

## The Order of the Arrow: What's it all about?

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The Order of the Arrow is at once a prominent institution in Scouting and a mysterious one. The OA is nearly as old as Scouting itself, yet it is misunderstood by some and unknown to others. While this is partly by design, there's much about the Order of the Arrow that every Scouter should be familiar with.

### The OA: What is it?

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You have probably heard the Order of the Arrow described as **Scouting's National Honor Society** or **The Brotherhood of Honor Campers**. But membership in the OA is not an honor to be bestowed on a Scout or a recognition given for having gone camping, achieved First Class or just because it's his turn.

Rather, the purpose of the OA is summed up as not just recognizing those Scouts who have experienced the outdoors, but who live according to the Scout Oath and Scout law. The OA promotes camping and the appreciation of the outdoors both inside and outside of Scouting, develops leadership among its members, and aims to emphasize the importance of being of service to others.

Think of it, then, mainly as a call to its members to put others first, and make it their life's habit to do so. As Rotarians would say, it's about service above self.

### What does it do?

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The Order of the Arrow isn't a private club for the enjoyment of its members, as some might think. Sure, Arrowmen have a lot of fun – camping, hiking, eating pizza, and playing great games at meetings – but fun is the carrot that keeps Arrowmen engaged, and it works the same way as it does in the rest of Scouting.

Arrowmen, first and foremost, cheerfully provide service to others. That service takes many forms. One of the most visible is the service provided to Scout camps and the camping program. The OA helps maintain our camps through seasonal service weekends, getting camps ready to host summer campers by setting up tents, sprucing up the waterfront and grooming trails. They also promote camping in troops and packs, and help with district and council camping events like camporees and day camps. And the scope of camping service extends all the way up to the BSA's national high adventure bases. An elite corps of Arrowmen helped build the Summit in West Virginia, a task that could never have been completed without their hard work. Being honor campers, Arrowmen share their knowledge. They help other members of their troops learn camping skills, improve their abilities and show how camping can be more fun. They help Cub Scout packs by promoting and helping at Cub Scout resident camps and daycamps.

Arrowmen also fan out into their communities and provide service in ways large and small, often not visible to those who benefit as being from Scouting. The *Dare to Do* initiative unveiled at the 2015 National Order of the Arrow Conference is an example of OA members accepting the challenge to help others.

### How do I Join?

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To be able to join the Order of the Arrow, you need to be elected by the members of your Scouting Unit. Once each year, every unit should hold an election where those eligible are chosen by their fellow youth Scouts based on their performance in the unit. Not all eligible are elected. You'd be surprised how good the unit members are at deciding if you are worthy of this honor.



TECUMSEH LODGE

ORDER OF THE ARROW

## **What are the qualifications to be eligible?**

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Youth membership qualifications.

All members of, or candidates for membership in, the Order of the Arrow who are under 21 years of age shall be considered youth members or candidates for youth membership, subject to meeting the following requirements:

- Be a registered member of the Boy Scouts of America.
- At the time of their election, youth must be under the age of 21, and hold one of the following ranks corresponding to the type of unit in which they are being considered for election: Scouts BSA First Class Rank, Venturing Discovery Award, or Sea Scout Ordinary rank, or higher, and following approval by the Scoutmaster, Crew Advisor or Sea Scout Skipper, be elected by the youth members of their unit.
- Have experienced 15 nights of camping while registered with a troop, crew, or ship within the two years immediately prior to the election. The 15 nights must include one, but no more than one, long-term camp consisting of at least five consecutive nights of overnight camping, approved and under the auspices and standards of the Boy Scouts of America. Only five nights of the long-term camp may be credited toward the 15-night camping requirement; the balance of the camping (10 nights) must be overnight, weekend, or other short-term camps of, at most, three nights each. Ship nights may be counted as camping for Sea Scouts.

## **What is involved in taking my “Ordeal”?**

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To become a member, you must complete the Ordeal which consists of four parts which you will complete during the Ordeal weekend: 1) A night of camping alone under the stars to prove self-reliance. 2) A day of arduous toil to show willingness to serve others. 3) A day of scant food to show power of self-denial. 4) A day of silence, to turn your thoughts inward. After completing these tasks, you will be able to complete your ceremony and become a member of the Order of the Arrow.

## **How long do I have to complete my Ordeal?**

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Typically, you are eligible to take your Ordeal for 18 months from the date you are elected. If you do not complete your Ordeal during this period, you will need to be re-elected by your unit to be eligible again. Occasionally, an extension will be granted for certain hardship cases where someone can't attend due to illness or injury. This will not apply to those who just put it off and then realized they are too busy with other activities in the fall, so be mindful of this when choosing the date for your Ordeal.

## **What will I need to do the weekend of my Ordeal?**

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You should plan to arrive at the camp between 6:30 and 8:00 Friday evening - absolutely no later than 8:15 PM unless you make prior arrangements with the Lodge Chief or the Lodge Adviser. Saturday morning arrival is not acceptable because the program starts on Friday evening and must be completed in its entirety. The Ordeal weekend will end at 9:00 AM on Sunday so please plan on staying through Sunday morning. You should make arrangements to be picked up between 9:00 AM and 10:00 AM Sunday. Youth will not be permitted to leave camp before Sunday morning unless prior arrangements have been made in writing by their parent or guardian.

## **Where can I register for an Ordeal and get the necessary forms?**

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You can register online through our website (<https://www.tecumseh65.org>). Just choose your Ordeal date, click the link and follow the directions. You can also download a copy of the letter you were mailed along with the forms [Here](#).

## **Who can I contact if I have further questions?**

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Lodge Professional Adviser	James Dockter	<a href="mailto:james.dockter@scouting.org">james.dockter@scouting.org</a>	614 436-7200