

How we talk



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Meet our new writer: you



A YouTube video can help us show the world what Scouts is all about. A skills for life campaign on a billboard might grab people's attention on the way to work. A celebrity speaking about us can spark a young person's interest. But there's an even better way to help more people know who we are and what we do, and it starts with you.

You are Scouts to the young people who join us and join in. You are Scouts to the parents who drop off and pick up their kids every week. You – and everything you write and create for Scouts – are our most important ambassador.

So this toolkit is for you. It's not everything we're doing to share our story, it simply includes the most useful things to help you write for and about Scouts. That might be a poster, a leaflet or a simple email asking parents to help out every now and then. It's part of a bigger plan to help us all show our communities what Scouts is all about.

Scouts on one page: now and next

This is how we sum up Scouts on paper now (opposite). And while the facts are all true, the language and examples are broad and impersonal. When we write about skills for life, it starts to sound like we've raided someone's CV: 'key life skills, teamwork... leadership... resilience'.

On page 11, we've looked at our 'about us' pitch from a different angle. What might a Scout say they've learned with us? Written from a Scout's point of view, the first paragraph has more detail, more pace and more energy than the original. As a reader, you immediately jump into the action.

From this:

As Scouts, we believe in preparing young people with skills for life. We encourage young people to do more, learn more and be more. Each week, we help over 460,000 young people aged 6-25 enjoy fun and adventure while developing the skills they need to succeed, now and in the future.

We're talking about teamwork, leadership and resilience – skills that have helped Scouts become everything from teachers and social workers to astronauts and Olympians. We help young people develop and improve key life skills.

We believe in bringing people together. We celebrate diversity and stand against intolerance, always. We're part of a worldwide movement, creating stronger communities and inspiring positive futures.

Scouts on one page: now and next



To this:

Scouts made me a do-er and a give it a go-er. Made me question and listen and have a wide-open mind. Scouts made me take a deep breath and speak up. Made me think on my feet, made me see the big picture, made me ignore the butterflies and go for it. Scouts made me get back up and try again. Made me think about what's next, and plan for it. Made me jump in, get muddy, give back and get set.

We're Scouts and everyone's welcome here. All genders, races and backgrounds. Every week we give almost half a million people aged 6-25 the skills they need for school, college, university, the job interview, the important speech, the tricky challenge and the big dreams: the skills they need for life.

Writing about skills for life

How to make skills easier to relate to

Our 'about us' blurb is just the start (it shouldn't become a fixed bit of writing that you copy and paste in different places). You can make all your words more grounded by writing more like you speak.

We especially want to be known for skills for life: the things young people learn at Scouts set them up for the rest of their lives.

Up to now, a lot of the words we've used to describe these skills have been formal, even corporate. But if you break these words down and write about them in a more down-to-earth way, our writing instantly sounds more approachable. It's often as simple as explaining what 'motivation' means. And it might help to add more detail or give an example of someone being motivated. Everyday phrases and idioms like 'doing your own thing' can be really helpful here, too.



Writing about skills for life

From this:

Independence

Resilience

Dedication

Curiosity

Adaptability

Teamwork

Empathy

Motivation

Patience

Initiative

To this:

Under your own steam or
Doing your own thing

Try, try again or
Get back up and try again

Sticking at it or
Going for it

Asking the big questions

With a plan B (and C) up your sleeve
or Thinking on your feet

Mucking in or
Playing your part

Stepping into their shoes or
Seeing their side

Go-getting or
Give it a go

As long as it takes or
No rush

Thinking for yourself

In a headline

Pair a grounded skill with an everyday place, time or activity and you've got a sparky headline. It makes the skills young people learn at Scouts sound within reach. We want parents and young people to think 'that could be me'.

As you can see (on the next couple of pages), our photographs are just as important here. Often when people think of Scouts, they only imagine campfires, so we're intentionally adding less-expected images to the mix. We're also using simple, descriptive words like 'tarmac' that say 'city' or 'urban' in a less clichéd way. You can adapt these lines to fit wherever you are. 'Village hall' in the second example (pages 20-21) does a similar thing. It's a way of saying 'rural' or 'village' without overexplaining it.

