



## Special Considerations

### 5.0.1.0 Advancement in Camp Settings

#### 5.0.1.1 Procedures Established by Council Advancement Committee

Procedures for advancement in camp are established by the council advancement committee in compliance with national procedures, and under the direction of the council executive board. The camp director and program director, and the committee responsible for camp program, should be included in the process. Their expertise will be important in evaluating practicality, and their buy-in can improve cooperation from the camp staff.

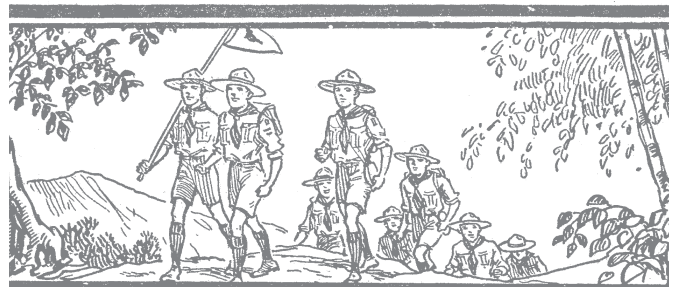
Once procedures are in place, advancement committee representatives should periodically visit each resident camp to assist in efforts to achieve compliance. The visits can also surface new ideas on improving implementation and building a worthwhile partnership. The desired result of the partnership is a quality merit badge program operated according to the policies, procedures, and best practices outlined in Section 7, "The Merit Badge Program," and especially in topic 7.0.3.2, "Group Instruction." Camps should not have a reputation of "Just show up and get the badge."

#### 5.0.1.2 Procedural Examples

Below are examples of procedures a council advancement committee might consider for camp settings.

1. How to handle staff training on the particulars of advancement in each program—Cub Scouting, Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Sea Scouts—as appropriate. This training could be conducted or supervised by members of the council advancement committee.
2. Which merit badges may be offered at camp. Note that summer camp is not the best place for some merit badges, such as the citizenship merit badges, which can be earned at home under the direction of merit badge counselors who may be more qualified than those available at camp.

3. Recommendations on reasonable instructor-to-Scout ratios for classes or activities related to advancement.
4. A process by which the council advancement committee will approve camp merit badge counselors. Note that camp leaders should recognize that it may be unlikely for members of the camp staff to have the expertise or maturity to instruct a wide range of merit badge subjects.
5. How to handle the training of merit badge counselors and camp staff to help ensure Scouts meet requirements as written—no more, no less.
6. How to develop lesson plans and guidelines for the instruction of merit badges and other advancement opportunities that make the best use of the time available and assure campers get credit only for requirements they actually and personally fulfill.
7. A process for accepting work completed before camp begins, and for issuing partials for merit badges that take more time to complete than is available at camp.
8. Communication plans to build awareness of camp practices, such as those related to scheduling, prerequisites, Scoutmaster approvals, paperwork, etc.
9. Procedures for approving completion of requirements for Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks. It is appropriate for camps to offer "Trail to First Class" programs, and camp staff members are permitted to sign off related requirements; however, they should offer unit leaders the opportunity to do so.
10. Record-keeping practices that facilitate accurate reporting to unit leadership of completed requirements and partial merit badges and provide documentation if units need it later.
11. Collecting and making use of feedback on camp advancement program quality.



While Cub Scout outdoor programs such as day camp and resident camp should support advancement, this should not be the focus of the camp activities. Instead, advancement should occur naturally as an end product of the experience. The keys to facilitating this approach lie in implementing the Cub Scouting performance standard of “Do Your Best” and ensuring programs are age appropriate. It is important to understand that skill mastery is not the objective in Cub Scouting, and that youth—even of the same age, grade, and gender—can have very different developmental time tables.

### 5.0.1.3 Advancement Committee Approves Merit Badge Counselors

Resident camp standards require a letter from the council advancement committee approving merit badge counselors. There are no camp-related exemptions from the qualifications described under “Supervisory Qualifications and Certifications,” 7.0.1.1. Councils are not permitted to change the rules about who qualifies. Staff members under 18 are not to serve as, or be treated as, merit badge counselors; however, those with subject-matter knowledge may assist qualified and approved counselors with instruction. Classes and activities may take place in group settings, but this must be done in accordance with the procedures described in “Group Instruction,” 7.0.3.2, assuring that only Scouts who actually and personally fulfill requirements receive credit.

