



# THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE WORLD WARS, INC.®

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## BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA ON COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS

“Scouting” magazine (November-December 2005), by Robert Peterson.

How do you deal with a volunteer who doesn’t follow through on his promises? Scouter E. K. noted that it’s awkward to tell a volunteer, “No, I don’t want you,” out of fear the task won’t get accomplished. Readers offered several suggestions.

- **Instead of making a general appeal for volunteers, a good practice is to ask a specific person you know can and will do the job.**
  - Set a deadline to complete each portion of the task. That allows for a spot-check on the assignment’s progress. If the person doesn’t complete the portion in the allotted time, you can suggest that someone assist in the task or inquire kindly, but firmly, whether it is necessary to get another person to finish the task.
    - The Rev. N. R.; Lorain, Ohio
- **Never be afraid to provide feedback to your adult Scouters. Communication is the key; let volunteers know what is expected of them. Make it clear that the Scouts are counting on them as well.**
  - Since it is awkward to say, “No, I don’t want you,” after making a plea for help, seek out volunteers one-on-one instead of in a public forum. This personal approach can help you spread out volunteer opportunities among the adults in your unit while giving you more control of who is doing the helping. This tactic is one of the best ways to recruit new volunteers since it is very hard to say no to a Scout leader when he or she asks sincerely for help.
    - S. H.; Dayton, Ohio
- **Change your approach** to getting help. Between parent-talent surveys and personal observation, you already have a good idea of who would be a match for a particular job. Approach him or her directly and personally. Most people are flattered by the personal approach and are more likely to accept an offer than they are to volunteer in response to a general appeal for help.
  - This approach has three benefits. You are more likely to fill a necessary job, you are more likely to fill it with the person you want, and you avoid the difficulty of having to be diplomatic with people who aren’t dependable. You might even offer the undependable volunteer a secondary, non-critical role. Then, even if they don’t follow through, you have lost nothing, and they don’t feel left out.
    - Cubmaster E. E.; Downingtown, Pa.
- **I have learned to surround myself with as many dependable volunteers as possible so that I can ask them (in private) to pick up the ball if [someone else] drops it.**
  - “No, I don’t want you” is never a correct answer to someone who wants to volunteer. Instead, you learn to develop a contingency plan when and if a volunteer appears to be failing. Try to coach this person and don’t focus too negatively on difficulties. Never lose patience with a volunteer; in fact, it’s best to try to find some less important tasks for the volunteer. Experiment to find an area in which he or she will follow through to the finish. You might be pleasantly surprised.
    - B. B.; North Augusta, S.C.

- **Try these five steps to ensure that volunteers do what they commit to [doing].**
  - Make sure they understand your expectations. Describe the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the job. Be sure they want to do the job. Find out whether the job is suited to their skills and interests. If it is, odds are that you'll get great results. If not, better find someone else. Follow up along the way. Praise them for a job well done or counsel them about what went wrong. One of the best gifts you can give someone is positive, constructive feedback on a job that was not well done. Give them more chances in areas where you think they will be successful. If they do well, you've got a winner. If they don't follow through a second time, go back to Step 4, and try again.
    - P. P.; Dunwoody, Ga.
- **My experience is that it's best to define (in writing, if necessary) the scope of the task. It should include a deadline to finish and the anticipated time commitment.**
  - The deadline and time commitments usually eliminate less-than-reliable volunteers. However, a pre-date phone call is never a bad idea to confirm that the volunteer is on schedule to complete the task.
    - Webelos Den Leader T. B.; St. Louis Park, Minn.