

Advancement News

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Prepared. For Life.®

As programs and opportunities modify over time, your friends at *Advancement News* will continue to be here to share these changes with you and offer insights. *Advancement News* will be uploaded directly to the [Advancement Resources](#) page of Scouting.org. Each bi-monthly edition will be found at the [Advancement News](#) page. Since advancement evolves and occasionally changes, please note that the most current information found in *Advancement News* and the online version of [Guide to Advancement](#) supersedes previous versions.

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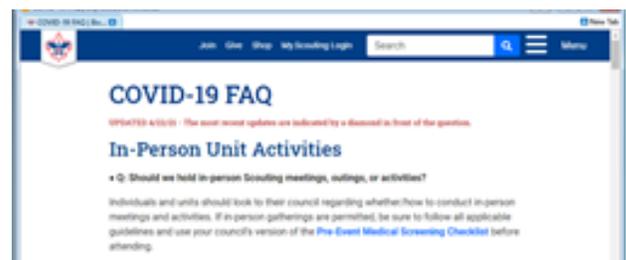
Advancement News is designed for council and district advancement committees, advancement staff advisors, and Eagle processors. However, any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe. To subscribe to the *Advancement News* announcements, click here: [Subscribe](#)

Special Notation

The [COVID-19 FAQ](#) updated version 4/22/21 is now available.

Starting with the question: “Should we hold in-person Scouting meetings, outings, or activities?” this document will guide units as Summer brings advancement opportunities at every turn.

Now is a good time to review the advancement modifications currently in effect, which are found in this document.



On Increasing Advancement

Positions of Responsibility: *Guide to Advancement*

In past issues we have talked about specific positions of responsibility, but in this edition, we would like to focus on the “big picture” guidance provided in the *Guide to Advancement’s* (GTA) “4.2.3.4 Positions of Responsibility” section.

Positions Must Be Chosen From Among Those Listed

In the January/February and March/April issues of *Advancement News* we talked about the positions of responsibility approved for Scouts to earn Star, Life, and Eagle. But did you know units cannot require specific positions for a rank? For example, a troop cannot require a Scout to be the senior patrol leader to become an Eagle Scout. Or that positions of responsibility in a provisional jamboree troop or Philmont crew do not count?

Also remember that for Star and Life ranks, a unit leader **may** assign the leadership of a project that helps the unit as a substitute for the position of responsibility.

4.2.3.4.2 Meeting the Time Test May Involve Any Number of Positions

The requirements call for a period of months and not a specific position. So, a Scout may hold several positions if total service time equals at least the number of months required for the rank.

4.2.3.4.3 Meeting Unit Expectations

A unit should set expectations of the Scout for positions of responsibility, and if, within reason (see the note under “Rank Requirements Overview,” 4.2.3.0), based on the Scout’s personal skill set, these expectations have been met, the Scout has fulfilled the requirement.

In a note that has become a big point of discussion over the last year, the *Guide to Advancement* says “Regardless of a unit’s expectations or policy, if a unit takes time off, such as during the summer months, it must count that time toward service in a position of responsibility. (See ‘Active Participation,’ 4.2.3.1.)” When setting or considering expectations, see also <https://www.scouting.org/coronavirus/covid-19-faq/#advancement>.

4.2.3.4.4 Meeting the Requirement in the Absence of Unit Expectations

A unit should set expectations, but what if it does not? In the absence of clear expectations, a Scout is left on his/her own judgement as to what a good job may entail. If expectations were not communicated to the Scout, then the unit cannot come back and say you didn’t do what we wanted.”

4.2.3.4.5 When Responsibilities Are Not Met

If a Scout is not meeting the clear expectations laid out for the position of responsibility this must be communicated to the Scout as early as noted, which can be a wonderful opportunity for counseling and learning. It is unfair and inappropriate – and too late – to wait until the end of the time period to have this discussion.

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4.2.3.4.6 “Responsibility” and “Leadership”

Many suggest these requirements should call for a position of *leadership* rather than of *responsibility*. As the *GTA* says, “Taking and accepting responsibility, however, is a key foundation for leadership. One cannot lead effectively without it.”

