

# Money-saving tips to help you experience Scouting to the fullest

By Gretchen Sparling

Illustrations by Bill Butcher

From the November-December 2015 issue of *Scouting* magazine

Scouting for deals? We're here to help. Try one (or all!) of these tips to help you save money and experience Scouting to its fullest — without breaking the bank.



**From campfires to courts of honor.** Scouting provides life-changing experiences. Lack of funds should not keep Scouts from making the most of the program, but expenses add up — particularly when families boast more than one Scout. In the spirit of thriftiness, we've gathered ideas to help you save money in Scouting and beyond.

See something we missed? Share your money-saving tips with other leaders in the comments below.

---



## **UNIFORM SHARING**

*Create a uniform-sharing system for Scouts.*

“Eagle Scouts generally don’t need their uniforms after they bridge to Venturing to continue Scouting,” says Matt Price, a Scoutmaster and Advisor from Fuquay-Varina, N.C. “We ask them to donate used uniforms to our uniform closet. We strip the patches, and they get those back to put in a frame.”

This idea extends to Cub Scouting, too. “During our pack’s crossover ceremonies, we have a tradition of formally divesting our Cub Scouts of their ‘experienced’ neckerchiefs and slides, so they can be passed down to the next den level. That is, experienced Webelos’ neckerchiefs and slides are given to Bears who are moving up, Bear neckerchiefs and slides to Wolves moving up, and so on,” says B.P. Palmateer, Cubmaster of Pack 42, Norwood, Mass.

---



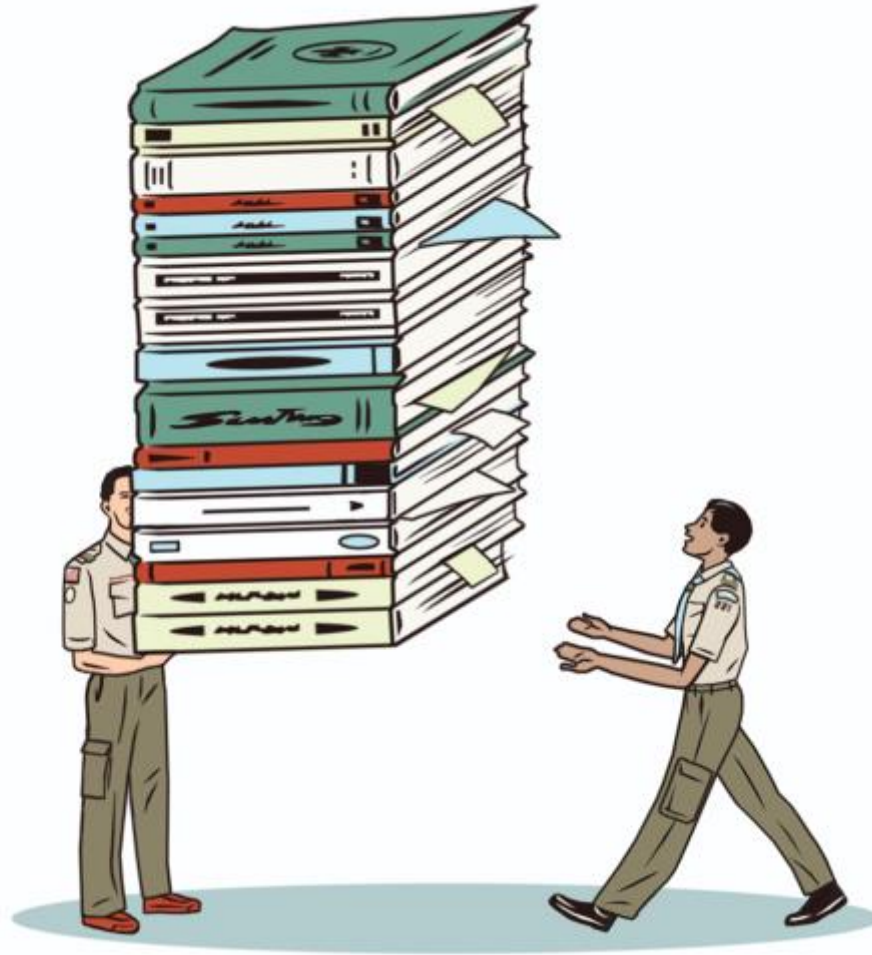
## **PARTNER UP**

*Keep costs low by teaming with other units for events or excursions.*

Joining forces with another unit can help you earn **group-discount rates** if your troop or crew is small in numbers; it can also help lower the cost per each Scout attending the outing.

