

# Questions and Answers

Please check the "As of Dates"

## Cub Scouting/Scouts BSA/Venturing/Sea Scouting Rank Advancement and the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The following questions regarding advancement have arisen as we deal with closures, cancellations, or other issues caused by the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Although there are difficulties and constraints, advancement can continue. Youth, parents, and leaders should work together to implement creative, common sense ways to facilitate advancement while adhering to the Guide to Safe Scouting and following the rules of Youth Protection training.

Please follow this link to the [Guide to Advancement \(GTA\)](#), which remains the primary source for information related to Scouts BSA advancement. It is referenced throughout the answers provided here.

Please send additional questions to [advancement.team@scouting.org](mailto:advancement.team@scouting.org)

### **Advancement — Cub Scouts - As of April 20, 2020**

#### **♦ Q: Can the Arrow of Light (fifth-grade dens) requirements fulfill the requirement to visit a troop or attend a troop outing to function as a patrol?**

Yes. Two things to keep in mind, the standard of completion for Cub Scout advancement is "Do Your Best," so given the circumstances, we want to look at the purpose behind the requirements. Remember that doing nothing is never doing your best.

Dens can visit a virtual troop meeting to see the patrol method and youth leadership in action. Since the den cannot attend a troop campout or outing, the idea is for the den to function as a patrol while attending the virtual troop meeting. During this time, a virtual den meeting where the den functions as a patrol can be done. Elect a patrol leader, pick a patrol name, play a virtual game together as a patrol. Plenty of opportunities to Do Your Best to meet the intention of the requirement. Remember to maintain all youth protection standards online.

### **Advancement - Scouts BSA, Venturing & Sea Scouts - As of April 20, 2020**

#### **♦ Q: Can merit badge counseling or Nova/Supernova counseling be done using digital technologies like Zoom or WebEx?**

Yes, registered merit badge counselors or Nova counselors/Supernova mentors may work with youth using digital platforms, ensuring that all youth protection measures noted in the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#) and [BSA's social media guidelines](#) are in place. In addition to youth protection, the advancement guidelines in [Guide to Advancement \(GTA\) Section 7](#) are required.

#### **♦ Q: Are merit badge counselors allowed to provide online instruction?**

Yes. Merit badge counselors should follow the guidelines in the Guide to Advancement 7.0.3.2 and ensure you are adhering to all youth protection requirements and online communications guidelines. It is acceptable—and sometimes preferable—for merit badges to be taught in group settings, including online instruction. We currently allow group instruction at camp and merit badge midways, fairs, clinics,

or similar events. These can be efficient methods, and interactive group discussions can support learning. Gathering a group online can also be beneficial. Guest experts and speakers that assist registered and approved counselors may be more willing to speak to a larger online audience. Slide shows, skits, demonstrations, panels, and various other techniques can also be employed, but as any teacher can attest, not everyone will learn all the material. Therefore, the standards we use to verify that each Scout has fulfilled requirements must not be relaxed. Merit badge counselors must be sure that each Scout has individually gained the knowledge intended. When accomplished, counselors can easily sign off requirements via ScoutBook.

♦ **Q: What changes have been made to rank advancement/camping requirements given the need to maintain social distancing during this time?**

We have implemented temporary changes, detailed below, to allow Scouts to complete rank requirements, detailed below, by video conferencing through September 1, 2020. This deadline will be re-evaluated as needed.

The goal when using video conferencing must be to preserve the ideals and intent of each requirement as best as possible. Scoutmasters or their designee(s) should remain mindful of the Methods of Scouting, such as the Patrol Method, before implementing the modified requirements listed below. Some advancement activities can be completed by video conferencing but not all. For example, virtual visits to a city council meeting, national historic landmarks, museums, and art galleries may be acceptable, but swimming, rifle shooting, and motorboating merit badges cannot be completed virtually.

Even when using video conferencing, all virtual campouts and activities should consist of as many elements found on a normal outdoor campout or activity as possible. The most significant difference is that patrol or troop members are not all in the same location. All existing youth protection policies and digital safety guidelines must be followed.