In a headline



Now write your own



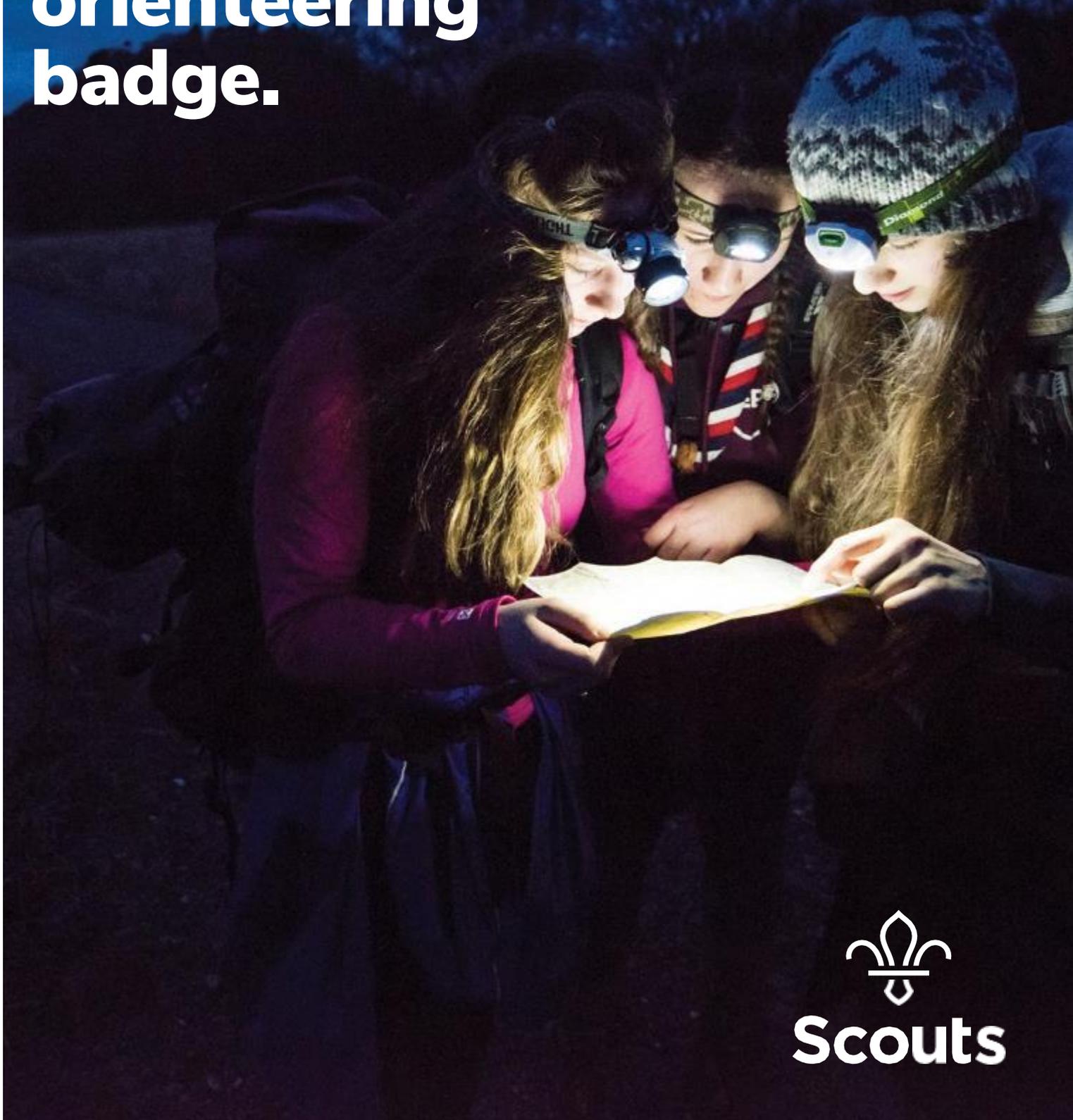
We've started with headlines about skills for life because they're an easy way to pitch what we do with a lot of impact. Use them anywhere you want to promote your Scout Group – for example on a poster, or on your Group's homepage.

We've written some more examples over the next few pages to get you started. Feel free to use or adapt them. Even adding your town or the name of your Scout HQ, as we've done on page 11, makes it yours. Or write your own. There's no special formula. It's not always: skill x place = headline (otherwise it'll get repetitive and you'll run out of examples). The one thing all these examples have in common is that we've used detail and everyday language to show the different skills young people learn at Scouts.