“Our unit keeps adventure trip costs to a minimum by **locating other Scout units in the area we are going to visit** and contacting them to find places to camp for free. It also makes a great adventure if we have the local unit camp with us and show us what they think is cool in the area,” says Paul Giacomo, an assistant district commissioner in Nelson, N.H.

---



## **BOOK SHARING**

*Organize a unit library that contains merit badge pamphlets, leader guides, maps and other activity-planning resources like local park brochures.*

“Our pack bought one set of handbooks and den leader guides,” says Julie Conrad, a pack committee chairperson from Ortonville, Mich. “These are **passed from leader to leader** (along with notes, tips, suggestions, etc.) each spring. The new den leader then has a handbook, guide and lots of ideas shared from previous leaders in his/her position.”

Other units offer a **merit badge library**. Boys “donate books to the troop when they are done with the badge to pass along the savings,” says Tim Emery, a Scoutmaster from Bedford, Texas.

Or, consider asking chartered-organization members or families in your community to donate old tablets. (You might be surprised how many previous-generation iPads are going unused.) Purchase **Book versions of handbooks or merit badge pamphlets** (at [scoutstuff.org](http://scoutstuff.org)) and store these resources on devices to share in your pack, troop or crew. The downloaded files cannot be shared between devices, but the tablet can be passed from Scout to Scout.

Encourage your Scouts to visit a local **public library** to check out free resources for trip planning or merit badges.

---



## **LOYALTY PROGRAMS**

*Sign up for store loyalty cards and earn points as you spend money on equipment or food for your unit. Cash in these points for extra savings.*

Consider purchasing a **Costco or Sam's Club membership** for your unit. (Or ask if a family in your unit already has a membership.) There, you can buy in bulk at discounted prices — items at these stores include food, camping gear and even clothing.

Purchase your own **REI membership** for a one-time \$20 fee and earn 10 percent in dividends on eligible purchases. In return, you'll get an annual dividend check to spend on future REI purchases.

