



*Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, Reverent*

---

## **How Advancement Works in Troop 728: A Primer for New Parents**

**Introduction:** After a scout joins Troop 728 and becomes a Scout, a flood of information immediately confronts the scouts and parent(s) and/or guardian(s). It can certainly prove overwhelming. One of the more confusing areas concerns the advancement process and record keeping. This primer should minimally guide you through the general process; however, there are myriad awards, achievements, etc. that your scout may earn along the trail to Eagle which are not explained below. If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask the Scoutmaster, Committee Chair, Advancement Chair, and/or Merit Badge Coordinator. Contact information for these adult leaders is provided at the bottom of this document.

**Rank Advancements:** The trail to Eagle consists of earning seven ranks. Along the way, scouts are expected to master various “scout skills,” learn how to teach these to others, serve in leadership positions, engage in various service projects, explore the outdoors, and eventually to organize and lead their culminating activity: the Eagle Project. The ranks progress in difficulty, and they draw on different skills that are matched to the maturation process as scouts grow from youth to young adults.

**Ranks:** There are seven ranks in Scouting: Scout, Tenderfoot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, Star, Life, and Eagle.

**Scout:** The Scout rank introduces the scout to Scouting principles, including the Oath and Law. Additionally, they start to acquire foundational scout skills that start them along the Trail to First Class (aka, TTFC).

**Tenderfoot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, & 1<sup>st</sup> Class:** The next three ranks are focused on learning “scout skills”: camping, patrol cooking, hiking, knots and lashings, orienteering with map and compass, first aid, swimming, safe knife and ax handling, fire building, responsibilities of citizenship, service projects, etc. These ranks also help the scout begin to learn how to live the Scout Oath and Law in daily life. These ranks provide the occasions for the scout to learn the skills that he will be expected to teach as he progresses towards Eagle.

**Star & Life:** These two ranks represent a deliberate reorientation of the scout from learner to teacher, from follower to servant leader, from a youth to a young adult. The primary requirement of these ranks is to serve in at least two leadership positions in Troop 728. Scouts may serve in various positions, including Assistant Patrol Leader, Patrol Leader, Den Chief, Quartermaster, Historian, Scribe, Bugler, Order of the Arrow Representative, Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, Senior Patrol Leader, etc. In addition, Star and Life scouts participate in more service projects, often assisting fellow scouts in completing their Eagle projects. They build on



*Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, Reverent*

---

their “scout skills” by earning a set amount of merit badges. The Star rank requires six merit badges (including 4 Eagle required); the Life rank requires five more merit badges (including 3 more Eagle required).

**Eagle:** The Eagle rank is the culmination of the Scout rank advancement process. The scout is required to serve their unit for six months and earn an additional 10 merit badges (a minimum of 21 total and including 14 Eagle required). However, the culminating requirement is the completion of the Eagle project. This is an extended service project that is conducted to help a local religious institution, school, or community. It must be planned, developed, and led by the Eagle Scout candidate. Ideally, it combines many of the skills learned along the scouting trail, including servant leadership, project management, public speaking, etc.

**Eagle Palms:** Troop 728 has a proud tradition of Eagle scouts staying active in the unit. They provide an invaluable service in that they represent the very best of scouting and serve as role models for younger scouts. Eagle Palms recognize this continued service. To earn the Bronze Palm, the Eagle Scout must complete an additional five merit badges and continue to serve the troop for three months. The Gold Palm requires three more months of service and five more merit badges. The Silver Palm is earned with three additional months of leadership within the unit and by securing five more merit badges. (Note: In Scouting, silver denotes a higher rank than gold.)

**Scoutmaster Conferences:** For every rank and for Eagle Palms, the scout must participate in a Scoutmaster conference. When the scout has completed all the requirements for a particular rank, the scout should schedule a conference with the scoutmaster. The reasons for this conference are multiple. Although the candidate is not “retested,” the scout asked questions about how they are living in accordance with the Scout Oath and Law. The scout may be asked about how the patrols and/or unit are functioning, how they assess the leadership provided by the youth and/or adults, what ideas they might have for improving Troop 728, and their plans for service to the Troop. The general goal is to “check-in” with the scout and to make certain that Troop 728 is serving them well and to discuss how the scout can give back to the unit. Once the candidate completes the Scoutmaster Conference, they may then schedule a Board of Review.

