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THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SCOUTING



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SCOUTING DEVELOPMENT



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Scouting Development
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THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SCOUTING

This document is an update of the original document produced in 1998, which was titled "The Essential Characteristics of Scouting." It aims to provide a compact but comprehensive overview of the key elements that characterise our Movement, ensuring that Scouting remains relevant by aligning the educational proposal with societal changes.

This review takes into account the work undertaken since 1998 throughout the World Organization of the Scout Movement, particularly the policies, documents, and constitutional changes adopted by World Scout Conferences, the conclusions of World Scout Education Congresses, and the most recent commentaries on education such as the last UNESCO report - Rethinking Education (2015), the Incheon Declaration: Education 2030 (UNESCO and UN System, 2015), the principles on how people learn from The Nature of Learning (OECD, 2010), and the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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INTRODUCTION

“When the young citizens, male and female, in all countries are brought up to look upon their neighbours as brothers and sisters in the human family allied together with the common aim of service and sympathetic helpfulness towards each other, they will no longer think as heretofore in terms of war as against rivals, but in terms of peace and goodwill towards one another.”

*Robert Baden-Powell, 1922:
Education in Love in Place of Fear*



THE IDEAS ON WHICH SCOUTING IS GROUNDED

Since its inception, Scouting has been grounded in the ideals of the equal dignity of all human beings, the intrinsic and unique value of every girl and boy, and their potential to create new answers to the challenges of living together in harmony among their fellow humans and with nature.

These are ideas that have been shared by many civilizations. The Zulu greeting “Sawubona” literally means “I see you” as recognition of the other person. These ideals embody a commitment to inclusivity that have also been expressed within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959).

Scouting’s vision of mutual respect and openness, its optimism for the future, and its confidence in young people, along with the belief that young people and adults can learn with and from each other, are also embedded within those action-oriented, transformative approaches to education.

Scouting’s educational approach aims to equip young people with the competencies they need to build fulfilled lives and to work towards sustainable development. All these contribute to a shared identity and educational approach that form those essential characteristics of Scouting that bind us together as a Movement.



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SCOUTING'S EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

Contributing to the education of young people...

THE PURPOSE OF THE SCOUT MOVEMENT

The purpose of the Scout Movement is to contribute to the development of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible citizens, and as members of their local, national, and international communities.

Constitution of the World Organization of the Scout Movement



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EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS AND CITIZENS

For Scouting, the two dimensions – growing as an individual and as a citizen – cannot be dissociated, since education cannot be complete without a search for the full development of a person's own potential; and that there can be no education without learning to live freely and responsibly with others and with nature as a member of one's local, national, and global communities.

Scouting, as an educational movement, believes that every new generation of young people has the potential to bring new answers to the challenges of inspiring each life journey with a purpose and a sense of equal freedom and dignity, living together in harmony with others and

with nature, and helping to create a better world. Scouting also believes that the goal of education is to activate potential, develop self-fulfilled individuals, and cultivate active global citizens.

In order to achieve Scouting's purpose and help young people become active citizens, every individual involved in the Movement has the responsibility of ensuring the wellbeing, healthy development, and safety of children and young people by providing a safe environment.



EDUCATION TODAY

NEW GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Unprecedented levels of change, complexity, and contradiction characterise many of the challenges the world is facing today:

- How to make all development sustainable
- How to fight vulnerability, inequality, exclusion, violence, and cultural and religious intolerance, which are increasing despite economic growth
- How to end gender inequality and violence against women and girls
- How to face climate change, environmental degradation, and an upsurge in natural disasters created by unsustainable patterns of economic production and consumption
- How to properly implement and protect human and civil rights for everybody everywhere
- How to prevent or resolve conflict, physical or emotional abuse, and structural or systematic violence
- How to respond to the social and economic consequences of digital transformation in a time of exponentially advancing technologies

THE SDGS, A BASIC COMMON GLOBAL FRAMEWORK

The Sustainable Development Goals (2015), raise awareness and propose answers to these challenges.

Education is fundamental to achieve them¹, requiring, as UNESCO says, “an open and flexible approach to learning that is both lifelong and lifewide: an approach that provides the opportunity for all to realise their potential for a sustainable future and a life of dignity”².

Scouting considers education to be the way society makes it possible for the experience and knowledge of previous generations to empower young people through their learning to respond to today’s challenges.

In its broadest sense, education is a lifelong process that enables continuous development of a person’s capacities, both as an individual and a member of society.

¹ [Education for the Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives. UNESCO, 2017.](#)

² [Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good? UNESCO, 2015.](#)



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THE FOUR PILLARS OF LEARNING

Learning is a continuous, lifelong process of holistic development, supported in equal measure by each of the four pillars of learning defined within UNESCO's Delors report³:

- **Learning to be:** to develop one's personality and to be able to act with growing autonomy, judgment, and personal responsibility
- **Learning to know:** a broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on a small number of issues as well as learning how to learn
- **Learning to do:** to acquire not only occupational skills but also the competence to deal with many situations and to work in teams
- **Learning to live together:** by developing an understanding of other people, an appreciation of interdependence, and an adherence to the values of democracy, mutual respect, peace, and justice

Today's societies demand much more of education than traditional learning. They expect education to foster creativity and knowledge, high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social competencies, and also develop the competencies that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions based on critical thinking, and respond to local and global challenges⁴. That is why education goes far beyond formal education, in both its scope and duration.

Since Scouting began, each succeeding generation has striven to identify and respond to the challenges of society and the world through education. When Baden-Powell founded the Boy Scouts International Bureau in 1920 (which was renamed World Organization of the Scout Movement in 1961), he aligned it with the universal values of the League of Nations, which were later taken up and developed as the founding values of the United Nations, and which today form the values of global citizenship.

Scouting's contributions to peace and human rights, to global solidarity and development, to the environment and its sustainability, and to interreligious and intercultural dialogue, have always been educational tools to promote understanding, respect, and coexistence of the vast diversity the Movement represents. The World Scout Jamboree, a regular gathering of thousands of young people from all cultures as well as the countless international camps and interchanges of Scouts all over the world that happen every year, have since contributed to this objective.

