

## Troop 804 Advancements Overview – for Parents

This overview will help you understand the philosophy and procedures for Scout advancement in Troop 804. It is not meant to be the final word on anything, but it is meant to give some guidance so that all our Scouts can achieve their fullest potential.

Advancement is a Scout responsibility. Adult leaders are available to provide advice and encouragement. If a Scout hits a problem with advancement, the adults will try to help the Scout identify his own solution – but the adult will not solve the problem. Likewise, families should support and encourage their Scouts – but should not push.

Scouts advance at their own pace. It is not true that the Scouts who advance most quickly are “most successful.” Achieving the rank of Eagle Scout is a long-term goal, like running a long race, not a sprint. The last thing that any Scout should ever feel is that he is a disappointment to his family or his Troop for not advancing more quickly. The entire Scouting program is designed to give boys a space to learn who they want to be and to create their own expectations.

Scouts advance in stages called ranks: starting with the rank of *Scout*, followed in order by the junior ranks of *Tenderfoot*, *2<sup>nd</sup> Class*, *1<sup>st</sup> Class*, and then the more senior ranks of *Star*, *Life*, and finally *Eagle*. The requirements for the early ranks focus on basic Scout skills (ie. demonstrate the square knot) and get progressively more complex. Once a Scout reaches the rank of *1<sup>st</sup> Class*, advancement focuses more on leadership development and independent study toward *merit badges*, which require concentrated effort in a specific area and are offered in over 100 different disciplines.

The Scout Handbook has detailed descriptions for each requirement along with space for “sign-offs” when each requirement has been completed. In almost all cases, requirements for the junior ranks will be completed by more senior Scouts. Our Troop policy is that sign-offs may be completed only by a Scout that is at least the rank of *Life*. Some requirements may only be signed by designated adult leaders<sup>1</sup>. Unlike Cub Scouts, parents do not sign Boy Scout requirements.

For the junior ranks (*Tenderfoot*, *2<sup>nd</sup> Class*, and *1<sup>st</sup> Class*), Scouts will be helped to learn new skills through “advancement time” at Troop meetings and on camping trips. Often the Scout will be taught the skill by one Scout but will be expected to demonstrate that skill to another Scout in order to get signed off. A Scout should seek out older Scouts to get sign-offs; the process of earning a rank includes learning how to take the initiative for getting sign-offs (and remembering to bring the Scout Handbook to all activities!). The key to success in advancement is setting a goal and taking small but consistent steps toward that goal. Adult leaders will provide reminders and encouragement at each step – but will generally be perfectly

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<sup>1</sup> Tenderfoot: 1, 9, 13, 14, 15      2<sup>nd</sup> Class 1b, 9a, 9b, 11, 12, 13      1<sup>st</sup> Class 5, 11, 12, 13, 14

content if a Scout decides that finishing a specific requirement or rank is not critical right “now”.

For the senior ranks, advancement is a much more independent activity and by this point each Scout is expected to know what needs to be done and how to get help if needed. *Merit badges* are special awards that the Troop will introduce to boys as they get older. In addition to demonstrating advanced skills and earning merit badges, the senior ranks also require a Scout to hold a leadership position in the Troop. There are a large number of such positions available (including Patrol Leader, Troop Scribe, and many others), each requiring a different set of skills and responsibilities. There is a position to fit every boy. The positions are assigned and supervised by the Assistant Senior Patrol Leaders (in consultation with the Scoutmaster) and Scouts beginning work on the senior ranks should consult the ASPL to find out about a leadership position.

The last two requirements for nearly all ranks are to complete a Scoutmaster Conference and to attend a Board of Review. The Scoutmaster Conference is simply that: a conference between the Scout and the Scoutmaster to talk about the Scout’s participation in the Troop and to help cement the achievement the Scout is about to complete. The Scoutmaster Conference is also an opportunity to review and assess the Scout’s skills. If a Scout is not prepared for the rank, the Scoutmaster will ask for additional study and practice: we do not think it is in a boy’s best interests to advance to a rank for which he is unqualified. The Board of Review is a session with several of the Troop’s adult leaders to talk about the Scout’s time in the Troop and is designed to review his advancement as well as prepare him for future “interview” situations.

Advancements are awarded at a Court of Honor, which we hold quarterly. The dates of the Courts of Honor are publicized well in advance to give the boys time to prepare.

If your son comes to you with questions about advancement, we suggest you help him review the requirements, and perhaps help him if he is stuck on learning some skill or material – but then encourage him to find an older Scout, such as his Patrol Leader or Troop Guide, for additional help. If you find that an older Scout has put your son off, or has responded inappropriately, please notify the Advancements Chair or the Scoutmaster. We are here to help!

**Do**

- Allow your son to set personal goals
- Encourage your son at his pace
- Remind your son to bring his Handbook to all activities
- Praise your son for success

**Do Not**

- Compare to other Scouts in T804 or other Troops
- Force your son to set ambitious goals for success
- Sign things in the Scout Handbook
- Criticize your son for “failure”

Reminder: We are very proud of all the boys in Troop 804. Of the current group of outstanding leaders and senior Scouts – nobody remembers who advanced very quickly at first, and who instead set a more moderate pace. Our senior Scouts include both!