

Boards of Review: An Overview for All Ranks

This section first covers board of review procedures for all Boy Scout ranks. It is followed by [“Particulars for Tenderfoot Through Life Ranks,” 8.0.2.0](#); and [“Particulars for the Eagle Scout Rank,” 8.0.3.0](#).

Procedures for Sea Scout bridges of review, and several related topics, are much the same as those for Scouts BSA. There are some exceptions, however, as noted in the sections beginning with [“The Sea Scout Bridge of Review,” 4.4.2.0](#), and ending with [“Appealing a Quartermaster Bridge of Review Decision,” 4.4.2.8](#). Boards of review for the Discovery, Pathfinder, and Summit awards in Venturing are covered in the topics beginning with [“Venturing Boards of Review,” 8.0.5.0](#).

8.0.0.1 Purpose and Timeliness of Boards of Review

A Scout who has completed the requirements for any rank (except Scout rank) then appears before a board of review. Its purpose is to determine the quality of the Scout’s experience and decide whether the requirements for the rank have been fulfilled. If so, the board not only approves the Scout’s advancement but also provides encouragement to continue the quest for the next rank. Because the board of review date becomes the effective advancement date, boards should be scheduled promptly as Scouts are ready, or set up on a regular basis that assures Scouts are not delayed in beginning time-oriented requirements for the next rank.

Note that Scouts must be registered through the time they are working on advancement requirements, but need not be registered thereafter or when their board of review is conducted.

8.0.0.2 Boards of Review Must Be Granted When Requirements Are Met

A Scout shall not be denied this opportunity. When a Scout believes that all the requirements for a rank have been completed, including a Scoutmaster conference, a board of review must be granted. Scoutmasters—or councils or districts in the case of the Eagle Scout rank—for example, do not have authority to expect a Scout to request or organize one, or to “defer” the Scout, or to ask the Scout to perform beyond the requirements in order to be granted one. Neither can a board of review be denied or postponed due to issues such as uniforming, payment of dues, participation in fundraising activities, etc.

In a case where there is concern that the requirements for a rank as written have not been fulfilled, it is appropriate to advise the Scout that he or she might not pass the board and to make suggestions about what might be done to improve the chances for success. It is, however, the Scout’s decision to go ahead with a board of review or not.

8.0.0.3 Composition of the Board of Review

A board of review must consist of no fewer than three members and no more than six, all of whom must be at least 21 years of age. For further specifications, see [“Particulars for Tenderfoot Through Life Ranks,” 8.0.2.0](#), and [“Particulars for the Eagle Scout Rank,” 8.0.3.0](#). Unit leaders and assistants shall not serve on a board of review for a Scout in their own unit. Parents, guardians, or relatives shall not serve on a board for their child. The candidate or the candidate’s parent(s) or guardian(s), or relative(s) shall have no part in selecting any board of review members.

8.0.0.4 Wearing the Uniform—or Neat in Appearance

It is preferred a Scout be in full field uniform for any board of review. As much of the uniform as the Scout owns should be worn, and it should be as correct as possible, with the badges worn properly. It may be the uniform as typically worn by the Scout's troop, crew, or ship. If wearing all or part of the uniform is impractical for whatever reason, the candidate should be clean and neat in appearance and dressed appropriately, according to the Scout's means, for the milestone marked by the occasion. Regardless of unit, district, or council expectations or rules, boards of review shall not reject candidates solely for reasons related to uniforming or attire, as long as they are dressed to the above description. Candidates shall not be required to purchase uniforming or clothing to participate in a board of review.

8.0.1.0 Conducting the Board of Review

Most adults would admit to nervousness if told they were to appear before a "board of review." Imagine how a Scout must feel. A certain level of formality and meaningful questioning should exist, but it is important that the atmosphere be relaxed and that the review is conducted with the Scout Law in mind. It may help if the unit leader introduces the candidate, and if a few minutes are spent getting acquainted.

The unit leader may remain in the room, but only to observe, not to participate unless called upon. The number of "observers" at a board of review should otherwise be minimized. The members of the board of review, however, have the authority to exclude the unit leader or any other observers if they believe their presence will inhibit open and forthright discussion. Youth observers are not permitted in boards of review for Scouts BSA advancement.

