

NATIONAL OUTDOOR AWARDS

Time Available

10 minutes

Learning Objectives

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

1. Identify the National Outdoor Awards that Boy Scouts can earn
2. Provide ideas for enhanced unit programming through these awards
3. Find resources for award requirements

Suggested Presenter(s)

A member of the district advancement committee or an experienced unit leader whose unit actively promotes earning some of these awards should present this topic. The presenter should review the resource materials and be able to answer questions about the awards.

Presentation Method

- Conduct a brief discussion with the attendees about the National Outdoor Awards that Boy Scouts can earn. A forum discussion would be ideal in which unit leaders are asked which of these awards their units have worked on and provide comments about the awards.
- Discuss ways these awards might fit into existing unit program plans or encourage Scouts to go above and beyond existing plans.

BSA Reference Materials

- National Outdoor Awards Program, www.scouting.org/BoyScouts/Youth/Awards/NOA.aspx
- National Outdoor Awards handout, included at the end of this interest topic
- Application for National Medal for Outdoor Achievement, www.scouting.org/filestore/Outdoor%20Program/pdf/430-041_WB.pdf

Presentation Content

Do you enjoy camping under the stars, rafting a whitewater river, or hitting the trail afoot, on a bike, or even on a horse? Can you pitch a tent, find your way, and bandage an ankle using only materials in your pack? Are you prepared to do any of these in rain, snow, sleet, or heat?

If so, the National Outdoor Awards are for you. There is nothing virtual about these awards—you can earn them only by demonstrating knowledge and experience in the outdoors. So if you are a Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer, and think you are tough and disciplined enough to hike or ride the miles, camp the nights, run the rivers or lakes, or do the work to conserve the land, then

read on and see if the National Outdoor badges or possibly the National Medal for Outdoor Achievement could be for you and your troop, team, or crew!

National Outdoor Awards for Camping, Aquatics, Conservation, Hiking, Riding, and Adventure

- When a Scout excels in outdoor participation, there are awards to show for it! This program, conceived by the BSA's National Camping Task Force, includes a series of six badges designed to recognize a Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer who has exemplary knowledge and experience in performing high-level outdoor activities.
- The award consists of up to six emblem segments positioned around the perimeter of a beautiful center emblem. All are embroidered in full color. The segments represent six areas of emphasis: Camping, Aquatics, Conservation, Hiking, Riding, and Adventure, with rigorous requirements to earn each segment. The center emblem features an outdoor scene with fleur-de-lis and the words "National Outdoor Awards."
- The six National Outdoor Awards badges recognize a Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer who demonstrates knowledge and experience in camping, aquatics, conservation, hiking, riding, or adventure. Youth earning the National Outdoor Awards badges have demonstrated that they are knowledgeable, safe, and comfortable in the outdoor activity covered by the badge. National Outdoor Awards badges may be earned in the following areas:
 - **Camping.** A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for Camping upon successfully completing the Camping requirements outlined in the National Outdoor Awards handout.
 - In addition, a gold device may be earned for each additional 25 nights of camping. A silver device is earned for each additional 100 nights of camping. The youth may wear any combination of devices totaling his or her current number of nights camping.
 - **Hiking.** A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for Hiking upon successfully completing the Hiking requirements outlined in the National Outdoor Awards handout.
 - A gold device may be earned for each additional 50 miles hiked, backpacked, snowshoed, or skied as outlined in requirements 2 and 3 as stated in the National Outdoor Awards handout. A silver device is earned for each additional 200 miles of hiking.

The youth may wear any combination of devices totaling his or her current number of miles hiking.

