

# Advancement News

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Prepared. For Life.®

As programs and opportunities modify over time, your friends at *Advancement News* will continue to be here to share these changes with you and offer insights. *Advancement News* will be uploaded directly to the [Advancement Resources](#) page of Scouting.org. Each bimonthly edition will be found at the [Advancement News](#) page. Since advancement evolves and occasionally changes, please note that the most current information found in *Advancement News* and the online version of [Guide to Advancement](#) supersedes previous versions.

## In This Issue

Please note that the article for Cub Scouts and the Cyber Chip requirement as previously published was incorrect. The information is correct in this edition. The Lion program does NOT have a rank requirement which requires the Protect Yourself Video.

- **From the *Guide to Advancement*:** Trained “Agents” Produce Retained Scouts
- **On Increasing Advancement:** Positions of Responsibility – The Quartermaster
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## Managing Subscriptions to *Advancement News*

*Advancement News* is designed for council and district advancement committees, advancement staff advisors, and Eagle processors. However, any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe. To subscribe to the *Advancement News* announcements, click here: [Subscribe](#)

# From the *Guide to Advancement*

## Trained “Agents” Produce Retained Scouts

In a recent television commercial for a medical alert system the announcer says, “Our agents are all *highly* trained.” Seeing this ad, council advancement chairs might do well to ask themselves, “Are all of our advancement ‘agents’ highly trained?” For example, are the district advancement chairs adequately trained and up to date on all the latest information? Similarly, are the advancement coordinators in each unit trained and up to date on any changes? If not trained or not up to date, do they know where to get help? How about this one: “Are all of our ‘agents’ signed up for *Advancement News*?”



Item #2 of topic 3.0.0.1 of the [Guide to Advancement](#) (GTA) (Council Advancement Committee responsibilities) provides overall guidance on how to ensure the answer to all of those questions is “Yes”:

*“Ensure that all advancement administrators in the council receive periodic, ongoing training to maintain awareness of updated procedures, best practices, and details related to all programs of the Boy Scouts of America—Cub Scouting, Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Sea Scouts.”*

As clearly stated, training does not solely consist of a one-and-done, four-hour series of PowerPoint and video presentations on a Saturday—even if you thoughtfully served donuts and coffee. Training is an ongoing process, which could range from informal broadcast emails making all of your “agents” aware of requirement/procedural changes to inclusion of a 10-to-15-minute agenda item at every monthly advancement committee meeting. A good place for unit-level training is the monthly district roundtable, while a great place for feedback on the effectiveness of your training efforts might be those “meetings-after-the-meetings” that take place leaning against the fender of your car in the parking lot.

Speaking of roundtables, make sure you work to engage the commissioners in getting the word out to all the units about advancement requirements/changes. Reach out to the council commissioner to ask that advancement be an agenda item at the council’s commissioner cabinet meeting to help you get the commissioners involved in getting the word out. Ideally, as is done in some councils now, the council commissioner can appoint an assistant council commissioner for advancement who comes to the council advancement committee meetings and then can carry the latest information about advancement back to the commissioners.

By engaging all of your council’s volunteer resources as a force multiplier, you in effect have expanded your advancement committee! By making sure that you [and all of them](#) are familiar with all of the resources that are available—and all of the updates that have been made—to them, you will have increased the effectiveness of your advancement efforts.

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Here is a quick guide to some of those resources available on the Scouting.org website:

1. Advancement Resources - <https://www.scouting.org/programs/scouts-bsa/advancement-and-awards/resources/>
2. Program Updates - <https://www.scouting.org/topics/program-updates/program-updates-scouts-bsa/>
3. Advancement Educational Presentations - <https://www.scouting.org/programs/scouts-bsa/advancement-and-awards/resources/advancement-presentations/>
4. Are all of your “agents” signed up for the *Advancement News* Newsletter – [sign up found on the front page of each Advancement Newsletter.](#)
5. A great video to start your monthly meeting -  
[https://help.scoutbook.scouting.org/knowledge-base/guardian-at-the-gate?gl=1\\*in15bq\\* ga\\*MjAzODQ4MjEyMi4xNjUzNzU0ODEz\\* ga\\_20G0JHESG4\\*MTY1Mzc1NDgxMy4xLjE uMTY1Mzc1ODkwNC42MA.& ga=2.81690263.1630504874.1653754813-2038482122.1653754813.](https://help.scoutbook.scouting.org/knowledge-base/guardian-at-the-gate?gl=1*in15bq* ga*MjAzODQ4MjEyMi4xNjUzNzU0ODEz* ga_20G0JHESG4*MTY1Mzc1NDgxMy4xLjE uMTY1Mzc1ODkwNC42MA.& ga=2.81690263.1630504874.1653754813-2038482122.1653754813)

The more effective we can make our advancement efforts, the longer the Scouts in our councils, districts, and units will stay in Scouting—and the more chances we will have to help them develop their character and fitness for life. Now isn't that what we are all about?