The Scout's parents, relatives, or guardians should not be in attendance in any capacity—not as members of the board, as observers, or even as the unit leader. Their presence can change the discussion dynamics. In cases where parents or guardians *insist* on attending a board of review, they should be counseled that their presence can change how their child addresses questions, and that the opportunity to further self-reliance and courage may be lessened. However, if parents or guardians still insist on being present, they must be permitted to attend as observers. For Scouts with special needs, see additional information under ["Advancement for Scouts With Special Needs," 10.2.2.0.](#)

In situations where—before a board is held—one or more members are of an opinion the Scout should be rejected, they should discuss their reasoning with the unit leader or others who know the Scout. Generally, a unit leader is closer to the youth; he or she may be able to present a different perspective and prevent an uncomfortable or unfair scenario. Board members who cannot be fair and impartial should recuse themselves.

The BSA discourages mock or practice boards of review. "Practice" reviews may imply that board members will ask predetermined questions or that the board of review is anticipated to be other than a positive experience. Instead, the advancement committee should aim for unrehearsed, spontaneous answers revealing character, citizenship, leadership, and mental and physical fitness at the boards of review.

8.0.1.1 Not a Retest or "Examination"

Though one reason for a board of review is to help ensure the Scout did what was supposed to have been done to meet the requirements, it shall become neither a retest or "examination," nor a challenge of the Scout's knowledge. In most cases it should, instead, be a celebration of accomplishment. Remember, it is more about the journey. A badge recognizes what a Scout has

done toward achieving the primary goal of personal growth. See [“Personal Growth Is the Primary Goal,” 2.0.0.3](#). It is thus more about the learning *experience* than it is about the specific skills learned. See also [“Mechanics of Advancement in Scouts BSA,” 4.2.0.0](#).

A Scout must not be rejected at a board of review for reasons unrelated to advancement requirements. For example, the Scout must not be rejected for not bringing a Scouts BSA Handbook or being tardy for a board of review, but the reason for the tardiness may certainly be a topic for discussion.

8.0.1.2 What Should Be Discussed

A board of review may be conducted posthumously if all the requirements were met prior to the Scout’s death. See topic [“Bestowing Posthumous Awards,” 5.0.6.0](#), for more information.

During the review, board members may refer to the *Scouts BSA Handbook*, *Scouts BSA Requirements* book, *Troop Leader Guidebook*, *Guide to Advancement*, and other such references. The *Troop Committee Guidebook* has examples of appropriate questions. Board members may ask where skills were learned by the Scout, who the Scout’s teachers were, and what was gained from fulfilling selected requirements. The answers will reveal what was done to earn the rank. It can be determined, then, if this was what the Scout was supposed to do. Discussion of how the Scout has lived the Scout Oath and Scout Law at home, at school, in the unit, and in the community should be included. We must remember, however, that though we have high expectations for our members, as for ourselves, we do not insist on perfection. A positive attitude is most important, and that a youth accepts Scouting’s ideals and sets and meets good standards in daily life.

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A board is not required to record “minutes,” but it is a good idea. Any such notes must remain confidential to the members of the board or to administrators with a need to know. They may be used in preparing a follow-up letter, should a Scout be turned down, and they can be helpful in an appeal process. In any case, once a review or appeal is completed, all notes must be destroyed.

8.0.1.3 How Boards Can Lead to Program Improvement

Periodic reviews of members’ progress can provide a measure of unit effectiveness. A unit might uncover ways to increase the educational value of its outings, or how to strengthen administration of national advancement procedures. For example, if it is discovered troop leaders are not ensuring that all requirements have been met before Scouts present themselves for the board of review, then process improvements can be recommended. A board can also help by considering the style of leadership best suited to current circumstances and ways to adjust it to different needs. Note that boards of review may also be held for Scouts who are not advancing. Much can be learned from them, as well.

8.0.1.4 Board Members Must Agree Unanimously on Decisions to Approve

After the board of review the Scout is asked to wait outside the room or out of hearing range while the board deliberates. To approve awarding a rank, the board must agree unanimously. Every effort should be made to deliberate with careful consideration of each member’s perspective and in sufficient detail as to avoid factual misunderstanding. It is appropriate to call the candidate back if additional questions may provide clarification. Still, if any member dissents, the decision cannot be for approval. In the case of such disagreement, the Scout shall not be informed about the specifics of the conversations or any arguments taking place. As indicated below ([“After the Review,” 8.0.1.5](#)), the Scout is only told what improvements need to be made.

8.0.1.5 After the Review

If the members agree a Scout is ready to advance, the Scout is called in and congratulated. The board of review date—not that of a subsequent court of honor—becomes the rank’s effective date.

If a board does not approve, the candidate must be so informed and told what can be done to improve. Most Scouts accept responsibility for their behavior or for not completing requirements properly.