Now write your own



**When you
need a plan B,
you'll be glad
of that
orienteering
badge.**



Scouts

Now write your own

The everyday can be surprising: writing a recruitment campaign for volunteers.

If you're writing a headline to go with a more 'expected' photograph of an outdoor activity, try to pair it with a less-expected headline. In this volunteer recruitment poster (right), it's more surprising (and more effective) to write about the things volunteers do behind the scenes to make these unforgettable days out happen. It's easy to adapt these with different activities and examples. If you're stuck, start by making a list of what volunteers really do, big and small.



**Not pictured:
the mini bus driver,
sandwich maker,
photo taker.**

Brockwell's young people need volunteers

16thBrockwellScouts.org.uk


Scouts
16th Brockwell

Now write your own

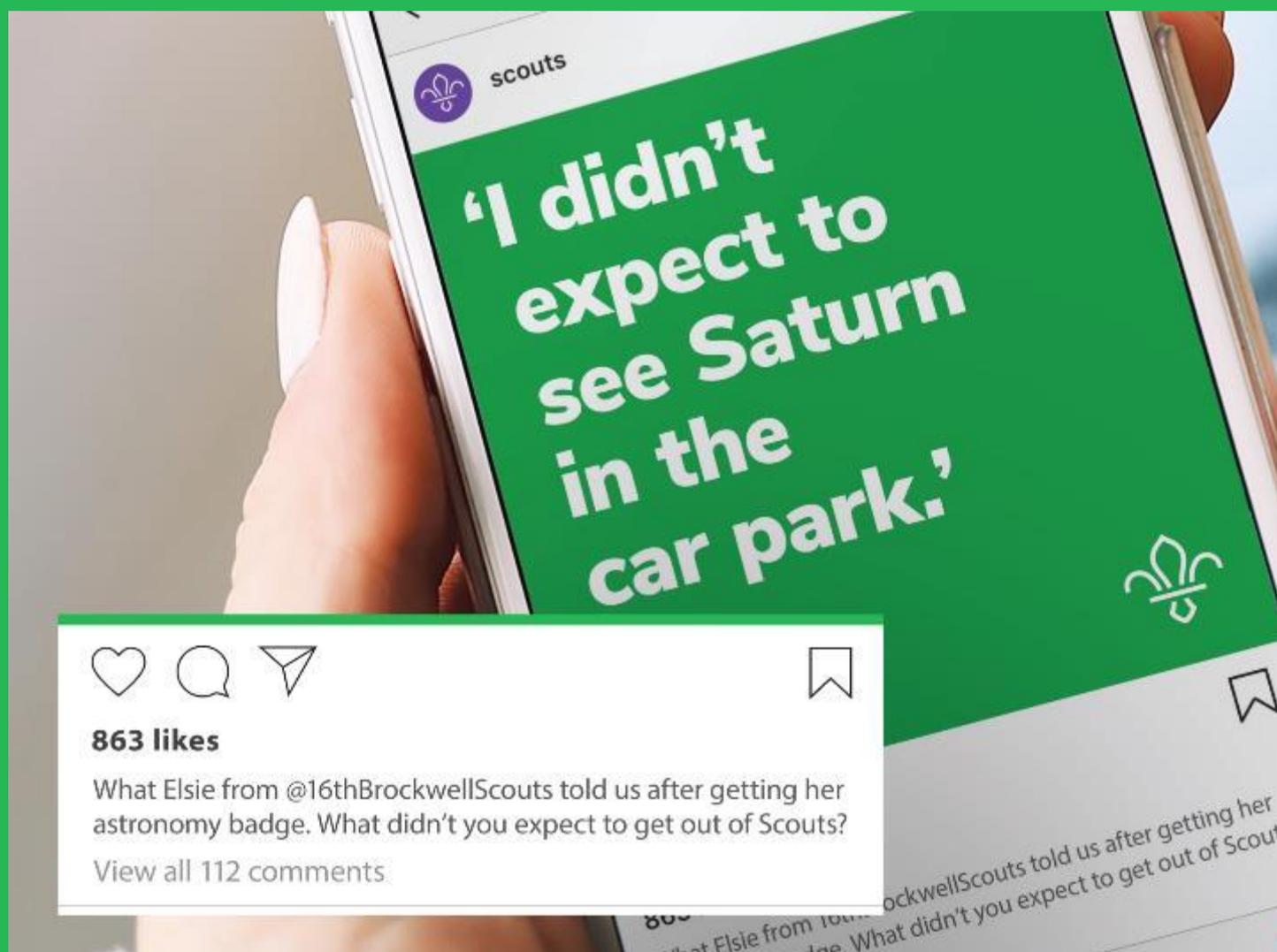


Now write your own

Doing the same on social media

On social media, we want to start conversations. But instead of asking open questions, spark the conversation with a surprising or provocative answer. As before, we're pairing something amazing (seeing Saturn) with something ordinary (a car park).

To find examples, try asking your group what they didn't expect to do when they joined Scouts. You'll probably need to ask a few 'but why?' questions to get more detail and really interesting answers (for example, 'It's fun' won't work hard enough! What was the most fun activity and why?).





**Feeling great about yourself.
There isn't a badge for
that, but there should be.**



Scouts

Writing everything else

Grounded – and inspiring – words

Again, in your day-to-day writing, try to write more like you speak. But also think about what you're writing. A short, snappy, welcoming poster with an intriguing headline is more likely to recruit volunteers than a long job description, for example.

We've rewritten the copy on the next page more like an advert: a list of grounded phrases like 'teeth-gritting' is more inspiring and interesting than simply copying and pasting our aims and methods which, although important, are broad and formal and don't create ideal first impressions.

Writing everything else

From this:

About this Group

8th Brockwell Scout Group

Missions

Our aim is that of Scouting; to promote the development of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, social and spiritual potential, as individuals, as responsible citizens and as members of their local, national and international communities.

