

Advancement News

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Previous issues are available at www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/advancement_news.aspx

Opportunities for Advancement Administrators

Mechanics of Advancement - June 18-24

The John D. Tickle National Training and Leadership Center at the Summit will host a *Mechanics of Advancement* conference for unit, district, and council volunteers and professionals during the week of June 18-24.

This course is a **must** for new advancement administrators or those in need of a refresher on advancement procedures. Attendees will gain an in-depth understanding of the essentials of advancement and an appreciation for the rationale behind the policies and procedures in the *Guide to Advancement*. Group discussions will focus on effective ways to resolve the related issues and challenges that arise.



Further information about the conference and a link to register are available now at www.summitbsa.org/programs/training.

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Advancement Issues and Solutions - July 16-22

If you are an experienced volunteer advancement administrator, consider taking your game to the next level at the *Advancement Issues and Solutions* conference being held at the Philmont Training Center, July 16-22. This case study-based conference is designed for unit, district, and council advancement coordinators, chairs, committee members, and staff advisors. If that's you, start making plans now to take advantage of this opportunity to share ideas with other committed advancement administrators at Scouting's premier destination, Philmont.

Conference participants will not only learn about the latest updates regarding advancement issues, but more importantly, they will analyze, discuss, and solve case studies similar to those regularly dealt with by the National Advancement Team and the Eagle Issues Task Force. The result will be a better understanding of the effective use of the *Guide to Advancement*, as well as the confidence to handle difficult issues at the council level.

Don't forget the fabulous programs that are available at the PTC for families of conference participants! Spouses and children will have a week, long remembered.



Registration information is available at: www.philmonttrainingcenter.org. Just click on the green Registration banner to sign up now for this "mountaintop" Scouting experience.

2017 Conferences

June 18-24: The Summit Bechtel Reserve
Mechanics of Advancement

July 16-22: Philmont Training Center
Issues and Solutions Conference

July 23-29: Philmont Training Center
Conference on Education for Advancement Administrators (CEAA)

Conference on Education for Advancement Administrators (CEAA)

July 23-29

Scheduled to be held at the PTC during the week following the *Advancement Issues and Solutions* conference, the CEAA will provide an advanced learning experience for council and district advancement volunteers and professionals who have advancement responsibilities. Of significant importance, the CEAA will give participants an opportunity to assist in the development of educational materials and other resources that can be used across the country. Conferees will view and discuss various existing materials and make recommendations for tools that should be developed for the future. Participants also will be given a chance to "test drive" some of those tools during this conference.

Don't miss this fabulous opportunity to visit Philmont Scout Ranch and the opportunity to engage in some amazing Scouting and advancement activities and camaraderie. The CEAA offers another opportunity to bring your families along to be able to participate in age appropriate programs that will not be forgotten for a long time.



Registration is available at: www.philmonttrainingcenter.org. Just click on the green Registration banner to sign up now for this exciting Scouting opportunity.

From the Guide to Advancement

Advancement Administrators Spot Check

What is the condition of advancement in your council or district? Here is a quick check that might help you measure the health of your advancement program.

- Are there issues with not enough volunteers to manage the responsibilities? (Try using the BSA's "Friendstorming" program.)
- Do you need help building an effective advancement committee? (Try using the BSA's presentation on Developing Council and District Advancement.)
- Is your troop not having the advancement success that it desires? (Try using the BSA's Effective Troop Advancement presentation.)
- Is there a need for better understanding of boards of review? (Try using some of the BSA's short videos on that topic.)



Do these tools mentioned above actually exist? YES, and many more!

Advancement education is an ongoing activity. Some veteran Scouters only need occasional updates, but others may be new to the advancement part of the Scouting program and may be in need of more information. Experienced or not, where can a volunteer find what he or she needs to become and remain an effective member of an advancement team?

The BSA has offered courses at several of the National High Adventure Bases for many years. (For a description of these exciting national-level opportunities being offered this summer, see the Opportunities for Advancement Administrators section of this *Advancement News* edition.) In addition, many areas and council groups have begun to conduct half-day, all-day, or even weekend-long advancement education seminars.

The curricula for all of these courses draw heavily upon the 26 resources which are Powerpoint presentations, videos, and videocasts, that are currently available on the BSA's national website (www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/Resources/advancement_presentations.aspx).

Here's the good news. Use of any or all of these resources is not restricted to formal training courses at the national or area level. These materials can be used anytime, anywhere. Check them out and use them at district advancement committee meetings, roundtables, and even unit committee meetings, i.e., whenever and wherever you can. (Hint: "Friendstorming" is discussed in the "Increasing Volunteerism" presentation given at the 2013 National Annual Meeting.)

