

Advancement News

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Opportunities for Advancement Administrators

Stay tuned here as the national Advancement Committee develops and makes training courses more widely available for advancement chairs and coordinators. *Advancement News* readers are encouraged to send summaries of topics they think would be a valuable addition for advancement training to advancement.team@scouting.org.

Two Opportunities at Philmont: June 10–16 and July 29–August 4

In recent issues of *Advancement News*, we highlighted opportunities for training in the Mechanics of Advancement at the Florida Sea Base last January, and at the Philmont Training Center this June and July. Attendance at Philmont Training Center represents the premier opportunity for advancement training where the family can be involved. Visit www.philmonttrainingcenter.org to learn more.

Registration for Mechanics of Advancement is first-come, first-served, and space is limited. To register, go to www.myscouting.org and choose the “Events Registration” tab. The courses begin with check-in at Philmont on Sunday afternoon, June 10 or July 29, 2012, and conclude Saturday after breakfast. Housing is in large, two-person wall tents with wooden or concrete floors, electric lights, an electrical outlet, a wardrobe, and two twin-sized beds with mattresses. Each “tent city” has restrooms, hot showers, and family shower houses. Cots and cribs are available. Wednesday afternoon is devoted to free time to enjoy local attractions. The \$495 course fee includes meals, dormitory housing, sheets, towels, and course materials. There are additional fees for spouses and family members, depending on the activities in which they choose to participate.

Course Description: The Mechanics of Advancement

Advancement is a key indicator of a successful unit. Learn how to enhance the program for your Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, Venturers, and Sea Scouts by increasing your knowledge of the BSA’s procedures governing advancement. This conference—designed for unit, district, and council-level volunteers and professional Scouters—will connect participants to the essentials of advancement, steer them toward a wealth of advancement resources available on www.scouting.org, and engage them through group discussions on effective ways to resolve advancement issues and challenges. The new *Guide to Advancement* and revised *Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook* will be featured and covered in detail.

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On Increasing Advancement

Integrating Advancement Activities in the Unit

Is advancement an integral part of the fun and program in your unit? Are you using advancement as a tool as you play Baden-Powell's "game with a purpose"? On the other hand, perhaps there isn't much advancement in your unit and you're not sure why. An example might reveal some ways to make improvements. Let's say your patrol leaders' council has decided on an upcoming campout where the featured activity will be to build a trebuchet. Let's see how we might prepare for this exciting weekend activity.

In the weeks leading up to the campout, the meeting activities would include instruction on splicing and lashing, making a rope, building a scale model of a signal tower or monkey bridge, building trestles, and making a commando rope.

Games at the meetings would include knot-tying games, splicing games, and lashing games.

Some of the older Scouts would make presentations on "What in the world is a trebuchet?" and cover the design of the trebuchet, ropes and how to care for them, use of rope tackle, throwing a rope, and how to build trestles.

In patrol meetings, patrol leaders would review first aid for injuries or illness that could occur while working on pioneering projects, Tenderfoot and First Class knot requirements, and menu preparation for the campout.

Activities at the campout would include throwing a rope, using a rope tackle, building trestles, patrol-cooked meals, and finally, building a trebuchet and using it to propel water balloons downfield at a target the Scouts might deem interesting.

What have you accomplished as you prepare your Scouts for fun on a campout? With a little background administration, every Scout who participated fully will have earned the Pioneering merit badge. Some will have completed a number of requirements for the Communications and Camping merit badges. Many younger Scouts will have completed first aid, knots, camping, and cooking requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, or First Class.

Was there a motivation for all of these activities? Certainly! It was all about getting ready for an exciting activity. It was to prepare for fun. Nobody was sitting around in a troop meeting "classroom" because "we need this stuff for advancement." This is the method of

advancement in action. In fact, this is advancement defined: recognizing Scouts for what they achieve while they have fun. In this way your unit will grow and you'll have many opportunities to influence character in your youth. Isn't this what we're all about?

About Advancement News

Advancement News is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America national Advancement Team and the national Advancement Committee. Its intent is to support 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. The plan is to distribute *Advancement News* monthly, but we're flexible. It will go out when there is something important to say. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at advancement.team@scouting.org. Districts and councils may reprint articles from this publication.

