

## Introduction

The current edition of the **Guide to Advancement** replaces any previous editions and is the official Boy Scouts of America source on advancement procedures. The most current and official version of the **Guide to Advancement** can be accessed from [www.scouting.org/advancement](http://www.scouting.org/advancement).

## Policy on Unauthorized Changes to Advancement Program

No council, committee, district, unit, or individual has the authority to add to, or subtract from, advancement requirements. There are limited exceptions relating only to members with special needs. For details see Section 10, "Advancement for Members With Special Needs."

## The Guide to Safe Scouting Applies

Policies and procedures outlined in the Guide to Safe Scouting apply to all BSA activities, including those related to advancement and Eagle Scout, Summit, and Quartermaster service projects.

## How Is a "Month" Defined?

A month is a month regardless how many days it has. It is not defined as 30 days or four weeks. February 2 up to August 2, or August 31 up to February 28 (or 29th if leap year) are examples of six-month periods. Six months does not mean 180 days.

### 4.0.0.1 Changes to Requirements

Advancement requirements change from time to time. For each program's requirements, consult the following web pages, which are expected to be updated annually:

**Cub Scouting:** [www.scouting.org/programs/cub-scouts/what-cub-scouts-earn/the-advancement-trail](http://www.scouting.org/programs/cub-scouts/what-cub-scouts-earn/the-advancement-trail)

**Scouts BSA:** <http://www.scouting.org/programs/scouts-bsa/advancement-and-awards>

**Venturing:** <http://www.scouting.org/programs/venturing/venturing-awards-and-advancement/rank-advancement>

**Sea Scouts:** <http://www.seascout.org/advancement-central>

Please note that web addresses appearing in the Guide to Advancement are confirmed prior to publication, but they are subject to change.

Once a new or revised requirement appears on one of those web pages, any Cub Scout, Scouts BSA member, Venturer, or Sea Scout beginning work on the next rank (or Eagle Palm) must use the new or revised requirement as stated there.

Changes may also be introduced in youth handbooks or various official BSA publications or releases before appearing on one of the above web pages. In this case, unless official communications set forth a different procedure or establish a date by when use of the old requirements must cease, youth members have through December 31 of that year to decide what to do. They may continue—or begin work—using the old requirements, or may switch to—or begin work—using the new requirements. Scouts who choose to use the old requirements may continue using them until the rank (or Palm) has been completed. Those who have not begun work on a rank (or Palm) by December 31 of the year a change in its requirements is announced must use the new requirements.

For handling changes to merit badge requirements, see "What to Do When Requirements Change," 7.0.4.3.

Former members who rejoin a BSA program, still as youth members, may carry on in the advancement program and pick up where they left off, but they will not receive credit for activities while not registered. A former member who is no longer eligible to participate in a BSA program as a youth member due to age, for example, can neither receive credit for completing advancement requirements nor be awarded any advancement-oriented recognition such as ranks or merit badges, etc., that the individual was ineligible to earn as a youth member under the rules in effect at that time.

### 10.2.2.0 Advancement in Scouts BSA for Scouts With Special Needs

Members must meet current advancement requirements as written for merit badges, all ranks, and Eagle Palms—no more and no less—and they are to do exactly what is stated. If it says, "Show or demonstrate," that is what they must do; just "telling" isn't enough. The same holds for words and phrases such as "make," "list," "in the field," "collect," "identify," and "label." Requests for alternative requirements for Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks can be made using the information outlined below.

Alternatives are not available for the Star, Life, and Eagle rank requirements. Scouts may request approval for alternative merit badges, but the other requirements for those three ranks must be fulfilled as written.

It is important to remember that the advancement program is meant to challenge our members; however, not all of them can achieve everything they might want to—with or without a disability. It is for this reason all Scouts are required to meet the requirements as they are written, with no exceptions.

## Important excerpts from the [Guide To Advancement - 2021](#) No. 33088 (SKU-648216)

For boards of review for Scouts with special needs, the board members should be informed ahead of time about the special circumstances and needs. It may be helpful, too, if the unit leader is present at the review. He or she may be able to help answer questions and provide background. It may be important to allow parents or guardians to be present at the meeting as well—especially if they are able to help interpret and communicate what the Scout is saying. At the least, parents or guardians should be available to help board members understand the challenges and how the Scout copes with them.

