

# Standards and Guidelines Ore-Ida Council Hosted/Linked Websites

May 2005

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# **Standards and Guidelines for Ore-Ida Council Hosted/Linked Websites**

## **Guidelines - adapted from BSA National Guidelines for Council Websites**

### **I. Introduction**

The following are guidelines set forth by the Ore-Ida Council for Scout Community Groups (Districts, OA, Roundtables, Venturing, etc.) who wish to be hosted by or linked to the Council Website at <http://www.Oreida-bsa.org>, herein referred to as SCGs. Due to the nature of the ever-changing World Wide Web, it may be necessary to update these guidelines/procedures from time to time. Any requested changes to this document will be submitted by e-mail to the [Council Webmaster](#). Changes will be reviewed by the Council Website team and added as approved. The latest copy of this document will then be posted and will supersede any previously published copy. If any parts of these guidelines are found to be in conflict with the "BSA National Guidelines for Council Websites", the "BSA National Guidelines for Council Websites" will prevail.

### **II. Rules and Regulations**

SCGs are the primary means of delivering the Scouting program to the volunteers and the general public in Ore-Ida Council. SCGs are free to develop their own applications of Internet and Web technology, as long as they observe the rules and regulations of the Boy Scouts of America, as required by their charters. This guideline is issued by the Ore-Ida Council to provide more specific and detailed guidance to SCGs.

### **III. Representation**

While the Ore-Ida Council provides guidelines by which it will acknowledge SCG's and refer others to them, each of these sites is the product and possession of the local SCG. However, these sites represent the Ore-Ida Council as well as the SCG that maintains it. For this reason, it is required that each SCG follow the guidelines set forth by National BSA and by the Ore-Ida Council provided in this document.

## IV. Ore-Ida Council Standards

In order to be acknowledged by and linked to the Ore-Ida Council's website, an SCG website must meet the following twelve guidelines. These guidelines may be altered or amended from time to time, and the SCG will be notified when this occurs. The guidelines that are posted on the Ore-Ida Council website will be deemed as the most current and will supersede any previously posted versions or any printouts of these guidelines.

## V. Approval Guidelines

1. The SCG must have direct control over the content of its official Web site.
2. The name, address, phone number and e-mail address of ONE SCG webmaster must be provided to the Ore-Ida Council web team. This person will be the contact point between council and the SCG regarding web site issues. (See SCG Webmaster Appointment below for more information.)
3. Up to two additional helpers may obtain access to the SCG site to assist in the updating of the information. These people will be selected by the *assigned* SCG webmaster. They will be listed as Assistant SCG webmasters.
4. All webmaster's working in the Council site, no matter what area, will complete webmaster training and sign an agreement stating they will follow National and Council Web site guidelines before they are given password access to their area.
5. The content of SCG site must be appropriate to the Scouting movement.
6. The SCG site will not contain links to any sites that contain material that is not appropriate to the Scouting movement.
7. The SCG site will not contain any advertisements or commercial endorsements.
8. The SCG site will not engage in the electronic sale of BSA Supply Division merchandise or competing products.
9. The SCG site will not replicate any BSA publication currently for sale through the Supply Division.
10. SCG sites must abide by all applicable laws regarding copyrights, trademarks, and other intellectual property.
11. SCG sites must consider the safety and privacy of their members and participants by obtaining the necessary permissions to release information about or images of any individual.
12. If the SCG site is being hosted by Ore-Ida Council, a review of created or used programs executed at or interpreted on the server, such as cgi, asp, etc., **MUST** be reviewed by the Council Webmaster prior to posting. This is to insure that the program will not cause problems with the hosted site. Contact the Webmaster for more information.

The information that follows supports these guidelines by providing more specific information on practices and procedures that may be implemented for producing and maintaining a site that successfully meets the guidelines. Additional information is

presented that extends into areas that the guidelines do not address to cover topics and procedures that are advisable, but not strictly requisite.

When considering whether to host, acknowledge, or link to a SCG Web site, the Ore-Ida Council will assess the SCG Web site in comparison to the guidelines above.

