

ADVANCEMENT

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WHAT IS ADVANCEMENT?

Advancement is one of the methods used to achieve Scouting's aims—character development, citizenship training, and personal fitness. Everything a Cub Scout does to advance is designed to achieve these aims and aid in his personal growth. Remember that badges are simply a means to an end—not an end in themselves.

Advancement is the process by which a boy progresses from badge to badge, learning new skills as he goes. The Cub Scout advancement program is designed to encourage the natural interests of a boy in a natural way. Each of the ranks and awards in Cub Scouting (Bobcat, Tiger Cub, Wolf, Bear, Webelos, and Arrow of Light) has its own requirements. As a boy advances through the ranks, requirements are progressively more challenging, matching the increased skills and abilities of a boy as he grows older.

Advancement gives boys a means of measuring their progress. They learn skills based on a standard that Cub Scouting provides. Credit is given to the Tiger Cub or Cub Scout for each requirement when the adult partner, parent, or guardian (or for Webelos Scouts, the Webelos den leader or activity badge counselor) is satisfied that the boy has done his best.

Advancement provides a satisfying means of recognizing boys for their progress. Boys have a ladder to climb with recognition at each step. Presenting awards to boys in meaningful ceremonies to recognize their accomplishments is a principle of advancement.

Advancement is not competition among boys. Each Cub Scout is encouraged to advance steadily and purposefully, setting his own goals with guidance from his family and leaders. Measurement for satisfying requirements is “do your best,” and that level can be different for each boy.

Advancement is a boy-family experience. Advancement gives families excellent opportunities to share growing experiences and challenging activities with their sons. (See Chapter 5, “Family Involvement.”)

HOW THE ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM WORKS

The success of the advancement program depends entirely on the way in which Cub Scout leaders and parents apply it. Careful research has gone into developing the advancement program to make certain that it contains activities boys like to do; however, den and pack leaders and families make advancement really work in the dens, in the home, and, most importantly, in the lives of boys.

The advancement program, when implemented correctly, will

- Help build a boy's self-esteem
- Help build his self-reliance as he discovers that he is now old enough to assume certain responsibilities toward other people
- Give a boy the positive recognition that he needs
- Bring a boy and his family closer through the advancement activities that family members enjoy together

The Tiger Cub Den Leader

The Tiger Cub den leader has the following responsibilities related to advancement:

1. Stimulate interest in advancement by providing opportunities for boys and adult partners to participate in den meeting advancement requirements.
2. Plan meetings with the host adult partner to fulfill the den meeting part of each Tiger Cub achievement, taking into account the monthly program theme.
3. Help adult partners understand and use the advancement plan.
4. Keep accurate records of achievements and electives that Tiger Cubs complete. Promptly provide the pack leadership with the Tiger Cub Den Advancement Report (see page 34-23) so boys can be recognized at the next pack-meeting.
5. Notice boys who are not advancing and find out why. The-answer could indicate a weakness in the den or pack program.
6. Provide incentives for advancement at dens meetings by using the Tiger Cub Immediate Recognition Kit and special ceremonies. Also use the Tiger Cub Den Advancement Chart and den doodles.

The Cub Scout Den Leader

The Cub Scout den leader has these responsibilities related to advancement:

1. Stimulate interest in advancement by providing opportunities for boys to practice advancement requirements at den meetings. The den chief can be especially helpful.
2. Help parents and/or guardians understand and use the advancement plan.

3. Keep an accurate record of achievements and electives that Cub Scouts complete. Promptly provide the pack leadership with the Cub Scout and Webelos Scout Den Advancement Report (see page 34-24).

4. Notice boys who are not advancing and find out why. The-answer could indicate a weakness in the den or pack program.

5. Provide incentives for advancement at den meetings by using the Immediate Recognition Kit and special ceremonies. Also use the Cub Scout Den Advancement Chart and den doodles.

Cub Scout den leaders may use the advancement information that appears each month in *Cub Scout Program Helps*. This tool may alert leaders of certain achievements and electives that could be completed as the boy participates in the month's den and pack program.