³ [Learning: The Treasure Within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. UNESCO, 1996.](#)

⁴ [Incheon Declaration "Education 2030". World Education Forum. UNESCO, 2015.](#)

HOW, WHY, AND WHERE EDUCATION HAPPENS

HOW PEOPLE LEARN

For education to respond to today's challenges, strong conceptual frameworks and empirical evidence about how people learn are required. The following seven principles summarise existing knowledge of how people learn, in any context⁵:

1. Learners should be at the centre of the learning process.
2. Learning is a process of social nature, i.e. mostly cooperative.
3. Emotions and motivation are an integral part of learning.
4. Learning must take individual differences into account.
5. Challenge and effort are key in learning – not overload.
6. Formative feedback and clarity of expectations favour learning.
7. Learning is favoured when creating horizontal connections across areas of knowledge and to the community and the wider world.

WHY PEOPLE LEARN

We live in a world characterised by change, complexity, and paradox. The 2015 UNESCO Report notes the emergence of a new global context for learning with deep implications for education. It proposes the requirement that we revisit the purpose of education – why and what to learn – and the organisation of learning – how we learn and where from.

WHERE PEOPLE LEARN

Learning happens in different settings and UNESCO (ISCED 2011) has traditionally defined three main ones:

- **Formal education:** Education that is institutionalised, intentional, planned through public organisations and recognised private bodies and – in their totality – constitute the formal education system of a country (e.g. school system and universities).
- **Non-formal education:** Education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned by an education provider, that is an addition, alternative and/ or complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals (e.g. Scouting, youth work, lifelong learning initiatives).
- **Informal education:** Forms of learning that are intentional or deliberate but are not institutionalised. It may include learning activities that occur in the family, workplace, local community and daily life, on a self-directed, family-directed, or socially-directed basis (e.g. family and community).

⁵ [The Nature of Learning: Using research to inspire practice. OECD, 2010.](#)



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BLURRING BOUNDARIES OF EDUCATION TYPES

However, this clear separation of settings is blurring, because “there is a move from traditional educational institutions towards mixed, diverse, and complex learning landscapes in which formal, non-formal, and informal learning occur through a variety of educational institutions.”⁶ This evolution can lead to new, interesting, and productive partnerships between formal and non-formal education.

Despite this, in most countries the school model (formal education) continues to associate learning primarily with classroom teaching, even if much learning – even in a traditional educational setting – takes place elsewhere. Classroom-centred learning is now being challenged by the expanding access to knowledge of the information age, and by the emergence of learning spaces beyond the classroom as well as learner-centred approaches adopted by many schools today.

Scouting’s very purpose demands that it should keep exploring new ways to contribute to the full development of young people, rather than hold on to practices that have become outdated or claim exclusivity of those that have been successfully adopted within other education settings.

⁶ [Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good? UNESCO 2015.](#)



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The educational approach which makes Scouting so popular and relevant to young people will continue to be tested as mainstream education use more of the non-formal methods. Scouting's success in this area is because learning occurs through fun activities, often games, selected usually by the young people and done in small teams with peers. Through the effective use of developmental age groupings (sections), young people take responsibility and ownership and are empowered to investigate and take action on issues important to them. Through reflection of these meaningful experiences, they continue to be active learners, gaining confidence to address bigger challenges. This ethos motivates adult leaders to support the young people as they progress through their personal journey and ensure all enjoy and learn from our game of Scouting.

Through a system of progressive self-education...

THE YOUTH PROGRAMME

YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE

Scouting contributes to the empowerment of autonomous individuals and to their holistic development as active global citizens. Scouting does so through its Youth Programme: through learning opportunities from which young people can benefit, cocreated with them to achieve the purpose of the Movement, and experienced through the Scout Method. These experiences have young people at its centre, and adults, through dialogue and cooperation, helping them in their learning journey. In that journey, adults also grow through the experience and this enriches the adult-young people dialogue.

Through its programme, Scouting enables young people to empower, motivate, and protect themselves, strengthening their resilience to face the increased complexity, rapid change and uncertainty, and the ambiguity in today's society. Scouting does this by building a positive framework of dialogue and partnership around them.

It also enables young people to be actively engaged in their communities and in decision-making processes in the structures they belong to since early ages. Additionally, educating Scouts to have respect for themselves and others and to be aware of any kind of harm that might result from activities, attitudes, or exchanges among them, helping to develop a safe environment for young people and adults⁷.

Scouting provides a lifelong learning process and all young people should have the opportunity to join the Scout Movement. Nonetheless, National Scout Organizations need to consider their educational provision carefully, taking into account the characteristics of the society in which they operate and the changes taking place in that society which affect young people.

COEDUCATION: FOSTERING MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN GENDERS

Scouting is committed to the fulfilment of its educational purpose, to contribute to the education of all young people, regardless of gender, as equals, and on the basis of the needs and aspirations of each individual as well as to the two principles of equal opportunities and equal partnership between genders, both within Scouting and in society as a whole.

Scouting adopts coeducation as an approach which aims to develop both genders equally, bearing in mind the individuality of each person and the characteristics of the society they live in. It addresses the educational needs of boys and girls, young men and young women, and adapts the programme accordingly to the various age sections. A coeducational approach does not imply that young people of different genders have to take part in all activities together.

Coeducation is an approach which helps foster mutual respect and understanding between genders and prepares young people for integrating in society today. Having lived in a mixed environment with Scout values at the core of their programme, young people become role models in society and lead the way in establishing respect and constructive exchanges among people of different genders, race, age, religion, identity, capabilities, experience, or background.

In societies where separate gender relationships are the norm, nothing prevents a National Scout Organization from providing Scouting to both genders in single sex settings.

⁷ Refer to the [World Safe from Harm Policy](#), WOSM 2017.

