

## COVID-19 FAQ

UPDATED 8/30/20 - The most recent updates are indicated by a diamond in front of the question.

### In-Person Unit Activities

Q: Should we hold in-person Scouting meetings, outings, or activities?

With safety in mind and based on guidance from national health officials, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) is strongly advising that in-person meetings, activities and gatherings be conducted only within the guidelines outlined by your state and local health department and other local officials, as well as under the direction of your local BSA council and chartered organization. This applies to youth and adults. Please review the Restart Scouting Checklist for additional information.

Q: If meeting locations are open, can units meet or do other in-person activities?

Councils make the determination, working closely with their council health supervisor and local health department, about when units can conduct in-person meetings and activities again. If the unit's local council is allowing in-person activities but has restrictions in place (e.g., no more than 10, social distancing of 6 ft. etc.) units must meet and abide by those restrictions – even if the unit is traveling out of council/state.

Q: What do we do about Scouts' fundraising activities?

Fundraising activities may be held if those activities are conducted within guidelines outlined by your state and local health department and other local officials under the direction of your local BSA council and chartered organization. This applies to youth and adults. If fundraising activities can be facilitated using digital methods while still adhering to applicable rules, then those activities may continue.

Q: What is BSA's policy on social distancing in a tenting environment when camping?

Camping should only take place in accordance with guidelines outlined by your state and local health department and other local officials, as well as under the direction of your local BSA council and chartered organization. There is no formal national policy on social distancing in tents, just as there is no prohibition on tenting alone if logistics can accommodate that request. As always, all BSA youth protection policies must be followed.

Q: What are the youth protection guidelines if I am using a commercial video conferencing platform that allows for breakout rooms?

All breakout rooms for youth must have at least one registered adult and either another registered adult or a parent/legal guardian of a participating Scout.

Q: What are the refund policies if I have already paid for an event that has been cancelled?

Event organizers typically set refund or cancellation policies. Please reach out directly to those organizers. In the case of attendance at a national high adventure base, contact them directly about your crew.

### Camping this Fall/Winter

♦ Q: There was an extension for Part C, pre-placement exam of the Annual Health and Medical Record at my camp this summer, is that still in effect?

As of 8/31/2020, the extension granted to certain BSA Accredited Council Camps and High Adventure Bases is expired. If your programs or activities require Part C, it must be in place. As a reminder, if you are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, please ensure you have approval from your health care provider prior to attending camp.

We also encourage anyone whose medical condition or history has changed significantly since their last physical exam to get approval from their health care provider prior to attending camp.

♦ Q: If my camp is cancelled, can my unit get together with other units and have our own camp?

No. Chartering organizations play an important role in the program and activities for their chartered units. Chartering organizations promote well-planned unit programs for the units they charter and encourage their units to have active outdoor unit programs. Chartering organizations are not authorized to plan, promote or deliver programs for units outside of their charter.

It is the role of the council to plan long-term or resident camps and the role of councils or districts to plan camporees and other outings during the year that give youth an opportunity to test their knowledge and skills in competitive events with other troops and/or patrols.

When units with different chartered organizations do activities together, this becomes a district or council event and requires council approval. In fact, some require such activities to be licensed.

Should your troop, crew or ship decide to do a long-term camping program for their own unit (Cub Scouts units are prohibited from this activity) please note that Scouter Code of Conduct and relevant program safety and training requirements are still in place, e.g., Safe Swim Defense, Hazardous Weather, Wilderness First Aid, etc.

Q: My Wilderness First Aid Course has been cancelled; can I still go on my trek?

Current Wilderness First Aid (WFA) certification will continue to be required for backcountry adventures including trek programs and high adventure base participation. As a reminder, a current CPR/AED certification is a prerequisite for a WFA course.

For fall 2020 through March 2021, please review options for NCAP accredited local council camps and National High Adventure Bases via a blended offering ECSI: <https://www.ecsinstitute.org/scouting-wfa>

Note: Online-only WFA courses do not meet the WFA requirement.

## Advancement

Q: How can advancement be tracked remotely?

Scouting units should use Scoutbook to record and track advancement.

To track advancement remotely, parents should:

» Connect with their child's member profile via an invitation that the unit leader sends within Scoutbook. You may also connect to your youth via the Scouting "Add a Parent connection."

