

## The FINAL Edition - Advancement News

When *Advancement News* was introduced many years ago, the *Guide to Advancement* was a new resource, and the availability of Facebook support groups was minimal. Over the years, with the current increased presence of effective and monitored BSA support pages, the sharing of Scouting information is immediate and provides ease of retrieval for distribution to others.

This final edition is comprised of articles reflecting ideas of importance prior to the 2024 Cub Scout program releases just around the corner, plus includes the close out of several topics that have been explored during recent issues. The story of the origin of Advancement News is also included along with links to current Scouting resources of interest for all Scouters involved in advancement.

Over the years, numerous authors from across the spectrum of volunteer positions within the BSA programs have given their time, energy, and expertise to share information with the readers of *Advancement News*. On behalf of those dedicated volunteers, thank you for letting us be a part of your Scouting journeys for the benefit of youth.

> Yours in Scouting, Cheri Pepka Coordinator Advancement News

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## The Story of Advancement News-In The Beginning

By Christopher Hunt

"Advancement News" began not as the informative tool it has become, but as a method to collect names and email addresses of Scouters interested in advancement. I was never a fan of the old Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures manual, last printed in 2008. It was incomplete and designed for the limited market of district and council advancement chairs. My primary concern, however, were the internal conflicts different answers to the same questions, depending where in the book one looked.

When I accepted the position as national director for the advancement program, my first assignment was to produce a new manual. I feared the expectation would be for a quick fix to a booklet that had been in use for decades—that major changes would be frowned upon. To my surprise BSA management agreed to my parameters and objectives: First, the new manual must be a complete rewrite. It must meet not only the needs of district and council advancement chairs, but also those of unit advancement administrators and Scouts and parents. Finally, we must take our time and get it right—no tight deadlines. Completing the project—the GTA, the Eagle workbook, and *Advancement News*—took 18 months.

Feedback became essential. How else could I identify the various needs of the wider market? Out of this necessity was born *Advancement News*. We had an email list of several hundred past council advancement chairs. I started with that, sending out the first edition in October 2011. Response was tremendous. Scouters from all over the country wanted to be added to the list. Subscriptions leapt into the thousands over the next few years. That first issue of *The News* introduced the new *Guide to Advancement* and the *Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook,* along with other articles including the Chess Merit Badge rollout, advice on increasing advancement, and how the Eagle Scout rank appeals process works.

Most important to me, however, was the regular piece called "What Do You Think?" In every edition I featured survey questions. The answers were important to the newly forming National Advancement Committee. They also included names and email addresses of Scouters interested enough to respond!

Thus began my prospect list for volunteers who could tell us what we should include in *Advancement News* and provide feedback on *Guide to Advancement* revisions. After just a few years I had a cadre of 250 unit, district, and council volunteers we could call on to form task forces to study and recommend changes and clarifications. The idea was to decrease the distance between "us" and "them." I think we did that.

The most important indicator for success was the number of phone calls to my office. Before releasing the GTA, I spent most of my day on the phone answering questions that could be easily covered in a comprehensive guide written with the users in mind. During the year after publication, phone calls dropped off dramatically to the point where I could spend most of my days working on improvements to the overall program.

Advancement News was a tremendous help.

#### Continued from page 2

I produced the first two issues of *Advancement News* without assistance. After that, volunteers joined in the project to submit articles, prepare surveys, and eventually take over the entire process. It was a classic example of allowing quality volunteers to lead and support a complicated process with stunning results.

It's time to say farewell to *Advancement News*. But let us recommend an alternative source for answers, besides the myriad of Scouting advice blogs, you can tap into the Facebook site, BSA Advancement Chairs. You can post questions and comments there and other members respond. I've monitored it for several months and can recommend it as a reliable source. If by chance any posted answers are off the mark, it never fails that another member will set the record straight with the appropriate GTA topic number and quote. It's a joy to watch.

