

10 Commandments for Camp Leaders

Someone asked about some simple rules for Adult Leaders at Camp. I made these up this year to deal with the 7 Dads we took to Summer Camp. They thought the rules were simple enough and we all had a great time working as a team.

For the list's edification--use and abuse at will:

Dads' Ten Commandments for Camp

1. Thou shalt allow thy progeny their due breathing room. Don't smother your son. Remember, these are your Son's "good ol' days". Let him have fun and experience Camp as if you were not there. Try to let your son make his own decisions; this is a great venue for learning to make decisions without relying on you.
2. Thou shalt praise in public and criticize in private. Scouts have feelings too. Help our youth build self-esteem by correcting them away from the group. Stop the action if it is unsafe or inappropriate, and talk with the offending Scout away from his peers. Remember BSA policy on one-on-one contact—it is for you too.
3. Thou shalt allow the Staff and the Scouts to do their jobs. Never confront a Youth Staffer unless it is a matter of safety or appropriateness. If you have a problem with the way things are being run, you will speak to the adult supervisor or program director, not the Youth Staffer. If in doubt, ask the Scoutmaster. "Never send a man to do a boy's job." Let the boys do their duties—this builds a sense of ownership in the program. Sure, we could do it for them, and probably do a better job—that's not the idea. Let the boys do it!
4. Thou shalt spread the wealth. It's OK to be a DAD to a homesick Scout. Remember, 75% of our boys are at Camp on their own. Please avoid trying to do things just with your own son all the time. A little attention to one or two of his friends can go a long way to keeping spirits up.
5. Thou shalt let the Scoutmaster be the Scoutmaster. One person has to have the last say—at Summer Camp (or all Scout Functions) that has to be the Scoutmaster. This teaches our boys respect for authority. If you undermine the authority of the Scoutmaster, you undermine a big part of the Program. If the Scoutmaster has told your son not to do something and you let him do it because he is with you—your son will come running to you anytime he doesn't get his way. Discipline is then lost.
6. Thou shalt follow and enforce the Camp and Troop Rules. If you don't follow or enforce them, how can we expect your son to do otherwise? Never allow your son to violate a rule just because he is with you. Remember 78 youthful eyes, besides your son's 2, are watching what you do.
7. Thou shalt be a participant. That means active in the activities and decision process. Please don't sit back and wait to be asked to do something—volunteer—it's fun. If you have a better way to do something, let us know! Please don't just bring up problems, offer solutions. The Scoutmaster can't operate in a vacuum.
8. Thou shalt guard thy tongue. We shall maintain civil speech, even in

anger. Anyone speaking with forked-tongue will be asked to publicly apologize for using profanity. My deal with the boys—I hear them use inappropriate language and they owe me a Diet Pepsi. They hear me, and I owe them a case of their favorite soft drink.

9. Thou shalt an example be. A boy can't be more proud of a Dad that shows respect for his son by setting the example in patience and bearing. A Dad can't express his love for his son more than by offering that son his guidance when asked; and by having the wisdom to know when not to guide, but bask in the glow of pride, as he watches his son grow in spirit as the boy blazes his own trail.

10. Thou shalt have fun. OK, you've given up time and money to be here. So get the heck outta Camp and do stuff! There is always something to do around these premier Camps we go to—but you can only enjoy them when you participate. We don't allow the boys to hang around camp—why should you?

Luvin' this Scoutin' stuff...

Bill Britt
SM, Troop 509, Hurlburt Field, FL
<http://troop509.org>