Boy Scout Requirements FAQs

Aug. 29, 2015

If you have specific questions that are not addressed here, please send a message to advancement.team@scouting.org.

Your questions will be used to generate the next updates to these FAQs.

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TRANSITIONING TO NEW REQUIREMENTS

Q. When can boys start using the new requirements?

A. The new requirements become effective on Jan. 1, 2016, subject to some transition exceptions (see below) and cannot be used for advancement prior to that date. The requirements are being released ahead of time to give Scouts and their leaders an opportunity to review upcoming changes and prepare for them.

Q. Do all youth have to switch to the new requirements on January 1?

A. No. Boys registered in a troop, team, crew, or ship on or prior to Dec. 31, 2015, may choose to switch on Jan. 1, 2016. For those who choose not to switch right away, here are the rules:

- Boys registered in a troop on or before Dec. 31, 2015, who are working on Tenderfoot through First Class ranks, may continue to use the old requirements through 2016, but they must convert to the new requirements upon attaining the First Class rank.
- Boys registered in a troop, team, crew, or ship on or before Dec. 31, 2015, who have completed the First Class rank may complete the rank they are currently working on with the old requirements through 2016, but then must convert to the new requirements for subsequent ranks.
- Any boy registering in a troop for the first time on or after Jan. 1, 2016, must use the new requirements.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2017, new requirements must be used for all ranks earned.

Q. Is there a definitive deadline after which ranks cannot be earned using the current requirements?

A. Yes. That deadline is Dec. 31, 2016. That is the last day to sign off requirements using the old requirements.

Q. Suppose a youth is in the middle of a rank on Dec. 31, 2016, and has to finish that rank using the new requirements. Will he need to "start over" and repeat all of the requirements for that rank?

A. No, not all—only new requirements and any new elements of requirements.

- If the wording of a completed rank requirement has not changed ***and*** that requirement was signed off on or prior to Dec. 31, 2016, the approval should be transferred to the corresponding new requirements. For Tenderfoot through First Class ranks, this may include approvals that were previously listed in a different rank.
- When the rank in progress has new requirements (or new ***elements*** of requirements) that were not in a previously completed rank under the current (2015) requirements, those new requirements or elements will need to be completed in 2017 and beyond.

Q. Will a new handbook be released for use with the new requirements?

A. Yes, the 13th edition of the *Boy Scout Handbook,* which includes the new requirements, will be available in January 2016.

Q. Will every Scout need to acquire a new handbook in order to have requirements signed off?

A. No. A Scout may continue to use his existing handbook as a reference and resource. However, he should also have a list of the new requirements for the purpose of sign-offs. This will be available for downloading from www.scouting.org. It should be noted that there will be other content updates beyond requirement changes in the new *Boy Scout Handbook*, which may make the purchase of a new handbook desirable for many BSA members.

GENERAL TOPICS

Service

Q. Is there a greater emphasis on service in the new requirements?

A. Yes. In keeping with the Scout Oath and "helping other people at all times," a service aspect is now a requirement for each rank except the Scout rank—one hour for Tenderfoot, two hours for Second Class, and three hours for First Class. The total hours for Star and Life remain the same, at six hours each. Note that half of the six hours for Life rank must be conservation-related; this reflects an increased emphasis on important matters like the outdoors and stewardship of Earth.

Scout Spirit

Q. A new element of Scout spirit ("Tell how you have done your duty to God …"), is alongside the elements of "living the Scout Oath and Scout Law" in the new requirements. Does this mean troop leaders need to examine and evaluate a Scout's duty to God, and then determine whether it is sufficient by some standard?

A. No, not at all. The troop leader is there to listen to the Scout ***tell*** about how he believes he has done ***his*** duty (the Scout's duty) – that is the requirement. The idea is for the Scout to have a self-reflection about belief and reverence. The requirement does not indicate that a discussion or a two-way conversation should take place. For the purpose of the requirement, the boy is simply to tell his leader how he believes he has done his duty to God as defined by himself and his family. Nothing more is required.

The telling might be a very brief statement, depending on the Scout and the family's beliefs—and on where the Scout is in his development of understanding of such matters, which will evolve as the Scout matures.

Q. Does including "duty to God" as a part of Scout spirit put too much emphasis on religion? Does it create a requirement of belonging to a religion?

A. No, not as written. There is no requirement that a Scout identify a religious faith as part of his duty to God—although, if the Scout does have a religious faith, it is likely to be part of the self-reflection and expression. It is important to note that Scouting is nonsectarian and promotes no specific religion. In fact, a boy need not belong to any official religious institution—he could practice his beliefs privately at home.

However, while membership in an organized religion is not necessary or implied, a Scout does have to ascribe to the declaration of religious principles, and express belief in a higher power. This condition of membership is acknowledged by the parent or guardian's signature on the BSA Youth Application.

