

# Boy Scout Advancement Program

(prepared by Pat Klemens, Scoutmaster)

Advancement is the method by which youth members of the Boy Scouts of America progress from rank to rank in the Scouting program. Advancement is simply a means to an end, not an end in itself.

## Boy Scouting advancement



Everything done to advance and earn these ranks, from joining until leaving the program, should be designed to help the young man have an exciting and meaningful experience.

### **Personal growth is the prime consideration in the advancement program.**

Scouting skills—what a young person knows how to do—are important, but they are not the most important aspect of advancement. Scouting's concern is the total growth of youth. This growth may be measured by how youth live the Scouting ideals, and how they do their part in their daily lives.

**Learning by doing.** A Boy Scout may read about fire building or good citizenship. He may hear it discussed, and watch others in action, but he has not learned it (for example, first aid) until he has done it.

**Each Scout progresses at his own rate.** Advancement is not a competition among individual young people, but is an expression of their interest and participation in the program. Youth must be encouraged to advance steadily and set their own goals with

guidance from their parents, guardians, or leaders. Just because a group of youth joins at the same time, not everyone will earn the same awards at the same time. Let all members earn the awards at their own pace.

**A badge is recognition of what a young man is able to do, not merely a reward for what he has done.** The badge is proof of certain abilities, and is not just a reward for the completion of a task.

**Advancement encourages Scouting ideals.**

Scouting teaches a young man how to care for himself and help others. Advancement should reflect the desire to live the Boy Scout Oath in his daily life.

The Boy Scout advancement program is subtle. It places a series of challenges in front of a Scout in a manner that is fun and educational. As Scouts meet these challenges, they achieve the aims of Boy Scouting.

The Scout advances and grows in the Boy Scout phase of the program in the same way a plant grows by receiving nourishment in the right environment. The job of adults concerned with advancement is to provide the right environment.

One of the greatest needs of young men is confidence.

There are three kinds of confidence that young men need: in themselves, in peers, and in leaders. Educators and counselors agree that the best way to build confidence is through measurement. *Self-confidence* is developed by measuring up to a challenge or a standard. *Peer confidence* develops when the same measuring system is used for everyone—when all must meet the same challenge to receive equal recognition. *Confidence in leaders* comes about when there is consistency in measuring—when leaders use a single standard of fairness.

As a Scout advances he is measured and grows in confidence and self-reliance.

## **Four Steps of Advancement**

A Boy Scout advances from Tenderfoot to Eagle by doing things with his patrol and his troop, with his leaders, and on his own. It's easy for him to advance if the following four opportunities are provided for him.

**1. The Boy Scout learns.** A Scout learns by doing. As he learns, he grows in ability to do his part as a member of the patrol and the troop. As he develops knowledge and skill, he is asked to teach others; and in this way he begins to develop leadership. [Skill sessions at troop meetings and monthly campouts are great opportunities for Scouts to teach others.](#)

**2. The Boy Scout is tested.** A Scout may be tested on rank requirements by his patrol leader, Scoutmaster, assistant Scoutmaster, a troop committee member, or [a member of our troop with the next highest rank](#). The Scout's merit badge counselor teaches and tests on the requirements for merit badges.

**3. The Boy Scout is reviewed.** After a Scout has completed all requirements for a rank, he has a Board of Review. For Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, Life, and Eagle Palms, the review is conducted by [at least three](#) members of the troop committee. Not only is it important to review those Scouts who have learned and been tested for a rank, but also to review those Scouts who have shown no progress in their advancement over the past few months. The review is not an examination; the board does not retest the candidate. Rather, the board should attempt to determine the Scout's attitude and his acceptance of Scouting's ideals. The board should make sure that good standards have been met in all phases of the Scout's life. A discussion of the Scout Oath and Scout Law is in keeping with the purpose of the review, to make sure that the candidate recognizes and understands the value of Scouting in his home, unit, school, and community. The decision of all boards of review is arrived at through discussion and must be unanimous.

The Eagle Scout board of review is [conducted by the North Star District's Advancement Committee](#).

[It should be noted that no council, district, unit, or individual has the authority to add to or subtract from any advancement requirement.](#)

**4. The Boy Scout is recognized.** When the board of review has certified a boy's advancement, he deserves to receive recognition as soon as possible. This should be done at a ceremony at the next troop meeting. The certificate for his new rank may be presented later at a formal court of honor. [Troop 96 typically holds three Courts of Honor each year.](#)

## **Scoutmaster Conferences**

One of the most enjoyable experiences of being a Scoutmaster is the opportunity for a Scout and his leader to sit down and visit together. In large troops, Scoutmasters occasionally assign this responsibility to assistant Scoutmasters or members of the troop committee; but this is unfortunate, because most Scoutmasters feel that this is truly the opportunity to get to know the Scout and help him chart his course in life.

A good conference should be unhurried. It helps the Scout evaluate his accomplishments and set new goals with his Scoutmaster. This can be accomplished at a troop meeting, camping trip, or in the Scout's home.

Goal setting by the Scout makes it possible for the Scoutmaster to help the Scout with his weaknesses and encourage him to use his strengths. The Scout (joining) conference is probably one of the most important associations the Scout will have in his Scouting career. It is at this conference that the Scoutmaster illustrates to him the adult-youth relationship that is unique to Scouting.

All through the ranks, it is rewarding for the Scoutmaster to observe the Scout grow in responsibility and maturity. It is through this association and example that a young man grows and matures, and the Scoutmaster conference accomplishes that aim.

The requirement for advancement is that the Scout participates in a Scoutmaster Conference, not that he "passes" the conference. When advancement is going to be deferred, the Scout should not come to the Scoutmaster conference thinking that everything is OK and then be surprised that his advancement is deferred. He should have had plenty of warning and guidance prior to the Scoutmaster conference. This is not a time to shut the door on advancement, but rather to work with the Scout to create goals that will allow him to succeed. However, even after a negative Scoutmaster conference for the ranks of Tenderfoot to Life, if the Scout desires a board of review, he should be granted his request.

Often, a Scout can sense that he is, or is not, advancing properly and can be encouraged to make the most of his Scouting experience.

Advancement is the method by which youth members of the Boy Scouts of America progress from rank to rank in the Scouting program. When used effectively, a Scout can achieve Scouting's ultimate Aims: fostering citizenship, developing fitness and building character.

(The preceding article on Advancement is largely excerpted from the BSA's Advancement Committee's Policies and Procedure.)