

JUNE – WHO CAN SIGN OFF ON REQUIREMENTS?

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LEE: Greetings, everyone and welcome to the June ScoutCast. I'm Lee Shaw, Team Lead of National Alliances.

BRYAN: And I'm *Bryan on Scouting* blogger Bryan Wendell. Now, Lee, as you know, in our ScoutCast mailbox we got an email from Richard Eitzel. He has a three-year-old troop and wanted to know if we could have a discussion right here on ScoutCast about who can sign off on requirements, whether it be for merit badges or ranks. And Richard, it turns out you're not alone with that question.

LEE: And we aim to please, so we did ask around, and there are others who sometimes struggle when the time comes for signatures.

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LEE: So Wayne Huddleston is joining us to help us with figuring that out. Wayne has been active in a number of district and council positions, including Council Training Chair and he has served on the faculty at the Philmont Training Center and at the Sea Base. More importantly, we've asked him to join us this month because he serves as the Eagle Rank Specialist for the National Advancement Task Force. Welcome to ScoutCast, Wayne.

WAYNE: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

LEE: Why do troops struggle with the signature process?

WAYNE: It really shouldn't be a struggle for troops. Topic 4.2.1.2 in the *Guide to Advancement* states that the Scoutmaster authorizes individuals who may test and pass a Scout on rank requirements. The Scoutmaster can choose to designate youth leaders or other adult leaders if he wants to. It's really up to him to make that decision.

BRYAN: Wayne, what does the *Guide to Advancement* say about signing off on merit badge requirements? Whose job is that?

WAYNE: That's the responsibility of a merit badge counselor, and only individuals who are registered and approved by the Council as a merit badge counselor can sign off on merit badges. Even unit leaders such as the Scoutmaster must be registered as a Merit Badge Counselor and approved by the Local Council for any merit badges they wish to counsel. They just can't do it because of the fact that they're a leader in the unit.

BRYAN: So if a Scout tells Mom or Dad, "Hey, I finished Family Life Merit Badge, can you sign off for me?" that's a no-no unless they are the merit badge counselor, is that right?

WAYNE: That's correct. The parent would need to be a registered and approved merit badge counselor. And actually, the Scout should have talked with his Scoutmaster previously to be sure that the parents are ones that unit is using.

BRYAN: Good point.

LEE: Is there a difference between who can sign off at camp and sign off at a troop meeting?

WAYNE: No, actually there isn't any difference. The Scoutmaster is responsible for determining who signs off on rank requirements in all aspects of the troop's program - at a troop meeting, a weekend campout or even summer camp. So, for example, if the Scoutmaster authorized a senior patrol leader to sign off on First Class requirements, then the senior patrol leader can do so regardless of the setting.

BRYAN: What about when they conflict? Let's go back to merit badge requirements specifically, and what about when a merit badge counselor says you've completed a requirement, but the Scoutmaster says, "Well, I'm not so sure that that requirement was completed to my satisfaction." Who wins in that conflict, Wayne?

WAYNE: Normally it would be the merit badge counselor that would win in those circumstances, but there are some extreme conditions that have occurred where, for example, a Scout comes back from summer camp and he's got merit badges signed off by a merit badge counselor at summer camp that were offered at the same time. And it's pretty clear to the Scoutmaster after he has a discussion with the youth that the boy couldn't have done both of those merit badges. In that case, then, the Scoutmaster can ask for additional work with the Scout through another merit badge counselor. That's also covered in Section 7 of The Guide to Advancement.

BRYAN: And it's not meant to be punitive, right? It's just a matter of making sure that every Scout who is wearing a merit badge has actually earned it. Is that the rationale behind all these requirements?

WAYNE: It's important that every Scout has completed the requirements, yes.

BRYAN: Okay. Let's move gears a little bit to rank requirements. Who is supposed to sign off on those rank requirements?

WAYNE: Are you asking about the individual requirements themselves or whether or not the boy has completed all the requirements for a rank?

BRYAN: Let's go through each. The individual requirements, say, for Second Class or First Class Rank and then who signs off once that entire rank has been completed.

WAYNE: Okay. For the individual rank requirements, the Scoutmaster, again, is the one who makes the determination in his troop who can do that. He can designate other youth leaders, he can designate other adults. For example, the Scoutmaster could decide that the patrol leader in a patrol will have the authority to sign off on certain requirements for Scouts within that patrol. When you get to the level of signing off on the rank itself, only the board of review has the authority to do that.