## On Increasing Advancement

### Positions of Responsibility – The Quartermaster

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

The 2022 Eagle Scout Rank Application lists leadership positions which will fulfill Requirement #4 of the Ea-



gle Scout award, as well as the Star and Life positions of responsibility requirements. Some of these are positions that help a youth advance in Venturing and Sea Scouting. We have also been sharing thoughts on the importance of these positions in the development of a youth via the Scouting program.

In this issue we will share some thoughts on another of those positions of responsibility- the quartermaster.

BSA Troop and Venturing crew quartermasters (or storekeepers in Sea Scout ships, not to be confused with the Quartermaster rank), serve as their units' “supply bosses.” They keep an inventory of unit equipment and see that the gear is in

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good condition. Since this is prime time for camping and using supplies that may have been stored over the winter, there are lots of things to do and learn. Plus, when the camping season is over (if it ever really is!) what do they do with the gear to keep it ready and safe for the next time it will be used? Don't forget props for ceremonies, the U.S. and unit flags, game equipment, cooking gear, ropes, and so much more.

As a unit quartermaster or storekeeper, a Scout will learn the importance, and cost, of maintaining property, keeping an inventory that will be valuable skills throughout their lives. While the organization, cleanliness, and storage of the unit's gear are the core responsibilities of the quartermaster, the position itself is not intended to be a "solo" job.

Quartermasters are meant to be active members of the unit's youth leadership team. At leadership meetings, e.g., the patrol leaders' council, they report on the status of equipment in need of replacement or repair, as well as any needed new or replacement items. In a troop the quartermaster should also give leadership and guidance to patrol quartermasters, helping them learn some of the things the Scout has learned in their troop role, for example, how to work with unit members as they check out equipment and return it.

The quartermaster also plays a key liaison role between the unit's adult leadership and the senior youth leadership – the senior patrol leader, president, or boatswain. Considering the value of a unit's gear, a unit may be inclined to just let the adults take care of the equipment. However, truly "youth-led" units should instead provide their quartermasters with the guidance of a member of the troop committee or a crew/ship advisor. Thus supported, this key role will not only provide the youth with an opportunity to learn skills, but will provide a great place to add them to their personal leadership tool box.

Troop quartermasters can learn more about their role at <https://troopleader.scouting.org/quartermaster/>.



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# Cub Scouts



## Helping Cub Scouts Learn to Protect Themselves



The Boy Scouts of America is committed to creating safe environments for Scouts and leaders. As program planning starts in anticipation of the new program year, pack leaders should be aware of a change in this area that will affect the Tiger, Wolf, Bear, Webelos, and Arrow of Light Cub Scout ranks. **The Lion program does NOT have a rank requirement which requires the Protect Yourself Video.**

Because BSA's supporting partner organization had retired its Cyber Chip, that requirement is being replaced for these ranks. The new set of Adventures called "[Protect Yourself Rules,](#)" was developed in partnership with the Barbara Sinatra Children's Center Foundation.

Child abuse is an uncomfortable topic but an important one to cover to ensure the safety and well-being of our Scouts. The Boy Scouts of America has partnered with the subject-matter experts at [the Foundation to create "Protect Yourself Rules"](#) Adventures that help children recognize, respond to, and report abuse.

Before starting work on this adventure, den leaders should re-view [Scouting's Barriers to Abuse](#), because this new Adventure is intended to complement BSA's existing youth-protection measures. After their den has completed its age-appropriate Adventure, we would value den leaders' thoughts, so we ask that they complete the quick survey that is provided at the website where they reviewed the lesson plan. For their analysis, feedback from the survey will be shared with the Barbara Sinatra Children's Center Foundation.

Scan the QR code to go to [Protect Yourself Rules Preview Video](#) for these age-appropriate, rank-level Adventures.



