

Creating the Varsity Team Annual Calendar

The Contents of a Varsity Team Calendar:

A Varsity Team calendar should contain a mix between the **27 Program Features** and the **5 Fields of Emphasis**.

The 27 Program Features provide a high adventures/sports emphasis for your Varsity Scout program. Program Features are listed in the Varsity Scout Guidebook, pp. 28-37 and detailed in Varsity Team Program Features, Vols. I, II, and III.

The 5 Fields of Emphasis are High Adventure/Sports, Advancement, Service, Special Programs and Events and Personal Development (which includes spiritual, leadership, citizenship, social/cultural, and physical development) (see Varsity Scout Guidebook, pp. 27-37)

A Varsity Team calendar should have four quarterly Program Features, such as:

- January-March: Rock climbing and rappelling
- April-June: Bowling
- July-September: Backpacking
- October-December: Snow Camping

Ideally, each quarterly plan should build toward and end with a significant high adventure or sports activity that puts into practice the learning and preparation that occurs throughout the quarter. One of the quarters should culminate in a major Ultimate Adventure or Super Activity.

Include at least one activity in each of the Five Fields of Emphasis. The quarterly Program Feature selected dictates the High Adventure/Sports activities to be held and possibly also the Special Programs and Events activity.

Activities for Service and Personal Development may or may not be focused on the quarterly program feature. Service activity should usually be structured so that is planned and led by a specific individual boy, to help him be able to meet Eagle Scout or Duty to God service project requirements.

At the end of the quarter, the calendar should include a Parents/Awards night, (see Varsity Scout Guidebook, pp. 27-37)

The Annual Calendaring Process

Schedule and prepare a Planning Clinic

A Planning Clinic helps to get the young men away from distractions. These seem to work well if held at a summer home, perhaps on a Friday evening and Saturday. An alternative is an office conference room away from home on a Saturday. This particular event is one activity that should largely be prepared by the adults that support the Team, including food, arrangements, agenda, etc. Plan for some team-building activities and include some leadership training, if desired. Youths will need to play a major part in the conducting and especially the calendaring process, of course. Refer also to the Varsity Scout Guidebook for ideas.

Essential resources for Varsity annual calendaring

- Varsity Scout Guidebook
- Varsity Team Program Features, Vols. I, II, and III
- Blank interest surveys (one for each boy) (See Varsity Scout Guidebook)
- Calendars for School, BSA district and council, Stake and ward.
- Large blank calendar sheets for each the months of the year to tape up around a room.

Decide the yearly calendar cycle

While normally an annual Varsity Team calendar should include four quarters, each with a program theme, leaders of a brand new Varsity program might make a start by creating a plan for a single quarter to get experience with the process. Or, if the Team is in the midst of a program year, the first calendar might only include enough quarterly plans to finish the year. One of the first steps for new leaders is to decide when the yearly calendar cycle will start and end, and how many quarters to include in the initial calendaring attempt. Most programs will either follow the school year (September through August) or the calendar year (January through December). Advantages of the former are that the Team has an entire year to point toward a summer ultimate adventure. The latter may have the advantage of greater availability and better coordination with most outside calendars (except schools, of course).

Preparation of Calendar sheets

Calendar sheets, one for each month in the coming year, need to be prepared prior to the Planning Clinic. It is helpful to write in beforehand various fixed dates that will have to be included or avoided, including the week of each month for combined YM/YW activities, youth conference, and other dates already committed for ward, stake, BSA district and council, and community events that will affect Teachers age young men. You might also pencil in dates beforehand in each quarter for a Parents/ Awards night, perhaps the last midweek activity night of the quarter or within the next two weeks after the end of a quarter. Some wards have the habit of varying the week for the monthly combined YM/ YW activity from month to month or of switching the week at the last moment. These can be kill-ers for the creation and implementation of an annual Varsity Scout calendar. Ideally, you can get an advance commitment from the rest of the YM/YW leaders and/or Bishopric to hold combined YM/YW activities on a set week of the month throughout the coming year and to stick with this calendar religiously, so as not to have these activities preempting items on an annual Varsity calendar which the young men have prepared and committed to.

