

General Questions and Answers About the Eagle Rank

What is the Eagle Award and why is there so much information on this particular badge?

The EAGLE SCOUT BADGE is the highest youth award available to youth members of the BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA (BSA). It represents the successful completion of a long process that started when the young man became a Boy Scout. Very few Scouts make it this far, and it is a great achievement for all parties involved Scout or Venturer, his unit, his community, the local BSA Council and the Boy Scouts of America. Eagle Scouts have went onward to place themselves in very powerful positions: Over 1700 chief executive officers/presidents/heads of corporations are also Eagle Scouts.

Once an Eagle Scout, the title never goes away; hence the statement "He **was** an Eagle Scout" is untrue. In the history of this award, only nine were ever "stripped" from their holders; and only the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America can do this.

The Eagle Scout Badge is the seventh badge that can be earned by Boy or Varsity Scouts in the American Boy Scouting program. The other six which must be attained beforehand are called Scout (which only represents a new member of the Boy Scout division), Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star and Life. A Scout traditionally spends anywhere from two to four years in most cases in a Scout unit before he earns the Eagle Scout Badge. At this writing, female members of Venturing Crews and female associates of Varsity groups may NOT earn this award.

The Eagle Scout Badge in this country has always stood for the best that a young man can be. In this country, universities and colleges, the military establishment, and many civilian corporations will hire Eagle Scouts solely based upon this achievement in their lives. To them, the Eagle Scout is someone that they can trust, that they know will be a good, hard worker and eventually, a good leader of other workers or a good supervisor. This is not to say that employers don't look for other factors; it is saying that they trust the results coming from Scouting as leaders and examples of the best that our nation has to offer the workforce. In addition to the increased opportunities for personal gain, the label "Eagle Scout" also takes on the air of someone that cannot be misused, of someone wholesome and yes, someone that adheres to a set of "old-fashioned" (some may say conservative) standards.

The Eagle Scout Badge, first awarded in 1912, has become more than a rank or award in a youth program; it has become a status symbol, an icon of American society even in today's 90s. Therefore, a great many young men -- and their families and Scout leaders -- want them to become Eagle Scouts. Some do. The BSA says that one of each 100 Scouts become an Eagle Scout; or roughly about 3-5.5% of the total number of Scouts *ever* in Scouting will become Eagles. Does this mean that the rest are NOT "great Scouts"??? NOT ON YOUR LIVES. There are many fine examples of famous Americans, in all walks of life, that did NOT make it to Eagle (most have made it past First Class; however) and those people credit a great deal of their personal success to Scouting in the same way as those Eagle Scouts out there.

Likewise, there are several Eagle Scouts doing time in American prisons and jails. The Eagle Scout Badge is important, but it does NOT shield Eagles from their social responsibilities as citizens of this nation.

So what does this award look like? Why do you call it a badge instead of a rank? Why is it sometimes called a "award" and sometimes a "badge"?

The Eagle Scout AWARD is a medal, a one inch long silver-plated (earlier badges up until 1980 were all sterling silver) Eagle, with wings outstretched and with the letters "B.S.A" over the front, suspended from a red, white and blue ribbon, tied at the top by a silver bar shaped into the emblem of the Second Class Badge (a scroll with the wording "Be Prepared") and with a thin piece of silver wire shaped into a loop as on the Second Class Badge. This medal is worn on formal occasions, and is placed above the left pocket flap on the field uniforms. It is not worn at any other time.

The Eagle Scout CLOTH BADGE is an oval shaped badge, presently fully embroidered, with a design of an Eagle and the Scroll in the center of a red, white and blue inner design. This is surrounded by a silver outer design with the words "Eagle Scout" at the top, and "Boy Scouts of America" at the bottom and sides. This is the appropriate badge for youth members (those members of the BSA under the age of 18 years) to wear on the field uniforms at all times. It is worn as all rank insignia is worn, centered on the left pocket of the field uniform.

The Eagle Scout SQUARE KNOT is an embroidered square knot in the Eagle Badge colors of red, white and blue, on a tan (or on older uniforms, khaki) background with a brown border around the rectangular-shaped patch. Adult Scouters, both volunteer and professional, above the left pocket seam, who are holders of the Eagle Scout Badge wear it. This is worn in a similar manner as the youth Cloth Badge is worn by youth members.

There are other items, which can be purchased by holders of the Eagle Scout Badge; pins, tie-tacs, and necklaces. These and other Eagle Scout items are restricted items and only upon showing a copy or the original of the Eagle Scout CARD (which has the name, date, and Council number of the local Council awarding the badge and signed by the President of the United States (the Honorary President), the Chief Scout Executive and the President of the BSA) can Eagle Scouts purchase the items.