Barbara Sinatra Children's Center  
FOUNDATION



### About *Advancement News*

*Advancement News* is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America National Advancement Program Team. Its intent is 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. Our plan is to distribute six issues of *Advancement News* annually, but special editions may go out whenever there is important information to share. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at [advancement.team@scouting.org](mailto:advancement.team@scouting.org)

# Merit Badges

## Virtual MB Classes – New Freedoms, Renewed Responsibilities

With the rise of virtual merit badge classes, a world of new opportunities has opened up for Scouts. They can earn all kinds of unusual merit badges on all kinds of schedules, well beyond those available through in-person meetings with counselors in their home council.

However, with this new freedom come renewed responsibilities—for the Scout, for the merit badge counselor, and for the scoutmaster—to ensure that all BSA policies and procedures are still being followed. These policies and procedures are documented in the [Guide to Advancement](#). (GTA) Just like the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#), mandated policies and procedures in the *GTA* are clearly identified as such, as stated on the inside front cover of 2021 edition of the *GTA*.

### Mandated Procedures and Recommended Practices

This publication clearly identifies mandated procedures with words such as “must” and “shall.” Where such language is used, no council, committee, district, unit, or individual has the authority to deviate from the procedures covered without the written permission of the National Advancement Program Team. Recommended best practices are offered using words like “should,” while other options and guidelines are indicated with terms such as “may” or “can.” Refer questions on these to your local district or council advancement chairs or staff advisors. They, in turn, may request interpretations and assistance from the National Advancement Program Team.

*Guide to Advancement, inside front cover, 2021*

When it comes to earning merit badges, *GTA* topic 7.0.0.3 states in part that “before working with a counselor or attending a group or virtual merit badge opportunity, a Scout should meet with his or her unit leader.” While this does not mean the merit badge will be denied if they do not, it does mean that, if at all possible, the Scout and scoutmaster should discuss in advance the merit badge and the presentation environment (in-person/online, group/individual, etc.). The Scoutmaster should investigate to see if there is any question as to the quality of the class, or if a Scout will be required to “actually and personally” fulfill all the requirements (*GTA* 7.0.3.2).

Sometime a new, eager Scout may be unaware of the requirement to meet with the unit leader before attempting a merit badge, and so may present their scoutmaster with a completed blue card, literally and figuratively “out of the blue.” The first time this happens the Scoutmaster should accept it, but counsel the Scout on proper process and tell them future merit badges must be discussed in advance (with the under-

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standing that the Scoutmaster cannot deny them, but can investigate the offering, and be prepared to question the Scout more thoroughly when the blue card is returned).

Similarly, it is the merit badge counselor's obligation to check that each Scout counseled has discussed the opportunity with their scoutmaster, and each Scout should provide their own signed blue card or electronic equivalent.

As a further reminder, *GTA 7.0.3.2* further states the following: "there must be attention to each individual's projects and fulfillment of all requirements. We must know that every Scout—actually and personally—completed them. If, for example, a requirement uses words like 'show,' 'demonstrate,' or 'discuss,' then every Scout must do that. It is unacceptable to award badges on the basis of sitting in classrooms *watching* demonstrations, or remaining silent during discussions."

Each interaction with a registered adult is an opportunity for personal growth and learning on the part of the Scout. It is through this interaction and association with adults—the conversations, the counseling, the instruction and learning experiences—that mission-oriented Scouting takes place. (*GTA 7.0.0.2*) Shortcutting this process in the interest of efficiency robs the Scout of the opportunity to grow, which is the heart of the merit badge program.

## **Best Practices for Approving Merit Badge Counselors**

### **(Part 1 of 3)**

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: This is the first of a 3-part serialization that will appear in *Advancement News*. Part 2 will continue in the :  
: September-October edition, focusing on policies for approval of counselors for specific merit badges. Part 3 :  
: in our November-December edition will conclude the topic, focusing on the question of the quantity of merit :  
: badges an individual counselor may or should cover, and will provide BSA links to many resources supporting :  
: the merit badge program. :  
:.....

The 130 or so merit badges available to Scouts BSA members allow them to explore a wide range of topics, customize their advancement according to their interests and abilities, and interact with adult role models with expertise and enthusiasm for each topic. Recruiting and approving merit badge counselors is thus an important responsibility, which formally rests with the council advancement committee: "Council advancement committees have the responsibility to implement an approval procedure that assures merit badge counselors have the necessary skills and education to offer quality experiences in the badges they counsel." (*GTA 7.0.1.4*).

