

Arrow of Light Crossover Year Guide for Packs & Troops

Overview

The Arrow of Light (AOL) year is the most critical transition point in the Scouting journey. Packs and Troops must work together to ensure Scouts and families feel supported, informed, and excited about continuing into Scouts BSA. This guide provides clear expectations, flexible strategies, and actionable steps for both Packs/Den Leaders and Troop Leaders—whether your units have a natural feeder relationship or not.

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SECTION 1: PACK & DEN LEADERS

Core Responsibilities

- Provide families with clear early communication about the transition timeline
- Coordinate Troop visits and outdoor activities
- Support families in evaluating troop options
- Maintain consistent communication with Troops and Membership Chairs

Annual Timeline for Packs

- **August–September:** Introduce the transition plan to families; share Troop visit expectations
- **October–December:** Conduct joint activities with Troops; encourage Den Chief involvement
- **January:** Ensure Scouts attend Troop meetings; finalize crossover plans
- **February:** Hold crossover ceremony; confirm youth applications
- **March–April:** Follow up with undecided families



SECTION 1: PACK & DEN LEADERS

Working with Parents When Multiple Troop Options Exist

- Provide a Troop Visit Checklist to help families compare programs
- Encourage families to attend at least two different Troop meetings
- Offer a neutral, supportive stance—avoid steering families toward a single Troop
- Share Troop program calendars, leadership contacts, and summer camp plans
- Host a Parent Troop Q&A Night with multiple Troops invited

If Your Pack Has a Natural Feeder Troop

- Maintain regular communication with the feeder Troop's leadership
- Coordinate joint campouts, skills nights, and Den Chief assignments
- Ensure families understand they may choose any Troop, not only the feeder
- Invite the feeder Troop to participate in Blue & Gold and recruitment nights

If Your Pack Does NOT Have a Feeder Troop

- Reach out to all nearby Troops early in the year
- Request Troop visit dates and program information
- Encourage Troops to attend Pack meetings and outdoor events
- Create a simple comparison sheet for families
- Ask Membership Chairs for support connecting with Troops

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SECTION 2: TROOP LEADERS

Core Responsibilities

- Provide welcoming, structured opportunities for AOL Scouts to experience the Troop
- Supply trained Den Chiefs to AOL dens when possible
- Communicate program plans, expectations, and summer camp details
- Build relationships with Packs and support their recruitment efforts

Annual Timeline for Troops

- **August–September:** Introduce Troop program to Packs; share visit dates
- **October:** Participate in joint campouts or outdoor skills days
- **November–December:** Attend den meetings; promote summer camp
- **January:** Host Troop visit night for AOL Scouts and parents
- **February:** Support crossover ceremonies
- **March–April:** Follow up with undecided families

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SECTION 2: TROOP LEADERS

Encouraging Packs to Engage When You Do NOT Have a Feeder Unit

- Proactively contact Packs in your district early in the program year
- Offer Den Chiefs, outdoor support, or skills instruction
- Attend Pack meetings, Pinewood Derby, or fall recruitment nights
- Provide a Troop Welcome Packet with program calendar, leadership bios, and expectations
- Invite AOL dens to campouts or skills nights
- Share photos and stories of troop activities to build excitement

If Your Troop Has a Natural Feeder Pack

- Maintain strong communication with Pack leadership
- Provide consistent Den Chief support
- Attend Pack events and ceremonies
- Ensure your Troop remains welcoming to Scouts from any Pack
- Offer multiple visit opportunities for AOL Scouts

Presenting Your Troop to Families

- Highlight youth leadership, outdoor program strength, and advancement support
- Share summer camp plans and financial assistance options
- Explain expectations for new Scouts and parents
- Provide a clear, friendly introduction to Troop culture

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SECTION 3: JOINT STRATEGIES FOR PACKS & TROOPS

High-Impact Activities

- Joint campouts or outdoor skills days
- Troop scouts assisting at Pack recruitment nights
- Troop visits to den meetings
- Pinewood Derby support
- Summer camp promotion nights

Communication Expectations

- Share contact lists early
- Maintain monthly check-ins between Pack and Troop leaders
- Provide families with clear timelines and expectations

Supporting Families Through the Transition

- Offer multiple Troop visit opportunities
- Provide neutral guidance when multiple Troop options exsit
- Ensure every Scout has a clear path forward

SECTION 4: CROSSOVER CEREMONY ESSENTIALS

- Coordinate between Pack and Troop leaders
- Prepare neckerchiefs, loops, and handbooks
- Ensure youth applications are completed
- Assign new Scouts to patrols

SECTION 5: KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Early communication prevents confusion
- Joint activities build confidence and excitement
- Packs must support families in exploring troop options
- Troops must actively engage Packs—especially without feeder units
- Every Scout deserves a smooth, welcoming transition

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APPENDIX: SAMPLE JOINT ACTIVITY CALENDAR (AUGUST–FEBRUARY)

AUGUST – Early Engagement & Planning

- Troop provides Den Chief assignments to Packs.
- Pack & Troop leaders meet to align expectations for the AOL year.
- Troop shares annual program calendar with Packs.
- Joint "Welcome Back" outdoor skills day (fire building, knots, games).

