

# THE ROLE OF ADVANCEMENT IN THE BOY SCOUT PROGRAM

## Time Available

10 minutes

## Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Understand advancement as one of eight methods in Scouting.
2. Describe the fundamental mechanics of the Boy Scout advancement program.
3. Identify resources to guide effective and appropriate advancement practices

## Suggested Presenter(s)

The district advancement chair or a member of the advancement committee should present this topic. Alternately, a highly engaged unit advancement coordinator can present. Any presenter must be very familiar with advancement policies and procedures as outlined in the current *Guide to Advancement*.

## Presentation Method

This presentation is tailored for Boy Scout leaders and is a very basic overview of the advancement program. It is best presented using a visual aid of some sort such as a chalkboard, flip chart, or PowerPoint. Some discussion and Q&A is encouraged, but the short time period necessitates pressing on to completion of the material. Further interest can be addressed after the meeting or in future meetings.

## BSA Reference Materials

- *Guide to Advancement 2015*, No. 33088
- Boy Scout Requirements, No. 33216 (current edition)
- Advancement Resources: [www.scouting.org/advancement](http://www.scouting.org/advancement)

## Presentation Content

- The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.
- The three aims of Scouting are:
  - Character: "Growth in moral strength and character. Character can be defined as the collection of core values by an individual that leads to moral commitment and action, and encompasses a boy's personal qualities, values and outlook."
  - Citizenship: "Participating citizenship. Used broadly, citizenship means the boy's relationship to others. He comes to learn of his obligations to other people, to the society he lives in, and to the government that presides over that society."

— Fitness: "Development of physical, mental, and emotional fitness. Fitness includes the body (well-tuned and healthy), the mind (able to think and solve problems), and the emotions (self control, courage, and self respect)."

- Advancement is one of the eight methods used by Scout leaders to successfully fulfill the mission and aims of the BSA. Thus, advancement is a means to an end!
- Since advancement is a prime indicator of a youth's success, it is tracked in documentation such as the Journey to Excellence (JTE).
- Advancement is the process by which Scouts move from rank to rank within the Scouting program.
  - In Cub Scouts, the motto is "Do your best." Cub Scouts try new things, learn, and grow. Advancement recognizes them for trying and exploring as they learn. The learning is mostly parent- and leader-directed.
  - In Boy Scouts, the Scouts do requirements exactly as written—no more, no less. They are expected to meet a specified task or objective, and are recognized for successfully doing so. The learning becomes increasingly the youth's responsibility.
  - In Venturing, the youth have more flexibility and increasing responsibility for program development and advancement.
- The best advancement happens naturally as the outcome of an exciting and active Scouting program that engages the youth in a variety of fun learning and growth opportunities. How does that happen?
  - Advancement is achieved through a series of age-appropriate surmountable hurdles. The experiential learning through this process leads to personal growth, which is a primary goal.
  - It is best delivered when built into a unit's program so that participation leads to achievement. This requires a well-planned dynamic troop program that utilizes the patrol method and an effective patrol leaders' council.
  - Advancement, when done well, promotes and encourages the ongoing involvement that keeps members coming back for more. Retention is almost automatic when these conditions exist.
- What are the steps in this advancement process?
  - First, the Scout learns: A well-rounded unit program puts a boy in a position to constantly be learning and thus be developing knowledge and skills.
  - Secondly, he is tested: Unit-authorized individuals test and pass the Scout on rank requirements. The boy **MUST** do exactly as the requirement states—show, demonstrate, discuss, etc.

- Third, he is reviewed: This is where the boy receives a board of review. It should be a positive experience that helps him relate to others and encourages him to continue to grow.
- Fourth, the Scout is recognized: This should be done as soon as possible. It can involve a short ceremony at the next unit meeting and certainly should involve being recognized at a formal court of honor.
- What recent changes have occurred in the rank advancement program?
  - New requirements became effective in January 2016.
  - Until January 2017, any Scout who was already working on a rank when the new requirements came into effect may finish that rank using the same requirements. However, the next rank must use the new requirements.
  - Effective January 2017, all Scouts MUST use the new requirements regardless of what they are working on.
- What are some of the major requirement changes?
  - Scout is now a full rank and no longer simply a joining activity. It must be completed as a member of the troop.
  - A service project is now included in all ranks.
  - A Duty to God component is now included in all ranks.
  - Other requirement changes are more thoroughly explained on the BSA update Web page at [www.scouting.org/programupdates/](http://www.scouting.org/programupdates/).
- The BSA provides a series of policies and guidelines to run an effective advancement program in every unit. These provide a fair and appropriate standard for all Scouts in the program. Following these policies is an important part of operating a successful and high-quality program.
- The current *Guide to Advancement*, No. 33088, is the definitive resource for BSA advancement policy. It is available in print from the local Scout shop or as a free PDF download.