**No council, committee, district, unit, or individual has the authority to add to or subtract from advancement requirements.**

### 5.0.1.4 Statement on Unauthorized Changes to Advancement in Camp Programs

Though stated earlier in this publication, it bears repeating here: *No council, committee, district, unit, or individual has the authority to add to or subtract from advancement requirements.* There are no camp-related exemptions except those described in “Advancement for Members With Special Needs,” 10.0.0.0.

Camp counselors and those assisting them, regardless the circumstances, are not permitted to modify requirements. If requirements as written cannot be completed at camp, they must be done elsewhere, before or after the camp experience. The Application for Merit Badge “blue card” (see “About the Application for Merit Badge (“Blue

Card”),” 7.0.0.2) has space to record and initial what is finished, and age 18 is the only limit to finishing partials.

If unit leadership or others dissatisfied with the quality of advancement instruction at camp become concerned Scouts are being approved for merit badges they have not earned, a report should be filed with the council advancement committee. The form found in the appendix (see “Reporting Merit Badge Counseling Concerns,” 11.1.0.0) may be used for this purpose. See also “Once It Is Earned, It’s Earned,” 7.0.4.6, and “Limited Recourse for Unearned Merit Badges,” 7.0.4.7.

### 5.0.1.5 Advancement Committee as a Partner in Camp-Related Advancement

Council advancement committees that partner with camp staffs and approach solutions jointly are more likely to see strong programs. Implementing a merit badge program at camp is not a simple task. It is not something to consider from afar and then make rules about. Committees with members who make the trip and lend a hand are more likely to see successful results. An example might be helping the staff meet the camp standards requiring training in several areas around advancement.

### 5.0.2.0 Extended Absence From Scouting

Members who leave a Scouting program are welcome to return if they are eligible and in good standing. They take up where they left off, assuming the last verifiable rank or award. It may be necessary for them to produce advancement documentation, or to have records updated or transferred from another council. The time away must not be held against them, and they must not be made to redo requirements.

Because time spent in positions of responsibility (“Positions of Responsibility,” 4.2.3.4) or active participation (“Active Participation,” 4.2.3.1) need not be continuous, any periods of activity before leaving count toward the next rank. The new unit leader, however, may check with past unit leaders, parents, guardians, or others to confirm time spent meets the respective requirements.

### 5.0.3.0 Lone Scouting

Youth who do not have access to traditional Scouting units can become Lone Cub Scouts and Lone Scouts. In the following or similar circumstances, they may find this an appropriate option:

1. Home-schooled where parents do not want them in a youth group
2. U.S. citizens living abroad
3. Exchange students away from the United States
4. Disability or communicable illness that prevents meeting attendance

5. Rural communities far from a unit
6. Conflicts with a job, night school, or boarding school
7. Families who frequently travel or live on a boat, etc.
8. Living arrangements with parents in different communities
9. Environments where getting to meetings may put the Scout in danger

## Lone Scouts is limited to Cub Scouting and Scouts BSA. Venturing and Sea Scouts do not offer equivalent experiences.

Each Lone Scout in Cub Scouting or Scouts BSA must work with a Lone Scout friend and counselor—preferably the Scout’s parent, but the counselor might also be a religious leader, teacher, neighbor, or Scouting volunteer. Regardless, even if a parent, he or she must complete Youth Protection training, be at least 21 years of age, registered with Scouting America, and meet its adult membership requirements. More details can be found in the *Lone Scout Friend and Counselor Guidebook*, an essential tool in carrying out this program. The guidebook can be found at [www.scouting.org/advancement](http://www.scouting.org/advancement).

To register as a Lone Cub Scout or Lone Scout, application can be made through the council service center. Lone Scout friends and counselors must register using the standard adult application. Those living abroad should contact the National Council at 972-580-2000 to learn which local council serves their location. Lone Scouting is not an alternative for those who just don’t like the local units or cannot get along with them.

It is permissible and even beneficial for Lone Scouts to meet from time to time with others in the area, or visit a unit if possible. These meetings can provide additional instruction and counseling to promote further advancement, and also a more public forum for recognizing achievement.

