

# How to Build a Better Budget

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Perhaps you enjoy fundraising every month or pestering parents for money before each camping trip. Maybe you're a fan of scrubbing pots and pans and doing summer camp laundry, too.

For the rest of us, a unit budget plan is the way to go. Scouters like you will enjoy getting a more complete picture of the year. Parents will appreciate knowing the annual cost of Scouting up front so they can incorporate that cost into their family's budget.

Start by planning your year in advance. Then figure out how much money you'll need — and need to raise. Have your unit committee and chartered organization approve the budget. After that, simply execute the plan and enjoy a well-designed year of Scouting.

In Cub Scout packs, adult leaders create the program plan and budget. In troops and crews, youth leaders are heavily involved while adult volunteers advise from the sidelines.

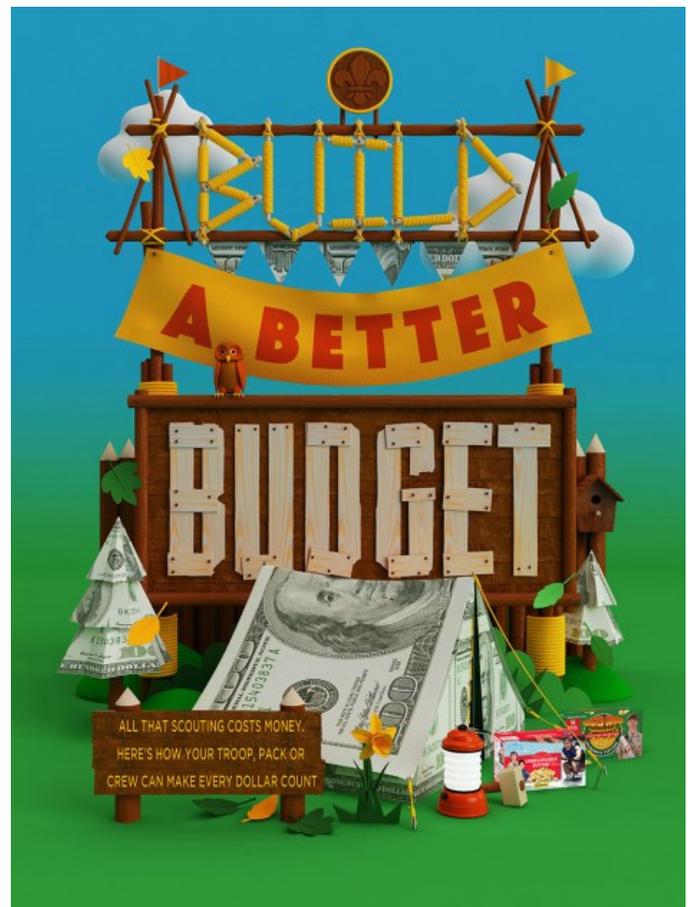
## Six steps to creating a budget

1. **Plan your pack, troop or crew's annual program.** You can't have a budget without a program plan. This is a vision of your next six, 12 or 18 months of Scouting fun. Your calendar should list meetings, weekend campouts, high-adventure trips and more. It should include day camp, resident camp and summer camp. Don't forget district, council and national Scouting events. Be sure someone brings the school district's calendar, a list of holidays (when is Easter this year?), and schedules for sports or extracurricular activities.
2. **Make it fun.** Bring snacks, play some music and plan a fun post-planning activity. Work's always better when it doesn't feel like work.
3. **Develop a budget** so you know how much money you'll need to achieve the program. Remember to include costs beyond camping trips. Consider handbooks, awards and recognition items, program materials, scholarships for low-income families, contingency expenses and more.
4. **Look for projects** that allow the troop or crew to bring in additional income.
5. **Figure out how much product you'll need to sell.** If you're peddling a product like popcorn, determine how much each member should try to sell to cover your income goal.
6. **Get commitments** from parents, leaders and youth.

