

**Discussion:** This comparison was done in preparation for choosing new troop management software for Troop 203 in Hershey, Pennsylvania. We are about to go over one hundred scouts with the bridging of new Webelos from the three Packs in our town. This, together with the new 1999 requirements, forced us to look at upgrading our current TroopMaster for Windows, or to find new software. On the basis of this comparison and further evaluations, we have chosen to convert to WinScout and are now completed with the conversion. So you should know that this comparison is not entirely unbiased. Your mileage may vary.

In selecting any software, you should first consider what are your needs and requirements, now and in the foreseeable future. Consider particularly what (not how) the software should do to fit into and to support the program of your troop. Not all troops and users have the same requirements, so you may come to a different choice.

Next, consider the features of the software that do the what of your requirements. Do not consider other features which will be unused, and certainly do not consider promised new features, also known as *vaporware*. In our troop's situation, we do our finances separately, so financial features are mostly ignored in this comparison. Next, choose two or three products from this comparison that interest you, and do your own evaluation and testing with your own data. Consider the quality of the features that you need. In this case, consider particularly the quality and content of the reports, the data input convenience, the navigation convenience, and whether data fields are available for the data you need. Quality, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Only you can judge, and choose the one product for your troop.

If you are changing software packages, consider how you will convert your current data. Only one of these packages (WinScout) includes partial conversion from TroopMaster. However, you should not consider conversion a big barrier to choosing another package. Conversion is once and done, whereas you may spend many more hours struggling with a package that does not fit your needs.

Lastly, choose the hardware to support your software choice. (Many make the mistake of choosing the hardware first, and then have greatly narrowed their software choices.) This is true even if you are getting or using donated hardware; it is better to throw away old hardware, than to have it not support your program and requirements (assuming you can afford the choice.)

Feature	TroopMaster	RecordKeeper	WinScout	Rank N' File	Scoutmate	Trooper
Version evaluated	2000 1.02 (current version is 1.03)	4.7.2	2.10.06 (current version is 2.10.07)	4.03	5.10a3	1.01
Company	TroopMaster Software, Inc., Palmyra, VA	A. W. Beck Co., Portland, OR	TP Software, Colorado Springs, CO	Hart C. Enterprises, Provo, UT	KSC Group Delray Beach, FL	SRT Enterprises Glen Ellyn, IL
Size of company (persons)	4	1	4	1?	1	1
Web site	<a href="http://www.troopmaster.com/">http://www.troopmaster.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.recordkeeper.com">http://www.recordkeeper.com</a>	<a href="http://www.tpsoftwareinc.com">http://www.tpsoftwareinc.com</a>	<a href="http://www.reliablehost.com/eaglesnest/">http://www.reliablehost.com/eaglesnest/</a>	<a href="http://www.kscgroup.com/">http://www.kscgroup.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.xnet.com/~srt/">http://www.xnet.com/~srt/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:tsi@troopmaster.com">tsi@troopmaster.com</a>	<a href="mailto:support#awbeck.com">support#awbeck.com</a>	<a href="mailto:winscout@tpsoftwareinc.com">winscout@tpsoftwareinc.com</a>	<a href="mailto:hartcentr@aol.com">hartcentr@aol.com</a>	<a href="mailto:kcoleman@pipeline.com">kcoleman@pipeline.com</a>	<a href="mailto:srt@xnet.com">srt@xnet.com</a>
Cost	\$69.95 + \$4 S&H for troop site license. \$29.95 to upgrade TroopMaster for Windows	\$69.95 for one version, \$91.95 for both Mac and Windows, for troop site license, \$5 S&H	\$79.95 including S&H for troop site license, free upgrade	\$59.95 for multi-unit license on CD-ROM or disks, \$50 downloaded, other options. Venture module unlocked for \$20. \$5 off for orders on web site.	\$49.95 for site license for up to 2 units. \$20 for 50 more units (an entire district!) for all BSA unit types	\$59 + \$4 S&H for troop site license
Based on which database	none	FileMaker Pro	MS FoxPro 2.6 (rewriting in FP 6)	MS Access	MS Access 2.0 and Visual Basic	Paradox (Borland Database Engine)

