

# Memo

**To:** Troop 467 New Scouts and Parents

**From:** Payne Midyette, Assistant Scoutmaster – New Scouts / Advancement Coordinator

**Date:** February 10, 2007

**Re:** Advancement Overview – “the big picture”

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The advancement program and process in Boy Scouts is different than that in Cub Scouts. In this memo, I will provide a brief overview or big picture perspective to facilitate your transition from the parent of a Cub Scout to that of a Boy Scout.

The Boy Scouts of America was incorporated to provide a program for community organizations that offers effective character, citizenship, and personal fitness training for youth.

Specifically, the BSA endeavors to develop American citizens who are physically, mentally, and emotionally fit; have a high degree of self-reliance as evidenced in such qualities as initiative, courage, and resourcefulness; have personal values based on religious concepts; have the desire and skills to help others; understand the principles of the American social, economic, and governmental systems; are knowledgeable about and take pride in their American heritage and understand our nation's role in the world; have a keen respect for the basic rights of all people; and are prepared to participate in and give leadership to American society.

Advancement is one of the eight methods that the program uses to achieve its stated purpose as set forth in the preceding paragraph.

Boy Scout advancement incorporates four basic steps:

- **The Scout learns**

He will learn skills at troop meetings, on an outing, or in a session with a merit badge counselor. Sometimes skills are taught in formal settings, whereas at other times the Scout will pick up a skill as he goes about his activities on an outing. Although we prefer that the Scout learn from either older more experienced Scouts and/or adult leaders, a parent may also help the Scout learn a skill.

- **The Scout is tested**

Once the Scout has learned a skill and practiced it sufficiently, he will seek out a troop leader who will confirm that the Scout has completed the requirement. That leader will initial and date

the Scouts Handbook (see pages

for signoffs). Parent signoffs are generally

not permitted.

- **The Scout is reviewed**

When a Scout has completed all but the review requirements for a given rank, i.e., Scoutmaster conference and board of review, his work is reviewed, first by the Scoutmaster in the Scoutmaster conference and then by the board of review. The board of review is comprised of 3 – 6 adults who ideally are not active leaders in the troop. The review requirements are the last two requirements for each rank.

- **The Scout is recognized**

Finally, the Scout is recognized for his achievement usually at one of the three Courts of Honor held during the year.

There are six distinct ranks in Boy Scouts: Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, Life, and Eagle.

The first three ranks are intended to focus the Scout on learning the basic scout skills, which include his roles in the patrol and the troop, respectively, citizenship, camping and other outdoor skills, first aid, swimming, and personal fitness. Our program and outings should provide most of the opportunities for a Scout to advance from Tenderfoot to First Class.

Thus as a new scout enters the troop, we will provide the connections between those advancement opportunities and the specific requirements. We will provide a structured program to ensure the new Scout has the opportunity to complete the Tenderfoot requirements as long as he attends most of the meetings and participate in at least one outing during the spring. We will take the initiative to initial their handbooks when they have satisfactorily demonstrated completion of a requirement.

As the Scout moves from Tenderfoot toward First Class and then the higher ranks, the Scout must begin to take the initiative and seek out leaders when he is ready to have a requirement signed off. This is especially important when the Scout is ready for his Scoutmaster Conference and subsequent board of review. He is expected to schedule these reviews in advance with the appropriate leader(s).

The Star, Life and especially Eagle ranks focus on merit badges, troop leadership and service. At this point the Scout is expected to assume responsibility for identifying and arranging opportunities for completing these requirements.

Most merit badges are earned outside of the troop program. Many merit badges are completed at either summer camp or through classes which are offered at regular intervals by different organizations. Various parents within the troop monitor these organized MB opportunities and will notify us of any upcoming clinics, classes, etc. Others may be taught by troop adult leaders or parents but outside of regular meetings. Other MBs may require that the Scout (always with a buddy) find a qualified registered counselor and work with that counselor to complete the MB requirements. There are 121 merit badges to choose from although each rank requires the Scout to earn some of the 12 Eagle required merit badges. It is sometimes hard for a new gung ho Scout to resist all of these opportunities. Some merit badges are more appropriate for more developmentally mature Scouts and should not be taken by an 11- or 12-year old. Some MBs have rank prerequisites. Others may require the completion of another MB first. The requirements for all merit badges are available at [www.meritbadge.com](http://www.meritbadge.com). I strongly recommend that you consult with an experienced adult leader if you have any questions before your Scout signs up to earn any merit badges.

The Star, Life, and Eagle ranks each require the Scout to actively hold a troop junior leadership position. Some positions are elected, some are appointed by the Senior Patrol Leader, some are appointed by the Scoutmaster. Leadership is not a passive accomplishment. It means more than just having a leadership title. I like for our Scouts to learn that leadership is not derived from the power of a leadership position and barking orders to others, but is demonstrated by motivating, teaching, organizing and leading by example. Leadership culminates in the Eagle Leadership Service Project. An Eagle candidate conceives, negotiates with an organization, prepares a detailed project plan and then executes that plan by leading others to accomplish the work.

Varying levels of community service are also required for each of these last three ranks. The objective is to develop the desire and skill to providing service to others in one's community. This lesson culminates with the Eagle project, which applies a valuable hands-on lesson in project leadership to delivering a needed service to a community organization. The scope of these projects often involve hundreds of volunteer hours.

Although the troop tracks the Scouts progress using TroopMaster software, the Scout is ultimately expected to know what he has done and what he needs to do in order to complete a rank advancement or a merit badge. The parent and adult leader role should gradually diminish to more of a coaching / mentoring role. I recommend that the Scout (not the parent) maintain an advancement notebook to facilitate this process. The form of this recordkeeping is up to your scout (with your counsel). One approach is to use a loose leaf three-ring binder. In this notebook, your Scout can keep track of his advancement progress, his plan to get Eagle, his merit badge blue cards and rank cards, camping trips (needed for certain rank and Eagle required merit badges), leadership positions, and service hours, etc. The notebook can become a scrapbook of his Scouting experience.

I have limited my comments to the basics and have not addressed the nitty-gritty of the advancement process. Those details will be presented as warranted over your Scouts experience. If you a question, I encourage you to contact me or any of the Troop 467 adult leadership.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my passion for Scouting with you and your son.