing donations to help cover these expenses). Rods and reels can be ordered from Zebco or any other manufacturer you prefer. Other costs to consider include event venue, food & drink, belt loops, backyard bass for the casting station, and other miscellaneous event costs.

## Step 3 – Pick a Date

This is an outdoor activity, so it should be relatively warm outside when the event is held. We know Scouts are tough, but we'll also have parents and youth participating with us for the first time, so it's very important that this is a pleasant experience. Always have a back-up plan if it turns out to be a rainy day when you show up for the event. For example, you could move indoors and still learn how to tie knots and set up a hook and bobber. Specify a beginning and ending time but advertise the event as an "open time" for when families can show up and participate.

## Step 4 – Reserve a Venue

Select a family friendly and convenient location to host the event. A local park, community pond or even a Scout camp (as long as it's close by) are all great options. If you cannot hold the event somewhere with water access, all stations except live fishing can still be executed. Be sure to secure the venue months in advance if it must be reserved.

## Step 5 – Secure Materials

A shopping list of potential materials is available, but your basic need will be a rod, reel, and tackle pack for each of the youth attending the event. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time to order certain items to ensure you have everything needed prior to the event.

## Step 6– Provide Meals

Plan to have a meal service run throughout the event. Plan on having a designated lunch time, but also keep in mind that depending on when families show up, some may want to eat before fishing and some after. Be flexible. Choose something simple such as hotdogs and snacks.

## Step 7 – Organize Staff and Volunteers

Like most things in Scouting, this event will only work with the help of our dedicated volunteers and professional staff. This is a great opportunity for parents, alumni, and donors to get involved. Below are suggested staffing needs with recommended numbers of people. Be aware that your staffing needs will vary depending on how many people show up to the event.

# Promoting the Activity

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It doesn't matter how fun the event is if nobody shows up. Here are a few tried and true tactics you can use to get the word out. Remember to think outside the box and apply them to your community's specific situation. We have created customizable assets to fit your individual needs that can be found by accessing the [BSA Brand Center](#).

## Current Members

Be sure your current parents and volunteers are aware of the event and are invited to participate. This is a recruiting event, and our best recruiters are those who currently love our programs. A Scout family that brings their friends to an event is one of the most powerful recruiting tools we have.

## Social Media

Be sure to promote the event on your council's social media channels. Encourage parents and adults to share photos from the event on their Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. Often, any local businesses you partner with will be willing to share the event with their online communities as well.

## E-Mail

Reach out to your network digitally by sending them an email that promotes the event and includes links to learn more about Scouting in their community.

## Printed Materials

Fliers, posters, yard signs, etc. are great ways to drive awareness and promote the event in your local area. Professionally designed assets have been created for you to leverage during your recruiting efforts.

## School Outreach

School outreach is a great opportunity to promote your Hooked on Scouting event. Back to School recruiting nights provide an opportunity to invite new Scouts to the event and allow boys who are not signed up yet to see Scouting in action. For new Scouts that sign up at the back to school night, a rod and reel could be provided to them as an incentive for signing up. Daily morning announcements, take home mail, and weekly emails to parents are also great options to explore.

## Public Relations / Earned Media

Reach out to your local newspapers and news stations and invite them to attend the event and do a story. Local news organizations usually appreciate advanced notice so be sure to let them know at least a week or two in advance. Additionally, consider inviting local bloggers as well.

## Community Partnership

Work with local businesses to have them provide prizes for the kids. Partner with churches and other local nonprofits (such as a wildlife center or kids club) and invite them to participate as well. In addition to taking flyers to community centers, make sure it ends up on their online calendars too.

# Holding the Activity

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The event itself is organized into eight different stations that families and their Scouts will move through.

## Station 1 – Check-in / Check-out

At the check-in station, provide each Scout and family with their rod, reel, tackle pack, and card that will be signed at each station. Plan to also provide an agenda for the day and answer any potential questions families may have about Scouting. Upon check-out, each Scout will present their completed card so that they can receive their belt loop.

## Station 2 – How to tie a Fishing Knot

This is an essential skill that any new fisherman must learn. Provide brochures with examples and demonstrate how to tie the knot with a small diameter cord. Make sure each youth also demonstrates they know the knot and encourage parents to get involved as well.

## Station 3 – How to set up a Hook and Bobber

Now it's time to get their rod and reel set up to fish! Scouts will have their own tackle but plan on having some extra supplies along with all the necessary tools. Demonstrate the proper way to tie the hook, add the split shot and string the bobber. Coach everyone along as needed but insist that the adult and youth set up their rod and reel themselves.

## Station 4 – When and How to use Tackle

This will be more of an informational station where everyone will learn about different lures, when to use them and how certain set-ups work. Keep it basic to begin with and encourage Scouts and their parents to ask questions about different situations.

## Station 5 – Safety on the Water

This is a great opportunity to bring in a conservation or department of natural resources officer, as they are the experts. Topics of discussion will include life jackets, when you need a fishing license, and how to safely fish in different settings.

## Station 6 - Fish Identification and Handling, Catch and Release

A big part of learning how to fish is being able to identify the fish you're reeling in. Plan to have a picture book with fish commonly caught in the local area. Demonstrating proper fish handling will be important as well so the Scout knows what to do after he gets one on his line.

## Station 7 – Casting

This activity will be done using council provided rods with casting plugs. Here you will demonstrate the different types of casting techniques so everyone can start getting the hang of it. This station can be conducted by casting into the water or on dry land depending on what works best for your event. The backyard bass is a great option if you choose to conduct this station on dry land.

## Station 8 – Live Fishing

Now it's time to bring it all together! At this station Scouts will bait their hooks and start fishing. Volunteers need to be prepared to assist with any problems or demonstrate skills from the various stations if the Scouts need help.

# Recruiting at The Event

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Recruiting at the event itself should occur naturally and organically. When parents and youth have the opportunity to participate in Scouting and see what it's all about, they tend to be much more responsive to recruiting messages. Be sure to have plenty of recruiting material on-hand and provide opportunities to sign up, but remember to keep it light and informal. Families came here to have a fun time, not to hear a sales pitch.



# Follow Up

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After the event, it is appropriate to follow up with the parents and families that attended and include them in future council communications. Send an email to new families thanking them for their time and sharing photos or recaps from the event. Include an invitation to join a local pack if they haven't already. The important thing is to follow up and ensure that those who have a desire to become part of Scouting are able to do so.

# Thanks!