## **VI. SGC Webmaster Appointment**

It will be the responsibility of the Council staff partner for the District/SCG to provide the name of the site webmaster to the senior webmaster board. (Example: The District Executive of Capital District will provide the name of the person in charge of that site; the staff advisor for OA would do it for that group). It is recommended that the DE/staff partner consult with the key volunteers within their group to secure the proper person for this position. Once the name is submitted, this person may then select two additional people to get training and passwords. These people will be assistant webmasters, reporting to the SGC webmaster. If there is a problem with the site, the senior web team will contact the SCG webmaster.

## **VII. SGC Passwords**

Each SCG will have an area assigned to them under the council web site. Each area will be assigned one password. This password will be given to the webmasters/assistant webmasters when their training is complete. NEVER SHARE A PASSWORD WITH ANYONE, even if you think this person should have it. If it is found that a password has been shared with someone who has not attended training and has not been approved to work on the site by one of the above methods, the password will be changed and access to the site will be blocked until a new password can be distributed. If a member of the SCG moves from the area and no longer needs access to the website, the password will be changed immediately.

## **VIII. On-Line "Conversation"**

Chat Rooms, guest books, and bulletin boards are three forms of interactivity that are generally inadvisable for SCG Web sites because they require dedicated resources to monitor and control them sufficiently.

### **Chat Rooms**

These are on-line forums in which users "converse" by typing messages to one another in real time. Recent advances have also made it possible to audio- or video-conference on the Internet. These are too hard to control and for this reason, Ore-Ida Council will not host or link to any SCG which contains a chat room.

### **Guest Books**

Guest book programs allow site visitors to leave a message, and are generally not a problem unless the log file (which contains all the comments visitors enter) is visible to the public. In that case, anyone can add text, graphics, and even programmatic components to the SCG's Web pages that will immediately be viewable to other visitors. If a guest book is used, the log file should be kept in a location that is not visible to other visitors, but which must be downloaded using administrative software (Telnet/FTP) in order to be read. The SCG should then review that material before posting it to a publicly accessible interface.

### **Bulletin Boards and News Groups**

These are a form of chat rooms in slow motion: Users post messages and others may read and respond at a later time. Bulletin boards have the same inherent risks as chat rooms, but since conversations do not occur in real time, there is opportunity for better moderation. Users may be allowed to send their remarks to a private section of the Web site, but the remarks should not be posted to the site for others to read until the SCG has approved the content for publication on its site. Ore-Ida Council does not recommend the use of bulletin boards or news groups. If the SCG decides to use them, they should have stringent guidelines for their use and someone assigned to monitor these areas.

## **IX. Providing/Collecting Personal Information**

SCGs are urged to be discreet when collecting personal information via their Web sites. Privacy is a delicate issue on the Internet, and many people are reluctant to use sites or interfaces that require them to provide personal information such as their name, address, telephone number, email address, etc. It is recommended that SCGs avoid using the Internet to gather this information about users unless it is necessary to accomplish the user's goals. For example, you would have to request a telephone number and contact name from an organization that wishes to be contacted about starting a unit, but it should not be necessary that they provide this information merely in order to read information about starting a unit. It is especially important to treat contact information carefully: contact information should be used only for the purpose for which it was provided. It is unethical and in some cases illegal to use this data for any solicitation or communication outside the context in which it was provided. The issue is particularly serious regarding contact information for children under 13.

## **X. Youth Participants and Parents**

Contact information for youth participants shall not be provided on the Internet.

The webmaster of a SCG web site hosted by Ore-Ida Council will be assigned an e-mail account. Website guidelines also apply to e-mail accounts, where appropriate. E-mail accounts shall not be used to SPAM, harass, or barter. E-mail addresses received from Ore-Ida Council shall not be given away or sold to third parties. SCGs should be aware that there are computer programs that crawl the Internet compiling lists of e-mail

addresses that appear on Web pages. These lists are often sold to e-mail marketers who regularly send unsolicited advertisements. It is recommended that an SCG that wishes to provide e-mail contact information, utilize techniques to prevent or minimize this unfortunate side effect (such as "escaping" characters or using CGI scripts that maintain the actual addresses in a safe location).