It is important to note that teams of dedicated volunteer Scouters from across the country have developed and regularly update all of these tools. Great ideas are always welcomed. Send them to advancement.team@scouting.org.

The Cub Scout Angle

Advancement Changes: Putting the “Outing in Scouting” Still Begins in Cub Scouting



Cub Scout advancement centers on exciting and meaningful activities and requirements designed to teach each Scout life and outdoor skills. The recent advancement requirement changes allow some flexibility in the outdoor requirements, but they still emphasize the importance of beginning to “put the outing in Scouting” at the Cub Scout level. As dens begin to prepare their spring and summer calendars, the outdoors beckon; just remember that the new requirements became effective immediately upon their release.

A quick comparison of the original adventure requirements to the modified ones in the outdoor adventures shows how leaders’ concerns about how to fit all of the previous requirements for advancement into their program year—in the face of weather, daylight, access, and even overnight camping issues—have been addressed to better support advancement for Cub Scouts. Leaders should note that even though many of the activities are now “optional,” the activities not explicitly required for rank, e.g., field trips, will still help to create a full and exciting program for your Cub Scouts by helping our Cub Scouts explore the world around them.

For example, the Tiger-required “Backyard Jungle” and “Tigers in the Wild” adventures involve short hikes where Scouts can observe the sights and sounds of nature. The first of these originally had five requirements, but now has a minimum of three, including a required outside walk with an adult partner who has an option to choose two activities, such as building and hanging a birdhouse, planting a plant, shrub, or tree, or pointing out the birds in the area. Similar changes occurred to the “Tigers in the Wild adventure,” where the number of required activities was reduced from seven to four, and leaders can choose activities from options such as participating in an outdoor pack meeting or campfire program, identifying plants and trees that grow in the area, or visiting a nature center, zoo, or similar location.

The original overnight camping requirements for all units whose chartered organizations permitted Cub Scout camping—much less those who did not—were difficult for some units to achieve. The modified requirements for the Wolf-required, “Call of the Wild” Adventure and the Bear-required “Bear Necessities” Adventure now allow Cub Scouts to attend one of the following: a daytime or overnight campout with their pack or family, an outdoor activity, day camp, or resident camp. These options will pave the way for every unit to be successful in getting its Cub Scouts outdoors, regardless of circumstances.

Similarly, the Arrow of Light-required “Camper” adventure, which has been modified and renamed the “Outdoorsman” adventure, now has two options from which a den or pack can choose. Option A is for those units who desire den or pack camping in their outdoor plan, so their Scouts can participate in a campout, set up tents, and demonstrate knowledge of what makes a good tent site. Option B allows for an outdoor activity. Both options require learning about severe weather conditions, tying a bowline, and reciting the Outdoor Code and Leave No Trace Principles for Kids.

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One other area of significant change concerns campfire programs. The original adventure requirements called for an annual pack campfire program that involved each of the ranks participating in activities that qualified for advancement. Leaders are free—and encouraged—to continue campfire programs as part of their annual pack plan because they do provide fun, fellowship, entertainment, and leadership opportunities.

In sum, although program modifications have made some outdoor activities optional, outdoor skills and awareness remain among the key program outcomes for the Cub Scout program. Cub Scouts need to learn emergency skills, nature and outdoor ethics, and to experience comfort, safety, and adventures in the outdoors. Leaders need to make the “outing in Scouting” a priority as they move forward in their spring and summer plans.

The Boy Scout Angle

The Webelos-to-Scout Transition: Avoiding “Culture Shock” for Scouts AND Parents

THE SITUATION

Your troop is about to receive a new group of Cub Scout “crossovers.” From experience, you know that they will need to make several major adjustments, i.e., adapting to a new small group structure (patrols operate differently from dens), to a new hierarchy of leadership (youth more than adults), and a new concept of advancement responsibility. Often the new boys and their parents will be unprepared for the major shifts that will occur after the Webelos-to-Scout Transition. If these differences are not understood and adjusted to quickly, there is a genuine risk of losing this next generation of Scouts before the first badges are sewn on their uniforms.

