



Invitation Methods for Cub Scouting

A few guidelines for successful implementation

Learn about family resources and talents...

Throughout *Invitation Methods for Cub Scouting*, pack leaders are challenged to discover the talents and resources of their parents and families. If we know more about what people can do and what they might enjoy, our efforts to involve them will be far more successful. The *Family Talent Survey Sheet*, published by the Boy Scouts of America is a good place to start. Use it “as is,” or create your own form. Either way, do take this important step!

Plan ahead...

One of the keys to a successful Cub Scouting program is planning ahead. Usually all that separates great activities and those just “so so,” is thinking about them in advance. The same thing goes for inviting new families to join Cub Scouting. None of the steps are complicated, but they *do* require lead-time. Just getting the right people and materials in-place, on-time, requires careful planning. And then add to that, time for creating attractive materials; and for preparing parents, leaders, and Cub Scouts for their roles in the effort. You can see how last minute planning can severely limit results.

Use your council’s resources...

Talk to your district executive, a district committee member, or to a commissioner; and read your council newsletter. Learn what’s available. There may be a membership recruiting theme to work with, or pre-printed flyers or “stickers” available. Your DE may also be able to assist in a meeting with your principal or visits with boys and girls at school. You won’t know unless you ask.



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THE TOP TEN LIST

The most important methods for recruiting. All packs should consider them.

1. Pack information sheet

- ☉ Every pack should develop and distribute a Pack Information Sheet that includes meeting dates, times, and places; a pack calendar; a list of leaders' contact information; and other exciting information about events and activities.
- ☉ Give copies to your chartered partner, pack families, local schools, churches, and other organizations—then they can answer questions and help people get in touch with you.
- ☉ It's your chance to brag on your pack! Make it look smart. Keep a supply on hand.

2. Chartered partner organization visit

- ☉ Before school begins, schedule a face-to-face meeting with your chartered partner. This important meeting gives you the opportunity to thank the organization for its support, and to outline ideas and requests for your recruitment effort.
- ☉ Take your Pack Information Sheet and perhaps a yearbook-style photo album of activities. Be prepared to explain how Cub Scouting benefits the organization.
- ☉ A can of popcorn or other appropriate gift for the head of the chartered partner and his or her assistant, can go a long way.

3. Meeting with the principal

- ☉ Just like a PTA presentation (see item #17), a meeting with the principal will strengthen relationships and may foster support for your recruitment efforts.
- ☉ Share exciting news and successes regarding your pack and upcoming events. Be sure to include school and community service projects.
- ☉ The pack is a resource and an asset to the school. Explain the benefits for the youth and for the school. Schools should be the sites of many pack service projects. And, Cub Scouting is educational: it has been established that active Scouting programs improve grades and study habits, and lead to better jobs and more successful lives.
- ☉ Remember, a principal will appreciate a pack that is a source of school volunteers.
- ☉ Take a can of popcorn or other gift to thank the principal for support. Be sure to make the meeting brief. Don't waste this important administrator's valuable time.

4. Flyers

- ☉ A pack can produce its own Cub Scouting promotional flyers, but often the local district or council will provide them at no charge.
- ☉ Order or produce flyers well in advance, and include the date, time, and place of the recruitment night, along with unit leadership contact information. Many flyer designs also have space for information about your upcoming events.
- ☉ Joining nights should be held in the first few weeks of school and flyers sent home with all boys. It might help if you offer to count out the flyers by classroom. Counts need not be exact. Ask for an average, divide by two for number of youth, and add a cushion!

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- ☉ If teachers distribute them, attach a half-sheet with directions for each classroom-package of flyers. Your note should also thank the teacher for his or her assistance.

5. Wear the uniform

- ☉ What a simple way to market Cub Scouting. The uniform is a walking billboard!
- ☉ Ask Cub Scouts to wear their uniforms not only on the days of den and pack meetings, but also on those of joining nights and other school events like back-to-school night.
- ☉ At your meetings, provide recognition for every youth who wore their uniform that day.
- ☉ Leaders should also consider wearing their uniforms at school events.
- ☉ Design a cool pack t-shirt for Cub Scouts to wear on a more regular basis.

