

# Order of the Arrow General Information FAQ



## What is the Order of the Arrow?

Often referred to as the OA, the Order of the Arrow is Scouting's Honor Society. It is a brotherhood of honored scouts and scouters who promote scout camping and perform service to others.

## What is the purpose of the Order of the Arrow?

The purpose of the Order of the Arrow is fourfold:

- To recognize those Scout campers who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives.

- To develop and maintain camping traditions and spirit.

- To promote Scout camping.

- To crystallize the Scout habit of helpfulness into a life purpose of leadership in cheerful service to others.

## Where and how did the OA begin?

The Order of the Arrow (OA) was founded by Dr. E. Urner Goodman and Carroll A. Edson in 1915 at the Treasure Island Camp of the Philadelphia Council, Boy Scouts of America. It became an official program experiment in 1922 and was approved as part of the Scouting program in 1934. In 1948 the OA, recognized as the BSA's national brotherhood of honor campers, became an official part of the national camping program of the Boy Scouts of America.

## What does being in the OA mean for me?

Being inducted into the OA is a honor given to you by your troop. However, it is *not* an award. You were selected because being in the OA will help you give back to your troop. Remember, Arrowmen are not elected for what they have done, but for what they are expected to do.

## What's a Lodge?

Nearly every Scout Council in the nation has an OA Lodge associated with it. In the Heart of Ohio Council, the OA Lodge is Portage Lodge.

## Who runs the Lodge?

The Lodge is run by a youth Executive Board, at the head of which sits the Lodge Chief. He is joined by the other Lodge Officers; Vice Chiefs, Treasurer and Secretary. No OA member over the age of 21 may serve as a lodge position. The Council appoints a Lodge Adviser to guide the Chief's Council and help facilitate their goals and objectives. The Lodge Adviser appoints an adult Adviser for each Vice-Chief and any other Advisers as may be necessary. The Council also assigns a Staff Adviser to the Lodge.

## Why does the OA keep most of its activities secret?

The Order of the Arrow is not a secret organization. Rather, we recognize that an aura of mystery not only stimulates interest in the Lodge, but also helps new members feel proud of an accomplishment that is not achieved by every Scout.

Most candidates receive fewer benefits from the induction if they know about the induction in advance. Knowledge lowers expectations, and dulls the edge of experience. In other words, you hurt candidates by telling them about the "Ordeal." Parents should feel free to discuss the experiences their children had at the Ordeal, after its completion.

The Order of the Arrow is happy to share any pertinent information about our activities with legitimately interested individuals. For more information, one should contact the Lodge Adviser.

## I was an OA member but I cannot find a membership card?

If you believe that you were a member of the Order, talk with the Lodge Chief or Lodge Adviser. Perhaps you can find an old newspaper clipping, your sash, lodge flap or be able to describe your Ordeal.

## Who can wear a Lodge Flap on their uniform?

Only active, dues-paid brothers of the Lodge can wear a Lodge Flap on their uniform. If you are not a current member of the lodge, because you failed to pay your dues, you must remove your lodge flap from your uniform.

## Where can I get more information?

<http://www.portage619.org/> or <http://www.oa-bsa.org/>

## **Elections:**

### **How does a youth become a member of the OA?**

Youth members (under the age of 21) are elected by other youth members of their troop in an election conducted by the OA Lodge through the Chapters. At least 50% of the registered youth members of the troop must be present for an election to be held.

### **How does an adult become a member of the OA?**

Adults are nominated by the troop committee and the nomination is forwarded to a Lodge Adult Nomination Committee, headed by the Lodge Adviser, for consideration.

### **Are there any membership requirements?**

Yes. To be considered for election, a youth must be a registered member of his unit, must have achieved the rank of First Class, must not have reached his 21st birthday, and must, while registered with a troop, have a minimum of 15 days and nights of Scout camping experience, including one (and only one) long-term camping experience (7 days/6 nights) within two years prior to the election. With the exception of the First Class and age requirements, adult nominees must meet the same camping and membership requirements.

### **Is there any limit to the number of youth who are placed on the ballot for election?**

Provided they all meet the eligibility requirements, no.

### **Does the Scoutmaster have to list all youth who are eligible?**

No. The Scoutmaster must sign the election form certifying that all those on the ballot are eligible for election. If the Scoutmaster feels that a certain member or members of the unit do not exemplify the high ideals of the OA, he does not have to list them as eligible for election even though they may meet the membership requirements. The Scoutmaster has full discretion as to the eligibility of any troop member for the election, but he may not waive the membership requirements. This certification takes place prior to the election, and cannot be changed once the election takes place.

