

The way Scouts earn Eagle Palms has changed in a big way

July 10, 2017 Bryan Wendell

Update, Aug. 23, 2017 | The National Boy Scouting Subcommittee has released this statement, saying that the policy outlined in the post below has not changed but is currently under review:



“The current policy regarding Eagle Palms is any Eagle candidate having a board of review on or after Aug. 1, 2017, is eligible to receive the appropriate number of Palms based on the total number of merit badges earned prior to his board of review. However, due to concerns from the Scouting family, this policy is currently under review. All points of view are being carefully, respectfully, and thoughtfully considered. However, that does not guarantee that any changes will be made to the policy. When the review is complete and a decision is made, a notice will be sent out to announce that decision.”

The original post from July 10, 2017, follows.

Eagle Palms are bronze, gold and silver awards presented to young men who earn five, 10, 15 or more merit badges beyond the 21 required to become an Eagle Scout.

This week, the BSA has announced significant changes to the way Scouts earn Eagle Palms. The modifications take effect Aug. 1, 2017.

The changes bring Eagle Palm requirements in line with the needs of older Scouts. The National Boy Scouting Subcommittee has eliminated unnecessary obstacles, such as the Eagle Palm board of review, and expanded the definition of active participation.

But the biggest change affects young men who haven't yet earned Eagle. Beginning Aug. 1, all earned Palms may be awarded instantly to new Eagle Scouts at their Eagle court of honor. This abolishes the wait of months or years for these young men to receive all Palms available to them.

Here's a look at what's changing. Below that, an in-depth guide to the new Eagle Palm requirements.

What's changing?

A new Eagle Scout can instantly receive, alongside his Eagle medal, all Eagle Palms he has earned for merit badges completed before he became an Eagle Scout. These Palms recognize additional merit badges earned before completing the Eagle board of review. Previously, an Eagle Scout needed to wait three months between each Palm — even if he earned the extra merit badges before becoming an Eagle. This meant that, under the old rules, a young man who became an Eagle Scout at 17 years and 10 months, was mathematically unable to earn any Eagle Palms.

Example: Glenn, a 16-year-old Life Scout, has 36 merit badges at the time of his Eagle Scout board of review — 15 more than required. Previously, he would've needed to wait three months after his Eagle board of review to receive his Bronze Palm, another three months for his Gold Palm and another three for his Silver Palm. Under the new rules, he can get that Silver Palm (representing 15 additional merit badges) along with his Eagle medal at his Eagle Scout court of honor. No wait required.

Note: After becoming an Eagle Scout and receiving the Palms already earned, additional Palms may be earned by completing the revised requirements, including the three months tenure between awarding each Palm.

The three-month tenure requirement has been expanded to allow active participation in any BSA program — not just the troop and patrol.

This recognizes that as some Scouts get older, their Scouting participation shifts to the Order of the Arrow, summer camp staff or elsewhere.

The leadership requirement has been broadened to include “accepting responsibility” as well as “demonstrating leadership.”

The Eagle Palm board of review has been eliminated.

Eagle Palms are not ranks, so the Eagle Palm board of review was seen as an unnecessary step. A unit leader conference is deemed to be sufficient and may be conducted at any time during the tenure requirement.

Eagle Palms: the official requirements

These are effective Aug. 1, 2017.

After successfully completing your Eagle Scout board of review and being validated as an Eagle Scout by the National Service Center, you will be entitled to receive an Eagle Palm for each additional 5 merit badges you have completed before your Eagle Scout board of review. For these Palms only, it will not be necessary for you to complete any of the requirements stated below.

After becoming an Eagle Scout, you may earn additional Palms by completing the following requirements.

1. Be active in the Boy Scouts of America for at least three months after becoming an Eagle Scout or after the last Palm was earned. **
2. Since earning the Eagle Scout rank or your last Eagle Palm, demonstrate Scout spirit by living the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Tell how you have done your duty to God and how you have lived the Scout Oath and Scout Law in your everyday life.
3. Continue to set a satisfactory example of accepting responsibility or demonstrating leadership ability.
4. Earn five additional merit badges beyond those required for Eagle or last Palm. ***
5. While an Eagle Scout, participate in a Scoutmaster conference.

Notes

**Eagle Palms must be earned in sequence, and the three-month tenure requirement must be observed for each Palm.

***Merit badges earned any time since becoming a Boy Scout may be used to meet this requirement.

Eagle Palms: the official requirements, annotated

Here are those same requirements annotated.

The new requirements are in **green**. Remember, these take effect Aug. 1, 2017.

Notes in **orange** explain why each change was made. The text comes from the National Boy Scouting Subcommittee.

After successfully completing your Eagle Scout board of review and being validated as an Eagle Scout by the National Service Center, you will be entitled to receive an Eagle Palm for each additional 5 merit badges you have completed before your Eagle Scout board of review. For these Palms only, it will not be necessary for you to complete any of the requirements stated below.