- Patrols. In the pack your new Scouts were not only guided but were managed by their “Akelas”—their den leaders and parents. Now they find themselves members of a small group, ideally a patrol of new Scouts, led by other boys. The den-like structure is familiar, the “management” structure is not.
- Leadership. In the pack, the adults planned and ran activities. Now the Scouts find themselves involved in selecting their patrol and leaders from among their fellow Scouts. Their parents—those who involved in pack leadership roles and those who were not—suddenly find themselves “unemployed.” Or at least that is the way it seems to them at first. Suddenly, adults are not at the forefront. Troop meetings are run by the senior patrol leader and his patrol leaders, and campouts and hikes no longer require a one-to-one “buddy” parent presence—their son’s buddy is a fellow Scout.
- Advancement. Where advancement previously relied largely on their den leader’s initiative, the responsibility in the troop will be firmly placed on each Scout’s shoulders, with support (but not initiative) from his patrol and troop programs of activities. Similarly, parents no longer “sign off” rank advancement requirements in their sons’ handbooks unless they become trained, uniformed members of the troop’s “scoutmaster corps.”

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THE SOLUTION

Just as the troop's Scouts and leaders tried to make the Webelos Scouts and their parents feel welcome to join during their Arrow of Light den visit to the troop, so too must they find ways to make them want to stay once they have arrived. There is no better way to do this than to welcome the new Scouts with an appropriate ceremony, followed by an orientation session—or two, in fact. Many troops find it most successful for the senior patrol leader and a few other selected youth leaders to lead the new Scout orientation while the Scoutmaster, troop advancement coordinator, and committee chair speak with the new Scouts' parents. These can be done concurrently by simply using two different rooms at your chartered organization's location or other meeting site.

When gathering the Scouts, make certain that all have the most current edition of the handbook. For parents, there really is no need to create a "troop advancement manual"—the BSA has already done this for us all. It is recommended that you just reproduce a few relevant Handbook pages, e.g., the requirements for the ranks of Scout and Tenderfoot, to use as examples, and have a copy of the current *Guide to Advancement* handy for referral.

From experience, these orientations, especially those for the parents, work best when conducted in an interactive rather than lecture-style format. Facilitators for each session can prepare a series of discussion questions for participants, together with well-researched answers and examples. Be sure to leave reasonable time for spontaneous questions, and don't be afraid to say "I don't know but we'll research that and get back to you," if necessary.

These orientation sessions, if held right at the outset of your new Scouts' journeys, will not only give all new Scouts and their parents the information needed for success in Boy Scouting, but will let the new boys' families know that their questions and participation in whatever role they would like to serve, e.g., assistant scoutmaster, committee member, even advancement chair, are always welcome. In addition, preparing these orientation sessions will help your troop's key youth leaders and adult volunteers to re-ground themselves in the same areas, which should help ensure that the best possible overall troop program can be delivered to the youth we are all here to serve.

About *Advancement News*

Follow the National Advancement Program Team on Twitter!

(BSA Advancement Team, @AdvBSA)

Advancement News is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America National Advancement Program Team. Its intent is to provide and clarify procedures found in the *Guide to Advancement*, announce various changes and updates in advancement, and to assist advancement committees in making decisions that can help increase the rate of advancement. Therefore, districts and councils may reprint articles from this publication. Our plan is to distribute six issues of *Advancement News* annually, but special editions may go out whenever there is important information to share. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at

advancement.team@scouting.org.

On Increasing Advancement

The Webelos-to-Scout Transition: A Question of Initiative

As discussed in the *Boy Scout Angle* section, taking initiative will often be a fresh and possibly disconcerting concept for these new Scouts and their parents. Up to the 11th Edition of the *Boy Scout Handbook*, Scouts were advised that “*you can advance at your own pace,*” but earlier editions were even more direct. Beginning in 2009, more recent Handbook editions have been largely silent on this critical aspect. For example, the 12th Edition suggested that

- “*Self-Leadership is Having a vision of where you want to be;*
- *Figuring out the steps to get there; and*
- *Completing those steps one at a time.*”

The 13th Edition states, “*You should complete [the Scout rank] as soon as you join a troop...It’s a good idea to complete [Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks] within your first 12 to 18 months as a Scout.*” The question becomes “how will that happen,” and whose initiative would be needed to achieve this results.

These new Scouts have just come off the “rank-per-year” system used in Cub Scouting, plus the highest rank, Arrow of Light, can only be earned as the boy exits the program. Their experience in Cub Scouts may leave boys and parents alike with a mistaken belief that Boy Scout ranks will be similarly earned, i.e., with seven ranks and up to seven years in Boy Scouting, all may assume that boys can only become Eagle Scouts as they age out of the troop at the age of 18. Of course, nothing could be more erroneous, but this assumption may well be among the reasons why the average age of young men earning Eagle Scout rank is now 17.3 years, whereas just a few decades ago the average age was around 15.