♦ **Tenderfoot rank requirements**

- 1b. – Virtual patrol or troop campouts via video conferencing will be permitted.
- 2a. – During the same day as your virtual patrol or troop campout, assist in preparing one meal with the help of those with whom you live. Tell your patrol or troop why it was important for each person to share in meal preparation and cleanup.
- 2b. – During the same day as your virtual campout, demonstrate the appropriate method of safely cleaning items used to prepare, serve and eat a meal.
- 5a. – Explain the importance of the buddy system as it relates to your personal safety on outings and in your neighborhood. Verbally commit to following the buddy system on your next troop or patrol outing.
- 7a. – Tell how to display, raise, lower, and fold the U.S. flag.

♦ **Second Class rank requirements:**

- 1a & 1c. – Virtual patrol or troop activities via video conferencing will be permitted.
- 3b. – Using a compass and map together, **plan** a 5-mile hike approved by your adult leader.
- 4. – Evidence of wild animals can be demonstrated with information or photos of your local area found online.
- 5c. – May be completed virtually via video conferencing on dry land.
- 7c. – Learn about the dangers of using drugs, alcohol and tobacco and other practices that could be harmful to your health. Discuss what you learned with your family and explain the dangers of substance addictions. Report to your Scoutmaster or other adult leader in your troop about which parts of the Scout Oath and Scout Law relate to what you learned.
- 8a. – May be completed virtually using video conferencing.

8d. – May be completed by comparing costs at three (3) online sites or locations.

♦ **First Class rank requirements:**

1a – Virtual patrol or troop activities via video conferencing will be permitted.

2e. – On the same day as your virtual campout, serve as the cook. Supervise your assistant(s) in using a stove or building a cooking fire. Prepare the breakfast, lunch, and dinner planned in First Class requirement 2a. Supervise the cleanup.

4a. – By drawing, computer software, or other virtual methods, plan an orienteering course that would cover at least one mile. Explain why measuring the height and/or width of designated items (tree, tower, canyon, ditch, etc.) is helpful. Explain how you would complete your course using a real map and compass.

4b. – Scouts do not need to follow their route.

5a. – Evidence of native plants can be demonstrated with information or photos of your local area found online.

6e. – May be completed on dry land.

9a. – Visit may take place virtually or by phone.

9c. – Outings can include past or future plans.

10. – Invite the potential new member to a **virtual meeting or future activity using video conferencing.**

♦ **Q: Will virtual camping count toward Order of the Arrow nights camping?**

No, virtual camping will not count toward the 15 nights camping required for membership in the Order of the Arrow.

♦ **Q: Can merit badge requirements be adapted since some elements can't be completed as stated right now?**

The published guidelines for the methodology of the merit badge program and the role of the merit badge counselor is found in the [Guide to Advancement](#), Section 7.0.0.0. It is important to remember that leaders and merit badge counselors must not make additions or deletions to requirements. The Scout is expected to meet the requirements as stated; however, in some cases, virtual "visits" may fulfill the intent of a requirement. When the requirement's intent cannot be reached virtually, the requirements cannot be completed, and the Scout must wait to complete that badge/requirement. Merit badge counselors signing off on requirements must determine to the best of their ability if the Scout has demonstrated the intended outcome.

All existing youth protection policies and digital safety guidelines must be followed.

♦ **Q: Does a Scout need a hard copy of a Blue Card when working on merit badges?**

No. Since the introduction of Scoutbook, the BSA has offered Scouts two ways of recording merit badge requirement completion: The Blue Card and Scoutbook. Both remain authorized methods to record merit badge work. Scoutbook is a part of the BSA Internet Advancement system, which means that entering an advancement record in Scoutbook is the same as entering it in Internet Advancement. Anyone with a BSA member ID automatically has access to a Scoutbook account through their my.scouting account.

## **All Scouting Programs *As of March 18, 2020***

### **Q: How can advancement be tracked remotely?**

A: Scouting units should use ScoutBook to record and track advancement.

To track advancement remotely, parents should:

- 1) Connect with their child's member profile via an invitation that the unit leader sends within ScoutBook.
- 2) Once a connection is made, the parent should use the Scouting app, found in both the App Store and Google Play, to stay connected with their unit.
- 3) The Scouting app provides parents the ability to report any advancement that was completed at home.

Go to <https://help.scoutbook.com> to learn more about how to start using ScoutBook and how to connect parents to their Scouts.