# Boy Scout Records Software – A Comparison of Features

5/12/99

Feature	TroopMaster	RecordKeeper	WinScout	Rank N' File	Scoutmate	Trooper
Native platforms	Windows	Windows, Mac (68K and PPC native)	Windows (a version of FoxPro also runs on Macs, but no WinScout available)	Windows	Windows (separate 16 or 32 bit versions)	Windows
Run OK on Macintosh with Virtual PC?	(reported OK on Virtual PC, Real PC, or SoftWindows)	Windows version likely OK on Mac, but not necessary	yes	probably OK, but not tested	probably OK, but not tested	probably OK, but not tested
Conversion from TroopMaster	N/A	ask for converter	yes-some	no	no, but available soon?	no
Import of data	Only from TroopLedger and PackMaster	yes, from 10 formats	Only TroopMaster data for scouts, sduits and advancement, but no activities	no	Only from other versions of Scoutmate.	no
Export of data	To ASCII delimited files; any report can be saved to a file, or to tab-delimited format	yes, to 10 formats	Scout, adult, activity data in 6 formats. Court of Honor report to editor.	yes, in that any report can be saved to text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf) or Excel	yes (to Scoutmate only) and ScoutNet 2000. Any report can be saved to .txt or .rtf.	reports can be saved to 6 formats
Add to or modify database if you own the DB software?	no, no database software used	both with purchased key	yes for troop's use only (otherwise violates license)	yes for adding queries and reports; no for modifying data layout, reports, or forms	yes for custom reports	no
Printed manual quality	good	can be printed, but same as online help, poor quality	good, partially on web	none	not evaluated	none
Online help	Excellent, context sensitive	disjointed, full of typos, not context sensitive	Context sensitive help for each data entry field at bottom of window. No other help available.	Excellent context sensitive, intended to replace the need for a printed manual.	Fair, poor quality of graphics (on my screen), no Search, no Next, no context sensitive help.	Context sensitive, all documentation is online and intended to replace a printed manual.
Data entry convenience (opinion)	Good, improved over previous versions of TM; can copy or update parent data to leader, counselor, or POC files.	Excellent	Good, one record for each household address, but must enter 6 digit dates	Uses a 3-ring binder metaphor. Somewhat confusing, a separate form for every conceivable type of data. Zip code entry causes entry of city & state	Good, handy popup calendar for dates, but otherwise dates must be typed as 6 digits, must keep clicking Modify button.	not evaluated
Relational database records	no	yes, but parents, leaders, merit badge counselors, officials, committee are all separate records	yes, adults entered once for parents, leader, and merit badge counselor	yes, but parent, leader, resource, and merit badge counselor are all separate records.	yes, but parent, adult, and merit badge counselor are all separate records	?
Household info related	no, only as copy or update of parent data	no, but it will find address info if same phone number as another scout.	yes	no, but auto copy of data when entering a brother, or making a parent into a leader	no	?
Data field for email address	yes	yes for scouts, no for parents or leaders	yes	yes	no	no
Data fields for vehicles and insurance	yes	yes, a free format field	yes	yes	yes	no

