

Scouts Victoria

A Guide to Open Days and Open Nights



A Group open day/night is a fantastic opportunity to introduce Scouting to your local community, and recruit new youth members and Leaders! This guide contains some tips to help your Group run a successful open day/night. Event checklists, posters, registration forms, handouts and media release templates are also available, and can be tailored to suit your event.

What is an Open Day/Night?

An open day is an opportunity to show the best your Scout Group can offer to the rest of the community. These open days are a chance for the group to work together to plan and demonstrate to the community all that youth and adults can enjoy in Scouting.

What is the purpose of an open day?

- To improve community awareness of Scouting in their area.
- To recruit youth members.
- To recruit Leaders.
- To actively encourage family members to become involved in the Group.

Promotions

Approximately one to two weeks before the event:

- Distribute flyers in local schools.
- Display posters and banners in shopping centres, schools, community notice boards, and other strategic public areas.
- Contact your local newspaper and submit a press release, an article, photo or announcement about the event. Follow up with the newspaper via phone three days before the event. Introduce yourself to the journalist responsible for youth activities. Ask if they received the press release, and invite them to attend the event.
- Write a letter to local businesses outlining what you are doing (running an Open Day), what it is you are asking for (a prize donation), and why they should think about supporting you. Follow up with a phone call, allowing time for the recipient to familiarise themselves with your 'ask'. Prize donations (e.g. a dinner for two at a local restaurant) are a great way to encourage visitors on the day to provide their name and contact details on arrival. These details form a database of potential members, and can be used for follow up in the weeks after the event.

You may also want to:

- Organise an address at local school assemblies.
- Contact local radio stations.
- Construct a tower in a prominent local area and attach a banner! (Remember you generally will need local government approval to do this if erected in a public open space. Such approval can take time, so it's best to check with your local Council.)

Take into consideration the time frame required to organise these promotions.

Hall Maintenance

Ensure your hall is looking its best. In the weeks leading up to the open day:

- Lawns are mowed.
- Any graffiti is removed.
- Hall is clean.
- Dens are clean, organised and decorated.

On the day, ensure directional signs are clearly visible to guide people to the hall from the surrounding main roads. When set up, have someone pilot the route using the signage.



The Event

Open days are usually run from 10am to 2pm on a Saturday or Sunday. With Section meetings usually during the evenings, some Groups may choose to host an open night during the week.

All youth members, parents and Leaders should be encouraged to get involved in running the open day. A roster system should be established and distributed in the days leading up to the event. If given adequate notice, Venturers and Rovers from your local area may also be available to assist, even if they are not directly connected to your Group.

Ensure all visitors feel welcome and are as involved in the day's proceedings as they want to be. Invite visitors (with no cost or commitment) to participate in Group activities, meet current members, and see Group facilities and equipment.

Scouting Activities should be run at the Group's discretion. This depends on the infrastructure, resources and manpower available. It is highly recommended that Groups organise Scouting-type activities and encourage people to 'have a go' at everything. One way to do this is by running an activity trail. The trail begins with registration on the day, where names, contact details and ages of youth are recorded. The visitors are then given a puzzle kit requiring them to go to each of the activities being run on the day to find a clue. This puzzle could be as simple as a letter at each base to make a word or sentence at the end. Once the puzzle has been solved, a small prize may be available (e.g. Minties, Fantaes, Scout stickers etc.)

If you have organised prizes, draw these and announce winners at the end of the day.

Risk Assessment

As you are well aware, it is vital to undertake a risk assessment in respect of venue and activities to ensure that all reasonable care has been taken to ensure the safety of staff, participants and the public in general.

Activity Suggestions

- Outdoor display: Set out tents, canoes, and equipment for activities your group undertakes (bushwalking, rock craft, snow trips, etc).
- Construction display: For example - rope bridge, ballista, towers, flag pole etc.
- Obstacle course.
- Craft table- e.g. rockets, colouring etc.
- Group promotion movie inside the hall.
- Games.
- Photo displays- of camps, activities, ceremonies, people having fun!
- Leader profiles- Photo and brief blurb on each Leader
- Branch and regional promotional material.
- BBQ sausage sizzle, tea/coffee, cordial.
- Opening Ceremony, Going-up Ceremony
- Group information display- meeting times, ages etc.
- Any other activities which are unique to your Group

Activities should be spread out to occupy the entire premises available to your Group - hall, den, kitchen, bush, grass, upstairs/downstairs etc.

Closing the Deal

As visitors leave, invite them along to the next Group meeting where they can try out Scouting. Remember, parents and friends can be involved as helpers and Leaders and can get a lot out of Scouting too!

Provide a handout with all the necessary information about the Group, including meeting times, the upcoming program, contact numbers for Leaders, costs etc, while reminding them that the first few weeks are free. A follow-up phone call one to two weeks after the event is a great way to touch base with families.

Leaders need to be aware of the impact of the new members, and need to have a fun-filled interesting program as they introduce the Scouting principles. Well-trained youth members help a lot in leading by example.