

Air Scouting

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Scout
Information
Centre

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Introduction

This is the second edition of the factsheet which replaces that coded AA-1 and dated 1986.

Further editions will be published in the light of experience. Publications will be notified in Scouting Magazine, Talking Points and the Activities Newsletter.

General

Air Scout Troops and Units are similar to any other well run Troops and Units, but with an additional specialisation in air activities and air training. They are recognisable by the colour of their uniform, light blue shirt, grey trousers and beret, with an Air Scout Identification Badge to supplement the normal insignia. This specialist section was formed during wartime, in 1941, when interest in aviation was at a height and knowledge of such skills as aircraft recognition were vital. Discussions between the Boy Scout Association and the Air Ministry resulted in the formation of both the Air Scouts and the Air Training Corps. This ensured that many existing Boy Scouts would not need to leave the Movement in order to carry out air training and activities. Many Air Scout Groups formed, particularly in boarding schools, and the peak membership was 8,671 in 1944.

Today there are over 3,000 Air Scouts, Venture Air Scouts and Leaders in about 130 Groups. Some are just a single Air Scout Patrol in a Scout or Sea Scout Group. Others a single Air Scout Troop or Unit, again within a larger Group. Finally, there are the complete Air Scout Groups, some of which qualify for the honour of Royal Air Force Recognition.

Formation of a new Group or changing to Air Scouts

Very few Groups have been Air Scouts from their formation. Often within an existing Group, an air enthusiast Scouter will restart a dormant Troop

or Unit, or start an additional section. This can result in the whole Group becoming Air Scouts, or an Air Scout section running in conjunction with Scouts and/or Sea Scouts. The Beaver Scouts and Cub Scouts within an Air Scout Group are not "Air", this specialisation commencing with the Scout section (P.O.R. Rule 7.1).

The policy of The Scout Association is to encourage the development of Air Scouting. However, a change to light blue uniform is not recommended unless a reasonable level of air activities and air training can be supported.

The District Commissioner must be informed of proposed developments at the very earliest opportunity. Contact should then be made with the Assistant County Commissioner (Activities) and County Air Activities Adviser as appropriate. The District Commissioner will be able to help make contact where necessary.

It may be felt useful to start with an Air Scout Patrol within an established Scout Troop and to operate this as an experimental basis for a period. No change of registration (Form C2) is required, but the District Commissioner must give approval. If the Group wishes to add the word "Air" to the officially registered name, then Form C2 requires processing. The Specialist Adviser for Air Scouting is tasked to be in contact with Air Scouts nationally, and would particularly appreciate contact from any potential new Air Scouts via the Activities Office at Gilwell Park.

Leadership

Any well organised Scout Troop or Venture Scout Unit will have a strong team of Leaders, Air Scouts being no exception. In addition, the assistance of instructors with an interest in aviation will be found to be vital. The team will take time to build, but "experts" are not essential, an airline pilot is not necessarily the best person to instruct a young Air Scout in the basics of theory of flight. Often an enthusiastic "let us all learn together" approach from the Scouter will

be the most successful. Look for assistance from the previously mentioned sources, then the nearest existing Air Scout Group (details can be obtained from the Activities Office/Information Centre at Gilwell Park.). Try local flying or gliding clubs, who are often most happy to help. The standard requirements apply for the completion of the confidential enquiry procedure and Air Activity Authorisation (see below) if flying is involved.

Structure of the Sections

All Scout Troops are made up of a number of Patrols; those in an Air Scout Troop should be linked to aviation by using appropriate names from the official list of 28 choices, such as Bulldog, Eagle, Falcon, Hawk or Merlin. These can be supplemented by the use of the 6 miscellaneous badges to use the names of other modern or vintage aircraft, should the Patrol Leaders' Council so wish. The substitution of the words "flight" or "flight leaders" for "patrol" or "patrol leader" is not encouraged.

The meeting place should be given an aviation atmosphere and may be suitably decorated with aircraft posters, models and trophies, but do ensure that everything is kept tidy and up to date. Different offices in a headquarters building could be named "briefing room", "control", "operations room" etc. to further create a comfortable air environment. Additionally some leaders may choose to adopt an air-related nickname for Troop purposes. (Fortunately "Skipper" is universal).

A Venture Air Scout Unit should be the natural progression for an experienced Air Scout. However, unless there is a particular central air activity in the Unit, possibly working closely with a paragliding, gliding or flying club, the link can become tenuous. Training for the Venture Scout Award, Queen's Scout Award and Duke of Edinburgh's Award should encourage continued air activity wherever possible. There is also a need for new recruits from outside The Movement to catch up with air activities.

