

## Otter Leader Mini Guide

### **The Otter Raft:**

A Section of the Scouting Group aimed at youngsters aged from 5 to 7 years. The Scouter in-charge of the Raft will be the Otter Leader (Ahmeek) and he/she will be assisted by Den Leaders. Parents may also be called upon to assist. The maximum number of Otters permitted in one Pack is 32 (4 dens of 8 Otters each).

### **The Den:**

The Raft will be divided into a number of Dens, each Den to consist of a maximum of 8 Otters but preferably not more than 6 Otters. Ideally, there should be two adult Otter leaders per Den (one male, one female). The lead Otter in a Den is called a "Whisker." This role should be given to an older Otter who is in their last year as an Otter or to a scout who consistently shows themselves to be committed to the scouting program. This is a similar position to a Sixer in the Timberwolf Pack. In a newly developed Den, the "Whisker" could be rotated throughout the group to give all the Otters a period of leadership responsibility.

### **Raft/Den Parents:**

These are either Instructors (of any sort) or assisting parents who are allocated to teach a specific skill set or supervise a particular Den and in some cases to actively participate in and encourage the Den to do its' best in activities of whatever description. This is not to take away from the Den Leader any responsibility but to act as a normal parent would to his/her family, which is what the Den is meant to be. It should be the

aim of the Otter Leader to have a Den Parent for each Den if there are not sufficient Den Leaders, as adequate supervision is at all times a necessity. However, per discretion of the Otter Leaders, parents who are not directly involved in leading should be encouraged to drop their scout off for meetings so that scouts will look towards their Otter Leaders for guidance and Den bonding is more likely to occur. Otter scouts are much more likely to exert independence and accept challenges when parents are not in attendance.

**NOTE:** It is essential that a background check be done by ANY parent who volunteers to work with the Raft.

### **Otter Program**

The Otter Program scheme is designed to develop and stimulate the Otter and give a variety and interest to the Program. It is progressive throughout the period between 5 years and 8 years of age and should be spread over the full three years. Skills and activities can be differentiated to meet the varying needs of the ages and abilities represented.

The scheme consists of an Investiture Badge, Four Progress (Paws) Badges, a Camping Badge, a Safety Badge, a Service Badge and a link to the Timberwolf Pack with the Swimming Otter Badge. (See Badge Book for more detail and description)

**Colors:** Each Otter Den should choose a color and wear a 1 inch square felt patch of their Den color at the top of their left arm. Acceptable colors are: Red, Purple, White, Green, Blue, Tan and Orange.

**Otter Motto:** Busy and Bright

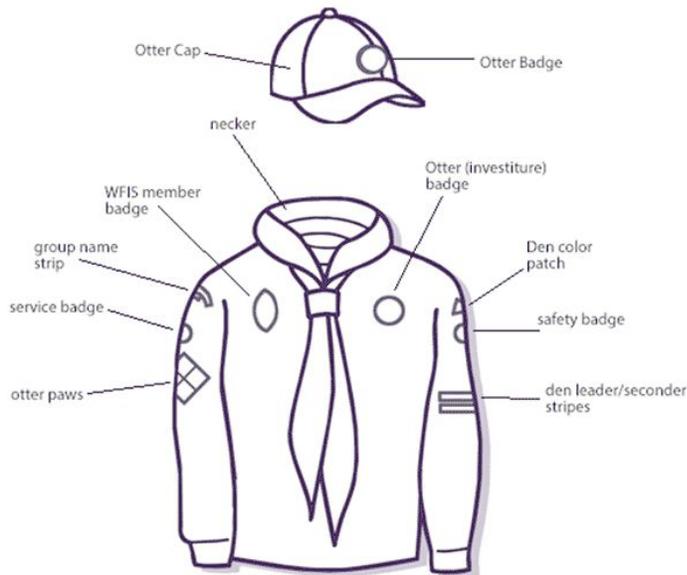
**Otter Law:** An Otter is always busy and bright and helps other people by doing a good turn every day.

**Otter Promise:** I promise to do my best, to obey my leaders and my parents and to be a good Otter.

## Uniform

Adults wear the uniform as described in your Association PO&R (Policy, Organization and Rules) and do not wear the uniform of the youth members.