## **Cub Scouts *As of March 18, 2020***

### **Q: May parents sign off on Webelos and Arrow of Light requirements?**

A: Yes. Through July 31, 2020, parents and other adults in the Cub Scout's family, may sign off on Webelos and Arrow of Light requirements. We strongly encourage that parents use the Scouting App or ScoutBook to record completion of their child's requirements.

### **Q: If my den is behind in advancement due to COVID-19, can my Cub Scout continue to work on advancement through the summer?**

A: Yes. Cub Scouts can continue to work on their current den's advancement through July 31, 2020. This is to provide any additional time a Cub Scout needs to complete their badge of rank; if they earn their badge of rank prior to July 31, 2020, they may advance to the next rank.

## **Scouts BSA, Venturing and Sea Scouts *As of March 18, 2020***

### **Q: May merit badge requirements or rank requirements be modified?**

A: No. All requirements must be completed as written. If meetings or activities are canceled or limited, youth should continue to work on requirements as far as possible. By employing common sense and creative solutions, many requirements—even Scoutmaster conferences—can be fulfilled through videoconferencing or telephone calls.

### **Q: Can merit badge counseling or Nova/Supernova counseling be done using digital technologies like Zoom or WebEx?**

A: Yes, registered merit badge counselors or Nova counselors/Supernova mentors may work with youth using digital platforms, ensuring that all youth protection measures noted in the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#) and [BSA's social media guidelines](#) are in place. In addition to youth protection, the advancement guidelines in GTA Section 7 are required.

**Q: May time missed due to canceled unit meetings count toward active participation requirements?**

A: Yes. If youth are registered and in good standing, a disruption from COVID-19 virus can be the “noteworthy circumstance” that prevents participation. This policy has been in place for many years and is explained in GTA Topic 4.2.3.1.

**Q: May time missed due to canceled unit meetings count toward position of responsibility requirements?**

A: Yes. If youth are registered and unable to meet the expectations of their positions because of COVID-19 disruptions, then units may need to waive or rethink the expectations. Just as youth must not be held to *unestablished* expectations, they must not be held to expectations that are impossible to fulfill. See GTA Topic 4.2.3.4, “Positions of Responsibility,” with its six subtopics.

**Q: Does the National Council grant extensions of time to complete rank requirements beyond the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday for the Eagle or 21<sup>st</sup> birthday for Summit or Quartermaster?**

A: Yes, but only for the Eagle Scout rank as described in GTA Topic 9.0.4.0 or for Venturing Summit or Sea Scout Quartermaster as described in GTA Topic 4.3.3.0. Unit leadership must become familiar with the five tests under 9.0.4.0. The tests were designed to accommodate such obstacles as those presented by COVID-19 disruptions.

**Q: Will youth who are not yet Life Scouts be allowed to apply for an extension to earn the Eagle Scout rank?**

A. Extensions are considered only for Scouts who are Life rank. If, once a Scout achieves Life rank, it turns out that COVID-19 disruptions along the way have left them with insufficient time to complete Eagle requirements, then this may be cited when the time comes to submit an extension request.

**Q: May local councils grant extensions?**

A: Normally, that is not allowed. However, due to the current situation—effective immediately and through September 30, 2020—council Scout executives may grant extensions, or delegate authority to the Council Advancement Committee to grant extensions under the following limitations:

1. It can be established that COVID-19 disruptions were the only circumstances that delayed work on Eagle Scout/Summit/Quartermaster advancement requirements, such as the service project or merit badges. If any other causes were involved, the extension request must go to the National Council following the process outlined in the GTA.
2. Extensions shall only be granted to youth in Scouts BSA who have already achieved Life rank.
3. When the council receives a COVID-19-related request for a time extension, the council reviews the request and approves it if appropriate. A written response stating the outcome of the extension request must go to the youth. If approved, the notification must be attached to the youth’s Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster rank application. For Eagle, the extension must not exceed 3 months from the youth’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday; for Summit/Quartermaster, the extension must not exceed 3 months from the youth’s 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.
4. Upon turning 18, the Scout must submit a completed adult application and successfully complete YPT; their participant code will now be UP for SBSA or VP for Venturing and Sea Scouting.

5. Extension requests for more than 3 months beyond the youth's 18<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> birthday must be sent to the National Service Center following the process outlined in the GTA.

Note: A "month" in BSA advancement is defined as a day from one month to the next. For example, March 5 to April 5.

