
100 Facts About Scouting



1. Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon, is an Eagle Scout. When he said, “The Eagle has landed,” he wasn’t kidding. In 1969, Armstrong became the first Eagle Scout to be portrayed on a U.S. postage stamp - called “The Man on the Moon.”
2. The original Invention merit badge (1911-1918) required the candidate to obtain a patent.
3. In 1911, 18-year-old Scout, Joseph Lane started Boys’ Life magazine, which goes to 1.1 million Scouts each month. A year later, the Boy Scouts of America bought the magazine for \$6,100 - about \$1 per subscriber.
4. James E. West was the BSA’s first Chief Scout Executive. When he took the position in 1911, he agreed to serve six months. At his retirement in 1943, he was given the title of Chief Scout.
5. The BSA is the second-largest Scouting organization in the world. The largest is in Indonesia.
6. One of Scouting’s most popular traditions, patch trading, has bloomed into a full-fledged hobby. Some rare patches are worth thousands of dollars.
7. For all but two years from 1925 to 1976, illustrator Norman Rockwell illustrated the annual Brown & Bigelow Boy Scout calendar for free.
8. Former Congressmen Alan Simpson and Norman Mineta served together from the mid-1970s to the late 1990s. They met as Boy Scouts during World War II, when Simpson’s troop from Cody, Wyoming, visited the internment camp where Mineta and his Japanese immigrant parents were being held. The two became - and have remained - close friends and political allies.



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9. The first Eagle Scout to earn all available merit badges was Leon Wallace in 1922.
 10. In May 1964, 29 of American's 30 astronauts visited Philmont for a two-week training trip to learn geological mapping and seismographic studies in preparation for the Apollo programs.
 11. Three important Eagle Scouts all have names beginning with "A." The first Eagle Scout is Arthur Eldred (1912) of Long Island, New York; the one millionth Eagle (1982) is Alexander Holsinger of Normal, Illinois; and the two-millionth Eagle (2009) is Anthony Thomas of Lakeville, Minnesota.
 12. Scouts collected more than 65 million containers of food during the first Scouting for Food drive in 1988.
 13. The Cub Scout sign (the index and middle fingers extended in a V shape) symbolizes the ears of an alert wolf. It replaced the Indian "how" sign, which looked too much like the Nazi salute.
 14. The BSA sells 2.3 million merit badges every year - one for each person in the state of Utah.
 15. After eating candy when he had promised not to, a repentant Howard Hughes returned his Buckskin Badge to Daniel Carter Beard with a note that read, "With love, from Howard."
 16. By the BSA's centennial in February 2010, more than 1.2 billion Boys' Life magazines will have been printed.
 17. At age 12, Seattle Mariners Chairman and CEO Howard Lincoln posed for Norman Rockwell's painting The Scoutmaster.
 18. On Feb. 8, 1910, William D. Boyce incorporated the Boy Scouts of America. He personally donated \$1,000 per month to keep the organization afloat on the condition that boys of all races and creeds be admitted.

19. In 1920, the BSA sent 301 Scouts to the inaugural world Scout jamboree in England, where they joined Scouts from 33 other countries. The American Scouts represented all 48 states plus the territory of Hawaii.

20. In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt requested the Boy Scouts' service in collecting 1.8 million items of clothing, household furnishings, foodstuffs, and supplies for victims of the Great Depression.

21. After the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaiian Scouts set up first-aid stations and emergency kitchens, helped evacuate civilians, served as messengers, and manned 58 air-raid sirens around Honolulu.

22. During a three-month drive in the spring of 1942, Scouts collected 318,000 tons of paper for the war effort.

23. In a nationwide nonpartisan get-out-the-vote campaign in 1956, Scouts distributed more than a million posters and 36 million Liberty Bell doorknob hangers.

24. In 1954, the BSA conducted a National Conservation Good Turn, distributing 3.6 million conservation posters. In parks, rural areas, and wilderness areas, Scouts planted 6.2 million trees, and built and placed 55,000 bird-nesting boxes.