PROGRESSIVE SELF-EDUCATION

Scouting uses and is a learner-centred approach, based on the concept of self-education. This implies that each youth member is considered to be a unique individual who, from the outset, has the potential to develop in all dimensions and to take responsibility for his or her own development from an early age: this means learning how to learn, being equipped for lifelong learning. Implicit in self-education is that it is based on the concept of “education from within,” as opposed to “instruction from without.”

That self-education is also progressive. The Scout Method, while retaining the same basic elements, adapts them to the different stages of young people’s development from childhood to the end of adolescence and early adulthood. It takes into account the characteristics of each age group to stimulate the discovery and development of new capacities and interests and to open doors to further stages, taking into account each individual’s own pace.



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A SYSTEM: THE SCOUT METHOD

The educational approach to Scouting is implemented through the Scout Method, an original educational system that fosters self-education, empowerment, and cooperative learning. As with any educational method, the Scout Method is the vehicle that brings young people closer to the learnings they are expected to acquire.

The application of the Scout Method results in an experience for young people that is educational, fun, enjoyable, and where young people are safe – physically and emotionally. It aims to be flexible and relevant to the changing needs of young people and society.

EIGHT INTERACTING ELEMENTS

The Scout Method comprises eight interdependent elements forming a unified and integrated whole. These equally important elements working together as a cohesive system and their implementation, in a combined and balanced manner, adapted to each age range, is what makes Scouting unique.



Each of the eight elements has an educational function, contributing to the educational process in a specific way and complementing the impact of the others.

The key elements of the Scout Method cannot be considered in isolation. They interact with each other to create a dynamic educational environment formed by:

- the attitude of welcoming: dialogue and support of adult leaders
- the values of Scout Law that determine how to assess and enrich common life
- the challenge of personal goals
- the individual commitment generated by the Scout Promise
- the framework of teams and councils that allows democratic decision-making processes and promotes youth empowerment
- the sense of purpose and belonging provided by the symbolic framework
- the attractiveness of activities in the privileged setting of nature
- and through the joy to serve others that allows young people to find a role in the community

THE SCOUT PROMISE AND LAW

A VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT TO A SET OF SHARED VALUES

The Scout Promise is a personal voluntary commitment to the Scout Law, a set of shared inclusive values, which is the foundation of everything a Scout does, and how a Scout wants to be. The Scout Promise and Law are central to the Scout Method.

Through the Scout Promise, each Scout makes a conscious and voluntary decision to adopt the Scout Law committing themselves to “do their best”; to use it as code of individual and social behaviour; and by that to assume the responsibility of their own personal development. Making the Scout Promise is the first symbolic step in the process of self-education. The Scout Law is a positive code of living through which Scouting proposes its universal values to young people, in a concrete and practical way. The values contained in the Scout Law and adopted through the Scout Promise shape young people in their behaviour and group life.

Throughout their Scouting journey, a young person’s understanding of the Scout Promise and Law will evolve and come to mean more to them. This learning journey is a central part of the intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual development experienced through Scouting, while emphasising the key principles of Scouting.

LEARNING BY DOING

AN EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION

Scouting uses practical actions (real life experiences) and reflection(s) to facilitate ongoing learning and development.

Learning by doing shows Scouting’s practical approach to education, as a result of first-hand experience as opposed to just theoretical instruction, based on learning through the opportunities for experiences that arise while pursuing interests and dealing with everyday life.

In Scouting, the acquisition of new competencies – knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values – is achieved through the practice of various activities, fun and relevant, that lead young people to act, make mistakes, reflect, and discover, allowing them to develop in all dimensions of their personality through extracting what is personally significant from everything that they experience.



PERSONAL PROGRESSION

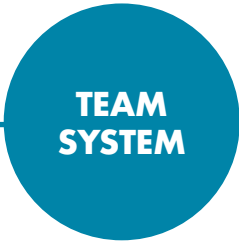


MOTIVATING AND CHALLENGING TO CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT

Scouting is a progressive learning journey focused on motivating and challenging an individual continually to develop, through a wide variety of learning opportunities.

This approach enables young people to progress in their own development, in their own way, and at their own pace, towards the educational objectives appropriate to their age section, using a progressive recognition system that helps them to gain confidence and to grow. This personal progression is autonomous, facilitated by adults, who empower, encourage, and support young people appropriately to set their own challenges, exercise freedom of choice, and engage in self-reflection.

This is also relevant outside Scouting, since it helps them to set life goals and to learn to become an active citizen, offering each young person the opportunity to identify their personal needs and the resources needed to improve their own competencies according to their own circumstances and abilities.



TEAM SYSTEM



A TOOL FOR EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

Scouting makes use of small teams such as patrols as a way for people to participate in collaborative learning and decision-making, with the aim of developing effective team work, interpersonal skills, leadership, and building a sense of responsibility and belonging.

This approach facilitates and enriches group life and can be an effective tool for empowering young people, enabling them to develop their personal and collective capacities through pooling and building on their individual skills, talents, and experience, and through the development of a mutually supportive team spirit where problems are solved collectively.

The basic organisational structure, often used in local units, comprises small teams of normally six to eight young people, based on their natural tendency to form small groups. This system is also applicable to all sorts of small grouping for cooperative decision-making purposes (e.g. unit council, district committees, event organising teams, project executive teams, etc.). It also provides Scouts with opportunities for leadership and to appreciate diversity, helping them to develop constructive relationships with other young people and partnerships with adults, while learning to live according to a democratic form of self-government.

ADULT SUPPORT

YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP

Scouting relies on adults, who facilitate and support young people to create learning opportunities through a culture of partnership, to turn these opportunities into meaningful experiences.

Scouting offers the potential for a partnership of enthusiasm and experience between young people and adults, based on mutual respect, trust and acceptance of each other as persons. The adult provides educational, emotional, informational, and appraisal support to young people in their own development.

Educational support involves the provision of tangible aid and services that directly assist the self-educational development of young people. **Emotional support** is associated with sharing life experiences. It involves the provision of empathy, devotion, trust, and caring. **Informational support** involves the provision of advice, suggestions, and information that young people can use to address problems. **Appraisal support** involves the provision of information useful for self-evaluation that includes constructive feedback, affirmation of the personality, and compliance with organisational values.

