ADVANCEMENT FAQs

What 'Active' Means

How troop leaders should measure a Scout's participation for BSA requirements.

TO EARN EACH of Boy Scouting's top three ranks—Star, Life, Eagle—a Scout must "be active" in his troop and patrol for a specified number of months and "serve actively" in a position of responsibility such as patrol leader or quartermaster. So what exactly does "active" mean and how can troop leaders measure participation? Read on to find out.

WHY IS BEING ACTIVE IMPORTANT? Scouts best achieve the aims of Scouting (character development, citizenship training, and personal and mental fitness) when they participate in meetings, outings, and service projects. Scouts who hold positions of responsibility only fulfill their responsibilities by being present.

WHAT CONSTITUTES 'ACTIVE'? To meet the requirement of active participation, a Scout must be registered in the unit and be in good standing, meaning he hasn't been dismissed for disciplinary reasons. In addition, he should meet the unit's "reasonable expectations."

CAN TROOPS SET ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THEIR MEETINGS AND OUTINGS? Yes, so long as the standard is reasonable and recognizes the many worthwhile opportunities beyond Scouting. A Scout who falls short of the unit's expectations must be given the chance (during a board of review) to offer an explanation. Certainly there are medical, educational, and other issues that may prevent participation. If the Scout would have been more active under other circumstances, he is deemed active. A board of review must also let Scouts demonstrate how non-Scouting activities contributed to growth. For example, a Scout might have missed a campout to attend a church retreat.

CAN STANDARDS GO BEYOND PARTICIPATION? No. Expectations such as uniform compliance, payment of dues, and parental involvement can't be considered when evaluating tenure.

DO MONTHS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION HAVE TO BE CONTINUOUS? No. A Scout may piece together any periods he has been active and still qualify. And active months won't expire if followed by inactive months.

CAN A TROOP SET PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS? Yes, as long as they are established up front. It's a disservice to the Scout and the unit to reward work that hasn't been done. Holding a position and doing nothing is unacceptable.

HOW DO YOU EVALUATE A SCOUT WHEN THE UNIT HAS NO ESTABLISHED EXPECTATIONS? An adult leader or the Scout—or both—should work out the responsibilities to fulfill. BSA literature such as the *Patrol Leader Handbook* can provide the basis for this effort. If it's left to the Scout to determine the responsibilities, and he makes a reasonable effort, he passes the requirement.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE? The best source is the *Guide to Advancement 2011* (No. 33088), available at Scout Shops and online at *scouting.org/filestore/pdf/33088.pdf*. ✚