

# CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

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## WHY WE NEED CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Cub Scouts are growing up in a complicated world. They are faced with conflicting messages that are often hard for them to grasp. Some influences, such as peer pressure, may provide boys with the positive support they need to help them do the right thing; but in some cases these same influences can cause boys to act in ways that sharply contradict positive values.

Since its origin, the Scouting program has been an educational experience concerned with values. In 1910, the first Scouting activities were designed to build character, physical fitness, practical skills, and service. All of these elements remain part of Cub Scouting today. As Cub Scouting has progressed through the years, the importance of making good decisions based on sound values has been integral and steadfast.

Scouting helps teach values to boys and helps them develop character. Character development is a process begun in early childhood, and the family is the first and most important source for raising children of character. But for character development to be comprehensive, it must seek to develop all areas of a child's character—knowledge, commitment, and practice. Toward that end, character education must be present in all areas of a child's life, including the home and educational, religious, and civic arenas. Scouting honors the home, religious institutions, schools, and communities as critically influencing the character development of youth.

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Cub Scouting activities

- involve the parents, adult leaders, and friends of Cub Scouts;
- are based in home-centered programs that teach essential core values central to the development of good character;
- encourage character development, physical coordination, family unity, and enthusiasm for learning;
- reinforce the qualities embraced by the Cub Scout Promise and the Law of the Pack. (See Chapter 2 for the Cub Scout Promise and the Law of the Pack.)

## WHAT IS CHARACTER AND HOW IS IT DEVELOPED?

Character can be defined as the collection of core values possessed by an individual that lead to principled moral commitment and action. Character development refers to the processes by which these values are learned and practiced.

People have debated for a long time on how character is developed. Some think that character is developed by clearly instilling moral knowledge; that is, children must be *told* what is right and good—period. Others argue that children develop character by *learning to reason* about what is right and good. Still others argue that character is developed by habitually *practicing* what is right and good.

So, how is character developed? The answer is this: Character development requires attention to each of these concepts, and more.