The authority for councils to grant extensions is temporary, lasting only through Sept. 30, 2020.

**Q: If youth have already received an extension, can they request additional time due to COVID-19?**

A: Yes. Council Scout executives may grant extensions, or delegate authority to the Council Advancement Committee to grant extensions under the limitations listed above.

**Q: What should be done while an extension request is being considered?**

A: Youth should continue to work on advancement in so far as they are able—e.g., independently, or over the phone or videoconference—and at Scouting activities once they resume.

**Q: Are extensions required when an Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster board of review must be delayed?**

A: No. Councils may grant Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster boards of review up to six months after the youth's 18<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> birthday. See GTA Topic 8.0.3.1, "Eagle Scout Board of Review Beyond the 18th Birthday."

See also, GTA Topic 8.0.1.6, "Boards of Review Through Videoconferencing."

**Q: Are electronic or digital signatures acceptable for rank advancement or for the Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster packets/applications?**

A: Yes. Electronic or digital signatures will be accepted through September 30, 2020.

**Q: How can a youth continue to work on advancement requirements if they don't have internet or high-speed internet for videoconferencing?**

A: Youth may take a picture of their completed activity/requirement and share the work with unit leaders. In keeping with Youth Protection Training policies, all communications from youth should be sent to at least two adults. Parents or guardians may send advancement work on behalf of their child.

## **Minsi Trails Council As of March 18, 2020**

### **Guidelines for Eagle Scout candidates applying for extensions due to COVID-19**

Through September 30, 2020 Councils may grant extensions where it can be established that COVID-19 disruptions were the only circumstances that delayed work on Eagle Scout advancement requirements such as the service project or merit badges. If any other causes were involved, the extension request must go to the National Council following the process outlined in the Guide to Advancement.

Councils may grant up to a maximum 3 month extension after a Scout's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday for COVID-19 causes.

Extension requests may be made by 17 year old Life Scouts that are approaching their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and know or reasonably anticipate that they will reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday without having been able to complete all Eagle rank requirements due to COVID-19 impacts. It is presumed that 16 year old Life Scouts will have sufficient time to complete requirements without need for an extension. A Scout who is just moving to Life rank, and is already within 6 months of turning age 18 cannot use COVID-19 as a reason for granting an extension.

Scouts are encouraged to explore with their troop leadership the following as potential ways by which to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on their progress:

- For Eagle service projects, consider developing a project that does not rely on face to face work by individuals and groups yet still allows the Scout to demonstrate leadership in the execution of the project.
- For merit badges, consider identifying strategies for requirements that may be satisfied by creative alternate means via remote, electronic methods. Such proposals will need to be approved by the respective merit badge counselor in advance.
- For leadership position service in which time is missed due to an absence of unit activities, discuss with troop leadership strategies by which to continue to demonstrate leadership in the position. For positions that are being considered for the six month leadership position requirement, consider those qualifying positions that may lend themselves better to being performed in the current environment.

Please follow these steps when making a request for an extension due to COVID-19 causes:

- As prescribed in the Guide to Advancement, the Scout, the Scout's parent or guardian, the unit leader, or a member of the unit committee may file the request. It is preferred that the request be made in the form of a letter that is signed and dated by the author.
- In consideration of the current situation where Council personnel may be working from home, please scan the letter into a PDF document and attach the PDF to an email or take a photo of the letter and attach that to the email. The email is to be sent to both Stephanie Miller, Council Registrar at [Stephanie.Miller@scouting.org](mailto:Stephanie.Miller@scouting.org) **as well as** the respective District Eagle Chairperson (see next page). In addition, the letter itself is to be mailed to:

Stephanie Miller  
Council Registrar  
Minsi Trails Council  
P.O. Box 20624  
Lehigh Valley, PA 18002

- The letter must include the following:

- The Scout's name, date of birth, unit number, telephone number and email address
- Scoutmaster's name, telephone number and email address
- An explanation of how did COVID-19 make this request necessary including what aspects of the Eagle requirements were or are being impacted.

Please allow up to two weeks for the Council to respond to the request. A letter will be emailed or sent to the Scout with the Council's decision. If approved, a copy of this letter must be included as part of the Scout's Eagle Application when submitted.

### **DISTRICT EAGLE BOARD CHAIRS**

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