The Webelos Den Leader

The Webelos den leader has these responsibilities related to advancement:

1. Plan den meetings around activity badge areas. Provide good instruction, using activity badge counselors whenever possible to help stimulate boys' interest.
2. Encourage Webelos Scouts and help them earn the Webelos badge, Webelos compass points, and Arrow of Light Award. The Webelos den chief can assist with these-functions.
3. Keep accurate advancement records. Promptly provide the pack leadership with the Den Advancement Report (see the appendix) so boys can be recognized at the next pack meeting.
4. Help parents and/or guardians understand and use the Webelos advancement plan. Point out how the Webelos advancement plan differs from Wolf and Bear advancement.
5. Use advancement incentives in den meetings such as the Webelos Den Advancement Chart and den doodles.
6. Notice boys who are not advancing and find out why. The-answer could indicate a weakness in the den or pack-program.
7. Make sure that an impressive Arrow of Light ceremony is conducted at the pack meeting.
8. Make sure that an impressive graduation ceremony is conducted at the pack meeting. Involve the Scoutmaster and troop junior leaders in this ceremony.

The Cubmaster

The Cubmaster has these responsibilities related to advancement:

1. Provide a quality year-round program full of action and fun that appeals to boys. See that den and pack activities are planned so that completing achievements and electives and earning activity badges is a natural outcome of the month of fun.
2. Provide advancement incentives at the pack meeting, such as colorful and exciting induction, advancement, and graduation ceremonies. Encourage displays of den advancement charts and den doodles at pack meetings.
3. Ensure that boys who have earned awards receive them at the next pack meeting. Don't let boys get discouraged by having to wait for recognition.
4. Work with the pack committee to provide families with help and training in the Cub Scouting advancement program.
5. Make sure that den leaders are trained and know how to use the advancement program effectively.
6. See that advancement standards are maintained. Every boy should do his best to complete the requirements as presented in the program.
7. Coordinate with the pack committee to ensure that accurate advancement records are kept. Follow up on boys who are not advancing and find out why.

The Pack Committee

Pack committee members may have these responsibilities related to advancement:

1. Help train leaders and adult partners or family members in the proper use of the advancement program.
2. Collect den advancement reports at each monthly pack leaders' meeting. Complete the multipart Advancement Report (see page 34-25) to purchase awards from the local council service center. See that badges are presented at the next pack meeting.
3. Help plan advancement and graduation ceremonies for the pack meeting.
4. Help build and/or secure equipment for use in meaningful advancement ceremonies.

SIGNING BOYS' HANDBOOKS

Tiger Cubs and Cub Scouts may prepare for requirements and work on achievements and electives at home or during the weekly den meetings. In the Tiger Cub, Wolf, and Bear programs, the adult partner or a family member must approve completion of the requirements by signing the boy's book.

It is important that the family understands the correct interpretation of the advancement program because when a parent or guardian signs the boy's book, the requirement is approved and should not be questioned.

In some cases, when a Cub Scout completes certain requirements during the den meeting, the den leader initials the boy's book in the space indicated and then the parent and/or guardian signs the achievement when all of the requirements have been met.

The situation changes when boys become Webelos Scouts. Although families are encouraged to help the boys at home as they learn and practice activity badge requirements, actual completion is approved by den leaders or activity badge counselors.

Den leaders should have a clear discussion with parents and guardians about expecting too little or too much from their Cub Scouts. The "Parent Guide" in the boys' handbooks gives some guidance to families on how to help boys with advancement.

Advancement always emphasizes *doing*, not *getting*. The experience the boy has as he works on the requirements is more important than the badge itself. Boys are awarded badges to recognize their accomplishments, and families should be careful not to overemphasize the awards.

HOW FAST SHOULD A BOY ADVANCE?

Generally speaking, a boy should advance one rank per year. The important thing is to see that he earns the rank for his grade (or age). If necessary, allow the boy an extra month or two to earn the badge.

A Cub Scout's advancement progress depends on his own motivation for learning new skills, on the encouragement and help he gets from his family, and on his need for recognition. These factors will vary for each boy.

An "overachiever" will progress rapidly, especially if his family encourages him. An "underachiever" might not progress at all without an occasional push. Den leaders can provide motivation by stressing advancement work during den meetings and by providing quick rewards and recognition. One way to emphasize advancement is by having visual evidence of each den member's progress at the den meeting place through use of the Den Advancement Chart or a den doodle (see page 18-5). Another way is by using the Immediate Recognition Kit (see page 20-6).

Families should be encouraged not to rush their boys through the required achievements for each rank. There is no hard-and-fast rule, but if the boy rushes through the requirements, it might be difficult to hold his interest with electives through the rest of the year. He may not begin working on the requirements for the next rank until he reaches the next grade or age requirement.

