

Dog Scout Camp - General Instructions

Pre-arrival: Are you really ready for the camp experience? It's been a long time since we were kids at camp, and some of us never got to go to camp at all.

Rules: Campers have told us they were surprised by the volume of rules and safety precautions sent out and provided in the pre-camp materials, but then realized that most of the stuff was “no-brainer” material. All of the rules are really common sense sort of stuff that the average adult human would not think we'd need to mention. As you read through the rules and policies, you may think to yourself, “Who would do that?” However, for every “no brainer” rule or precautionary statement we include, there has been a person who actually did what the rule covers, creating a potential hazard to self, others, and/or the property, and causing us to feel the need to enumerate every little “common sense” rule. We don't mean to insult anyone. We don't mean to sound restrictive. All the rules are in place for your safety, enjoyment of camp, and protection.



Some come to camp hoping to get very

Expectations: It's ALL about expectations. Everyone has a different idea of what their camp experience will be like. If the actual camp experience does not exactly fit the mental image of the dream vacation you had in mind, then you will be dissatisfied. We don't like to have dissatisfied campers, especially when it's a simple thing like their own unrealistic expectations that make them dissatisfied (something that we have no control over.) So, we try to provide as much information ahead of time, and paint a picture for you that is accurate, and not glossed-over or seen through rose-colored glasses.

The camp “community:” By signing on for camp, you are joining a little community for two and a half days. You will be learning, playing, eating, and sleeping next to other adults and their dogs and maybe their kids. As a member of this new community, it is your responsibility to follow rules and be a “team player.” All of the rules we have in place have been put there for the safety and preservation of yourself, those around you and the camp itself. As a general rule, ask yourself if what you are doing will pose a danger to yourself, the environment, or other people. If so, then don't do it! Because we are adults, and not kids, we are used to having things just the way we like them in life. For some, it is harder than for others to co-exist in this camp community for two and a half days. Our most frequent gripe from campers is about other campers not following rules! We must all try to get along. If you're a “me-first” kind of person, I can tell you right now that you are probably not going to enjoy this camp experience, which depends on your ability to share and work well with others.

Arrival at Faulkner Park at the Trailhead:

On the evening of the first day of camp during check-in time, we will give you your name tag, dog scout binder (1st time campers), make sure your dog's health record is on file (or you can turn it in at this time), and your release form is signed. There may also be sign-up sheets for certain activities and other check-in items. We will take a photo of you with your dog(s) and put it up in the “meet your fellow campers” area to help the instructors, staff, mentors and other campers recognize people and dogs. You will have read your paper pre-camp info before arrival at camp, and know a little about what to expect. Then we will have introductions and welcome activities. We will not repeat the information from the website (pre-camp info), but have more very important information for you.

Off Leash Area at Grasshopper Hill Farm: Often after a long drive, your dog will likely want to stretch his legs. The fenced play area is an area encircled by orange snow fencing. At check in, please ask where it is located. You **MUST** stay in this area with your dog or assign a responsible adult that agrees to watch your dog. If you have a small dog, or a dog that jumps fences, you will need to exercise extra supervision because the fencing is temporary construction fencing (4' high) and small dogs might squeeze under it. Please limit your time in an off-leash area if others are waiting to use it and their dog needs alone time in the area. Some dogs will only relieve themselves when they are off leash, so please remember to bring your poop bags and clean it up quickly and deposit the knotted bag in the trash container with a lid on top. Please make sure the top is sealing the container when you are finished.

No Smoking: Remember, there is no smoking allowed inside or near any of the buildings in the camp. Please be careful with your butts, if you do smoke (put them in a proper container, where they won't be stepped on by dogs or start a forest fire.) There are “smoker's outposts” outside the exit doors of the main lodge. Please do not leave any butts on the ground on camp property or on the trails.