6. School visits

- ☉ Visits to classrooms, the lunchroom, and even on school buses, are highly effective at getting youth excited about Cub Scouting—a great opportunity to talk up your pack activities and to offer a personal invitation to the recruitment night.
- ☉ Be sure to take visual aids, “stickers” (see item #7), display boards, and simple props to make the presentation lively and memorable.
- ☉ The visit can be done up to three days before the event. Stress that the youth must take a parent or guardian, or other adult partner with them to the joining night!
- ☉ After your visit, be sure to send the school a thank you note.

7. Stickers & Tyvek wristbands

- ☉ “Stickers” that go on a youth shirt (think peel-off name-tags printed with joining information) may be more likely to make it home than a flyer.
- ☉ Boys and girls can also put the stickers on their lunch boxes, notebooks, or anything else that goes home, and that a parent might see.
- ☉ An alternative to stickers is identification wristbands made of Tyvek like those used in hospitals. They can be printed with recruitment night and pack contact information and then distributed to boys and girls at schools or other venues.
- ☉ Many councils provide stickers free of charge. They might do the same for wristbands.
- ☉ Stickers or wristbands should include date, time, and place for joining night, along with contact information and instructions for a parent or adult partner to also attend.
- ☉ Distribute at school visits, back-to-school events, and other such functions.

8. Yard signs

- ☉ Before joining night, put signs at school entrances and exits, and high traffic areas.
- ☉ Distribute signs to parents to post at their homes and perhaps places of business.
- ☉ Use council-provided signs or create your own.
- ☉ Include date, time, and place for joining night, plus a phone number and web site address. If you design your own sign use LARGE, DARK print.

9. Picture boards

- ☉ Display boards speak louder than words! Get permission to set them up at back-to-school nights, recruitments, church/school activities, and other places families will see them.

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- 🌀 Creating these boards may be a great den activity. Be sure to include contact information, web site address, and any joining night information.

10. Back-to-school nights

- 🌀 Your pack is part of the fiber of the school, and people need to know it. Being present at back-to-school nights and other school activities is an important way to increase awareness of what we have to offer youth and families.
- 🌀 Set up a table with flyers, a sign-in sheet, stickers, picture board, and other visuals; and speak with all families attending. Be sure to have a supply of your Pack Information Sheet and pack “business cards” (see item #11).
- 🌀 Take names and contact information of interested families so you can personally call and remind them to attend the recruitment night.
- 🌀 All pack leaders should be in uniform for this event.
- 🌀 Encourage pack leaders and parents to volunteer at back-to-school nights. They can help with set up, take down, and other duties.

Pack Families

The families of the pack are your most important resource. They know people; their sons have friends; and getting everyone—especially parents—involved in marketing your program can be an easy way to introduce the idea of volunteering. Don't be shy! Working together with other adults is fun and many will thank you. Just remind them we're looking for our nation's future leaders.

11. “Business” or “buddy” cards

- 🌀 Design and print attractive “business cards” for parents and Cub Scouts to distribute to friends and other families. The cards also work well as a “takeaway” at school, church, and community functions.
- 🌀 Perhaps use a child-oriented version—a “buddy card”—for the Cub Scouts to use with their friends.
- 🌀 Think about creating a special version to pass out with candy on Halloween.
- 🌀 Include pack meeting date, time, and place; leadership contact information; and perhaps a catchy slogan that alludes to the fun new families will enjoy. Print upcoming activities on the reverse side.
- 🌀 Use a commercial print shop or a business card template on your home computer.

12. Customized invitation letters

- 🌀 Produce and email a letter to parents that they can customize as from their family, and then send to friends and acquaintances.
- 🌀 Include information on the benefits of Cub Scouting, your pack's activities, and why your families are involved.
- 🌀 It is important that any letters invite families to a specific gathering, indicate how to learn more, and what to do if they cannot attend.

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13. Personal phone calls/email invitations

- ☉ Ask each family to brainstorm other families they could personally call or email with an invitation to join.
- ☉ The pack should provide each family with copies of the *Pack Information Sheet*, business card, and other items to help spread the excitement of Cub Scouting.
- ☉ Pack leadership could also create an email “newsletter” or other promotional copy for families to forward to their brainstormed list.
- ☉ Have an incentive for the family inviting the most new members.

