

Advancement Updates 2026

As of January 1, 2026 the following changes to Scouts BSA requirements become effective



RANK ADVANCEMENTS

None

MERIT BADGES WITH SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO CONTENT ARE:

- Archaeology** – updated with new career requirement (9)
- Athletics** – no physical exam required; new career requirement (2a,b,c) (3b,c,d) (4a,b) (5Gh) (7)
- Automotive Maintenance** – clarifications in electric motors and brake systems (1c) (2a) (10b)
- Bird Study** – expanded requirements and updated with new Leave No Trace and career requirements (4) (9e) (10c) (12) (13a,b)
- Canoeing** – refers to swimmer test, now in Swimming merit badge pamphlet (2)
- Chess** – major reorganization and expanded requirements to include researching a famous chess player; includes captures, more chess openings; Légal Mate, chess traps; clock management; explanation of tournaments (1b) (2a,b,c) (3c,d) (4c,d) (5a,b,c,d,e) (6) (7a,b,c)
- Citizenship in the Community*** – now a checkable list (2a)
- Citizenship in the Nation*** – expanded to use any correspondence method, like email (8)
- Citizenship in the World*** – updated agencies; expanded visits to WOSM, JOTA, JOTI (6b) (7d)
- Coin Collecting** – date corrections in listed coins (4d,f)
- Composite Materials** – updated with new career requirement (6a,b)
- Cycling*** – corrected wording to include gear discussion and wording in techniques for hills (3) (6B1c)
- Digital Technology** – expanded to include RFIDs; updated with new career requirement (4d) (9a,b)
- Emergency Preparedness*** – moved First Aid to last requirement to emphasize it's not a prerequisite (requirements moved, unchanged)
- Engineering** – updated with new career requirement (9)
- Exploration** – expanded Outdoor Ethics discussion; updated with new career requirement (8b) (9a,b)
- Family Life** – Updated wording on growing up process discussion (6b3)
- Fishing** – not required to eat the fish is now a note (10)
- Fly Fishing** – fish should be caught using fly-fishing method (9)(10)
- Forestry** – includes past logging operations in visit, includes option for reviewing hazardous tree report; limits scope of inventory area; checkable list (5b) (6a,b)
- Geology** – adds igneous and intrusive rocks; adds Outdoor Ethics discussion; updated with new career requirement, renumbered (3) (4A,B,C,D) (5a,b) (6a,b)
- Graphic Arts** – reworded to remove redundancy (3) (5a) (6d)
- Home Repairs** – updated to more common repairs; expand to include turning off main water source before plumbing repairs; adds career/hobby requirement (2d,e,f) (5) (6d,e,h) (7a,b)
- Horsemanship** – adds career/hobby requirement (12a,b)
- Inventing** – includes invention of process, expanded to any adult who has invented something (2a)
- Journalism** – adds online article option; updated with new career requirement (2AB) (3a) (5)
- Kayaking** – refers to swimmer test, now in Swimming merit badge pamphlet (2)
- Law** – added flexibility in law enforcement discussion and mock trial attendees (4) (6b)
- Lifesaving*** – explicitly lists several common drowning situations (3a)
- Mammal Study** – decreased size of site area; adds Outdoor Ethics discussion; updated with new career requirement (3b) (6) (7a,b)
- Mining in Society** – updated with new career requirement (8)
- Model Design and Building** – expanded and updated (1a,b,c) (2a,b,c) (3a,b,c,d,e) (4a,b,c,d,e) (5a,b,c,d) (6)
- Motorboating** – removes CPR and adds Safety Afloat; refers to swimmer test, now in Swimming merit badge pamphlet (1c) (2a)
- Moviemaking** – removed videotape; updated with new career requirement (2d) (4a,b)
- Multisport** – no physical exam required; checkable list; formats restated as options (2a) (4A,B,C,D) (7a,b,c,d)
- Music** – updated with career/hobby requirement (6a,b)
- Nuclear Science** – clarification and rewording; how a particle accelerator works: updated with new career requirement (1b,e) (3a,b) (4a) (5c) (6b) (7) (8a,b)
- Oceanography** – includes rip currents (3a,b,c,d)
- Painting** – updated with new career/hobby requirement (8a,b)

