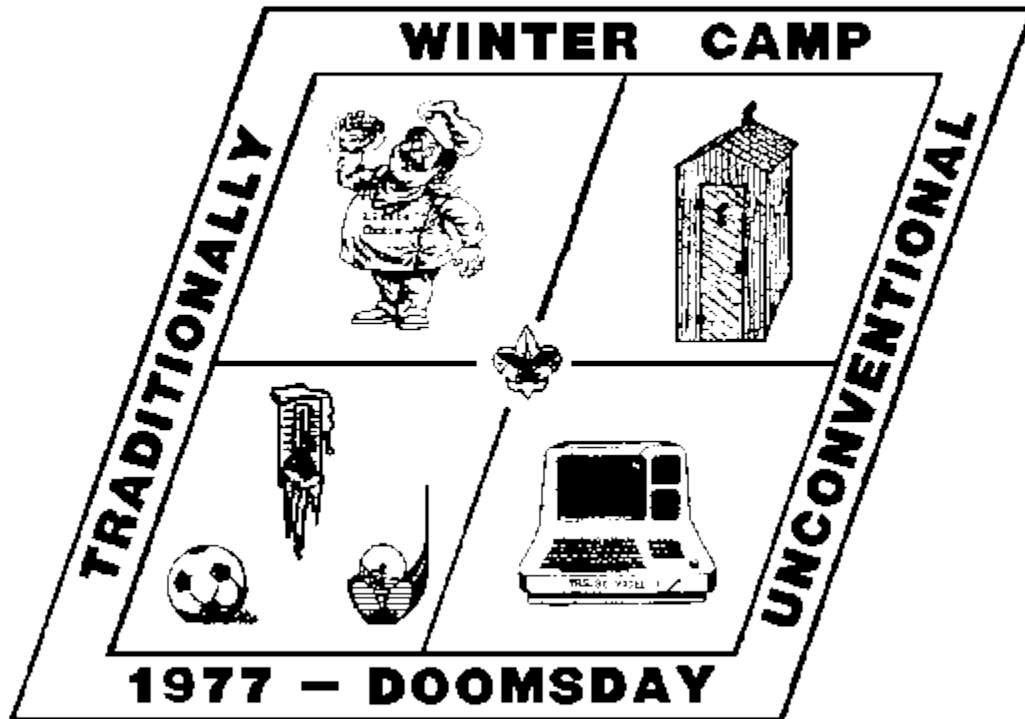


# *Executing*



# *Winter Camp*

*Inaugural Edition - 2020*

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# **Executing Winter Camp**

**Winter Camp is an event with a lot of resources,  
a lot of creativity,  
and a bunch of eager participants,  
both youth and adults.**

**You'd think it would be easy to run,  
but that's not always the case.**

**This book provides some suggestions for leading a  
successful Winter Camp from December 27 – 31.**

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**This is the inaugural edition.**

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## Introduction

Thus far, we've had four different books this year on how to successfully plan Winter Camp from activities to meals. We even had a Leader's Guide with nearly one hundred tasks aimed at making Winter Camp successful. The tasks start during the previous Winter Camp and the very last task for the current year is:

***Execute the schedule until Dec 31***

That's not much to go on when we're about to follow a schedule with seventeen meals and around twenty activities. This book is intended to help expand on that task and the page or so of advice from Appendix XI of the Leader Guide.

Unlike the other recent leadership guides, this one is focused more on the future state than on the current state. There are definitely areas where the execution of Winter Camp could improve. Currently, it is very reliant on the youth leader to take charge and remain in control. In a room full of current and former officers, that can be a tall order.

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### Why is Running Winter Camp a Challenge?

Many of the issues that make planning Winter Camp difficult will come up again during the execution of Winter Camp. Participants cover a wide range of ages and interests and probably the only thing they have in common is they are all members of the Order of the Arrow.

This is also a strength as it means that whatever activity we're about to engage in, there's probably one or more people who have a good idea how to make it work. We just need to make sure that those people, if they aren't youth, work with the youth to make things happen.

### Nostalgia

Winter Camp, like any long-time event, has its share of nostalgia and traditions. Long time campers speak lovingly of events that were held when the current leader's parents were children. We don't talk about the things that didn't work or the arguments about rules. As an example, there have been at least four major revisions to the rules for Capture the Objective (which started with a human objective). Most of the revisions were made after an argument (sometimes heated) about the current rules.