BRYAN: Got it.

LEE: Now, where can a leader go for assistance if there's a question on who can sign off on either merit badge or rank requirements? Where does one go?

WAYNE: Every leader should have their own copy of the *Guide to Advancement*. There's a lot of questions in there that are going to get answered by the information contained in it. *Advancement News*, it's a bimonthly electronic newsletter of the National Advancement Team, is another good place. And certainly your council and the district advancement committees can help.

BRYAN: Wayne, this may be a silly question, but where does one find the *Guide to Advancement*, and how do they make sure they're using the latest copy? There may be some 2010 or 2008 versions floating around out there.

WAYNE: The *Guide to Advancement* itself, the cover page says right on it, *Guide to Advancement 2015*. And you'll be able to look there and inside as to for updates. You can find it in the local Scout Shops - its Publication No. 33088, or you can actually see it online at Scouting.org/advancement where it's available in both PDF and HTML versions so leaders can access it any time they need to.

BRYAN: Just to be clear, it's the 2015 version even though we're in 2016, so 2015 is still current for this present year?

WAYNE: Yes, it is. Typically, we don't update it except every couple of years.

BRYAN: Well, that makes Scoutmasters' jobs a little easier. I did want to ask you, when it comes to signing off on requirements about alternate requirements for Scouts who may have disabilities or other issues where they cannot meet the requirements as written - what's the process for that?

WAYNE: The process for requirements is that the local unit will work with the district or the council advancement committee to determine if alternative requirements are appropriate, and once those requirements can be determined, then the Scout can move forward with that. When you get to the level of Eagle Scout, the requirements all must be met. The only thing that can be different is there are opportunities for alternative merit badges if a Scout is not able to complete a specific merit badge due to health reasons or some other reason. In that case, the Scout has to complete all the other merit badges he possibly can do and then request alternatives for the ones that he can't do. And that's again decided by the council advancement committee.

LEE: Wayne, is there anything else about who can sign off on requirements that we haven't covered that our listeners need to know?

WAYNE: Just a couple of things. I'd just like everyone to remember that Scouting is about personal growth and not make the requirements more than they are intended to be. It's more important that the Scout develop confidence to take on challenges than to be able to demonstrate specific skills.

LEE: This has been very helpful in (understanding) how simple this can be, knowing where they can find those resources. So thanks so much, Wayne, for joining us on ScoutCast.

WAYNE: Thank you. I appreciate being here to help.

BRYAN: And speaking of signing off, Lee, it's time for us to sign off just about, but first let's check in with Kristen and Garfield over at the new ExploringCast, and then we'll be back with Reminders and Tips.

(ExploringCast – Exploring: the Other Teen Program)

BRYAN: Okay, folks, here we go with this month's reminders. Now is that time your troop should be camping. It doesn't matter where or for how long. Just go camping! After all, that's what the Boy Scouts are known for, right?

LEE: And in case you forgot, there's still time to earn the William T. Hornaday Award. The Hornaday Award Program encourages learning about natural resources, conservation, and the environment. More information about the award can be found on [Scouting.org/awards_central](https://www.scouting.org/awards_central).

BRYAN: There is also the Outdoor Ethics Awareness Award guided by the Outdoor Code, Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace. If you're prepared to venture down the path of really becoming aware of your surroundings, then the Outdoor Ethics Awareness Award was made for you. Now I want you to

go back and check out the January 2016 ScoutCast where Lee and I gave you all the information you need on the Outdoor Ethics Guide.

LEE: This month, *Boys' Life* magazine gives tips on buying the right skateboard for you, and you can read about the cool job of being an NBA referee.

BRYAN: It sounds like a tough job. (Laughs) *Scouting* magazine also has an article about Troop 111 in Virginia. Now, they devised a group workout that builds more than just muscle.

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BRYAN: All right, speaking of workouts, this episode was a bit of a workout for our brains, in a good way, but now it's come to an end and I want to say thank you to our guest, Wayne Huddleston.

LEE: And thank you for listening. So, Richard let us know what he wanted to hear more about. What would you like for us to discuss?

BRYAN: Your suggestion could become a future episode. So send us an email to ScoutCast@scouting.org or tweet us @BSAScoutCast. Until then, I'm Bryan Wendell.

LEE: And I'm Lee Shaw. We look forward to hearing from you.

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