The BSA calls each badge of rank a "Badge", as in Life Badge, First Class Badge, or in this case, the Eagle Scout Badge, to distinguish the Award (the medal) from the Badge (the cloth badge of rank), Scouters interchange the words "Award" and "Badge". Either is correct, although technically, the Eagle Award is the metal badge of rank; the Cloth Badge and the Square knots are both badges to be worn informally to signify this honor.

How do you earn the Eagle Badge? How long does it take? Can adults earn it? Do other youth programs (cub scouts, explorers, varsity, venture, Learning for Life) of the BSA earn this Badge Too?

Females CANNOT earn the Eagle Badge presently, youth or adult. There used to be a policy for male adults to earn the Eagle Badge, but since the early 50s, this policy has been scrapped and the advancement program ends at age 18.

In this discussion, the term "BOY SCOUT" will include ALL members of the Boy Scout Program division, which consists presently of Boy Scouts and Varsity Scouts. Therefore, unless there are specific requirements of Venture and Varsity Scouts, the term "Boy Scout" will be used to indicate ALL members of that program.

To Earn the Eagle Scout Badge: A Boy Scout must be a registered member of a Boy Scout Troop or Varsity Team for at least 2.5 years (assuming normal progress between the time he becomes a member of a unit and the time of his Eagle Scout Board of Review). Any male Venturer who achieved the First Class rank as a Boy Scout in a troop or Varsity Scout in a team may continue advancement toward Star, Life, and Eagle ranks up to his 18th birthday. In addition to the above:

* He must complete of ALL requirements prior to his 18th birthday (he may attend the Board of Review after his 18th birthday).

* He must be active in his unit for a period of six months after he has achieved the rank of Life Scout

* He must provide at least three written references who will witness his adherence to the principles of the Scout Oath (Promise) and Law in his daily life.

* He must earn a total of 21 merit badges, including the following:

- Camping
- First Aid
- Citizenship in the Community
- Citizenship in the Nation
- Citizenship in the World
- Communications
- Environmental Science
- Personal Management
- Personal Fitness
- Family Life
- Emergency Preparedness OR Lifesaving
- Cycling, Hiking, or Swimming
(the others, if earned, become "personal preference" merit badges)
- 9 other badges based on "personal preferences"

* He must serve actively for a period of 6 months in a unit leadership role:

* While a Life Scout, plan, develop, and give leadership to others in a service project helpful to any organization outside of Scouting. The project must be approved by your Scoutmaster/Team Coach/Advisor/Skipper, the unit's committee and by your local District BEFORE YOU START. YOU MUST USE THE EAGLE SCOUT SERVICE PROJECT WORKBOOK, BSA # 18-927A IN MEETING THIS REQUIREMENT.

* Demonstrate Scout spirit by living the Scout Oath (Promise) and Scout Law in his everyday life.

* Participate in a Scoutmaster conference.

* He must attach to the application a written statement of his personal life ambitions and goals, and what he wants to do with his life. He should also attach listings of all other awards earned from other sources, other honors and accolades he's received for service or leadership. He must also take part in a Scoutmaster conference with his unit leader.

* After the attainment of the previous seven requirements, he must go before a Board of Review, consisting of representatives of the local District Advancement Committee and the community. The Board will review his progress and recommend to the NATIONAL COURT OF HONOR that he should receive the Eagle Scout Badge.

What happens at the Board of Review? Is it a secret? Can non-BSA members attend? How about the parents? Who is there to examine the boy on these things? Do they go into "requirement 1b of the camping merit badge says what?" or do they look at the bigger picture?

The Review is NOT "secret" and may be explained to ANYONE AT ANY TIME either before or after the event. Many pastors, church officials, community leaders, and just plain citizens have sat in on the Board of Reviews. Eagle Scouts are free to discuss ALL aspects of the Board of Review with others, and even are encouraged to do so in order to relieve anxieties and to relate similar experiences with others. Unless there are special circumstances, the only individuals in the room during the review will be the members of the Board, the candidate, and his unit leader. Parents do not attend the Board of Review, and the unit leader only speaks if the Board asks him (or her) a direct question.

The Board of Review is NOT an examination. The entire purpose of the Board of Review is to REVIEW the progress of the youth toward Eagle. This is done primarily by interviewing the candidate and asking leading questions (those which cannot be answered by a simple "yep" or "nope") of the candidate about his entire Scouting experience. Questions such as "What is requirement 1b of the Camping Merit Badge" are not acceptable questions; a better question would be of the Scout "How many nights and days have you been camping with your unit?" "What was your best campout that you can remember and why was it so?" and "How would you put together a overnight camping trip for a Patrol of Scouts to go to?" These questions allow the Scout candidate to reflect upon the skills he has learned throughout the Scouting experience and to put them in his OWN wording, not the verbiage of the Scouting literature.