25. Scouts collected more than one million tons of litter on Scouting Keep America Beautiful Day in 1971.

26. The Soviet Union turned to the BSA in 1993 for help in producing the first Russian Scout handbook; 20,000 copies were distributed.

27. The 20 millionth Scout was registered with the BSA in 1952; by 2000, that number reached 100 million.

28. The gravestone of worldwide Scouting founder Robert Baden-Powell is marked with a trail symbol of a circle with a dot in the center, meaning "I have gone home."

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29. While Robert Baden-Powell's English Scouts had nine points in their Scout Law, the Boy Scouts of America added three more: A Scout is brave, clean, and reverent.
30. In 1929, an African American Boy Scout from Fort Worth, Texas, found and returned a woman's pocketbook that contained more than \$300 in cash. The boy declined her liberal reward, saying, "No, madam. I am a Boy Scout and cannot take a tip for doing my duty."
31. Scouts have served at every presidential inauguration since Woodrow Wilson's in 1913. Boy Scouts who helped out at the Wilson inauguration were Honor Medal recipients.
32. Portions of the 1963 movie "PT 109," the story of the sinking of John F. Kennedy's PT boat during World War II, were filmed on Big Munson Island at the Florida National High Adventure Sea Base.
33. When America entered World War I in 1917, membership in the BSA outnumbered the 200,000-man U.S. Army by more than 68,000 members.
34. American passenger railroads helped boost the population at the first national Scout jamboree in 1937 - they offered fares at a special price of 1 cent per mile.
35. Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton became an Eagle Scout at age 13, businessman and philanthropist H. Ross Perot at 13, and President Gerald R. Ford at 14.
36. The first Scouts to live in the White House were the sons of 30th U.S. President Calvin Coolidge: John and Calvin Jr.
37. In the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, Scouts from New York and New Jersey helped re-ignite the American spirit, collecting more than 153,000 bottles of water for Ground Zero rescue workers and placing handwritten messages of appreciation and encouragement in their hard hats.

38. The Boy Scout Memorial in Washington, D.C., marks the site of the 1937 National Scout Jamboree. One of the few D.C. memorials to commemorate a living cause, it was accepted in 1964 by Associate Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark on his 50th anniversary as an Eagle Scout.

39. More than 8 million people read Boys' Life each month.

40. In Scouting's first decade, dozens of composers turned out Boy Scout sheet music, including John Phillip Sousa, who wrote the "Boy Scouts of America March" in 1916.

41. More than 1.5 million pinewood derby cars are sold each year. If the cars were lined up end to end, they would stretch 166 miles.

42. At the outbreak of World War I, the Boy Scouts of America was the largest uniformed body in the United States - twice as large as the U.S. Army, nearly twice as large as the National Guard, four times larger than the U.S. Navy, and 11 times larger than the U.S. Marine Corps.

43. Each year, the BSA awards 6 million pocket certificates. If stacked on top of one another like a deck of cards, they would be as tall as the Empire State Building, the Washington Monument, both Sears Towers, and the John Hancock Conservatory combined.

44. The first African American Boy Scout troop was organized in 1911 in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

45. The Florida National High Adventure Sea Base is one of the largest scuba-diving operations in the United States, conducting more than 25,000 individual dives annually.

46. These days, boys may earn the rank of Eagle Scout only until age 18, but until 1965, both boys and men could achieve Scouting's highest rank.