The truth is that Winter Camp had its share of failures in the early years and it continues to have failures to this day. That's not to say we should expect failure or accept it as a foregone conclusion, but if we're honest, the odd failed activity is almost a Winter Camp tradition. It means that if something doesn't go perfectly, it's not the end of the world. We pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and move on to the next event hoping to make it better.

### Fear of Failure

At the early Winter Camps, there were basically just youth. Mr. Wilson was in his early twenties and not much more experienced than the rest of us. Winter Camp was just a fellowship event, not some crazy juggernaut like it is now. You could fail. Now Winter Camp feels like it has a fear of failure. As soon as it looks like things aren't going well, advisers step in to fix things and ensure the event succeeds. That's not usually the best answer.

At early Winter Camps, adults didn't step in like that. There weren't many adults and they weren't that much more experienced than the youth. Until we got into the double-digits, we typically had about 6 youth for every adult. In the later years, the returning Winter Campers really skewed these numbers and some years the adults have outnumbered the youth. Now we have a cadre of "been there, done that" adults and while they're trying to be helpful, sometimes they overstep.

### Following the Plan

Some judge a successful Winter Camp by the simple criteria of "did we hold every event on the schedule?". This is an issue because it feeds into the fear of failure. If an activity is poorly planned or the weather doesn't cooperate, we may be better off to have free time or swap an event in. This is probably a bias of the author, but I'd rather have an unplanned activity that works than a planned activity that fails, particularly if the youth develop the unplanned activity.

### The Role of Advisers

Advisers are meant to help and guide. They should really only step in if they are asked unless they're legitimately concerned about safety. If you feel like advisers are creating problems, don't be afraid to ask them to make space for the youth to run the event with their help. If an adviser doesn't honor that kind



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of request, then its time to ask another adviser to help wrangle them. The advisers want you and the event to succeed, but sometimes their enthusiasm can be a little overwhelming (or overbearing).

### Being Prepared

Sometimes youth aren't ready to run the activity as planned. They don't remember what they agreed to do, or they aren't prepared to do it. They'll try to coast and let adults do it for them. The key is to first identify if that's what's happening and then to figure out how to fix it. It can be hard to tell if a youth is unprepared or just not as prepared as the adults would like. Once you identify the issue, it should be fairly easy to proceed.

### Before Camp

We don't always do a great job of pre-camp communication, despite having a number of tools to do so. We need to improve in this area, and we have several new tools and guidelines to help us do so.

### Planning

During and after the planning session, we should write down the rules and expectations for our activities and meals. These should be communicated to members before Winter Camp and posted in plain sight during the event. Some people do better with written than oral communication.

### Winter Camp Manual

We have the Winter Camp Manual, but we often do a poor job of distributing it. New campers receive it at camp and experienced campers get this year's pages at camp. We need to work to deliver it sooner, which means we need to prepare the new pages sooner. There are several tools on the website to help with this as well as the guidance in our other leadership manuals. Hopefully, this will be an area we improve in.

### Online Communication

Winter Camp has a broad range of tools which could be used for online communication. We'll need to promote some of these over the course of the coming year as most of them are "pull" techniques where the person has to log in to see what you have to say. We currently have a Facebook group, Instagram, Twitter, and Discord in addition to our long-standing website at [wintercamp.com](http://wintercamp.com) Some IDs;

- Facebook: Winter Camp (a group)
- Discord: Winter Camp
- Twitter: [wintercamp\\_fs](https://twitter.com/wintercamp_fs)
- Instagram: [wintercamp\\_fs](https://www.instagram.com/wintercamp_fs)
- Website: [www.wintercamp.com](http://www.wintercamp.com)

### Communication

When we get to Winter Camp, we already have a schedule and plans for most events. We need to execute against the plan and most of that execution is about communication. We need to ensure everyone is aware of the plan and who is leading the events. If there's an issue, we need to know about it as soon as possible in order to correct the problems early and in the best possible way. There are a lot of ways and times to communicate at camp and we need to use as many of them as we can.

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### Recruiting/Delegating

Frequently we arrive at Winter Camp with a lot of events with no assigned leader. They wind up being handled by either the Youth Leader or the Activities Leader (or worse, an adviser). We should recruit people at camp to run the events. Most events are run just by having someone announce it's time for the event, gathering the group, and then going over the rules or objectives before the event starts. The leader really only needs to know the rules and possibly pick teams.

