



BOY SCOUT TROOP

77

Hightower Trail District
Atlanta Area Council
Boy Scouts of America

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Advancement Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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SIGNING OFF REQUIREMENTS

Who can sign off on requirements in a Scout's handbook?

"A Scout who wants to complete an advancement requirement must demonstrate to his leader that he has fully mastered a skill at the level expected. In a new-Scout patrol, that leader might be the Assistant Scoutmaster or the Troop Guide assigned to the Patrol. A Scout in a traditional patrol or older-Scout Patrol might be tested by an adult troop leader or by his own Patrol Leader, Troop Guide, or another junior leader, provided that the boy leader has already earned the rank the Scout is aiming for." (Troop Leader Guidebook— pg. 98)

A Scout's leader may be either an adult or a boy. However, a Scout's leader is **not** a fellow member of his Patrol, unless that patrol member is the Patrol Leader, or a Troop Guide. For the purposes of requirement sign-off, an adult leader is either a Scoutmaster or an Assistant Scoutmaster who has completed leader training appropriate for his or her position. You will know if an adult leader is trained by looking for the "TRAINED" patch on his or her uniform just below the Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster patch.

Can a First Class Scout sign off on requirements in a Scout Handbook?

No, unless they are a leader as described in the previous question, and only for Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class requirements.

Can a Scout sign off on Star, Life and Eagle requirements?

No, for Star rank and above, **none** of the requirements should be signed off prior to your Scoutmaster Conference.

Who can sign off on the Camping Log, Service Log, Merit Badges, and Positions of Responsibility at the back of the Scout Handbook?

Either the Scoutmaster or an adult leader as described above - this means a Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster who has been TRAINED.

Are there requirements that should only be signed off during a Scoutmaster Conference?

Yes. For First Class and below, the requirement to "*Demonstrate Scout spirit by living the Scout Oath and Scout Law...*" should not be signed off prior to your Scoutmaster Conference. Of course, the requirement to "Participate in a Scoutmaster conference" should not be signed off either.

Can my parent sign off on any requirements? They were on the campout (or they saw me tie the knot correctly, etc.).

No – parents may not sign off on requirements for their Scout, even if they are a TRAINED Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster. You should find another leader to sign off the requirement. For Merit Badges, a parent should only be a counselor if there are no others available, due to fairness and impartiality. If you are having difficulty finding a Merit Badge Counselor, ask the Scoutmaster for assistance.

I heard that I can get some campout requirements signed off during Advancement Weekend in February. Is this true? It is not a campout!

Yes. However, in order for you to satisfy requirements which state, “On a campout...”, you have to have to treat Advancement Weekend as a campout, meaning that you have to camp outside in a tent, and you need to cook your food at the fire pit. Your Troop Guides will have more information on this.

ACTIVITIES & SERVICE PROJECTS

Do service projects count as activities for advancement?

Great question. Service projects and activities are not the same thing. **Activities** are required in order to reach First Class rank and below. **Service Projects** are required to reach Star rank and above, with the exception that in order to reach Second Class, a Scout must participate for one hour in a service project (requirement 5). Therefore, service projects can count as activities for First Class and below, but only service projects count for Star rank and above. However, note that, if you are working on your Second Class rank, you cannot double-count the hour you spent in service as also being a Troop activity. In other words, if you participate in a service project for three hours as a Tenderfoot Scout, you may count one hour of that activity as a service project in order to meet Second Class requirement 5, but you cannot simultaneously count that as an activity for Second Class requirement 3a, even though you worked on the service project for longer than an hour.

After you have reached First Class, activities and service projects are treated differently. Star, Life, and Eagle all require a specific number of service hours. Participation in activities with the Troop is still required, but it is handled differently. For example, Star rank, requirement 1. says, “Be active in your troop and patrol for at least four months as a First Class Scout”. Attending activities is certainly a way to meet this requirement. After reaching First Class, Scouts are not required to log a specific number of activities in their handbook. However, continuing to log these is a great way to prove you have been active in the Troop.

We need examples of activities!! For First Class requirement #3, the handbook says, “Since joining, have participated in 10 separate troop/patrol activities (other than troop/patrol meetings), three of which included camping overnight...). What counts for this? We get many different answers.

The following things **always** count as activities under this requirement as long as you have at least two adults who are registered with the Troop as adult leaders. NOTE: THESE ADULTS MUST BE CURRENT IN YOUTH PROTECTION TRAINING AND THE ACTIVITY MUST BE CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THESE GUIDELINES:

- Helping on an Eagle Project (counts as an activity OR as service project hours but not both)
- Attending a campout (counts as one activity, even if it is more than one night)
- Attending summer camp (counts as **one** activity, even if it is five nights)
- Helping at the OGUMC BBQ (counts as either an activity **or** service hours, but may not be counted as both)