Take another look at “4.2.3.4 Positions of Responsibility” in the *Guide to Advancement* for more detail.

Prepare Now for Post-Covid Advancement

The past 14 months have tested the mettle of Scouts and Scouters alike, including the chairs and members of our council and district advancement committees. With creative use of texting; emailing, Zoom, Skype, and other communication tools; plus masking, and distancing, we have adapted to keep open the portals for our youth to continue moving forward along the advancement pathways of all BSA programs.

The 2021 Tenth Anniversary edition of the *Guide to Advancement* that will be published shortly, will present an opportunity to take stock of our advancement committees and begin planning for a brighter and more relaxed future.

Begin with person-power. Do all committee functions and responsibilities have committee members who are knowledgeable and effective, serving as “champions” of their designated district functions? Where are the gaps and how will these be filled?

Next, look at training—the linchpin for all well-operating committees. How recently have your members received basic and staying-up-to-speed training? Are there plans in place for ongoing training segments inside scheduled committee meetings?

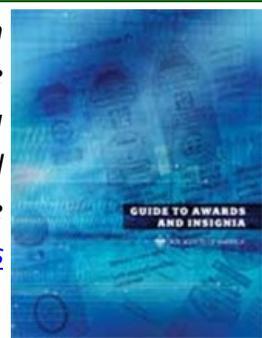
Here are some other questions, to ensure your committee is prepared for the end of Covid bans and procedures:

- Does your council advancement committee (CAC) have a designated member who coordinates and collaborates with your district advancement committees (DACs)?
- Do both levels of committees have members with in-depth knowledge of the advancement process across all BSA youth programs?
- Do you have council-level subcommittees responsible for recognition of outstanding adult volunteers?
- Do your committees have program specialists to generate unit-level awareness of advancement, its processes, and methods for encouraging youth advancement?
- Is someone assigned to track and analyze advancement across all units and districts, and is the job getting done?
- Are the interactive steps needed for advancement to the Eagle Scout, Quartermaster, and Venturing Summit awards managed by designated district *and* council committee members?

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- Are committee designees in place to manage unique recognitions such as Venturing Leadership Award, NOVA awards, life-saving awards, international Scouter Awards, outstanding Eagle Scout awards, etc.?
- Do all committees have a Special Needs advancement specialist?
- Are the CAC and DACs collaborating with council and district training chairs to assure that advancement modules are included at all training levels?
- Do the CAC and DACs each have a member who collaborates with counterparts on the camping committees, to assure that outdoor events include activities oriented to youth advancement needs?
- Is your CAC-level Merit Badge Chair keeping current lists of qualified counselors and assuring that all units needing this list are kept current at least annually? Is the Merit Badge Chair assuring that counselors are—by career or avocation—qualified to counsel each merit badge for which they apply?
- Over 40 organizations offer religious awards programs for youth and adults. Do the CAC and DACs have at least one member assigned to promote and coordinate these programs on an ongoing basis?

More information can be found in the section on Scouting Honors and Special Recognitions in the [Guide to Awards and Insignia](#).



These questions align with the protocols of all *Guide To Advancement* editions and spur individual thinking across all councils and districts. Our advancement and recognition programs work like a long-running engine—they need regular fine-tuning and maintenance to keep doing their job.

Cub Scouts

Cub Scout Summer Fun



Summer is a time of transition for our Cub Scouts – bringing a “close” to the current Cub Scout program year and “opening” the next program year. Around the first of June, as Cub Scouts are “rolled up” to the next rank, they move onto the next set of Adventures to be accomplished. (Please note that during this time of the pandemic, Cub Scouts have been given the opportunity to continue work on the previous program year Adventures in order to complete and finalize requirements to earn their badge of rank.)

Summer is also a time when many of our Cub Scout packs transition to fewer activities and a general slow-down. In the summer dens often do not meet, and packs may only have a monthly activity planned that is not the typical pack meeting. Our volunteers are deservedly looking for some time to take a breather. Families take the opportunity to vacation or enroll their kids in other activities that are only offered during the summer. Parents are often looking for a more relaxed schedule and a break from the routine.