Q. A troop leader's beliefs about God may be different from those of the Scout. With the requirement "tell how you have done your duty to God," a troop leader might believe that the Scout should do more or do something differently to show duty to God. Can a boy be withheld from advancing for that reason?

A. No. The troop leader does not evaluate whether a Scout's expression of how he shows duty to God is sufficient by any standard. In signing off the requirement, the leader simply acknowledges that the Scout *has told* how he has done *his* duty to God. The leader should make no judgment and the Scout should not be held to a standard of belief or activity in order to be signed off on the requirement.

There will often be differences of belief among troop members and troop leadership—but the troop leader's beliefs do not establish a standard for the Scout. The policy of the Boy Scouts of America is that "the home and the organization or group with which the member is connected shall give definite attention to religious life." The troop leader is to respect those differences, with no attempt to impose his or her personal beliefs on the Scout.

Q. Can the Scout tell about his duty to God during the Scoutmaster conference?

A. Yes. That would be an appropriate place for this to happen, just as other Scout spirit actions like telling "how you have lived four different points of the Scout Law" may be covered in Scoutmaster conferences. There is no reason why both actions cannot be completed at the same time. Of course, the Scoutmaster may delegate responsibility for sign-off on Scout spirit requirements to another leader, just as with any other requirement.

Q. Should a board of review ask the Scout about this Duty to God requirement?

A. A board of review may ask—just as with any other requirement—but the board is not required to do so. It is not expected that every rank requirement will be individually covered during a board of review, and this requirement is no exception. However, as with the previous question, the Scout only needs to *tell* how he has done *his* duty to God. Board members are not to pass judgment or try to impose their individual beliefs.

The situation is no different from what might currently be asked: "How have you lived the 'duty to God' part of the Scout Oath in your daily life?" or "How have you demonstrated 'A Scout is reverent' in your everyday life?"

Q. What if, during a Scoutmaster conference or board of review, a Scout says that he does not believe in God?

A. A Scout is called to do his duty to God by both the Scout Oath and Scout Law, and his belief in God should be acknowledged by his parent or guardian's signature on the BSA Youth Application. A Scout's declaration that he does not believe in God is grounds to deny rank advancement and could affect his continued membership in the troop. The situation should be approached with the utmost caution, recognizing that the Scout and his family are best served by a process in which the Scout remains positively engaged in his Scouting pursuits. Troop leadership should not attempt to counsel the Scout, but should contact the boy's parents or guardians and allow the family time to discuss the situation with the youth. If the issue arises at a board of review, the board should be adjourned and reconvened at a later date, giving the family an opportunity to conduct that discussion with their son.

SCOUT RANK

Q. Will we still be able to present the Scout badge to boys as soon as they join the troop?



A. No. Beginning Jan. 1, 2016, Scout becomes a rank—with a new color scheme—and is no longer considered a "joining badge." As with all other ranks, a boy must complete each requirement for the Scout rank as a registered member of a Boy Scout troop. The Scoutmaster or designated leader must sign off each individual requirement as the boy demonstrates his knowledge or skill.

Troop leadership should anticipate that completion of requirements for the Scout rank may not "happen overnight," particularly for boys who were not members of a Cub Scout pack. Depending on the maturity of an individual boy, it may take a few weeks for him to memorize the Scout Oath and Scout Law, as well as to learn some basic Scout skills.

However, well-prepared Scouts—especially those who have recently earned the Arrow of Light—should be able to complete the Scout rank during the first few weeks after joining.

Q. Is there both a Scoutmaster conference and a board of review for the Scout rank?

A. No. Only a Scoutmaster conference is required; there is no board of review for Scout rank. The idea was to make becoming a Boy Scout more challenging but without the delays that a board of review might cause. The Scoutmaster conference is considered sufficient adult interaction for this initial rank.

Q. If a boy has already completed the Scouting Adventure pin and earned his Arrow of Light Award, won't he have already learned all he needs to know for the Scout rank?

A. Yes. However, even if the youth did complete Scouting Adventure as a Webelos Scout, all Boy Scout rank requirements must still be completed as a registered member of a Boy Scout troop. It should be relatively easy for a well-prepared Scout who earned the Arrow of Light Award to re-demonstrate what he learned to his designated Boy Scout leader.

It should be noted that not every Arrow of Light recipient joining in 2016 will have earned the Scouting Adventure pin. Webelos dens have the option during the 2015–2016 program year to earn the Arrow of Light Award using the old requirements. The old requirements for Arrow of Light do not cover Scout rank topics as comprehensively as the new requirements.

Q. Will it be difficult for boys new to Scouting to memorize the Scout Oath, Scout Law, and the Outdoor Code for their first rank?