Therefore, it is imperative that the issue of Initiative included in the new Scout and parent orientation briefings discussed in the previous section of this newsletter. Using “Advancement” in the Index of the 13th Edition of the *Boy Scout Handbook* as a guide, troop leaders can prepare a thorough troop advancement orientation which will, as a minimum want to cover the following points:

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Managing Subscriptions to *Advancement News*

Advancement News is designed for council and district advancement committees, advancement staff advisors, and Eagle processors. However, any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe.

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Unsubscribing. To decline future issues please reply and enter “REMOVE” in the subject line. We will remove the subscription within the next two weeks.

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Address Change. If you want *Advancement News* sent to a different address, reply and enter “ADDRESS CHANGE” in the subject line. In your message, enter your council name and the email address you prefer.

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- Advancement in Boy Scouting is based on *individual initiative* with guidance and encouragement from your patrol leader, your Scoutmaster, and other youth and adult leaders
- Boy Scouting has seven ranks; advancement has four Steps: Learn-Test-Review-Recognize
- Requirements for completing Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks; additional considerations for Star, Life, Eagle, and Eagle palms, i.e., tenure, service, and merit badges (a brief introduction to procedures for earning, required vs. elective, etc.). Also for parents, if needed: alternative paths for Scouts with permanent physical or developmental challenges)
- The ways in which patrol and troop activities support advancement
- The purpose and relationship of participation; service and Good Turns; and “Scout spirit”
- Leadership/positions of responsibility
- The purpose and value of Scoutmaster conferences
- The purpose and procedures for boards of review
- Recognition: Badge presentation, courts of honor

As mentioned earlier, many troops find it most successful to hold two independent orientations—one for the new Scouts and a separate one for their parents—because different questions and discussion points will arise. However, it is strongly suggested that the new Scouts and their parents not go their separate ways until both have heard the first briefing point together: Advancement in Boy Scouting is based on *individual initiative*.

Journey to Excellence: Advancement Is Just One Way to Keep Score

The JTE scorecard for each Scouting organization from the unit through council level has an advancement component. Section 3 of the *Guide to Advancement* provides the following guidelines for JTE areas of emphasis at the council, district, and unit advancement committee level.

- Council - #3 – Establish objectives and action plans that stimulate advancement and lead to maximum success in Scouting’s Journey to Excellence.
- District - #3 – Establish objectives and implement action plans that stimulate advancement and lead to maximum success in the Journey to Excellence.
- Unit - #5 – Ensure Cub Scouts advance in rank annually by school year’s end and are recognized in a meaningful ceremony.
- Unit #7 – Assist the unit leader in establishing practices that will provide opportunities for each new Boy Scout to achieve First Class rank within 12 to 18 months of joining and Star rank soon thereafter.

The Journey to Excellence continuous improvement initiative helps units, districts and councils focus on details to provide the best Scouting program for youth. The 2017 JTE scorecards for each Scout organization can be found online at www.scouting.org/jte.aspx. While each has a line labeled “Advancement” the tracking of advancement progress is only one very important component of the overall score. It is important to recall that Scout advancement is not an end in itself; rather, it is the sum of Scouting’s other components—

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Planning, Membership, Program, and Leadership, all of which are also listed and measured on each JTE scorecard. Addressing these multiple, interrelated measures of advancement will help units, districts and councils to succeed in achieving positive results in this performance recognition program of the BSA.

Let's look at one example of ways that that district advancement committee can promote Cub Scout advancement. On the 2017 pack JTE scorecard, section #5 requires packs to calculate percentages of advancement during the year. There are multiple ways a district advancement committee might help the district and each of its units to achieve their mutual goal of increased advancement:

- The district committee, with the help of unit commissioners, can ensure that advancement reports that are being filed monthly, and can analyze these reports to identify areas where extra attention will be useful.
- Members of the district committee can identify areas of need (within the unit) and help with activities to promote advancement. For example, helping to provide den chiefs for packs by providing den chief training and encouraging troops to send suitable Scouts to this training.
- The district committee can promote communication with and among units encouraging participation in district activities that lead to advancement, ranging from Cub Scout day camp and district Webelos events to Boy Scout resident camp.
- Advancement committee members can assist the district training committee to develop, promote, and provide leadership training that ensures unit leaders are aware of the program outlines of the program support materials available for all levels of Scouting. Training will also encourage those leaders to present a program with multiple opportunities for including advancement activities. On an on-going basis, they can encourage participation in monthly roundtables where leaders can get up-to-date information about upcoming activities.

