

# BCS 108

## Mining Internet Resources



Time allotted	50 minutes
Teaching format	Instructor-led discussion with PowerPoint support, Group activity

### Resources

Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BCS 108 - Resource-Links-for-Commissioners – 1 per person</li> </ul>
Equipment and materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BCS 108 – Mining Internet Resources course plan</li> <li>BCS 108 – Mining Internet Resources PowerPoint presentation</li> <li>Internet access (participants with laptops preferred)</li> <li>Computer and projector</li> <li>Whiteboard or flip chart (optional), appropriate markers, and eraser</li> </ul>
Resources for additional participant learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BCS 108 - Official Scouting America Websites</li> </ul>

### Course Connections

Connections to other CCS courses	
----------------------------------	--

### Presentation Outline

#### Introduction and Course Objectives – 2 minutes

Commissioners are frequently asked many questions and are often assumed to be experts on a wide range of topics. Although the commissioner is a pillar of information and a link to resources, we might not always have the answers; however, knowing where to find information can make them a virtual expert. This course concentrates not on the local “who do you call” but on using the internet, in effect, mining internet resources.

### Course Objectives

**Introduce the learning objectives, noting that by the end of this training, each participant should...**

- **Recognize** good information sources
- **Select** reliable Scouting websites
- **Know** internet resources for commissioners

## Recognizing Good Information Sources – 10 minutes (slides 3-8)

### The Role of Commissioners in Information Stewardship

#### “Our Leadership is the Gateway to Accurate Scouting Knowledge”

Commissioners are more than facilitators – we are the single best resource for ensuring accurate, timely, and consistent information flows throughout Scouting America.

Our unique role places us at the intersection of national directives and local needs. Commissioners are trusted stewards of Scouting knowledge. Our leadership empowers units, councils, and districts to operate from the most current and credible information available.

Today, we’ll explore best practices for maintaining that leadership role by accessing the right resources, validating information, and leveraging your networks to ensure that your knowledge is both authoritative and actionable.

### Finding Relevant and Credible Information

Many of you may have gotten a chuckle from the commercial with the tagline, “I saw it on the internet; it must be true.” There are several pitfalls associated with believing such a statement.

**Don’t get lost in the web.** It’s easy to get overwhelmed by all the information out there — some of it helpful, a lot of it not so much. The place to start? The official Scouting resources -- that’s where the accurate, up-to-date information lives.

#### ASK: What does “Official Scouting America website” mean?

An official Scouting America website is owned by Scouting America (as opposed to an individual or unit). Any site that does not fit the definition of “official” will be called “unofficial”. By visiting an official website, you can access authentic verbiage, forms, and the original intent. Official websites range from national to local councils.

Unofficial sites offer a wealth of valuable information but may not be entirely accurate or up to date.

#### ASK: What do you do if your council website has information that conflicts with the national website?

Generally, defer to the national website, as it is more likely to have the most up-to-date information.

As we will see later in our discussions, most Scouting America forms are available online at the official website and are regularly updated. Too often, we see units post outdated forms and publications on their own websites, rather than providing a link to the form or publication on an official site. The latter is a “best practice” to pass to your units.

Before sharing any info, give it a second look. A flyer from 2014 might look legit, but the requirements or rules could’ve changed five times since then. When in doubt, don’t just guess—reach out. Council Service Territory specialists and fellow commissioners are goldmines of solid info.

**Be SMART, SKEPTICAL, and stay SHARP.** Because if commissioners aren't careful about their sources, no one else will be.

### **Recognizing Good Information Sources**

#### **Follow the basic rules of thumb ---**

Scouting America has many talented individuals who provide volunteer service, wanting to spread their knowledge and wisdom to help others avoid reinventing the wheel. As an organization, we encourage this, but we must also be mindful that there is a shelf life to much information, as requirements, forms, and publications are updated, and sometimes a well-meaning individual may be wrong on a subject. The key to policy information is to use the official Scouting America website.

#### **Find Info That You Can Actually Trust**

Googling is easy, but it's a risky first move. Search engines don't know what's valid for Scouting—they understand what's popular. And sometimes, what's popular can mean outdated or flat-out wrong.

A quick Google search might land you in a Scoutmaster's blog from 2013 or a Facebook post full of half-truths. Instead, think like a pro – go straight to trusted sources. The fewer clicks between you and the original info, the better.

Commissioners should lead by example—use judgment, stay sharp, and teach others how to fish for the correct info.

#### **Check Your Dates and Versions**

Outdated materials are one of the biggest causes of confusion in Scouting. A handbook from 2017 might still look official—but if the requirements changed in 2023, that's a big problem. Scouting is constantly evolving; merit badges are updated, policies shift, and contact details change. That's why it's critical to build the habit of checking the publish date or revision tag before passing something on.