## From the Guide to Advancement

## **Personal Growth**

It's not just good results this weekend or by the end of the month that we're aiming for but good results for years to come. We're aiming to develop these characteristics in the parents of our grandchildren. We also learn that the primary goal is personal growth. (GTA 2.0.0.3). It is not that the Scout learned to tie the square knot. The important thing is: has our Scout grown as a person? Are our Scouts incorporating the Ideals of Scouting in their daily lives?



On their first campout one of our Scouts volunteered to say Grace at Sunday breakfast.

Lord, thank you for the food we are about to eat. Thank you for keeping us safe. And thank you for the fun we had this weekend.

#### Amen

It had been a cold and damp fall weekend. This Scout already knows that a Scout is Reverent! Personal growth for our new Scout was that he learned that in spite of the weather he had a good time. He had a fun time. He learned that a Scout is Cheerful! (Daley, *The Commissioner's Corner*, 2007, "Bryan's Prayer", p105) This is what personal growth looks like.

#### Guide to Advancement - The Aims of Scouting

Every Scouting activity moves young people toward the basic aims of character development, citizenship training, leadership, and mental and physical fitness.

#### Continued from page 3

An older Scout, a veteran of many troop campouts, feels comfortable helping a new Scout prepare a meal — A Scout is Friendly. At home the same Scout, much to the surprise of the parental units, jumps in to help prepare the family evening meal. A Scout is Helpful! This is personal growth.

There was an accident at camp with minor injuries. One Scout grabs the first aid kit and confidently starts to treat the wounds. This is personal growth.

An older Scout, as Senior Patrol leader, arrives at camp, briefcase in hand with all the troop's paperwork, confidently ready to check the troop in. This is personal growth.

Personal growth is not one size fits all. We all start at different places, and we grow at different rates. The important thing is that our unit program is challenging enough so that there are opportunities for all to achieve personal growth. One Scout may not feel confident in one situation where another does feel confident. The important thing is that both are progressing.

Make sure that your unit's program has opportunities for personal growth for all the youth. In this way we will achieve our aims. Now isn't that what we're all about?

The Commissioner's Corner: A Collection of Inspirational Essays Paperback – November 29, 2007 By <u>F. Darnall Daley Jr.</u> (Author)

## **On Increasing Advancement**

#### **Positions of Responsibility – Scribe**

In this series of articles, we have been sharing the linkage between the Scouting Aim of leadership development and the Scouting method of advancement via youth positions of responsibility.

All the positions of responsibility listed in the requirements for Star, Life, and Eagle help a Scout to help others in various ways. Including this one – the scribe.

As we find in "Troop Leader Resources" on Scouting.org and in the Scouts BSA Handbook, the scribe is the troop's secretary. Though not a voting member, they attend meetings of the patrol leaders' council and keep a record of the discussions. They cooperate with the patrol scribes to record attendance and dues payments at troop meetings and to maintain troop advancement records. The troop scribe may be assisted by a member of the troop committee.





#### **Responsibilities:**

- Attends and keeps a log of patrol leaders' council meetings
- Records individual Scout attendance and dues payments
- Records individual Scout advancement progress
- Works with the troop committee member responsible for records and finance
- Sets a good example
- Wears the Scout uniform correctly
- Lives by the Scout Oath and Law
- Shows Scout Spirit

By keeping, and sharing, a log of what occurs at the patrol leaders' council meetings, the scribe helps the members remember commitments they made in the meeting and upcoming plans of the troop. This helps keep the troop on track.

A good scribe who maintains accurate advancement records helps the youth leaders of the troop, and the adult leadership, help all the troop's Scouts advance. There are many stories of troop scribes who reminded a Scout of timing issues (those three-month merit badges for example) or that a Scout was close to that next rank. Also, reminding Scouts of rank requirement changes when they come up!

Think about the scribe's duties relating to summer camp. The scribe notes what activities the troop will compete in, getting the word out for changes, and then the all-important reminders when the troop returns home. And the important tasks of recording advancement completed at camp and managing those merit badge cards completed, and not completed.