The method of achieving the Aim is through the provision of exciting and adventurous activities with progressive training based on The Scout Promise and Law guided by adult leadership.

Description

8th Brockwell Beaver Colony, Cub Pack and Scouts pack meets every Wednesday during term time at St Thomas Church, Brockwell.

Beavers - 5.00pm - 6.00pm

Cubs - 6.00pm - 7.00pm

Scouts - 7.00pm - 8.30pm

To this:

About this Group

8th Brockwell Scout Group

Teeth-gritting, keep-on-going, summit-reaching, belly-laughing Wednesday nights-every week in term time at St Thomas Church in Brockwell. Come and give it a go.

Beavers: 5.00pm – 6.00pm

Cubs: 6.00pm – 7.00pm

Scouts: 7.00pm – 8.30pm

Writing everything else

From this:

Cub leader role ad – 23rd Woodheath

Adult volunteers wanted for the Cubs section of 23rd Woodheath Scout Group

Every year, Scouts help over 460,000 young people in the UK enjoy new adventures and gain new skills. We help them experience the outdoors, interact with others, gain confidence and have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Scouts take part in activities as diverse as kayaking, abseiling, expeditions overseas, photography, climbing and zorbing. This everyday adventure is possible thanks to our adult volunteers, who support Scouts in a wide range of roles.

Volunteers have the opportunity to train as a leader, become a first aider, help on camps etc

Key responsibilities

Supervising young people from the ages of 8 to 11

Organising and running activities

Crowd control

Plus anything else you can think of

Desirable skills

Teaching and training

Administration and clerical communication

Event planning

Interpersonal

Leadership and management

Listening

Mentoring and counselling

Negotiation and influencing

Non-discriminatory

Non-judgemental

Planning and organising

Positive attitude

Presentation

Problem solving

Project management

Public speaking

Team work

Time management

Networking

Writing everything else

To this:

Think differently about where to recruit volunteers and how to get your advert to stand out. Short and snappy is good – you don't need to say everything here

You look like
a role model.

Woodheath's young people need
volunteers to help run their group
on Tuesday nights.

scouts.org.uk/woodheath



Writing everything else

A recruitment flyer



Our values

Integrity
Respect
Care
Belief
Cooperation



Our values

From this:

The Values of Scouting

As Scouts we are guided by these values:

Integrity

We act with integrity; we are honest, trustworthy and loyal.

Respect

We have self-respect and respect for others.