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Some of our best run packs approach the summer with the attitude, “Let’s just have some fun.” The pack gets together with no expectations other than spending time with their Cub Scout community. These packs hold barbeques in a local park, hit the beach, go for a bicycle ride or take a hike. They may visit a local museum, take in a local baseball game or spend the night at the zoo. The goal is to provide an opportunity for the families to get together, to see one another, to create some memories and enjoy themselves.

Nevertheless, Cub Scouts may certainly work on Adventures during the summer. Remember, there is no, single way to deliver the program. Each pack should do what works best for all their youth. But sometimes the reward is not the belt loop or the pin. The reward is seeing friends, being silly, just having a good time. Eating popcorn at a baseball game and seeing their faces on the jumbotron, or waking up in the lobby of the zoo to see the animals fed breakfast might just be the highlight experience that makes them want to continue their Scouting adventures in the Fall.

Check out the May Virtual Roundtable for more information on [Cub Scout summertime activities](#).

Scouts BSA

Keeping Scouts SAFE

Many experienced Scoutmasters (and other Scout leaders) make it a point to visit with the parents of every new Scout. Whenever possible these meetings should be as private as possible and should have two main purposes. First, they give the parents an opportunity to tell the Scout leader about their child. If you’re going to keep their (and now your) Scout safe, you’re going to have to know as much as you can about them from the people who know them the best. Second, and perhaps most important, these visits give the Scout leader a chance to assure the parents that everything possible will be done to make their child safe. *(It’s also an opportunity to recruit new leaders, but that’s a story for another day.)*



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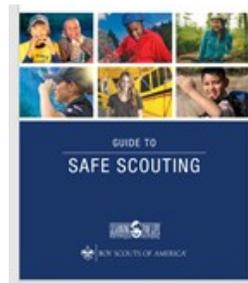
About *Advancement News*

Advancement News is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America National Advancement Program Team. Its intent is to provide 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. Therefore, districts and councils may reprint articles from this publication. Our plan is to distribute six issues of *Advancement News* annually, but special editions may go out whenever there is important information to share. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at

advancement.team@scouting.org

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Leaders can tell parents and guardians that there was a time when we had to rely solely on our own common sense and forethought to determine how to keep Scouts safe, but today we have the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#). The latest version of this valuable tool is available online and is revised quarterly.



To help them understand its major points, let them know that your unit's leaders will use the four points of SAFE:



Supervision – Youth are supervised by qualified and trustworthy adults.

Assessment – Activities are assessed during planning. You will assess every situation. Is our meeting place safe? What kind of things do we have to consider when we're planning a service project? There are Service Project Planning Guidelines in the [Appendix](#) to the "Guide to Safe Scouting."

Fitness and Skill - Participants' Annual Health and Medical Records will be reviewed, and leaders will confirm that prerequisite fitness and skill levels exist for participants to take part safely. (There is a list of tools that are appropriate for Scouts to use. Unit leaders review the "Age Guidelines for Tool Use and Work at Elevations or Excavations" in the *Guide to Safe Scouting* (page 92). Additionally, there is information about prohibited activities (described on pages 39-43 in the current Online version of the *Guide to Safe Scouting*.)

Equipment and Environment – Safe and appropriately sized equipment, courses, camps, campsites, trails, or playing fields will be used properly. Your unit's leaders periodically check gear use and the environment for changing conditions that could affect safety. Additionally parents are reassured that you are familiar with the National [Statement on Covid-19?](#)

To prepare for these meetings, check out the [Scouting Health and Safety](#) website for a wealth of additional information. As you plan for the safety of your Scouts be sure to involve your Scouts in the planning process. This is part of their citizenship development and will help assure that those Scouts advance and stay in Scouting. Now, isn't that what we're all about?

Two additional items to review:

Meeting place checklist:

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/mpinsp.pdf>

Service Project checklist:

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/healthsafety/pdf/680-027.pdf>

Program Update

Special Notation:

Please note that the original dates set for earning the Diversity Merit Badge and new rank requirements have been put on hold at the current time. Scouts should continue their advancement work as usual.