Although not required, some Webelos Scouts earn all activity badges during their time in the Webelos den. If one badge is covered each month in den meetings, earning all 20 badges is possible. What a boy learns while earning the badges, however, is more important than earning them all.

Advancement Checklist

- Do the Cubmaster and pack committee give den leaders and families guidance in using the advancement program effectively?
- Do family members understand their part in the advancement program? Are they using achievements, electives, and activity badges to suggest activities for the boy's free time?
- Do family members recognize that advancement requirements can be completed naturally during a boy's play activities? Do they periodically check to be sure that he has been given credit for what he has accomplished?
- Do den leaders talk to parents about boys who are not advancing?
- Do den leaders try to keep den meetings filled with the kinds of activities that carry over into a boy's free time and also contribute to his advancement?
- Are accurate advancement records kept in the dens and the pack?
- Do boys receive prompt recognition?
- Do pack advancement ceremonies create an incentive for advancement?
- Are wall charts and den doodles used in den and pack meetings?
- Does the pack have an advancement ladder or chart?

RANKS AND BADGES

Cub Scout ranks are set up by grade and age, except for the Bobcat, which all boys must earn.

The **Bobcat badge** is earned before all other ranks. If a boy joins Cub Scouting as a Wolf, Bear, or Webelos Scout, he must earn the Bobcat badge before receiving any other award or rank.



The **Tiger Cub badge** is for those boys who have completed kindergarten (or are 7 years old).

The **Wolf badge** is for those boys who have completed first grade (or are 8 years old).



The **Bear badge** is for those boys who have completed the second grade (or are 9 years old).

The **Webelos badge** is for boys who have completed the third grade. Boys earn the **Arrow of Light Award** after completion of the Webelos badge, usually during their second year of Webelos Scouting. A boy who enters Webelos Scouting as a fifth-grader (or age 10) may earn both the Webelos badge and the Arrow of Light Award.



Each boy should be encouraged to earn the rank for his grade (or age). If a boy is close to earning a badge of rank when the school year ends, he may be allowed a few extra weeks to finish before going on to the next rank. Earning the badge will give him added incentive when he tackles the next rank.

What about the boy who is not promoted to the next grade with his classmates but instead repeats a grade? Does he also repeat the rank in Cub Scouting? This should be decided by the boy's family on the basis of what is best for the boy. Generally, a boy who repeats a grade is not held back in Cub Scouting.

A second-grader who earns his Wolf badge and several Arrow Points and then is retained in second grade should

move on to the Bear advancement program at the end of the school year. A second-grader who has completed only a few Wolf achievements at the time he is retained in a grade, however, might be better off continuing in the Wolf advancement program. In any case, the boy always retains credit for all advancement work he has completed.

A boy who enters Cub Scouting after completing second grade first earns the Bobcat badge and then begins work on the appropriate rank for his grade (or age). He may not “go back” and work on advancements designed for younger boys. A new Webelos Scout, however, must earn the Webelos badge before he can earn the Arrow of Light Award.

Specific information on the advancement programs for Tiger Cubs, Wolf, Bear, and Webelos Scouts follow in Chapters 19 through 21. See Chapter 17, “Cub Scouts With Disabilities” for information on advancement for boys with special needs.

ADVANCEMENT RECORDS

To ensure that prompt recognition is given for advancement, it is important to keep accurate, up-to-date den and pack advancement records. (See Chapter 10, “Den and Pack Management,” for more information.)

Den Advancement Reports. These forms (see pages 34-23 and 34-24) are completed by Tiger Cub, Cub Scout, and Webelos den leaders at the end of the third den meeting each month. They are turned in at the pack leaders’ meeting so that badges can be obtained and presented at the next pack meeting. Information for these reports is taken from the individual Tiger Cub, Cub Scout, and Webelos Scout records (see pages 34-27 to 34-30) on which advancement information is recorded at each den meeting.

Advancement Report. This multipart form (page 34-25) is completed each month by the Cubmaster or a designated pack committee member. Information for this report is taken from the den advancement reports that are turned in at each pack leaders’ meeting. The report lists badges and awards for the entire pack and is presented to the local council service center at least a week before the pack meeting so that badges can be purchased. The pack retains one copy of the form so advancement information can be transferred to the *Pack Record Book*.

Pack Record Book. This is the pack’s most complete record. It includes the achievement and elective record of each Tiger Cub and Cub Scout, as well as the activity badges, Webelos badge, compass point, Arrow of Light Award, and graduation record of each Webelos Scout. Information from the pack advancement report is transferred to the *Pack Record Book* each month.