Air Activities

There is no substitute for the real thing, and this particularly applies to Air Scouting. The opportunity to fly should be offered whenever possible. However this is a specialist activity and the use of Scout County, or other Flying

Clubs will be necessary. In addition to powered aircraft and microlight flying, there is gliding, ballooning, parachuting, hang gliding, parascending and hovercrafting to consider.

We must be realistic in accepting that these activities require forward planning, commitment in advance and patience and understanding on the day. Hopefully some of your contacts will result in suitable opportunities for practical air activities, but remember that properly qualified pilots and aircraft are a scarce commodity. Offers from individual aircraft owners require clearance through Scout County and Headquarters before any Air Scout goes flying (see "Authorisation" below).

Other practical air activities include working model aircraft, hot air balloons, and round the pole flying, gliders, kite-flying, air navigation exercises, etc. Scale aircraft modelling, such as plastic kits or paper models are popular and greatly assist with aircraft recognition. Visits to local air museums or air shows are always a good venture, and an enthusiastic and well-behaved Air Scout Troop is usually very welcome, but do give suitable notice so that you are expected.

Air Experience Flights

Particular study must be made of Rule 39 in P.O.R.; this covers all Air Activities. It must be particularly noted that prior notification must be made to Headquarters (Rule 39.2), a simple telephone call or E-mail may suffice. Also Air Activity Authorisation forms must be completed (Rule 39.3) for those who are carrying out the flying or other air activity. Factsheets are also available from the Information Centre at Gilwell Park to cover Access to Airfields (Rule 39.4) and Flight Briefing (Rule 39.5).

RAF Recognition

As experience and training improve, successful Air Scout Groups may wish to consider applying for the honour of Recognition by the Royal Air Force. There are up to 60 of these Groups nationally, and they can receive some practical benefits from their Recognition in addition to having being proven a particularly efficient unit. These Groups are required to carry out an Inspection by the Royal Air Force every 18 months or so in order to retain their Recognition. Full details of the scheme are available from the

Programme and Development Department at Gilwell Park.

TRAINING AND ACTIVITIES FOR AIR SCOUTS

Scout Training Award Scheme

Several items in the Pathfinder and Chief Scout's Award offer the options of items from the Air Training programme. In addition the various options for "any one other activity of a similar nature" could also take the form of a further item of air training, with the agreement of the Patrol Leaders' Council.

Air Training Programme

The Airmanship series of Proficiency Badges is the lifeblood of an Air Scout. This training should be carried out in parallel with the various Scout Awards, and is similarly graded in age groups. At first glance, the choice of 91 items appears daunting to an Air Scout Leader, however, this choice is there to help you as well as your Air Scout. Obviously it is best to commence by agreeing a fairly limited choice of options, keeping within your knowledge levels, and to expand the choice as time goes on. A particular Air Scout who has very specialist interests may often teach a Scouter more than he learns.

The four progressive Airmanship Badges are the Junior Airman, Airman, Leading Airman and Master Airman. They will carry the same design and have a green, red, silver and gold background respectively. Each is a separate badge in its own right, so they can all be worn together at the top of the sleeve. Venture Scouts may also qualify for and wear the Master Airman Badge.

Many of the options in the programme are more suitable as introductory items for younger Air Scouts. Several County teams and Groups have produced their own recommended syllabus for the Junior Airman and Airman Badges to reflect this. Again, you could adopt such a system, if you wish, after discussion with the P.L.C. and Air Scouts.

Proficiency Badges

There are four additional Proficiency Badges which are "air orientated" with the familiar light

blue background - Aeronautics, Air Researcher, Air Spotter and the Paraglider. There are also "air options" within the requirements for the Communicator, Mechanic, Meteorologist and Navigator Badges. Hobbies and Interest should also offer scope for an air-minded young Air Scout.

Venture Air Scouts should follow the air activity theme by incorporating air activities in the Venture Scout Award and the Queen's Scout Award Programme. In addition those Venture Scouts who have commenced the Master Airman Proficiency Badge before moving to the Venture Air Scout Unit may continue the training and on completion wear the Master Airman Proficiency Badge.

Venture Scouts and Adult Leaders may qualify for and wear Scout Wings either for Flight Training or Canopy Training, details are contained in P.O.R Rule 60.

PUBLICATIONS CROSS-REFERENCE

There are many sources of information, with which the previously mentioned contacts may help. The Information Centre offers factsheets, and there are several other organisations which publish information and training aids which would be of great help to a new Scouter. There is an ever-growing wealth of information on the Scoutbase and other Internet websites and also the local library may have much to offer.

The Current Editions of:-

Policy, Organisation and Rules of The Scout Association	
Authorisation Scheme for Air Activities	-
	FS120701
Access to Airfields	FS120702
Flight Briefing	FS120703
Aircraft Recognition List	FS120704
RAF Recognition Scheme	FS120176