Planning: Once you get situated, it is a good idea to go over all of the materials you have been given. Then, take a look at the schedule (it may have changed since the one you were sent.) Try to decide which of the activities you would like to participate in. A staff member (during the orientation) will point out which activities are “must attend” sessions for 1st time campers.

Classes and mini-seminars: There are a number of informational classes that have nothing to do with merit badges that are just fun to attend. We offer some advanced sessions concurrently with other beginner sessions on the schedule. This means you will have to choose which one you will attend

Mandatory Dog Scout Class: If you are a first-year camper, you will want to be sure to attend the Dog Scout Class! It is on the schedule at the same time as leadership training. The new leaders (usually repeat campers) participate in the training and certification of the new Scout teams. So, the leaders are being evaluated while they check you out to become Dog Scouts. The leadership training program is how we get people who are qualified to check out the Scouts, so you are each helping each other. Please be patient if the leader in training needs to consult the guidebook for a clarification. It's part of the learning process. Don't make the mistake of skipping out during that hour—everything you need to know to pass the Dog Scout certification takes place in that hour each day. If you want to earn any of the merit badges, your dog must attend and pass the Dog Scout class. But you can be working on earning the other badges during camp as you work on earning the Dog Scout badge/title or Jr. Scout badge/title. If for some reason your dog doesn't pass this test, you can hold on to any other badge forms he might have earned and complete your Dog Scout test by video or in-person with a certified Scoutmaster if you have one in your area.

Merit Badges: Please consult your camp schedule as to the days and times each activity is to be introduced. **It is imperative that you attend the "how to" orientation and safety session** (called the O & S) **on each activity before engaging in that activity with your dog.** Each introduction session covers the mechanics of the activity as well as rules and safety concerns with regard to that particular activity. Activities are geared so that all or most dogs can participate. If you miss an O&S, thinking your dog will not be able to or want to do that activity, and then change your mind, you'll be "bummin." For example, the Art of Shaping is the basis on which we teach everything here at camp. It's more than just painting, so if you think you could skip that one, better plan your free time for elsewhere.



You may be surprised at what your dog can do!

After the introduction lecture and demonstration for each activity, campers will break out into groups where we will practice the activity in the field, lake, woods, or whatever the activity requires. Please print the check-off sheets and badge forms before coming to camp for each activity you want to earn a merit badge for (that is on the schedule.) If you change your mind or don't have a printer, we also have black and white badge forms at camp for you to use.

As your dog proceeds through his mastering of the activity, one of the instructors or mentors will verify your progress, and you can move on to the next item on your

checklist. **EXAMPLE:** before your dog can go on the 3-mile hike wearing a loaded pack, he has to first demonstrate that he will wear the pack and walk on a loose leash, then wear a loaded pack and walk on a loose leash. This does not have to be observed by staff, if you see that your dog is ok with it; move on to the next step.

It is very important for you to follow the guidelines on the check-off sheets. The activities taught in camp are all taught in progressive steps, and you must lay a proper foundation for subsequent training. Once your dog is checked off at one level and is ready to go on to the next, he does not have to be checked off again at the previous level. If he seems to "forget" what he did at the previous practice session, go back and repeat the last few things you were able to check off (review previous successful sequences) before moving on. Just because your dog has a checkmark by something does not mean he will never again need to review it. It is always a good idea to review the last thing your dog did successfully before moving on to a new level. To earn the badge, we expect your dog to be able to repeat the desired performance, not just get it right “once” on a lucky fluke.

Most of the work you do in the field will be on your own, under the supervision of one or more instructors. The assistant instructors will not "re-teach" everything in the field. That's why you must attend the instructional portion of the activity before we break out into groups. The purpose of the assistants is to help you with trouble areas, clarify things, maintain safety and traffic flow, or act as a spotter. To get your badge, your instructor must have witnessed you performing the required activities. All of the activities on your check sheet are not necessarily requirements—they are just learning steps toward the desired goal.