47. Of the 12 men who would eventually walk on the moon, 11 were former Scouts.

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48. Rafael Petit and Juan Carmona of Caracas, Venezuela, hiked to the 1935 National Scout Jamboree, only to find that it was canceled due to a polio outbreak. They returned for the rescheduled 1937 Jamboree - a total of 8,000 miles.
49. The only recorded Tyrannosaurus Rex footprint cast was discovered at Philmont Scout Ranch.
50. Norman Rockwell designed the first 12 Scout medals for the BSA.
51. Robert E. Peary discovered the North Pole in 1908. When his article on the adventure appeared in print in June 1914, it was not in Harper's or Collier's. Only Boys' Life had it.
52. In April 1937, Cubmobiles, patterned after soapbox derby racers and described as any contrivance on wheels (one, two, three, four, or more wheels) became an annual feature of Cub Scouting.
53. At his family's request, two separate honor guards of Eagle Scouts played a major role in the 2006 memorial services for President Gerald R. Ford, the first U.S. president to achieve the Eagle Scout rank as a boy.
54. A young George Herman "Babe" Ruth was a Tenderfoot Scout in Troop 23, promising to do a Good Turn daily.
55. The BSA sells almost 1 million neckerchiefs each year. If laid out flat, they would cover 120 football fields, or 124 acres.
56. In 1927, the BSA created Honorary Scouts to distinguish "American citizens whose achievements in outdoor activity, exploration, and worthwhile adventure are of such an exceptional character as to capture the imagination of boys." Among the Honorary Scouts were Orville Wright and Charles Lindbergh.
57. In 1981, real Life Scout Harrison Ford made film history, playing fictional Life Scout Indiana Jones in the third of four adventure films.

58. Of 121 merit badges, the one earned most by Scouts across the country is First Aid; more than 84,419 Scouts earned the badge in 2008.

59. The BSA has always been eco-friendly. In addition to publishing the first “green” Boy Scout Handbook in 2009, BSA magazines Boys’ Life and Scouting have been certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

60. A Boy Scout was selected to read Abraham Lincoln’s address at the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 1913, one of among several national notices the BSA received that year.

61. Home to the world’s largest collection of Norman Rockwell paintings, the National Scouting Museum in Irving, Texas, is 53,000 square feet - it would take some 3.2 million merit badges to fully cover the museum’s floor.

62. When Orville Wright wrote how he and his brother Wilbur got to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, for the first engine-powered airplane flight, only Boys’ Life printed “How I Learned to Fly.”

63. Nearly 1.2 million volunteers donate an average of 20 hours per month to the BSA, which totals 288 million hours during one year. Independent Sector projects the average value of volunteer time to be \$20.25 an hour. Given this hourly rate, the approximate value of the time given by Boy Scout volunteers is more than \$5.8 billion annually.

64. A project for Cub Scouts and their parents, pinewood derby cars made since 1954 could form a line stretching from Los Angeles to the island of Tahiti in the Polynesian Islands - a total of more than 5,500 miles.

65. If a Boy Scout attends his weekly patrol and troop meetings, participates in a monthly weekend troop outing, and attends long-term summer camp with his troop, he will have spent as much time with Scouting in a year as he spends in the classroom.

66. The Boy Scout Handbook has had Braille editions for many years; merit badge pamphlets have been recorded on cassette tapes for the blind; and closed-caption training videos have been produced for those who are deaf.

67. Former Sea Scout Paul Siple coined the term wind chill. He experienced the phenomenon firsthand when he accompanied Commander Richard E. Byrd on an 18-month voyage to Antarctica.

68. Inspired by an article he read in Boys' Life about the adventures of reporters working around the world, Boy Scout Walter Cronkite went on to become the face of television news in the United States.

69. During the 1970s, Kenner Products developed a line of Scout action figures whose right arms, when raised, made the Scout salute.

70. The "turn" in Philmont's first Scout name, "Philturn," came from the Scout slogan "Do a Good Turn Daily."

71. In Scouting's early years, institutions such as Cornell University, Columbia University, and the universities of Virginia, Wisconsin, Texas, and California offered training courses for Scout Leaders. More than 400 colleges and 34 seminaries offered such courses by the mid-1930s — half for college credit.

72. As part of the two-year "Strengthen the Arm of Liberty" campaign in 1949-50, Scouts erected more than 200 8 1/2-foot-tall replicas of the Statue of Liberty across the country. Following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, the statue on Seattle's Aiki Beach became an impromptu memorial and gathering place for stunned Seattle residents.

73. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden has dived from the Florida National High Adventure Sea Base.