14. Promotions through family affiliations

- ☉ Most families of course, are affiliated with other organizations and businesses: place of employment; customers or clients; church; musical groups; various clubs; sports; etc. These contacts can also be avenues to spread the word about Cub Scouting.
- ☉ The Boy Scouts of America publishes a *Family Talent Survey Sheet*, or you can create your own “family resource questionnaire.” Be sure it asks for information about family affiliations outside of Scouting.
- ☉ The *Pack Information Sheet* and business or buddy cards also come in handy with this invitation method.

15. Halloween Candy

- ☉ Halloween represents an opportunity where often parades of children actually stop by the homes of Cub Scouting families. Why not take advantage of the opportunity?
- ☉ Provide a sticker or label your pack families can to affix to candy they give to out.
- ☉ Sheets of labels with invitations can be printed from your computer.

16. Pack web site

- ☉ Check with your parents and find talent to set up and maintain your own pack web site. This is getting to be the “norm” these days; most packs seem to have them.
- ☉ The site should be designed for members of your pack; as well as for the community to learn about what we have to offer and that we are developing tomorrow’s leaders.
- ☉ Limit what the public can see, to information about joining nights and pack activities in general. Provide a link to the National Council, <http://www.Scouting.org>, for information about Cub Scouting and the Boy Scouts of America.
- ☉ Provide password protected access that allows pack families to see the more detailed information about activities and events.
- ☉ Think logically about youth protection issues. For example, refer to youth only by their first names. Check with your local council about the rules for a pack web site.
- ☉ Check with your council, your school, and other community organizations to see if they will provide links from their sites to yours.
- ☉ Include your web site address on all pack promotional materials.

Schools

The greatest potential for Cub Scout membership growth is in the schools. Youth who would benefit from what we have to offer spend more time there than almost anywhere else. Pack leaders should develop strong relationships with principals, teachers, and parent organizations. This will go a long way—especially in those areas where the local Scouting council or district has limited access. Don't forget to research and include, local private schools and "home-school" associations.

17. PTA/PTO presentations

- ☉ At the beginning of each school year, it is a good idea to schedule a brief presentation to your school's parent teacher organization.
- ☉ Share information about the number of families in your pack, recent and planned activities, and the benefits of Cub Scouting for both youth and their families.
- ☉ Distribute Pack Information Sheets and business cards.
- ☉ Take a few cans of popcorn to pass around in thanks for their ongoing support.
- ☉ Offer the pack's assistance and involvement in PTA/PTO events and projects.
- ☉ It is extremely helpful if several pack leaders and parents are active in the PTA/PTO.

18. Involvement in school activities

- ☉ Back-to-school nights, carnivals, fund-raisers, and other school activities represent excellent opportunities for pack parents and leaders to volunteer, and thus pay the school back for its support—or sew good will toward developing it.
- ☉ The pack's participation will help the school see the pack as a positive resource and committed ally, for they too are developing future leaders.
- ☉ If parents cannot volunteer, they should at least attend and otherwise support school functions, and be on the lookout for prospective new families.
- ☉ Be sure especially, to be available for flag ceremonies throughout the year.

19. Intercom announcement

- ☉ Obtain permission to use the school's public address system or intercom to make announcements regarding pack meetings and activities, and to promote joining nights.
- ☉ The announcements must be brief, upbeat, and well rehearsed.
- ☉ Seek a parent to handle this—one with a strong a "broadcast" voice.

20. Video announcement

- ☉ If your school has a closed-circuit television system, ask if one of your articulate, well-uniformed Cub Scouts or leaders could read a joining night announcement on-camera.
- ☉ Make sure the reader is well rehearsed. You can point to your favorite television anchor as an example for how your "news" should be read.
- ☉ Your school may also allow you to show one of the Boy Scouts of America's membership promotional videos, either over their TV system, at an assembly, or in a classroom. Work with your district executive to obtain a copy.

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21. Textbook covers

- 🌀 Create and distribute a text book cover that promotes Cub Scouting and your pack.
- 🌀 These can be easily created on a computer.
- 🌀 Perhaps design it as a template that dens and families can personalize.

22. Personal letters of invitation

- 🌀 Use a formal invitation letter or card to invite all families in the school to your joining night.
- 🌀 Work with pack families to gather names and addresses, or use a school directory if available.
- 🌀 Invitations should be mailed two weeks ahead.

