



# KNOW THE CUB SCOUT

Cub Scouts' age is between 7 and 11 years. During this period children are in their second stage of development. At 8 years of age they come out of infancy and by the time they are 11 they start to venture into adolescence.

Children experience a lot of changes during this stage of development and even though there are common characteristics, maturity varies not only between male and female but also between children of the same sex. Therefore, we as leaders have to be aware of the changes that the common Cub Scout may go through, as well as be sensitive to the needs of each individual.

The Cub Scout age is an age where the child is bursting with energy. The fact that children are always bombarding us with questions shows that they are constantly in search of answers, since they would be just starting to discover the world around them – a world which is not their home. In fact, they do not know what danger is and this makes it all the more attractive because it brings mystery and adventure, and unfortunately, the consequences are not their problem!



Cub scouting is there to satisfy these young people's curiosity and so the leader has to provide them with different activities where they can develop and feel free to let out their energy; where they can give vent to their imagination. As leaders, we need to observe and scout for the individual potential of every cub.

By this, we can think creatively and identify ways how to help the cub explore their world in a safe environment.

Furthermore, as educators we have to create an environment where they can learn through enjoyment. We need to move away from the rigid setting that they face every time they go to school. The fact that their attention span is very short, intensifies the need for variety in activities. Even though they need constant monitoring, the value of freedom should not be underestimated.

They need to do things which are meaningful to them and should not be forced to perform a task just to please grown ups but because they are interested in it. If we as leaders do not realize this we will not be helping the child to develop but suffocating his/her enthusiasm. As leaders working with children, by talking and engaging with the child we do not only get to know their interests but also are helping them to express themselves clearly by finding worlds and talking to an adult.

Furthermore, by effective communication, the cub will feel safer in the scouting environment. This communication can range from a conversation about their dog to something as simple as asking how was their day.



Cub Scout's age is synonymous with laughter and ridicule which reaches its epitome during adolescence. Once children start giggling it is difficult to stop them. A joke can carry on for ages. This aspect is fostered even more within the 'gang'. Gangs start to feature during this age and this reflects the need to belong to a group. This is why cub scouts are put into sixes. The leader has to keep a watchful eye on gangs since peer pressure can sometimes lead to bullying, not only physical but also psychological. Therefore it is advisable that sixes should be reshuffled from time to time in order to avoid such situations from happening.

Children enjoy projects which involve group work. Their sense of competition is boosted and this helps them to do their best. Furthermore, if done effectively it will give rise to child engaging not only in a particular scouting technique/ability but also in interacting with friends while building self-confidence. However failure is sometimes taken too seriously. This is where the leader steps in to show them that they have to accept defeat in a constructive way and not let it develop into revenge.



## Girls and Boys

The children under our care are not just a number. They are individuals with different needs. Even though they share the same age the differences between them call for different approaches. At Cub Scouts' age most of the children look the same but there are aspects of their growth which vary.

This depends on a lot of factors like family environment and the female and male models they come to identify themselves with. Leaders have to be aware that there are differences in the behaviour, interests and attitudes of girls and boys. Furthermore, in our globalized society, some young children who may join the pack may not only have language barriers; as leaders we should be aware also of different cultural backgrounds.

However we should not be conditioned by the stereotypes that society has led us to accept. Therefore within our packs we have to try to do away with these stereotypes. For example, we should not restrict girls from doing jobs which are considered as 'masculine' or to exclude them from games which are considered too 'rough' for them. On the other hand, we cannot totally disregard the potential of being a man or a woman. The differences should be regarded as complementary to each other. This is what education is about.

The boy and the girl have to learn to accept that they are different and to respect each other's identity as male and female. If this is made clear from the start it will help to pave the way for when they reach the scout age, when differences both physical and psychological start to come to the fore.





## Grown Ups in The Pack

The transition from being a cub scout to becoming a young scout is a very delicate period. The old members of the pack start to feel that they no longer belong to the rest of the pack and at the same time they are afraid of the change ahead. Hence it is the job of the leader to help make this transition as natural as possible. At this age, cubs tend to take things more seriously and start to become less dependent on adults. On the other hand, they start to show interest in engaging in a conversation with adults. Their skills become sharper and their experience in the pack makes them act as young leaders. However this sense of authority has to be monitored since in some cases it can degenerate into bullying. They also develop a sense of individualism which is a sign

of maturity. In fact it would be a good idea to involve them in minor sessions. Besides giving a helping hand to leaders they learn to carry some degree of responsibility.

Going up with the troop section is seen as a big step by the cub scouts. The majority are strong enough to cope with it, others find it difficult to integrate once they leave the pack section. Hence it is important that leaders should give much more weight to the link badge period, which takes three months to complete and which aids this transition. During this time cub scouts should be encouraged to attend both the pack meeting and the troop meeting and leaders of the respective sections have to be very supportive to make the Cub Scout eager and not fearful of joining the troop section.