74. The total number of merit badges earned in 1911 was 85; the number earned in 2008 was 1,913,676.

75. Virtually unchanged since 1911, the design of the Plumbing merit badge is a water faucet.

76. Dr. E. Urner Goodman, the founder of the BSA's national honor society, the Order of the Arrow, was once a volunteer Scoutmaster of Troop 1 in Philadelphia.

77. Early Scouting Leaders James E. West, Daniel Carter Beard, and Ernest Thompson Seton sat on first Eagle Scout Arthur Eldred's Eagle Board of Review.

78. The Kansas City Area Council has had an exceptionally productive advancement program and won the distinction of "Most Eagle Scouts" from 1912 to 1969, totaling 13,943. The council still ranks in the top 10 today.

79. Edward VIII, former Prince of Wales, is the only person who received the BSA Silver Buffalo Award (1929) and later became a king. The Silver Buffalo Award is awarded for distinguished service to youth.

80. On Sept. 10, 1910, S. F. Lester of Troy, New York, became the first person to hold the Scouting leadership position of Scoutmaster (commissioned by the BSA).

81. Today, approximately 100,000 Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Venturers with disabilities are registered with the Boy Scouts of America in more than 4,000 units chartered to community organizations.

82. In 1912, five of the 23 Eagle Scouts came from West Shokam, New York.

83. Chess legend Bobby Fischer was the author of a chess column called "Checkmate" in Boys' Life from 1966 until 1969.

84. Eagle Scouts who served as Chief Scout Executive include Joseph Brunton Jr. (1960 – 1966), Alden Barber (1967 – 1976), Harvey Price (1976 - 1979), James Tarr (1979 – 1984), Jere Ratcliffe (1993 – 2000), and current Chief Scout Executive Robert Mazzuca.

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85. Charles Scruggs of Cuero, Texas, was reportedly the first recipient of the Honor Medal for lifesaving in 1911.
86. Ernest Lawrence was the first Boy Scout to have a chemical element named in his honor: lawrencium. He was also the first former Scout to win the Nobel Prize for Physics, in 1939.
87. In June 1942, Time magazine dubbed the BSA “Public Scavenger Service #1” for its outstanding wartime collection drives.
88. It is believed that Robert Baden-Powell and W. D. Boyce never met.
89. Raymond Cobb was 25 when he reportedly became the first “Complete Scout,” completing all merit badges and earning Eagle, Ace, Ranger, Silver, and Quartermaster Awards.
90. The seven Mercury Project astronauts designed the original requirements for the Space Exploration merit badge.
91. Mickey Mouse, who was created in 1928, was the authorized name of a patrol in the 1930 Bronx Council Troop 246.
92. “Uncle Dan” Beard wrote that his greatest honor was having a mountain named after him: Mount Beard, which adjoins Mount McKinley.
93. During the Depression, the BSA employed special railroad executives who started and supported Scout troops in some 300 rural communities along railroad lines.
94. Ralph Bunche was the first Boy Scout to earn the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1950. (Robert Baden-Powell was nominated in 1939 but did not win.)
95. In 1952, the World Book children’s encyclopedia published a special book on each of the merit badge subjects.

96. The BSA was the first youth-serving organization to have a U.S. combat vessel, the USS Esteem, dedicated in its honor. It launched in December 1952.

97. During World War II, Scouts collected 7,000 tons of clothes for people in Europe and Asia.

98. In 1964, 41 Scouts were the first to earn merit badges for Oceanography, presented to them by Rear Adm. Denys W. Knoll.

99. The pages of Boys' Life have been home to noteworthy writers such as Alex Haley, Arthur C. Clarke, Ray Bradbury, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Van Wyck Brooks, Ernest Thompson Seton, Bobby Fischer, Catherine Drinker Bowen, Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Arthur B. Reeve, and John Knowles.

100. Presidents John F. Kennedy, Gerald R. Ford, George W. Bush, and Bill Clinton were Scouts as youth, and Jimmy Carter was a Scoutmaster. President Kennedy was the first Scout to become president; Gerald Ford was the first (and to date, only) Eagle Scout to become President.