23. Display case

- 🌀 Use a school display case or bulletin board to show the excitement in your pack.
- 🌀 Include action-pictures to catch attention and motivate boys and girls to attend the joining night.
- 🌀 Consider purchasing an electronic “picture frame” that loops through a number of photos.
- 🌀 Include a poster with the date, time, and place of the recruitment night, and with other information that will help families make the decision to join.
- 🌀 Some schools will let you keep up the display year-round, but do this ONLY if you are able to update it from time to time with upcoming pack activities.

24. Phone calls

- 🌀 Personally call each family at the school, and any additional prospects you might have listed through discussions with others in the pack. Share a few details about your activities, and invite them to the joining night.
- 🌀 This is a great opportunity to answer questions and share stories about the program.
- 🌀 Calls should be made at least one week in advance.
- 🌀 Ask other pack families to help with the calls.

25. Silicone wristbands

- 🌀 If ordered in quantities of 100 or more, these debossed promotional wristbands can be purchased for as little as \$1.00 each, or even less. Try an Internet search on “promotional wristbands” to check out different sources.
- 🌀 Customize the wristbands with your pack’s web site address, so people can learn more about your activities.
- 🌀 Distribute to youth at the school or award them to new members and their recruiters.
- 🌀 It is even possible in some markets to sell them for a small return.

26. School reader-board

- 🌀 Ask at your school if you can display a message on their outdoor marquee to promote your recruitment night or other pack activity.
- 🌀 Give lots of notice and make your message short so it can be read as people drive by.

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27. Lunch tray liners

- ☉ You've seen them at McDonalds and other places—a promotional piece that fits the food tray! Provide information about your pack and its activities, and how to join.
- ☉ Tray liners should include pictures, puzzles, and other exciting visuals in order to attract attention and motivate children to even take them home.
- ☉ To make the idea more attractive to the school, you could also coordinate the message to include information about girls' youth organizations.

28. Serving school lunch

- ☉ Have uniformed pack leaders volunteer to serve lunch on the day of your joining night.
- ☉ Be sure to take a picture board, stickers, and flyers to build interest and attention.

29. After-school promotional activity

- ☉ Work with the school administration to set up an activity on school grounds.
- ☉ If you have volunteers willing to get food handler permits and meet other regulations, make it a hot dog BBQ! Nothing attracts attention like free food.
- ☉ Have uniformed Cub Scouts participating along with other children. Make it co-ed and allow all ages to join in. The younger boys and girls will soon be ready for Lion and Tiger Cubs.
- ☉ Take the games and activities straight out of Cub Scouting literature.
- ☉ Have a picture board, displays, stickers, flyers, and copies of your Pack Information Sheet; and watch for parents stopping to pick up their sons.

30. School service projects

- ☉ If the pack supports the school the school is more likely to support the pack.
- ☉ Make sure service projects are based on what the school needs.
- ☉ Youth and leaders should be in uniform as they work.
- ☉ Do projects at times when a maximum of youth and parents will see the action.
- ☉ Seek coverage in the school newsletter and the local newspaper (see item #46)
- ☉ Ask to have pictures and a description displayed on a bulletin board in a hallway.

31. Follow-up joining nights

- ☉ It is highly unlikely that all the boys and girls who want to join will make it to one recruitment night. There is just too much going on these days for both youth and parents. As a result, many packs hold two or even more joining nights per year.
- ☉ Help families understand that if they missed the first meeting they can still join at a subsequent night, or at any other time of the year!

Churches

There is a reason so many churches serve as Scouting chartered partners. Most appreciate our family values and our stand on duty to God. Contact the local minister, priest, bishop, rabbi, or other pastor, and establish a mutually beneficial relationship!

32. Bulletin inserts, articles, & calendars

- 🌀 Create an attractive insert, and encourage churches in your pack's drawing area to include it with their weekly bulletin. Handle all the printing, and offer to help with the inserting process as well.
- 🌀 Submit regular articles for churches to include within the text of their bulletins.
- 🌀 Include pack leader contact information and details about your joining nights and upcoming activities.
- 🌀 Make articles brief with no long paragraphs. Bold and underline all contact information and activity dates so they will stand out. Inserts should look like an advertisement that guides the eye to critical information.
- 🌀 If the church produces a weekly or annual calendar, be sure to get all your pack activities listed in it.

