

VENTURE UNIT

THE UNIT EXECUTIVE



There's nothing like
'Being Prepared' is there,
for what might seem possible,
even if it may not
seem probable.

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Responsibilities of the Unit Executive

WHAT IS A THE EXECUTIVE?

Unlike Scouts, Venture Scouts don't have Patrols or Patrol Leaders. They have an organisation known as The Unit Executive. This group of Venture Scouts is responsible for the management of the Unit and is elected by the unit members.

WHO MAKES UP THE EXECUTIVE?

The Unit Executive is made up of a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and any other elected members, plus co-opted activity Leaders for special activities. Some other positions could include Fundraiser, Property, Public Relations, Recruitment, Associate Venture Scouts, Transport or whatever you need to make the Unit run effectively.

Members should be elected to do a job, not on popularity. Popularity by itself is not a qualification. Many Unit Executives have members with different ages to provide a cross section of views.

The Executive must represent the unit members. Unless the members of the unit feel that their views are properly represented they will not be inclined to accept the decisions of the Executive. It is important to have regular reporting back sessions with the Unit-In-Council.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

The Unit Executive is responsible for number of things including the membership, Unit programme, finances, communication, discipline and the Award Scheme.

The Executive should meet separately from the Unit at least once a month. Many also meet for a few minutes either before or after each Unit meeting to check on progress.

If you are not a member of the Unit Executive you must do your best to back up its members and support its decisions. They have been taken on behalf of the Unit as a whole. Remember, the Unit Executive is particularly concerned with deciding the standards that will be adopted by the Unit and its members. It is not always necessary to write these down, but everyone must be quite clear about what has been decided.

DUTIES OF A UNIT EXECUTIVE

1. To plan and operate a Balanced Programme
2. To conduct elections for the Unit Executive positions
3. To operate all documents in relation with unit finances
4. To be responsible for Unit membership and recruitment
5. To ensure the Unit has a reliable method of Communication between members, leaders and the Group
6. To ensure the Unit has a Code of Ethics which is reviewed by the Unit-In-Council on an annual basis
7. To be responsible for the management of unit/group equipment
8. To be responsible for programme standards and the award scheme progress within the unit.

UNIT EXECUTIVE ELECTIONS

Elections are held probably every six months, so that the jobs are shared around. Some positions may be held for longer than six months depending on how the Executive Members are operating. Obviously it is useful to have some continuity but you should bring in new blood as part of a regular policy so that the Unit benefits from fresh ideas. There is no question of being “demoted”. It is simply a matter of having the privilege of leading the Unit for a time and eventually standing down to enable someone else to benefit from this experience also.

Elections should involve participation by all members of the Unit with a democratic result. Elections should never be slap dash or ad-hoc. Consideration should be given to making the elections a major part of the calendar for the Unit. Consideration should also be given to the actual method of voting – show of hands or secret ballot.

The counting of the votes should be undertaken by an impartial member of the Unit and consideration given to the manner of the assessment of the voting.

That is, do you use the “first past the post is the winner” method or do you use preferential representation? In the latter, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated and their preferences distributed to the others until an outright winner is determined.

All of these matters are for the Unit to consider and to set the ground rules. Perhaps the Constitution should address these matters.

Often it is hard to find people willing to take on the responsibility of some of the tasks associated with the Unit Executive. You must remember that we are in the Scout Association and have all promised **to do our best**. We should all be prepared to extend ourselves to support the Unit. >

In many cases, you may have a member who would like to try a position, but is afraid of criticism if they nominate themselves for the job or of losing the election once they do so.

The Unit must foster a high expectation for the job to be done and show support for all who take on these important roles to make sure that the members will support the system.

It is important to determine terms of office. These normally varies from unit to unit. As explained above, this is usually 6 to 12 months. Office bearers should not exceed 12 months in any one position. The Unit-In-Council may have a policy on how many positions an individual can serve on the executive.

It is good practice that only half of the Executive members change at each election to help with continuity. For example: If the executive is made up of 9 ventures, then 6 positions are rotated and 3 are elected or 3 change position, 3 step down and 3 are elected.

THE SECRET TO RUNNING A GOOD UNIT
IS HAVING AN ACTIVE UNIT EXECUTIVE.

NOW YOU'RE A UNIT EXECUTIVE MEMBER

The Unit must foster a high expectation for the job to be done and show support for all who take on these important roles to make sure that the members will support the system.

