

The Unit Board of Review

The board of review is the final step in a Scout's rank advancement. It is designed to ensure that the Scout has completed all of the requirements for that rank, determine the quality of his troop experience, discuss the impact of the Scouting program on him (how he lives the Scout Oath and Law), and encourage him to advance to the next rank.

The board of review is not a retest of skills. By allowing the Scout to appear before the board of review, the Scoutmaster has certified that the Scout has completed all the requirements for this rank. Because the board of review is a check on the Scoutmaster and the troop program, however, the board needs to be satisfied that the Scout is ready for his next rank.

Checking skills abilities can be appropriate at boards of review. *Board members should keep in mind that ranks indicate present abilities and not past accomplishments:* "A Boy Scout badge recognizes what a young man is able to do; it not a reward for what he has done." (BSA, *Advancement Committee: Policies and Procedures*, 2002 Printing, p. 23.)

Just as with the Scoutmaster conference, the board of review is a valuable opportunity for members of the board to discuss with each Scout his activity in the troop and his understanding and practice of the ideals of Scouting. This is a time to:

- Openly talk about the Scout's progress in the troop.
- Ask how the Scout has demonstrated leadership in the troop and his patrol.
- Ask what he's done in his position of leadership.
- Ask how he defines Scout spirit and lives according to the Scout Oath and Law.
- See how much fun he's having.
- Determine whether he's having any problems.
- Ask for suggestions to make the troop better.
- Ask about non-Scouting areas of the boy's life (school, sports, extracurricular activities, etc.)

Scouts should wear their full Class A uniform (Scout shirt, pants, belt, socks, neckerchief, merit badge sash, and all patches sewn on correctly) to a Scoutmaster conference and board of review.

Questions

What is the purpose of the board of review?

- To make sure that the work has been learned and completed.
- To check to see what kind of experience the boy is having in his patrol and troop.
- To encourage the Scout to advance to the next rank.

How often are boards of review held?

This varies by troop. BSA's advancement committee policies and procedures recommend that boards of review should be held monthly.

Where are boards of review held?

Typically where the troop meets, most often in a facility located at the chartered organization (e.g., Scout hut or lodge). Boards of review can also be held at the same time as a troop meeting, at summer camp, or in the home of a member of the troop committee.

How long does a board of review last?

This varies by troop. BSA's advancement committee policies and procedures recommend 15 minutes from Tenderfoot through Life, and 30 minutes for Eagle.

Who sits on the board of review?

At least three but not more than six members of the troop committee sit on the board of review. Neither the Scoutmaster nor assistant Scoutmasters nor the Scout's parents, guardians, or relatives is permitted to serve on a Scout's board of review.

Is the discussion the same for all ranks?

Like the Scoutmaster conference, the discussion should be appropriate for the age and rank of the Scout. Some of the questions the board asks are relevant for all ranks. Other questions are more appropriate for older Scouts, especially those related to leadership, mentoring younger Scouts, and how he's making the troop better.

Can board members use supplementary materials as a reference during a board of review?

Yes. They should feel free to refer to the *Boy Scout Handbook*, *Scoutmaster Handbook*, or any other references during the review. The *Troop Committee Guidebook* and the link on this website contain examples of questions that could be asked during a review.

How does the board of review reach a decision?

After the board is finished, the Scout is asked to leave the room. The board then discusses the Scout's readiness for the next rank. The Scout is then invited back into the room and told the outcome. The decision of the board must be unanimous.

What happens if a Scout does well during a board of review?

He is congratulated, notified when he will receive his recognition award, and encouraged to continue his advancement or earn his next Eagle Palm.

When can a Scout be recognized for earning his new rank?

As soon as possible after the board of review (usually at the next scheduled troop meeting), but not until that action is reported to the council service center on an "Advancement Report." It is the responsibility of the troop (usually the advancement committee) to take this form to the council service center, buy the award, and submit the "Advancement Report" at the Scout Shop at the same time the award is purchased.

What happens if a Scout does not do well during a board of review?

If the board does not believe that the Scout is ready for the next rank, the board must tell him what he has not done satisfactorily. The members of the board should specify what must be done to rework the Scout's weaknesses and schedule another board of review for him. A follow-up letter must be sent to a Scout who is turned down for rank advancement, confirming the agreements reached on the actions necessary for advancement. If the candidate disagrees with the board, there is an appeal process that can be undertaken.

Can the decision of a board of review be appealed?