33. Church service projects

- 🌀 Take a look at item #30, covering school service projects. Same suggestions apply.
- 🌀 If we support the church in this way, then while our Cub Scouts are learning the valuable lessons of service, the pack will be earning the respect of the church.

34. Sunday school presentations

- 🌀 Ask to make a brief presentation at local religious education classes ("Sunday school").
- 🌀 Take a few Cub Scouts with you, and be sure to be in uniform.
- 🌀 Promote and explain the religious awards program for that faith.
- 🌀 Participate in Scout Sunday services; wear the uniform; set up an information table.

35. Messages from the pulpit

- 🌀 Though this is especially appropriate for Scout Sunday, many pastors are willing to promote Cub Scouting at other times as well. Our values are an important factor.
- 🌀 Schedule a meeting with the pastor and follow the same guidelines indicated in item #3 for a meeting with a principal. Pay special attention to the appropriate Religious Awards Program.
- 🌀 Ask if he or she would be willing to deliver a message along with the sermon and to preach about the values of Cub Scouting.
- 🌀 Provide a brief summary of important points that might be covered.
- 🌀 Investigate the possibility of a pack leader delivering a brief message during the part of a service reserved for announcements; cover the joining night or other pack event.

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36. “Welcome to Cub Scouts” table

- ☉ Secure permission to set up a display that youth and parents can stop by as they enter or exit the church. Perhaps it will make a “future leader” feel welcome!
- ☉ Use some of the same ideas indicated previously for a school display (see item #23): lots of pictures, the Pack Information Sheet, and so forth.
- ☉ Have the table staffed by uniformed pack leaders and Cub Scouts.
- ☉ Do this the day messages are delivered from the pulpit, and yes, on Scout Sunday.

37. After-church promotional activity

- ☉ This would be just like item #29 covering the after-school promotional activity.
- ☉ It could be done in a “fellowship hall” or on church grounds, depending on the weather, facilities, and available space.

Community

The following ideas can help market your pack’s program throughout your community. Try not to keep your pack a secret! Build awareness that Cub Scouting is alive, healthy and relevant. You will reach not only additional families, but may well develop general support for Scouting aims and objectives.

38. Community events & parades

- ☉ Do some research! The local chambers of commerce are a good place to begin. Make a list of all the local carnivals, parades and other events in the area around your pack. Then contact organizers to learn how you can be part of them.
- ☉ Set up a display board or booth at community events such as carnivals and parades. Have uniformed leaders and Cub Scouts there to answer questions, along with plenty of flyers and your Pack Information Sheet to distribute.
- ☉ Encourage pack families to volunteer to assist with the set-up, clean up, or activities at community events.
- ☉ Look for opportunities for your Cub Scouts to present flag ceremonies—especially for patriotic celebrations and 9/11 remembrances. Get them in their best uniforms, and practice, practice, practice!
- ☉ Parades are great fun for the entire Scouting family. Build a float, march, or volunteer to carry banners! Again, have plenty of information available to distribute.

39. Pack special events in the community

- ☉ Hold a special event such as a “Kite Day,” bike rodeo, or carnival. Invite the entire community. Get the local paper to cover it! Community service projects are good too.
- ☉ Negotiate a special price at the zoo and offer “Cub Scouting at the Zoo.” Publicize it through newspapers, schools, and churches. A science center or museum works too.

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- ☉ Secure a partner for the event; perhaps the local fire or police department, a school, or a church. This can lead to increased exposure and credibility.
- ☉ Have a schedule of events and activities planned for children of all ages. Consider setting it up for just part of a day so people will leave wanting more.

40. Sporting events & recreation centers

- ☉ Sports are a major activity for many families; be on the lookout for their marketing possibilities.
- ☉ Work with youth sports associations to set up information tables at games.
- ☉ Get permission from local sports venues to hang banners or posters, or to set up information tables during games and tournaments.
- ☉ Host an activity at a local recreation center. These are often very popular places where kids of all ages “hang out.” An example might be a basketball skills clinic for children.

41. Popcorn & fund-raising opportunities

- ☉ Selling popcorn or conducting other fund-raisers represents an opportunity to do more than just generate revenue.
- ☉ For each item sold, attach information or give the customer a thank you card that also promotes your pack activities and successes.

