

Troop 82 Annual Five-Mile Hike Policy

Purpose

The Annual Five-Mile Hike is a cornerstone event of Troop 82's outdoor program. It occurs once each year at the February campout and is intentionally designed to advance the aims of Scouting through shared challenge, leadership, service, and perseverance.

This event is not recreational. It is formative.

Why the Five-Mile Hike Matters

The Five-Mile Hike provides experiences that cannot be replicated through classroom instruction or individual activities:

- **Patrol Method in Action**

The hike is one of the few remaining events where Patrols must function fully as teams over sustained difficulty. Navigation, pacing, encouragement, problem-solving, and decision-making all occur under real conditions.

- **Leadership Development Over Time**

The hike is designed to be experienced repeatedly. Scouts grow through it first as learners and later as leaders. What is learned one year is applied in service to others in later years.

- **Character and Resilience**

Scouts learn that they can do hard things together. Completing the hike builds confidence, perseverance, and self-discipline in ways that cannot be replicated through individual merit badge work.

- **Equity Within Patrols**

Younger Scouts rely on older Scouts for leadership, example, and support. When experienced Scouts opt out, the Patrol suffers and the program breaks down.

- **Advancement Support**

The Five-Mile Hike may be used to satisfy a requirement option for the Camping Merit Badge, reinforcing its central role in the outdoor program.

Learners First, Leaders Later

The Five-Mile Hike is intentionally structured around long-term growth:

- **The first two years** a Scout participates primarily as a learner, developing skills, confidence, and endurance.

- **The later years** a Scout participates as a leader, using those same skills to guide, encourage, and support younger Scouts.

Participation in prior years does **not** exempt a Scout from future participation. Completing the hike once or twice does not fulfill the obligation of leadership later. The experience only works when Scouts return year after year, applying what they have learned in service to others.

Attendance Requirement

Participation in the Annual Five-Mile Hike is **mandatory for all Patrol Scouts**, every year they are eligible.

Scouts are expected to participate for the full duration of their time as Patrol Scouts, both as learners and as leaders. The expectation is not “I have done this before,” but rather “I am needed this year.”

Exceptions

Exceptions are rare and limited to circumstances such as serious illness, injury, or unavoidable family obligations.

- Outside merit badge events, service events, or elective activities are **not** valid reasons to miss the Five-Mile Hike.
- Any exception must be discussed in advance with the Scout’s Company Scoutmaster.
- Approval of an exception does not alter the standing expectation of annual participation.

Consistency and Fairness

Clear and consistent expectations protect Patrols, support Company Scoutmasters, and preserve the integrity of the program. The Annual Five-Mile Hike remains a shared commitment and a defining experience of Troop 82.