The position you hold requires a good deal of time and effort on your part. The Unit Executive is responsible for the success or failure of the Unit. As a member of the Unit Executive, you will be expected to help the Unit members get the most out of the time they spend with the Unit.

The Leaders and other adults will provide guidance and assistance; *however it is YOUR Venture Scout Unit.*

Unit Executive meetings are held at least once a month at a time convenient to all. Decisions are made at these meetings that will affect the entire Unit eg. Programming, fundraising, membership and any other matters of importance to the Unit.

As a Unit Executive Member you will be given the responsibility of organising activities for the Unit to participate in. Depending on the size of the activity the organisation may be shared between two or more individuals.

In all cases a Leader will be allocated to assist if necessary. The Leader is only there **to assist not organise.**

Roles and Responsibilities

The Unit Chairperson

The role of the Unit Chairperson is a demanding but rewarding role. There are two main parts to the position:

1. To show leadership to and motivate the Unit. It is very easy for the Unit to become lethargic and stagnate.
2. To chair the Unit Executive meetings in which the decisions of the Unit take place.

Most Venture Scouts think the job of the Unit Chairperson is to head the parade, break the flag and close the meeting at the end of the night. What happens in between becomes the job of the Venture Scout Leader – *Nothing is further from the truth.*

What happens during the meetings falls squarely on the leadership of the Unit Chairperson. If the Unit Chairperson is slack, the Unit will often follow; unless the Leader gives some unobtrusive guidance.

A good Unit Chairperson will double check all activities and co-ordinate where there is doubt of a good result.

During a meeting time is always limited. Therefore a good Unit Chairperson will have a scheduled plan. This plan should cover each item and the appropriate time slots for the evening.

The Unit Chairperson keeps to the planned order of the activity, calling on the Venture Scout Leaders if he/she feels the programme is getting out of hand.

The most important role of the Unit Chairperson here is **LEADERSHIP.**

NOW THE RESPONSIBILITY IS YOURS

- Under the leadership, will it be exciting to old members and enticing the new ones?
- Can you get people to work hard and still retain their respect and friendship?
- Any group has enough members who want to work. Whether they do depends on how much they like and admire their leader. To rate members' appreciation, a Chairperson has to have the following attributes:
 - Show he/she can get things done
 - Be friendly to members and win their trust
 - Be willing to delegate responsibility
 - Ask the right people to work
 - Give precise directions when he/she asks somebody to do a job
 - Be skilful critic
 - Keep the Executive motivated
 - Give his/her committee plenty of warning.

A key role of the Chairperson is to prevent a meeting bogging down, rambling on or becoming caught in details that divert it from the subject at hand. Everyone likes to think they're on the winning team and they admire a leader or Chairperson who makes them feel their meetings are purposeful and decisive.

PLAN YOUR MEETINGS

Practiced Chairpersons create a mood; first by looking purposeful and decisive themselves. Some start the night before by preparing their opening remarks so that they can say them without stumbling.

One Chairperson says he always starts a meeting by pushing aside anything he might fidget with such as a pencil or paper clip.

An effective Chairperson also starts before the meeting to prime the group for a fruitful discussion and then sees to it that there is one. It is also good to note major issues on a whiteboard so everyone can keep track of what they have done and where they are headed.

DOUBTERS, STIRRERS, EAGER BEAVER, HAIR-SPLITTERS ETC.

To stay popular, the Chairperson has to run a productive meeting but he cannot stop there! He also has to keep it pleasant and, as you may have discovered, often the two go together. >

Whether your meeting is a club meeting, committee, Group Executive or the like, you've experienced meeting goers who block the group from pursuing its business and make everyone uncomfortable while they are at it.

Some chairpersons have met so many of these type of people that they have classified them as follows:

- There is the **DOUBTER** who thwarts any new idea with the old refrain "it won't work, so we'd better not try it".
- There is the **EAGER BEAVER** who will try anything without pausing for sober reflection.
- The **TALKER**, with a fund of personal reminiscences, gives the impression that he/she may have been vaccinated with a gramophone needle.
- Then there is the **HAIR-SPLITTER** who stops to question and define everything.
- Of course there is the **BULLY** who says "you use my idea or else" – even if it has nothing to do with the discussion.

It is up to the Chairperson to subdue them all and to do it so gracefully that nobody calls him or her a bully.

One way out is to give the disruptive member something to do so that they cannot talk. Post them at the whiteboard if there is one, or appoint them observer to tabulate how many people speak or how many comments there are for or against the proposal.