Managing Subscriptions to *Advancement News*

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The Cub Scout Angle

What Is "Do Your Best"?

Do Your Best. Not only is it the Cub Scout motto, but it is the standard for Cub Scout advancement performance. Even though Cub Scout-age youth can have very different developmental timetables, we know they can succeed if we teach them to always do their best.

Thus, Do Your Best means to do one's own personal best. It is not a competitive standard. For example, D.J.'s personal best may be quantitatively better than his fellow Cub Scout Brian's best, but as long as D.J. and Brian each do their own personal best, both have met the standard. Do Your Best does not mean do it perfectly. When a boy has done his very best, accomplishment is noted and the requirement is met. See the *Guide to Advancement*, topic 4.1.0.4.

As a boy begins in Cub Scouting, his parent or adult partner should sign off in his handbook for the Bobcat trail and Tiger Cub achievements. The den leader then approves, as progress is recorded in the den's advancement record. For Wolf, Bear, Webelos, and Arrow of Light, den leaders and their assistants take the lead in approving requirements. Additionally, parents or guardians who help at meetings may be asked to assist.

Generally, between the parent or guardian, den leader, and assistants, they will know if effort put forth is truly a Cub Scout's best or if he should be reminded to give the requirement another try with his own personal best. When Do Your Best is the evaluation and parents or guardians get involved, Cub Scout advancement achieves success.

From the Guide to Advancement

Scoutmaster Conference Myths

Myth No. 1: *The Scoutmaster (unit leader) conference is the last step before a board of review.*

Myth No. 2: *A Scout can "fail" a Scoutmaster conference and be held back from a board of review.*

Topic 4.2.3.5 in the *Guide to Advancement* breaks both these myths. "While it makes sense to hold [a Scoutmaster or unit leader conference] after other requirements for a rank are met, it is *not required* that it be the last step before the board of review." Some leaders hold more than one conference along the way, and any of them can count toward the requirement.

Requirements for each rank state, "Participate in a Scoutmaster conference." This is not a pass/fail requirement. Topic 4.2.3.5 states, "[The conference] is not a 'test.' Requirements do not say he must 'pass' a conference." If an Eagle Scout candidate's conference is denied or the unit leader refuses to sign a candidate's Eagle application, a board of review under disputed circumstances is held (See *Guide to Advancement* topic 8.0.3.2).

A Scoutmaster conference should not become just another requirement for rank advancement. It should be a rewarding opportunity for a unit leader to form a bond with each member, whether advancing or not. It is more about using the Scouting method of positive adult association than it is about using the method of advancement.

Location is important to a good conference. While virtually any place that supports BSA Youth Protection

guidelines is acceptable, some settings provide for more relaxed conversation. A unit leader may find that conferences held during outings are less subject to interruption than those held during regular meetings.

When we examine the four steps to advancement, the unit leader conference is the first part of the "Scout Is Reviewed" step. The second part is the board of review. However, neither is a retest of skills. A unit leader should plan conferences carefully. Trust is a vital element. Listening is another. Hearing about the Scout's life outside troop activities is just as important as his experiences in the unit. Emphasizing the Scout Oath and Scout Law, setting goals, promoting additional responsibility, sharing ideas, and providing positive reinforcement should be reflected upon.

Active Scout Spirit

The November 2011 *Advancement News* featured an article called "Active Participation and Applying the 'Third Test.'" It explained how the *Guide to Advancement*, in topic 4.2.3.1, sets forth three standards, or "tests," to determine if a Scout is "active in his unit."

Under "Alternative to the third test . . ." in topic 4.2.3.1, a Scout who has fallen below his unit's activity-oriented expectations is allowed to "count" outside activity toward the "active" requirement. The bottom line for this exception, as stated in the *Guide to Advancement*, is that "*Since we prepare young people to go forth, and essentially, make a positive difference in our American society, we judge that a member is 'active' when his level of activity in Scouting, whether high or minimal, has had a sufficiently positive influence toward this end.*"

In judging the Scout who perhaps has not been as active in his unit as we might like to see, we want to know if what he has learned along the way—in terms of the Scout Oath, Scout Law, motto, and slogan—is being put into practice in his everyday life. These "applications in life" are sought as proof of the "lessons learned," and we look for them not only in his life as a Scout, but also in the variety of non-Scouting activities in which he engages outside of the unit: family, school, clubs, sports, community and religious activities, and so forth.