A. Memorization could be challenging for some youth, but with weekly repetition and group activities within the patrol to support learning, a new Scout can pick it up quickly.

As noted above, one can expect the Scout rank to take longer to earn than the joining badge. However, these requirements are not much different from the old requirements where boys were expected to memorize the Scout Oath and Scout Law for their first rank, Tenderfoot. Repeating the Outdoor Code from memory is new, but this was added due to an increased emphasis on the outdoors and camping built into the rank requirements.

Q. Not every troop uses patrol flags or yells, so why are there "patrol method" requirements?

A. The patrol method is the basic building block of Boy Scouting. These requirements are intended to help boys transition from an adult-led Cub Scout program and to help all Boy Scouts and troops put more power into their patrols. So if your troop doesn't use the patrol method or use it to the fullest, these requirements could help foster a more youth-led troop.

Q. What happened to repeating the Pledge of Allegiance, a current Scout badge requirement?

A. The Pledge of Allegiance is included as requirement 1f in the revised version of the requirements posted in August.

TENDERFOOT THROUGH FIRST CLASS RANKS

Physical Fitness

Q. What is the "modified stretch-and-sit" referred to in Tenderfoot requirement 6? How do you determine the number done correctly in 60 seconds?

A. This test is the same as the back-saver sit-and-reach test described in the Quest Award of the *Venturing Awards and Requirements* book. The name has been changed in Tenderfoot requirement 6 so that terminology is consistent among programs.

For this exercise, the Scout should stretch one time as far as he can. The expectation is not to ***do more*** but to ***reach further*** to improve flexibility. Improvement is measured by the difference between the length of his initial stretch and the one measured after 30 days of practice.

Leaders might ask youth to complete three stretches at the starting and follow-up points, then count the best of three. However, repetitious "bouncing" should be avoided as it could lead to back injury.

Q. What is the reason for dropping pull-ups from the Tenderfoot fitness requirements? They are very important in increasing and maintaining upper body strength.

A. While some of the physical fitness elements are more challenging in the new requirements—such as the 1-mile walk/run compared to the old quarter mile—this change is intended to ease up on our expectations of the Scout. Pull-ups are difficult and have been a frustration in the past for some Scouts trying to earn Tenderfoot. Sometimes even very fit people are unable to succeed with pull-ups; in 2014, the player drafted fourth in the NHL draft was unable to do a single pull-up at his draft combine.

The expectation is that a regular physical fitness program in the ranks will improve overall fitness. Pull-ups might still be part of a troop program, whether in the SCOUTStrong program, working toward the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA) or the Climbing merit badge, or just overall fitness.

Camping

Q. The old Tenderfoot requirements included "Present yourself to your leader, properly dressed, before going on an overnight camping trip," but "properly dressed" is dropped in the new requirement 1a. Why is that no longer important?

A. Well, it is important! The requirement is expanded from "properly dressed" to "prepared for," and proper clothing is certainly part of that preparation. ***Prepared*** means even more than ***properly dressed.***

The new wording also provides an opportunity for the requirement to be signed off at a time other than the actual camping trip. For example, if the troop conducts a "shakedown" at the meeting prior to the campout, the youth might not be wearing the actual clothing required for the outing.

Q. Are more campouts now required to achieve the First Class rank?

A. Yes. Although the number of troop or patrol activities remains the same (10 total for First Class), the number of campouts required has doubled—one for Tenderfoot, two more for Second Class, and three more for First Class—for a total of six campouts. This change reflects an increased emphasis on the outdoors program and ensures that First Class Scouts have enough camping experience to develop and improve on the outdoor skills that Scouting promotes.

Q. How will this affect 11-year-old Scouts in an LDS unit who are only allowed to camp three nights during the year?

A. The May 2015 printing of the LDS "Scouting Handbook for Church Units in the United States" (https://www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/english/young-men/35814_scout-handbook_eng.pdf?lang=eng) addresses this change:

> "Eleven-year-old Scouts … are encouraged to complete as many of the First Class rank requirements as possible before turning 12, with the exception of the requirement for six overnight camps.
>
> Eleven-year-old Scouts may participate in three one-night camps a year, which meets the camping requirements for advancement to the rank of Second Class."

Outdoor Ethics

Q. Tread Lightly! seems to focus on motorized activities. Is this age-appropriate for Scouts working on First Class (requirement 1b)?

A. While Tread Lightly! promotes safe and responsible use of motorized and mechanized vehicles in the outdoors, it also provides educational material and guidance in other areas such as camping, hiking, geocaching, fishing, snow sports, mountain biking, and shooting sports. See www.treadlightly.org/education/learn/recreation-tips for more information. Introducing Tread Lightly! principles at this time will help to prepare a Scout for future outings were they might be needed. It should also be noted that Tread Lightly! is included in requirements for the Outdoor Ethics Awareness Award and the Outdoor Ethics Action Award in all program areas from Cub Scouting through Venturing. See http://outdoorethics-bsa.org/awards.