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Data fields for other phone types like cell, fax, pager	yes	only one alternate phone	yes, youth phone, mobile, pager, fax/modem	no	no	no
Separate data for mother and father	yes	yes	yes	yes, as a relative; otherwise, assumes same last name	yes	yes
Data fields for alternate parent types	yes	only one	yes, two guardians and an alternate emergency contact	yes	only if less than 2 parents too	no?
Data fields for Order of the Arrow	yes with OA camping eligibility report	no	yes with camping eligibility data	yes	yes	yes with OA eligibility report
Data field for and print scout picture	no	yes	no	yes, separate file	no	no
Navigation convenience (opinion)	good, added buttons to go directly to other entry forms	Excellent, uses category tabs and sub-tabs	Good	adequate, buttons on various forms help	good tabs and "Go" to sections button for scouts and adults. Other areas adequate.	not evaluated
<b>Requirements</b>						
Requirements checks	yes, excellent	no	yes, detailed MB tracking including partials, all MB requirements included.	no, requirements are only numbered	No. Each requirement inconveniently on a separate page	no
Automatically place merit badges	yes, or manually place	separate entry of required and non-required MBs	yes	no	no	no
New requirements conversion	yes	yes	yes and switch between	no	no. New requirements are in a free update; then can select either for each rank.	no
Track meeting attendance	yes	yes	no, will consider for future release	yes	yes	yes
Track scout activities	yes, including tour permit with driver, itinerary, etc.	yes, including trip costs, payments and history	yes, including tour permit, drivers, itinerary	yes, including tour permit, drivers, itinerary, etc.	yes	yes
Check scout activity requirements	yes, and automatically credit	no?	yes, and automatically credit			no
Track and check scout leadership requirements	yes, and automatically credit	yes	yes, and automatically credit	yes	no	no
Track and check scout service hours requirements	yes, and automatically credit	yes	yes, and automatically credit	yes?	no	no
Other scout info recorded	camping, hiking, meetings, and user-defined activities	calendar, photos, attendance, hiked miles, Varsity Module	nights camped, miles hiked,	hikes, campouts, meals, etc.	calendar alarms, training, events, hiking, leadership activities, finances, fund raisers, all the BSA unit types	nights camped, any event
Track adult training	yes	yes, committee only	yes	Fast Start only	yes	yes
Track adult awards	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no

Feature	TroopMaster	RecordKeeper	WinScout	Rank N' File	Scoutmate	Trooper
<b>Reports</b>						
Number of reports & forms (many can be customized)	over 80	over 37	over 57	108	about 83	47
Report quality (opinion)	diverse, one settable font, much improved over previous TM	Good	Good, rosters take too many pages	diverse; particularly like Eagle's Nest report	good	not evaluated
Ad hoc reports	none, except through export	yes with FileMaker Pro	no	no	yes with queries	no
Mailing labels	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Search flexibility	none except in POC report	excellent, search using any data fields in the current screen. Searches select a set of records for reports, export, browsing, etc.	none, uses scrolled list to select individuals directly	searches used internally only, constantly asks for troop number, but defaults if only 1 unit. Good use of "Rolex" to select individuals directly	good, some queries can be made on some data fields for each record type. Searches select a set of records for printing or export of reports.	none
Sorting flexibility	no control of sorting	Can sort on any field	Rosters, activity, work sheet and court of honor reports can be sorted or grouped on some fields	poor: alphabetic or entry order	Sort order is built into reports	Sort order is built into reports
<b>Database Management</b>						
Backup adequate	yes, all files only	yes, copy all files, or transfer file	yes, full database only	yes, each troop and photos separately	yes, full database only	yes, full database only
Restore adequate	yes, full restore or restore delegated part	yes, copy all files, or transfer file	yes, full database only	yes, each troop and photos separately	yes, full database only	yes, full database only
Archive of records	Scout and adult	no	yes, within same database to ensure not loss of data	no, only inactive status or delete	yes, using the export/import and delete facilities, or the Troop Change feature	inactive status records in same database
ScoutNet 2000 certified	verbally passed BSA testing last October	promised for version 5	submitted for compliance testing	submitted for compliance testing	informally passed BSA testing	talking to BSA
Delegate parts of database	yes, up to 7 parts	yes	no	no	yes, for scouts, adults, or counselors using the export/import facilities	no
<b>Modern Features</b>						
Can multiple users simultaneously access and/or update database over a network?	no	yes, using TCP/IP, IPX, or AppleTalk	yes, but only one user at a time can update (?).	yes?	yes, with INI file change for file path	not tested or supported, most features should work according to developer.
Web access	no	potential custom web interface and data publishing option. See RK web site.	no	no	planned for scout and adult data only for future release	no
Phone dialing from database	no	yes	no	no	no	no
Launch email client from database	no	yes	no	no	no	no

**Boy Scout Records Software – A Comparison of Features**

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Y2K compliant	yes	yes	yes	yes, displayed dates depends on Regional Settings control panel, report dates after 2000 must enter 4 digits	yes	yes
Performance impression *	adequate, claims to be fastest. (On a slow computer, this might be important)	adequate	adequate	adequate	slow, takes many seconds to display a new window	not evaluated

\* The test computer was a Compaq Armada 1510DM laptop Pentium 120 MHz with 16 Mb RAM and Windows 95.