### 5.0.3.1 Lone Scout Advancement Procedures

Because Lone Scouts are not registered with units, we can exercise some responsible flexibility with advancement. This is not to say anything goes: Lone Scouting is not a place to register a youth simply to facilitate parental approval of advancement. Requirements for ranks, merit badges, or any other advancement-related awards that can be met by one Scout working with a counselor must be fulfilled as written. In some instances, family members, neighbors, or friends can be used in place of a “den” or “troop” to increase the number of requirements that can be met as stated.

Some wording issues are simple and do not require council approval. For example, a Lone Scout may fulfill a position of responsibility by serving in school, a place of worship, a club, etc. Where it is not possible to meet requirements as written, a Lone Scout friend and counselor may suggest equal or very similar alternative requirements. These must have council advancement committee approval. Dissimilar requirements should be allowed only in extreme circumstances, or when they cannot be met without extreme hazard or hardship. See the *Lone Scout Friend and Counselor Guidebook* for details.

### 5.0.3.2 Lone Scouts and Merit Badges

A Lone Scout earns merit badges by working with adult counselors who meet the qualifications as stated under “Supervisory Qualifications and Certifications,” 7.0.1.1. They can be recruited from teachers, hobbyists, business leaders, members of various clubs, etc., and must register with the council as a merit badge counselors. A list of preapproved counselors can be obtained by calling the local council service center. For more information, see “The Merit Badge Program,” 7.0.0.0. In instances where the Lone Scout is unable to meet a merit badge requirement as written, the procedure outlined in 5.0.3.1 is to be followed.

### 5.0.3.3 Eagle Scout Applications for Lone Scouts

A Lone Scout who has completed the Eagle Scout requirements works with the district or council advancement committee according to local practices (see “Boards of Review,” 8.0.0.0). The Eagle Scout Rank Application is reviewed and processed according to topics 9.0.1.0 through 9.0.1.10. These steps include verification at the local council, scheduling and conducting a board of review, and submitting the application to the National Program Committee or their designee.

Since the Lone Scout is not affiliated with a unit, the local council processor must send the application to the National Program Committee or their designee for processing. It cannot be submitted electronically. Since there is no “unit committee” for a Lone Scout, the unit committee chair signature line on the Eagle Scout application is left blank. No unit committee approval is required for the Eagle Scout service project proposal. The Lone Scout friend and counselor conducts the unit leader conference and signs as the unit leader on the Eagle Scout Rank Application and in the project workbook.

### 5.0.4.0 Youth From Other Countries

Youth from other countries who temporarily reside in the United States, or have moved here, may register in a Scouting America unit and participate in advancement. If progress from a foreign Scouting association is to be considered and applied to Scouting America requirements, then the foreign Scout must meet in person (or over electronic media) with members of the council or district advancement committee, along with at least one adult leader or committee member of the receiving unit. Previous advancement work is reviewed to determine the Scouting America rank—up to, but not including Eagle Scout rank—the youth is qualified to receive. The candidate must present evidence of membership and advancement from the previous association. Once a rank is determined, it is reported through Scoutbook Plus or other internet portals for reporting advancement or on an advancement report.



This procedure applies to all ranks except Eagle Scout, which is not considered equivalent to any other association's rank. If it can be established that Life rank has been achieved, then the council or district advancement committee can determine which Scouting America merit badges may be awarded based on previous effort and experiences that meet Scouting America merit badge requirements as written. This may leave a number of additional badges to earn—required or not—to achieve Eagle.

Requirements for active participation, position of responsibility, Scout spirit, the service project, and the unit leader conference must be completed in a Scouting America unit. This procedure also applies to members of Scouting America who, while living abroad, have earned advancement in another Scouting association.

### 5.0.5.0 Religious Principles

From time to time, issues related to advancement call for an understanding of the position of Scouting America on religious principles.

Scouting America does not define what constitutes belief in God or practice of religion. Neither does Scouting America require membership in a religious organization or association for membership in the movement. If a Scout does not belong to a religious organization or association, then the Scout's parent(s) or guardian(s) will be considered responsible for religious training. All that is required is the acknowledgment of belief in God as stated in the Declaration of Religious Principle and the Scout Oath, and the ability to be reverent as stated in the Scout Law.