Of course, it takes a good funding plan to operate a troop. The scribe's role in working with patrol scribes and adult leaders in keeping track of dues and other payments is critical.

As always, never forget the <u>Guide to Safe Scouting</u> when the scribe is working with troop adults and youth.

As you can see, the Scout who carries out this role will learn, or improve, skills that will be an asset in business, family, and life in general.

We encourage you to use this important position of responsibility to give your Scouts more leadership experience, to keep them engaged in the troop, to help them and other Scouts advance, and to strengthen your troop.

Take a look at <u>https://troopleader.scouting.org/scribe/</u> for a brief orientation on the role of the scribe.

### Positions of Responsibility – Historian

The historian collects, assembles, and preserves troop photographs, news stories, trophies, flags, scrapbooks, awards, and other memorabilia, and makes materials available for Scouting activities, courts of honor, the media, and troop history projects.

#### Responsibilities

- gathers photos and facts about troop activities and keeps them in a historical file or scrapbook
- takes care of troop trophies, ribbons, and souvenirs of troop activities
- keeps information about former members of the troop
- sets a good example
- wears the Scout uniform correctly
- lives by the Scout Oath and Law
- shows Scout spirit

The troop historian can be instrumental in promoting pride in troop membership. Finding out that the current mayor of your town was once a member of your troop can bring a marked interest in the way Scouting can influence your community.

More information, including a brief orientation on the role of the historian, may be found at <u>https://troopleader.scouting.org/historian/</u>

### Positions of Responsibility –Librarian

Troop librarians oversee the care and use of troop books, pamphlets, magazines, audiovisuals, and merit badge counselor lists. They check out these materials to Scouts and leaders and maintain records to ensure that everything is returned. They may also suggest the acquisition of new literature and report the need to repair or replace any current holdings.

#### Responsibilities

- sets up and takes care of the troop library
- keeps records of books and pamphlets owned by the troop
- adds new or replacement items as needed
- keeps books and pamphlets available for borrowing
- keeps a system for checking books and pamphlets in and out, and follows up on late returns
- sets a good example
- wears the Scout uniform correctly
- lives by the Scout Oath and Law
- shows Scout spirit

Further helpful information will be found at <u>https://troopleader.scouting.org/librarian/</u> including a brief orientation on the role of the librarian.





# **Cub Scouts**

## Mixed Gender Dens Can Provide Advancement Flexibility



#### **Mixed Gender Dens Can Provide Advancement Flexibility**

Cub Scout advancement is done through the den structure, ideally, a group of 6-8 scouts in the same grade working on a program year of June 1<sup>st</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup>. Previously Packs, a group of dens, may have dens constructed of single-gender scouts. If they are a Family Pack they may have singlegender dens of either boys or girls. After a successful year-long pilot program with data showing both membership and net promoter scores went up significantly above those Packs not participating, as of June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 there is now a third option. If they are **Family Packs, they may now have the option of mixed gender dens, K – 4<sup>th</sup> grade**. Fifth-grade Cub Scouts will need to re-form into single-gender dens to prepare them to advance into single-gender Scouts BSA. YPT guidelines should be followed as always for any Packs and would not change due to this added option. This will allow Packs and Chartered Organizations the flexibility they need to provide the program and handle advancement in the way that works best for them.

**Pack flexibility to deliver the Cub Program is key to successful advancement**. Some Packs may need multiple options based on their demographics, leadership, and chartered organization needs. This may mean that a single Pack can have girl dens, boy dens, and mixed gender dens all in the same Pack, whatever is needed to provide a successful advancement program and change lives.

It is also possible to have flexibility within a den. This happens when a Pack may have either too many or not enough Scouts in a few grades and they then need to combine them into a multi-grade den to complete advancement. So within a Pack, you could have a den of 3rd grade Bears boys, a den of 3rd grade Bear girls, and a multi-gender den of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Wolves and Bears because there weren't enough Scouts to form a second den of either grade. Smaller Packs can have this need also due to the opposite issue with size, they don't have enough Scouts to form any separate dens. Flexibility is possible within all den needs and should be supported to provide a quality program that advances each grade and has a strong impact on youth lives.