The nature of the partnership between young people and adults in Scouting varies in accordance with the age and capabilities of the young people involved. Wherever possible, young people should be empowered to make decisions and contribute to the leadership process, and be allowed to make mistakes, in a safe environment. In general, adults are there to assist young people to prepare as well as to support, guide, mentor, and facilitate learning experiences. In essence, the role of the adult in Scouting is to reinforce the youth-led, adult-supported nature of the programme.

SYMBOLIC FRAMEWORK

A SET OF SYMBOLS, THEMES, AND STORIES

Scouting makes use of a unifying structure of themes and symbols to facilitate learning and the development of a unique identity as a Scout.

In Scouting, a symbolic framework is a set of symbols, themes, and stories which develops a sense of belonging, helps convey a certain educational message, and stimulates cohesion and solidarity within the group and the global Movement. It helps them to identify with the purpose and the values of Scouting, expressed through various elements and themes.

It also represents Scouting's educational proposal for a particular age range, according to their level of maturity and specific educational needs, which helps to recognise personal progression within the Youth Programme. The purpose of the symbolic framework is to build on young people's capacity for imagination, adventure, creativity, and inventiveness in a way which stimulates their development.



NATURE

AN IDEAL
SETTING
PROVIDING A
NUMBER OF
LEARNING
OPPORTUNITIES

Scouting creates learning opportunities in the outdoors which encourage a better understanding of the relationship with the wider environment.

The natural environment provides an ideal setting for Scout activities, offering adventure and learning opportunities for the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual development of young people. Activities may focus on various themes, from classic outdoor activities like hiking or camping, to projects related to environmental sustainability or education, and even where the natural world is limited in the environment, there can still be activities "out of doors."

These experiences also allow them to be in direct contact with the natural world in urban, rural, and wild environments, which enables them to discover the vital relationship that unites human beings and the natural world and to develop a constructive connection with nature.

However, the use of nature, as an element of the Scout Method, involves more than just activities carried out in the great outdoors to develop a constructive contact with nature, making full use of all the unique learning opportunities provided by the natural world in order to contribute to the development of young people. It involves an educational value of the challenge of being in nature which encourages young people to be inventive and grow up. It also involves the sustainability approach that provides a better connection, respects, and encourages individual sustainable behaviours.

Although referring to the forest, Baden-Powell's view of nature as an educational tool can be summarised as follows: "For those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, the forest is at once a laboratory, a club, and a temple."⁸



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

EMPOWERING
YOUNG
PEOPLE TO BE
ACTIVE GLOBAL
CITIZENS

Scouting provides opportunities for active exploration and commitment to communities and the wider world, fostering greater appreciation and understanding between people.

Working with and within their communities (at local, national, and global levels) enables young people to increase their commitment to their community at all levels, their intercultural understanding, and their international solidarity. It is an essential element in a young person's development process and it links every learning opportunity to how it could serve the community. Service is not just to be seen as doing things for others, but through involvement, which entails doing things with others, no matter their background.

Community involvement includes helping Scouts to create a better world, a journey which they cannot take on their own while leaving the community behind. Through youth engagement, it empowers young people to commit to be active global citizens, from their immediate context, and to take personal responsibility to understand their role in their communities and how they can contribute to transforming them for the better. It emphasises on the idea of citizenship from an early age as we do not need to wait to be an adult to be a citizen.

This element of the Scout Method is also raising the educational value of the community itself as an educational environment. An African proverb says: "It takes a whole village to raise a child." In Scouting, we value the role of the community at local, national, regional, and world levels, and hence it is essential part of its method.

⁸ "Rovering to Success", R. Baden-Powell, Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 8th printing, London, 1930.



AGE RANGES

ADAPTING THE PROGRAMME TO THE DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

Unlike traditional schooling, which separates children based on the same age, Scouting, in recognition that children do not all learn in the same way and at the same time, adapts its programme to a number of age groups corresponding to different stages of a young person's development: childhood, puberty, adolescence, youth.

Within each age group, Scouting does not seek to form homogeneous groups, but on the contrary, to play on differences. The age difference between the youngest and

oldest is limited in order to bring together young people of the same developmental stage and with similar characteristics in terms of interests and maturity. This makes it possible to form peer groups.

At the same time, the age difference is enough to have young people with varying levels of experience and competence. This allows for the operation of a peer-to-peer tutoring system, a key element for a cooperative learning environment.

Based upon an inclusive
value system...

THE SCOUT PROMISE AND LAW AND THEIR PRINCIPLES

SUMMARISING THE UNIVERSAL VALUES

Scouting draws from its founder's desire to improve society and the lives of all its members, a goal he believed could only be achieved by improving individuals in society.

Within Scouting, the "improvement of the individual," i.e. the educational process, is achieved through a system of progressive self-education, embodied within the Scout Method. One of the fundamental components of the Scout Method is the Scout Promise and Law, which is a voluntary personal commitment (the Scout Promise) to do one's best to adhere to an ethical code of behaviour (the Scout Law).

The Scout Promise and Law summarise, in simple terms, these universal values that recognise the equal and unique value of all human beings and of their inner life, and the goal for them to live in harmony with each other and with nature. These values constitute the essential ethical framework within which Scouting functions, and without which the Movement would no longer be Scouting. Consequently, one of the essential characteristics of Scouting is that, since its inception, it has been based upon a value system, an interrelated set of ethical rules.

For the Movement as a whole, the values are expressed in the principles of the Movement. The principles are the fundamental beliefs which represent an ideal, a vision of society, and a code of conduct for all its members. The principles of Scouting, or values it stands for, are summarised in three categories:

- the relationship to the spiritual life
- the relationship to others, to the world, and to Nature
- the relationship to oneself,

Also expressed in the Constitution as "Duty to God; duty to others; and duty to self"



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RELATED TO THE IDEA OF SERVICE AND LOVE

Building on Baden-Powell's message that "the real way to get happiness is by giving happiness to other people," Scouting links the three principles within the belief that individual happiness and meaning comes from a commitment to human dignity, based on love, and to service that improves society through living together in harmony with each other and with nature⁹.