# The 12 basic Scouting expenses

For best results, build each of these expenses into your unit's annual budget.

1. **Registration fees.** The BSA membership fee is \$33 a year for all registered youth and adult members.
2. **Charter fee.** Units are required to pay an annual rechartering fee of \$40, submitted with the unit's annual charter application. Sometimes the unit pays this fee; sometimes the chartered organization covers it.
3. **Boys' Life magazine.** The BSA's monthly magazine is available to all members at \$12 per year. Most units simply wrap this cost into their annual dues. Every Scout should [subscribe to Boys' Life](#) because it promotes reading and enhances your unit's monthly program — plus, it's fun. It's part of being a Scout.
4. **Accident and sickness insurance.** Ask your local council for information on how to protect parents from the financial hardship of high medical bills in the case of an unfortunate accident while on a Scouting trip.
5. **Advancement and recognition.** Costs for Cub Scout adventure loops, Boy Scout merit badges, Venturing awards and more should be included.
6. **Activities.** In some units, families pay per event for activities like the Pinewood Derby, council camporees, weekend campouts and high-adventure trips. A better bet: Make this all part of the unit's budget.
7. **Camp.** Day camp, resident camp, family camp, Boy Scout summer camp, and a big Venturing or Sea Scouting trip. These special Scouting events — often the highlight of a young person's year — should be included in the budget.
8. **Program materials.** Den meeting supplies, craft tools, a U.S. flag, a unit flag, camping equipment, videos, books, merit badge pamphlets, ceremonial props and more. Some packs, troops and crews provide each new member with a "welcome kit" that includes an official handbook, unit numeral, T-shirt and cap.
9. **Training.** Adult and youth leader training should be considered an integral annual expense. In many troops, the cost to send the senior patrol leader or crew president and his or her assistant to National Youth Leadership Training is part of the budget. Other units pay to send a certain number of adults to Wood Badge each year and ask Scouters to apply for these spots.
10. **Uniforms.** Uniforms create a sense of belonging. In most units, the individual pays for the uniform. But you might consider making uniform elements — or the full uniform itself — part of the unit budget.
11. **Reserve fund.** The "rainy-day fund" might be established by a gift or loan from the chartered organization, by members of the committee or by a unit money-earning project.
12. **Other expenses.** A gift to the World Friendship Fund, leader recognition items, meeting refreshments and anything else that might cost money.



## Sources of income

It's called "fundraiser fatigue," and it afflicts youth soccer teams and Scout units alike. Instead of a parade of monthly fundraisers, try to earn the most amount of money in the least amount of time. For most units, one well-planned fundraiser in the fall, such as selling popcorn, will suffice. Other units need the extra boost of a spring fundraiser.

Remember, units aren't allowed to solicit money by requesting contributions from individuals or the community. And if you're not doing a council-sponsored fundraiser, you'll need to fill out the Unit Money-Earning Application ([bit.ly/BSAmoneyapp](http://bit.ly/BSAmoneyapp)) before proceeding.

Once you determine how much money each Scout or Venturer can realistically expect to earn in a fundraiser (or two), calculate the deficit. That will reveal the annual dues obligation from each parent.

If the expected annual dues are still prohibitively high, switch to monthly dues payments. Or go back to "the 12 basic Scouting expenses" and see where cuts can be made. At all costs, try to avoid the pay-as-you-go approach, which entails charging families per event.

## More resources

Having a program plan and budget adopted by your pack, troop or crew committee earns you points toward **Journey to Excellence Gold Level**. Calculate your current score at [scouting.org/JTE](http://scouting.org/JTE)

**GO FOR GOLD:** Kick-start your unit's budget planning with PowerPoint presentations, helpful guides and even fillable Excel spreadsheets at [bit.ly/BSAplanning](http://bit.ly/BSAplanning)

**DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL:** Someone has been down this planning path before you. Ask your predecessor to email you the unit's budget from a previous year. If one doesn't exist, check with a nearby unit.