If we don't have someone when we get to camp, we should recruit them while we're at camp. The best time is often at meals. Look over the schedule for the day to see where we have holes and then pick someone and ask them to help. Most people will be willing to help if asked even if they wouldn't volunteer. Don't overlook meals as a good time to recruit. Even if the person you ask declines, someone sitting near them may offer to do it.

### Announcements

We should make announcements at each meal. We probably don't want to call them that for fear of provoking the song. Announcements should include what's going on with the schedule between the current and next meal including who is in charge of those activities. If there are any changes, those are critical to announce.

One issue we have is a culture of eat & go. Many times, people will arrive for a meal, eat it and leave as quickly as possible. We need to change the culture to make waiting for announcements an expectation. An alternative would be to deliver announcements before Grace. At the very least, while everyone is together, we should mention that we need them to stay for announcements after the meal.

### Leadership

We have three key youth leaders at Winter Camp. They should meet, along with their advisers, at least once a day. The topic should be changes, problems, and recruiting. The goal is to work together to make sure the leaders are on the same page and, more importantly, to get in front of any issues which might be coming up soon. Scheduling a daily meeting is a good idea and holding an impromptu meeting might be necessary along the way. The goal is for the youth leadership, with their advisers, to solve problems before they get any worse.

One of the big problems is often an unplanned activity. Either we've failed to finish the plan or we're counting on equipment which didn't make it to camp. Discussing things at least the night before gives us a much better chance to come up with a youth-led alternative to the activity.

Another key topic at this meeting is meal planning. Food that is stored in the freezer needs to be removed in time to thaw so we can use it. Food stored in a secondary refrigerator should be moved to the primary refrigerator before it is needed. We should probably have the secondary refrigerator and freezer emptied and cleaned before we reach the last day of camp. Staying on top of this will prevent many meal issues and facilitate our clean up at the end of camp.

### Control the Group

Winter Camp is a large group and they don't camp together often. As a result, they're bringing thoughts about how things work from their own unit. Some units don't say Grace, others might not have

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announcements and still others might think an activity scheduled for 1:00 pm means you start getting ready at 1:00 pm.

We need to control this diverse group. There are a few ways to do that.

### Set expectations

We need to make it clear what we plan to do and how we expect people to behave. This isn't a Scout Law thing, it's more of a social thing. For example, when we have an outdoor activity at 2:00 pm, we expect everyone to show up by 2:00 pm ready to go outside. It's not acceptable to come and then go find your boots. Likewise, we need to make it clear that there will be announcements before or after meals and that people are expected to be present for them.

We also need to remind everyone that we'd like them to help out by running an activity. We need to remind them that participation is expected and that playing a game (of any type) or fussing with new equipment is not an acceptable reason to miss an activity. The only real reasons to miss are physical problems and camp requirements. Anyone who misses an activity should be put to work doing dishes, preparing the next meal, or cleaning up the cabin. We need to encourage the idea that everyone's goal should be to make Winter Camp better for everyone else.

### Habit

One of the keys to setting expectations is to set a habit or routine. One of the key habits we need to instill is punctuality. Once people realize that events will start 5 minutes late, they'll show up 5 minutes late. Being late should be the exception, not the rule. People who come late should miss things and not be caught up by the group leader; if you're late, you'd better hope someone who is on time will explain things to you later.

The other habits worth instilling are preparedness and participation. Creating a routine can help us is at meals too. Have someone picked to deliver Grace before we get to the meal. Have a rule for choosing which table goes first (it shouldn't be part of Grace) or just assign it in advance.

### Over-communicate

Normally, this is a negative, but it's probably a positive during the early parts of Winter Camp. Get everyone on board with the activities and the expectations. If the youth are doing what's expected, the adults have less reason to step in.

### Arriving

Until a few years ago, everyone coming to Winter Camp on the 27<sup>th</sup> was expected to meet at Bollman's house at 7:30 am. We did away with that and it has since become a problem as people arrive anywhere from around noon until the evening. This is a problem for planning. We've had a lot of food left over from lunch on the first day – some of this is late arrivals and some is people arriving having stopped at a restaurant.

We need to get in front of this and make it clear to people that Winter Camp will start at about 10:30 am on the 27<sup>th</sup>. We probably won't be able to make everyone show up on time, but at least we can set the expectation that they should arrive at 10:30 or so (that's EST) and that it's okay to come hungry as we're making lunch.