If it is thought that a Scout, before his or her 18th birthday, can benefit from an opportunity to properly complete the requirements, the board may adjourn and reconvene at a later date. If the candidate agrees to this, then if possible, the same members should reassemble. If the candidate does not agree, then the board must make its decision at that point. In any case, a follow-up letter must be promptly sent to a Scout who is turned down. A copy of the letter should also be sent to the council’s designated appeals coordinator. The letter must include actions advised that may lead to advancement, and also an explanation of appeal procedures. (See [“Appealing a Decision,” 8.0.4.0](#), or—if applicable—[“Appealing a Quartermaster Bridge of Review Decision,” 4.4.2.8](#) or [“After the Venturing Board of Review,” 8.0.5.5](#).) The council must keep a copy of the letter.

After any board of review, the unit leader is informed of the decision.

8.0.1.6 Boards of Review Through Videoconferencing

Boards of review for any rank are meant to be face-to-face, personal experiences. From time to time, however, as Scouts go off to college or the military, or live in very remote locations, for example, it may be virtually impossible to hold in-person boards of review. In those rare situations where it is unreasonable to expect a Scout to travel long distances, or to wait several months, it is permissible to use videoconferencing. If such boards of review are held, however, they must be conducted according to the following requirements.

1. The local council must grant permission to hold a videoconference board of review for the Eagle Scout rank. Videoconference boards of review may be held for other ranks without local council approval, but they still must comply with the following requirements.
2. All equipment, including the cameras, lighting, microphones, software, and internet connection, should be tested ahead of time to provide the best audiovisual experience possible.
3. All members of the board of review must be visible to the Scout, and any observers with the Scout must be visible to the members of the board of review. No one within hearing range on either side shall be off camera. It is important to consider your technical capabilities when planning how many board of review members to involve. Observers should be minimized for any board of review, and this applies especially to videoconference reviews. Their presence can change the discussion dynamics.
4. For Scouts under the age of 18, a parent or guardian of the Scout, or two registered adult leaders as required by the Guide to Safe Scouting (www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss01) who are familiar with these requirements for videoconference boards of review, must be directly present with the Scout at the beginning of the conference. The Scouters may be from the nearest council, district, or unit. Their role is to verify that the Scout is in a safe environment and that the board of review appears to be in compliance with these requirements. Once all the members of the board of review are present on their end of the call and introductions are completed, and the review is about to begin, anyone present with the Scout must leave the room or move out of hearing distance unless they have specifically been approved to remain as observers. See [“Conducting the Board of Review,” 8.0.1.0](#), for more information.
5. Once the review process has been concluded, if the Scout is under age 18, the Scout’s parent or guardian, or two registered adult leaders must rejoin the Scout. Their purpose is to be available to

answer any questions that may arise, to join in the celebration of the Scout's accomplishment, or to be party to any instructions or arrangements regarding the appeals process or the reconvening of an incomplete review. Once this is done, the board members end the call and sign off.

6. Videoconference boards of review must not be recorded.

Boards of review under disputed circumstances and appeal boards may be conducted via videoconference under the same rare circumstances and the requirements listed above.

8.0.2.0 Particulars for Tenderfoot Through Life Ranks

The preceding applies to boards of review for all Scouts BSA ranks (except Scout rank), but there are a few differences for the ranks other than Eagle:

1. The board is made up of three to six unit committee members—no more and no less. In units with fewer than three registered committee members available to serve, it is permissible to use knowledgeable parents (not those of the candidate) or other adults (registered or not) who are at least 21 years of age and who understand Scouting's aims. Using unregistered adults for boards of review must be the exception, not the rule. Registered committee members familiar with the unit program, who have had a background check, and who are Youth Protection trained are preferred. Scheduling boards of review when and where committee members can attend usually alleviates the problem of not having enough committee members for a board.
2. Composition for Scouts BSA rank boards of review held in Venturing crews or Sea Scout ships is the same as that for Scouts BSA troops.
3. One member serves as chair. The unit committee decides how he or she is chosen. The chair conducts review meetings according to BSA procedures and reports results to the unit advancement coordinator.
4. The location should be comfortable, such as the unit's meeting place or a camp setting.
5. The review should take approximately 15 minutes, but not longer than 30 minutes.
6. Ranks shall not be presented until the signed advancement report is submitted to the local council.
7. If a Scout is to be reviewed for more than one rank (Tenderfoot, Second Class, or First Class), each rank should have a separate board of review. While these boards may be conducted on the same date, it is preferred—if feasible—that different members be involved on the boards to give the Scout an enhanced experience and an opportunity to interact with a variety of adults.