Because Scouting is an educational movement that embraces multiple cultural and religious identities, it also creates dialogue as well as personal and collective growth through supporting young people in their search for life's answers, and the process of discovering purpose, meaning, and inner strength. The Movement's principles, therefore, must not be used to discriminate against people. On the contrary, they should ground the positive set of values of the Scout Law on which to base the Movement's educational approach.

This approach matches "the fundamental purpose of education in the 21st century" as expressed by UNESCO, which is based on "sustaining and enhancing the dignity, capacity, and welfare of the human person in relation to others, and to nature," and includes "the respect for life and human dignity, equal rights and social justice, cultural and social diversity, and a sense of human solidarity and shared responsibility for our common future"¹⁰. This is the context in which each National Scout Organization proposes to its members its own specific wording of the Scout Law and Promise, including alternatives where appropriate, reflecting these main values of Scouting adapted to its own culture.

SCOUTING REJECTS INDOCTRINATION

The values have a particularly important function in Scouting's education and experience. Scouting rejects indoctrination, instead developing in young people the capacity to think critically, to learn by inquiry, to verify facts, and to reflect on their actions.

⁹ «In the Promise I purposely put the "Duty to God" as a concrete form of active work that a boy can understand. An attitude of mind like "loving God" is not comprehensible to the average small boy, whereas he can understand that doing his good turn is a form of service to God». (Robert Baden-Powell, 1920).

¹⁰ [Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good?](#) UNESCO, 2015.





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SCOUTING'S DEFINING ELEMENTS



A Movement...

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A GLOBAL MOVEMENT ROOTED IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Scouts around the world recognise themselves as members of a movement. Scouting is a movement because it is authenticated by a large group of individuals who share the same values and are actively willing to achieve a common purpose. This is evidenced through it being deeply rooted in the local community, where it is adapted to each reality. The strength behind the purpose of Scouting is that it is acceptable to all where the Movement's members are committed to achieve it, no matter their gender, origin, race, or creed.

As a movement, Scouting can be characterised by the following:

FLEXIBLE TO REACH ITS PURPOSE

A movement must be dynamic and it cannot be static. A movement, by definition and nature, implies evolution to reach its purpose. As a movement, Scouting evolves over time to achieve its purpose in order to meet the needs of young people in a specific time and place. It must always be able to change its approach at all levels, to adapt, to be flexible in the manner in which it works to reach its purpose, since Scouting does not live in a vacuum but in a constantly and rapidly changing society.

This duality – the need to achieve the purpose, and at the same time, to be flexible and dynamic in its ways of working – is an essential characteristic of Scouting. Diverting from achieving Scouting's purpose would lead to a loss of the movement's identity and, therefore, to a chaos, whereas a rigid and inflexible approach to reaching the purpose could equally harm the Movement.

UNITY THROUGH A COMMON SET OF VALUES

A movement requires unity. This unity results from the sharing of a common purpose, through a common set of values and a common educational method which together create a sense of belonging among its members and which makes their identification with the Movement possible.

Unity does not mean uniformity and it does not stop diversity among its members. However, unity does require that all members of the Movement adhere to the fundamental elements which it has defined as being the basis for its existence. In the case of Scouting, these fundamentals are the purpose, the principles, and the method of Scouting. It is the duty of all members to ensure that these fundamentals are respected through the structures and the process at all levels to maintain the unity of the Movement.



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AN ORGANISATION SHOULD NOT BE A GOAL IN ITSELF

The Movement is supported by an organisation. To ensure the dynamism of the Movement and keep its members united across borders, a movement implies a need of some type of a structure or organisation. It is important to bear in mind that having an organisation or structure is by no means, a goal in itself.

The World Organization of the Scout Movement, all National Scout Organisations, and all structures in between and beyond were created with exactly the same idea – to be dynamic in achieving the purpose of Scouting and to keep the unity of the Movement. It is the same goal of all the structures at all levels. The leadership of these structures should be at the service of the grassroots level, the Scouts.

Baden-Powell wrote of the importance of taking care of the Movement and of watching out not to end up with “just an organisation.” He was criticising not the principle of an organisation, but that of “just an organisation,” i.e. a structure that exists only for itself and not to serve the Movement and its purpose.

It is precisely these factors which have enabled Scouting to grow steadily into a unique worldwide movement – the world’s largest voluntary educational youth movement.



For young people...

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A MOVEMENT OF AND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY ADULTS

Scouting, as a youth movement, addresses its educational proposal to young people. It accompanies young people in their transition from childhood to adulthood, helping them to develop the competences, behaviours, values, and attitudes needed for active citizenship in a safe environment.

It is a Movement of and for young people, supported by adults; it is not a Movement for young people managed by adults on their behalf. Scouting offers the potential for a learning community of young people and adults, working together in a partnership of enthusiasm and experience.

Scouting exists for all young people, regardless of race, gender, age, religion, identity, capabilities, experience, or background, to contribute to their empowerment, and that is why it is also a movement of young people. The more young people are involved in shaping their Scouting experiences, the more they will get out of it, and the more likely they are to stay, do well and achieve their potential.

While there are broad trends concerning the age range of the young people to whom Scouting's educational proposal is offered, there are no absolute rules governing this subject. Each National Scout Organization determines the age range applicable within it. However, as a movement for young people, it would be inappropriate to apply the Youth Programme beyond the years of adolescence and early adulthood, which in most societies is often viewed as the early to mid-20s.

At the other end of the age range, the Scout Method can be used with young children that are at a developmentally appropriate level. There needs to be an understanding of the concept of making a personal commitment to a code of conduct through an appropriately worded Scout Promise and accompanying Scout Law as well as the ability to exercise leadership within a small group.