42. Community reader-boards

- ☉ Use marquees at businesses, churches, and neighborhood or recreation centers to promote joining nights and pack activities.
- ☉ Contact organizations well in advance, in order to plan the message and its timing.
- ☉ Look especially for “scrolling” signs; the moving message attracts more attention.
- ☉ Be sure to thank the organization for its support.

43. Local libraries

- ☉ Ask the local library if you can hang posters there and leave a supply of your Pack Information Sheets on the counter for interested patrons.
- ☉ Design and print Cub Scouting promotional bookmarks for libraries to distribute.
- ☉ Libraries also have events; your pack’s involvement could lead to more exposure.
- ☉ Encourage pack leaders to volunteer to read (in uniform) for “story time.”

44. Promotion through businesses and offices

- ☉ Visit local businesses and post offices to seek permission to set up a window or counter-top display, or to leave information about your pack activities.
- ☉ Ask groceries or drug stores if they will insert your Pack Information Sheet or business card into each shopping bag.
- ☉ Family-friendly businesses are the best bet. And they will be especially interested if the display might bring in or increase business.
- ☉ The best time to use these methods may be during the Scout Week celebration.

45. Door hangers

- 🌀 Create attractive door hangers with pack contact information and joining night details.
- 🌀 Target specific areas within your community and assign them to dens for distribution of door hangers. Use the same rules that you would for door-to-door sales, with full involvement from accompanying parents and leaders.
- 🌀 Door hangers work especially well in apartment complexes and subsidized housing, but be sure to first obtain permission from building management.
- 🌀 Blanket key areas in your community on a specific day. Make this a pack activity and give the Cub Scouts a special participation recognition.

The Media

The media is all about communications and marketing; it's what they do. Every news story about Scouting helps generate support; every public service announcement draws a level of interest. There is always somebody out there watching, listening, or reading. Let's help them see and hear about Cub Scouting!

46. Local newspaper “news stories”

- 🌀 Community newspapers are always interested in what's going on in their neighborhoods. Usually they are looking for stories to write.
- 🌀 Every pack meeting or activity represents an opportunity for a story: who earned what, who won the race, what families are involved. They are all of interest.
- 🌀 Develop a relationship with the publisher and editors. Look for a parent with good writing skills who might be willing to prepare and submit news releases.
- 🌀 Alert the paper several weeks before any of your major activities. You never know; they might send a reporter/photographer.
- 🌀 Make sure your pack meetings and activities are included in the community events section or calendar that most papers publish. This is a good method to consider for the larger papers as well.

47. Newspaper or newsletter advertising

- 🌀 Sometimes it pays to purchase small ads in newspapers and in the newsletters published by schools, churches, and even large business that realize they have employees with families.
- 🌀 An ad might be a one-time purchase for a joining night or major activity, but some newsletters—especially those from churches—will also print low-cost business card-sized ads that become permanent fixtures on the back page.

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48. Community access television

- Ⓢ Most communities and local cable companies have community access channels.
- Ⓢ They may run public service announcements, feature live guests, and cover various community events.
- Ⓢ Become familiar with the station in your community and contact management to learn about the possibilities.
- Ⓢ If you have the talent and interest among pack families, try filming a 30-second spot based on your activities and plans for the coming year. Of course, you might want to check with channel management—just to make sure they will run it.

49. Drive-time radio PSAs

- Ⓢ Make your own public service announcement! To get ideas, listen to advertising on the radio. Then plan what will be said, write it out, and rehearse and record!
- Ⓢ If you can recruit someone with a voice recognized in the community, then all the better!
- Ⓢ Some stations—especially talk radio and sports stations—may have radio hosts or personalities willing to do the recording for you.

50. Sign spinner

- Ⓢ Maybe you've seen them on street corners. They're the latest thing. Instead of someone just standing there wearing a sandwich-board, young people hire out as "sign spinners." They use large—usually cardboard or vinyl—signs that they twirl over and around themselves like a basketball player might show off his ball handling skills. It involves a combination of acrobatics, baton-tossing and martial arts movements to attract the attention of passing motorists.
- Ⓢ Ok, so maybe this one's a long shot, but having a sign spinner spinning a Cub Scouting message would certainly attract attention. You never know, one of your Cub Scout's older siblings may already be skilled in the art!





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