One further note about JTE: remember that it is a journey, not a destination. Like a garden, it needs constant attention if it is to achieve its purpose, the growth of good citizens through Scouting.

Advancement Report

These reports, either copied or downloaded from a unit Internet advancement program or a paper copy of the advancement report, are turned in when purchasing merit badges or badges of rank recognitions. Without these reports being turned in properly, proper updating of council advancement records may not happen.

Merit Badges: Enhancing our Youth's Competitive Edge

Any Scout, Any Merit Badge, Any Time

A few merit badges have certain restrictions, but there are no restrictions on when a boy can begin working on a merit badge. Any registered Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, or qualified Venturer or Sea Scout may work on any badge at any time. Furthermore, although recommended, it is not necessary for a Boy Scout to obtain an Application for Merit Badge, commonly called a “blue card,” before starting work on merit badge requirements. Sometimes leaders misinterpret the requirement for a boy to obtain a blue card to work with a merit badge counselor to mean that the boy must obtain the blue card before beginning any work. That is not correct. The Scout only needs to obtain the blue card once he is ready to begin working directly with a merit badge counselor.

Consider, for example, a boy who has a pet dog, collects stamps or coins, enjoys fishing or certain sports, or reading. Merit badges related to each of these interests have requirements that the boy can complete without a counselor. If the boy is interested in working on any of these merit badges he should be encouraged to do so, but he should be aware that it ultimately is up to the merit badge counselor whether or not to accept the work he has completed prior to receiving a signed blue card.

If this is true, why is there a requirement for obtaining a blue card before working with a merit badge counselor, even while attending merit badge fairs or similar activities? The simple answer is that a merit badge-related meeting is essentially a Scoutmaster conference that provides an additional opportunity for the unit leader to discuss the boy's interests with him before he provides the boy with the name of at least one registered and approved merit badge counselor with whom he would like to work. Every discussion a Scout has with his unit leader is meant to be a growth-oriented experience, not a gate through which the boy must pass. Thus, this meeting should consist of more than just providing a name, a signature, and discussing concerns the unit leader might have related to the boy working on a specific merit badge. It should be seen as an opportunity to provide inspiration and direction beyond the subject of the merit badge, especially because it always remains the Scout's decision whether to proceed or not.

See *Guide to Advancement* topics 7.0.0.2 and 7.0.0.3 for more information on this subject.



Exploration Merit Badge Released

Have you introduced the Scouts and Scouters in your council, district, or troop to the recently released Exploration merit badge yet? If not, it is high time you did. This new merit badge explores nine general areas:



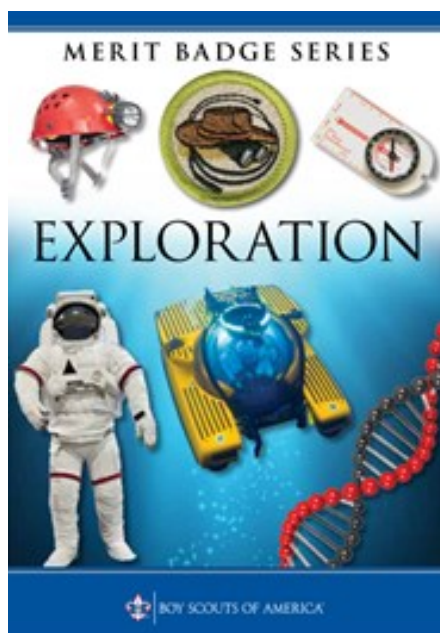
1. General Knowledge
2. History of Exploration
3. Importance of Exploration
4. Real-Life Exploration
5. Exploration in Lab and Field
6. Expedition Planning
7. Prepare for an Expedition
8. Go on an Expedition
9. Career Opportunities.

Exploration is more than an adventure. It is discovering and uncovering information. It is contributing to scientific knowledge. Exploration is

- Subterranean
- Aquatic
- Terrestrial
- Extraterrestrial

Available at www.scouting.org/filestore/Merit_Badge_ReqandRes/Exploration.pdf or in Scout shops everywhere, this booklet comes complete with pages and pages of resources and acknowledgments giving credit to a huge variety of explorers, specialists, and consultants who joined together to create this exciting opportunity for boys, while putting them on a unique advancement path.

For example, Scouts working on the badge's #5 requirement are encouraged to visit a lab or research facility to learn firsthand what types of exploration are done in that facility, to ask questions, and perhaps even to catch a glimpse of the exciting discoveries they hope to make. Imagine the excitement these Scouts would feel someday should this facility announce a ground-breaking success and they remember the time they were there, in person!



