

Dear Scout and Scout Parents,

Rank advancement is a critical element in the GAME of Scouting. Winning this part of the game is the foundation of the other important parts of Scouting - Teamwork, Leadership and Character.

Every Scout should strive to earn the rank of First Class Scout: Earning the First Class rank signifies a great achievement. The skills you acquire will serve you well for life, and will prepare you well for the greater goal, the rank of Eagle Scout. Many of our country's leaders are Eagles, and to a man, they are proud of it. Something you will often hear at Troop 55 is "Once an Eagle Scout, always an Eagle Scout". And it's true. Just ask any man who is an Eagle, and you'll know what we mean.

Each Scout is responsible for his own advancement. That means you must:

1. Identify the requirements
2. Seek out information needed for that requirement
3. Practice the requirement until proficient
4. Seek out an older Scout who will test your ability and
5. Present your records to an adult leader so we can track your progress.

A Scout must KNOW the requirement, not just have it down by rote memorization or mimicking activity which could fade in a short time. This means you must put forth individual effort on your own, away from the Scout meeting for study and practice.

At Troop meetings you can find assistance to work through difficulties and pass off requirements. Many troop meetings are designed to help you achieve a requirement for advancement. Campouts are also good opportunities for learning, practicing and passing off advancement. Plan out what advancement work you want to tackle on each campout and work with your Patrol Leader and Senior Patrol members to accomplish it. Summer camps (Boxwell and Rock Island Outpost Camp) are advancement oriented. A great part of advancement should be accomplished there.

Most important of all is your SCOUT HANDBOOK. It was written for you by people who understand what you need to know about Scouting. It was written in a way you can understand. Spend time with your Scout Handbook. You will get a lot out of it in addition to advancement.

We encourage you to create your own opportunities for advancement. The work for many activities can be prepared at home and presented to a Scout assigned with advancement or to an adult Scouter. For example, present yourself properly dressed for a camping trip your gear prepared (Tenderfoot, Requirement #1). Some activities are to be performed by you away from normal Scouting events (discussing your rights and responsibilities as a citizen for First Class, #5).

To pass off the requirements for the ranks of Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class you should do the following:

1. On your own time, decide which requirements you want to work on at the next meeting or campout. The Scout Handbook lists the requirements for each rank.
2. Study the information in the handbook about your chosen activity. The handbook will provide you with the information needed to pass the requirement. If you need further help, just ask one of the

Troop Guides.

3. Practice, practice, practice the procedures shown in the handbook.
4. Present your skills to your Patrol Leader, a Senior Patrol member, Troop Guide, or adult counselor when you have studied and practiced enough to adequately present the skills required by the activity. If you need help or clarification, this is the time to ask for it.
5. When you have sufficiently passed the approval of a Senior Patrol member, have him sign it off in your Handbook and then present that to an adult leader so it can also be recorded in the troop's records.

When you have successfully completed all requirements except "Show Scout Spirit" and the Scoutmaster's Conference then notify the Scoutmaster that you are ready for these two remaining requirements. Once the Scoutmaster has passed these requirements, then notify the Troop Committee Chairman via phone call or email to request your Board of Review. He will schedule a Board of Review at the next Troop Committee Meeting night. If you successfully complete your board, you will be awarded your new rank badge at the next Troop meeting. There will also be a formal presentation at the next Troop Court of Honor.

Each Scout must maintain his advancement records from Tenderfoot to Eagle. He must not rely on someone else to do it for him. Although back-ups of an individual Scout's advancement records are maintained by the Troop electronically, each Scout must carefully retain all his rank and merit badge cards and emblems.

Boards of Review

When a Scout has completed all the requirements for a rank, he appears before a Board of Review.

To sign-up for a Board of Review...a Scout **MUST** write his name on the sign-up sheet OR contact Mr. Rick Clark one week prior to the board date. ***Parents may not sign-up their son for a Board of Review!***

The purpose is not to simply retest the Scout, but to make sure he has met all requirements for the rank. There is also time for the Scout to give feedback regarding his experience with the troop and Scouting in general. Boards of Review in our troop are composed of 2-3 members selected from the Troop Committee (excluding the Scoutmaster).

Boards of Review must be scheduled by the Scout himself after he completes the Scoutmaster Conference for a particular rank. Boards of Review are generally held only once a month in conjunction with the Troop Committee Meetings. These typically occur on the Monday night after a camping trip or weekend outing. As a Scout transitions to First Class, he assumes more leadership responsibility, and this Board of Review will be more thorough to assure readiness.

The Eagle Board of Review includes members from outside of our troop and each session is scheduled individually.

A Scout must attend a Board of Review in full 'Class A' uniform and be prepared to give and discuss the Scout Oath and Law. While the time is not primarily focused on retesting, he should expect some questions regarding his Scouting skills. He should also be prepared to discuss how he completed any of the listed requirements or merit badges. He will need his Scout Book to provide documentation. The session will last 20-30 minutes.

