

# Order of the Arrow

## Purpose

The purpose of the Order of the Arrow is fourfold:

1. To recognize those Scout campers who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives
2. To develop and maintain camping traditions and spirit
3. To promote Scout camping
4. To crystallize the Scout habit of helpfulness into a life purpose of leadership in cheerful service to others



## History

The Order of the Arrow (OA) was founded by Dr. E. Urner Goodman and Carroll A. Edson in 1915 at the Treasure Island Camp of the Philadelphia Council, Boy Scouts of America. It became an official program experiment in 1922 and was approved as part of the Scouting program in 1934. In 1948, the OA was recognized as the BSA's national brotherhood of honor campers and became an official part of the national camping program of the Boy Scouts of America. Today, the OA is recognized as Scouting's National Honor Society.

## Membership

The OA has more than 183,000 members in lodges affiliated with more than 300 BSA local councils.

## Eligibility

To become a member, a youth must be a registered member of a Boy Scout troop or Varsity Scout team and hold First Class rank. The youth must have experienced 15 days and nights of camping during the two years before his election. The 15 days and nights must include one, but no more than one, long-term camp consisting of six consecutive days and five nights of resident camping, approved and under the auspices and standards of the Boy Scouts of America. The balance of the camping must be overnight, weekend, or other short-term camps. Scouts are elected to the Order by their fellow troop or Varsity team members, following approval by the Scoutmaster or Varsity Scout Coach.

## Induction

The Ordeal induction ceremony is often conducted at Scout camp and is the first step toward full membership. During the experience, candidates maintain complete silence, receive small amounts of food, work on camp improvement projects, and are required to sleep alone, apart from other campers, which teaches significant values.

## Brotherhood Membership

After 10 months of service and fulfilling certain requirements, a member may take part in the Brotherhood ceremony, which places further emphasis on the ideals of Scouting and the Order. Completion of this ceremony signifies full membership in the OA.

## Vigil Honor

After two years of service as a Brotherhood member and with the approval of the national Order of the Arrow Committee, a Scout or Scouter may be recognized with the Vigil Honor for outstanding service to Scouting, his lodge, and the community. This honor is bestowed by special selection and is limited to one person for every 50 members registered with the lodge each year.

## Lodges

Each Order of the Arrow lodge is granted a charter from the National Council, BSA, upon annual application by the local council. The OA lodge helps the local council provide a quality Scouting program through recognition of Scouting spirit and performance, development of youth leadership and service, promotion of Scout camping and outdoor programs, and enhancement of membership tenure.

## Sections

An Order of the Arrow section consists of lodges within a geographic area of the region. Once every year, representatives of lodges in the section come together for a conclave to share in fellowship and training. All of the elected section chiefs form the conference committee for the annual Order of the Arrow program of emphasis, which is held under the guidance of the national OA Committee. The committee meets each year at the national OA planning meeting in December.

## Regions

The region chief is the youth leader of the region and elected by the section chiefs in his region for a term of office specified by the national Order of the Arrow Committee, which coincides with the terms of the national chief and vice chief. This election is held in conjunction with the national OA planning meeting where the annual OA program of emphasis is planned. The region chiefs serve as voting members of the national Order of the Arrow Committee, representing youth on national OA policy and programs.

The Order of the Arrow region chairman is an adult appointed by the regional director. The professional adviser for the region is a staff member assigned to the position by the region director.

## National Chief and Vice Chief

The national chief and vice chief are Arrowmen selected by the section chiefs at the national OA planning meeting each December. They serve as voting members of the national Order of the Arrow Committee, representing the youth on national OA policy and program. They also serve as the presiding officers for the annual OA program of emphasis. The national committee specifies their term of office. The national committee chairman and director of the Order of the Arrow advise them of their responsibilities.

## National OA Committee Chairman

The national OA committee chairman is appointed by the chairman of the national Boy Scout Committee. The professional adviser is the director of the Order of the Arrow, a member of the national Boy Scout Division staff.

More information may be found on the Order of the Arrow Web site, [www.oa-bsa.org](http://www.oa-bsa.org), or in the *Order of the Arrow Guide for Officers and Advisers*, No. 34997A

---

[Fact Sheets](#)

---

The Boy Scouts of America



<http://www.scouting.org>