You are also encouraged to practice the various activities (once you have attended the introduction lecture) on your own during your free time. You will need to do this with the "buddy system," as it will be easier and safer if you have a companion to assess your performance or spot your dog if you need help. The equipment will be in the field for your use, as long as you practice safely and humanely. Instructors will offer help if they are in the area, but they are only required to be there during the time which is scheduled for that activity. For instance, if you decide to skip the scheduled water rescue activity with your dog, and go to the agility field instead, with your camp buddy and her dog, you may do so, but don't be surprised if the instructor is not waiting on the field for you! The instructors are often campers too or they might have other camp duties and they also need some down time to rest or work with their own dog.

Note: While we try to be uniform, not every instructor, co-instructor, or assistant instructor teaches the same class the same way. If you are told one thing by one staff member, and another by a different staff member, you may not know what to think. They are not trying to confuse you. Be aware that there are probably as many ways to train something as there are instructors. Please contact Lonnie to get the final word on the matter. Every now and then, we have to clarify something for an instructor who is making certain requirements for check-outs that are simply not needed. Or, two instructors may be administering the same merit badge, but one might be more "lenient", and the other more strict. I assure you, they are each trying to do their best to uphold the standards set by Dog Scouts of America.

Trails: There are only three actual backpacking sessions. The first is the introduction, after which we will fit the dogs with their packs and get them used to wearing them and then we'll take a one mile hike. There will be two- and three-mile hike on consecutive days. The requirements for your merit badge are that you complete the 3 mile check-out hike and log in a minimum of at least 6 miles of backpacking over the week's time. It takes about 20 minutes to walk one mile. You can make up a hike on your own time if you miss the group hike. Remember to have your log signed by your hiking buddy to verify your mileage. Save your backpacking log page, as your hiking miles also qualify for packdog titles. The trails at Faulkner Park are mapped and relatively marked, but we would appreciate it if you only go in the woods with your map and at least one human buddy along. Please stay on the groomed trails. You may use the trails to take hikes any time you feel like it during the day but we appreciate you not going alone.



BackPacks: If you do not have a backpack for your dogs, we recommend you pick one up locally or order one from the online store and have it shipped ahead of time so your dog can get used to wearing it prior to camp. There is a limited supply in the online DSA store of our adjustable, convertible and affordable Dog Scout Packs that come in several sizes from tiny to extra large. These fit over a Premier Sure-Fit Harness which comes with the pack. It is recommended that you order your pack in advance so you have time to acclimate your dog to wearing a pack based on the training advice found with the Backpacking badge forms on the DSA website.

Pace Yourself: There are many areas of activity being officially offered at camp which are eligible for merit badges upon completion. **You are not required, nor expected, to complete them all.** It is possible that you have a dog which could earn all of the merit badges. However, I suggest that you don't "go overboard" trying to master all activities introduced here at camp. There will be other camps and other chances to complete your merit badge requirements in the future, even after you get home. To get all of your badges on the first try, you will be busy morning, noon and night, sacrificing all of your free time, and probably not having much fun! Fun is why we are here! You don't have to make this into a "marathon." Take it easy. Have fun. Enjoy your dog. For some people, it's "all about the badges." For others, they could care less about the

badges. And don't forget, most dogs sleep all day! They are not used to this much activity and need their own rest time so they don't get grumpy.

We will repeat this warning over and over at camp. Even though we recommend that each camper try only a few merit badge activities per camp, there will still be people trying to do it all, and blaming us because they're tired at the end of the week and their dog got snappy. Please keep in mind that YOU are responsible for making sure you and your dog do not become too stressed by over activity during camp. In addition to the advertised activities, your time will include options for fun and games, interesting lectures, contests, and campfires. There will be more than enough to keep you busy, but if you get overwhelmed, you can always just take time out to relax. If you find your dog is the one needing a break, you are welcome to attend the practice sessions without him so you can still learn from watching others and hearing what the instructor has to say.