Yes. Two sets of circumstances may lead to the appeal of a decision:

1. If the unit leader or unit committee does not recommend the Scout for a board of review, or if the unit leader or unit committee does not sign the Eagle Scout application, the Scout or other interested party may appeal the decision at the next level.
2. If the appropriate board of review does not recommend the applicant for rank advancement, the decision may be appealed to the next higher level. The Scout, his leader, or his parents may appeal the decision. With all appeal applications, the final decision rests with the national Boy Scout Committee. In ascending order, levels are unit, district, local council, and national Boy Scout Committee.

On receipt of an appeal, the district or council committee responsible for advancement will provide a prompt review to determine the facts. All parties must be interviewed either individually or as a group, but a confrontation should be avoided. A written report with all details must be prepared for the committee responsible for a decision of for forwarding to the national Boy Scout Committee, if necessary. All appeals to the national Boy Scout Committee must be processed through the Scout's local council. A *copy* of the Scout's Eagle Scout Rank Application must be included when petitioning at the national level.

Are boards of review intended to be tough sessions, so that a Scout can "be prepared" to face the real world?

No. Just the opposite. Boards of review should be conducted in a relaxed setting. The Scout should be encouraged to talk freely and openly so the review can be a learning experience for both the Scout and members of the board.

When does tenure for a Scout's next rank begin?

Immediately – as of the date of the board of review.

What's the board of review like for Eagle Scout?

It's the final requirement for Eagle Scout, much like his "final exam" with his Scoutmaster. The candidate should be fully prepared to speak about his entire Scouting career, his Eagle Scout service project, the impact of Scouting on his life, and how adult leaders can better serve their troops. At least three but not more than six adult leaders sit on the board, and must be 21 years of age or older. Typically there are two reviewers from the Scout's own troop committee plus a member of the district advancement committee. Board members do not have to be registered in Scouting, but they must have an understanding of the importance and purpose of the Eagle board of review. Successful completion of the board of review for Eagle Scout signifies that the Scout is ready for Eagle. The troop then submits the Scout's paperwork to the council, and the council transmits the information electronically to national BSA headquarters. The official date that the Scout earned his Eagle Scout award is the date of the Eagle board of review.

Can I have a board of review before a Scoutmaster conference?

No. The Scoutmaster conference always precedes a board of review.

Can a Scout have a board of review after his 18th birthday?

Yes. Scouts who have completed all requirements for a rank (other than participating in a board of review) prior to their 18th birthday should be reviewed and recognized within three months after that date. Additional procedures pertain to Scouts who are more than three months past their 18th birthday before their Eagle Scout board of review.

So You Know Advancement? Test Your Skills!

True

or

false

–

An appropriate board of review might consist of the troop committee chair, the advancement chair, an assistant Scoutmaster, and one of the boy's parents.

False. The assistant Scoutmaster and parent are not allowed to sit on his board of review.

The board of review is essentially a retest of skills.

False. The board of review is primarily intended as a way for the board and Scout to get to know each other better and to share information that will help the Scout and the troop. It is the Scoutmaster's responsibility to ensure that the Scout knows his skills before sending him along to the board. Because the board of review is a check on the Scoutmaster and the troop program, however, the board needs to be satisfied that the Scout's abilities match the requirements of his next rank.

Scoutmaster conferences, boards of review, and merit badge sessions should be held in secret places to ensure confidentiality.

False. BSA policy strictly forbids secret meetings of any kind, and two-deep leadership is essential for youth protection. These meetings should be held in a quiet place so the Scout and adults can focus, but they are never "secret."

Scoutmaster conferences and boards of review must be tough sessions to give Scouts a taste of the real world.

False. Just the opposite – these sessions are designed to put the Scout at ease, provide an environment where the Scout has the chance to talk openly and honestly, and get introduced to speaking with adults in a group session that encourages give-and-take.

"Demonstrating Scout spirit" is almost always an automatic check-off in a board of review.

False. This is one of the most important areas the board is interested in. Scouts may believe that they're ready for a board of review when they've completed all their skills and service requirements. Scouts should give careful thought about how they're demonstrating Scout spirit (specifically defined as living the Scout Oath and Law in your everyday life).

A Scout passes his board of review if a majority of the reviewers agree.

False. The decision of the board must be unanimous.

If the board of review does not believe a Scout is ready for advancement to the next rank, the advancement chairman, troop committee chairman, or Scoutmaster can override the board's decision.

False. The board's decision is final. If the Scout wishes to file a formal protest, he can do so with the district advancement chair. In most cases, the board will be supported if it has followed BSA policies and procedures correctly.

There is no real reason to have a board of review with a Scout who's lagging behind and not advancing.

False. As with a Scoutmaster conference, this might be a perfect time for a board of review. These meetings are not just held when a Scout is ready for advancement, but also can serve as counseling sessions to determine why a Scout *isn't* advancing. A well-timed board of review may make the difference between a Scout who gives it another chance and one who throws in the towel.