

ADVANCEMENT INFORMATION FOR LEADERS

July 2020

Happy Summer T55 Leaders!

Firstly, I would like to thank you for taking the time and energy to help the boys advance, even while we are all juggling so much more these days. Thank you!

I wanted to follow up with you guys regarding the advancement summary I sent to the whole troop a few weeks ago. Sorry for the unintended delay between messages here. I had to deal with some family issues... Apologies in advance for the length, but there is a lot to cover and I have tried my best to cover all of the questions I have received so far. Anyway, in an effort to address everything I could think of and provide useful information in one place, here goes:

Regarding Rank Advancement –

1. Scout Rank – PASM's should ALWAYS enter Scout Rank data in Scoutbook. Then send me an email to let me know the Scout is complete.
2. First Class Trail – PASM's may enter rank data for FCT ranks in Scoutbook OR sign the handbook in person - up to you. The Scout is required to send us a PDF copy of the handbook pages for the Rank they are seeking when they request a BOR so that we can cross-check to make sure all items are complete prior to scheduling the BOR.
3. Star, Life, and Eagle – Most of these items are covered during the Scoutmaster Conference. PASM's do not need to worry about this since the Scoutmaster is responsible for entering this data during the SMC.
4. Scouts must email BOR and Advancement to request a BOR. The email addresses are posted on the troop website. Please encourage your Scouts to use the resources available to them and do not just send them the addresses if they ask for them. Teach a Scout to fish, so to speak...
5. BOR are being held via Zoom. Policies for this have been posted multiple times in the troop newsletter.
6. Once the BOR is complete, the forms are given to me for processing. Please remind your Scouts to be patient and allow a reasonable amount of time for this transfer and data entry to occur.
7. After the BOR, there is nothing else the Scout needs to do.
8. Unfortunately, we do not know when we will have a COH again.

9. Please encourage your Scouts to work on their email communication skills. This is a useful skill for sure, but especially timely now.
 - a. When sending emails to any adult, they are REQUIRED to copy in a parent or other trusted adult. This is Cyber Chip and YPT policy. Please pay attention to whether someone else is included in the email chain. If not, **when you reply, please remind him of this policy and copy in his parent(s) or a fellow PASM. This is important.**
 - b. Encourage them to use proper salutations and closings (know your audience).
 - c. Encourage the boys to include their full name AND patrol. We have over 250 Scouts...
 - d. Remind them to send emails to the Scouting contacts for Scoutmaster, Troop Committee Chair, Advancement, BOR, etc. This helps us keep our volunteer work separated from our personal items and keep organized communication records. Addresses are available on the troop website.

Regarding Merit Badge work –

1. Anatomy of a Merit Badge Card (blue card) – see attached PDF
 - a. Front
 - i. *Left panel – information, nothing needed here*
 - ii. *Center Panel – itemized list for MBC use*
 - iii. ***Right Panel – Scout name, address, district, council, and INITIAL UNIT LEADER SIGNATURE. Scouts need to ADD PATROL NAME HERE.***
 - b. Back
 - i. *Left Panel – Name of MB and MBC contact information. This panel MUST be signed by the MBC upon completion of the MB. DO NOT fill in the data below the line (checked and recorded...). This is for Advancement use.*
 - ii. ***Center Panel – Scout name, name of MB, date completed, and signature lines. This is the second spot a MBC must sign upon completion of the MB. This is also where the Second Unit Leader Signature line is located.***
 - iii. *Right Panel – this panel is technically given to the MBC upon completion so that they keep a record of who they have worked with and for which MB, in case questions arise in the future. Many MBC do not retain these panels.*
2. Recap on the Merit Badge process (per BSA Guide to Advancement)