By implementing this proposal, a Scout can be recognized with an Eagle Palm(s) for the extra work he has put into earning merit badges and acquiring additional education prior to earning the rank of Eagle Scout regardless of his age at the time he earns the rank of Eagle Scout. If the Eagle Scout has sufficient time remaining before his 18th birthday, he can then continue to earn additional Eagle Palms by completing the following proposed requirements.

After becoming an Eagle Scout, you may earn additional Palms by completing the following requirements:

1. Be active in the Boy Scouts of America for at least three months after becoming an Eagle Scout or after the last Palm was earned.

Requirement 1 has been changed to include being active in the "Boy Scouts of America" instead of just "troop and patrol." This allows a Scout to receive active participation time credit for programs such as the OA, Venturing, serving on camp staff, NYLT and NAYLE staff etc. In addition, participation in positive non-Scouting activities can be given consideration, as explained in topic 4.2.3.1 of the Guide to Advancement. This significantly broadens the opportunity for Scouts to stay involved in Scouting or other character-building activities and receive consideration toward earning additional Palms after earning the rank of Eagle Scout.

2. Since earning the Eagle Scout rank or your last Eagle Palm, demonstrate Scout spirit by living the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Tell how you have done your duty to God and how you have lived the Scout Oath and Scout Law in your everyday life. Requirement 2 is unchanged.

3. Continue to set a satisfactory example of accepting responsibility or demonstrating leadership ability.

Requirement 3 has been updated to include accepting responsibility as well as demonstrating leadership ability. This is not as restrictive as the current requirement, which focuses only on leadership. It is reasonable to make this change because Scouts can achieve Eagle Scout rank by serving in a position of responsibility rather than just serving in a leadership position. Accepting responsibility or demonstrating leadership should be sufficient. If a young man demonstrates leadership, we can assume that at some point he developed it.

4. Earn five additional merit badges beyond those required for Eagle or last Palm. Requirement 4 is unchanged.

5. While an Eagle Scout, participate in a Scoutmaster conference.

6. *There isn't a No. 6 under the new requirements.*

Requirement 6 has been eliminated. A Palm is an award to recognize achievement beyond the rank of Eagle Scout. It is not a rank itself, so it is not necessary to have a board of review. It also generates confusion, becomes a barrier to recognition because delays can result in a Scout being short of time to earn another Palm, and is one more duty for a unit advancement committee which should be devoting more attention to building advancement throughout the unit. These are Eagle Scouts; they've already reached the pinnacle. They represent youth with whom we have most likely already achieved our aims. Approval of the unit leader is sufficient.

The right way to wear a combination of palms

The Bronze Palm represents the first five merit badges beyond the 21 required for Eagle. The Gold Palm represents the next five (10 total), and the Silver Palm the third five (15 total).

After that, you'll combine multiple Palms. While qualifying Eagle Scouts can wear multiple Silver Palms, they should never wear more than 1 Bronze or 1 Gold Palm. You'll see why in this handy chart that shows the proper Palm combinations.

Total number of merit badges	Number beyond minimum	Palm combination			
21	0	None	76	55	1 Gold, 3 Silver
26	5	1 Bronze	81	60	4 Silver
31	10	1 Gold	86	65	1 Bronze, 4 Silver
36	15	1 Silver	91	70	1 Gold, 4 Silver
41	20	1 Bronze, 1 Silver	96	75	5 Silver
46	25	1 Gold, 1 Silver	101	80	1 Bronze, 5 Silver
51	30	2 Silver	106	85	1 Gold, 5 Silver
56	35	1 Bronze, 2 Silver	111	90	6 Silver
61	40	1 Gold, 2 Silver	116	95	1 Bronze, 6 Silver
66	45	3 Silver	121	100	1 Gold, 6 Silver
71	50	1 Bronze, 3 Silver	126	105	7 Silver
			131	110	1 Bronze, 7 Silver
			136	115	1 Gold, 7 Silver

Answers to your questions about the changes

Following are some questions and answers regarding the new requirements. These were provided by the National Boy Scouting Subcommittee.

Q: Why were these changes made at this time?

A: The BSA has a longstanding policy and tradition of quickly recognizing Scouts for their achievements. In the case of Eagle Palms, many Scouts were not receiving any recognition for the extra work they were doing by earning additional merit badges.

Q: Why are these requirement changes being implemented immediately instead of waiting until the Boy Scout Requirements book is published in 2018?

A: This is consistent with any other requirement change introduced mid-year. The intent is to allow the greater flexibility of the new requirements to be used as soon as possible so more Scouts can take advantage of them.