Play nice! We want both owners and dogs to enjoy their stay here at Dog Scout Camp. Please be mindful of the rights of others. It's nice to be out in nature and let your dog run and play, but please do not let your dog run out of control, and do not give your dog freedom at the expense of the other camper's enjoyment of their camp experience. Dog Scouts must get along well in groups, but please do not let your dog force himself on someone else or their dog(s). **Please do not let your dog out of your sight.** It is a definite "no-no" to have your dog loose outside while you are in a building, barn or port-a-pottie.

Clean-up after your dog: As always, we must clean up after our dogs. Clean-up bags are available in camp, but please bring plenty of your own clean-up bags. Clean-up bags are required in your dog's backpack when you're on the trails. Clean-up bags must be knotted and disposed of properly and only in the 5 gallon buckets with lids designated for that purpose. Please be sure to securely tie/close the bag! The troop has to dump the buckets into trash bags after camp and open bags that spill their contents make the job even less pleasant! Yuck!

Poop Police: There should never be any dog poop left on the ground at camp. Dog Scout Camp has its own "Poop Police." They are out to "bust" you! Of course, we believe in positive reinforcement training, so we don't punish you if you're caught without your clean-up bags—you just get a NRM (no reward marker). However, if you're busted carrying clean-up bags (AND are wearing your name tag), the police officer will give you a ticket. On this ticket you write your name (be sure it is legible!), and then you put the ticket in the drawing bin. We have a drawing at the beginning of each meal, and you could win some nice prizes just for being a good dog owner (and wearing your name tag and showing up on time for meals)! You must be present to win when your name is called.

Stray Poop Picker tickets: On the rare occasion that you find an abandoned pile, you can get credit for cleaning it up! There are "stray poop picker" tickets near the prize drawing bin. Simply put your name on one and put it in the drawing bin for an extra chance to win prizes. Note that excrement left by wildlife doesn't count for this.

Where the heck are we? If you need to let someone know where you are, the camp phone number and address is **Grasshopper Hill Farm, 19745 County Road 178, Flint, TX 75762.**
Natalie's cell phone: 903-530-9273.

Cell Phones: Some cell phones will work here at camp.

Cancellations: If you can't come to camp at the last minute, or you leave camp for any reason, including an emergency, such as an illness, your camp fee is not refundable, as your spot can not be filled at that late date. If your dog comes into heat just before or during camp, you do not have to withdraw from camp. You do have to work harder to keep away from the intact male dogs (it's not fair to them), and you must have your dog wear a panty and something to mask the scent. If you suspect your female may come into heat during camp, it may be better to bring a different dog, if you have that option.

Shopping: The camp store is open all day, and we accept cash and checks. You will have a camp tab sheet at the store and you will need to pay the total accrued at the end of the week during the check-out period. As you select items from the store, make extra crafts or get the winning bid on auction items, you or a staff member will add those purchases to your camp tab page. The best time to hit the camp store is before camp starts, or the morning of the first day. Shop early and often! At check-out, we will ask that those leaving Sunday night that have a ways to travel be allowed to settle their tabs first so they can get on the road. After that, we will ask that you settle your tab alphabetically, according to your last name, to keep

everyone from having to stand in a long line. We will call your name in the Lodge when it is your check-out time. We are not set up to receive credit cards so we can only accept checks and cash for payment. There are ATM's in town if you need cash to pay your tab. Check is the preferred method of payment as we will not have cash on hand to make change.

Visitors: We regret that we can not allow you to invite people to come to camp to "visit." There is no provision for visitors. Anyone who sets foot on the camp grounds must be insured, must be a member of DSA, must sign the release form, must have viewed the pre-camp info, and must know and obey the camp rules. Therefore, we can not allow unregistered guests to come into the camp (human or animal.)