Care

We support others and take care of the world in which we live.

Belief

We explore our faiths, beliefs and attitudes.

Cooperation

We make a positive difference; we cooperate with others and make friends.

To this:

Our Scout values

Our values are at the heart of who we are and what we do:

Integrity

We're honest, we try to do the right thing (even if no-one's watching), and we stay true to ourselves.

Respect

We're thoughtful of people's feelings and values, treating everyone as we'd like to be treated ourselves.

Care

We're kind to others, looking after the world we live in.

Belief

We explore our beliefs and attitudes with wide-open minds.

Cooperation

We work with others to change the world for the better, making friends along the way.

Over to you



Here are some more tips to use in your own writing:

Write more like you speak

Think about what you'd say if you were talking to someone and start there. Write in the first person: 'you' and 'we'.

Swap formal words for more everyday ones: write 'make sure', not 'ensure'; 'use', not 'utilise'; 'need', not 'require'.

Look out for more formal description of skills, too. Would you really say 'interact with others' when you're talking to a young person about Scouts?

Think of the more everyday, grounded way you might say it, then write that down. So 'interact with others' might become 'make friends', 'meet other people your age' or 'work it out together'. It won't always be a case of swapping one word for another:

sometimes your rewrite will be longer, and that's OK.

Less-expected

We want to surprise and challenge those people who still think we're a predominately outward-bound organisation for boys. So show our young people doing things people might not expect from Scouts: skateboarding, building a robot... We want our words and images to show we're more modern, more open and more diverse than people may think. So play with people's expectations. Surprise them.

Don't say everything

Think about what you're writing as an advert or a flyer (even if it's not). It will help you keep your words short, snappy and interesting. Even if you're writing a longer piece, what can you do to make people curious and hook them in?

A little detail goes a long way

Use detail to help ground 'skills for life' and to paint a picture of what it's really like to volunteer for Scouts. What do volunteers do? How much time do they have to commit? Make it everyday, make it real, make it personal:

**We need tea makers,
activity planners,
tidy-uppers and helpers
for as little or as much
time as you can spare.**

Over to you

Lists are helpful

Lists – along with detail – help show the range of things both volunteers and Scouts do. Use them!

From this:

Scouts had a great weekend at CamFest.

To this:

They walked on water, they zorbed, they raced go-karts, they balanced on high ropes, they made bottle rockets, joined the iCircus, kayaked and ate 3004 marshmallows.

Make it local

Be proud of your patch! Namecheck your area or your Scout group, road or local park. It will get people's attention and show that your group really is run by local people for your area's local people.

And when you're writing to parents and potential volunteers...

Think about the context

Who's going to read what you're writing? Where will they be? What frame of mind will they be in? How can you get their attention? If you're trying to recruit more volunteers, a short, snappy headline on a poster for a noticeboard will probably work harder than several paragraphs with lots of detail (you can always put more info online).

Cut the rulebook and AGM tone

We want our words to inspire and encourage volunteers and parents, not put them off. So if something sounds bureaucratic ('clerical communication'...) or reads like minutes from a council meeting or a rulebook, it's time to think again.

From this:

We fully understand that you may not be able to help on a regular basis, which is why we will be starting a Parents' Rota.

To this:

If you could help us out once or twice a term, it'd make a big difference.

Think about what's stopping someone from volunteering and use that as a way in

Think about why someone might not volunteer for Scouts (eg, 'I can't put up a tent or use a compass', or 'I can't do it every week') and use those to find interesting angles to get their attention: 'You don't have to be Bear Grylls to volunteer', for example, or 'Dens and determination, made with you, a few hours a month'.

More help

Brand centre

We want to make creating on-brand materials as easy as possible. Our brand centre scouts.org.uk/brand has lots of templates, tools and resources to help with your communications and recruitment, including:

- guidelines on how we talk
- brand guidelines
- logo artwork
- local logo generator
- web-to-print templates
- (including banners, posters, flyers, certificates, stationery)
- social media templates
- MS Office templates
- photo library
- videos
-

Style guides

To make sure everything we write – and how we present it – is consistent, read our editorial and digital style guides at scouts.org.uk/styleguide

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Got a question or suggestion? Please let us know at communications@scouts.org.uk



Get in touch

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