» Once a connection is made, the parent should use the Scouting app, found in both the App Store and on Google Play, to stay connected with their unit.

» The Scouting app provides parents the ability to report any advancement that was completed at home.

Learn more about how to start using Scoutbook and how to connect parents to their Scouts at [Scoutbook.com](https://scoutbook.com).

## Advancement – Cub Scouts

♦ Q: May parents sign off on Webelos and Arrow of Light requirements?

Yes. During this pandemic period, parents and other adults in the Cub Scout's family may sign off on Webelos and Arrow of Light requirements. We strongly encourage that parents use the Scouting App or Scoutbook to record completion of their child's requirements. We will continue to monitor the situation and communicate when this temporary measure expires and there is a return to the standard rules for Cub Scout advancement.

♦ Q: If my den is behind in advancement due to COVID-19, can my Cub Scout continue to work on advancement through the summer?

Yes. Cub Scouts may continue to work on their current den's advancement. During this pandemic period, it is at the discretion of the den to decide the best action for how long to extend continuation of advancement. We want to ensure that the pandemic does not create an obstacle to youth advancement, that Cub Scouts families continue to have a positive experience, and that the standard for Cub Scout Advancement continues to be "Do Your Best." We will continue to monitor the situation and communicate when this temporary measure expires and there is a return to the standard rules for Cub Scout advancement.

Q: Can the Arrow of Light (fifth-grade dens) requirements fulfill the requirement to visit a troop or attend a troop outing to function as a patrol?

Yes. Two things to keep in mind, the standard of completion for Cub Scout advancement is "Do Your Best," so given the circumstances, we want to look at the purpose behind the requirements. Remember that doing nothing is never doing your best.

Dens can visit a virtual troop meeting to see the patrol method and youth leadership in action. Since the den cannot attend a troop campout or outing, the idea is for the den to function as a patrol while attending the virtual troop meeting. During this time, a virtual den meeting where the den functions as a patrol can be done. A patrol leader, pick a patrol name, play a virtual game together as a patrol. Plenty of opportunities to Do Your Best to meet the intention of the requirement. Remember to maintain all youth protection standards online.

What is the guidance for completing the Outdoor Activity Award and Summertime Pack Award?

Packs and dens should do their best to meet the intent of the awards. If a required activity (such as day camp or resident camp) is not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic, packs can utilize an alternative option of their choosing. Units should continue to follow any restrictions outlined by their state and local health departments or other local officials regarding gatherings, etc.

## Advancement – Scouts BSA, Venturing and Sea Scouts

♦ Q: Will there be any changes to the Swimming requirements for Second and First class?

Swimming remains a major health and safety concern and cannot be abandoned by Scouts BSA. With that in mind, the Swimming rank requirements for Second Class (5b) and First Class (6a) may be deferred until each Scout's next rank, as necessary (through Life, but not Eagle).

Second Class requirement (5b) Demonstrate your ability to pass the BSA beginner test: Jump feet first into water over your head in depth, level off and swim on the surface, stop, turn sharply, resume swimming, then return to your starting place.

First Class requirement (6a) Successfully complete the BSA swimmer test.

This temporary deferment will allow Scouts to advance in rank up to, and including Life Scout, but not beyond. All other rank requirements must still be earned. When conditions warrant and upon direction from the National Council, these requirements will be reinstated with 30 days' notice to our Scouting friends through Workplace, Bryan on Scouting, Scouting Wire, social media, and any other means determined appropriate.

For clarity, the following swimming requirements can be completed on dry land and are not a hindrance to advancing:

Second Class requirement (5c) Demonstrate water rescue methods by reaching with your arm or leg, by reaching with a suitable object, and by throwing lines or objects.

First Class requirement (6e) With a helper and a practice victim, show a line rescue both as tender and as rescuer. (The practice victim should be approximately 10 feet from shore in deep water.)

♦ Q: Do I still need to take a swim test for aquatic activities since there is a deferment in place?

A: The deferment is only for rank requirements Second Class(5b) and First Class(6A). Aquatic activities still require current and valid swim testing for both Sea Scouts and Venturers. If swim checks for these events cannot be done, then the aquatic activities cannot take place.

♦ Q: Will there be any changes for Scouts who cannot complete the camping merit badge?