Den Advancement Charts. Dens use the Tiger Cub, Cub Scout, and Webelos den advancement charts to keep a record

of each boy’s progress. These wall charts are colorful and will add to the den meeting place. The charts are also taken to the pack meeting for display so families can see how their sons are progressing. (Mount them on corrugated board, foam board, or other sturdy material for durability and easy transportation.)

At each den meeting, the advancement chart can be used in a simple ceremony. When a boy has completed an advancement requirement, he can be called forward to color in the appropriate section of the chart.

Computerized Advancement Records. Computer software may help leaders keep track of boys’ advancements accurately and simply. A variety of electronic record-keeping software is available. Be sure that you use a version that is current with correct information and is compatible with your council’s guidelines.

Den Doodles. A den doodle is a clever way to record advancement progress and other accomplishments of the boys as well as a colorful decoration for the den meeting place. It can be something as simple as a chart, much like the den advancement chart, or it can be a simple structure consisting of a cutout mounted on a stand.

No two den doodles are alike. Each one is distinctive and may have the den’s number, a place for each boy’s name, and a cord or thong for each boy’s advancement record. When additions are made to the den doodle, it is nice to have a short ceremony in the den meeting.

Cub Scouts love to help make their den doodles. They like to see their string of achievements grow. Let them help decide what type of den doodle fits their own den best and what kind of trophy will mark their accomplishments.

See Chapter 20, “The Wolf and Bear Programs,” and *The Cub Scout Leader How-To Book* (No. 33832A) for more information and ideas.

ADVANCEMENT CEREMONIES

Cub Scouting is a growth process. New boys are constantly joining your pack, advancing through the ranks, earning badges and other awards, and graduating into Boy Scouting. All of these steps along the Cub Scout trail are occasions for recognition. Almost every pack meeting will have some type of induction, advancement, or graduation ceremony.

See *Cub Scout Ceremonies for Dens and Packs* (No. 33212B) for information on and examples of advancement ceremonies. Other resources for ideas include roundtables, pow wows or University of Scouting, the monthly themes, *Cub Scout Program Helps*, and the *Webelos Leader Guide*.

Bobcat Ceremony

All boys in Cub Scouting earn the Bobcat badge, so the ceremony should be especially exciting and memorable. Some packs have a special ceremony complete with artificial campfire. The parents should have an important role in this presentation.

Any Bobcat ceremony in which boys are physically turned upside down contains significant potential for harm and should not be used.

A Cub Scout badge is recognition of what a boy is able to do—proof that he has gained certain abilities. It is not just a reward at the end of a tiresome task. If a boy receives that badge in an exciting advancement ceremony, it will be even more meaningful to him. If the ceremonies are colorful and realistic and recognize a real achievement for a boy, they can be satisfying and memorable for every member of the pack. Advancement ceremonies may also serve as an incentive for boys who are not advancing.

Advancement ceremonies should be well-planned and related to the purposes of Cub Scouting. Each person involved should know what is expected, and parents or other family members should always be included as a part of the ceremony. Badges are presented to them, and they in turn present the badges to the boys.

Advancement ceremonies, like all other Cub Scout activities, should be positive and meaningful experiences that reflect the values and aims of Scouting. Take care that all

cultures and ethnic groups, including American Indians, are portrayed in a positive manner, showing proper respect for religious beliefs and reflecting authenticity in dress. All ceremonies should refrain from imitating activities that might be interpreted as “hazing”—such as walking on hot coals, or branding.

CEREMONIAL EQUIPMENT

Ceremonial equipment such as awards boards, costumes, and other props add color and interest to ceremonies. Most packs use ceremony boards, cutouts of badges, artificial campfires, recognition charts, advancement ladders, candles, spotlights, and costumes to make ceremonies more exciting for the boys.

Equipment should be

- Simple and inexpensive but sturdy for repeated use
- Adaptable so it can be used in a variety of different types of ceremonies
- Designed for easy storage and transportation

Before using candles for indoor ceremonies, be sure it is permissible, and take any necessary safety precautions. Some areas have laws restricting the use of open flames in public buildings. Electric or battery-operated candles or small pen-type flashlights can be used as substitutes for lighted candles.

Advancement ceremonies can be planned around the Cub Scout monthly themes, which are recommended annually in *Cub Scout Program Helps*.