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PARTICULARLY RELEVANT FOR ADOLESCENT AGE RANGE

Scouting remains particularly relevant to the adolescent age range. The contribution that Scouting can make to the development of a young person differs according to the specific stage of development of that young person. To adolescents in particular, the Scout Method provides the opportunity to develop the ability to make their own decisions and reach a higher stage of autonomy, leading from dependence, through independence to interdependence.

INTER- GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

Scouting requires high levels of intergenerational dialogue. A Scout leader may be the first adult with whom a young person chooses to work. Scouting brings people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Scouting's intergenerational practice is inclusive and collaborative, building on the positive resources that the younger and older have to offer each other and those around them.



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NO COMPULSION TO JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Voluntary means performed, undertaken, or brought about by free choice, willingly, and without compulsion. The voluntary character of the Scout Movement emphasises the fact that members, in accepting the educational proposal made to them by their national association, adhere to the Movement of their own free will.

There is no compulsion to join the Scout Movement or to remain a member as young people choose when to join the Movement and when to leave. The same principle of voluntary membership applies to adult leaders, who have an essential role in helping young people achieve their full potential as self-fulfilled individuals and active global citizens.

The membership of the Scout Movement is undertaken by free choice. The relevance and attractiveness of the activities offered by Scouting to its members retains their interest, by addressing trends relevant to the young people today. The Movement itself must be – and be seen as – dynamic and alive.

A VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT IS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF SCOUTING'S EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

In return, the Scout Movement requires a commitment from the individual member to the fundamental values and purpose of the Movement, and to commit to build a society where everybody could live in freedom and harmony with each other and with nature. This commitment is made through making the Scout Promise, which is the public expression of the willingness to do one's best to adhere to a code of living based on these ideals.

This voluntary commitment to the Scout Movement extends also to achieving the educational purpose of Scouting. This applies to youth members, insofar as their own personal development is concerned; indeed the voluntary commitment is an essential component of Scouting's educational process, being in control of one's own personal development, setting personal objectives, positively impacts motivation and personal attitude, self-drive, etc.

Activities and learning opportunities should be codecided and cocreated with young people, ensuring their relevance and attractiveness in a fast-changing world. In some countries, Scouting is school based rather than community based. The voluntary aspect of Scouting occurs in this case, as members voluntarily accept the Scout Promise and Law to become active members in Scouting.

ADULTS COMMITTED TO FACILITATE THE DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Adults in the Movement must also be committed to Scouting's purpose, principles and method, as their role is to help youth members, directly or indirectly, to achieve their full potentials. Adults, by joining and adhering to the Movement, commit to do their best to facilitate the development and empowerment of young people. This leads to a strong sense of shared responsibility and partnership among all members of the Movement: youth and adult, volunteer and professional.

Also arising from the voluntary nature of the Scout Movement is that adults serving the Movement in a leadership capacity do so of their own accord, freely and willingly, without being paid for their services or time. Each adult in a voluntary movement contributes in his or her own way, according to his or her skills, talents, time availability, etc., to the accomplishment of shared goals.



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SCOUTING BENEFITS FROM PAID PROFESSIONALS

Whereas Scouting is a voluntary movement, it benefits from paid professionals on a full or part-time basis to support its work when appropriate. Where the need exists and resources permit, some people may be employed to fulfil specific roles that contribute to the effective and efficient achievement of Scouting's purpose. The use of professionals and a strong volunteer-professional partnership strengthens the Movement and increases its effectiveness.

A voluntary movement depends upon participation of all its members, regardless of their race, gender, age, religion, identity, and experience or background, at all levels, in the decision-making process. As part-owners, or "stakeholders" in the Movement, they must be actively involved in managing its affairs in a democratic manner.

Scouting is based on volunteering, a key characteristic of the Movement which keeps it alive and impactful in our societies.



Open to all...

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ACCEPTING ALL THOSE WHO ARE PREPARED TO LEARN AND GROW THROUGH SCOUTING

Scouting is grounded upon the optimistic view that each young person can be empowered with positive values and competencies for life to lead a fulfilling life project and to contribute positively to society. But we should not expect the result of education to be achieved before the educational process itself has started: that is why Scouting is for all young people who are willing to adhere to its principles and to practise its method.

This choice places the final decision – to join or not to join – in the hands of the young person, who is the only one who can decide whether he or she is prepared to make such a commitment. It is not for adult leaders to decide whether or not that young person is suitable for the Scout Movement, or to restrict the recruitment to a particular collective. Scouting is an educational movement, and so it must accept all those who are prepared to learn and grow through Scouting.

This is why Scouting should be open to all young people, breaking the invisible walls of any condition of a young person and “enabling them to treat others with respect, acceptance, tolerance, and empathy, regardless of their ethnicity, race, social, economic or immigration status, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression”¹¹. This is consistent with the commitment that the inclusive shared values become practice rather than just belief: “A Scout is active in doing good, not passive in being good.”

COMMITMENT WITH COEDUCATION AND TO ERADICATE GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Scouting’s commitment to inclusion is an active approach: it implies valuing the diversity of individuals, giving equal access and opportunities to all, and having each person involved and participating in activities to the greatest extent possible. Additionally, it stands for accessibility, which is supported by various organisational methodologies, strategies, structures and financial support and implemented by creating an inclusive environment, respecting diversity, supporting human rights, and strongly opposing all forms of prejudice and discrimination.

Scouting is also an educational movement open to all genders, which adopts the coeducational approach that educates girls and boys in the same structure taking into account specific needs, and it is committed to the equal rights of all young people. Consistent with its learner-centred approach, Scout activities should be cocreated to answer the needs and interests of all its young members. Likewise, its educational goals should include the understanding of the basic rights of women and girls, including their right to freedom from exploitation and violence as well as reproductive rights, and the awareness of all forms of gender discrimination, violence, and inequality to break them down.

