

What to Expect When Girls Join Cub Scouts

The Boy Scouts of America organization announced that moving forward, it will allow girls to fully participate and register in Cub Scout and Boy Scout programs, should local Scouting partners choose to recruit girls into their pack, depending on the needs of their youth.

The BSA Board of Directors unanimously decided to welcome girls into its Cub Scout program and to deliver a Scouting program for older girls that will enable them to advance and earn the highest rank of Eagle Scout as of 2019.

The BSA conducted extensive research, including two Harris surveys, as well as four research efforts that included input from nationwide family listening sessions. The results were overwhelmingly positive of the decision to welcome girls.

The question remains, however, how this inclusiveness will affect current Cub Scout packs and what options now exists for leaders, chartered organizations, and parents of eligible children.

The BSA explained, "When girls join Cub Scouting in fall 2018, packs may welcome them right away. An existing pack may choose to recruit girls or remain an all-boy pack. When creating a new pack, a chartered organization may form an all-boy pack, an all-girl pack or a pack of girls and boys." Each chartered organization will decide how or whether to implement these program changes and what activities will best serve their youth.

Cub Scout *dens*, however, will remain single-gender – all boys or all girls. Cub Scout packs can include any combination of all-boy or all-girl dens. The choice is left to individual pack leaders in cooperation with their chartered organization.

The hybrid model builds on the benefit of a single-gender program while also providing character and leadership opportunities for both boys and girls.

"I've seen nothing that develops leadership skills and discipline like this organization," said Randall Stephenson, the association's National Board Chairman. "It's time we make these outstanding leadership development programs available to girls."

Many big things won't change, however. Uniforms, activities, rank advancements and Youth Protection policies will remain the same.

Regarding Youth Protection, the policies match existing rules in place for the Venturing program for young men and young women. When a Scouting activity includes both boys and girls, there must be both male and female leaders present. At least one of those leaders must be registered as an adult member of the BSA, having passed a background check.

Existing program content and activities are appropriate for boys and girls alike. Education experts have evaluated program content and confirmed the relevance of the program for young women, despite some questions from the Girl Scouts.

Many have welcomed the announcement with open arms and shouts of praise for the consideration of their daughters, granddaughters, and their neighbors to have the same opportunities and choices as boys.

Brian Wistisen, a third-generation Eagle Scout with two sons who have achieved the same honor says, "I was skeptical at first, thinking of the logistics of having young boys and girls together on camping trips and outings, thinking there may be benefits to the existing separation. But after further introspection and clarification on the new changes, I'm thrilled that my eleven-year-old daughter can earn an Eagle and have the same opportunities to learn leadership, preparedness, and self-reliance skills just like her brothers... should she desire."

The current desire of the BSA is states as follows: "To expand their programs to serve more young people in the United States." After all, the values of the Scout Law – trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent – are relevant and important values for young men *and* young women as we look to the future of this great nation.

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The Voice of Scouting

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