

Mechanics of Advancement: In Boy Scouting

Both adult and youth leaders approve Boy Scout advancement. This permits greater emphasis on standards and more consistency in measurement, but it also places another level of importance on teaching and testing. As Scouts work with one another, learning takes place on both sides of the equation as they play teacher and student in turn. Parents are involved at home encouraging, mentoring, and supporting, but they do not sign for rank advancement requirements unless they serve as leaders or Lone Scout

Advancement at this level presents a Scout with a series of challenges in a fun and educational manner. As he completes the requirements he achieves the three aims of Scouting: to develop character, to train in the responsibilities of participating citizenship, and to develop physical and mental fitness. It is important to remember that in the end, a badge recognizes the Scout has gone through an experience of learning something he did not previously know. As a result, through increased confidence, he discovers or realizes he is able to learn similar skills or disciplines. Advancement is thus about what a young man is now able to learn and to do, and how he has grown. Retention of skills and knowledge is then developed later by using what has been learned through the natural course of unit programming; for example, instructing others and using skills in games and on outings.

Advancement, thus, is not so much a reward for what has been done. It is, instead, more about the journey: As a Scout advances, he is measured and he grows in confidence and self-reliance, and he builds upon his skills and abilities.

The badge signifies that a young man—through participation in a series of educational activities—has provided service to others, practiced personal responsibility, and set the examples critical to the development of leadership; all the while working to live by the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

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Scouting Ranks & Advancement Age Requirements

After being awarded the Scout badge, there are six ranks in Boy Scouting that are to be earned sequentially no matter what age a boy joins the program.

All Boy Scout awards, merit badges, badges of rank, and Eagle Palms are only for registered Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Lone Boy Scouts; and also for qualified Venturers or Sea Scouts who are not yet 18 years old. Venturers and Sea Scouts qualify by achieving First Class rank as a Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, or Lone Scout. The only exceptions for those older than age 18 are related to Scouts registered beyond the age of eligibility and those who have been granted time extensions to complete the Eagle Scout rank.



Tenderfoot



Second Class



First Class

Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks are oriented toward learning and practicing skills that will help the Scout develop confidence and fitness, challenge his thought processes, introduce him to his responsibilities as a citizen, and prepare him for an exciting and successful Scouting experience.

Requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class may be passed at any time after the Scout badge has been earned. For example, a Scout working toward Tenderfoot may fulfill and be signed off on all the first aid– related requirements for all three of the ranks.



Star



Life



Eagle

All requirements for Star, Life, and Eagle, except for those related to merit badges, must be fulfilled after the successful completion of a board of review for the previous rank.

In Boy Scouting, advancement requirements must be passed as written. If, for example, a requirement uses words like "show," "demonstrate," or "discuss," then that is what Scouts must do. Filling out a worksheet, for example, would not suffice.



Four Steps in Advancement

A Scout advances from Tenderfoot to Eagle by doing things with his patrol and troop, with his leaders, and on his own. A well-rounded and active unit program that generates advancement as a natural outcome should take boys to First Class in their first 12 to 18 months of membership. Boy Scout advancement is a straightforward matter when the four steps or stages outlined below are observed and integrated into troop programming. The same steps apply to Varsity Scouting, or where members are qualified to continue with Boy Scout advancement in Venturing or Sea Scouts. In these cases, references to troops and various troop leaders would point to teams, crews, and ships, and their respective leaders.

1. The Scout Learns

He learns by doing, and as he learns, he grows in his ability to do his part as a member of the patrol and troop. As he develops knowledge and skill, he is asked to teach others; and in this way he learns and develops leadership.

Once a Scout has been tested and signed off by someone approved to do so, the requirement has been met. The unit leader is accountable for ensuring proper advancement procedures are followed. A part

of this responsibility includes the careful selection and training of those who approve advancement. If a unit leader believes a boy has not learned the subject matter for a requirement, he or she should see that opportunities are made available for the Scout to practice or teach the requirement, so in this way he may complete his learning and further develop his skills.

2. The Scout Is Tested

The unit leader authorizes those who may test and pass the Scout on rank requirements. They might include his patrol leader, senior patrol leader, an assistant unit leader, another Scout, or the unit leader himself. Merit badge counselors teach and test him on requirements for merit badges.

3. The Scout Is Reviewed

After he has completed all requirements for a rank, the Scout meets with a board of review. For Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, and Life ranks, and Eagle Palms, members of the unit committee conduct it. The Eagle Scout board of review is held in accordance with National Council and local council procedures.

4. The Scout Is Recognized

When the board of review has approved his advancement, the Scout deserves recognition as soon as possible. This should be done at a ceremony at the next unit meeting. His achievement may be recognized again later, during a formal court of honor.

5. After the Scout Is Tested and Recognized

After the Scout is tested and recognized, a well-organized unit program will help him practice his skills in different settings and methods: at unit meetings, through various activities and outings, by teaching other Scouts, while enjoying games and leading projects, and so forth. These activities reinforce the learning, show how Scout skills and knowledge are applied, and build confidence. Repetition is the key; this is how retention is achieved. The Scout fulfills a requirement and then is placed in a situation where he has to put it to work. If he has forgotten what he learned, he may have to seek out a friend, leader, or other resource to help refresh his memory. As he does so, we are able to watch him grow.