Advice and policies for such approvals are detailed in the current *GTA*, and other BSA publications offer additional insights and ideas. The following notes highlight that guidance, and offer ideas and considerations for fulfilling this important function.

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## **Counselor Approval Overview**

Councils must establish a two-step process, first for approving Scouting volunteers for the merit badge counselor position, and then approving them for individual badges based on their expertise and experience.

Large councils may have over 1,000 merit badge counselors on their roles, with additions and deletions occurring through the year as Scouters move, resign, etc. While council staff manage background checks and approval of all volunteers, council or district level advancement volunteers can be used to review the subject matter expertise of potential merit badge counselors. These advancement volunteers can also recruit additional volunteers for specific subject areas.

For their part, each merit badge counselor agrees to follow the requirements of the merit badge, making no additions or deletions, and ensuring that each Scout “actually and personally” completed each requirement (GTA 7.0.3.2).

## **Special Needs Interests**

### **“The Toolbox” – A-to-Z Online Resource Launched**

The BSA Special Needs and Disabilities Committee (SNDC) has just released a new A-to-Z online resource for special needs information. Formally called the *Inclusion Toolbox for Special Needs and Disabilities*, it is tailored to Scouting and written for any Scout leader who wants to help his/her Scouts without having to wade through special needs jargon on the internet.

“The Toolbox,” as it is sometimes affectionately known, is filled with stand-alone modules, set up so you can use it just like a physical toolbox: rummage around for what you need and pull it out to read. No need to read the whole thing, page by page; just check out the links for each module and read and use what interests you or suits your needs.

For example, let’s say you are interested in the advancement of a Scout in your unit who is experiencing some issues making progress in the program. Two modules, both of which provide useful commentary and explanations of the rules in the *GTA*, are available for you:

- Module E - *Navigating Advancement Requirements*, which is for families and unit leaders to help them understand what they need to do to get alternatives approved.
- Module V - *Evaluating Advancement Alternatives*, which is for BSA volunteers who are decision makers for advancement issues.

Another example might involve some confusion on your part about some common stereotypes concerning a certain disability or need that might be getting in the way of coming to a viable decision for all involved. “The Toolbox” could help you find answers in its “Understanding” series, which has a whole variety of subjects

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from which to choose, ranging from Module H - *Understanding Allergies and Food Issues*, to Module S - *Understanding Speech and Language Disorders*. Information contained in one or more of these modules may dispel some of your preconceived notions or help you to get a better understanding of how actual disabilities impact a Scout's life and what kinds of accommodations could work for those Scouts.

The *Inclusion Toolbox for Special Needs and Disabilities* can be found at [www.ablescouts.org/toolbox](http://www.ablescouts.org/toolbox). This site, which is managed by the BSA Special Needs and Disabilities Committee, contains other useful resources and articles, as well. Whether you are a brand-new Scout parent or a seasoned council volunteer or professional, there will be something in “The Toolbox” that you can use to help make Scouting better. Who could ask for more? ! Check it out!

As always, if you have a question, feel free to contact [specialneedschair@scouting.org](mailto:specialneedschair@scouting.org).

## Awards

### STEM/NOVA Awards Program Now Council Administered

BSA created the STEM Nova Awards program to bring awareness to the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics and to provide recognition to Scouts who go beyond current advancement requirements to pursue a STEM topic. STEM Nova and Supernova awards can be earned by Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturers, and Sea Scouts.

Beginning June 1, councils began administering and delivering the STEM Nova awards on a local level. The STEM Nova Awards website will remain on Scouting.org as a National resource for the requirements with all other aspects of the award moved to the local council. This includes all recognition items. When current National Supply inventory of these items is significantly reduced and no longer meets the needs for these awards, councils will order recognition items through an approved licensed vendor that will be provided on the STEM Nova website. Local councils will continue to approve Nova counselors and Supernova mentors, and will also now approve any Dr. Albert Einstein Supernova applications. All STEM Nova resources may be found at <https://www.scouting.org/stem-nova-awards/>.

As a reminder, all activity and programming used in conjunction with the STEM Nova Awards program must be followed and implemented as designed by the BSA.

Local Councils **may not add or subtract activities or requirements**

from this BSA designed program. To learn more, read the FAQ at <https://www.scouting.org/stem-nova-awards/stem-faq/>.

Please contact your council for support or answers to specific questions.