COVID-19 has resulted in Scouts being unable to complete the Eagle-required Camping merit badge, specifically requirement 9b.

Requirement (9b) On any of these (Scouting) camping experiences, you must do TWO of the following, only with proper preparation and under qualified supervision.

- (1) Hike up a mountain, gaining at least 1,000 vertical feet.
- (2) Backpack, snowshoe, or cross-country ski for at least 4 miles.
- (3) Take a bike trip of at least 15 miles or at least four hours.
- (4) Take a nonmotorized trip on the water of at least four hours or 5 miles.
- (5) Plan and carry out an overnight snow camping experience.
- (6) Rappel down a rappel route of 30 feet or more.

Although this requirement adds "Scout fun" to a camping experience, it will be temporarily suspended as a requirement to earn this badge. All other Camping badge requirements must still be completed to earn this badge. Upon direction from the National Council, requirement 9b will be reinstated with 30 days' notice to our Scouting community through national channels.

Q: Can merit badge counseling or Nova/Supernova counseling be done using digital technologies like Zoom or WebEx?

Yes, registered merit badge counselors or Nova counselors/Supernova mentors may work with youth using digital platforms, ensuring that all youth protection measures noted in the Guide to Safe Scouting and BSA's social media guidelines are in place. In addition to youth protection, the advancement guidelines in Advancement (GTA) Section 7 are required.

Q: Are merit badge counselors allowed to provide online instruction?

Yes. Merit badge counselors should follow the guidelines in the Guide to Advancement 7.0.3.2 and ensure you are adhering to all youth protection requirements and online communications guidelines. It is acceptable—and sometimes preferable—for merit badges to be taught in group settings, including online instruction. Currently, we allow group instruction at camp and merit badge midways, fairs, clinics, or similar events. These can be efficient methods, and interactive group discussions can support learning. Gathering a group online can also be beneficial. Guest experts and speakers that assist registered and approved counselors can be more willing to speak to a larger online audience. Slide shows, skits, demonstrations, panels, and various other techniques can also be employed, but as a teacher can attest, not everyone will learn all the material. Therefore, the standards we use to verify that each Scout has fulfilled requirements must not be relaxed. Merit badge counselors must be sure that each Scout has individually gained the knowledge intended. When accomplished, counselors can easily sign off on requirements via ScoutBook.

Q: Can I connect directly with my Scouts/Venturers/Sea Scouts if I am a merit badge counselor?

Yes. In ScoutBook, merit badge counselors can now connect directly with the Scouts they are counseling; see <https://discussions.scouting.org/t/march-23-2-scoutbook-updates/165970> NOTE: Scouts/Venturers/Sea Scouts still must get approval from their leader, according to Guide to Advancement 7.0.3.0.

Q: How will I know if a Scout/Venturer/Sea Scout has obtained approval from their leader to work on a merit badge?

In the member profile, you will see if the leader has signed off with their approval.

Q: What if my member profile shows that my merit badge counselor status has expired?

Check with your council. Local councils may need to upload their latest list of approved merit badge counselors.

Q: Will unit leaders know that a merit badge counselor has connected with one of their Scouts/Venturers/Sea Scouts?

Yes. The unit Key 3 will receive an email that includes the name of the merit badge counselor, the Scout, and the name of the merit badge.

Q: What if I have other merit badge/ScoutBook questions?

See <https://help.scoutbook.com/knowledge-base/scoutbook-merit-badge-counselor-council-upload-faq/>

♦ Q: What changes have been made to rank advancement/camping requirements given the need to maintain social distancing during this time?

We have implemented temporary changes, detailed below, to allow Scouts to complete rank requirements, detailed below, by video conferencing through Dec 31, 2020. This deadline will be re-evaluated as needed.

The goal when using video conferencing must be to preserve the ideals and intent of each requirement as best as possible. Scoutmasters or their designee(s) remain mindful of the Methods of Scouting, such as the Patrol Method, before implementing the modified requirements listed below. Some advancement activities can be completed by video conferencing but not all. For example, virtual visits to a city council meeting, national historic landmarks, museums, and art galleries can be acceptable, but swimming, rifle shooting, and motorboating merit badges cannot be completed virtually.

