

Advancement Overview

From the 2015 Guide to Advancement, this is online at www.scouting.org

Advancement is simply a means to an end, not an end in itself. It is one of several methods designed to help unit leadership carry out the aims and mission of the Boy Scouts of America.

Everything done to advance—to earn ranks and other awards and recognition—is designed to educate or to otherwise expand horizons. Members learn and develop according to a standard. This is the case from the time a member joins and then moves through the programs of Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing or Sea Scouts.

Experiential learning is the key: Exciting and meaningful activities are offered, and education *happens*. Learning comes from doing.

Advancement should be a natural outcome of a well-rounded unit program, rich in opportunities to work toward the ranks.

Scouting skills—what a young person learns to do—are important, but not as important as the primary goal of *personal growth* achieved through participating in a unit program. The concern is for total, well-rounded development.

3.0.0.3 Unit Advancement Responsibilities

Unit advancement coordinators and those who assist them have the basic responsibility to support the unit's advancement program, to maximize rank achievement, and otherwise facilitate a smooth implementation of the process. Specific responsibilities are outlined in the leader literature for each program. The following responsibilities are not all-inclusive, but typical.

1. Support and facilitate the unit leader's vision for advancement, providing consultation on the policies and procedures put forth in the *Guide to Advancement*.
2. Educate parents, guardians, unit leadership, and committee members on appropriate methods to stimulate and encourage advancement. For example, help build unit programming rich in advancement opportunities, encourage members who are advancing slowly, and post advancement charts.
3. Help plan, facilitate, or conduct advancement ceremonies. In troops, teams, and crews, schedule and support regular courts of honor—quarterly is generally sufficient. Ships will want regular bridges of honor, and packs should make recognition a key part of every pack meeting.
4. Obtain necessary badges and certificates, etc., and arrange for timely presentation of ranks, adventure belt loops and pins, merit badges, awards, and other recognitions. It is best to obtain and present these as soon as possible after they are earned. They can then be re-presented in more formal settings.
5. Ensure Cub Scouts advance in rank annually by school year's end and are recognized in a meaningful ceremony.
6. Know and understand the advancement procedures for the program served, especially those applicable to Eagle Scout, Summit, and Quartermaster candidates.
7. Assist the unit leader in establishing practices that will provide opportunities for each new Boy Scout to achieve First Class rank within 12 to 18 months of joining, and Star rank soon thereafter.
8. Arrange for timely (monthly suggested) boards of review, and see that youth ready for them are invited.
9. Maintain advancement records and submit reports to the unit committee. It is appropriate in Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, Venturing, and Sea Scouts to involve youth leaders in this process.
10. Use the BSA's Internet portal to report advancement to the local council.
11. Keep a current and accessible copy of the district or council merit badge counselor list. As needed to fill in, develop and maintain a list of unit merit badge counselors. Note that *all* merit badge counselors must be registered as such, annually, and also approved through the council advancement committee.
12. In troops, teams, crews, and ships, work with the unit's youth leadership to maintain a library of advancement literature, such as merit badge pamphlets and the annual *Boy Scout Requirements* book.
13. Learn about other BSA awards and recognition opportunities that may be helpful in delivering a well-rounded unit program. A good resource for this is the *Guide to Awards and Insignia*.