Q: Can a Scout who completed his Eagle Scout board of review before Aug. 1 go back and receive Palms for merit badges he has already completed?

A: No, the change to allow awarding Palms as described above is not retroactive. If the Scout still has eligibility remaining, he may continue to earn Palms by completing the new requirements.

Q: Other than having completed at least five additional merit badges before his Eagle board of review, does a Scout have to complete any additional requirements for a Palm to be awarded immediately after he is validated as an Eagle Scout?

A: No, there are no additional requirements to complete if a Scout is to receive Eagle Palms based on the merit badges he earned before his Eagle Scout Board of Review.

Q: After becoming an Eagle Scout and receiving any Eagle Palms he might be entitled to, how does a Scout earn additional Palms?

A: By completing the revised requirements.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of Eagle Palms a Scout can immediately qualify for following his Eagle Scout board of review and verification by the National Service Center?

A: No limit. So long as the Scout has completed the required number of merit badges, he may apply to receive the equivalent number of Palms.

Q: How does the Scout apply to obtain any Palms he might be entitled to receive?

A: Eagle Palms may be reported by the unit leader submitting an Advancement Report No. 34403, making the appropriate entry via Internet Advancement, or via Scoutbook once the option is available. The Eagle Scout Palm Application, form # 58-709, was previously discontinued since it is not necessary for Eagle Palms to be processed or approved at the council level.

Q: Why was "... be active in your troop and patrol" replaced with "... be active in the Boy Scouts of America...?"

A: This requirement was broadened to recognize that Eagle Scouts have many positive character-building activities that they can participate in both in and out of Scouting. Those activities should be considered when reviewing this requirement. See *Guide to Advancement* topic 4.2.3.1 "Active Participation" for an in-depth explanation of active participation.

Q: What does the phrase "accepting responsibility or demonstrating leadership ability" mean?

A: A Scout can meet this requirement by accepting responsibility or demonstrating leadership in many ways in or out of Scouting. For example, he could perform a Scoutmaster-assigned project or be an active leader in district or council activities, serve as a lodge officer in the Order of the Arrow, or even serve on camp staff. A Scout could also meet this requirement by accepting responsibility or serving in a leadership position on their sports team, as a student council officer, accepting responsibilities in other youth or religious organizations, or in a myriad of other positive activities outside of Scouting.

Q: If a Scout has earned a total of 25 merit badges but doesn't complete one more merit badge before his Eagle Scout board of review, will he have to wait until three months after his board of review to earn an Eagle Palm?

A: Yes, he must wait. Only the required number of merit badges earned prior to his Eagle Scout board of review may be considered when awarding Palms immediately following the board of review.

Q: A 17 year old Scout, who has earned 24 merit badges, has completed all his Eagle rank requirements but has not yet had his Eagle Scout board of review. If he earns two more merit badge before his Eagle board of review can he receive a Palm at that time or does he have to wait?

A: So long as he completes the two additional merit badges before his Eagle Scout board of review, the Scout can immediately receive a Bronze Palm.

Q: Four months before his 18th birthday a Scout successfully completed his Eagle board of review with a total of only 21 merit badges although he had numerous partials he was working on. After his board of review, he completed 10 additional merit badges. Can he receive a Bronze and a Gold Palm at the end of the three months?

A: After the Eagle board of review, the Scout must meet all the requirements, including three months tenure between each Palm. In this case he is only eligible to receive a Bronze Palm.

Q: If a Scout who has earned 25 merit badges has passed his 18th birthday but has not yet had his Eagle Scout board of review, can he complete one more merit badge before his board of review to receive a Palm.

A: All merit badge work must be completed before the Scout's 18th birthday.

Q: Why was the board of review requirement for Eagle Palms eliminated?

A: Eagle Palms are not a rank and thus don't need a formal board of review. Also, in some cases, scheduling boards of review had become a barrier to earning additional Eagle Palms. The Scoutmaster's conference is deemed sufficient since it can be conducted anytime during the three-month tenure period.

Q: Palms can be an important part of keeping a Scout involved in Scouting after they have earned Eagle Scout rank. Do the new requirements eliminate any incentive for them to stay in the program?

A: The new requirements provide recognition for the work a Scout has already done while providing the opportunity for Scouts who have time before their 18th birthday to earn additional Palms. Eagle Palms are only one small part of an exciting and engaging program which is what really keeps Eagle Scouts motivated to stay active in Scouting.

Where to buy and wear Eagle Palms

Buy them at your local Scout Shop. Eagle Palms are restricted items, meaning you must submit the required paperwork.

As for wearing them, you have three options:

1. On the Eagle Scout square knot, which is worn by adult Scouters.
2. Attached to the ribbon of the Eagle Scout medal, which is worn on special occasions by youth and adults.
3. On the Eagle Scout rank emblem (patch), which is sewn on the youth field uniform.