---

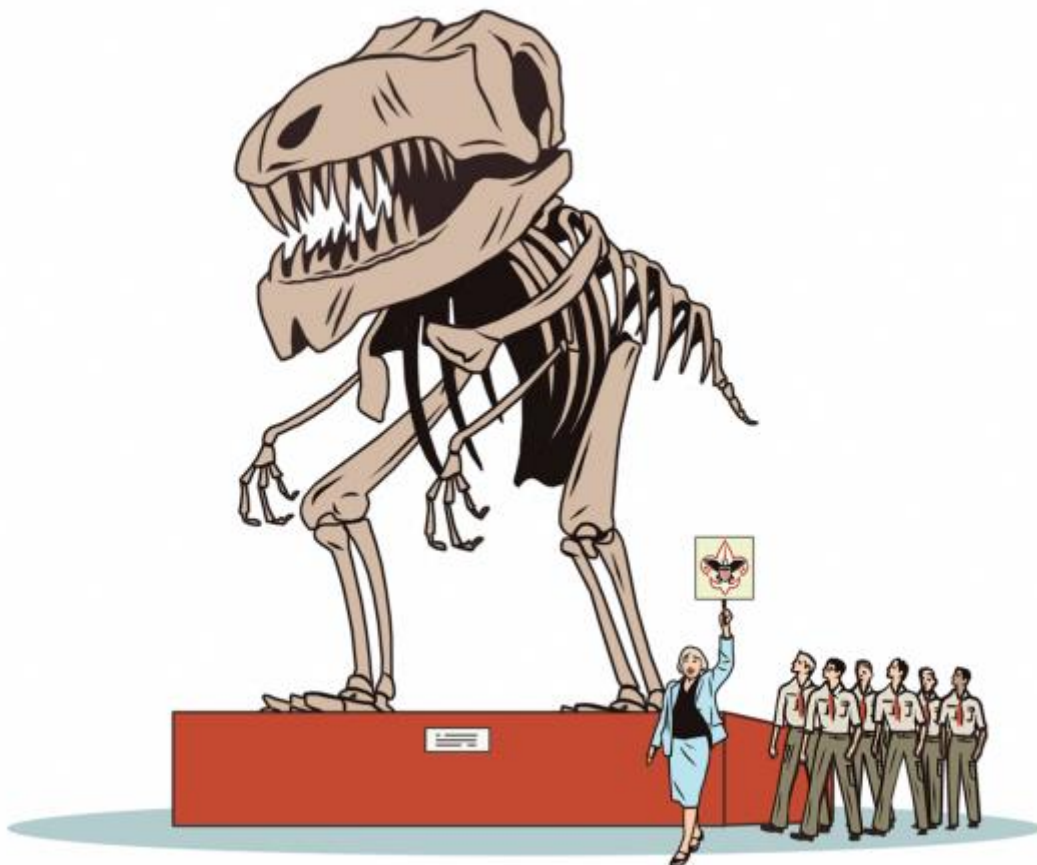


## ALUMNI PERKS

*If you're a registered Scouting volunteer, you qualify as a Scouting Alumni Association member. Registration is free, but if you spring for the Pathfinder level (\$35), you gain access to the special discounts listed here. Register at [scouting.org/alumni](https://scouting.org/alumni).*

- Liberty Mutual discount on auto and home insurance (amount of discount depends on individual quote)
- A one-time 10 percent discount at Scout shops or [scoutstuff.org](https://scoutstuff.org)
- 15 percent off oil changes at Firestone
- 25 percent off your entire purchase at Papa John's Pizza
- 20 percent off at [1800Flowers.com](https://1800Flowers.com)
- Up to 10 percent off on multiday and Park Hopper admission tickets at Disneyland
- First pair of eyeglasses free; repeat purchases 30 percent off at [Coastal.com](https://Coastal.com)
- 15 to 30 percent off in-store products at Office Depot

- Up to 30 percent off at Chili's restaurant
  - Up to 35 percent off movie tickets at more than 15 theaters, including AMC, Regal and Carmike
  - Up to 50 percent off in-store, regular-priced items at Men's Wearhouse, excluding shoes
  - Membership to the National Scouting Museum in Irving, Texas, which includes free admission
- 



## SEEKING ADVENTURE

*Try these ideas when planning your next outing.*

- **Pay your way with service.** Troop 99 of Lancaster, Pa., has traveled across the nation on exciting adventures, earning free lodging with service projects. Before you ask for a discount on campsite fees or boarding, consider first what your unit can offer — like cleaning the grounds, for instance. (Read more about Troop 99 at [scoutingmagazine.org/supertroop](http://scoutingmagazine.org/supertroop))
- Look for **deals available on coupon sites like Groupon.com**, such as paddleboarding excursions, zip lining and more.
- Find the nearest **KOA campground** ([koa.com/find-a-koa](http://koa.com/find-a-koa)), where your pack, troop or crew can save on camping fees. Scouts pay \$5 to camp overnight (at tent sites) and units earn a 10 percent discount on cabins.
- Plenty of **outdoor-adventure outfitters** — like [OARS.com](http://OARS.com) — offer discounts for Scouts.
- Same goes for **museums**, many of which offer Scout-specific programs or group discounts.

- Some **ski parks and resorts**, such as Ski Butternut in Massachusetts, offer discounts for Scouts. Ask the park about these savings when you purchase your passes in advance.
  - Can't muster the cash for a campsite? Try a **backyard campout**, says Josh Friedrich, a volunteer from Oceanside, Calif.
  - **Register early** for camps or excursions to get extra savings for your unit.
  - Ask your local council about **camperships or partial camperships** that might help cover the expenses of a Scout wanting to go to summer camp. These are typically needs-based scholarships, but check with your council for more details.
  - Score **high-adventure scholarships** at the BSA's four national high-adventure bases; check out the respective websites to find more details about how to apply.
  - Ask if state or national parks offer **group camping discounts**.
- 



### **SPECIAL DISCOUNTS FOR SCOUTS**

*The following stores offer varying discounts for youth and adult members of the BSA. Check with each individual location to see if these apply.*

- **Bass Pro Shops:** Get a 10 percent in-store discount when you present a BSA membership card.
- **Cabella's:** Get a 10 percent in-store discount when you present a troop checkbook.
- **Campmor:** Save 10 percent on troop orders.
- **Coleman:** Register for access to discounted products at [coleman.com/youth](http://coleman.com/youth).
- **Dick's Sporting Goods:** Get a 10 percent in-store discount when you present a BSA membership card.
- **Eastern Mountain Sports:** Call individual stores for "Club Day" dates, on which Scouts save up to 25 percent on EMS-brand merchandise and up to 20 percent on any other merchandise. Stores are located in New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, New Jersey and Maryland.
- **Hikerdirect.com:** Register to receive discounted prices on outdoor equipment.
- **Gander Mountain:** Get a 10 percent in-store discount when you present a BSA membership card.



