

Research Shines a Light on Cub Scout Retention

Did you know that most boys who drop out of Cub Scouting do so in May, June, and September?

Did you know that dens that meet more often have higher retention rates?

The BSA Research Service has conducted studies to determine the reasons boys have dropped their Cub Scout membership. The findings have been used to develop many Cub Scout recruitment and activity programs.

Consider a typical family in a Cub Scout pack. Their school year ends in May or June. Summer becomes full of family trips and activities. September rolls around and the family must now decide what extracurricular activities they will take part in for the coming school year. If this family's pack became dormant over the summer, they now have an even harder time deciding whether to stay in Scouting. This directly affects our retention efforts. Those three months when the Cub Scout program meets much less frequently allow for other activities to become priorities in the family's lives. This is why encouraging packs to earn the Summertime Pack Award is important. It keeps families involved in Scouting year-round.

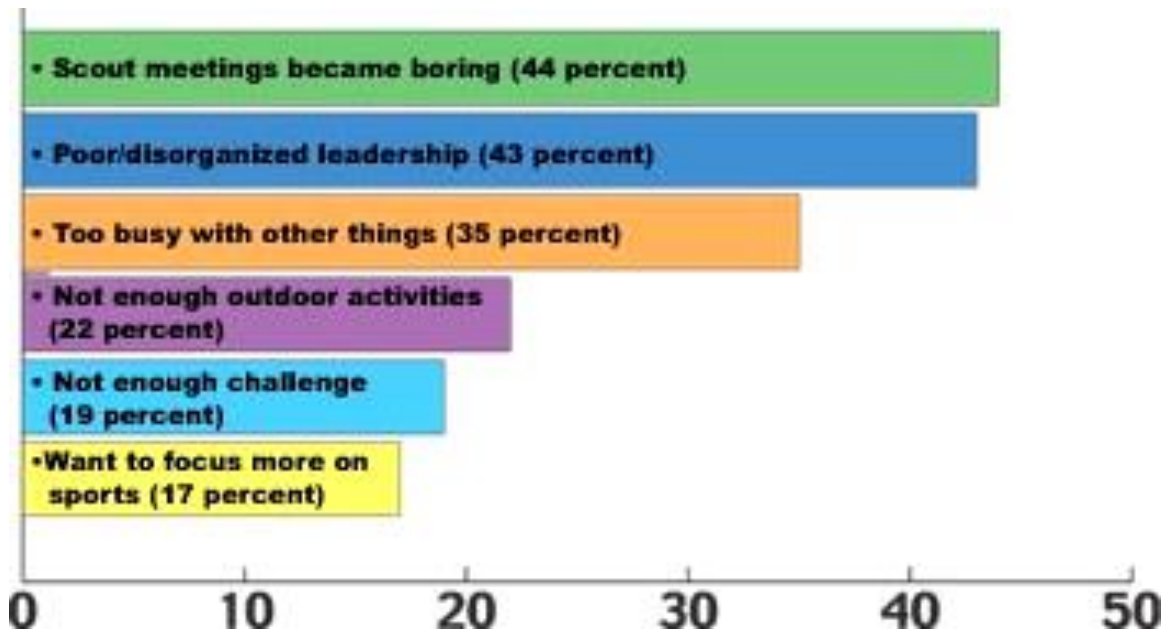
Once in the program, the number of meetings per month becomes a factor in retention. In our study, one of five boys (21.1 percent) who dropped was in a den that met less than twice a month. Cub Scouts and their families are looking for activities, outdoor adventure, challenges, and fun. When the meetings are not frequent enough, continuity is lost and other activities will take their place.

Cub Scouting versus sports. A common thought is that Cub Scouting loses boys to sports. This research study found that only 17 percent of boys wanted to focus more on sports.

Boring meetings. The top factor influencing the decision to leave Cub Scouting is that the meetings became boring. When we recruit boys into the program we promise fun and challenging outdoor activities. Meetings need to be full of activities that introduce the boys to new and challenging things. Take them outside!

Training pays. Another key factor is poor or disorganized leadership. New leaders need immediate training, even mentoring, to get them started on the right track. To address these needs, encourage district leadership to provide immediate Fast Start training and follow up with position-specific training.

Pass this information on to your district leadership. Talk about it at roundtables. As the saying goes—the more you know, the more you grow!



Source: National Cub Scout Retention Survey, June 2001

Base: 194 parents of boys who dropped out of Cub Scouts

*Percentage who say the item had a "major" or "somewhat of an" influence on the decision to drop out