Interest surveys

Interest surveys are very useful for suggesting possible activities, for getting boy input about the relative priority they place upon particular activities, and especially for reaching decisions and getting closure about calendar specifics. The process for the use of interest surveys is to:

1. Decide on or prepare the survey(s).
2. Have all of the team members complete the survey form(s) a week or two prior to the scheduled Planning Clinic. To get a fairly equal input from individual team members, each boy might be asked to check at least 10 (or 15 or 20) items.

3. With the help of the youth leaders of the team compile the results of the survey, perhaps onto a single survey sheet, then list the preferences on a large newsprint sheet (or computer document for display). Show the most popular item at the top of the list, the second next, etc. Prepare this sheet with survey results prior to the Planning Clinic
4. Display the survey results sheet at the Planning Clinic. Try to include all of the most popular items on the annual calendar.

There is an interest survey form in the Guidebook, Appendix A-14, or you could create your own. Since the annual Varsity calendar requires decisions on both Program Features to be used and specific activities to plug into specific dates, two different kinds of surveys might be helpful. The first should focus on the 27 Program Features and the other should list a broad range of specific activities, perhaps to include Duty to God goals that could be held as Varsity activities

Using Interest Surveys in the actual calendaring process.

There are several ways these interest survey results could be used. One approach is to begin the planning session by getting agreement on which Program Features are to be used and to be scheduled for which quarterly periods. Then working one quarter at a time, determine the following:

- 1) The High Adventure event for that quarter and its date(s).
- 2) The activities that are needed to prepare the young men for or that lead up to the quarterly high adventure. Give these activities dates on the calendar. (Some of these could fit into the other fields of emphasis, such as SP&E or Personal Development, and be under the direction of other Program Managers than High Adventure/Sports.)

After adding these activities to the calendar sheets, there should be 4-6 midweek activity nights remaining for the three month period. Find a night for Service and for the other Fields of Emphasis not already included. Plug in the most popular activities from the second (specific activity) survey and/or include activities suggested in the Guidebook (pp. 30-37) or Program Features section for the particular High Adventure/Sports program. A second approach might be to use the specific activities survey exclusively and infer the Program Features from the most popular activities from the survey; then follow the same procedure as above to flesh out the calendar. A further approach might rely solely on brainstorming as an alternative to written surveys. This appears to be the major strategy described in the Guidebook material on program planning. But in our experience, using interest survey results as the basis for planning enhances the ability of the young men to create a broad and interesting program, and helps keep planning focused and moving. We recommend emphasizing the use of surveys, where possible.

The Planning Clinic

Before the calendaring session begins, tape the monthly calendar sheets around the room and display the interest survey results, both with the preparation mentioned above. As the planning session proceeds, have someone, preferably one of the young men, note the various decisions on the appropriate calendar sheets, and someone else mark off interest survey items as they are assigned to dates on the calendar. Here are steps that might be followed:

1. Make sure everyone understands which sets of three months will be grouped together in the quarterly program cycle. Then begin by getting agreement on which Program Features will be done and in which quarters.
2. Focusing on the first quarter, decide on and date the high adventure/sports activity to complete the quarterly program; then determine the preparatory events that will need to take place and schedule these dates on the calendar.
3. Then finish the work on the first quarter by calendaring dates for:
 - a. A Parents/Awards night. This could be near the start of the quarter to present awards for the prior quarter.
 - b. At least one activity from each of the other Fields of Emphasis. The decision should identify both the nature of the activity and field of emphasis. You might want to do this in two steps—first write the fields of emphasis on the open nights in rotating order; then, focus on the list of desired activities, to select the highest ranked activities that match the open fields of emphasis and write these activities on the calendar for the appropriate dates. Continue until all dates are filled.
 - c. A camp or other outdoor activity for the months not covered by the high adventure above.
4. Repeat this planning process for each of the remaining three month periods in the calendar.

Publish the calendar

Back home, type up the calendar and make it available to young men, coaches, parents, and ward leaders. Ideally, present the calendar at a Parents/Awards night. The Team Captain or another one of the boy officers should lead in making the presentation. Over the year, revise the calendar as needed, and redistribute it to all parties.