Cub Scout Nova Patch



Scouts BSA Nova Patch



Venturing/Sea Scout  
Nova Patch

# Worth Repeating

## Service Projects – At the Core of Scouting

(August-September 2012)

“For every Scout rank, the Scout must demonstrate Scout spirit by living the Scout Oath and Scout Law in their everyday life. This includes helping others. A Scout’s duty to others often takes the form of service projects or service hours, and these are integrated into the advancement program beginning with the Second Class Rank<sup>1</sup>

“For Second Class, the Scout must participate in an approved service project lasting at least one hour. This may be a troop project like a highway cleanup or helping the chartered organization, or it could be a project undertaken by a patrol. With the Scoutmaster’s approval, it could even be something a Scout does alone. Often, of course, the service time is fulfilled by assisting with an Eagle Scout candidate’s project.

“Star and Life ranks each require participating for at least six hours per rank in service projects approved by the Scoutmaster. The requirements do not say that the service time or the projects must be approved beforehand, but a discussion with the Scoutmaster may prevent any issues at a board of review. Note that no council, district, unit, or individual has the authority to add a planning requirement to the Second Class, Star, or Life service project requirements.

“The Eagle Scout candidate must plan, develop, and give leadership to their service project. And the key to evaluating this requirement comes in looking at its impact, not the number of hours spent on it. The *Guide to Advancement* covers the Eagle Scout project requirement in detail in section 9. For any service project, someone should keep track of participants and time spent, not only so Scouts get credit toward rank requirements, but also to facilitate reporting on the [Journey to Excellence](#) website”.

<sup>1</sup>Second Class Rank—Rank advancement currently (2022) includes a service time requirement under the category of Citizenship, beginning at Tenderfoot. The statement within the article is true for the year 2012.



### Service Is At the Core of Scouting

“A Scout is helpful.”

“To help other people at all times.”

“Do a Good Turn daily.”

### Editor’s Note

- This article was written before the inclusion of girls in the Scouting program. General references have been modified as appropriate, modified to “Scout”, “Scouts” or “youth”.
- Service Requirements listed within the article were in effect in 2012.
- As shown in the footnote, the Tenderfoot rank now includes a service requirement.
- JTE service requirements originally referenced in this 2012 article were those in effect at the time, so they have been omitted in this reprint. The [Troop JTE Scorecard for 2022](#) is now available at

<https://www.scouting.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022-JTE-Troop-Scorecard-FinalR3.pdf>.

## Helpful Links

The most current materials of interest for Scouters who are involved in the administration of advancement are located in one handy place. Many resources are available via the Advancement Resources page at [www.scouting.org/Advancement](http://www.scouting.org/Advancement)

### ***Abilities Digest***

Did you know there was a newsletter produced by the National Special Needs and Disabilities Committee? It is called *Abilities Digest*. It is available by subscribing by email as found on page 3 of the [Winter 2022 edition](#). Fortunately, past issues of [Abilities Digest](#) can also be found at the [Advancement Resources](#) web page. Each and every issue is stuffed with great ideas to serve the youth, provide support for programs, suggest ideas to create awareness of special needs of Scouts. One example activity that troops may find useful is the Cane Maze activity. Complete directions and “words of wisdom” are provided in the article found on page 4 of the very First edition of *Abilities Digest* ([Summer 2014](#)).

In the latest edition of the *Digest*, one timely summer-related article discusses helpful ideas to assist families in preparing Scouts, and special needs Scouts in particular, for that all important week away from home. The ideas presented included looking at what “might happen” in the unfamiliar surroundings and the importance of speaking with unit leaders and the Scout regarding what to expect and how to react. Additional information is presented to encourage communication with all parties involved to ensure a successful summer camp experience for everyone.

This valuable resource provides information for supporting those with special needs or disabilities, and can be yours for an easy sign up within the publication.



### **Adapting Events: Caregivers for Scouts with Disabilities**

*"We want especially to help the weaker not to feel their weakness, and to gain hope and strength."*

—Robert Baden-Powell

We have youth members in BSA with medical conditions, disabilities, or special needs where they are not able to care for themselves in certain ways while they are alone in a private space. For example, they may be unable to bathe themselves, dress themselves, use the toilet, etc. They require adult caregivers. Under the general BSA Youth Protection policies, only a parent or legal guardian is allowed to do these things for their own child. However, a parent/legal guardian is not always available when a Scout activity takes place. To allow full participation in the program, a caregiver is an acceptable alternative when approved by the local council and charter organization.