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### Choosing Teams

We frequently have events which require teams. For many of them we will use our thematic teams, but there are other opportunities. Given the age and skill range of participants, it is often best to find a way to divide teams other than having a captain choose them. We typically pick something like birth month, Scout rank, color of coat, favorite color, letters of first, last, or middle names or something similar. The goal is to avoid picking anyone last and to avoid having the teams turn into obvious cliques. If we do have an event where we're picking teams and really want to pick them, we should always start with "youth first". Adults are much more able to deal with being picked last.

### Departing

This has also become an issue; it's always been true that some people left early but in recent years this has grown to become a problem. Winter Camp has a set-up day where a crew retrieves everything from the Beaver Creek attic and sets up decorations, the kitchen, and a variety of other things. It's a pretty big job and one that keeps them busy all day. Having people leave early often leaves us short-handed as we're taking things down, putting them away, and cleaning the cabin.

There are probably three ways to help with this problem:

First, communicate the expectation that people should expect to stay until about 2:00 EST to ensure we get things done without putting too much of a burden on a handful of people.

Second, use the Winter Camp Clean-Up Assignments sheet (found in the Leader's Guide) to assign specific tasks to specific people early in the week. That way, if they plan to leave early they know what they're expected to do before they depart. If departure is non-negotiable, assign them tasks which can be done independently of other tasks or which are completed earlier in the process. Once completed, post the list for all to see.

Third, collect a checkout time from everyone early in the week, then require those who are leaving to check out with a specific person, probably whoever is responsible for registration. This will at least let us know who has left and it will probably make the departure a bit smoother as we can intercept people who are leaving alone while others are scrounging for rides.

### Troubleshooting

Sometime there will be a problem during camp. Some of the most common ones and some potential solutions are provided below. The most important key to any of them is to stay ahead of the problem. A solution in progress always beats a last-minute save by an adviser.

### Service Day

Over the years, this issue has been rare, but it's a big deal when it happens. The most common issue is that we have a plan for a specific day and the rangers ask us to change it for some reason. It could be weather, missing equipment, or just poor communication before camp.

The most likely solution is to try to swap two entire days. Usually the meals for Service Day are designed to be hearty and quick to prepare, so it's best if we can keep them aligned with the project. That doesn't always work if things are frozen or the notice is late, but it's still the best solution if we can manage it.

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### Missing Equipment

Another common issue is arriving at camp only to discover that some piece of equipment has been left at home. There can be a number of solutions to this issue depending on what's been left behind and where:

- Arrange for someone coming later to pick it up.
- Find a suitable alternative amongst the equipment we do have (could involve some jury-rigging).
- Head to town to buy the equipment.
- Borrow it from camp.
- Crazy enough, sometimes someone else has the right piece of gear by accident.
- Redesign the event to use equipment that we do have.

Some of these choices are very common (Steve Donohue has to text a list every year) while others are really only possible as Winter Camp has gained more adults and more resources.

### Weather Issues

We usually try to mitigate this by not scheduling very many events which require snow or a frozen lake, but sometime there are other issues like rain, mud, extreme cold, or even a blizzard. Some of these we can work around, and some might even improve events, but some make the event less fun or nearly impossible. We need to discuss these at the time as there usually aren't any one-size fits all solutions to problems like this.

### Common Problems

As with any group this large, you'll find that some problems occur year after year. There are enough new campers and enough people who've forgotten what happened last time, that we have some problems that come up every year. Knowing how we've solved them in the past can help us when they appear again later.

Some common problems include:

<b>Peeve</b>	<b>Possible Solution</b>
Late start to events	Encourage people to dress and arrive 5 minutes early.
Slow food service	Specifically taking a long time to get food. Usually best fixed by having servers rather than self-serve. Another fix is to move things like drinks and condiments to individual tables; condiments can take a very long time to apply, particularly if you have an artist in line.
Eat and Run	Need to ensure people know they're expected to stay.
Not holding an event	Having meetings will help avoid this and provide the chance for an alternate event to be held.
"This table goes first"	Assign it on the duty roster or have some randomizer so it's not a shouting match that eventually intrudes on Grace.
Late Meals	Work to ensure cooks understand that being on time is an important part of the meal
Behind Schedule or "Camp Time"	Don't have late meals. Start activities on time. Make it clear that we expect people to show up dressed and ready for the activity.