To download the Exploration Merit Badge requirements:

[http://www.scouting.org/filestore/
Merit_Badge_ReqandRes/Exploration.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/Merit_Badge_ReqandRes/Exploration.pdf)

To read the press release:

[http://www.scoutingnewsroom.org/press-releases/boy-
scouts-america-seeks-inspire-next-generation-explorers-
launch-new-exploration-merit-badge/](http://www.scoutingnewsroom.org/press-releases/boy-scouts-america-seeks-inspire-next-generation-explorers-launch-new-exploration-merit-badge/)

Counselor's Corner

(Ed: As announced previously in the Advancement News, the Counselor's Corner segment of the Advancement News has replaced the former Counselor's Compass publication. Most of the information that will appear in these segments will be geared to merit badge counseling administration and related counseling "pearls," and will, by design, be primarily aimed to assist the steady stream of new merit badge counselors, or MBCs. However, we want to assure our veteran MBCs that we will also be including items pertinent to your needs.)

Understanding the Process of Counseling

Effective counselors understand that creating a hands-on, interactive learning environment—one in which the Scout's goal is to participate and take full responsibility in working towards and earning the badge as this is part of the merit badge plan. Topic 7.0.3.0 in the *Guide to Advancement* suggests a 10-step process to ensure that a gratifying experience between Scouts and counselors is achieved. This collaborative process begins with an initial discussion between the unit leader and the counselor, to help Scouts earn merit badges.

1. **The Scout indicates an interest and discusses it with his unit leader.** The Scout develops an interest in a merit badge and may begin working on requirements. He discusses his interest in the badge with his unit leader. This discussion is intended to be a growth-oriented, positive conversation to encourage the Scout and to offer guidance on how he can approach the required work, as well as to inform the Scout of possible challenges he may encounter along the way.
2. **The unit leader signs a blue card and provides the Scout with at least one counselor contact.** The unit leader signs the front of the blue card and gives it to the Scout. He also provides at least one currently registered counselor's contact information. The Scout may want to work with a different counselor, which is permitted as long as he has discussed it with his unit leader.
3. **The Scout contacts the counselor.** This is usually done by phone or e-mail. The counselor tells the Scout what is expected of him and sets up a meeting with the Scout and his buddy. Personal contact makes earning the badge a better experience for all concerned.
4. **The Scout, his buddy, and the counselor meet, often several times.** During the initial meeting, the counselor starts by finding out what the Scout already knows about the subject. He may set up additional meetings to coach him on completing the challenging requirements or projects. If the Scout has already started working on requirements, the Scout should provide evidence of completed work. It is the counselor's decision whether to accept work completed prior to the initial discussion with the unit leader.

Use of the Buddy

The Scout must have a buddy; a friend, parent, guardian, brother, sister, or other relative—or better yet, another Scout working on the same badge—along with him attending the session"

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Archived editions of *Counselor's Compass* will remain available at

www.scouting.org/scoutsource/boyscouts/guideformeritbadgescounselors.aspx.

5. **The Scout completes the requirements.** The counselor must be satisfied the Scout actually and personally has completed all requirements. During review sessions, the counselor may ask questions to get an idea what the Scout has learned.
6. **The counselor approves completion.** Upon successful completion of requirements, the counselor signs the Scout's blue card on the reverse side (to the left) and on the applicant's record (in the middle.) The MBC tears off and retains the Counselor's Record, and gives the Scout the remaining two-thirds. If the Scout did not complete all the requirements, the counselor simply indicates and initials those that were fulfilled using the spaces provided on the back of the applicant's section, and returns the card to the Scout.
7. **The Scout returns the signed blue card to his unit leader.** The Scout meets with his unit leader to discuss his experience. The unit leader then signs the applicant record section of the card.
8. **The unit leader gives the Scout the applicant record.** The Scout is responsible for retaining his applicant record. This becomes especially important because it is proof the badge was earned.
9. **The unit reports the merit badge to the council.** The troop advancement chair records the Scout's advancement and reports the badge 'earned.'
10. **The Scout receives his merit badge.** The Scout is presented his badge, either during a troop meeting or later during a formal court of honor.

Eagle Issues

Merit Badges for Star and Life - Effects on Eagle Scout Rank

Earning the rank of Star and Life requires a Scout to complete a certain number of required and optional (non-Eagle-required) merit badges. Sometimes, confusion occurs about which merit badges can be counted toward which requirement and boards of review are needlessly delayed, which even could adversely impact a Scout's ability to earn Eagle Scout rank.