When the doubter "pooh-hoos" an idea, ask if he'd like to present one. When the bully stumps for this pet project, ask him politely for three reasons why it might work in the situation under discussion.

Sometimes, a newly appointed Chairperson may worry that curbing discussion may be considered undemocratic. Experienced practitioners maintain it is the Chairperson's job to focus the discussion – and it will win him/her the loyal support of the rest of the group.

In certain cases, a Leader may have another recourse; if heading a committee, he/she can try to keep trouble-makers from joining it. This may sound difficult or even foolhardy.

Doesn't the Chairperson need anyone he or she can get? Things are not really that tough. Chairpersons of flourishing committees insist if you have to beat the bushes for workers, maybe you don't press the right people to work.

If you hope to be a successful and popular Chairperson, you can't be bossy. Group members lose interest or disappear if they have no say in planning events and making decisions.

Remember, many members will work harder than you might expect if they have helped to formulate the programme. They'll also say good things about the Leader's or Chairperson's confidence in them, especially if he pauses at the next meeting to thank them for a job well done.

HOW DOES A UNIT EXECUTIVE ACHIEVE ITS AIMS?

A Unit Executive has several important ingredients:

- Starting Time
- Finishing Time
- Target or Aim
- Fine tune details

To achieve the above, the Unit Chairperson must do the following:

- In association with the Secretary, prepare an agenda and circulate it to the Executive members. This is the guideline of the meeting.
- Follow the Agenda
- Keep to the subject and prohibit all superfluous talk. This is where most Chairpersons of meetings offend.
- Resolve the subject allowing for time constraints.
- If in doubt about your committee, follow up. Remember some are new to the job and inexperienced. We all make mistakes at times.
- Finally, a good Chairperson will set goals for themselves and goals for the Unit.
- The Venture Scout Leader is there to help the Unit Chairperson achieve those goals and offer advice when called upon. Remember that your Leader has been trained especially to help.

The Unit Secretary

The role of the Secretary is to record Unit and Unit Executive decisions, usually as minutes and will deal with all general correspondence. The Secretary may also keep a check on the Award Scheme progress and requirements so that programme content is balanced.

When Unit or Executive meetings are to be called and held, an agenda should be prepared. The agenda for a meeting has been described as the “programme for a business meeting” and in practice it collects and defines matters relating to the Unit’s business in an orderly way.

The agenda contains items that need discussion and approval of the meeting relevant to the functioning of the Unit. It should be formulated by the Executive of the Unit Executive and circulated to all committee members about seven days before the meeting, by the Secretary. Any Unit or Committee member wishing to submit items for the agenda can do so.

THE FORMAT FOR AN AGENDA

- 1.** Opening Prayer – Any participating member
- 2.** Record of Attendees – The Secretary should always record the names of people attending meeting
- 3.** Apologies for Absence – The Secretary should always be notified if members are unable to attend and this should be recorded
- 4.** Minutes of the Previous meeting – These are either circulated with the agenda or read by the Secretary at the meeting.
- 5.** Matters arising from the minutes – This item is to tell members of the Committee, of developments of action/ non-action arising out of previous business
- 6.** Correspondence – The reading of any correspondence that the Secretary has received since the previous meeting. The inwards correspondence is read first followed by outwards
- 7.** Reports – Reports by the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and other office bearers on progress and matters in hand since the last meeting, plus any reports of special committees as previously set up by the meeting.
- 8.** Main Items affecting the unit's organisation – These are items that the Executive has agreed on which require the approval of the full Unit Executive prior to implementation eg: programme, objectives, financial proposals, awards etc.
- 9.** General Business – This gives members of the Executive the opportunity to put forward items that have not been placed on the agenda and which the members feel to be relevant. Ideally these are communicated before the meeting and noted on the agenda.
- 10.** Date of next meeting – A date must be suitable to the majority to ensure a well supported meeting.
- 11.** Formal closing of the meeting by the Chairperson – After closing, no further business can be formally discussed or minuted.

MINUTES

Once approved and signed, the minutes become the authoritative record of the proceedings. At the same time, they provide a continuous historical narrative of the committee's activities. The main points need to be recorded into the minutes, including any facts of the meeting that should be recorded. Any decisions that are passed or actions to be taken, should also be recorded.