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	Remind people to clear their things off the table (mostly applies to meals, but also some activities).
Excessive complaining	Take them aside to discuss privately. Maybe Winter Camp needs an ombudsman.
Non-participation	There is usually work to be done for some future meal or dishes for the current meal. Non-participants should replace members of the assigned group who plan to participate in the event.
Disorderly Cabin	Sometimes with 30 or so people in a cabin, things can get a little disordered. We should fix this by assigning one team to sweep and mop each day. If we have a day where we can see there's a lot of "stuff" accumulating in common areas, maybe we have a 15 minute put it away session after a meal or during free time. These tasks are often best done right after dinner to avoid interfering with evening activities which are more likely to be indoors.

### Advising Winter Camp

So far, we've talked a lot about how to run Winter Camp and we may have made it seem like advisers are the enemy. That's obviously not true, but Winter Camp is a very different animal than many other Scout events. The biggest difference is probably the lack of an adult patrol or any other serious distinction between adults and youth other than where you sleep.

From the beginning, Winter Camp has expected adults to participate along with the youth. They don't run stations for the youth to demonstrate skills, they're right with the youth demonstrating their own skills. They also don't send the Scouts off to engage in activities for the day while they drink coffee back at the cabin. It's different. That difference is huge and important. It helps with participation and engagement of the youth and adults at Winter Camp. It lets the youth see adults having fun doing many of the same things they find are fun. Maybe most importantly, it helps everyone feel more like a friend than the more typical divide between adults and youth.

All this adds up to some confusion. If you're an inexperienced adviser, it's hard to stop running things and if you're an experienced adviser, it can be hard to let things proceed at their pace.

I don't think anyone is always right on advising – it is a matter of judgment to figure out how best to help a Scout succeed. Sometimes they need a nudge to get going, sometimes a word of encouragement, and sometimes they really need you to step in and play a slightly more active role in making the event succeed. Here are some suggestions from things that have worked in the past.

#### Be a Friend

Years ago, I was in a training where they asked advisers to rank 5 characteristics the youth thought made for a good adviser in order. We had things like experience at the top and the youth turned out to put friendship at the top.

It is much easier to accept help from a friend. It's also easier to accept criticism from a friend. The bottom line is that the youth want their adviser to be a friend first and experienced second. The truth is that most adults have more experience than youth, but not all of them are friends or even friendly.

#### Respect Boundaries

The youth leader has an adviser. Start with him if you think something is going south. With any luck, he's developed a relationship with his advisee that makes asking for and accepting help a little easier. Youth, like adults, are not always eager to accept help or advice from a relative stranger. Don't be afraid to use the channels; after all the adviser may know things you don't know about the plan and that could mean your help isn't needed (yet).

#### Communicate

Ask how you can help. This is the easiest thing, except sometime a youth doesn't realize they need help (or isn't ready to ask for it yet). If they ask, do your best to give them what they ask for, but don't be afraid to ask some questions. The best thing is to try to use the Socratic Method and let them figure out why you might think they need help and what help they'd accept.

Sometimes, they don't want help and won't accept it. There are a couple of ways around this. The first is for you to talk to another adviser and see what they think. Maybe you're seeing a problem that isn't really there yet. The second is to let it go. Too often at Winter Camp, we're afraid to let things fail. The truth is

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that part of the Order of the Arrow is failure. Don't let a meal fail in a disastrous way but having it be a little late or not quite as good as it could have been is probably acceptable.

If you offer to help and they decline, they may not admit it (just like anyone else, regardless of age), but they know what happened and may be more willing to accept help next time.

### Have Patience

It's a sad truth that not everyone works at the same pace. The author of this book is pretty well-known for leaving things to the last minute and, of course, there's the old saw "If it weren't for the last minute, nothing would get done". Some youth embrace this and it can be frustrating. If you've communicated and they say they aren't ready for help yet, then it's time to sit back. Maybe you can quietly set up some things, but don't make a fuss and don't involve too many people. You're the backup option, not the new leader. Being prepared to help is good, taking over is bad.

### Be Positive

Most people are more willing to accept help if you don't assign blame or complain about the current plan. Questions like "How can I help you make this better?" or "Are there any parts of this you want to unload so you can focus on the big stuff?" are good questions. They make it clear that you already expect them to succeed (even if you don't) and they acknowledge that they are still the key to succeeding.

Of course, you have to be ready to deliver. This could mean you're peeling potatoes for dinner or cutting out bits of cardboard for a game later, but that's okay: you are providing the Scout with the support they feel they need.