Youth members wear a short or long sleeve red t-shirt or sweatshirt and a plain red cap (cap is optional). These items are available in the Quartermaster's store as well as many clothing stores for minimal cost.



Otter Uniform Patch Guide

Badges are worn in the following places on the youth uniform (Adult badge positions are shown in the PO&R).

1. WFIS Badge: Worn on the right breast. (Received at registration)
2. Investiture Badge: Worn on the left breast.
3. Safety Badge: Worn on the left sleeve.
4. Paw Badges: Worn on the right sleeve.

5. Service Badge: Worn at the top of the right sleeve below Group Title Flash.

6. Group Title Flash: Worn at the top of the right sleeve along the seam. (Received at registration)

7. Camping Badge: Worn on left sleeve next to the Safety Badge

8. Swimming Otter Badge: Is not worn on the Otter uniform. It is presented at their Timber Wolf Investiture by Ahmeek (The Otter Raft Leader), and is worn only on the Timberwolf uniform.

9. Den Color Patch: Worn at top of left arm

\*Badges are sewn directly onto the shirt. Badges are not glued or pinned.

### **Otter Leader Roles and Responsibilities:**

First and foremost, an Otter Leader must always try to “Do your best” to set a good example for the Otters. A leader should be prepared, properly uniformed, and enthusiastic about the tasks at hand. As your mood will be reflected in them, a relaxed, friendly atmosphere with lots of activity for healthy exercise, coupled with love and sympathy and understanding should be aimed for. When planning for meetings and adventures with Otters, remember STARS!

### **S-Safety**

always the priority - BE PREPARED!

### **T-Teamwork**

build relationships through scout collaboration

### **A-Activity**

play games, explore, have fun and work on scout proficiencies

### **R-Reason**

develop clear purpose for meetings and adventures

### **S-Service**

give back to the community by doing good turns

While guiding Otters, simple speech, clearly expressed, should be the order of the day. Give clear and concise directions and use hand signals to guide them when possible (“Quiet Coyote” works very well to gain silence and attention. Index and pinky are “ears up” while thumb, middle and ring finger push together for “mouths closed”)

Listen to the things that children say, not only to you but amongst themselves. Encourage them to ask questions and discuss things and not just to accept things blindly. We should be prepared to tell them why a certain thing has to be done so that they may more fully understand and learn.

Developing a strong Den identity and friendship amongst the Otters should be a primary focus as new Dens are forming or as new Otters join a Den. The scouts will only want to come scouting if they feel comradery with their Den mates.

### **Program Planning:**

Otter Leaders should try and meet monthly to develop both short and long term program plans. Long term planning can focus on calendar building, deciding meeting dates and times, developing monthly/seasonal themes, assigning proficiency requirements to themes, confirming campouts and service projects. Short term planning will then focus on the specific details for each meeting, event or service project. Plan in alignment with both badge proficiencies and the natural interest and flow of children: provide

opportunity for high energy “steam-off” games as well as quieter, more focused activities like storytelling and handicraft. Promote scouting and connection to nature by meeting outside whenever possible. Help young scouts enjoy nature in all weather by teaching them to be prepared.

**Two Deep Leadership:** Per BPSA policy, no adult should ever be alone with a scout who is not their own child. Two background checked adults must always be present during scout activities.

### **Conflict Resolution and Positive Discipline:**

Most discipline issues can be resolved before they get out of hand by having a positive attitude, being clear on expectations and providing thoughtful activities, games, adventures. Disruptive behavior is often a signal to adults that a scout needs more firm boundaries. In situations where one or more scouts are being disruptive to the leader or group, do not feel badly for disciplining them. Discipline does not mean being harsh or reprimanding, but rather doing the scout a service by reminding them of their higher selves and what you expect from them. Discipline is essentially just providing structure for success.

When disciplining children, stay calm, get down on their level and be clear on the behavior goal. If a leader finds themselves unable to deal calmly in a situation, they should ask another leader to step in for them. It is also very important to communicate with the parents about any disruptive behavior so that everyone can work together to help support the scout’s success within the Den. The following criteria for positive discipline serve as a powerful guide when working with youth.