- Going climbing at Stone Summit with your Scout buddies
- Going to Cosmic Bowling night with your Patrol
- Getting your Patrol together for a Pizza dinner, a movie night, or to go for a bike ride at Stone Mountain (but it must be a Troop or Patrol activity, not just you getting together with a friend).
- Let's elaborate here. The purpose of the patrol activity is to build scout spirit. If you decide to invite your Patrol on a bike ride at Stone Mountain, that would definitely qualify. But if you invite a group of buddies from school to go on a bike ride at Stone Mountain, and one of those buddies happens to be in your Patrol, this would not qualify – getting a group of school friends together at Stone Mountain is a lot of fun, but it does nothing to build Patrol scout spirit.
- Service Projects **officially suggested by the Troop**. Example: If you attend a nature clean-up day on the Chattahoochee with other Troop 77 Scouts, then of course this would count as an activity (OR time spent may be counted towards service hours). Even if you are the only Scout from our Troop at the event, if Mrs. Sowell sent out the note, or the service project was announced at a Troop meeting, then this counts.

However, if you pack 5,000 lunches in two hours at a local food bank as part of something you do with your family, or as part of your church group, then this is definitely a fantastic service to the community, but it is a service rendered by your family or by your church. It is not a “Scout service project”, nor is it a “Patrol or Troop Activity”.

NOTE: Church or school service projects are great! However, we will not count these toward service hours or as activity hours for rank advancement. Service projects for rank advancement must be Troop or Patrol service projects and “they must be approved in advance by the Scoutmaster”. Service projects sent out by Mrs. Sowell are automatically pre-approved by the Scoutmaster and will count for service hours. If you have an idea for a Troop or Patrol service project, please let your Patrol Leader know. He should pass this information to the Senior Patrol Leader and the PLC.

If I go somewhere with other members of my Patrol or the Troop in order to get Second Class or First Class requirements signed off, is that an Activity too?

Yes. This will count as an activity if all of the following are true. It is an activity which is coordinated by Troop 77, it is an activity that helps build Scout Spirit because it helps Scouts advance while identifying them to the public as Scouts (you should wear your Activity Uniform (a Scout “T”-shirt)).

Our reasoning is this - we already count campouts and Summer Camp as activities, and Scouts get advancement requirements signed off at those activities, so why would we not count this activity as well?

Can I count a Merit Badge University class as an Activity?

No. It is something you are doing on your own. This is not an activity coordinated by Troop 77, and typically Scouts attend these events as individuals, not as a Patrol or Troop so it is not building Scout Spirit and enhancing group cohesiveness.

Some requirements in the Camping Merit Badge are identical to requirements for Scout Ranks. If I already have done the requirement for rank advancement, may I get credit for meeting the identical requirement for a Merit Badge?

Yes, as long as the requirement is *exactly* identical, then you may get credit on a Merit Badge for a

requirement which has been previously signed off for rank advancement.

Can I get this credit even though I started the Merit Badge *after* the requirement was signed off in my Scout Handbook?

Yes, the BSA does not require that a Scout do something over.

Do service projects have to be approved in advance by the Scoutmaster?

Yes. The Scout Handbook says that projects must be *"approved by your Scoutmaster"*.

While this does not state that it needs to be approved in advance, having it approved in advance allows the Scoutmaster to learn about the project, determine if the project qualifies for service hours, and allows for the project to be advertised to the troop.

I have an idea for a service project. How do I get it approved?

If you have an idea for a service project, send information about the project to the Scoutmaster. You can either do this by giving the Scoutmaster a 3x5 card, or by sending the Scoutmaster an email. The Scoutmaster or someone designated by him will review the opportunity and get back to you about it within one week (it may take longer if the project takes more coordination).

Are there some service projects that are automatically approved by the Scoutmaster?

Yes. Eagle Projects are always approved, as are any other projects which are specifically described as service projects in emails distributed by Mrs. Sowell. (Remember you can count time at an Eagle Project as either an activity OR for service hours, but not both.)

Can I get permission after the fact for a service project?

NO. Service projects must be approved, in advance, by the Scoutmaster.

Should I wear my uniform at the service project or activity?

Yes. you should wear a Scout T-shirt, or your formal uniform, depending on the activity, at all service projects or activities.

Are there things that do not count for service hours or for activity hours?

Yes - things that do **not** count for either service hours or as an activity:

- Attending a Troop or Patrol meeting (this is a meeting – not an activity or service project)
- Helping at an Eagle Court of Honor (this is a ceremony, not an activity or service project)
- Water Wars and Laser Tag (Games involving weapons or fighting activities of any kind are NOT sanctioned by the BSA: When we do these activities over the summer, they are done as a group of families getting together, NOT as a BSA Troop).
- Merit Badge Clinics (this is an event where you work toward getting a merit badge. It is not a Troop or Patrol activity).

We heard summer fun activities do not count. Is this true?

Summer fun activities **do** count as Troop/Patrol activities, with the exception of Water Wars and Laser Tag (see above). The pool party, Whirley Ball, Malibu; these are all Troop activities. But they are NOT service projects.

These are some significant changes - when do they take effect?

This document was updated on March 4, 2016.