**A Parent’s Guide to Rank Advancement**

This guide is to help you, the Scout Parent, navigate the obstacle course of rank advancement and hopefully avoid many of the pitfalls that have befuddled many other scouts and scout parents.  The path to Eagle Scout is not a sprint, but a marathon to be enjoyed and experienced.   *Let me say that again, it should be enjoyed and experienced.*  The lessons that are learned will serve your scout for the rest of his life.

First, here are the of the “W’s” about rank advancement…

**What is Rank Advancement?**  -  Rank Advancement is the process of completing various requirements by a scout which is done to earn a sequence of ranks leading to the rank of Eagle Scout. Scouts advance at their own pace and ranks are not tied to grades or ages like Cub Scouts. *It is up to the Scout to earn these ranks.*  Many Scouts enjoy the Scouts BSA Program without achieving all ranks.

**Where are the requirements listed?**– Requirements are listed in the Scout Handbook at the end of the book.  Requirements are signed off in the book by the scout or an adult leader (Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster).

**Who works on the rank advancement with the scout**?  - The scout works on the requirements and they are signed off in their Scout Handbook by another Scout who is of higher rank.   The physical Scout Handbook is their**official record**of what they have completed.

Example: A First Class Scout can sign off on Scout, Tenderfoot, or Second Class requirements, in their book.  *Notice Parents****are not****included.*

Parents cannot sign off requirements like in Cub Scouts.  If you sign off requirements you are doing a disservice to your scout.   Please, Please, Please do not mark off requirements in Scoutbook for ranks or merit badges for your scouts.  They **will not** be approved, and may even be removed.   You are taking away from your scout the learning opportunity from working with an older scout and that older scout being able to teach skills.  Yes, the online Scoutbook is *a way* to record advancement, but the **Scout**should record his in the online Scoutbook **only after** it is signed off in his Scout Handbook.   The rank requirement is only considered complete once it has been signed off in their Scout Handbook.

A Parent can teach their Scout how to record his information in the online Scoutbook, if desired.

**When and where do the scouts work on the ranks & requirements?**  Camping trips, meetings, on their own during the year.

**What are the ranks?**The initial ranks, Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class:

1)     Requirements focus on basic scout skills, knots, first aid, camping, cooking, hiking, conservation, physical fitness

2)     Requirements for these ranks can be completed at anytime and any order.   Only the ranks have to be completed in order.

Next, the journeyman ranks…  Star and Life, and then master rank of Eagle Scout:

1)     Merit Badges become the focus

2)     Leadership and service also become center stage

3)     Time requirements between ranks are now imposed, ranging from 4 to 6 months

**What can the parent do to help?**

1)     Help your scout come up with a plan to earn each rank, help your scout determine what a good time frame is to advance from one rank to the next.  Example 2 months to scout, 4 to tenderfoot and so on.   Then work the plan, and keep the focus on that small timeframes so your scout does not get overwhelmed.

2)     Ask your scout what he did each week at scouts, what he may have gotten signed off for each rank.   Ask him, “What do you want to try?” and encourage him to demonstrate it to a higher rank Scout and get the requirement signed off at the next Troop meeting or Camping Trip.

 3)     Have your scout use school activities to help complete requirements. Example, he is in Gym at school.  That is the perfect time make an exercise plan based on what he is doing in gym to complete the physical fitness exercise portion of the Tenderfoot or Second Class requirements.   They are in health class, focus on learning First Aid requirements.

 4)     One of the important resources is the Scoutbook Handbook.   Almost every single answer for completing the Scout through First Class ranks are in the physical Scout Handbook.   Need to know how to tie a Clove Hitch? *It’s on page 368*.  How to reach a weather map? *Check out page 213*.  Don’t be afraid to ask your Scout, “Did you read the Scout Handbook, I bet it is in there?!?”

 5)     Let them fail gently - if they forget to get something signed off, they may have to repeat doing it again.  It is not the end of the world; having to repeat doing something will help teach the lesson of taking advantage of opportunities. One of our Scouts has had to repeat service (several times) because he did not get the hours signed off.   As a result, he started to make sure he had his log signed off each time in the back of his book.

 6)     Make photocopies of their book for when they do lose it, falls apart or becomes soaked.    This way, they have proof of what they have accomplished**.   It will happen, 2 out of 3 have happened to my scouts.**

 7)     Summer Camp, Summer Camp, Summer Camp…   these are invaluable times for them to earn up to 5 or 6 merit badges in a one-week time frame.   It is a great opportunity to earn MBs like Swimming, First Aid, or Camping.

 8)     For each hiking trip, camping trip, or service activity, remind them to have the item signed off in the logs after the requirements in the back of the book.   This is proof they have attended the events for Tenderfoot, Second Class and First-Class attendance requirements.

 9)     Encourage your scout to work with a variety of Merit Badge Counselors.  Working with a merit badge counselor allows your scout to work with different amazing subject matter experts who are very passionate about the subject and will provide a depth of experiences that goes beyond just completing remeasurements.

**Record Keeping:**   Have your scout sent up a three-ring binder with a bunch of 9 pocket baseball card holders.   Have your scout keep all their rank advancement and merit badge blue cards in this binder.   This is the proof they have completed the merit badges.   Remember the scout is responsible for keeping track of his accomplishments.   The Merit Badge blue cards are equivalent of the Scout Handbook for merit badges.   The troop maintains back up records of completed MB’s, but it is the scouts responsibly to maintain the Blue Cards, especially for the partial completion Merit Badge Blue Cards.