Meals:

This is a Brown Bag Camp or a BYOS- Bring your own supplies! We have endeavored to make camp as affordable as possible. Dr. and Mrs. Fletcher have opened up their farm at no expense to the dog scouts. Please respect their generosity by keeping the premises as clean as possible and to not allow your dogs to chase the farm animals. Therefore, since the premises are not set up for a cafeteria, you will have to bring all of your own food for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks as well as beverages. You may need to bring your own ice chest, cups, plates, utensils, etc. You will have to bring your dog's food and water as well. The activities will be on the back side of the farm where there are no water hoses. If your dog doesn't want to lay on the grass, bring his blanket. Bring your yard chairs. If you need a table, bring it. For the overnight camping badge, you will need to boil water in your own pot and make oatmeal or some other instant food. Since what goes in must eventually come out, we will provide port-a-potties!

Stray Food: We also would appreciate it if you did not leave food out as temptation to the dogs, or give any leftovers or table scraps to your dogs. This attracts insects and little animals (maybe even some big ones), and is not good for your dog's digestive system (it could also start a dog fight.)



Roasting Marshmallows at the campfire

Responsibility: You are responsible for your own dog... to make sure he is not a nuisance, to make sure he is not barking, and to make sure he is safely contained or under your control at all times.

You need to bring a crate to camp with you.

There may be very few times when your dog will actually have to go in the crate (well-behaved dogs are allowed everywhere in camp.) However, it will be there for him to rest in, undisturbed, if you need it, like when you take a break or go to the port-a-pottie. You probably

don't want your dog's leash pulling the door open! If your dog is not obedient, you are responsible for keeping him on a leash or long line at all times. Please read the release form carefully. It states that you are responsible for your dog and his/her actions, no matter what happens.

Wildlife: There is a fair bit of wildlife here in the woods. There are deer, ducks, geese, beaver, opossum, hawks, coyotes, raccoons, snakes (harmless), squirrels, bobcats, songbirds, and I imagine there are skunks, too, though there haven't been any actual sightings (or smellings). Don't let your dog harass the wildlife or farm animals. He might run down the trail after a deer, and not turn back for miles. As for most of the wild animals, they don't hang around the populated areas. When we go on our hikes, your dog should be on a leash. The horses in the arena are very aggressive towards dogs so keep your dogs out of the arena. In general, all the farm horses, donkeys, and cows have very good aim. Your unsuspecting house dog could be knocked unconscious. So no chasing!

Identification: In the unlikely event that a dog would run away from dog camp (You've got to be kidding! This is the most fun he's had in his life!), we recommend that your dog wear an I.D. tag to camp. However, if the person that finds your dog calls your home, and you're at camp there could be no one to get the message. At camp, we can offer you a little white duct



tape which to write your cell phone number during the camp, so that if a dog gets found, we will hear about it right away.

What to bring: In the other camp info on-line, there is a list of the usual stuff to bring to camp. Don't forget your dog's health form.

Geocaching is available at our camp. Within the camp grounds and surrounding area, geocaches have been hidden for you to find. Wear your bushwhacking gear and take along your compass and GPS to unravel the clues and coordinates to find the hidden caches. The outlying area also has several. If you have your own transportation and come early or stay after camp, you can explore with your dog while working toward your merit badges for these activities. (see www.letterboxing.org , www.Atlasquest.com & www.geocaching.com)

Pages to Print and Bring:

- **Map** complete with written directions to the camp. Trail maps are available at camp, but you can print your own map of the facility if you'd like.
- **Schedule** – emailed to you- plan your strategy for which activities you'd like to attend
- **Waiver/Release Form** – It is available ahead of time for you to read—you'll be required to have on be signed and witnessed during check-in at camp. It will save time at check-in if you have already read this form.
- **Dog's Health Form** – have this verified by your vet within 30 days prior to camp, preferably between 14 to 30 days prior to camp, then bring it with you. You can also mail or email a scanned copy ahead of time so we are sure to have it just in case you forget to pack it.
- **Chapter 1 of your camper manual** – This covers how to earn badges, dog scout laws, and other helpful info.
- **Badge Forms:** You are encouraged to look at and print the badge forms and requirements (check-off sheets) ahead of time online at www.dogscouts.org. Go to the section called "Badges" and view the pages you want to work on for this year's camp (not all badges are available at every camp). We will have some extra copies of the badge forms at camp, but ask that you bring with you the ones you know you are interested in so there's not a rush Sunday afternoon to print a couple of dozen different badge forms that we ran out of.