Even when using video conferencing, all virtual campouts and activities should consist of as many elements found on a normal outdoor campout or activity as possible. The most significant difference is that patrol or troop members are not all in the same location. All existing youth protection policies and digital safety guidelines must be followed.

Tenderfoot rank requirements

1b. – Virtual patrol or troop campouts via video conferencing will be permitted.

2a. – During the same day as your virtual patrol or troop campout, assist in preparing one meal with the help of those with whom you live. Tell your patrol or troop why it was important for each person to share in meal preparation and cleanup.

2b. – During the same day as your virtual campout, demonstrate the appropriate method of safely cleaning items used to prepare, serve and eat a meal.

5a. – Explain the importance of the buddy system as it relates to your personal safety on outings and in your neighborhood. Verbally commit to following the system on your next troop or patrol outing.

7a. – Tell how to display, raise, lower, and fold the U.S. flag.

Second Class rank requirements:

1a & 1c. – Virtual patrol or troop activities via video conferencing will be permitted.

3b. – Using a compass and map together, plan a 5-mile hike approved by your adult leader.

4. – Evidence of wild animals can be demonstrated with information or photos of your local area found online.

5c. – May be completed virtually via video conferencing on dry land.

7c. – Learn about the dangers of using drugs, alcohol and tobacco and other practices that could be harmful to your health. Discuss what you learned with your family and explain the dangers of substance addictions. Report to your Scoutmaster or other adult leader in your troop about which parts of the Scout Oath and Scout Law relate to what you learned.

8a. – May be completed virtually using video conferencing.

8d. – May be completed by comparing costs at three (3) online sites or locations.

First Class rank requirements:

1a – Virtual patrol or troop activities via video conferencing will be permitted.

2e. – On the same day as your virtual campout, serve as the cook. Supervise your assistant(s) in using a stove or building a cooking fire. Prepare the breakfast and dinner planned in First Class requirement 2a. Supervise the cleanup.

4a. – By drawing, computer software, or other virtual methods, plan an orienteering course that would cover at least one mile. Explain why measuring the height and/or width of designated items (tree, tower, canyon, ditch, etc.) is helpful. Explain how you would complete your course using a real map and compass.

4b. – Scouts do not need to follow their route.

5a. – Evidence of native plants can be demonstrated with information or photos of your local area found online.

6e. – May be completed on dry land.

9a. – Visit may take place virtually or by phone.

9c. – Outings can include past or future plans.

10. – Invite the potential new member to a virtual meeting or future activity using video conferencing.

Q: Will virtual camping count toward Order of the Arrow nights camping?

Virtual camping (i.e., backyard or solo camping) may be counted toward the required nights of camping for OA election eligibility if all the following stipulations are met:

– To be counted, all virtual camping nights should be a direct result of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and be part of a BSA unit-organized unit camping event where multiple members of the unit are involved and camping simultaneously at remote locations).

– Some form of unit-organized communications should occur either during or immediately following the event.

– All existing youth protection policies and digital safety guidelines must be followed.

– No more than 3 nights of virtual camping are to be credited in any month in which government- or council-imposed COVID-19 restrictions are in place.

This change is in effect until September 1, 2020. Please see <https://oa-bsa.org/coronavirus/temporary-camping-night-policy-due-covid-19> for further details.

Units that have already held an election between March 1, 2020 and April 30, 2020 are authorized to hold one additional election for any individuals who were ineligible at the time of the election due to the camping requirement, but would have been considered eligible at the time if this temporary policy had then been in effect. This second election must be completed no later than July 1, 2020. Those who were previously considered for election in the first election may not be reconsidered on this second ballot (i.e., no one can be considered for election more than once in a year).

Q: Can merit badge requirements be adapted since some elements can't be completed as stated right now?

The published guidelines for the methodology of the merit badge program and the role of the merit badge counselor is found in the Guide to Advancement, Section 7.0.0.0. It is important to remember that leaders and merit badge counselors must not make additions or deletions to requirements. The Scout is expected to complete the requirements as stated; however, in some cases, virtual "visits" may fulfill the intent of a requirement. When the requirement's intent cannot be reached via virtual means, the requirements cannot be completed, and the Scout must wait to complete that badge/requirement. Merit badge counselors signing off on requirements must determine to the best of their ability if the Scout has demonstrated the intended outcome. All existing youth protection policies and digital safety guidelines must be followed.