Service

Q. Shouldn't Second Class requirement 8e include the statement, "The project(s) must not be the same service project(s) used for Tenderfoot requirement 7b"?

A. No. The same service project could be used to qualify for service hours for both Tenderfoot and Second Class, but the hours counted for Second Class must be in addition to those counted for Tenderfoot rank.

Navigation

Q. There's a new requirement about using a handheld GPS unit (First Class requirement 4b). We don't want to buy one, so can we just use the map application and directional tools on a smartphone?

A. Yes. The options in the requirements allow use of a handheld GPS unit, GPS app on a smartphone, or other electronic navigation system.

Q. Since GPS and navigation apps are so prevalent on smartphones, why don't we just use those, and drop the map and compass requirements?

A. Map and compass skills are still considered basic Scouting skills. Sometimes we find ourselves out of cell coverage or power, and we want Scouts to be prepared.

Q. Including GPS and smartphone app use in rank requirements is going to mean more boys bring electronics on campouts. Isn't the use of these devices on campouts prohibited by the BSA?

A. No. The BSA strives to teach Scouts to use their resources, including electronic ones, safely and responsibly. Individual troops may, however, set their own policies for use at troop events.

Aquatics

Q. Two requirements identify parts of boats and paddles and proper positioning in boats (First Class requirements 6c and 6d). But there is no requirement to actually take a boat afloat. Why not?

A. The intent of this requirement is to introduce Scouts to basic boating skills and safety so they will be prepared to participate safely when a boating opportunity presents itself. In addition, lack of opportunity for boating activities could be a barrier to rank advancement in some parts of the country, depending on the climate, environment, or season. The requirement as written will help ensure that all youth can advance in a timely manner.

Internet Safety

Q. The existing First Class requirement 11 states, "Describe the three things you should avoid doing related to use of the Internet. Describe a cyberbully and how you should respond to one." Why was this dropped from the 2016 requirements?

A. These topics will be covered in Scout rank requirement 6 and Star rank requirement 6 as part of the Cyber Chip award or through activities in the 2016 revision of *How to Protect Your Children From Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide*.

STAR THROUGH EAGLE RANKS

Personal Safety

Q. Why are the youth asked to repeat Scout requirement 6: "With your parent or guardian, complete the exercises in the pamphlet *How to Protect Your Children From Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide* and earn the Cyber Chip Award for your grade."

A. Most Scouts were in the latter half of fifth grade when they completed Scout requirement 6. Boys working on Star requirements are in intermediate or middle school, if not beyond, dealing with more complex issues in their lives and using digital technology on a more regular basis. This is a good time for a Scout to have additional conversations with his parents on youth protection topics, as well as completing the Cyber Chip requirements for grades 6–8 (or 9–12).

Q. Many Scouting families misplace the *Parents' Guide* before completing the current joining requirements. By the time Scouts get to Star, it is unlikely they will still have the pamphlet. Will there be a way to easily get a new copy?

A. The current version of this pamphlet can be downloaded at http://www.scouting.org/Training/YouthProtection.aspx. We expect that the 2016 version will also be available for download.

Positions of Responsibility

Q. The Leave No Trace trainer position is now called an outdoor ethics guide. Are there any specific requirements for a Scout to hold this new position of responsibility?

A. Not yet, but they are in development and will be announced soon. The outdoor ethics guide becomes effective as a position of responsibility on Jan. 1, 2016. These FAQs will be updated when the new position description is released.

Expectations for youth serving as outdoor ethics guides will also be published in the 13th edition of the *Boy Scout Handbook*, as well as in updated printings of the *Senior Patrol Leader Handbook, Patrol Leader Handbook,* and *Introduction to Leadership Skills for Troops*.

Note that outdoor ethics guide is no longer a qualifying position for Venturers, as it is not an official leadership position in the Venturing or Sea Scouting programs.

Q. Suppose a Scout began his six-month term as Leave No Trace trainer on Sept. 1, 2015. How would he complete the last two months of his term?

A. For September through December, he would be credited with Leave No Trace trainer as his position of responsibility. For the last two months, he would be credited as an outdoor ethics guide, and his obligation for this position of responsibility would be complete.

Q. Venture patrol leader is no longer listed as a position of responsibility. Does that mean the Venture patrol is being eliminated next year?

A. No, it has just been renamed. The term "Venture patrol" has already been replaced with the generic description "older-Scout patrol" in new literature. See *Troop Leader Guidebook, volume 1.* Part of the rationale for the change is to avoid confusion between a "Venture patrol" and the Venturing program. The patrol leader of the older-Scout patrol will simply wear a patrol leader emblem.

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