

ADVANCEMENT INFORMATION FOR LEADERS

November 2023

Firstly, I would like to thank you for taking the time and energy to help the boys advance. Thank you! Below is a list of answers to common Advancement questions I have received, gathered here in one place to help everyone.

Regarding Rank Advancement –

1. Scout Rank – PASM's should ALWAYS enter Scout Rank data in Scout book. Then send me an email to let me know the Scout is complete.
2. First Class Trail – PASM's may enter rank data for FCT ranks in Scout book OR sign the handbook in person - up to you. The Scout is required to send us a PDF copy of the handbook pages for the Rank they are seeking when they request a BOR so that we can cross-check to make sure all items are complete prior to scheduling the BOR.
3. Star, Life, and Eagle – Most of these items are covered during the Scoutmaster Conference. PASM's do not need to worry about this since the Scoutmaster is responsible for entering this data during the SMC.
4. Scouts must complete the BOR request form on the troop website.
5. BOR are being held in person on scheduled Tuesday evenings prior to meetings OR at monthly campouts. BOR are NOT held every week.
6. Scouts seeking BOR at a campout MUST request a BOR NO LATER than NOON on the Wednesday prior to the campout. Only boys who have been pre-approved for BOR will be permitted to have BOR during the campout. NO EXCEPTIONS. Policies for this have been posted multiple times in the troop newsletter.
7. Once the BOR is complete, the forms are given to advancement for processing. Please remind your Scouts to be patient and allow a reasonable amount of time for this transfer and data entry to occur.
8. After the BOR, there is nothing else the Scout needs to do.
9. Please encourage your Scouts to work on their email communication skills. This is a useful skill for sure, but especially timely now.
 - a. When sending emails to any adult, they are REQUIRED to copy in a parent or other trusted adult. This is Cyber Chip and YPT policy. Please pay attention to whether someone else is included in the email chain. If not, **when you reply, please remind him of this policy and copy in his parent(s) or a fellow PASM. This is important.**

- b. Encourage them to use proper salutations and closings (know your audience).
- c. Encourage the boys to include their full name AND patrol. We have over 250 Scouts...
- d. Remind them to send emails to the Scouting contacts for Scoutmaster, Troop Committee Chair, Advancement, BOR, etc. This helps us keep our volunteer work separated from our personal items and keep organized communication records. Addresses are available on the troop website. Please encourage your Scouts to use the resources available to them and do not just send them the addresses if they ask for them. Teach a Scout to fish, so to speak...

Regarding Merit Badge work –

1. Anatomy of a Merit Badge Card (blue card) – see PDF posted to the Troop website
 - a. Front
 - i. Left panel – information, nothing needed here
 - ii. Center Panel – itemized list for MBC use
 - iii. **Right Panel – Scout name, address, district, council, and INITIAL UNIT LEADER SIGNATURE. Scouts need to ADD PATROL NAME HERE.**
 - b. Back
 - i. Left Panel – Name of MB and MBC contact information. This panel **MUST** be signed by the MBC upon completion of the MB. **DO NOT** fill in the data below the line (checked and recorded...). This is for Advancement use.
 - ii. **Center Panel – Scout name, name of MB, date completed, and signature lines. This is the second spot a MBC must sign upon completion of the MB. This is also where the Second Unit Leader Signature line is located.**
 - iii. Right Panel – this panel is technically given to the MBC upon completion so that they keep a record of who they have worked with and for which MB, in case questions arise in the future. Many MBC do not retain these panels.
2. Recap on the Merit Badge process (per BSA Guide to Advancement)
 - a. Scout approaches PASM to ask for blue card **for a specific MB.**
 - i. Scout must specify precisely which MB he wishes to begin, so that you can advise on MBC (see below). If meeting in person, write it on the card!