OPENNESS TO ALL MEANS REACHING YOUNG PEOPLE WHO NEED SCOUTING MOST

Openness to all also means that Scouting should make a conscious commitment to reach young people who need it most. For instance, children and young people who have difficulties in their day-to-day lives and who may not be readily accepted in their communities, may nevertheless be prepared to do their best to commit themselves to the principles of the Movement. Rigid practices might make it impossible to reach young people in different social environments. Making Scouting truly open to all, in particular those who need it most, requires adaptation without compromising the purpose, principles, and method of the Movement.

While Scouting, as an educational movement, must be open to all young people, without any discrimination, the situation is different for adults. Scouting must positively welcome anyone who wishes to take up an educational function within the Movement. A candidate cannot be discriminated on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, identity, and experience or background, but Scouting's first duty is to protect its young members from any abuse.



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THE IMPERATIVE OF PROTECTING YOUNG PEOPLE MUST GUIDE US IN RECRUITING ADULT LEADERS

For those who wish to participate in an educational task, Scouting must offer the motto adopted by medical doctors: *Primum non nocere* – first do no harm. The imperative of protecting young people guides Scouting in the recruitment of adult leaders. Every candidate for an educational position in the Movement must be supported to ensure that he or she has the maturity and psychological balance necessary to develop a genuine educational relationship with young people and adults, respecting their dignity and taking all measures to ensure the necessary conditions of psychological and physical safety.

Once this first check has been carried out, the candidate must complete her or his training to acquire the skills necessary for the position he or she wishes to hold. It is only after having acquired the required skills that he or she will be formally appointed to the position for a limited period of time. Ongoing support and evaluation of any youth leader is essential to ensure that he or she is able to implement the attitudes and skills necessary to respect young people and help them grow as well as adults.

¹¹ [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), UN, 1948; United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 32/2, 2016; International technical guidance on sexual education: An evidence-informed approach. UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UN Women, 2018.



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THE SCOUT MOVEMENT MUST NOT BE IDENTIFIED WITH POLITICAL PARTIES

As an educational Movement, in explaining the non-political nature of Scouting, it is necessary to distinguish between:

- the Movement, and its organisation, as a social force
- the individuals who are members of the Movement

As a **social force**, the Scout Movement and its organisation must not be identified with political parties, which are usually the reflection of politics in a democratic society. Neither the organisation itself in its statements, publications, etc., nor anyone presenting him or herself as its representative must be identified with a party or other clearly structured political group within a democracy, since this would be a breach of the independence of the Movement.

The reason why Scouting must remain an independent, non-political movement is simple. Baden-Powell wrote that "Danger lies in the people becoming accustomed to having their own minds made up for them without any exercise of their own judgement or conscience in the process" and he, therefore, concluded that "individual power of judgement is essential".

This is why Scouting is an educational movement aimed at helping young people to develop, from within themselves, their own abilities and their autonomy. This approach requires complete neutrality in the educational process, the only constraint being the principles, or values, upon which Scouting is based. The identification of the Scout Movement with any political party inevitably jeopardises the objectivity and neutrality which must always characterise the person-centred educational approach for which Scouting stands.

This does not, however, mean that Scouting is completely divorced from sociopolitical realities. The Scout Movement itself is a social reality and its aim is to help young people to develop as responsible individuals and as active members of society. This civic education by definition cannot take place in a vacuum. The Movement must be able to defend and further the values and principles it stands for and be able to advocate for the best possible conditions for both the type of education it provides as well as for the young people it aims to serve.

Consequently, nothing prevents the Scout Movement from taking a stance on a certain number of issues such as the Rights of the Child and, in the current context, the Sustainable Development Goals, provided that this is clearly related to its educational mission, is based upon its own Constitution and principles, and is presented as such and not as part of the party politics which the Scout Movement must transcend. Its advocacy positioning, however, should always be an educational tool and, therefore, giving to young people the capacity to make inquiry by themselves and to think critically.

As for the **individuals** who are members of the Movement, the situation is somewhat different. Scouting contributes to the empowerment of young people as autonomous individuals and as active global citizens.

Being a global citizen implies having a commitment to the equal dignity of all human beings and to build societies where they could live in harmony among them and with nature – and so, a commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for Scouting also means, as Baden-Powell said, to build in young people “individual power of judgement”, with the inclusive shared values of the Movement developing the capacity to think critically, to learn by inquiry, to verify facts, and to stand against injustice¹² and for their model of society.



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Scouting supports the involvement of its members in social action and their active engagement in serving their communities, because to empower young people as active global citizens entails making them able to reflect on their own actions and to take informed decisions and responsible action to assure environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society for present and future generations, from a local and global perspective¹³.

In addition to exercising their civic responsibilities, nothing precludes a member of the Movement from also being an active member of a political party. If a member chooses to belong to a political party as an individual, this will not be in conflict with his or her membership of the Scout Movement, provided that the basic values of the party are consistent with those he or she holds as a Scout.

When an individual Scout adheres to a political party, he or she must in no circumstances use Scouting as a platform for the promotion of the party to which he or she belongs, and should be aware of the risk of Scouting to be instrumentalised for political power.

¹² [Preventing Violent Extremism Through Education](#). UNESCO, 2017.

¹³ [Education for the Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives](#). UNESCO, 2017.



Independent...

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SAFEGUARDING OUR SPECIFIC IDENTITY

Scouting, at all levels – local, national, and international – has a specific identity based on its purpose, principles, values, and method.

Scouting can succeed in fully achieving its educational purpose only if its specific identity is safeguarded. Any loss or diminution of this identity – through, for example, being too closely linked to or influenced by another organisation or authority – will inevitably have a negative impact on the Movement.

That is why any National Scout Organization should have the capacity freely to take decisions by its own sovereign decision-making authority, without the interference of public, social, or religious institutions.

This does not imply that Scouting should operate in isolation, nor should it refuse to cooperate with other organisations or authorities. Indeed, Scouting may never have become the global Movement that it is today without the popular and institutional acceptance and support that it has received throughout its history. What this does infer is that any offer or acceptance of support, or any form of partnership with another organisation or authority, can only be justified if it serves to further what Scouting sets out to achieve: its educational purpose.