For further information see the Cub Chat Live broadcast on this topic for June 23, 2023. <u>https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/cubchatlive/</u>

### Cub Scout Program Updates—Available Now

The Cub Scout program will be updated for the 2024-2025 program year. This was announced November 9, 2023. The link below will take you to the announcement, which includes a graphic explaining the Cub Scout Badges of Rank Requirements.

Cub Scout Program Updates Announced | Boy Scouts of America (scouting.org) Cub Scouts Program Updates Archives | Boy Scouts of America (scouting.org)

# Eagle, Summit, Quartermaster Highlights

### **Eagle Scout Alternative Merit Badge Process**

Many advancement administrators come across issues related to merit badges required for Eagle Scout Rank. There are times when a Scout is unable to complete all the requirements for a specific Eagle Required badge, so will need a substitute. There is a process for this (*Guide to Advancement:* Section 10.2.2.1). Merit badges can only be substituted one on one – requirements within a merit badge cannot be changed. For example, if a Scout can't earn 'Camping', they can petition to earn another merit badge instead. Policy states they should complete as many requirements as they can, then petition for the substitution. This substitute merit badge cannot be one that they have already earned.

See GTA Section 10.2.2 – How to apply for Alternative Requirements

See also: GTA Section 10.2.2.3 Alternative Merit Badges for Eagle Scout Rank. This section details information required for the <u>Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Merit Badges</u>

> "Though individual requirements for merit badges may not be modified or substituted, youth with special needs may request approval for alternative badges they can complete. This is allowable on the basis of one entire badge for another."

> > Guide to Advancement 10.2.2.3

### About Advancement News

Advancement News served as the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America National Advancement Program Team. Its intent was 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. This is the final edition.

# Sea Scouts

### Able: Advancement Review

Our series on Sea Scout advancements concludes this month – first was the Apprentice rank, followed by Ordinary, then Able and finally Quartermaster. Always verify the most current rank requirements as found at Sea Scout Rank Requirements.



Next for review is Able rank.

 1a Organize and conduct two important opening and closing ceremonies for the ship. Most activities for Sea Scouts are expected to be on the water. But Scouts cannot bring a boat into a chartering organization's formal room. So, Sea Scouts use what has been in place for 200-plus years – a land ship. Rope (called rope on land and line at sea) is placed around the room in stations. Seats are placed inside the roped-off area (or lined off), and the ceremony takes place in what looks like the outline of a boat.

1b. Explain how our nation's maritime industry has contributed to our way of life.

• 2. Active membership

2a Meet the ship's by-law requirements for active participation for six months.

- 2b Prepare and present a program on Sea Scouts for a Scouts BSA troop, Venturing crew, Venturing Officers' Association meeting, school class or other youth group.
- 3. Leadership Either serve and fulfill the responsibilities of a crew leader or a ship's elected officer, or serve as an activity chair for two major events.
- 4. Swimming Pass all requirements for the BSA's Lifesaving merit badge.
- 5. Safety Among other things, extinguish a fire with the proper fire extinguishers, be certified for standard First Aid, use a customized vessel safety check, and complete official certification of CPR.
- 6. Marlinspike is another way to say work with line on a vessel, usually with knots. There are specific knots Sea Scouts have to demonstrate.
- 7. Boat handling know how to operate a small boat with a motor and how to secure it to a wharf.
- 8. There also are areas for navigation, piloting, seamanship, environment, weather and earning the Long Cruise badge (think summer camp on water). These are all areas covered in the Ordinary rank, but require more skill for the Able rank. And there are electives that are required, just as there are in every Sea Scout rank.

When Scouts are finished with this rank, they will be well prepared for safe and fun experiences on the water.

### **Quartermaster: Advancement Review**

The top rank in Sea Scouts is the Quartermaster. It is considered on the same level with the Eagle Scout rank, as requires a project that has to be approved by the District Advancement Chairman.