## **XI. Adult Volunteers**

Contact information for adult volunteers should be treated with caution, as it is likely this information will be personal in nature (home addresses, residential telephone numbers, and private e-mail accounts). If this information were made available on the Web site, it would be preferable to provide it in a password-protected area of the Web site to which the general public has no access. Exceptions may be made for those volunteers whom it would be necessary for third parties to contact in order to obtain information about joining, starting, or supporting individual units.

It is strongly recommended that this information be published only after obtaining written authorization, and that these individuals should know that they can (and how to) request the prompt removal of their information at any time.

## **XII. Web Site Content**

### **Content Sources**

It is important to know the original source of all SCG Web site content and to be sure the SCG has permission to use it. The only content the SCG owns outright are the text, photos, illustrations, design, and programming developed by the SCG. Permission must be given by the owner for using all other material.

### **National Council Publications**

SCGs may reproduce the content of any BSA "bin resources" publication they feel is appropriate for their sites' audiences. However, SCGs may *not* replicate any part of any publication currently for sale through the Supply Division. The difference between "bin" and "supply" items may seem unclear for those items the council and SCG purchases but then redistributes without charge to its members. Item numbers provide a reliable method of differentiation: bin items have five-digit numbers separated with a hyphen (00-000) whereas Supply Division items have four or five digits (the first is typically a 3 or 4) that are not separated by a hyphen (0000 or 00000). (The item number is generally printed on the back cover or at the bottom of the contents page.)

Specific exceptions to this rule have been made so that *approved council Web sites* can link to certain Supply Division forms (medical forms, tour permits, certain applications, etc.) that are posted on a hidden location on the National Council site. Likewise, the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, a Supply Division item, has been approved for approved

council Web site links. Such exceptions are rare, and generally focus on service to members through the local council.

Content of *Boys' Life* and *Scouting* magazines should never be reproduced on Web sites without first obtaining permission from the Magazine Division. Many articles and images are included in the magazines under limited license and copying them could violate copyright law.

### **Third-Party Material**

If a SCG wishes to include any content (whether text, photographs, illustrations, design, or programming), that is not developed by the SCG or by third parties under the terms of a contract or agreement with the SCG, it is important to obtain written permission from the owner of that material. Even if the material is owned by a volunteer or donor and is provided with the understanding it will be used in the SCG's site, written permission remains important. In its simplest form, this written permission can be provided in a letter that explicitly states that the owner will permit the SCG (or the Boy Scouts of America) to use the material. It is also common to indicate the duration (dates) for which the permission is granted, the medium (media) in which the reproduction may occur, and any restrictions that may apply.

### **Materials from Other Web Sites**

Reusing material found on the Internet is *especially* dangerous. It is all too common for amateur Web publishers to take copyrighted material and reproduce it on their own Web sites and say that it is "free" or "public domain." A written agreement is prudent, regardless of any explicit disclaimer on a Web site, before using any material downloaded from the Web. It is especially important to obtain permission in advance for materials used on the Internet. Unlike newsletters, which are distributed only to members, the Internet is available to the public, and it is inevitable that the owner will discover your use of his/her material on your Web site.

### **Photographs**

Direct facial shots of youth or adults that make them easily identifiable should not be posted on a SCG site without a properly executed written release on file with the SCG Webmaster. It is up to the SCGs discretion how to interpret easily identifiable.

## **XIII. Links to Other Web Sites**

In general, SCGs should be cautious about linking to other Web sites. A user may follow a link from the SCG's site to another, which links to another and another ... and the chain of links may lead to a site that contains unacceptable content. Though experienced users recognize the ownership of Web pages, inexperienced ones may feel the SCG is culpable for content they are exposed to after clicking links that lead them several sites removed from the SCG's site.

SCGs should review any site to which they link to ensure its content is appropriate to the Scouting movement, and should be prepared to delete links in a timely manner in the event the content of these sites changes.

Another significant implication about links is that a link to a third-party site implies an endorsement. It will be assumed that the SCG endorses the content for use by its audience, which is primarily composed of its membership. For this reason, SCGs should be especially cautious about making links to sites of certain kinds.

### **National Council Site**

SCGs wishing to include content available on the National Council site must do so on a new page and must be shown as a stand alone page. They will not be nested in website page.