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Personal Fitness* – expanded requirements to include MESH (mental, emotional, social health) terminology; removes required physical examination; establishes meaningful measures; accessible for wheelchair-bound and other physically challenged Scouts; counselor does not have to witness testing; requirement to show improvement in each test category is eliminated and an honest discussion with counselor about results and insights substituted; includes career/ healthy lifestyle

requirement (1a,b,c,d,e) (2a,b) (3a,b,c,d,e,f,g) (4a,b,c) (5a,b,c,d) (6a,b,c,d,e,f) (7a,b) (8a,b)

Pets – removed requirement to start a friend raising a pet like yours; added career/hobby requirement (4b) (5a,b)

Plant Science – updated with new career/hobby requirement; added Outdoor Ethics (7a,b) (8C6b3,C6c3,C6e3) (9)

Programming – updated with new career/hobby requirement (6a,b)

Public Health – clarification; added federal public health agency in visit (1a,b,c,d) (7a)

Radio – expanded and updated requirements to include cell phones, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, fiber optics, RFID, Family Radio Service and General Mobile Radio Service Walkie Talkies; updated career/hobby requirement (1a,b,c) (2a,b) (3a,b,c) (4a,b,c,d) (5b,c,e) (6a,b,c) (7a,b,c,d,e) (8A6,E1,E2,E3) (9a,b)

Reading – rewording for clarification; updated with new career/hobby requirement (1b,e) (3a) (7)

Robotics – updated with new career/hobby requirement (7a,b)

Rowing – refers to swimmer test, now in Swimming merit badge pamphlet (2)

Safety – expanded requirements to include safety from crime; safety in public spaces; safeguarding youth, safety from assault; online safety; travel safety; updated with new career/hobby requirement (1a,b) (2a,b,c,d,e,f) (3a,b) (4a,b,c,d) (5a,b,) (6a,b,c) (7a,b,c,d,e,f) (8a,b,c,d,e,f) (9a,b)

Scouting Heritage – added three more biographical options; history of unit, council, summer camp or Order of the Arrow lodge; new career/hobby requirement (2a) (5) (9a,b)

Sculpture – updated with new career/hobby requirement (3a,b)

Search and Rescue – reorganization and update to include: Field Pack instead of Ready Pack; including Trip Plan and signaling for getting found; added USNG coordinates; new career/hobby requirement (1a,b,c) (2a,b,c,d,,e) (3a,b,c,d) (4a,b) (5a,b,c) (6a,b,c,d,e) (7a,b,c,d,e) (8a,b)

Signs, Signals and Codes – clarification (4a,b,c)

Skating – Roller skating specifies distance to dribble a basket ball or push a hockey stick; Skateboarding safety gear and rules updated and updated tricks

(2A1,A4,B1,B2,B3,B12,B13,C1,C2,C3,C4,D1,D2,D3,D4,D5,D6,D7,D8,D9,D10,D11,D12,D13,D14)

Small-Boat Sailing – refers to swimmer test, now in Swimming merit badge pamphlet (2)

Snow Sports – refers to Your Responsibility Code in use at your location; Cross country added important safety rules and adaptive option for tour length; Snowshoeing adds adaptive option for tour length; Snowboarding specifies types of trails; (6a) (7A9,B2,B10,D9)

Space Exploration – updated with new career requirement (8)

Surveying – updated with new career requirement (8)

Swimming* – refers to swimmer test, now in Swimming merit badge pamphlet; explicitly lists several common drowning situations (1a) (2)

Traffic Safety – expanded to include distracted driving, child safety seats, flat tire management; new topics related to highway designs and traffic safety; blind spots; updated career requirement (1a,b,c,d) (2a) (3a,b,c,d,e) (4a,b,c,d) (5a,b) (6a,b,c,d) (8)

Truck Transportation – updated with new career requirement (10)

Veterinary Medicine – removed report writing, updated career requirement (3) (4) (5) (6a,b) (7a,b,c,d,e)

Water Sports – refers to swimmer test, now in Swimming merit badge pamphlet (3)

Weather – added identifying weather forecasts to prepare for outdoor activities; updated to new career/hobby requirement, renumbering. (3) (12)

Whitewater – now a checkable list (2c)

Wilderness Survival – expanded and reordered to include Scout Essentials list, more hazards, new career/hobby option (1a,b,c) (2) (4) (5a,b,c,d,e) (7a,c) (10a,b)

The current merit badge requirements are found at <https://www.scouting.org/skills/meritbadges/>

"" indicates Eagle required meritbadge

The Guide to Advancement Section 7.0.4.3 addresses what to do when merit badge requirements change and Section 4.0.0.1 addresses changes to rank requirements. This can be found at <https://www.scouting.org/resources/guide-to-advancement/> .