Q: Does a Scout need a hard copy of a Blue Card when working on merit badges?

No. Since the introduction of Scoutbook, the BSA has offered Scouts two ways of recording merit badge requirement completion: The Blue Card and Scoutbook. Both remain authorized methods to record merit badge work. Scoutbook is a part of the BSA Internet Advancement system, which means that entering an advancement record in Scoutbook is the same as entering it in Internet Advancement. Anyone with a BSA member ID automatically has access to a Scoutbook account through their my.scouting account.

Q: May time missed due to canceled unit meetings count toward active participation requirements?

Yes. If youth are registered and in good standing, a disruption from COVID-19 virus can be the "noteworthy circumstance" that prevents participation. This policy has been in place for many years and is explained in GTA Topic 4.2.3.1.

Q: May time missed due to canceled unit meetings count toward position of responsibility requirements?

Yes. If youth are registered and unable to meet the expectations of their positions because of COVID-19 disruptions, then units may need to waive or rethink expectations. Just as youth must not be held to unestablished expectations, they must not be held to expectations that are impossible to fulfill. See GTA Topic 4.2.3.4, "Positions of Responsibility," with its six subtopics.

Q: Does the National Council grant extensions of time to complete rank requirements beyond the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday for the Eagle or 21<sup>st</sup> birthday for Summit or Quartermaster?

Yes, but only for the Eagle Scout rank as described in GTA Topic 9.0.4.0 or for Venturing Summit or Sea Scout Quartermaster as described in GTA Topic 4.3.3. Leadership must become familiar with the five tests under 9.0.4.0. The tests were designed to accommodate such obstacles as those presented by COVID-19 disruptions.

Q: Will youth who are not yet Life Scouts be allowed to apply for an extension to earn the Eagle Scout rank?

Extensions are considered only for Scouts who are Life rank. If, once a Scout achieves Life rank, it turns out that COVID-19 disruptions along the way have left with insufficient time to complete Eagle requirements, then this may be cited when the time comes to submit an extension request.

Q: May local councils grant extensions?

The Guide to Advancement (GTA) continues to serve and guide Scouts, adult leaders, and councils on the proper reasoning and procedures for extending the deadline for completing all work toward the rank of Eagle Scout beyond the age of eligibility. Currently, Scouts may apply to the National Council for extension outlined in the GTA (section 9.0.4.0).

To assist Scouts during the ongoing pandemic, local councils have been twice granted the authority to extend the timeframe, for up to three months each time (totaling a possible 6-month extension) to complete all work only for the rank of Eagle. This was done to eliminate any potential delays in the normal process. Authority for councils to grant these extensions is currently scheduled to expire September 30, 2020.

Local councils will now be given authority by the National Council to grant an additional three-month extension, which will end December 31, 2020. During this time, the National Council will evaluate permanently allowing councils the ability to approve Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster extensions beyond the age of eligibility six months. This would make unnecessary for local councils to forward those requests to the National Council.

If it is determined to permanently grant councils the six-month extension authority, Scouts would still be able to appeal to the National Council should their local council not approve their extension request.

Q: If youth have already received an extension, can they request additional time due to COVID-19?

Yes. Council Scout executives may grant extensions, or delegate authority to the Council Advancement Committee to grant extensions under the limitations listed above.

Q: What should be done while an extension request is being considered?

Youth should continue to work on advancement in so far as they are able—e.g., independently, or over the phone or videoconference—and at Scouting activities when they resume.

Q: Are extensions required when an Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster board of review must be delayed?

No. Councils may grant Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster boards of review up to six months after the youth's 18<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> birthday. See GTA Topic 8.0.3.1, "Eagle Scout Board of Review Beyond the 18th Birthday."

See also, GTA Topic 8.0.1.6, "Boards of Review Through Videoconferencing."

Q: Are electronic or digital signatures acceptable for rank advancement or for the Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster packets/applications?

Yes. Electronic or digital signatures will be accepted.

Q: How can a youth continue to work on advancement requirements if they don't have internet or high-speed internet for videoconferencing?

Youth may take a picture of their completed activity/requirement and share the work with unit leaders. In keeping with youth protection policies, all communication from youth should be sent to at least two adults. See our Barriers to Abuse for details. Parents or guardians may send advancement work on behalf of their child.