**Boards of Review:** Boards of Review (BORs) are conducted for each rank and the Eagle Palms. After the scout contacts the Advancement Chair a BOR is assembled and is constituted by at least three registered Committee Members. This is an important process in the life of Troop 728, as scouts get to know different adults through this process. Serving on a BOR is one of the easiest ways for new parents to get involved in the troop; it’s a great way to get to know



*Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, Reverent*

---

the scouts outside of your scout's patrol! The goals of the BOR are very similar to those of the Scoutmaster Conference. The scout is not "retested" but is asked a series of questions about completion of the rank, service to the troop, views on the unit's leadership, activities, etc., and how the scout plans to serve the troop in the coming months. Upon the successful completion of the BOR, the scout earns that rank. (Note: The BOR for the Eagle rank is not conducted by Troop 728 but is constituted by adults from the Sunset Trail District.)

**Courts of Honor:** Four times a year, Troop 728 holds a Court of Honor. At these celebrations scouts who have earned rank advancements, merit badges, special awards, etc. are recognized publicly for these achievements. Generally, a scout volunteers to work in conjunction with the Advancement Chair to build the program and serve as the Master of Ceremonies for the evening. This service to the troop is one possible way of completing two requirements for the Communications merit badge. At the Court of Honor all scouts are expected to wear their full uniform.

**Eagle Courts of Honor:** When a scout has successfully passed the Eagle Board of Review, scouts and parents usually want to celebrate this achievement by holding a special Eagle Court of Honor. These events can be organized separately and held on a special night. Scouts and scouters from Troop 728 are always welcome to attend these celebrations. Some Eagle scouts prefer to hold their Eagle Court of Honor on the same night as the Troop's Court of Honor. In such cases, the Eagle COH serves as an extension to the regular program.

**Merit Badges:** To earn the Eagle rank, a scout must complete a minimum of 21 merit badges. Fourteen of these badges must be Eagle-required merit badges. The other seven merit badges are electives. There are 138 merit badges currently offered. Troop 728 has counselors for the majority of these so that a scout should be able to earn most of these inside the troop.

**Merit Badge Requirements:** As mentioned above, the Star rank requires six merit badges (4 Eagle-required & 2 electives) and the Life rank requires five merit badges (3 Eagle-required & 2 electives). The Eagle rank requires that a scout earn an additional 10 merit badges (7 Eagle-required & 3 electives). A scout must complete a minimum of 21 merit badges; however, many scouts in Troop 728 earn many more than the minimum.

**Summer Camp:** Many scouts earn 3-4 merit badges at each summer camp. Scouts are encouraged to work on one or two Eagle-required merit badge during their first two summer camps (e.g. swimming, cooking, first aid, communications, etc.). However, these 7-day/6-night camps present a unique opportunity to earn some elective badges that are easier to complete at camp since the equipment is provided. It is not unusual for scouts to return from summer camp with partially completed merit badges called "partials." This often occurs when



*Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, Reverent*

---

a merit badge has requirements that cannot be completed at camp. In these cases, the scout will need to complete the merit badge with a MB counselor.

**Merit Badge Counselors and Blue Cards:** Troop 728 is a large unit. One of the ancillary benefits of a large troop is that there are many adults who have a variety of skills and interests. They volunteer to teach these skills to scouts as Merit Badge (MB) Counselors. In order to complete a MB, a scout must contact one of the designated counselors. For the Eagle-required MBs, there are a variety of counselors listed. Scouts are encouraged to pick different counselors for different badges so that they get to know a variety of adults in the troop. After the counselor agrees to work with a scout, the scout must secure a blue card from merit badge coordinator. This blue card must be filled out by the scout and the counselor. Additionally, the Scoutmaster must sign the blue card before the scout begins working on any requirements. Upon completion of the MB requirements, the scout meets with their counselor and completes the Blue Card. Upon securing the counselor's signature and the scoutmaster's signature, the blue card is separated into three segments. The counselor retains the Counselor's Record. The scout turns in the middle section to the merit badge coordinator; this is the most important part!!! The final segment, called the Applicant's Record should be kept by the scout.

If you have questions about MBs, please contact the Merit Badge Coordinator.

**Special Awards:** There are many special awards that scouts can earn during their time in scouting. Many of these recognize scouts who have achieved particularly difficult feats, including a 50-miler backpacking trip, 1-mile swim, National Outdoor Badge, Paul Bunyan Woodsman Award, W. Hornaday Badge, etc. The more commonly earned Special Awards include the following:

**Nights of Camping:** Troop 728 offers many camping opportunities. Scouts should keep track of their "Nights of Camping" in their Scout Book. Any official Scout camping trip counts towards these awards, including Troop 728 outings, summer camp, Venturing outings, Order of the Arrow outings, BSA High Adventure camps, etc. Upon the completion of various milestones (i.e. 25 nights; 50 nights; 75 nights; 100 nights; etc.), the scout should present this record to the troop's Advancement Chair. The scout will be awarded a flap with this designation to be worn on the scout uniform. While it seems daunting at first, there are many scouts in Troop 728 who have earned the "100 Nights of Camping" award. Some have even earned "150 Nights of Camping" and a few "200 Nights of Camping."

