

## 2.0.0.0 Section 2.

# Advancement Defined

Advancement is the process by which youth members of Scouting America progress from rank to rank.

### 2.0.0.1 It Is a Method—Not an End in Itself

Advancement is simply a means to an end, not an end in itself. It is one of several methods designed to help unit leadership carry out the aims and mission of Scouting America. See the inside front cover for text of the aims and mission.

### 2.0.0.2 Advancement Is Based on Experiential Learning

Everything done to advance—to earn ranks and other awards and recognition—is designed to educate or to otherwise expand Scouts' horizons. Members learn and develop according to a standard. This is the case from the time a member joins, and then moves through, the programs of Cub Scouting, Scouts BSA, and Venturing or Sea Scouts.

*Experiential learning* is the key: Exciting and meaningful activities are offered, and education *happens*. Learning comes from doing. For example, youth may read about first aid, hear it discussed, and watch others administer it, but they will not learn it until they practice it. Rushing a Scout through requirements to obtain a badge is not the goal. Advancement should be a natural outcome of a well-rounded unit program, rich in opportunities to work toward the ranks.

It is important to note, as with any educational opportunity, a rank or award is not the end of the learning process. In Scouting, after a requirement has been passed, the Scout is placed in practical situations that build retention through repeated use of skills. For example, the youth plays games that feature the skills, teaches other Scouts, and perhaps practices the skills in "real-life" outdoor experiences. A well-rounded and strong unit program takes advantage of these kinds of opportunities, using them to improve retention through practical application.



### 2.0.0.3 Personal Growth Is the Primary Goal

Scouting skills—what a young person learns to do—are important, but not as important as the primary goal of *personal growth* achieved through participating in a unit program. The concern is for total, well-rounded development. Age-appropriate, surmountable hurdles are placed before members, and as they face these challenges they learn about themselves and gain confidence.

Learning Scout skills and concepts through active participation is a vehicle for personal growth, but it is not the primary goal. For example, learning how to tie a knot, plan a menu, swim, or administer first aid may turn out to be critical in one's life, but they are secondary to the goal of personal growth that comes with learning. As Scouts learn skills and are tested on them, and then reviewed and recognized, they develop confidence. They come to realize they can learn and do other similar things. The retention of Scouting skills and knowledge is important, of course; but for retention to take place, it will be because Scouting skills and knowledge are used in our programs.

Success is achieved when we fulfill the Scouting America Mission Statement and when we accomplish the aims of Scouting: character development, citizenship training, leadership, and mental and physical fitness. We know we are on the right track when we see youth accepting responsibility, demonstrating self-reliance, and caring for themselves and others; when they learn to weave Scouting ideals into their lives; and when we can see they will be positive contributors to our American society.

Though certainly goal-oriented, advancement is not a competition. Rather, it is a joint effort involving the leaders, the members, other volunteers such as merit badge counselors or Venturing consultants, and the family. Though much is done individually at their own pace, youth often work together in groups to focus on advancement at Cub Scout den meetings, for example, or participate in a Scouts BSA campout or Sea Scout cruise. As they do this, we must recognize each young person's unique combination of strengths and weaknesses. As watchful leaders, either adult or youth, we lend assistance as called for and encourage members to help each other according to their abilities.

#### **2.0.0.4 The Methods of Scouting**

From Cub Scouting through Venturing and Sea Scouts, we put the methods to work. Together they lead to mission fulfillment. For example, the methods of the Scouts BSA program are Scouting ideals, the patrol method, advancement, adult association, outdoor program, the uniform, personal growth, and leadership development. Scouting ideals, put forth in the timeless instruments of the Scout Oath and Scout Law, represent the most basic method. Moving on, we know young people want to

belong to groups. Throughout the Scouting program, we provide a place where the sense of belonging—as in a den or patrol—is an outcome of practicing skills, exploring interests, learning values, forming friendships, and enjoying adventure. Associations within families and with a variety of adults are critical too, especially in terms of providing support and recognition and in developing mutual respect.

Advancement is the method by which we promote and encourage the ongoing involvement and commitment that keeps members coming back for more. It works best when it is built into a unit's program so that simply participating leads to meaningful achievement and recognition—and to a continually improving readiness for more complex experiences.

**For more about these and the other methods of Scouting, see the leader manuals specific to each program.**