The basic requirements of minutes are:

- 1. To provide a true, impartial and balanced account of the meeting**
- 2. To present the record of the meeting in clear, concise and unambiguous language**
- 3. To be as brief as is compatible with the degree of accuracy required**
- 4. To be well presented for rapid understanding of the contents**

TAKING MINUTES

A good memory is no substitute for adequate notes. Notetaking is a matter of personal preference, but experience will mould a particular style.

- 1. Notes must be highly selective – learn to distinguish what is significant and what is not.**
- 2. Record the name of the contributors – you will probably include them in the minutes, it is helpful in case a query arises after the meeting. If action is allocated to a person or group, tag the relative paragraph with “Action by”**
- 3. You may evolve a form of shorthand. This is helpful, provided you remember what your abbreviations mean.**
- 4. Boldly indicate each topic by a clear heading and use paper of adequate size. It is useful to keep to the same size paper for ease of handling and filing. Draft the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting while the events are still fresh in your mind.**
- 5. The minutes are then placed into the Minute Book. This is a very important document and must be ready to be inspected at any time. It is the only official record of the Unit's business.**

RECORDS AND ADMINISTRATION

The following are some of the records that the Unit must keep. The Secretary should be aware of all of these and either keep them personally or allocate them to other committee members so they may be readily found.

- **Membership List**
- **Personal Files**
- **Individual Record/Progress Records**
- **Attendance Records**
- **Accounts/Subscription Books**
- **Income and Expenditure Records**
- **Activity Log Books**
- **Previous Programmes**
- **Unit newsletter**

THE UNIT TREASURER

The position you have been elected to is an extremely important one, for the financial integrity of the Unit rests in your hands. Well kept financial records, regularly audited and with all accounts kept up to date will do much to assure the members that the money they contribute either as dues or through a fundraising project, is being looked after honestly and efficiently.

It's an important position, one you will learn to enjoy once you understand your job and try to do it well. It's important because your Unit will not function for long without funds to operate and you will have much to say about what funds are required, how they should be earned and spent.

As Unit Treasurer it is your responsibility to:

- 1. Keep an up to date record of all financial transactions of your unit**
- 2. Make a monthly report of the Unit's financial situation to the members**
- 3. Receive all income and pay all the bills**
- 4. Have your books checked every three months and audited annually**
- 5. Serve on any committee responsible for fundraising.**

MAKING ENTRIES

RECEIPTS: When entering money received, give as much detail as possible. State where or who it came from and what it is for eg: dues, receipts from fundraising event, a donation or sale of handcrafts.

EXPENDITURE: You will sometimes need to buy items that involve small amounts of money. To simplify matters, set up a petty cash system. A petty cash fund can be setup with the approval of the Group Parents' Executive. An amount is decided and this is handed over to the Unit Treasurer. To ensure success in handling a petty cash account, always make sure a receipt for every expenditure is presented.

UNIT FINANCES

The Unit Executive has the responsibility of managing all money belonging to the Unit. The Unit's finances are managed accordingly:

- **Appointment of a Venture Scout as the Unit Treasurer to operate all financial documents**
- **The Group Council agrees on a sum (petty cash) for the unit to operate with**
- **The Treasurer has the responsibility of keeping accurate records and provide a report on the current financial situation of the Unit at each Executive meeting**
- **Management of the Unit's income and expenditure provides a training element for all members of the Unit.**

UNIT MEMBERSHIP AND RECRUITMENT

To ensure the continuity of a Venture Scout Unit, the Executive must have an active recruitment programme. The active areas of youth member recruitment are from the Scout Troop and outside the Movement.

The Unit should appoint a "mentor" for each new member (especially those coming from outside the group). This role is that of a peer support person who helps the new member settle into the Unit. The mentor would be expected to assist and befriend the new member through membership and venturing skills. This simple method in most cases will guarantee the retention of the new member.

COMMUNICATION

However well-considered the decisions of the unit executive, however good its programme planning, it will be useless unless it also provides good communication to all the Venture Scouts and Leaders in the Unit as well as the whole Group.

It is very important that correct communication channels are set-up and responsibilities well defined.

UNIT RECORDS

The history of a Unit is an important heritage to pass onto future unit members, as well as looking back to repeat successful activities. Too often this information is lost with changes in the executive members and the lack of suitable storage facilities.

- It is important to keep all current records in a portable expanding file that can be taken to a council meeting easily.
- File past correspondence, finance, minutes, newsletters and other records – preferably one file for each year.
- Keep unit log books and memorabilia
- Keep copies of past unit programmes

THE AWARD SCHEME AND PROGRESS

The Executive is responsible for Award scheme standards within the unit. It is responsible for providing a programme where individual unit members can progress through the Award scheme.