And remind others to do the same. A commissioner who models info discipline helps keep the whole unit on the right track.

### **Unofficial Websites**

#### **Social Media and Unofficial Sites**

Before we launch into official websites, let's review what an unofficial website is again.

**ASK:** What is an unofficial website?

A site not sponsored by Scouting America (includes unit websites).

**ASK:** What are the dangers of using an unofficial website?

Possible erroneous or dated guidance, possible dated material.

Social media can feel like the frontlines of information—but that doesn't make it accurate. Facebook groups, Reddit threads, and Instagram posts often mix opinions with outdated advice or myths that have been around for years.

Just because something sounds familiar or has likes doesn't mean it's correct. As commissioners, you need to train your info filters. Look at the source, cross-check with official guidance, and don't be afraid to push back when bad info spreads.

Encourage your units to bring questions to you—not just to their phones.

## Reliable Scouting Websites – 23 minutes, including 8-minute activity (slides 9-22)

### Official Scouting America Websites Activity (slides 9 & 10)

Scouting America sponsors official sites, and the national websites typically start with a “www” and end with “.org”.

#### Scouting America Website Activity – 8 minutes (slides 9 & 10)

*Let's have a brainstorming session and see how many sites we can think of that may fall into one of these categories. Call out some Scouting America websites that you know and categorize them according to your assessment. OPTION: This is a good opportunity to record them on a whiteboard or flipchart.*

**ASK:** Can you think of some sites that might fall within these categories? (slide 9)

**Let's see how you did. (slide 10)**

**YELLOW** - holds the two sites, which are the primary general-purpose go-to sites for scouting information.

**LAVENDER** - breaking news and updates

**RED** - for specific knowledge on a scouting program, additional information, or guidance

**BLUE** - shows Scouting America's national high adventure base websites.

**ORANGE** - website information on supporting Scouting.

**GREEN** - Official sites that are at the local level and have a website address specific to your area.

**Instructor:** As you can see, there are multiple sites here you may be unaware of, and Scouting America continues to add more sites for more specialized resource areas. Do not feel that you need to capture all of them but get enough to energize the participants and show that there is a lot out there.

For virtual presentation, one way to keep the energy level high is to ask people to race to see who answers first in the chat line. Otherwise, consider allowing people to unmute themselves, call out their answer, and return to mute; answer in the chat line; or raise their hands to be called on by the instructor or facilitator.

## How Scouting Distributes Information

### “Know Where It’s Coming From”

Scouting America isn’t hiding its info—it’s putting it out in all the right places. Newsletters, council emails, official websites, and yes, even printed handbooks and brochures, are still the main vehicles for real updates.

If your inbox is a mess, set filters to catch those Scouting messages. Better yet, encourage your leaders to make it a habit to read official handouts and check council calendars. This is how you make sure your team isn’t guessing—they’re getting it straight from the source.

And remember, just because something is in print doesn’t mean it’s outdated. Plenty of official materials still come that way, and they’re just as valuable.

### **www.Scouting.org** **Scouting.org**

This site serves as your primary library of knowledge, forms, publications, and policies. We’re going to spend some time getting familiar with it, as it will be of great assistance with those commissioner objectives we discussed earlier.

The following slide displays some of the available options.

Many topics can be reached by simply typing [scouting.org](https://www.scouting.org), adding a forward slash “/” followed by the **subject** of interest.

The slide shows many of the key words that work and will take you directly to the associated page without requiring a single drop-down.

**Instructor Note:** If participants have a laptop or mobile device, test a few of the links with them.

### **News Sites**

Do you like to stay up-to-date on the latest in scouting and see if the rumors are true?

- *Scouting Wire* provides updates on upcoming changes and news items, including new council executives.
- The *Aaron on Scouting* blog provides a modern social media feel and includes things such as “ask the expert”.

Give them a try.

**Instructor Note:** Have *the class scan the QR codes on the slide*

### **Bi-Monthly Newsletter**

The bi-monthly Commissioner eBlast can be obtained by signing up to receive it by email OR by going to the website, where all eBlasts are archived.

**Instructor Note:** *Have the class scan the QR code on the slide*

## Scoutly

As of summer 2025, Scoutly is now available 24/7 on **Scouting.org** and **BeAScout.org**, providing answers to a variety of Scouting-related questions. It is an interactive chatbot trained on an extensive, contained knowledge base of official Scouting America resources.

You can interact with Scoutly by selecting the floating Scoutly icon on the lower right corner of each of these websites.

