

# You and Your Sixers



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## Why have Sixers?

How often do you look at your Sixers and see a future Queen's Scout, a business manager or a Trade Union leader? Can you tell how caring and capable they may be when they grow up?

Maybe not...but you can give them the opportunity within our programme of training to develop abilities in leadership. This presents an exciting challenge to us as Leaders, which will be very rewarding.

The Six system provides a way of organising a Cub Scout Pack and assumes that the Sixer will take responsibility for 'looking after' his or her Six. Being in this position can be an exciting job for Sixers and they will look to you for your support and encouragement.

A Cub Scout is chosen as a Sixer at an important stage in the youngster's development, just before going through a period of change at school or a move to the Scouts.

Being a Sixer will help a Cub Scout to grow in terms of self-confidence and experience of handling responsibility. Not only does being a Sixer help prepare the youngster as a future Patrol member in the Scout Troop, it also helps in relationships with others individually and with small groups...whether at school or during life in general.

The following offers practical advice on how to involve your Sixers and how to hold Pack Leadership Forums

## Choosing your Sixers

It is not an easy task to choose which particular Cub Scout to appoint as a new Sixer, as there are several factors to take into consideration.

Your Pack may have its own tradition for the selection of Sixers, but it is always a good idea for

the Cub Scout Leader to make this decision in consultation with his or her other Leaders, Instructors and existing Sixers to get the widest variety of opinions. It does not necessarily follow that the oldest Cub Scout will be best suited to become a Sixer, as each varies so much in maturity and ability.

Ideally, a Sixer should have some qualities and abilities from the following list:

- Mixes well with other Cub Scouts.
- Has some experience as a Cub Scout.
- Sets a good example to younger Cub Scouts.
- Attends regularly and is reliable.
- May already take the lead in keeping the Six to order.
- Enjoys Cub Scouting and is a keen Member.
- May have experience as a Second.
- Has an amiable personality.

## A working partnership

A young person aged somewhere between 9½ and 10½ is a very different character from the 8-year-old who entered your Pack. He or she can be your greatest asset, or the most disruptive influence.

Operating the Six system will give you the ideal chance to channel the energies of the older Cub Scouts towards helping the Pack. Perhaps, at the same time, they may be working for their Chief Scout's Silver Award.

So how can you maintain good relationships with your Sixers?

Perhaps these suggestions may help:

- Ask for their help in a polite and reasonable manner. For example you could say, 'I'm very busy at the moment, so could you possibly help by ...?' might get a better response than 'Somebody sweep up that mess!'
- A gentle reminder, quietly whispered in an ear, like 'Have you forgotten to tidy away the Six boxes, Adam?', might produce results.

- Youngsters of Cub Scout age are often genuinely forgetful.
- Make them feel involved in decisions. Do not ask for their ideas unless you are prepared to give them serious consideration.
- Remember to say 'thank you' to your Sixers and praise them for a job well done.
- Make time each week to have a brief chat with them and listen to what they have to say. It gives them an element of prestige, satisfaction and recognition of their status within the Pack.

You know your older Cub Scouts - they know the rules. They want to be heard, and they want the best for their Six and their Cub Scout Pack. Your job is to harness this enthusiasm to the benefit of the whole Pack.

### **Getting the best from your Sixers**

When any Cub Scouts become Sixers, they are, hopefully, looking forward to taking a more active role in the Pack.

There are many regular jobs within the Pack, which could be done by a Sixer supported by the Leaders.

The responsibilities taken on by the Sixers could include:

- Looking after new Cub Scouts.
- Organising a Six duty rota.
- Taking a leading role in ceremonies, for example Flag break
- Welcoming Pack visitors.
- Teaching younger Cub Scouts new skills.
- Running a game or inter- Pack competition
- Leading prayers.
- Looking after Pack equipment and Six boxes.

You may be able to find other jobs in your Pack that could be shared with your Sixers. Youngsters of Sixer age like rules and organisation.

They like to have fun, but they also want, and need, to be taken seriously. Here are some things to remember to help you support your Sixers:

- You'll need to know how much responsibility they can handle. This means that you should give the Sixers some simple tasks at first, and gradually build up, rather than overwhelm them with far too many responsibilities.
- You'll need to show the Sixers that you are listening to them during Meetings.

- You will need to take their suggestions seriously and put their ideas into practice whenever possible.
- You must be prepared to give them responsibility and let them try to do some jobs on their own.
- You must be able to step in when you see that the youngsters cannot cope, and give support. An example could be to clarify the rules of a game that the Sixer is in the process of introducing... but don't take it over.
- You must clearly define their responsibilities, so that they know exactly what they are expected to do.
- You should give them the opportunity to practise a skill or activity before they try to teach it to a small group of Cub Scouts.
- You should show the Sixers any new game and play it with them before they run it in the Pack.
- As previously stated and probably most importantly, nothing works better than praise and encouragement, so do remember to say 'thank you' for jobs well done.