- ii. If the Scout is intending to take a MB class, ask them where, are all requirements covered (is it a complete MB), is the MBC registered for that MB, etc. See troop website posting for more information on this (under MB reminders). **If a Scout is taking a class that does not cover all requirements, they MUST identify a registered MBC available to help them complete any work before/after the class. NO EXCEPTIONS.**
 - iii. **NO MB WORK IS ACCEPTED FROM GIGGLIN MARLIN. NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- b. PASM recommends name of at least one registered MBC for that MB and signs the FRONT of the card. This initial unit leader signature may also be handled within Scout book.
 - i. **It is the responsibility of the PASM to provide the name of AT LEAST one MBC registered for that MB.** We have a list of registered MBC available for your reference on the troop website. This is intended for YOUR reference to aid the Scout. **You should not refer the Scout to the list.**
 - ii. **Please encourage the Scout to read the MB requirements BEFORE starting the MB.** This is a huge source of frustration and confusion. It is the Scout's responsibility to know what he is getting into. **BE PREPARED.**
 - iii. **When the Scout requests a blue card, this is the time to discuss with the Scout any concerns you may have about the appropriateness of the MB.** For instance, Family Life might not be well-suited to every FCT kid due to its content. Personal Management, Nuclear Science, Engineering, etc. may be above the educational level of the Scout. Do they realize they need to become certified to earn SCUBA Diving MB? Are they prepared to care for a pet for 4 months? While you cannot forbid a Scout from beginning any specific MB, it is your job to provide advice and counsel. Have the conversation and allow the Scout to choose. Many Scouts have not yet read the requirements and have no idea what they are getting into. See above. **Encourage your Scouts to BE PREPARED.**
 - iv. **The Scout may choose to work with ANY registered MBC, not just the names provided by the PASM.** But, if the Scout chooses to use a name from outside our troop list, it is the SCOUT'S responsibility to confirm that the MBC he chooses to work with is registered with BSA for THAT MB.

- v. **Scout book has a feature open now to allow PASM to provide the initial unit leader signature.** Go into the Scout's profile, click on Advancement, scroll down to the MB list. If the Scout has already added the MB to his profile, it will be visible at the top of the list. Click there and look for the box that says Initial Unit Leader Signature. If the MB requested is not visible yet click on Start a New Merit Badge, select the MB from the list, and then click on the Initial Unit Leader Signature.
- c. Scouts may begin working with MBC. Scout may choose to work with any registered MBC but it is required that he verify that the MBC is registered. Some MBC may desire/require Scouts to connect with them via Scout book. If you need assistance with this, please contact me. I am happy to help.
 - i. Scouts may choose to link to their chosen MBC within Scout book. Some virtual programs require this. The program must provide the full name or email address for the MB and then the Scout can add them as a connection.
 - ii. **ONLY MBC and Advancement may enter MB requirements as complete. Scouts, parents, and PASM may not.**
- d. Once all requirements are signed off by MBC, Scout returns to PASM for second unit leader signature. At this time, the PASM discusses the Scout's experience - what he learned, what went well, what was challenging, etc.
 - i. Technically, this is not a new requirement. It appears new to many of us because T55 has not been following BSA policy on this part of the MB process for as long as I have been part of the Troop. Again, **this is not new, and it is a requirement.** Rules are in place for a reason. See below.
 - ii. This is not intended to create more work for you or the Scout. This is in fact intended to be a very valuable part of the MB process, closing the loop on the MB work by having a conversation with the Scout about what went well, what didn't, what they enjoyed or found challenging, etc. This step is intended to foster the relationship between Scout and PASM. **This is NOT OPTIONAL and MB work will not be accepted from Scouts until they receive a second unit leader signature following completion of the MB.**
 - iii. Not coincidentally, this step also provides useful intel for us as Scouting leaders – which MBC or programs are good and

which are, um, not; which MBC are actually responsive/available or not; which MBC work well with the Scouts; what personalities work well together or don't, etc. This helps you provide good counsel to the next Scout who comes to ask for an MBC for that MB.

- iv. **Scouts should return to the PASM after all requirements are signed off by the MBC and arrange the 'second signature meeting'**. This can be done in person or by video conference and should not take very long. As always, **A BUDDY OR PARENT MUST BE PRESENT DURING THE ENTIREITY OF THE CONVERSATION per YPT.**
- v. Once the PASM is satisfied that the MB work was actually and personally done by the Scout and has had the conversation with the Scout, you may sign the actual blue card OR send an email to the Scout. This is the second signature line on the BACK of the card. **SECOND UNIT LEADER SIGNATURES ARE NOT LOGGED IN SCOUTBOOK. There is no mechanism for this, as second unit leader signatures are intended to take place in person, as a conversation, and therefore sign directly on a blue card.**
- e. Scout turns in completed blue card - completed in ink/printed from Scout book, labeled with patrol, ALL requirements signed as completed, and TWO unit leader signatures. **NO ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS ARE ACCEPTED – hard copies only. NO LOOSE ITEMS ARE ACCEPTED.**
- f. Please take some time during your next patrol meeting to remind your Scouts of these policies and in particular, the rules pertaining to taking MB classes that do not cover all requirements and how to submit to Advancement. This is especially important as summer camp season approaches.

A lot of content there, but I hope this is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

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