- a. Scout approaches PASM to ask for blue card **for a specific MB.**
 - i. *Scout must specify precisely which MB he wishes to begin, so that you can advise on MBC (see below). If meeting in person, write it on the card!*
 - ii. *If the Scout is intending to take a MB class, ask them where, are all requirements covered (is it a complete MB), is the MBC registered for that MB, etc. See troop email below for more information on this (under MB reminders). **If a Scout is taking a class that does not cover all requirements, they MUST identify a registered MBC available/willing to help them complete any work before/after the class. NO EXCEPTIONS.***
- b. PASM recommends name of at least one registered MBC for that MB and signs the FRONT of the card. This initial unit leader signature may also be handled within Scoutbook.
 - i. ***It is the responsibility of the PASM to provide the name of AT LEAST one MBC registered for that MB. We have a list of registered MBC available for your reference on the troop website. This is intended for YOUR reference to aid the Scout. You should not just refer the Scout to the list.***
 - ii. ***Please encourage the Scout to read the MB requirements BEFORE starting the MB. This is a huge source of frustration and confusion. It is the Scout's responsibility to know what he is getting into. BE PREPARED.***
 - iii. ***When the Scout requests a blue card, this is the time to discuss with the Scout any concerns you may have about the appropriateness of the MB. For instance, Family Life might not be well-suited to every FCT kid due to content. Personal Management, Nuclear Science, Engineering, etc. may be above the educational level of the Scout. Do they realize they need to become certified to earn SCUBA Diving MB? Are they prepared to care for a pet for 4 months? While you cannot forbid a Scout from beginning any specific MB, it is your job to provide advice and counsel. Have the conversation and allow the Scout to choose. Many Scouts have not yet read the requirements and have no idea what they are getting into. See above. Encourage your Scouts to BE PREPARED.***
 - iv. ***The Scout may choose to work with ANY registered MBC, not just the names provided by the PASM. But, if the Scout chooses to use a name from outside our troop list, it is the***

SCOUT'S responsibility to confirm that the MBC he chooses to work with is actually registered with BSA for THAT MB.

- v. ***Scoutbook has a feature open now to allow PASM to provide the initial unit leader signature.*** Go into the Scout's profile, click on Advancement, scroll down to the MB list. If the Scout has already added the MB to his profile, it will be visible at the top of the list. Click there and look for the box that says Initial Unit Leader Signature. If the MB requested is not visible yet, click on Start a New Merit Badge, select the MB from the list, and then click on the Initial Unit Leader Signature.
- c. Scout may begin working with MBC. Scout may choose to work with any registered MBC but it is required that he verify that the MBC is registered. Some MBC may desire/require Scouts to connect with them via Scoutbook. If you need assistance with this, please contact me. I am happy to help.
 - i. *Scouts may choose to link to their chosen MBC within Scoutbook. Some virtual programs are requiring this. The program must provide the full name or email address for the MB and then the Scout can add them as a connection.*
 - ii. *ONLY MBC and Advancement may enter MB requirements as complete. Scouts, parents, and PASM's may not.*
- d. Once all requirements are signed off by MBC, Scout returns to PASM for second unit leader signature. At this time, the PASM discusses the Scout's experience - what he learned, what went well, what was challenging, etc.
 - i. *Technically, this is not a new requirement. It appears new to many of us because T55 has not been following BSA policy on this part of the MB process for as long as I have been part of the Troop. Again, **this is not new, and it is a requirement.** Rules are in place for a reason. See below.*
 - ii. *This is not intended to create more work for you or the Scout. This is in fact intended to be a very valuable part of the MB process, closing the loop on the MB work by having a conversation with the Scout about what went well, what didn't, what they enjoyed or found challenging, etc. This step is intended to foster the relationship between Scout and PASM. **This is NOT OPTIONAL and MB work will not be accepted from Scouts until they receive a second unit leader signature following completion of the MB.***

- iii. *Not coincidentally, this step also provides useful intel for us as Scouting leaders – which MBC or programs are good and which are, um, not; which MBC are actually responsive/available or not; which MBC work well with the Scouts; what personalities work well together or don't, etc. This helps you provide good counsel to the next Scout who comes to ask for an MBC for that MB.*
- iv. ***Scouts should return to the PASM after all requirements are signed off by the MBC and arrange the 'second signature meeting'. Of course, if we were meeting in person every week, this would be super simple to achieve. However, we aren't, so we need to adapt. This can be done in person or by video conference and should not take very long. As always, A BUDDY OR PARENT MUST BE PRESENT DURING THE ENTIREITY OF THE CONVERSATION per YPT.***
- v. *Once the PASM is satisfied that the MB work was actually and personally done by the Scout and has had the conversation with the Scout, you may sign the actual blue card OR send an email to the Scout (since we are not meeting in person). This is the second signature line on the BACK of the card.*
- e. Scout turns in completed blue card - completed in ink/printed from Scoutbook, labeled with patrol, ALL requirements signed as completed, and TWO unit leader signatures.
- f. See below (in the troop email) for more reminders on MB work. In particular, please review the requirements pertaining to taking MB classes that do not cover all requirements and how to submit to Advancement.

A lot of content there, but I hope this is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you,

Dr. Coveler
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