- Unit members should understand the Award Scheme and its purpose in providing a personal development programme for each Venture Scout in order to assess each activity proposal
- Each member must be assessed on his or her own merits. The unit council must look closely at each individual

DISCIPLINE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive is responsible for discipline standards within the unit. In some exceptional cases it may be necessary for the Venture Leader to step in and lay down the law.

The Unit Executive must decide what standards are to be adopted by the Unit and its members, make these standards known and ensure that they are maintained. This applies particularly in the case of boy-girl relationships within the Unit. If they threaten to interfere with the standards of the Unit, it will be combined opinion of the Unit Executive that will carry most weight, rather than the parental role enacted by the Leader.

The main guidelines are simple: The Law of the Country and the Scout Law.

THE VENTURE UNIT TERMS OF REFERENCE

It is important for the Executive to draft a Unit Terms of Reference. This should be reviewed annually and redrafted if necessary. This should outline the form of self-government on which the Unit is run, detailing positions of the Unit Executive, roles and responsibilities, the frequency of meetings, terms of office etc.

It should also deal with how Unit-In-Council should operate, the Unit elections, funds, property, relationships between sections, transport, type of activities and the way the unit is managed and organised.

Guidelines for the Venture Unit Executive

SUMMARY

1. What is the role of the Venture Unit Executive within the Unit?

The Venture Unit Executive plans, organises and runs all the meetings of the Unit

2. Who is the Venture Unit Executive?

The Venture Unit Executive is made up of a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and a number of members of the Unit (preferably two or three members).

3. What are the duties of the Unit Executive?

CHAIRPERSON

- Responsible for the running of the Unit Executive
- Responsible for the running of the weekly Unit meetings/activities
- Organises the Venture Executive meetings and runs it
- Monitors the members of the Unit Executive and ensures that everyone is carrying out their role.

SECRETARY

- Takes and writes the Minutes of the Unit Executive meetings
- Drafts the Unit Programmes as decided during the Unit Executive

TREASURER

- Collects subscription fees of the members of the Unit
- Responsible for the collection of any fees needed for activities.

MEMBERS

- Attend the Venture Unit Executive Meetings, give their input and participate in the decision making process.

4. When should the Venture Unit Executive meet?

The Venture Unit Executive should meet at least once a month. This should be distinct from the Venture Unit's meeting. The date of the subsequent Unit Executive Meeting is decided at the end of each meeting.

5. What should the structure of the Unit Executive Meeting be?

- i.** Before the meeting, the chairperson needs to consult with the Venture Scout Leader (VSL) in order to check whether there are any Group/District/National activities in the coming months so that the Unit Executive will take these into consideration and plan the Unit's activities accordingly.
- ii.** At the opening of the Meeting all members recite the Scout Promise and a prayer or a thought.
- iii.** The Secretary reads the Minutes of the previous Unit Executive Meeting.
- iv.** The Chairperson invites all members to review the previous month's Unit meetings. The Unit Executive should adopt a "Plan, Do, Review" approach, to identify any weaknesses and rectify them.
- v.** The Unit Executive forwards its ideas for the coming months and as a team decides when activities should be held.
- vi.** The Unit Executive needs to carry out a risk assessment for all the activities going to be organised.
- vii.** The date for the next Unit Executive Meeting is agreed upon.
- viii.** The meeting is adjourned.

6. How long should the Unit Executive's term be?

The length of the term depends on the Unit's size and needs. The term should be between six and nine months or for a period of 1 year. If the term is of 6 months, the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer are allowed to be candidates for the following term but elected in different roles.

7. When should the Venture Scout Leader intervene?

The Venture Scout Leader must attend all Unit Executive Meetings in order to make sure that all is going well. The Venture Scout Leader needs to guide the Unit Executive in the right direction and ensure that the Unit Executive is working according to the Venture Programme. The Venture Scout Leader needs to give ownership of the meeting to the Unit Executive and not intervene as much as possible.

8. How far ahead should the Unit Executive plan?

The Unit Executive needs to plan six months ahead with different type of activities that are consistent with the Venture Scout Programme. The Unit Executive should plan its weekly meetings three months in advance to allow ample time to organise meetings. Each month the Unit Executive should review the plans in order to ensure that all necessary preparations are carried out.