- **Aquatics.** A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for Aquatics upon successfully completing the Aquatics requirements outlined in the National Outdoor Awards handout.
 - A gold device may be earned for each additional 25 hours of aquatics activity listed in requirement 5. A silver device is earned for each additional 100 hours of aquatics activity. The youth may wear any combination of devices totaling his or her current number of hours of aquatics activity.
- **Conservation.** A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for Conservation upon successfully completing the Conservation requirements outlined in the National Outdoor Awards handout.
 - A gold device may be earned for each additional 25 hours of conservation work. A silver device is earned for each additional 100 hours of conservation work (for example, the first silver device is earned at 125 total hours of conservation work). Youth may wear any combination of devices totaling his or her current number of hours of conservation work.
- **Riding.** A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for

Riding upon successfully completing the Riding requirements outlined in the National Outdoor Awards handout.

- A gold device may be earned for each additional 100 miles of riding set forth in requirement 3. A silver device is earned for each additional 400 miles of riding. The youth may wear any combination of devices totaling his or her current number of miles of riding.
- **Adventure.** A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for Adventure upon successfully completing the Adventure requirements outlined in the National Outdoor Awards handout.
 - A gold device may be earned for each additional five activities. A silver device is earned for each additional 20 activities. The Scout may wear any combination of devices totaling his current number of activities.
- **National Medal for Outdoor Achievement.** The National Medal for Outdoor Achievement is the highest recognition that a Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer can earn for exemplary achievement, experience, and skill in multiple areas of outdoor endeavor. In order for a youth to earn the National Medal for Outdoor Achievement, he or she must complete the requirements outlined in the National Outdoor Awards handout.

NATIONAL OUTDOOR AWARDS FOR CAMPING, AQUATICS, CONSERVATION, HIKING, RIDING, AND ADVENTURE



When a Scout excels in outdoor participation, there are awards to show for it! This program, conceived by the BSA's National Camping Task Force, includes a series of six badges designed to recognize a Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer who has exemplary knowledge and experience in performing high-level outdoor activities.

The award consists of up to six emblem segments positioned around the perimeter of a beautiful center emblem. All are embroidered in full color. The segments represent six areas of emphasis: Camping, Aquatics, Conservation, Hiking, Riding, and Adventure, with rigorous requirements to earn each segment. The center emblem features an outdoor scene with fleur-de-lis and the words "National Outdoor Awards."

The six National Outdoor Awards badges recognize a Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer who demonstrates knowledge and experience in camping, aquatics, conservation, hiking, riding, or adventure. Youth earning the National Outdoor Awards badges have demonstrated that they are knowledgeable, safe, and comfortable in the outdoor activity covered by the badge.

National Outdoor Awards badges may be earned in the following areas:

Camping

A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for Camping upon successfully completing the following requirements:

1. Earn the Boy Scout First Class rank, Sea Scout Apprentice rank, or complete Venturing Ranger Award requirements 1–6.
2. Complete the Camping merit badge requirements.
3. Complete the requirements for two of the following three: Cooking merit badge or Ranger Cooking core; First Aid merit badge or Ranger First Aid core; Pioneering merit badge.

4. Complete 25 days and nights of camping—including six consecutive days (five nights) of camping (Sea Scouts may be on a boat), approved and under the auspices and standards of the Boy Scouts of America—including nights camped as part of requirements 1 through 3 above. Boy Scouts and Varsity Scouts must complete six consecutive days (five nights) of the 25 nights at a BSA accredited resident camp. A gold device may be earned for each additional 25 nights of camping. A silver device is earned for each additional 100 nights of camping. The youth may wear any combination of devices totaling his or her current number of nights camping.

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Hiking

A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for Hiking upon successfully completing the following requirements:

1. Earn the Boy Scout First Class rank, Sea Scout Apprentice rank, or complete Venturing Ranger Award requirements 1–6.
2. Complete the requirements for one of the following: Hiking merit badge, Backpacking merit badge, or Venturing Ranger Backpacking elective.
3. Complete the requirements for one of the following: Orienteering merit badge, Geocaching merit badge, *Pathfinding merit badge, or Venturing Ranger Land Navigation core requirement.
4. Complete 100 miles of hiking, backpacking, snowshoeing, or cross-country skiing under the auspices of the Boy Scouts of America, including miles hiked as part of requirements 2 and 3.