### **SCG and Unit Sites**

Ore-Ida Council's link to an SCG site connotes that the Ore-Ida Council has authorized that SCG site and that it is officially represented. While these links may be made, the Ore-Ida Council will ensure these sites are acceptable before providing a link and will monitor the sites periodically. The same policy holds true for SCGs linking to unit sites.

### **Third-Party "Scouting" Sites**

There are numerous Scouting-oriented sites on the Internet that are not maintained or authorized by the BSA. These sites provide a wealth of general-interest information on topics of interest to members and program participants (camping, games, songs and skits, crafts, etc.).

Some of these sites also provide information such as program helps, advice for leaders, requirements, procedures, forms, publications, ceremonies, and other resources that would seem to be of an official nature, but which are not authorized by the BSA. In some cases, this information is misleading or incorrect, and could cause conflict with members who refer to unofficial sources the SCG "endorsed." Worse, these sites may suggest activities that are unacceptable or unsafe by BSA standards, causing potential liabilities for a SCG that "authorized" (by linking to) the site for use by its members.

### **Third-Party Commercial Sites**

While many commercial sites provide valuable information of a non-commercial nature, SCGs should be careful when linking to these sites to avoid the impression that the SCG is endorsing commercial products or services. Annotation often makes the difference, as in this example: A link to xyzboots.com (the XYZ Boot Company's home page) appears to be a commercial endorsement. If you added the sentence "The XYZ Boot Company provides excellent advice for avoiding hiking injuries," and then linked directly to the page about avoiding hiking injuries, you clarify that the SCG endorses the information the company is providing rather than the product it is selling.

### **Sites with "Free" Services**

"Free" site components tend to be commercial. Certain sites offer services such as statistics, hit counters, guest books, animations, and the like to other Web sites. Like the bogus "awards" sites and sites offering "free" Web space or e-mail, the primary purpose of these giveaways is to advertise and plant links to the "donor" site on a wide range of Web sites in order to draw audience away from its "benefactors." Of course, there are plenty of legitimate reference Web sites as well. The best approach when you consider linking to a site is to "click through" the site while asking yourself, "Why are they offering this service? What do they want from me?" The answer should tell you whether you want to link to the site or not.

## **XIV. Content and Links to Avoid**

### **Advertisements and Banners**

SCGs are prohibited from endorsing commercial products or services in any medium, including the Internet. Banner advertisements for commercial products and services are thus inappropriate for SCG Web sites. (NOTE: any use of the Internet for fund-raising is subject to the same guidelines and procedures as other fund-raising activities.)

Another popular type of banner on the Internet provides site owners with free promotion on other Web sites in exchange for promoting other sites on theirs. Though not strictly a commercial endorsement, these banners remain unacceptable because they provide a highly visible link from the SCG site to others, and the SCG does not control either the graphic that is displayed or the site to which it links - one or both may be patently inappropriate.

### **Web Site Awards and Certification**

There are a number of Web sites that offer "awards" or "certification" for other sites. These awards/certifications often require the honoree to display an URL or provide a click-through link that promotes the grantor's site. In many cases, such "honors" are ploys to draw traffic to other sections of the grantor's site, with a commercial or political motive. These should be avoided.

### **Learning for Life Content**

In 1998, Learning for Life became a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America, and the National Council has completely separated the Learning for Life and Exploring programs from traditional Scouting programs in terms of its marketing and materials. On the Internet, the National Council maintains a separate Web site for all information about Learning for Life programs: <http://www.learning-for-life.org>.

This effort should also be supported at the SCG level: Information about Learning for Life and Exploring should be provided on an entirely separate Web site-or, failing that, a self-contained site within the SCG Web space until a transition to a stand-alone site can be made.

There should be no mention of Learning for Life or Exploring on traditional Scouting sites, or vice versa, in terms of text content, photographs, images, etc., and the sites should not promote or link to one another after a period of transition has elapsed.

## Revision History:

June 1, 2009

Reference to Webmaster Guidelines on National site removed.  
Guidelines no longer exist on National site.

National pages will now be shown as a stand alone page and  
not nested within website page.