Advancement and Merit Badges

Scout advancement is sequential and not dependent upon the age of the scout. The Scout Handbook has key reference material for rank advancement. All the general requirements are outlined and much of the material is within the handbook. In addition, as the scout moves up in rank, they will be required to complete merit badges, some of which are specifically designated as required for the Eagle rank.

It is up to the scout to take advantage of advancement opportunities and to take the initiative to ask someone to test them when they feel they are ready to demonstrate a requirement. Making sure their book is signed off is also their responsibility.

In our scout-led troop, scouts can sign off on rank requirements for the rank below theirs once they have attained First Class. The Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters also may sign off scouts who demonstrate they have mastered their rank requirements. The Troop Guide and Instructors have a particular responsibility for working with new scouts on rank requirements.

It is not necessary to complete all the rank requirements for a lower rank before completing specific requirements for a higher rank unless the requirement specifically states otherwise.

A scout should keep pictures of the rank requirement pages of their handbook and of their merit **badge cards**– updating as changes are made. A lost handbook could mean starting all over again if the scout had no other evidence of completion, so make new copies along the way. This is critical for those who want to attain Eagle rank, as the scout must have evidence of all completed requirements.



A Hidden Gem

The advancement program provides a multitude of diverse learning opportunities and recognition for a job well done. This may be seen clearly, but there is a hidden opportunity that is perhaps more precious than any of these obvious ones.

The interaction with Adults in making appointments, discussing progress and the topics of scouting and life in general is a very important and easily overlooked learning opportunity for our young scouts. Each interaction hones their communication and interpersonal skills and prepares them to enter the greater community as strong and effective citizens. There are very few programs that recognize this or provide this opportunity. Scouting is somewhat unique in this way.

We encourage parents and other adults to give our youth the tools and encouragement to make appointments and engage in discussion with adult leaders with sufficient training and support, but to avoid doing it for them.

General Rank Advancement

When a scout is working towards a rank, they must make an appointment with the Scoutmaster (or an Assistant Scoutmaster when delegated by the Scoutmaster) to have a Scoutmaster conference. At the conference the scout will review their rank accomplishments and generally discuss how things are going in the troop. The Scoutmaster will then advise the scout if they are ready for their Board of Review if all the requirements are met. If the meeting is not in a group setting parents should plan to remain within sight, but not to participate to maintain youth protection.

Once all the rank requirements are complete, the scout will arrange with the Advancement Chair for a Board of Review. There they will meet with a panel of at least three adults who will review their rank advancement and generally discuss the scout's experience with the troop. **The scout must be in full uniform and have their scout handbook** with them for their Board of Review.

Upon completion of the Board of Review the scout will be recognized in front of the troop as soon as possible. Their advancement in rank will be recognized again during the next Court of Honor.

The Life to Eagle rank has specific requirements and there is separate information provided to the scout and their parents when they attain the Life rank that is also available on the District web site.



Merit Badges (see full list at <u>https://www.scouting.org/skills/merit-badges/all/</u>)

Merit badges are an important component of rank advancement for the Star, Life and Eagle ranks. Each badge has a list of requirements that help the scout explore a skill, hobby, or vocation. The scout completes the requirements under the guidance of an adult who has special knowledge of that topic.

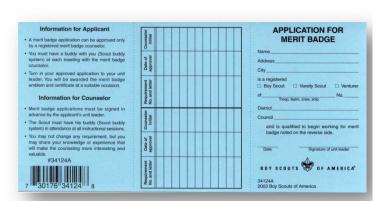
Adult volunteers serve as counselors, but only for specific topics in which they have expertise, and only a registered counselor for that topic can sign off the requirements for a scout.

There are currently 138 merit badges to choose from. Earning merit badges allows a scout to explore many fields, helps round out their skills, and introduces them to subjects that will perhaps become lifelong interests or a rewarding career. There are a few merit badges which are on the list of required badges for the Eagle rank, they cover subjects' core to the ideals of scouting. Required badges have a silver border rather than a green one.

Steps to Earning a Merit Badge

1. Meet with your Scoutmaster

- a. **Ask** for a blue "Application for Merit Badge" card.
- b. **Fill in** your name, address, and the name of the badge (see next page for complete example)
- c. Ask the **Scoutmaster to sign** your blue card, this is your permission to start working on the badge.
- d. Get the name and phone number of a qualified **counselor** from the Scoutmaster.



- 2. **Call** the counselor and set up an appointment. This can be at any place that is suitable to both of you.
- 3. Along with a **buddy** (another scout, a family member, or a friend), meet with the counselor.
 - a. The counselor will explain the requirements for the merit badge and help you get started.
 - b. Unless otherwise noted in the requirements you should not start the work until after you have met with your counsellor. You will likely get a lot more out of your experience if you discuss first.
- 4. Work on the badge requirements until you complete them, meeting with the counselor (along with your buddy) whenever necessary.
 - You must complete the stated requirements and satisfy the standards of each merit badge.
 - The merit badge counselor may encourage you to do more than what the requirements state but he or she may **not** require it.
 - YOU (not the counselor, Scoutmaster, or Advancement Chairman) keep the blue merit badge card until you have completed the requirements and the counselor has signed the card.
 - If you lose this card, you will have to start the badge over unless the counselor is willing and able to vouch for what you already completed. (save pictures as a backup plan)
 - If you change counselors for any reason, it is up to the new counselor whether or not he or she will accept the work you did with the previous counselor. Normally the new counselor will ask you a few questions, and if the counselor is satisfied that you did the work that was signed off, he or she will accept it. So be ready to answer their questions about your previous experience.
- 5. After you complete the merit badge and the counselor signs your merit badge card, he or she will keep the counselor's section and return the rest of the card to you. At this point take a picture of the card in case it is misplaced and save it (replace older copies)

6. Meet with your Scoutmaster again

- a. Bring the remaining two portions of the card to the Scoutmaster
- b. He will sign and return the "applicant's" portion of the blue card to you.
- c. Save a picture of the signed card and remove older copies.
- 7. The Scoutmaster signs the troop portion and gives it to the Advancement chairperson.
- 8. The Advancement Chairman puts the troop copy in the troop records, records it in the advancement software and reports it to the council. They will obtain the cloth badge and have it available for presentation at the next court of honor.
- 9. Keep your portion of the blue merit badge card in a safe place for the duration of your scouting career.

These **blue cards are the proof** that you have finished the work, and **you will need them to advance in rank**. The patch is easy to replace, the card is not. We suggest keeping your portion of the blue card in a plastic card sleeve used by sports card collectors and keep this sleeve in your scout advancement notebook.

Summer camps and merit badge weekends are great opportunities to complete merit badges. Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to complete too many badges at one time. We recommend that you actively work on no more than two at one time until you reach the rank of First Class, and no more than five at one time thereafter.