Following the Board of Review, the chairman will immediately inform the Scout of the board's decision. If deficiencies are noted, they will be discussed with the Scout. The Scout will be told specifically what must be done in order to be successful at the next Board of Review.

We want each Board of Review to positively impact the Scout. He should feel proud of his progress and advancement. If questions arise regarding Boards of Review, please contact the Troop Committee.

Merit Badges

If you already have your First Class rank, you will primarily be working on Merit Badges. Many of these can and should be earned at Outpost Camp (Rock Island or Kia Kima) and at Boxwell. Others should be worked on according to your own schedule. If you want to work on a merit badge, do the following:

1. Get the Merit Badge Counselor's name at the Troop Meeting from the Scoutmaster or Advancement Chair. 2) Download the merit badge Workbook from <http://usscouts.org/mb/worksheets/list.asp> and then print the PDF workbook for the merit badge you wish to start.
2. Get a copy of the Merit Badge Pamphlet for this badge. We have a small library at the Scout barn. Others can be purchased at the Scout Office (3414 Hillsboro Rd; 615-383-9724)
3. Contact your Merit Badge Counselor and work out a study and completion schedule. When you complete all of the requirements, have the counselor:
 - a. Sign the top of your workbook,
 - b. Write the date of completion,
 - c. Write the word 'COMPLETED' at the top of your workbook!
 - d. Alternatively, if your counselor prefers, he may simply email our Advancement Chair indicating you have completed the merit badge.
4. Turn in this signed workbook to the Troop Advancement Chairman. You should receive your merit badge patch at the next Troop meeting.
5. All merit badge work should be completed within 24 months of the initial start date to qualify for completion, otherwise the merit badge may need to be re-started!
6. Please note that parents cannot sign merit badge requirements unless they are a Troop 55 approved merit badge counselor for the respective badge and are leading a class of multiple scouts.

In the back of your Scout Handbook is a list of all available merit badges. Use this guide to help you set goals for completing Merit badges for Star, Life and Eagle. Each Scout who is First Class or above should map out his Merit Badge Trail to Eagle.

Service

The Star and Life ranks each require six hours of service. Each Scout must seek service opportunities for his troop and community.

All Eagle project work qualifies for service hours (when you help an Eagle candidate work on his Eagle project). There are other opportunities to serve the Troop by working at the Scout Barn or on Troop sponsored service projects. Also, many community service projects qualify, if you check with the Scoutmaster BEFORE you do them. In order for a Service Project to qualify, it must be approved in advance, you must complete the task thoroughly and cheerfully and you must give some evidence to the Advancement Chairman (a signed paper by someone in charge of the project, for instance).

Leadership

You must fulfill a 'Position of Responsibility' requirement for Star, Life and Eagle by performing a formal leadership function in the Troop. That means Patrol Leader, Senior Patrol Leader, Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, Historian, Scribe, Quartermaster or other Troop level leadership functions.

Assistant Patrol Leaders, Patrol Quartermasters, etc. perform important duties, but they do not fulfill this requirement since they are Patrol level jobs and not Troop level jobs. The Troop will make sure each Scout has an opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity, but it is up to each Scout to continually seek opportunities to demonstrate responsibility.

Scout Spirit

For every rank in Scouting, a Scout must pass the requirement 'Show Scout Spirit'. What is that? Quite simply it is always behaving in ways that agree with the four foundations of Scouting - The Scout Oath, The Scout Law, The Scout Motto and The Scout Slogan. It is not a requirement you pass off at a single Troop meeting or on a single campout. It is something you demonstrate at EVERY Troop meeting and on EVERY Campout. In fact, it is something you always are. And you can be sure that Scoutmasters and fellow Scouts are always watching and remembering when you are and are not showing true Scout Spirit as defined by these four ideals.

Be active in your troop...

Lastly, in order to achieve Star, Life or Eagle, there is one more requirement. It's called BEING THERE. Your service to the Troop is limited if you are not present at meetings and campouts. **Troop 55's definition of "active" or "actively" (as defined by the Troop Committee) is to attend a minimum of 50% of the troop's regularly scheduled meetings and at least 50% of the troop's outings.** Each Scout must decide what they want out of their scouting experience. If a Scout is not interested in rank advancement or becoming an Eagle Scout, but loves scouting simply for the joy and adventure of being outdoors with his friends, learning and using scouting skills and making great memories, that is acceptable....we do that as adult leaders.

However, if a Scout desires to become an Eagle Scout, that requires a commitment to learning how to serve and lead, and practicing both by doing them. Simply being a member of the troop doesn't give a Scout those opportunities....the learning and practicing comes from active participation so that the Eagle experience isn't just something that was read and forgotten, but rather something that was lived and becomes a part of that young man's life forever.

Your Troop puts a lot into you when you start out. It needs you to invest in others as you finish out your Scouting journey.

Thank you very much and good luck on the "Road to Eagle!!"

Sincerely,

Your Scoutmaster