### 10.2.2.1 Using Alternative Requirements

A degree of modification in advancement requirements may be necessary to mainstream as many members with disabilities as possible. Thus a Scout with a permanent physical or cognitive disability, or a disability expected to last more than two years, or beyond age 18, who is unable to complete all the requirements for Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, or First Class rank may, with his or her parent or guardian, and also the unit leader or a member of the troop committee, submit a request to the council advancement committee to complete alternative requirements. Unless a Scout has been approved to register beyond the age of eligibility, alternative requirements must be completed by the Scout's 18th birthday. The procedures appear below. This avenue is also available to youth with longer-term disabilities (such as those related to a severe injury) who want to continue advancing during recovery.

Simple modifications very close to existing requirements need not be approved. A Scout in a wheelchair, for example, may meet the Second Class requirement for hiking by "wheeling" to a place of interest. Allowing more time and permitting special aids are also ways leaders can help Scouts with disabilities make progress. Modifications, however, must provide a very similar challenge and learning experience.

The outcomes of the Scouting experience should be fun and educational, and not just relate to completing rank requirements that might place unrealistic expectations on a member who has special needs.

### 10.2.2.2 How to Apply for Alternative Requirements

Before applying for alternative requirements, as many of the existing requirements must be completed as possible. Once the Scout's best has been done to the limit of the Scout's abilities and resources, the unit leader or a troop committee member submits to the council advancement committee a written request for alternative requirements for Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, or First Class ranks. It must show what has been completed and suggest the alternatives for those requirements the Scout cannot do.

The request must be accompanied by supporting letters from the unit leader, a parent or guardian, and the Scout (if possible), as well as a written statement from a qualified health professional related to the nature of the disability.

This may be, for example, a physician, neurologist, psychiatrist, psychologist, etc., or when appropriate, an educational administrator in special education. Statements must describe the disability; cover the Scout's capabilities, limitations, and prognosis; and outline what requirements cannot be completed. Additional information such as Individualized Education Plans provided to parents by schools, and various treatment summaries and reports, may help an advancement committee make an informed decision.

Normally, it is expected that youth with only moderate learning disabilities, or such disorders as ADD or ADHD can—albeit more slowly—complete standard requirements.

The advancement committee reviews the request, using the expertise of professionals involved with youth who have special needs. To make a fair determination, the committee may want to interview the Scout, the Scout's parent(s) or guardian(s), and the unit leader. The committee's decision is then recorded and delivered to the Scout and the unit leader.

After the committee's decision has been recorded and delivered, any supporting private information should be returned to its source—the parent or guardian, or institution that provided it. Should there be questions about its disposition, then the supporting private information should be destroyed.

Note that topics 10.2.2.1 and 10.2.2.2 do not apply to merit badge requirements. See topic 10.2.2.3 to learn about earning alternative merit badges to those required for Eagle.

In addition to the excerpts shown here candidates for advance should review and pay particular attention to the following portions of the [Guide to Advancement](#), which are too lengthy to reproduce here:

#### Section 4. The Mechanics of Advancement

##### 4.2.3.0 Rank Requirements Overview

##### 4.2.3.1 Active Participation

##### 4.2.3.2 Demonstrate Scout Spirit

#### Section 8. Boards of Review: An Overview for All Ranks

##### 8.0.0.1 Purpose and Timeliness of Boards of Review

##### 8.0.0.2 Boards of Review Must Be Granted When Requirements Are Met

##### 8.0.0.3 Composition of the Board of Review

##### 8.0.0.4 Wearing the Uniform—or Neat in Appearance

##### 8.0.1.0 Conducting the Board of Review

##### 8.0.1.1 Not a Retest or "Examination"

##### 8.0.1.2 What Should Be Discussed

##### 8.0.1.3 How Boards Can Lead to Program Improvement

##### 8.0.1.4 Board Members Must Agree Unanimously on Decisions to Approve

##### 8.0.1.5 After the Review

##### 8.0.1.6 Boards of Review Through Videoconferencing

##### 8.0.2.0 Particulars for Tenderfoot Through Life Rank