Schedule Changes: While we try to avoid schedule changes, the camp schedule **IS** subject to change. We try our best to inform everyone in advance of these changes, but sometimes the weather or unforeseen circumstances cause sudden changes. Announcements will be made at meal times of any schedule changes. We encourage everyone to keep a copy of the schedule on you, but we will also have a copy in each cabin and in the Lodge.

Compliment board – we started this in 2004, due to a camper's suggestion. It's a way of letting other people know that they are appreciated. Anyone who wants to can put a note on the dry-erase board to thank or praise a staff member, another camper or something else they liked about camp. There's nothing like instant feedback to let us or someone else know that you've really liked something about your camp experience. If you run out of room on the board, just write it on a post-it note and stick it on the fridge.

Mark G. Echterling award- Mark was a camper that was always offering to help others in any way. He was kind, caring and always put others before himself. When Mark lost his battle with cancer, this award was named in his honor. If you notice a camper or staff member going out of their way or "above and beyond" to help you or others at camp, please nominate them for this award. All nominations are read during the award ceremony and the person with the most nominations is awarded a nice certificate with their name on it.

Care Bear – this is a new idea that the camp director had to help people get special attention. We never know which campers are struggling and which are doing fine until they either sneak away in the night, or we hear about it on our evaluations (when it's too late!) And, it's just as bad to offer help that is not needed (some people get offended), as it is to have not helped someone who did need some extra "hand holding." Since we're not clairvoyant, and the people who don't want help look just like the ones who desperately need it, we've created a "special help" jar. If you feel you just "aren't getting" the clicker training, for example, or somehow feel that you are not getting the attention you need from your instructor, or there is a particular thing that is puzzling you, or you have a concern with your roommate, or you think that everyone is too busy, and you don't want to interrupt them to ask for additional help, or ANYTHING else, just "tell it to the bear." At the end of your rope? Need an extra hand? Have a question or concern? There's no need to wait for an evaluation form at the end of the camp, and then whine about how nobody helped you. Just put your concern

on paper and slip it into the Care Bear (jar). We want to help. We do not mean to OVERLOOK you, but, as I pointed out, the campers all LOOK like they are having fun, and we can't tell the ones who are ecstatic from the ones who are bummed out because their dog won't swim. Because we are NOT mind readers, we have put the onus on you to seek the help you need. We're there for you... just ASK. A staff member will read the concerns in the Care Bear Jar (if any) and address them ASAP.

Wildcat Complaints (also known as WHINING) are not allowed at camp. Please note the "No Whining" sign in the lodge. If you're unhappy with something, and you're complaining to your fellow camper about it, you are talking to the WRONG PERSON (unless maybe it is him or her you are complaining about!) If you have a complaint about something, please don't try to win people over to your sour grapes point of view by lamenting it to the other campers. You will either make them "realize" that they should have been unhappy too, all along (gee, thanks a lot, sunshine!), or they will think you are some kind of mutinous rabble rouser. We give ample opportunity for you to voice concerns or vent complaints. If you have a beef with a staff member, or the camp in general, then WE are the ones who need to hear it. We are the only ones who can help alleviate your misery, so tell US! We're good listeners and we care.

Countdown: Ok. Get psyched up. I am. I am looking forward to camp, and I hope you and your dog are, too. If you have any last minute questions about something I did not cover in any of these materials, call or e-mail the camp director and she will do her best to help.

SEE YOU SOON!



Are you packed yet?!