**Totin' Chip:** When a scout shows that he has learned how to handle and use both a knife, ax, and saw safely and responsibly, he earns this award. The use of these woods tools is an important skill that a scout needs to master; however, this award requires maturity and respect. A scout



*Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, Reverent*

---

must carry the Totin' Chip card or wear the Totin' Chip patch whenever he carries a knife, ax, or saw.

**Firem'n Chit:** When a scout show that he has learned how to handle and use fire safely and responsibly, he earns this award. The ability to build, manage, and extinguish a fire is an important skills that a scout needs to master; however, this award requires maturity and respect. A scout must carry the Firem'n Chit card or wear the Firem'n Chit patch whenever he carries matches and builds campfires.

**World Conservation Award:** A scout can earn this award by earning the following merit badges: Environmental Science MB, Citizenship in the World MB, and either Soil and Water Conservation MB or Fish and Wildlife Management MB

**Religious Emblems:** To encourage scouts to grow stronger in their faith, religious groups have developed specific religious emblems programs. BSA has approved of these programs and allows the emblems to be worn on the official uniform. Various religious groups administer the programs. If you have questions about Religious Emblems programs, you may speak with the Scoutmaster.

**National Outdoor Award:** National Outdoor Awards for Camping, Hiking, Aquatics, Riding, and Adventure.

Many scouts in Troop 728 have already qualified or are very close to qualifying for the National Outdoor Awards. There are five distinct segments that a scout can earn which honor a Scout or Varsity Scout who has exemplary knowledge and experience in performing high-level outdoor activities.

The award consists of five emblem segments positioned around the perimeter of a center emblem. The segments represent five areas of emphasis: Riding, Hiking, Camping, Aquatics, and Adventure, with rigorous requirements to earn each segment. Contact the Advancement Chair for details about this important BSA Award.

**Record Keeping:** Scouting requires a significant amount of record keeping. Much of this is done by adult leaders of Troop 728, including official rank information, merit badge completion dates, special awards, etc. However, each scout must keep good records on the trail to Eagle. It is understandable that first year scouts might need parental assistance; however, as the scout proceeds in the program, more and more responsibilities should be turned over to the scout himself.



*Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, Reverent*

---

**Scout Book:** For the first four ranks, it is really important that the scout maintains accurate and up-to-date records. As he learns various “scout skills,” he needs to make certain that an adult is signing off on these requirements. Troop 728 is blessed with many active adults. For this reason, no adult should sign more than five requirements in any one rank for a particular scout. This policy encourages scouts to meet new adults. These records must be presented during the Scoutmaster Conference and the Board of Review; thus, they are extremely important. Parents are encouraged to make “back-ups” of these records periodically. Scout books should also be protected from the elements, as scouts need to bring them on Troop 728 outings.

**Nights of Camping:** In the back of the Scout Book, there is a designated location for recording nights of camping. Record the date, location, and name of the outing. This record will be important to show to the Advancement Chair when applying for the “Nights of Camping” awards.

**Service Hours:** In the back of the Scout Book, there is a place to record service hours. Record the date, location, and name of the service project. This includes any service project that the scout does for Troop 728, the Sunset Trail district, or the Cascade Pacific Council. However, troop fundraisers which result in money being deposited into “scout accounts” do not count as service hours. This record will be important especially for the Star, Life, Eagle ranks and some MBs which require extended periods of service.

**Troop Positions:** As your scout progresses through the various ranks, they will serve in various leadership positions in the troop. A scout may serve as the Assistant Patrol Leader or the Patrol Leader in the first two years in the troop. As the scout advances they may take on new leadership roles, such as Den Chief, Quartermaster, Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, etc. It is important for each scout to keep a detailed record of various leadership positions and the dates of service.

**Apps:** There are many apps available to help with scout recordkeeping. Ask other adults in the troop for recommendations.



*Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, Reverent*

---

**Questions:** Feel free to contact any of the people listed below with questions regarding the advancement process or any other questions that you might have regarding scouting with Troop 728.

---

Deb Starr  
Advancement Chair

Kari Silvertson  
Merit Badge Coordinator

Pat Pisano (scoutmaster@troop728.com)  
Scoutmaster

Bryce Horine (committeechair@troop728.com)  
Committee Chair



**Prepared. For Life.™**

Last Updated: January 2024