### **Can the Scoutmaster vote in the election?**

No. Only youth under the age of 21 may vote in the election.

### **How many elections can my troop have per year?**

Each troop is entitled to only one election per year, which is usually held between January and April.

### **How do I arrange for an election?**

Beginning in January each year, the Chapter or Lodge election teams will start contacting each Scoutmaster. If your troop has not been contacted by February 1st, you are encouraged to contact your Chapter Adviser.

### **Can a Scoutmaster conduct his own election?**

No. All elections must be conducted with at least one member of the Chapter or Lodge election team present, preferably a member from outside the troop.

### **How do I nominate an adult for membership?**

Adult nomination forms are available from the election team or your Chapter Adviser. They must be filled out accurately and completely, and signed by the unit's Committee Chairman. The Committee Chairman should retain one copy of the form with the remaining copy and original forwarded to the Chapter Adviser.

### **How many adults may I nominate?**

Each troop who has a youth election may nominate one adult per 50 youth in the unit (0-50, 1 adult; 50-100, 2 adults; 100-150, adults, etc.)

### **How are adult nominations considered?**

The adult nomination process is very selective. Since the OA exists by and large for the youth, with youth exclusively holding leadership positions, adult nominations are carefully screened. The committee considers the adult's ability to perform the necessary functions to help the OA fulfill its goals and purposes, how the adult will be an asset to the Lodge, and whether the adult will be a positive role model for the youth. OA membership is NOT a recognition for service either past or present NOR is it a reward for achievement or position.

### **Can my Venturing Crew, Varsity Scout Team, Sea Scout Ship, or Exploring Post have an election?**

OA elections can only be held by Boy Scout Troops and Varsity Scout Teams. Elections cannot be held by Venturing Crews, Sea Scout Ships, or Exploring Posts.

## **Ordeal:**

### **Once elected, am I member?**

No. All those who are elected must first successfully pass an Ordeal.

### **What is the Ordeal?**

The Ordeal consists of a night sleeping outside, alone under the heavens, followed by a day of minimal food and silent labor.

### **How will I be notified about the Ordeal?**

After your election, you will receive a mailing from the Lodge, usually during early March, detailing the information about the Ordeal weekend, what to bring, and other information. There will also be a registration form, which must be filled out and returned by the specified deadline. This information may be supplied to you electronically, so it is crucial that the Lodge receive your correct e-mail address on the election form and that you check your e-mail.

### **How long do I have after the election to take my ordeal?**

You have one year from the date of your election to take your Ordeal. This affords every person at least three opportunities to complete their Ordeal.

### **What if I fail to take my Ordeal within that one-year period?**

Then you would have to be re-elected. In extreme cases, such as family emergencies, the Chief's Council will consider granting an extension of the Ordeal eligibility period. However, each case is considered separately on its own merits and must be brought to the Chief's Council. For more information, contact the Lodge Adviser.

### **Do adult nominees have to take the Ordeal also?**

Yes. Adults have to successfully pass the same ordeal as the youth in order to become members. They must also complete it within a one-year period.

### **An election was held in our troop, but the results were not announced, what happens next?**

The Scoutmaster has the right to seal the election results for release at some later date, such as a troop Court of Honor or call-out ceremony. The year of eligibility will not start until the candidate is officially recognized by his unit.

## **Membership:**

### **Are there yearly dues?**

Yes. A membership renewal form is mailed to all Lodge members around October of each year.

### **Do new Ordeal members have to pay dues?**

The Ordeal fee includes one year of dues.

### **I am moving out of the Council, is my OA membership transferable?**

Certainly. When you get where you're going, have your new Council formally request your OA records from us. Once you register in a new Council, you can no longer remain a member of Portage Lodge, unless you also still maintain registration here.

### **Can I be a member of more than one Lodge?**

No. National policy dictates that you can only belong to one lodge at a time. It must be the lodge associated with the council where you hold your primary registration. Even if you pay a registration fee to more than one council, you must choose only one lodge.

### **Do my OA dues include BSA registration?**

No. OA membership is exclusive of membership in the Boy Scouts of America.

### **Do I have to be registered in the BSA to be member of the Lodge?**

Yes. You must be registered in a Pack, Troop, Crew, or Team, or at-large in order to be considered an active member of the Lodge and participate in Lodge events. OA membership does not supersede or include BSA membership.