Cooperation with other organisations and with public institutions for the Movement's purpose is encouraged, but caution needs to be exercised at every level of the Movement in such situations to ensure that Scouting does not risk losing its independence, its specific identity, and its common ethics.

This means that all levels of the Movement must be mindful in their relationships with other entities – sponsoring bodies, working partners, kindred organisations, governmental authorities, and the like – to ensure that the Movement's specific identity and independence are not compromised as a result of these relationships.

For example:

- Scouting's cooperation with other educational youth organisations must never lead to the loss or compromise of its own independence and specific role in educational provision to young people
- Scouting's sponsorship by a religious or community organisation must never result in a National Scout Organization being controlled by that organisation or being perceived as being subordinate to it
- Scouting's links to local or national authorities must never be such that the Movement's voluntary, non-formal educational role in society is put into question
- Scouting's support to development agencies must never lead to the Movement itself being seen as a development agency, rather than as a movement with a specific contribution to make to the education of young people.

Finally, it is important to note that the Movement is protected by the fact that its nature and specific identity are internationally defined and agreed upon by all National Scout Organizations.



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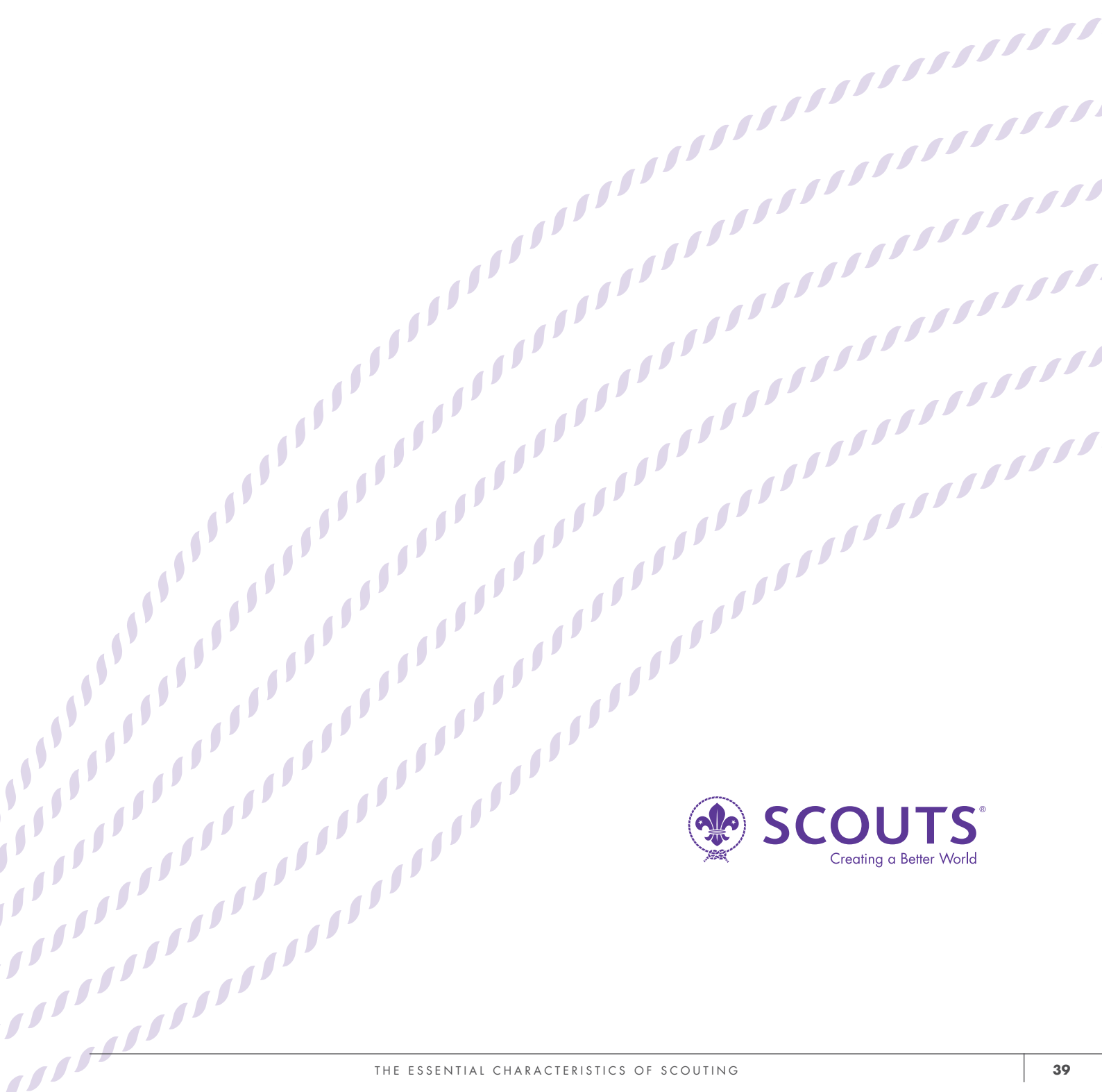


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APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL READING

Useful and complementary documents on the issues addressed in this document:

- *Scouting for Boys*, Robert Baden-Powell, [1908] 1944
- *Aids to Scoutmastership: A Handbook for Scoutmasters on the Theory of Scout Training*, Robert Baden-Powell, 1919
- [Constitution of the World Organization of the Scout Movement](#), World Scout Bureau, August 2017
- [World Scout Youth Programme Policy](#), World Scout Bureau, December 2017
- [The Scout Method](#), November 2019
- [Adults in Scouting World Policy](#), World Scout Bureau, September 2017
- [World Scout Youth Involvement Policy](#), World Scout Bureau, February 2015
- [Diversity and Inclusion in Scouting, WOSM's Position Paper](#), World Scout Bureau, May 2017
- [World Safe from Harm Policy](#), World Scout Bureau, December 2017
- [Scouting: an Educational System](#), World Scout Bureau, 1998
- [Scouting for What? Scouting for Whom?](#), World Scout Bureau, 1997



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