A gold device may be earned for each additional 50 miles hiked, backpacked, snowshoed, or skied as outlined in requirements 2 and 3. A silver device is earned for each additional 200 miles of hiking. The youth may wear any combination of devices totaling his or her current number of miles hiking.

**Only the Scouts who have already earned the Pathfinding merit badge during Scouting's centennial celebration in 2010 and first quarter of 2011 can receive credit for this requirement. This badge has been discontinued since then, and can no longer be earned.*

Aquatics

A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for Aquatics upon successfully completing the following requirements:

1. Earn the Boy Scout First Class rank, Sea Scout Apprentice rank, *or* complete Venturing Ranger Award requirements 1–6.
2. Complete the requirements for the Swimming merit badge and either Lifesaving merit badge or Venturing Ranger Lifesaver elective. (For Sea Scouts, Swimming merit badge requirements are an Ordinary rank requirement, and Lifesaving merit badge requirements are an Able rank requirement).
3. Complete the requirements for the Mile Swim BSA Award.
4. Complete the requirements for at least one of the following: Canoeing, Fishing, Fly-Fishing, Kayaking, Rowing, Scuba Diving, Small-Boat Sailing, Water Sports, or Whitewater merit badges or Ranger Award Fishing, Scuba, or Watercraft electives. Complete at least 25 hours of on-the-water time, applying the skills that you learned in the merit badge or Ranger elective.
5. Complete at least 50 hours of any combination of swimming, canoeing, fishing, fly-fishing, kayaking, rowing, scuba, small-boat sailing, stand up paddle boarding, water sports, or whitewater activity under the auspices of the Boy Scouts of America, including time spent in requirements 2 through 4.

A gold device may be earned for each additional 25 hours of aquatics activity listed in requirement 5. A silver device is earned for each additional 100 hours of aquatics activity. The youth may wear any combination of devices totaling his or her current number of hours of aquatics activity.

Conservation

A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for Conservation upon successfully completing the following requirements:

1. Earn the Boy Scout First Class rank, Sea Scout Apprentice rank, *or* complete Venturing Ranger Award requirements 1–6.
2. Demonstrate the safe use of five of the following conservation tools: pick or pickax; shovel or spade; ax; bow saw; cross-cut saw; pry bar; sledge hammer; loppers or shears; fire rake or McLeod; and/or Pulaski. Discuss the ethical use of the tools you chose.
3. Complete the requirements for the following:
 - a. Environmental Science merit badge *or* Sustainability merit badge *or* both Venturing Ranger Conservation core and Ecology elective
 - b. Soil and Water Conservation merit badge
 - c. One of the following merit badges: Fish and Wildlife Management, Forestry, or Mammals

4. Complete 25 hours of conservation work under the auspices and standards of the Boy Scouts of America, including hours worked as part of requirements 1 through 3.

A gold device may be earned for each additional 25 hours of conservation work. A silver device is earned for each additional 100 hours of conservation work (for example, the first silver device is earned at 125 total hours of conservation work). Youth may wear any combination of devices totaling his or her current number of hours of conservation work.

Riding

A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for Riding upon successfully completing the following requirements:

1. Earn the Boy Scout First Class rank, Sea Scout Apprentice rank, *or* complete Venturing Ranger Award requirements 1–6.
2. Complete the requirements for at least one of the following:
 - a. Cycling merit badge or Ranger Cycling/Mountain Biking elective and 100 miles of cycling
 - b. Horsemanship merit badge or Ranger Equestrian elective and 20 miles of horseback riding
 - c. Motorboating merit badge or Ranger Watercraft elective and 100 miles of motor boating
 - d. Skating merit badge or Ranger Winter Sports elective and 20 miles of skating
3. Complete 200 miles of riding activities, including cycling, stock riding, skating, motor boating, mountain boarding, snowmobiling (including ATV or PWC riding at an approved council program), under the auspices of the Boy Scouts of America, including the miles in requirement 2.