For Star and Life ranks the "any four" or "any three" requirement allows the Scout to choose ANY of the Eagle-required merit badges listed in Eagle Scout requirement #3, including alternatives, if available. These merit badges do not need to be from separate categories. For example, if a Scout earns First Aid, Camping, Environmental Science, and Sustainability, all would count as Eagle-required for his Star rank. Likewise, if a Star Scout earns Cycling, Hiking, and Swimming, all three may count as Eagle-required for Life rank. In each of these examples it would not be necessary for the Scout to earn any additional Eagle-required merit badge to meet the "any four" or "any three" requirement.

Although the alternative merit badges are counted toward Star and Life rank only one from each of the categories with alternatives would be counted toward the required merit badges for Eagle Scout rank. The other (extra) Eagle-required merit badges would count toward the optional merit badges required to make up the total of 21 merit badges. In the examples above, the Scout could choose to use Environmental Science merit

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badge for one of the 13 Eagle-required merit badges and Sustainability would count as one of the eight optional merit badges. In the other example, the Scout could choose to use Cycling merit badge as an Eagle-required merit badge and Hiking and Swimming would be counted as optional merit badges.

For the optional, sometimes referred to as non-required, merit badges the Scout can choose to count ANY merit badge toward that requirement, not just optional (non-required) merit badges. The Scout may choose to meet all merit badge requirements for Star and Life by only earning Eagle-required merit badges. For example, a Scout who earns First Aid, Camping, Environmental Science, Sustainability, Emergency Preparedness, and Lifesaving, and no other merit badges, may count all of them toward Star rank. That same Scout could earn an additional 5 Eagle-required merit badges and have met the merit badge requirement for Life rank. Thus it is possible for a Scout to complete the merit badge requirements for Star and Life ranks by only earning Eagle-required merit badges.

See *Guide to Advancement* topic 7.0.4.5.

Awards (Sea Scouts)

Sea Scout Elective “Strands”: A Primer

In the 2016 printing of the *Sea Scout Manual*, Sea Scout advancement underwent a significant reorganization. Rather than a limited number of elective options for Ordinary, Able, and Quartermaster rank, advancement electives were reorganized into “strands.” As changes develop in technology and the maritime industry, the organization of electives into these “strands” will make it easier to offer more learning opportunities for Sea Scouts.

Following these elective “strands,” a Sea Scout pursuing Ordinary rank who is interested in developing his/her leadership skills may opt for a level one leadership elective, i.e., National Youth Leadership Training (NYLT). Much in the way a Boy Scout can work on Second Class and First Class requirements while still pursuing his Tenderfoot badge, the Sea Scout could decide to continue on. This might happen while still pursuing Ordinary rank. Thus they could complete the level two leadership elective by attending National Advanced Youth Leadership Training (NAYLE) and a level three leadership elective by attending Wood Badge, as well.

However, once he or she has attained the Ordinary rank, the now Able candidate may only work on level two or higher electives. Similarly, Quartermaster candidates are limited to level three electives. Once accomplished, a youth may not use an elective for future rank.

The following link will take readers to the advancement page with tabs for each Sea Scout rank and elective: <https://seascout.org/advancement-central/>.



The Venturing Perspective



Venturing Advancement Structure: A Review

Venturing has an advancement structure that allows Venturers to develop themselves while working to complete a set of challenges. Each advancement in the structure has requirements that focus on the ALPS model: Adventure – Leadership – Personal Growth – Service.

Upon joining and demonstrating his or her intent to be committed to the program, a youth member first will earn the Venturing Award. Each Venturer may then work towards the Discovery Award by completing several requirements that relate to volunteer service hours, crew participation, CPR/First Aid training, Introduction to Leadership Skills for Crews, goal setting, and crew officers' orientation.

Next comes the Pathfinder Award, which requires Venturers to continue participating in their crew activities while taking on more leadership responsibility for planning and conducting crew activities, as well as taking part in an ethical controversies discussion, while also completing additional service hours.

Finally, the Venturer works towards earning the aptly named Summit Award by taking on other crew leadership positions, instructing crew trainings, and mentoring a younger member of the crew. The Summit Award requires completion of a service project where the Venturer leads others. Finally, each Venturer also is asked to set and obtain personal goals, and to lead an ethical controversies discussion.

Similar to Boy Scout advancement, in order to complete any of these four advancements, a Venturer must complete an Advisor conference and a crew board of review.