How about a special outing for the Sixers as a treat?

The Sixers will be learning by doing and they will need your support until they are confident about their special responsibilities.

Older Cub Scouts in the Pack have a significant amount of experience that can be shared with younger Cub Scouts. This expertise can be put to good use by you, but the Cub Scouts will require training. Ask the Sixers what they would like to do and also ask them to suggest ways of the tasks being organised. Gradually, they will take on more activities. Sometimes it might be useful to take time to organise a Sixer training day or evening, especially if you have recently appointed some new Sixers.

Nothing changes overnight and the effort put into early training will reap benefits later as the Cub Scouts get used to the idea of Sixer responsibility.

Seconders are a very necessary back-up and should be included in some elements of Sixer training. It is indeed beneficial to involve the older Cub Scouts in the sharing of ideas and planning for activities.

Today's Sixers may be tomorrow's Patrol Leaders. The acceptance of responsibility obtained during their time as Cub Scouts, will help them progress

through to their Scout Troop, where they can develop their skills further.

### **Pack Leadership Forums**

One way of helping your Sixers feel an important part of your Pack is to have regular Pack Leadership Forums, once a term or quarterly. This is where the Sixers and possibly Seconders meet with the leadership team. It is a way of giving the Cub Scouts a say in the running of the Pack.

There is no need for any great organisational upheaval to have a meeting. The Meeting could take place in the local library, or café. The time you hold the meetings must be arranged to suit your own and your Cub Scouts' circumstances.

How structured or informal you run these Forums is up to you, at the end of the day it's about what suits you and your Pack that is important,

There is little benefit in holding a Pack Leadership Forum and then ignoring the Cub Scouts' suggestions or comments. You should keep a simple record of their ideas and use some of them from time to time!

Do not worry about silly suggestions. You will get plenty of them, especially at first, but make it clear that you are interested in their views only if they are prepared to listen to each other - and to you - seriously!

Remember to make the Sixers feel welcome and comfortable if there are too many Leaders present, the Sixers will probably feel uncomfortable and the meeting will not be so productive as it could be, as they may feel inhibited by the large adult presence.

### **Topics for a Pack Leadership Forum**

It is a good idea to have some questions ready to ask the Sixers, and give them a chance to put forward their points of view.

Topics for discussion might include:

- New entrants, which Six they might join and how they are settling in.
- Changes in Pack routine.
- Ideas for outings and camps.
- Appointment of new Seconders.
- Future Activity Badges.
- The behaviour of the Sixes.

- Plans for parents' evenings.
- Forthcoming District events.
- Plans for Acts of Worship.
- New games, activities and projects.
- Plans for visiting the Beaver Scout Colony and the Scout Troop.
- A review of what has gone well during the last few weeks and what things the Cub Scouts were less keen on.

The Forum is a marvellous opportunity to talk with your Sixers and to find out what is really going on amongst the youngsters in your Pack. You may discover that one of the Cub Scouts has been picked for the school football team or had their bike stolen. Such information can be invaluable in understanding the behaviour of the Cub Scouts in your Pack.

It is also an opportunity to train your new Sixers in their responsibilities, making them feel an important part of the Pack. The meeting is another way to make the older Cub Scouts feel that little bit special.

### **District and County/Area Events**

Many Districts and Counties/Areas run special activities for Sixers. These events may include camps, theme days, activity days, or Sixer training days.

They extend the Cub Scouts' experience from 'the Group' to a wider view of the District and County/Area. The Cub Scouts will share ideas with other Packs, which may give them suggestions to bring to any future Forums. Such events make the Sixer feel special and are a way of saying 'thank you'.

They can give them a taste of the activities and of the Patrol System in the Scout Troop and, above all, they give you the opportunity to get to know the Sixers better.

### **A Final Word**

Often, working with the older Cub Scouts can be the most rewarding part of running the Cub Scout Pack, as you see the young person grow and develop...ready to face the challenge of the Scout Troop.

Thinking of the special needs of the older Cub Scout does take a little extra time and effort, but it is all very worthwhile and adds to the fun and challenge of your role in Cub Scouting.

As previously stated, being chosen as a Sixer is a very important stage in the youngster's development and it will help the Cub Scout to grow in self-confidence and ability.

It is a challenge for Leaders and youngsters alike but should be extremely beneficial for all concerned.