- **Great Outdoor Provision:** Discounts for Scouts range from 10 to 25 percent off in-store purchases at locations in North Carolina and Virginia when you present a BSA membership card.
  - **L.L.Bean:** Get a troop discount for gear that will remain property of your unit by registering at [bit.ly/llbeandiscount](http://bit.ly/llbeandiscount).
  - **Moosejaw:** Save 10 percent with your BSA membership card at stores located in Illinois, Michigan, Colorado or Missouri.
- 



## TUITION SAVINGS

*Are your Scouts or Venturers heading off to college soon? Don't miss out on ways to save on tuition.*

**Eagle Scouts: Apply for scholarships** funded by the National Eagle Scout Association. Find more details at [nesa.org](http://nesa.org).

Many colleges and universities offer scholarships to **students with Scouting on their résumé**. Click on [bit.ly/scoutsscholarships](http://bit.ly/scoutsscholarships) to find a comprehensive list.

**Write about Scouting in your college application essay.** “Include a couple of your best Scout adventures, the service of your Eagle project and the leadership you showed on an outdoor adventure,” says Mary Matelich, mom of three Eagle Scouts from Great Falls, Mont. “This approach allowed our third Eagle Scout son to receive a major leadership scholarship worth thousands of dollars each year for four years, enabling him to attend his No. 1 college choice.”

---



## **BUDGETING**

“Once you plan out the Scouting year, you should **come up with a budget and a plan for raising the necessary funds**,” says Nelson Howell of Indiana’s Sagamore Council. “If the funds don’t come, you scale back your plans a bit. It’s surprising how easy it is to fundraise when you have a specific target and can show families how little they need to do to attain it.”



## GEAR SAVINGS

*Here are more ideas for saving money on gear.*

Go to [scoutstuff.org](https://scoutstuff.org) first. The buyers at the BSA's Supply Group work hard to bring Scouts quality equipment and top-of-the-line brands at Scout-friendly prices. **Plus, all purchases at local Scout shops and on [scoutstuff.org](https://scoutstuff.org) help support the future of Scouting.**

Take a look at the following **online clearance stores**:

- [SteepandCheap.com](https://steepandcheap.com)

- [TheClymb.com](http://TheClymb.com)
- [SierraTradingPost.com](http://SierraTradingPost.com)

Check **thrift stores or Army surplus stores** for discounted outdoor gear or clothing that's gently used. **Yard sales** can also turn up surprisingly good finds.

If you don't find the used equipment you're searching for at a thrift store, check out **used-gear websites**, such as:

- [GearTrade.com](http://GearTrade.com)
- [FreeCycle.org](http://FreeCycle.org)
- [Craigslist.org](http://Craigslist.org)
- [Ebay.com](http://Ebay.com)
- [GearX.com](http://GearX.com)
- [GoSwitchback.com](http://GoSwitchback.com)

Designate a member of your unit to periodically check websites like Craigslist for equipment and **send out an email to unit members with good deals**, says Cristian Navas, a Cubmaster from Nutley, N.J.

**Rent outdoor equipment** to test items before buying or to fill a gap in your equipment. Check local gear outfitters for available rentals or look at online gear-rental websites, such as:

- [LowerGear.com](http://LowerGear.com)
- [GeartoGoOutfitters.com](http://GeartoGoOutfitters.com)
- [OutdoorsGeek.com](http://OutdoorsGeek.com)
- [MountainSideGearRental.com](http://MountainSideGearRental.com)

Check with your nearest REI store to **visit the next REI Garage Sale**, open exclusively to store members.

Have your Scouts consider **making their own gear**. Things like camp dishes, shelters and clothing items can be made from materials found around the house. Check out the *Boys' Life* DIY workshops, including a guide to making your own walking stick at [go.boyslife.org/workshop](http://go.boyslife.org/workshop).

Instead of spending hard-earned cash on backpacking food, check out our guide to **DIY dehydrated meals** at [scoutingmagazine.org/dehydratedfood](http://scoutingmagazine.org/dehydratedfood).

---



### **DON'T FORGET ...**

... to **accept help** when it's offered to your unit, says Avery Moore, a Scoutmaster from Rocky Mount, N.C. Moore says a local business donated a trailer to his troop, while other businesses have offered camp scholarships to Scouts in need. All that was required of him was to present these opportunities to the right representatives when they offered help.

And before you say this isn't possible in your town because of economics, Moore says, "I live in one of the top 10 poorest cities in the nation and my troop meets three blocks from the city projects."

---

*[Editor's note: This post has been edited from its original version appearing in the November-December edition of Scouting to make a clear distinction between asking for help and accepting help when offered to your unit. [Read more](#) about these guidelines.]*