



INCREASE RETENTION OF FIRST-YEAR SEA SCOUTS

Three Simple Steps to Retain More Sea Scouts - What Ships Can Do

1. MAKE IT PERSONAL!

Create Immediate, Personal Connections

- Contact every new Sea Scout quickly - ideally within 48 hours.
- Assign points of contact, such as the Yeoman, Boatswain, or another designated officer.
- Make every new Sea Scout feel known, welcomed, and included from the start.
- Personally invite them to the next meeting or activity and introduce them to other Sea Scouts before the event begins.
- Give new members something that builds ship identity: a ship t-shirt, patch, neckerchief, sticker, or welcome kit.

2. MAKE IT FUN!

Deliver Adventure and Experiences Early

- Plan an exciting activity, outing, or adventure early in the membership experience.
- Personally assure every new Sea Scout that they are invited to all meetings and activities and they understand what to expect.
- Set the tone: Sea Scouts offer adventure, leadership, friendship, and experiences youth cannot get anywhere else.
- Balance meetings with hands-on activities, social events, outdoor experiences, service, and skill-building.
- Ask Sea Scouts what they want to do and help them make it happen. Let them lead.

3. MAKE IT EASY!

Provide Strong Youth Leadership and Adult Support

- Help new Sea Scouts understand how the ship works without overwhelming them with information.

- Pair newer members with experienced Sea Scouts who can answer questions and help them get involved.
- Give youth leaders coaching and support while allowing them to lead and make real decisions.
- Use simple planning tools and clear expectations so leadership roles feel achievable.
- Make it easy for new Sea Scouts to contribute through small roles before asking them to take on larger responsibilities.

Set Clear Expectations and Foster a Strong Ship Culture

- Establish and publish a calendar early so Sea Scouts and their parents can see upcoming meetings, activities, trips, and major events.
- Use one primary communication system and make sure new members know how to access it.
- Clearly explain costs, uniforms, advancement opportunities, leadership expectations, and how youth can help shape the program.
- Create a culture where every Sea Scout is encouraged to bring ideas, invite friends, and take ownership of the ship.

Engage Sea Scouts Early Through Meaningful Roles

- Give every new Sea Scout a chance to contribute - plan an activity, lead a game, organize food, manage communications, or help with service.
- Use small, low-pressure leadership opportunities to help youth build confidence.
- Connect advancement and leadership development to real ship experiences rather than making them feel like separate requirements.

Bottom line: Retention improves when Sea Scouts feel personally connected, experience meaningful adventure early, and are given a clear, easy path to belong and leader.



WHAT SEA SCOUT YOUTH CAN DO – RESOURCES AND IDEAS

Increase Retention of First-Year Sea Scouts

1. MAKE IT PERSONAL!

- Create a welcome process for every new Sea Scout and assign a youth and adult point of contact.

- Send a personal message before the next meeting or activity with the date and time, location, and what they should bring.
- Hold a new-member orientation or informal welcome gathering.
- Use ship traditions, apparel, patches, and social events to build culture and belonging.

2. MAKE IT FUN!

- Plan adventures early: sailing, cruising, diving, paddling, travel, service, or other ship-selected experiences.
- Build the annual program around youth interests using brainstorming and program planning sessions. Keep meetings interactive and use them to prepare for adventures, develop skills, and make decisions.
- Mix high-adventure opportunities with affordable local activities so cost does not become a barrier.

3. MAKE IT EASY!

- Provide youth leadership training and mentoring for officers and activity chairs.
- Use a shared annual calendar and clear communication channels.
- Break large jobs into smaller roles so more Sea Scouts can participate.
- Explain how advancement, leadership, training, and awards fit into the ship's experience.
- Check in with newer Sea Scouts after their first few meetings and activities to ask what is working and what could improve.

**A retention-focused ship should regularly ask: Do new Sea Scouts feel welcome?
Have they had fun yet? Do they understand how to participate and lead?**