When changes to the current advancement policies are finalized, those will be announced as always, with an abundance of lead time. Watch for more details in *Advancement News* when they are available.

Sea Scouts

Sea Scouts Become Big Shots

Many a Scouts BSA Scout has obtained a merit badge for shooting sports, but did you know that Sea Scouts have a similar opportunity? Take a look at page 249 of the *Sea Scout manual* and you will find Sea Scout Marksmanship Program.



Sea Scouts can use a .22-caliber rifle, shooting from the benchrest position at 50 feet; can shoot clay pigeons with a shotgun; or can shoot pistols at nine-inch paper plated from 15 feet. Participants can earn four awards within each category; basic, intermediate, advanced and expert. Those who qualify can wear shooting medals on their Sea Scout uniforms.

The Sam Houston Area Council awarded a host of those medals when its fleet of 13 Sea Scout ships hosted its inaugural Marksman Program in late February at Bovay Scout Ranch near College Station, Texas. Four ships participated, with the idea that the fleet would host shooting events twice a year.

Top marksman was Elena M., of Ship 846, who hit 24-of-25 clays in shotgun. Elena, 14, had made only 1-of-25 shots two years ago when she was in a Scouts BSA girl troop. She is now a member in both Sea Scouts as well as Scouts BSA. Elena said the February event was just the second time she had used a shotgun, and said she can think of only one reason for the marked improvement. "I play video games. I think that's about all the practice I get," she said.

Maddie C., 17, of Ship 208, had never used a shotgun before, and missed qualifying for a basic medal in four tries. She had to hit 10-of-25 clays to obtain the basic ranking, and got close twice. She had not had the shotgun against her shoulder on her first shot, and had bruised her upper arm. She said it only hurt each time she did not qualify. But on her fifth, and last, try of the day, she shot 14 pigeons to earn the medal. "I guess I had let my intensity get in the way," Maddie said.

A highlight for Rusten N., 15, of Ship 502 was when he and another participant shot the same clay at the same time when they both said "PULL" at the same time. Meanwhile, Emma M, 14, of Ship 1996, said she felt embarrassed by what she thought was being rude when she yelled "PULL." As a good Scout, she wanted to be more "courteous." "I wanted to shout, 'Pull, Please.' "

Venturing



Mixing Venturing Recruitment and Advancement

Venturing member recruitment is an important part of sustaining a Venturing Crew. Advancement is also a main focus of many Venturers as they climb to the Summit. However, did you know that Venturing's advancement structure includes a recruitment component?

One of the requirements for the Pathfinder rank is to "plan, organize, and give leadership to a project designed to sustain and grow your crew." It is extremely important to use this requirement to increase the overall health of the Venturing Crew. This plan should include developing a recruiting type event or some way that will attract and retain membership. For example, to attract members, a Venturer could organize an open house, invite non-members to attend crew activities such as fun events and/or service events, or provide and post marketing materials in key visible areas that youth would see. The key to success is for existing members to be inviting non-members. There is nothing more meaningful than being personally invited to participate in something.

Once members are a part of the program, they need to be kept engaged so that they can be retained. This could be accomplished by providing an extremely engaging program that supports year-round activities on varying tiers of adventure. A good program would provide a mix of tier I and II adventures during the year with at least one tier III adventure per year.

Likewise, it is important to evaluate, every 6 to 12 months, what the crew members are interested in doing. This could be accomplished by providing an interest survey to the members and then using the data to develop the program. Moreover, creating something that keeps members working towards an accomplishment, such as rank advancement or other Venturing awards and recognitions, can also be a huge draw to keep members engaged. Developing and conducting a program around the advancement structure and showing members what they have left to complete to earn an award can keep them engaged and motivated to doing that little extra. This will help keep them in the program longer and strengthen their engagement in the program as they continue to advance further in the program.

Sustaining interest is extremely important for any crew and it is not something that is "one size fits all" and it needs to be constantly evolving. Finding the right method that fits your crew may be a challenge. Youth of today have so many other things that are competing for their time - school, extra-curricular activities, sports, work, and more. Venturing has so many values and benefits that it gives to its members and we just need to show this to others!