#### FIVE CRITERIA FOR POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

1. Is it kind and firm at the same time? (Respectful and encouraging)
2. Does it help children feel a sense of belonging and significance? (Connection)
3. Is it effective long-term? (Punishment works short term, but has negative long-term results.)
4. Does it teach valuable social and life skills for good character? (Respect, concern for others, problem-solving, accountability, contribution, cooperation)
5. Does it invite children to discover how capable they are and to use their personal power in constructive ways?

- See more at:

<http://www.positivediscipline.com/what-is-positive-discipline.html#sthash.b5jHLB1n.dpuf>

## Otter Ceremonies:

### Opening:

Ahmeek reads/ recites the Otter Invocation

### Otter Invocation:

Playful Master of the element of Water,  
Please teach me to swim joyfully through life.  
As you leap and dive and slide,  
may I also remember that play is essential to survival.  
Help me take pleasure in sharing and receiving,  
at ease with the world's abundance.  
Help me to move with quickness and grace,  
adapting to any environment.  
Help me to remain curious,  
ever seeking new perspectives and experiences,  
Open to love and laughter and all the mysteries  
above and below the surface of my life. ~Travis Bowman

Ahmeek directs Otters to show sign

Ahmeek leads Otters in reciting the Otter Motto, Promise and Law

**Motto:** Busy and Bright

**Law:** An Otter is always busy and bright and helps other people by doing a good turn every day.

**Promise:** I promise to do my best, to obey my leaders and my parents and to be a good Otter.

**The Raft then sing Cedar Log Song** (to the tune "The Old Grey Mare"):

*Here we sit like Otters on a Cedar log, Otters on a Cedar log, Otters on a Cedar log,  
Here we sit like Otters on a Cedar log, Waiting for the fun to start, Waiting for the fun to start,  
Waiting for the fun to start, Here we sit like Otters on a Cedar log waiting for The fun to start.  
YEAH!!!!*

### Closing:

Ahmeek calls "Council Rock"

Otters gather in Den formation at CR (Whisker to the right)

Brief reflection on the meeting/ share out

The Otters sing Taps:

*Day is done, (stand motionless)  
Gone the sun, (point Skyward)  
From the lake, (Extend both arms towards floor)  
From the hills, (move both arms, parallel to floor)*

*From the sky, (move both arms towards sky)  
All is well, safely rest, (lower arms slowly)  
Friends are near. (bow head)*

The Raft recites "Thank You Friends"

*Thank you, friends, for this day  
For my family, and for my play.  
Thank you for the good things to eat,  
For eyes and ears, and hands and feet.  
Thank you friends for all you do  
And, I will try to help you, too.*

Otters sing Vespers as a group:

*Softly falls the light of day  
As our meeting fades away;  
Silently each Otter asks  
Have I done my daily task?  
Have I kept my honor bright?  
Can I guiltless rest tonight?  
Have I done and have I dared  
Everything to 'Be Prepared'.*

### **Investiture:**

At the first Raft meeting a new Otter is placed in a Den, preferably with someone who is a friend. The new Otter may wear the Otter uniform with the exception of badges and neckerchief. In order to be invested an Otter must pass the tests as outlined in the Otter Badges and Award Scheme. Ahmeek will take the investiture and this should be done at the beginning of a Raft meeting. When the Raft is in the 'Council Rock' formation, Ahmeek will ask the Den Leader or Whisker of the Den concerned to bring forward the new recruit to be invested. The Otter then makes the Otter Sign and repeats the Otter Law and Promise. The newly invested Otter is then presented with the Membership Badge and group neckerchief and is welcomed into the Worldwide Brotherhood of Scouting with the Scout Handshake. The new Otter turns and salutes the Pack and all invested Otters return the Salute.

**Swimming Up:** Swimming Up Ceremony will be led by Ahmeek and Akela

This is the ultimate ceremony in the Otter Raft for the Otter, as it marks the departure for new pastures in the Timberwolf Pack. This is a joint affair between Ahmeek and Akela who must work together to make it a success. Before finally moving up to the Timberwolf Pack, the Otter

will have visited the Timberwolf Pack on several occasions to meet the Old Wolves and their prospective Sixer.

