

Narragansett Council, BSA
January 2021 Scouts BSA Breakout Talking Points

Courts of Honor

[Guest presenter for this topic could be the District Advancement Chair or leader of a troop with high percentage of attendance at their CoH.]

- What are the four steps to advancement in Scouts BSA?
 - A Scout Learns
 - A Scout learns by doing, and so learns skills. And with this learning a Scout grows in the ability to contribute to the patrol and troop.
 - A Scout is Tested
 - A Scout is tested to see if they have learned the necessary skills. The Scoutmaster authorizes who may test and pass a Scout on Rank requirements. For merit badges, the merit badge counselor ensures the Scout has met the requirements.
 - A Scout is Reviewed
 - A Scout is reviewed by a board of review to determine the quality of the Scout's experience and decide whether the requirements for rank have been completed.
 - A Scout is Recognized
 - This is what will be discussed today.
- When and how is a Scout recognized for their achievements? *[Solicit answers from the participants.]*
 - Per section 4.2.1.4 of the Guide to Advancement 2019:
 - "When a Scout has earned the Scout rank or when a board of review has approved advancement, the Scout deserves recognition as soon as possible. This should be done at a ceremony at the next unit meeting. The achievement may be recognized again later, such as during a formal court of honor."
 - Section 3.0.0.3.4 of the Guide to Advancement 2019 reads: "Obtain necessary badges and certificates, etc. ... It is best to obtain and present these as soon as possible after they are earned. They can then be re-presented in more formal settings."
 - Note both sections refer to near immediate recognition and presentation of rank, merit badges, etc., with a second, later, recognition at a formal setting, i.e. court of honor.
- Why present a rank award as soon as possible?
 - Scouts work hard to earn ranks and it is reasonable for them to expect to wear the badge for their newly earned rank as soon as possible and not have to wait months to receive it.
 - Scout through First Class present good examples.

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- Once a Scout earns Scout rank, they should have the badge of rank right away to fill the empty left pocket on their uniform shirt.
- As Scouts can work on the requirements for Tenderfoot through First Class concurrently, it is possible for a Scout to earn two or even all three of these ranks in close succession before a troop's next court of honor.
- If the troop holds the ranks until the next court of honor, the Scout will never have the opportunity to wear the badge of rank for the lower ranks.
- If that happens the Scout does not have true recognition of the work they put into the lower ranks as they never got to wear the badge of rank.
- Eagle Scout is another example.
 - In most troops, Eagle Scout Courts of Honor are held separate from other ranks to focus on the accomplishments of the new Eagle Scout. They may also include a group of Eagle Scouts, some of whom may have to wait months from their board of review until the court of honor.
 - Once the troop has the Eagle presentation kit, why should the Scout be denied the honor or wearing the Eagle badge they have worked hard to earn?
 - For those Scouts that age out between their board of review and Eagle Court of Honor, they never get to wear the Eagle rank badge on their uniform.
- Troops should have a court of honor four times a year so as to minimize the amount of time between formal recognition of achievements.
- How do we get Scouts to the Court of Honor if they already have their awards?
[Have participants provide examples of what their units do to maximize attendance at courts of honor.]
 - The Court of Honor should be organized so that as many Scouts as possible have a role to play. This way they will need to be there to fulfill their role, even if they have not earned any ranks or merit badges since the last Court of Honor.
 - Every Court of Honor needs one or more masters of ceremony. Being the MC is one way to complete requirement #8 of the Communications merit badge. Any Scout capable of being the MC and has not yet completed requirement #8 should be given the chance to do so.
 - Each patrol can be given an assignment at the Court of Honor.
 - One (or more) patrol to set up the room.
 - One patrol to do the opening ceremony.
 - One patrol for any closing ceremony.
 - One patrol (or more) patrol to set up and serve refreshments after the Court of Honor.

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- One (or more) patrol to clean up.
- During the Court of Honor, each Scout being recognized for earning a rank can be announced and called to front by a Scout who currently holds that rank.
- The Scoutmaster or SPL can share something personal about each Scout as they are being recognized, such as something they did while earning their rank.
- As each rank is presented, but before the Scouts return to their seats, ask every Scout of that rank to stand and be recognized.
- Aside from rank badges and merit badges, what other achievements can be recognized at a Court of Honor?
 - Special awards not worn on the uniform (list not all inclusive)
 - Aquatics awards (Boardsailing, BSA Lifeguard, Kayaking, Mile-Swim, Snorkeling, Whitewater Rafting)
 - Conservation awards (BSA Distinguished Conservation Service [replaces the William T Hornaday Award], Paul Bunyan, World Conservation Award)
 - 50-Miler
 - Historic Trails
 - National Honor Patrol
 - Lifesaving and Meritorious Action
 - Scouts who have participated in National Youth Leadership Training (NYLT) and have completed their Leadership Development Goals (LDGs).
 - The youth leaders can all be recognized for their service to the troop.
 - Adult leaders who earned square knots can be recognized for their service.
- *[Ask participants to share how their troops conduct courts of honor and what they do to make them special.]*
 - The following link has some basic information on courts of honor, sample agenda, and presentation ideas. <https://troopresources.scouting.org/troop-courts-of-honor/>
- Courts of Honor during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - *[Ask participants if they have held any courts of honor during the pandemic restrictions. If they have, have them share what their troop did.]* Some possible options are noted below.
 - Virtual Court of Honor
 - Conduct the Court of Honor via the video-conference platform that they troop is using for meetings.
 - Try to involve as many Scouts as possible in the Court of Honor as previously noted.

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- Badges and recognition items can be delivered by the advancement chair or other designee either before or after the Court of Honor.
- Drive-In Court of Honor
 - Utilize a large parking lot, if possible at your charter organization. Have each family park in a staggered formation.
 - Depending on resources available, the MC can use a microphone and speaker, microphone broadcasting to a radio frequency, or stream the presentations via the troops chosen video-conference platform. In the later option each family would need access to the platform on a mobile device.
 - Have each Scouts recognition items in a sealed envelope. As each Scout is called forward, the envelope is placed on a table. The Scout exits their vehicle (wearing a mask/face covering) and goes up to pick up their envelope. In lieu of applause, attendees can beep their vehicle horns to recognize the Scout.
- Courts of Honor for one or two Scouts may be able to be done in person.
 - All local Covid-19 guidelines are to be followed. These typically include the wearing of a face mask/covering, maintaining social distance (6ft), and a limit in the number of participants.
 - The in-person attendees should be from the stable group that Scout belongs to.
 - The ceremony can be streamed via a video platform for the rest of the troop and other invited guests to watch.