A gold device may be earned for each additional 100 miles of riding set forth in requirement 3. A silver device is earned for each additional 400 miles of riding. The youth may wear any combination of devices totaling his or her current number of miles of riding.

Adventure

A Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer may earn the National Outdoor Badge for Adventure upon successfully completing the following requirements:

1. Earn the Boy Scout First Class rank, Sea Scout Apprentice rank, *or* complete Venturing Ranger Award requirements 1–6.

2. Complete the requirements for one of the following: Wilderness Survival, Search and Rescue, or Emergency Preparedness merit badges or Ranger Wilderness Survival core, Ranger Emergency Preparedness core, or Ranger First Aid elective.
3. Complete 10 of any combination or repetition of the following adventure activities under the auspices of the Boy Scouts of America:
 - a. A backpacking trip lasting three or more days and covering more than 20 miles without food resupply
 - b. A canoeing, rowing, or sailing trip lasting three or more days and covering more than 50 miles without food resupply
 - c. A whitewater trip lasting two or more days and covering more than 20 miles without food resupply
 - d. A climbing activity on open rock, following Climb on Safely principles, that includes camping overnight
 - e. Earn the National Historic Trails Award.
 - f. Earn the 50-Miler Award.
 - g. Attend any national high-adventure base or any nationally recognized local high-adventure or specialty-adventure program.

Items 3a–g may be repeated as desired. A single activity that satisfies multiple items in 3a–g may be counted as separate activities at the discretion of the unit leader. Similarly, a single activity that doubles an item in 3a–d may be counted as two activities at the discretion of the unit leader. A gold device may be earned for each additional five activities. A silver device is earned for each additional 20 activities. The Scout may wear any combination of devices totaling his current number of activities.



National Outdoor Awards Devices

As defined in the requirements for the National Outdoor Awards Program, placing a gold- or silver-finish device on the appropriate activity segment can recognize additional achievements in any of the six areas.

National Medal for Outdoor Achievement

The National Medal for Outdoor Achievement is the highest recognition that a Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturer can earn for exemplary achievement,

experience, and skill in multiple areas of outdoor endeavor. In order for a youth to earn the National Medal for Outdoor Achievement, he or she must complete the following requirements:

1. Earn the Boy Scout First Class rank, Sea Scout Apprentice rank, or complete Venturing Ranger Award requirements 1–6 and hold the Venturing Discovery Award.
2. Earn the National Outdoor Badge for Camping with a silver device.
3. Earn any two additional National Outdoor Badges, each with two gold devices.
4. Complete the requirements for all of the following: Backpacking merit badge or Ranger Backpacking elective; Emergency Preparedness merit badge or Ranger Emergency Preparedness core; Nature merit badge; and Wilderness Survival merit badge or Ranger Wilderness Survival core.
5. Complete a 16-hour course in Wilderness First Aid from the American Red Cross, Wilderness Medical Institute, or other recognized provider.
6. Become a Leave No Trace Trainer by completing the 16-hour training course from a recognized Leave No Trace Master Educator.
7. Plan and lead, with the approval of your unit leader, an outing for your troop, team, ship, crew patrol, or squad in two of the following activity areas: hiking and backpacking, aquatics activities, or riding. Include in each outing a service element addressing recreational impacts resulting from that type of activity. With the approval of your unit leader, you may plan and lead the outings for another Cub Scout pack, Boy Scout troop, Varsity Scout team, Sea Scout ship, or Venturing crew.
8. Complete at least one of the following:
 - a. Plan and lead, with the approval of your unit leader, an adventure activity identified in the National Outdoor Badge for Adventure for your troop, team, ship, crew, patrol, or squad.
 - b. Successfully complete a season on a council summer camp staff in an outdoor area, such as aquatics, Scoutcraft, nature/environment, climbing, or COPE.

