



Scouts BSA Board of Review Guidelines

The purpose of a Board of Review 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. **Boards of Review are not a retest or "examination," nor a challenge of the Scout's knowledge.** In most cases it should be a celebration of accomplishment.

Scouts can sometimes lose focus or interest in weekly or monthly troop activities over time. Boards of Review should include information and encouragement for involvement in Order of the Arrow, Venturing, Sea Scouts, and Exploring for older youth. These programs are not competition to the functioning of the troop, but are additional opportunities for older youth to remain involved in Scouting.

It is preferred that a Scout be in full field uniform as defined by their unit 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 as typically worn by the Scout's unit. 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.

A unit leader may remain in the room, but only to observe, not to participate unless called upon. They should be seated behind the Scout, where they will not be a distraction to the Scout.

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. In cases where parents or guardians insist on attending a board of review, they should be counseled that their presence will 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.

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. Board members who cannot be fair and impartial should recuse themselves before the board starts.

The board is made up of three to six unit committee members—no more and no less. Unit leaders and assistant unit leaders must not serve on a board of review for a Scout in their own unit. If there is an insufficient number of committee members to conduct boards of review, 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. The review should take approximately 15 minutes, but not longer than 30 minutes. Eagle Boards of Review can be 30-45 minutes.

During the review, board members may refer to the *Scouts BSA Handbook*, *Scouts BSA Requirements* book, *Troop Leader Guidebook*, *Guide to Advancement*, and other official references. Board members may ask where skills were learned, who the teachers were, and what was gained from fulfilling requirements. 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. However, we do not insist on perfection. A positive attitude is most important, and that the youth accepts Scouting's ideals and sets and meets good standards in daily life.

Questions that require a narrative answer (rather than yes/no) may help Scouts to verbalize their feelings. Boards of Review may refer to specific rank requirements to determine if the intent was achieved, but retesting is not allowed.

Asking Scouts about their family, school, community and religious activities at the beginning of the conversation are great ways to help them to relax and feel at ease.

After the board of review, the Scout is asked to wait out of hearing range while the board deliberates. To approve advancement, the board must agree unanimously. If the members agree a Scout is ready to advance, the Scout is called in and congratulated. If a board does not approve, the candidate must be so informed and told what must be done in order to advance.

Remember, Scouting is more about the journey than the destination. A badge recognizes what a Scout has done toward achieving the primary goal of personal growth.

Note: Boards of review also may be held for Scouts who are **not** advancing. Reminding those Scouts of the opportunities and benefits of our program may help re-energize their interest. Much can be learned from those Scouts, as well, about how and why the program is not working for them.

Sample Board of Review questions:

(For Eagle rank, additional questions dealing with character and leadership may be included)

- What are your goals in Scouting?
- Why is being a Scout important to you?
- How do you live the Scout Oath and Law in your daily life?
- What does it mean when you say, "A Scout is Courteous"?
- How did fulfilling requirement number ____ help you?
- Why is it important to keep up-to-date on your first aid skills?
- How do you think the _____ merit badge you earned will help you throughout your life?
- What new things did you do and learn on your latest campout, service project, or at your troop meetings?
- What do you like most/least at troop outdoor activities?
- What do you like most/least at troop meetings?
- What would you like the troop to do differently to make meetings/outings more fun and engaging?
- What leadership positions have you held or would you like to hold?
- What are you looking forward to doing at summer camp?
- What is your most fun memory from a Scout outing?
- How do you define "Scout spirit"? How do you exhibit Scout spirit?
- What can we (the adults) do to make our program more fun and engaging for you?
- If you were Scoutmaster for a day, what one thing would you change about the troop?

When leaving a board of review, Scouts should feel proud of their accomplishments and excited for new adventures to come.

Additional information on Boards of Review can be found in the Guide to Advancement, section 8.0.0.0. (Updated May 2025)