Some are at first confused, as Troops have a quartermaster, who is in charge of equipment. The Quartermaster Rank is much different. It is the fourth of four ranks for Sea Scouts – Apprentice, Ordinary, Able and then Quartermaster.

While an Able Scout, a youth must plan, develop and demonstrate leadership with a service project. Sound familiar? (Hint: It's just like an Eagle Project.)

The youth must use the Quartermaster Leadership Service Project Workbook, which is different from the Eagle Scout Project Book. Even though some projects for both can be similar. If you also are working on your Eagle, you cannot use the same project for Scouts BSA and for Sea Scouts.

Another thing that is different from Scouts BSA is the Quartermaster Cruise. The youth must take command of a sailing vessel with a crew of at least four youths. The youths must be on the water for at least 80 hours, and cover two nights. What was taught previously in other ranks apply here: make a float plan (which tells others when you are supposed to be where so the group will be accounted for), supervise menus; and maintain course with commands to the helmsman. During the cruise, the youth must supervise a man-overboard drill, damage control, abandon ship, fire, collision and other drills.

Recent updates mean that a youth can use paddlecraft – such as canoes and kayaks – instead of a sailboat. There has to be at least four paddlecraft for two days. Menus must be made in advance, but other things apply differently as paddlecraft will not have the same challenges as sailboats.

Another Quartermaster requirement is to complete the requirements for Lifeguard through the BSA, the American Red Cross or another approved organization's program. Being a Lifeguard means you are eligible to run a Swim Test for troops that might need such tests in the spring to prepare for summer camps.

Other requirements are similar to requirement for previous Sea Scout ranks, but are somewhat harder. These are Safety, Marlinspike (knots), Boat Handling, Ground Tackle, Navigation Rules, Piloting, learning about Weather and Environment. Like the other ranks, there are Electives that must be earned. But Electives cut across multiple ways of being on the water because some Sea Scout ships are in land-locked cities and there are electives more suitable for those situations. A lot of the Electives and Quartermaster requirements are to teach other youths, which continues the sneaky way the BSA has providing leadership training to teenagers.

One of the Electives is to join the U.S. Coast Guard Flotilla near you. Sea Scouts is the official youth organization for the Coast Guard Auxiliary, which accepts qualified Sea Scout youths. Joining the Coast Guard is a way to look at working in the maritime industry, after graduating from school.

# Worth Repeating

## From the Guide to Advancement The GTA: Your Best Advancement "Compass"

### July-August 2016

You have read your Scout's handbook cover to cover. You have spoken with a number of folks in your unit and district. Yet, you still have more than a few questions: What is the difference between a "rank" and an "award"? What does "tenure" really mean? How do we manage the requirement that a Scout be "active"? You have these, and countless more questions to which everyone but you seem to know the answers.

No one comes to Scouting knowing all of the answers. However, whether you are a new Scout parent, Scoutmaster, Cubmaster, Skipper, committee member or chair, or your unit's advancement coordinator, or even a member of a district or council level advancement committee, the BSA's <u>Guide To Advancement</u> (or "GTA" for short) is the best place to look for them.

The GTA is indeed a guide. Yes, it does contain Scouting's "rules" for advancement, across all youth programs, but it provides much more than that. For example, it provides insights into why the rules are as they are, as well as assistance about how to assess a youth's correct completion of requirements.

The GTA is organized into 11 easy-to-find sections and includes an appendix of useful forms. The GTA's contents cover all aspects of the advancement process, from "Advancement Defined" to "The Mechanics of Advancement" to "The Eagle Scout Rank" to "Advancement for Members with Special Needs." To help you navigate the full spectrum of advancement related topics, each section is further subdivided by topic. For example, in Section 5—Special Considerations, you will find: Advancement in Camp Settings, Extended Absence from Scouting, Lone Scouting, Using Technology-Based Tools, and other topics.