SEPTEMBER – Recruitment & Relationship Building

- Troop Scouts assist at Pack fall recruitment night.
- Webelos/AOL den begins meeting with Den Chief support.
- Joint hike or conservation project.
- Troop invites AOL families to September Court of Honor.

OCTOBER – Outdoor Skills & First Troop Visit

- Joint fall campout or outdoor skills day.
- Troop teaches knife safety, fire building, first aid, or map/compass.
- AOL Scouts attend one troop meeting.
- Troop provides "New Scout FAQ" to families.

NOVEMBER – Advancement & Program Exposure

- Troop attends a Webelos/AOL den meeting to teach a skill.
- Joint service project (food drive, park cleanup).
- Troop invites AOL families to a November troop meeting.
- Packs share troop comparison sheets with families.

DECEMBER – Relationship Strengthening

- Troop supports Pack holiday event.
- AOL Scouts attend a second troop meeting.
- Troop shares summer camp plans and financial assistance info.
- Joint winter-themed activity (STEM night, indoor skills workshop).

JANUARY – Decision-Making & Preparation

- Troop hosts formal AOL Visit Night with parents included.
- AOL Scouts attend a troop outdoor activity (weather permitting).
- Packs follow up with undecided families.
- Troop assigns "New Scout Buddies" for incoming crossover Scouts.

FEBRUARY – Crossover & Integration

- Troop participates in Pack Blue & Gold.
- Crossover ceremony coordination between Pack & Troop.
- Troop welcomes new Scouts into patrolls.
- Troop provides onboarding materials (handbook, calendar, expectations).



APPENDIX: DEN CHIEF EXPECTATIONS

ROLE OF THE DEN CHIEF

- Serve as a positive role model for younger Scouts
- Help the den leader deliver fun, safe, age-appropriate activities
- Encourage AOL Scouts as they prepare for the transition to a Troop
- Support teamwork, participation, and advancement

BEFORE THE PROGRAM YEAR

- Confirm the Den Chief assignment with Pack and Troop leaders
- Review the annual Pack and Troop calendars
- Attend orientation and complete any required training
- Coordinate expectations with the den leader

DURING DEN MEETINGS

- Arrive prepared and in uniform when appropriate
- Lead games, skills instruction, and outdoor activities
- Demonstrate Scout skills accurately and safely
- Invite questions and encourage every Scout to participate

TRANSITION SUPPORT

- Explain Troop life, patrols, campouts, and summer camp
- Invite AOL Scouts to Troop meetings and activities
- Help families understand next steps without pressuring them
- Celebrate each Scout's progress toward crossover

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APPENDIX: TROOP VISIT CHECKLIST

BEFORE YOUR TROOP VISIT

- [ ] Review your program goals for AOL Scouts.
- [ ] Confirm your troop visit dates and times.
- [ ] Coordinate with your Den Chief or troop representative.
- [ ] Prepare a welcome plan for AOL Scouts and families.
- [ ] Communicate the plan to Pack leadership.

TROOP QUESTIONS TO ASK

- [ ] What activities are you involved in?
- [ ] What leadership opportunities are available?
- [ ] How often does the troop meet?
- [ ] What summer camps do you attend?
- [ ] How can we stay connected?

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE TRANSITION

- [ ] Troop Visits — Explore at Least 2 Troops
- [ ] Joint Activities — Attend Campouts & Hikes
- [ ] Crossover Ceremony — Celebrate the Move Up
- [ ] Summer Camp — Plan for Adventure
- [ ] Youth Independence — Scouts Lead the Way

DURING THE TROOP VISIT

- [ ] Welcome AOL Scouts and families warmly.
- [ ] Conduct a fun, engaging activity.
- [ ] Share leadership opportunities in the troop.
- [ ] Highlight upcoming events and camps.
- [ ] Answer questions from AOL Scouts and families.

AFTER THE TROOP VISIT

- [ ] Follow up with AOL Scouts and families.
- [ ] Share information about the next step.
- [ ] Invite AOL Scouts to upcoming troop events.
- [ ] Provide new Scout registration information.
- [ ] Thank your Den Chief and troop representatives.

HOW TROOPS DIFFER

- [ ] Youth Leadership — Are Scouts Leading?
- [ ] Outdoor Program — How Often Does the Troop Camp?
- [ ] Troop Culture — Is It Welcoming?
- [ ] Communication — Is Information Clear and Consistent?
- [ ] Expectations — What Is Required of Scouts and Families?

CLOSING MESSAGE

Your thoughtful preparation and warm welcome help AOL Scouts feel excited about joining Scouts BSA. Together, we're building a strong future where every Scout can grow, lead, and make a difference.

Thank you for your commitment to Scouting!

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