	Adventure and Activities	Leadership	Personal Growth	Service
Summit	Mentoring and participation	Ongoing leadership development	Goal-setting and personal growth	Leading others in service
Pathfinder	Leading and participation	Leading others	Goal-setting and personal growth	Participating in service
Discovery	Participation	Preparing to lead	Goal-setting and personal growth	Participating in service
Venturer	Initial participation, orientation to the crew, Personal Safety Awareness training, induction into the crew			

Hear It First on Twitter

If you want the news first, follow the National Advancement Program Team on Twitter. Topics cover the FAQs received at the national office, clarifications on policies and procedures, news on changes and new releases, and best practices in advancement.

If you already have a Twitter account, follow us at [@AdvBSA](#) or “BSA Advancement Team.” If you don’t have an account, it is a quick and easy process to set up an account at www.twitter.com. To limit incoming emails (‘tweets’), you can select to have BSA National Advancement Team as the only account you want to follow.

Note: Advancement questions should be directed to advancement.team@scouting.org.

From the Archives

On Increasing Advancement: District Roundtables: Opportunities for Meaningful Dialog

(December 2013-January 2014)

[*Editor's Note: Current Cub Scout and Boy Scout Roundtable Planning Guides are available at www.scouting.org/scoutsource/Commissioners/roundtable.aspx, along with a newly developed planning template that is fillable, which can be accessed through the same website simply by clicking under the Roundtable Planning Guide link.*]

"Council and district advancement committee presence and communication can lead to increased advancement in a number of ways. For example, making a presentation at a district's monthly roundtable is an effective way to open a dialog on advancement and make the committee's support visible.

"A task force of volunteers evaluating roundtables across the country generated a number of recommendations that can affect district advancement efforts. These suggestions are included the 2013-14 *Cub Scout Roundtable Planning Guide* and *Boy Scout Roundtable Planning Guide*, and provide user-friendly talking points for presentations highlighting advancement. As part of one of these presentations, the district advancement chair could share statistics on past performance and future goals for advancement, and then encourage units to strive for them. If the discussion includes the positive effects of advancement on retention, unit leadership may feel the motivation to implement constructive strategies. A Cub Scout roundtable highlight might add to this with a focus on the role of family and leaders in Cub Scout advancement.

"Roundtables across the country are implementing these recommendations, which provide new opportunities for advancement coordinators to make meaningful contributions to unit and district Journey to Excellence progress. Talk to your roundtable commissioner about how you can help in your district. Copies of these guides may be found at www.scouting.org/scoutsource/Commissioners/roundtable.aspx."

A Peek Ahead

Here is a glimpse of what we are working on for the next issue of *Advancement News*. As always, actual content may vary somewhat based on a number of considerations, especially to accommodate "late-breaking" news of immediate importance to our subscribers.

Topics Planned for May-June

Opportunities for Advancement Administrators: Sea Base January 2017 Comments

Cub Scout Angle: Advancement through Cub Scout Summer Camping opportunities

Eagle Issues: Extension Requests process

Helpful Links

Here are some links to the most current materials of interest for Scouters who are involved in the administration of advancement. These and many more resources are available via the **Advancement Resources** web page at www.scouting.org/advancement.

[Merit Badge Group Instruction Guide](#)

[Advancement Educational Presentations:](#)

- Cub Scout Advancement: Delivering Adventure
- Getting the Most From Internet Advancement
- The Essentials of Merit Badge Counseling
- The Merit Badge Program
- The Eagle Scout Service Project Coach
- Effective Troop Advancement
- Including Scouts With Disabilities
- Videocasts on *Guide to Advancement*, selected topics
 - ◊ Introduction to the Guide to Advancement
 - ◊ Judgment Calls
 - ◊ Boards of Review
 - ◊ Boards of Review Under Disputed Circumstances
 - ◊ Boards of Review Appeals
 - ◊ The Eagle Scout Application Process
 - ◊ Eagle Scout Boards of Review
- Videos
 - ◊ On Increasing Advancement
 - ◊ Why Advancement?
 - ◊ Guardian of the Gate

[Guide to Advancement 2015](#)

[Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook](#)

[Navigating the Eagle Scout Service Project: Information for Project Beneficiaries](#)

[Eagle Scout Service Project Coach Application](#)

[Eagle Scout Rank Application](#)

[Merit Badge Counselor Information](#)

[Reporting Merit Badge Concerns](#)

[Venturing Summit Award Service Project Workbook](#)

[Venturing Board of Review Guide](#)

[Individual Scout Achievement Plan](#)

[Lone Scout Friend and Counselor Guidebook](#)

