Scouts BSA Rank Progression

Scouts advance at their own pace. There are no age requirements for ranks, but most families want a sense of what's typical. The timeline below reflects how progression can play out, however it really varies by scout.

Typical Age & Timeline by Rank

Scout Rank

Age: 10½ to 11 (5th Grade)
Timeframe: First few weeks
What this means: Intro to the troop, safety basics, and joining requirements.

Tenderfoot

Age: 11 to 12 (6th Grade)
Timeframe: First 6 to 9 months
Focus areas: Physical fitness, knots, early camping skills, patrol method basics.

Second Class

Age: 12 to 13 (7th Grade)
Timeframe: Around 1 year in
Focus areas: Outdoor skills, map and compass, first aid, active participation on outings.

First Class

Age: 13 to 14 (8th Grade)
Timeframe: 18 to 24 months
Focus areas: Demonstrating independence in outdoor skills.
Why it matters: First Class is a key milestone. Reaching it before high school makes staying active much easier once sports and academics increase. First Class scouts will have leadership roles.

Star Rank

Age: 14 (9th Grade)
Timeframe: About 6 months after First Class
Focus areas: Leadership roles, service hours, merit badges (including required ones).

Life Rank

Age: 14 to 16 (10th Grade)
Timeframe: 6 months after Star
Focus areas: Larger leadership responsibilities, planning, teamwork, service.

Eagle Scout

Age: Before age 18 (11th-12th Grade)
Timeframe: Before age 18
Focus areas: Project leadership, advanced merit badges, long-term perseverance.
Note: Most Eagles finish around age 17.

What Parents Should Know

- Scouts advance **as they participate**, not on a fixed schedule.
- Outdoor skills and leadership take time to mature.
- Early encouragement helps, but leadership and initiative must come from the scout.
- High school schedules make early momentum useful, especially toward First Class.
- Merit badges can be done at any pace, but leadership roles have required time periods.

How You Can Support Your Scout

- Make sure they **attend outings**, bring their book, and actively ask for sign off on advancement.
- Encourage them to **ask older scouts or troop guides** for help.
- Keep track of deadlines for **leadership roles, conferences, and merit badges**.
- Celebrate progress, not speed.