

Advancement in Scouts BSA

Rank advancement and merit badges are often confusing to new Scouts. The biggest reason for this is because we do it differently than the Cub Scouts.

First of all, it is not a race or contest. We don't compete to see who makes Star rank first or who has the most merit badges. The goal is to learn scout skills and leadership, live the Scout Law and Oath, and do your best. After you prove you are ready, you will advance to the next rank. Unlike Cub Scouts, there is no set time when you have to advance, and everyone in the same grade doesn't have to advance at the same time. (The only requirement is that you have to make Eagle before turning 18 years old.) We would like to see everyone try to make First Class within a year or so. Other than that, it's up to you to do the work to advance.

PARENTS - We urge you to give your Scout an occasional word of encouragement, but don't push them. Don't do it for them - make them figure out the process and how to get it done. Historically, the fast burners rise rapidly through the Star rank and then lose interest and quit. We would like to see everyone make Eagle; however, we would prefer to see a Scout learn lessons that they can take into their adult life, rather than try to please mom and dad by advancing quickly. Additionally, it is difficult for a young Scout who has raced through all the requirements to Eagle to truly learn and apply the leadership skills expected of an Eagle Scout.

SCOUTS - How do you advance? First of all, only the people designated by the Scoutmaster may sign off requirements. These include the Troop Guides, Junior Assistant Scoutmasters (JASMs), and the Senior Patrol Leader. The Troop Guides will work with new Scouts to help them advance through First Class. They will help them to learn skills and make sure they know what they are doing before signing off a requirement. As an example, the first time you help to set up a tent, you will mostly watch. To get signed off, you and other new Scouts will have to pitch the tent *without* help from the older Scouts. By the time you make First Class, we want you to know all of the basic Scout skills - *so that you can teach them to a new group of Scouts!* From Star rank onwards, the emphasis will shift to leadership skills and community service.

As you work on your advancement toward First Class, you are allowed to work ahead. For example, while working on Tenderfoot, it's OK to get the hike signed off for Second Class. One word of warning here... you have to do the requirement as a Scout. Being a member of the swim team last year won't satisfy your First Class swim requirements. This also applies to merit badge requirements.

After completing the skills required for a rank, there are a couple more things to do. First, you will be tested by the JASMs, Troop Guides or another designated Scout. They will make sure that you have mastered all of the requirements for the rank. Next, you will participate in a Scoutmaster Conference to review your progress and goals in Scouting. When you have completed all of the requirements for a rank, see the Scoutmaster to set up a Scoutmaster Conference. They will discuss things with you like what you like or dislike about Scouts, talk about your goals in Scouting and so on.

Next, see the Advancement Chairman to schedule a Board of Review. Allow at least one week after your Scoutmaster Conference to schedule this. In most cases, we will not allow a Board of Review on the same night as your Scoutmaster Conference. Please note that you will be **required** to wear your class "A" uniform to the Scoutmaster Conference and the Board of Review, and **BRING YOUR SCOUT HANDBOOK.**

At the Board of Review, you will meet with a group of three adults from the Troop Committee who will ask you some questions about what you learned. This is not a retest of your rank requirements. You may be asked, for example, where you went on your five-mile hike or when a bowline knot is used. If you never heard of a bowline knot or can't remember ever taking a five mile hike, that could be a problem! Or, if you haven't been attending meetings and activities and are having trouble demonstrating Scout Spirit, you'll be given some extra time to earn the rank. Otherwise, there's no way to flunk a board. The purpose is to make sure that you did the requirements and that the paperwork is in order. After the Board of Review, be sure to show your Handbook to the Advancement Chairman, so that your information can be recorded.