### Key Features of Scoutly Include:

- **Dedicated Knowledge Base:** Scoutly is trained on official Scouting America documents, including the Guide to Safe Scouting, program handbooks, and leader guides, ensuring all information is accurate and safe.
- **Merit Badge Expertise:** The assistant has a comprehensive understanding of all Scouts BSA merit badges, with detailed information from the official merit badge pamphlets. It will also serve as the primary source for the new Artificial Intelligence Merit Badge, scheduled for release in mid-September 2025.
- **Simplified Registration:** Scoutly offers a conversational approach to help new parents find and register their children in a local unit, streamlining the entire onboarding process.
- **Round-the-Clock Support:** Available on [Scouting.org](https://www.scouting.org) and [BeAScout.org](https://www.beascout.org), Scoutly provides quick answers to a variety of Scouting questions.

## Scouting.org Program Tabs

Scroll down to find the different program areas. Clicking on each will take you to a page chock-full of information, links, forms, and publications related to that program area.

Remember, all we had to do was visit [Scouting.org](https://www.scouting.org) and select the desired program.

**Instructor Note:** *Have the class scan the QR codes on the slide*

## Scouting Safely

This site helps units understand where to go for **official Scouting America policy** and guidance.

## Additional Information for Commissioner – 10 minutes (slides 19-24)

**Commissioner Information Central!**

**Handout: BCS 108 – Resources Links for Commissioners – 1 per person**

For virtual presentation, consider whether to distribute this handout (a) before class, (b) during class via the chat line, if available, or email, (c) after class, or (d) a combination.

**ASK:** Where do commissioners go to find the national website for commissioners?

Everything, from our Core Concepts to training, Unit Connections, recruiting guides, and Commissioner eBlasts, is available on this site. The tools you learn here can help you execute those commission objectives effectively.

Become acquainted with and stay current with the Commissioner eblast ---- here is a link to “Resource-Links-for-Commissioners” which was shared in an eblast from the summer of 2025.

**Instructor Note:** *Have the class scan the QR codes on the slide*

**My.Scouting.org**

**Instructor note:** While in Slide Show mode, click on the arrow to open the link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bEbezQiOaCE> and play the 1.48-minute video.

There are seven primary tools currently available on my.scouting.org, depending on your position in Scouting, as some sites have visibility restricted to those in specific positions.

- **Menu Page** will show you your current progress in your training and provide you with access to take courses.
- **Commissioner Tools** is a great commissioner tool. There are several training modules on how to use it.
- The Training Manager *will help you track the progress of a unit in training.*
- **The Roster Tool** *will allow you to view rosters.*
- **The Unit Dashboard** provides an overview of the organization's performance.
- **Application Manager** provides a summary of in-progress applications, tracks the status of invitations to join, and provides several reports concerning Applications and invitations, as well as tracking membership leads.
- **Organization Manager** provides the Unit Key 3 plus 3 the ability to manage a unit's organization information and structure.

### **Stay on Top of Updates and Changes**

Scouting isn't static—it's a living, breathing movement that updates as youth needs and national policies evolve. That's why staying up to date isn't optional, especially for commissioners.

Whether it's a merit badge update or a council training change, commissioners need to be on the forefront of the information wave. Set up alerts, read the newsletters, and take 5 minutes a month to scan for changes that matter.

You're a key communicator. That means if there's new info, your units should hear it from you first—not from a social media rumor.

### **Connect with Local Committees**

You are not in this alone. No commissioner should ever feel like they're working solo. Council and district committees are built to help, and chances are, someone there has already tackled the exact challenge you're facing.

These local teams are crucial in translating national policies into practical applications for local units. That means they're a fantastic bridge between the big picture and the day-to-day reality of Scouting.

Use them. Lean on them. Build relationships. Because the more connected you are, the better you can serve—and the more up-to-date your info will be.

### **Council and District Committees**

Your local information powerhouse. Local committees are where strategy meets reality. These groups aren't just about policy—they're your front line for updates, interpretation, and support.

Whether it's advancement, training, or program support, council and district committees are where those updates first land. And because you're a commissioner, being looped in means you're able to act—and help others act—faster.

So, make it a point to attend, listen, and contribute. Being there regularly means you're always one of the first to know—and share—the latest.

### **Wrap-Up: You Are the Information Leaders**

Commissioners set the standard. You don't just pass along info—you shape the way your units think about what's accurate, helpful, and trustworthy. Commissioners are the tip of the spear when it comes to getting good information into the right hands.

Take pride in that role. Stay sharp, be skeptical of sources, and never hesitate to tap into your CST, your committees, or your council for clarity. Being the best source of information isn't about knowing everything -- it's about knowing where to look and who to ask.

Set the example. Help your leaders build the same habits, and you'll help the entire Scouting movement move forward smarter.

## **Summary/Conclusion – 2 minutes**

We have breezed through a lot of material today, but let's answer a few questions before we conclude.

**Q: What is the difference between official and unofficial websites?**

**Q: What websites are you likely to use the most and why?**

## **Questions? – 3 minutes**