Training Correction Noted

An article on Venturing training published in the January/February issue of *Advancement News* provided sound advice for pandemic delivery of training courses, but drew from a dated resource when describing available program materials.

Kodiak X was discontinued in 2011. *Kodiak* was renamed *Kodiak Challenge* at that time. The author regrets the error.

Visit the BSA [Training for Youth](#) website for more information.

Worth Repeating

May 2012

On Increasing Advancement

Support for the Outdoor Program

Since Lord Baden-Powell's first campout on Brownsea Island, the outdoors has been an important part of Scouting. Fun things happen on campouts, and they can be a place where advancement occurs. Thus, district and council advancement committees have a responsibility to provide a level of support (see *Guide to Advancement* topics 3.0.0.1, No. 6, and 3.0.0.2, No. 6). How can we make this happen?

Let's say the district or the council is planning a camporee. Proactive involvement from the advancement committee in assisting with the planning of the event can assure the activities held include advancement opportunities. The committee can also facilitate the implementation of the four steps in Scouts advancement.

For example, planning could include advance notice to unit leadership on how to prepare their Scouts for the event (a Scout learns). At the camporee, careful planning will have the Scouts demonstrating what they have learned (a Scout is tested). If we're really proactive, we might plan a special ceremony to recognize advancement at the camporee (a Scout is recognized). What else might we do?

- Encourage troops to hold boards of review and courts of honor at summer camp. A court of honor in the woods at night with a campfire burning brightly in the background will be a memory Scouts will tell their children and grandchildren.
- Visit roundtables to communicate and encourage advancement opportunities in outdoor programs.
- Ask the camping committee and the camp staff to collect reports of rank advancement at camp and forward them to the advancement committee.
- Be proactive in working with the camping committee to make sure appropriate advancement opportunities are available at Cub Scout day camp, resident camp, and other outdoor activities such as Cub Scout parent weekends and Webelos Scout camp.
- Make sure packs understand the advancement opportunities available for Cub Scouts at camp. Again, roundtables are a good place to foster this understanding.
- Be proactive in making sure merit badge experts are available to enhance the program at summer camp. Having local experts visit camp during the week will enrich the experience.
- Get involved in the planning and promotion of Venturing outdoor program events. Make sure crew officers and advisors understand how these events and advancement can connect.

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- The ideas concerning involvement with camporees also apply to the winter Klondike derbies and other similar events. Be actively involved in the planning and promotion of these activities so that advancement will be a natural part of them and units will be fully aware of the resources available.

All of these activities will make the outdoor programs more meaningful for the youth, and they will remain in Scouting longer. This gives us more opportunities to influence their character, citizenship, and fitness – isn't that what we're all about?

Editor's Note

Editor Note: This article referenced was written before girls were introduced into Scouting programs. Therefore, minor modifications to the original article have been made to reflect gender references. The terminology Scouts BSA has been substituted for all references to Boy Scouts. As always, refer to the *Guide to Advancement* for all current requirements.

Helpful Links

The most current materials of interest for Scouters who are involved in the administration of advancement are located in one handy place. Many resources are available via the Advancement Resources page at www.scouting.org/Advancement

Merit Badge Group Instruction Guide—A Guide for Units, Districts, and Councils



During the past year, Scouters and Scouts have benefitted from the use of technology to continue effectively presenting many merit badge opportunities for Scouts. This document was produced for just such a scenario. As the return to in-person instruction is on the horizon, it is a good opportunity to review the many suggestions and planning hints that will make units, districts, and councils shine with their offerings.

The section on “Planning a Merit Badge Event” includes factors to evaluate in the event planning, facilities and materials needed, identifying counselors and receiving council approval. Other highlights cover registration, record keeping and importantly setting expectations in advance.

Review of the event involves evaluating with feedback from Scouts, merit badge counselors and the unit interpretations of the quality of the event. Starting with questions of “what worked” and “what didn't work” will lead the organizers of the event to look at how to improve the experience for the Scouts.

After a well-planned merit badge event with careful follow up evaluation, the next event will provide additional personal learning opportunities for the next group of Scouts to participate.