If this sounds a little like a description for another advancement requirement to demonstrate Scout spirit, that is correct. Actually, by meeting the requirement to be active, we hope a Scout will learn the values-oriented lessons of Scouting, which when applied to his everyday life cross over to exhibiting Scout spirit. This direct correlation between the active and Scout spirit requirements, with one perhaps leading to the other, underscores the all-important BSA yardstick: "Will he contribute toward the Boy Scouts of America's mission?"

A problem sometimes develops when unit leadership or a board of review fails to recognize and appreciate that the life of a Scout—especially an older one—is by definition full of a variety of activities that are all a part of the rite of passage for a young man. Family commitments, sports, civic involvement, religious activities, employment, and other youth programs and activities are all vying for the limited time a young adult has between sunup, school, and sundown.

Failing to recognize the needs of a youth who has already spent a number of quality seasons with his troop, to grow through broadened horizons and life experiences can lead to unhappy discussions at Scoutmaster conferences or boards of review. On the other hand, if the effort is made to look for the telltale examples of how the young man has lived the lessons learned in Scouting in his out-of-Scouting activities, then proof may be found that his previous level of activity has given him the tools to fulfill the BSA's mission and live with Scout spirit. Remember, we do not measure "active" and "Scout spirit" by counting meetings and outings attended; rather, we do so by the way the Scout lives his life.

Eagle Issues

100th Anniversary of the First Eagle Scout

One hundred years ago, Arthur Rose Eldred became the first Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America. That was on Aug. 21, 1912. Since then, 2 million other Scouts have attained this distinction. To celebrate, those youth who earn the Eagle Scout rank during 2012 have the opportunity to wear the 1912–2012 Eagle Scout Centennial patch. The version of the red, white, and blue badge pictured here is now available at Scout shops.



What's the Procedure?

When Does the Clock Start Running for Credit Toward Merit Badges?

We are occasionally asked when the clock starts running that allows a Scout to earn credit for effort he puts forth in satisfying requirements toward a merit badge. Some might argue that the "line in the sand" begins *only* after his unit leader has had a discussion with the Scout about the merit badge choice, provided a qualified merit badge counselor, and then signed the "blue card." In such a scenario, any previous efforts or

activities related to the requirements could not be counted toward the requirements.

However, on the flip side, often it is the interest generated through pre-merit badge efforts that really motivates a Scout to *attempt* the merit badge and do more. A good example would be the early collecting of coins or stamps, which leads to earning the Coin Collecting or Stamp Collecting merit badge. One would not expect a Scout to start from scratch if he already had partial collections.

Similarly, it could be the initial camping experiences enjoyed as a young Boy Scout that become the driving force to tackle the more challenging Camping merit badge. Those early campouts must be allowed to count toward the 20 nights of documented overnight camping required, just as the rudimentary coin or stamp collections were. The same would apply to special events or travel, such as attending a world jamboree for either the Scouting Heritage or Citizenship in the World merit badge, or to skills learned on a computer long before beginning the Computers merit badge.

The bottom line is for requirements like collections, special events, or travel that usually are not part of a unit's program, it makes little difference when work began. Other requirements that are part of a troop, team, crew, or ship program—for instance, qualifying camping or hiking experiences—must also be allowed to count before the blue card is signed. Beyond practical examples such as these, this is not meant to provide an "out" for Scouts to begin work on any and all requirements before the blue card is signed.

For requirements that do not fall into the obvious common-sense categories or are not a part of a unit's ongoing program; or those requirements which, logically, should not be started without guidance or a discussion with the merit badge counselor (such as writing an essay or explaining technical details related to a merit badge topic), the clock starts running once the blue card has been signed.

What's Up With the Scoutmaster Signature on the "Blue Card"

Aka Qualified and Approved?

Most writers will confirm it is often difficult to find the precise word to convey a specific intent. Confusion and debate can be the result when we don't get it just right. A good example relates to the terms "qualified" and "approved" or "approval," used in various Scouting literature regarding the Scoutmaster's signature on the Application for Merit Badge ("blue card," No. 34124).