Whether the GTA is an old friend or it is the first time you have opened its pages, be sure to start in Section 1 -Introduction. There, under topic 1.0.3.0: Significant Changes, you will find a listing of the latest changes that the current edition addresses.

Although the GTA is an advancement resource that is always at your fingertips online (www.scouting.org/ advancement), note that an investment of \$14.99 for a printed copy of this book (SKU 656834) in which you can write your own notes, underline or highlight sections of text, or insert a fistful of "yellow stickies." When it comes to finding the answers you are seeking, or when you are helping someone else, the purchase of your very own hard copy of the GTA from your local Scout shop or via <u>www.scoutstuff.org</u> may prove to be worth many times its purchase price.

# **Editor's Note**

Editor Note: This article referenced was written before girls were introduced into Scouting programs. Therefore, minor modifications to the original article may have been made to reflect gender references.

- The terminology ScoutsBSA has been substituted for all references to Boy Scouts.
- Cub Scout Adventures reflect the use of appropriate capitalization.
- Information was updated to reflect the current edition and updated for current pricing
- The online version is updated as program changes are added. Thus, the most current and official version of the *Guide* to Advancement (33088.pdf) can be accessed at <u>www.scouting.org/advancement</u>.

# **Helpful Links**

The most current materials of interest for Scouters who are involved in the administration of advancement are located in one handy place, the Advancement Resources page at <a href="https://www.scouting.org/Advancement">www.scouting.org/Advancement</a>.

Please also note that the information found in each *Advancement News* and the online version of *Guide to Advancement* supersedes any previous versions.

### <u>Reporting Merit Badge Coun-</u> <u>seling Concerns</u> No. 518-80

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Use this form to report to your council advancemen group instruction events such as tairs, clinics, work internation of the advancement committee as meth follow up on specific cases.	shops, in camp settings, or	by individual counselors. N	ote that reports are primarily for the
Prior to submitting to your council advancement	t committee:		
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This form is used to report to your council advancement committee questionable processes or procedures discovered in merit badge counseling at group instruction events such as fairs, clinics, workshops, in camp settings, or by individual counselors. Note that reports are primarily for the information of the advancement committees as methods in improve the merit badge program are considered, however, committees may elect to follow up on specific cases.



# **Online resources supporting Scouters involved in advancement**

Advancement News may have reached its end, however the need for advancement information and clarification of issues continues. These additional resources are updated regularly and will provide an abundance of support information to explore and share with other Scouters.

#### 2024 advancement Updates

https://www.scouting.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Advancement-Program-Updates-2024.pdf <u>Cub Scouts Program Updates Archives | Boy Scouts of America (scouting.org)</u> <u>Scouts BSA Program Updates Archives | Boy Scouts of America (scouting.org)</u> <u>Sea Scouts Program Updates Archives | Boy Scouts of America (scouting.org)</u>



BSA Advancement Chairs | Facebook

BSA Advancement chairs on Facebook . This is an informative group that responds to questions and concerns of individuals across the country. Recent posts have discussed the Eagle Palm application, specifics related to the Cycling Merit Badge, individuals who may serve on a Board of Review , and much, much, more.

Cub Chat Live program provides item of interest for those involved in the Cub Scout program. Recently the focus centers around the program updates. Past sessions have included planning for Pinewood Derby , Yo-Yos and highlighting working with Cub Scouts who have special needs or disabilities.



Join us Fridays for #CubChatLive! (scoutingmagazine.org)



Official Newsroom of the BSA | Boy Scout News (scoutingnewsroom.org)

The Official Newsroom of the Boy Scouts of America, your source for Boy Scout news, announcements, and information.



Scouting Wire: newsletter@email.scoutingwire.org. Readers can select their role in Scouting to receive the most pertinent information for them!



No Scout Left Behind: A Guide to Working with Scouts with Disabilities

No Scout Left Behind: A Guide to Working with Scouts with Disabilities | Facebook



Review suggestions about the best information that district and council advancement chairs will want to access as they share at your local roundtables

Roundtable Commissioners (BSA) - Official | Groups | Facebook