### 5.0.6.0 Bestowing Posthumous Awards

If, prior to death, a youth member in any Scouting America program met the requirements for a rank or award, including age and service, he or she may receive it posthumously. If a required board of review has not been conducted, it is held according to the methods outlined in "Boards of Review," 8.0.0.0. It is appropriate to invite parents or guardians and friends to discuss the efforts made toward the rank.

For the Eagle Scout rank, the application is verified at the council service center, but it must be sent to the National Program Committee or their designee for processing. A cover letter from the Scout executive or designee must indicate it as posthumous. This triggers changes to the congratulatory letter returned with the pocket card and certificate. Note that the same procedures regarding timing of an Eagle Scout board of review apply in posthumous cases. See "Eagle Scout Board of Review Beyond the 18th Birthday," 8.0.3.1.

### 5.0.7.0 Spirit of the Eagle Award

Scouting America has created the Spirit of the Eagle Award as an honorary posthumous recognition for registered youth members who have lost their lives through illness or accident. It is offered by the National Court of Honor as a final salute and tribute in celebration of the recipient's life. It also publicly recognizes the recipient's contributions to the mission of Scouting.

An application can be found at [www.scouting.org/awards/awards-central/spirit-of-the-eagle](http://www.scouting.org/awards/awards-central/spirit-of-the-eagle). A unit committee must complete and submit it to the local council within six months of the member's death. The application is reviewed, approved, and processed by the local council where the certificate is ordered from National Supply.



## 5.0.8.0. Using Technology-Based Tools in Advancement

The use of technology has rapidly expanded into the culture of Scouting with tools such as videoconferencing, live streaming webinars, and mobile and web-based applications. These tools are useful and can save time for administrative tasks, especially in managing records for membership, training, and advancement. But Scout leaders must take care when using these tools to *deliver and implement* the advancement program. The preferred method for rank advancement and merit badge counseling is still face-to-face interaction that supports the Scouting America method of adult association, but there are occasions when use of technology might be supportive.

Procedures for using web-based tools in advancement are established by the council advancement committee in compliance with national procedures. Below are examples of actions that might be considered.

- Create a plan for promoting compliance with Youth Protection guidelines related to electronic communications within units.
- Develop a process for approving technology-based boards of review (see “Boards of Review Through Videoconferencing,” 8.0.1.6).
- Plan how to approve and monitor merit badge counselors who offer their services online to Scouts in your council, and the quality of the experience for Scouts who take advantage of these offers.
- Consider how to confirm with their home councils that counselors operating online are registered and approved for the merit badges they counsel.
- Produce guidelines for technology—or web-based merit badge instruction that places the actual testing in a personal setting.

For today’s youth, communication via social media is second nature. In all aspects of technology-based advancement, both adults and youth must adhere to Scouting America Youth Protection policies as well as Scouting America Social Media Guidelines ([www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection](http://www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection)).

When a requirement says to “attend a meeting,” in-person participation is strongly recommended. While virtual participation may be convenient, in-person attendance allows for a significantly richer experience, with more socialization and more focus. Virtual attendance should be extremely rare, when extenuating circumstances prevent in-person participation, and the merit badge counselor must approve the substitution **in advance**.

Digital technologies can enhance or hinder our interactions with the world around us. With that in mind, when working on Scouting America rank, merit badge, and

other advancement activities, the following definitions should be used:

- **Discuss** requires a back and forth, interactive conversation between the Scout and the merit badge counselor. Exchanging a few text messages does not meet this standard, but a video conversation might.
- **Explain** can be accomplished in a written or oral format but must be a substantive description, more than just a few words.
- **Demonstrate** means to physically do the activity, ideally in the presence of the counselor. If this is not possible, a video of the Scout doing the activity can be used, provided both the video and the activity can be done in a safe manner. Video evidence must only be accepted if the Scout performs the skill correctly, and all essential aspects of the task can be clearly seen in the video.

Generative artificial intelligence and other tools (spell checkers, grammar checkers, autofill, etc.) may be used by a Scout to assist with written requirements, but their use must be fully disclosed to the person reviewing the work, and the final output must be the Scout’s own original work.