According to the dictionary or a thesaurus, definitions and synonyms for these words have both variances and similarities, and therefore need clarification to express what is intended. With the blue card, the word “qualified” is not meant to define a level of ability or skill that the Scout must have before beginning work on a merit badge, but rather that the administrative qualifications have been met—that he is registered and in good standing and has also completed any necessary prerequisites. “Qualified” is also intended to mean the Scout is *capable* and *able* to begin working on the badge—that he understands the nature of the merit badge and the time and effort it will require, and he is physically capable of working on it at this point in his life, etc.

The words “approved” and “approval” in BSA literature thus have a limited interpretation, based only on administrative qualifications and those related to being “capable” and “able.” As we move forward with literature revisions, we will look at different wording that is clearer. If you have a suggestion, send it to advancement.team@scouting.org.

Above all, the most important aspect of requiring the Scoutmaster to sign the blue card is that it affords another opportunity for a quality visit between an adult and a Scout. Remember that the starting point for this interview should be for the Scoutmaster to say “yes” to the Scout’s merit badge request (a “no” might only come if there are obvious reasons for denial). But more important than the “yes” is the opportunity for a unit leader and Scout to share in a quality adult-youth moment.

Merit Badges—What’s New?

The Welding Merit Badge Has Arrived

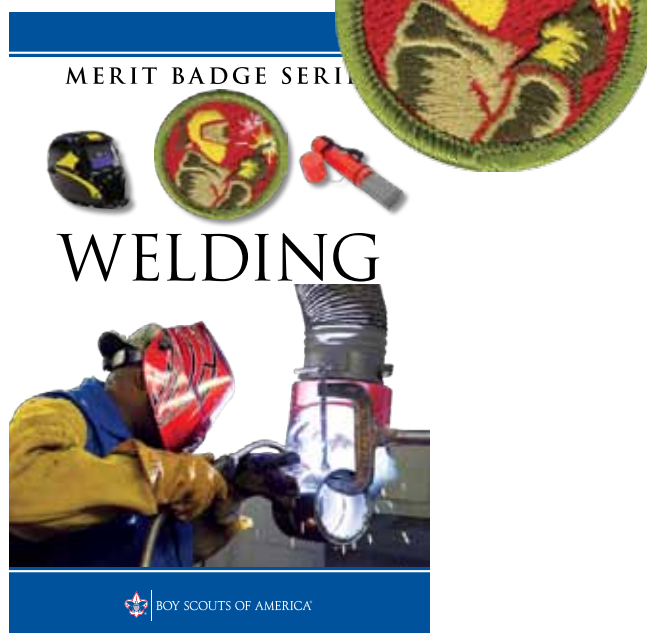
On February 24, Scouts were able to begin the path toward the latest among new merit badges: Welding.

Based on a BSA youth interest survey, it was determined a significant interest was present for adding the merit badge to the nearly 130 currently available. Given the importance of welding to many elements of the U.S. economy, the badge can become an important contribution to our nation’s growth and stability.

As with all merit badges, safety precautions become an integral part of the learning and earning. Scouts earning Welding must become familiar with the various hazards and potential injuries they may face. Other requirements include identifying different processes, welding plates together using various techniques, and discovering the career opportunities available in the welding profession. Many troops already have plans to

apply the activities in a very practical way for making repairs to camping equipment that needs welding fixes.

Council and district advancement committees are encouraged to support the new merit badge by identifying qualified merit badge counselors who will serve in your area. The American Welding Society is a good place to start.



What Do You Think?

Survey for March 2012

Tracking Advancement Toward First Class

This month’s survey seeks your input regarding tracking advancement progress as Scouts work toward the First Class rank. The national Advancement Committee is reconsidering the approach on this, and as part of the process is determining whether the First Class Tracking Sheet, No. 34118, should be improved or replaced. The committee is now undertaking a review of this document and would like your opinions as we consider improving or replacing it. It will take approximately five minutes to complete this survey.

Note that anonymous responses are not accepted for this survey. This is because of the importance the national Advancement Team places on the ability to communicate with survey respondents should more information be needed about their answers. Please click on the link below. We want to know what you think!

<https://bsa2.allegiantcetek.com/cgi-bin/qwebcorporate.dll?idx=2YMSN9>