The swim up ceremony for Otters should ideally be done in the evening at the campfire during a time when both Otters and Timberwolves are present. Otters sit on one side of the fire and Timberwolves sit on the opposite side of the fire. If Pathfinders and Rovers are present, they can stand in an outer ring around the Otters and Timberwolves.

Start: Otters sing Vespers as a group:

*Softly falls the light of day  
As our meeting fades away;  
Silently each Otter asks  
Have I done my daily task?  
Have I kept my honor bright?  
Can I guiltless rest tonight?  
Have I done and have I dared  
Everything to 'Be Prepared'.*

Ahmeek then calls out each Otter who is swimming up by full name and asks them to stand.

Ahmeek (addresses swim-up Otters): I hope you will always remember your Otter promise. For the last time, I ask you to join me in the Otter promise.

Otters (either together if a large group or individually if four or less): make the Otter sign and recite the Otter promise:

“I promise to do my best, to obey my leaders and my parents and to be a good Otter”

Ahmeek: Do I have your honor that you will always remember and obey this promise?

Otters: YES!

Ahmeek: Akela, will you accept these Otters into your Timberwolf pack and will you teach them the ways of the Timberwolf.

Akela: YES!

Ahmeek addresses the Timberwolf pack: Timberwolves, will you accept these new Timberwolf recruits into your pack and help guide them in the ways of the Timberwolf pack? If so, answer in a GRAND HOWL!

Timberwolves: Grand Howl

Ahmeek: Otters, this is the last time you will ever be addressed as an Otter. I ask you to take a moment and think upon your time with the Otters and remember them well. Look up at the night sky (or *blue sky* if daytime), the same constellations (*cosmos* if daytime)w that have looked down on you as an Otter will continue to look down on you as a Timberwolf. Take solace in knowing that the things you have learned as an Otter will serve you well as you make your journey into your new Timberwolf pack. Think for a moment about one of your favorite memories of your time as an Otter.....(pause about a minute).....when you are ready, you can swim up to the Timberwolves, swimming passed each Otter, passing the campfire and jumping over the log as you go, where Akela will welcome you and teach you the new Timberwolf salute.

When the Otters reach the other side of the campfire, Akela greets each new Timberwolf recruit individually with the Timberwolf hand-shake and teaches them the new Timberwolf salute. Akela presents the newly invested Timberwolf with the Tenderpad badge.

\*note: Swimming up Otters who have not completed the Swimming Otter Badge Requirements cross over the log to Akela but do not swim through the Raft. Akela will present them with a white necker because they are not yet invested.

Remaining Otters sing Taps:

*Day is done, (stand motionless)*  
*Gone the sun, (point Skyward)*  
*From the lake, (Extend both arms towards floor)*  
*From the hills, (move both arms, parallel to floor)*  
*From the sky, (move both arms towards sky)*  
*All is well, safely rest, (lower arms slowly)*  
*Friends are near. (bow head)*

Akela: Welcome new Timberwolf recruits! You may now join the Timberwolves in your first GRAND HOWL!

Timberwolves: GRAND HOWL

Everyone: claps!!!

Otter Jodies: to be chanted along the trail

Otters, Otters what do you know?  
Busy and Bright is the way to go.

Otters, Otters what do you like?  
Any adventure with a hike!

Otters, Otters what do you see?  
All my Otter Scouts hiking with me!

Otters, Otters what's in your pack?  
Our ten essentials and a tasty snack!

Otters, Otters what do you do?  
Render service to my crew.

Otters, Otters what's in that stew?  
Peas and carrots and Timberwolves too!

Otter Meeting Plan  
 “Current Flow”

Date:	Meeting Location:
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Timing/Notes	Council Rock Roll Call, Distribution of Bead Necklace Opening Ceremony: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Otter Invocation</li> <li>● Otter Sign, Law and Promise</li> <li>● Cedar Log Song</li> </ul>
	Steam-Off Game
	Snack and Story
	Campfire: Investiture Requirements, badge work, games, songs etc.
	Closing Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Share out about meeting</li> <li>● Taps</li> <li>● Thank You Friends</li> <li>● Vespers</li> </ul>
	Materials Required:

