

Life to Eagle “In a nut shell”



Boy Scout Troop 661
Mission Viejo, California

Boy Scouts of America

LIFE TO EAGLE “IN A NUT SHELL”:

This guide will help you by demystifying the process of working towards the Eagle Scout rank. While obtaining the rank of Eagle Scout takes a lot of planning and work it is not as complicated as you might think. Follow this guide along with the handouts from District (attached) and you will know what to do and when.

First, obtain a copy of the “Eagle Scout Application” and the “Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project Workbook” from District (or the Scout Shop). These may also be available on line at either the Orange County Council or Saddleback District websites. Second, come up with an idea for a service project as well as a project beneficiary. Talk with your Troop’s Eagle Scout Coordinator if you are unsure how to go about this. You need to pick a charitable organization that is not Scouting related, and find the person in charge. Speak with that person to see what you can do to be of service to them, keeping in mind that your project has to be something of benefit and that it has to have some degree of permanency to it. Not all Eagle Scout Leadership Service Projects include construction or building something, although many projects do so. For example, a Scout put together a collection of children’s video tapes for a local Women’s Shelter together with a donated cabinet. Be sure to keep track of all your time, as well as the time of adults who have spoke with you or helped you along the way. Use time sheets with rows and columns for this purpose. (*see* example sheets attached) Start right away so you don’t lose time spent in the planning process. Keep your time on separate sheets from other people’s time. You will need this later when you prepare an accounting of the time spent on the project. Feel free to meet with other Eagle Scouts in your Troop, ask their advice and ask to look at their Project Notebooks – these will provide you with a “roadmap” of what is acceptable. Remember you can ask your Troop Guide for help too.

Once you have picked your charitable organization and have a rough written outline of your idea you need to talk with adult leaders at your Troop to get approval to begin. Start with setting up a meeting with your Troop’s Eagle Scout Coordinator so you can bounce your ideas off him and go over your draft written materials. Fill out a copy of the Project Workbook completing the following information: First page (identifying info), Project

Description (including all subparts), Project Details (a rough draft), prepare some preliminary drawings or sketches (if you are building something). Go over these documents with your Troop's Eagle Scout Coordinator. Then set up a meeting and secure the signature of the person in charge of the charitable organization you are planning on benefiting, and obtain a "letter of need" setting forth in detail what you are expected to do for them. Look at the "Eagle Scout Application" and start to fill it out, carefully and in ink. Make notes on a separate sheet of paper about rank dates, merit badges and dates, and other items that you could accidentally get wrong. Typically the dates in your Scout Book when your Board of Review was signed off will be the rank dates, but check with the Troop's records in Troopmaster as well as the District's records (available at the Scout Shop) – ultimately if there is a discrepancy the District's records will prevail. Similarly with merit badges, your blue cards are the proof you earned the badge and the date on them should be correct, but still check with the Troop's records and District's records. Correct any errors by contacting your Advancement Chairperson and/or Committee Chair.

From there you need to meet with your Scoutmaster to obtain his approval for your project and his signature on your Project Workbook. Next, you need to meet with your Troop's Committee Chair to obtain Committee approval for your project. Do not be surprised if you are asked to make a short presentation before the full Committee before obtaining the Committee Chair's approval and signature. This should not be a big deal as you have already done at least at five boards of review and can talk in front of a group of adults. Be proud of your project and be sure to "sell it" to them when you speak about it. Now you have secured three signatures: Charitable Organization's, Scoutmaster's, and Committee Chair's. Complete your paperwork as much as possible: Do a more detailed Project Details (include an "idiot proof" checklist), go "shopping" to prepare a budget of material costs, look at the calendar for rough work dates and start to fill out the usual Tour Permits, and put together permission slips for the Scout's parents to sign. Schedule another meeting with the Troop's Eagle Scout Coordinator to go over your Project Notebook, detail sheets, drawings, preliminary budget, as well as partially completed Tour Permits. This meeting will get you prepared to meet with the District representative for your final signature before starting on your project.

Before you begin to raise any money, to buy any materials, to schedule any work days, or work on your project in any way, you need to meet with the District' Eagle Advancement Coordinator. Our Troop has generally had its Scouts meet with Mr. Michael Martin. As in all Scouting meetings the YPT rules must be met so be sure to go with either your parent, another Scout, or two adult leaders from your Troop to ensure that YPT rules are followed. Call Mr. Martin's office to schedule a date and time to meet with him. Be prepared. Come dressed in full Class A uniform, bring your Project Notebook, detail sheets, drawings, preliminary budget, as well as partially completed Tour Permits. Mr. Martin generally spends between one and a half and two hours with each Eagle Scout Candidate. That is a lot of his professional time! You need to be professional and prepared so that you do not waste his time. You will learn a lot so bring paper to take notes. Once you have secured the District Advancement Committee member's signature (again, usually Mr. Martin) you are ready to begin. Once you have secured this signature you have to add up your time spent to date. This total is the "Time Spent Planning the Project" which you will need later for your "Carrying Out the Project" portion of your Project Workbook.

Start by fundraising. Using your budget you know what you need and how much it will likely cost. Approach local businesses and community leaders to ask for support. Be sure to wear your full Class A uniform when making visits in person. Be prepared and organized, polite and professional. Remember that you are representing our Troop and Scouting in general. You can also call and send letters; be sure to keep copies of everything – you will need it for your notebook. When you get a charitable donation, remember to say "thank you" and to send a letter to the donor. Keep copies of all checks, and cash (if any). For donated materials (in kind donations) be sure to get a pro forma invoice, and always send a follow up letter thanking the donor. All of these letters, copies of checks and pro forma invoices will be kept together as proof of your project's "Income" part of the balance sheet. You need to account for all money brought in, and all money expended (i.e. taken out), and to explain in writing how you dealt with the deficiency. For example, if you budgeted for \$500 to complete your project, but it only cost \$485.75, then you need to explain what you did with the other \$14.25 – you should donate it to your charitable organization rather than keep it yourself. If, however, you end up over budget and spend more than the \$500 you raised then you need to explain how you came up with the extra money – like maybe Mom and Dad helped out!

Once you have raised your project budget you are ready to go shopping and buy the materials for your project. As before keep detailed time sheets reflecting your time and the time of adults and youth who have helped you along the way. Once you have purchased your materials you can begin scheduling your project work days. In scheduling work days think about the degree of difficulty and skill required for each step. For example, if you need to pre-cut materials plan on having adults and older Scouts only on that day. Think about how many Scouts you need for each work day, how much you can realistically accomplish each day, and how you plan on feeding your work crew. You can also use siblings and friends as extra help – do not be shy about asking. Some Scouts have found that they either have too few workers, or too many. Both are problems. Plan well and be sure to advertise your project work days by making announcements in Troop meetings, preparing and handing out flyers, sending e-mails, having sign up sheets, and following up with telephone calls to your workers a day or two before each work day. Prepare and attach a map showing where your project work day will take place; attach this map to or put it into your flyer. Discuss appropriate clothing for your work days in advance – it would not be wise to be in Class A uniforms if they might get ruined. Be sure to keep copies of everything – you need these documents for your Project Notebook.

Before each work day be sure to have a parent's permission slip, a completed and issued Tour Permit, and a sign in/sign out sheet for your workers. You might also want to consider having "safety meetings" at the beginning of each project work day where you go over the project details for that day and any hazards that might be experienced. Have safety equipment for all workers: Gloves, goggles, aprons, etc. – on an as needed basis. Not only do we want to prevent accidents, but in photos of work it would look really bad if someone using a power saw was not wearing goggles or eye protection! Plan ahead for food and drinks – these should be included in your budget (and keep receipts just as you did for project materials). Be sure to have at least two adult leaders present and signed in at all times on work days. Take pictures of the project in progress and of your workers. Consider having Mom or Dad play photographer so you are included in the pictures, and so that you have your hands free to direct and lead your workers. It is not inappropriate for you to do some of the work on the project yourself so do not be afraid to get your hands dirty! Have fun, this is a once in a lifetime experience.

After each work day sit down and write up a short paragraph on how it went, what went right, what went wrong and how you dealt with problems (if any). Be sure to state how you exhibited leadership. This is a “Daily Project Summary” and is a necessary part of your Project Workbook and Notebook. Then total up the time spent working on the project that day, your own time and other people’s time. After all of the project work days are completed prepare an over all “Project Summary,” explaining how you dealt with unforeseen circumstances, what project changes there were (if any), how the project went, how you exhibited leadership, and what you learned by completing your project. Then go to the Project Workbook and complete the “Changes” section reflecting any changes you made during the carrying out portion of your project.

Deliver your completed project to the person in charge of the charitable organization you did the project for. Obtain their approval verbally, and in writing on your Project Workbook. Be sure to get a letter from the person from the charitable organization accepting your work – a “Letter of Acceptance.” This goes in your Project Notebook following the “Letter of Need.” Be sure to take pictures showing your delivery and acceptance. If there is any money left over donate it to the charitable organization and get a receipt for it to include in your Project Notebook. *Your carrying out the project time is **officially** complete when you obtain this signature so be sure to work up your Project Notebook as much as possible BEFORE you turn in your project to the charitable organization.* Some of the District people who review the Project Notebooks do not consider time spent after this as time spent “carrying out” the project. Sign your Project Notebook certifying that you have completed it, and fill in your completion date as the date that the charitable organization person accepted the project and signed your Project Notebook. Complete your “Eagle Scout Application” and sign it where indicated, certifying that all items contained therein are true and correct. Prepare your “Personal Statement” (similar to a statement of life ambitions) and include it with your “Eagle Scout Application” – this is very important so be sure to go over it with your parents, your Eagle Scout Coordinator, and your Scoutmaster.

To complete the Project Workbook total up your time spent carrying out the project, and your grand total time on the project (planning hours + carrying out hours), as well as the total time spent by others, and a grand total of everyone’s time (your grand total time + everyone else’s time). Fill in these numbers in the “Carrying Out the Project” section of the Project

Workbook. Make sure your numbers add up correctly before you put it down in ink! It doesn't hurt to have attachment pages where you show how much time was spent (and by whom) each day, and a grand total page. Send out thank you letters or certificates of service hours to each of your project workers. Remember, you could not have exhibited any leadership but for their help. Thank them appropriately. Complete a detail sheet reflecting the materials used and costs of materials on your project (again, use attachment sheets if necessary or appropriate). Prepare a complete Income and Expense analysis for your Project Notebook, showing how you dealt with any surplus or deficit. Attach all receipts behind this section. Complete any unfinished parts of your Project Workbook, and complete organizing your Project Notebook by including all photographs (with captions) and make it "pretty" so you can show it off and be proud of it. Go over the attached District checklist(s) to make sure it is complete and ready to show off.

Schedule a meeting with your Scoutmaster and secure his signature on your Project Notebook reflecting his approval of completion of your project, as well as his signature on your "Eagle Scout Application." Schedule a meeting with your Committee Chair and obtain his signature on your "Eagle Scout Application." Get copies of all Troop Advancement Records from either your Advancement Chairperson or Committee Chair for inclusion in your Advancement Notebook.

Meet with your Troop's Eagle Scout Coordinator to go over everything so you are prepared to meet with District for your final signature. Incorporate all suggested changes and/or revisions into your Project Notebook. Also go over your Advancement Notebook and "Eagle Scout Application" with your Troop's Eagle Scout Coordinator. Call the people whom you have selected to recommend you for the rank of Eagle Scout (at least three: Educator, Religious leader, and Adult friend) to see if they would complete letters of recommendation for you. Then mail out the "recommendation letters" form along with a short note or cover letter.

Schedule another (final) meeting with the District Advancement Committee member (i.e. Mr. Martin) to show him your completed Project Notebook. Bring your "Eagle Scout Application", Advancement Notebook and your Scout Book too. You should be proud of your accomplishment and be sure to show it when you meet with Mr. Martin. Do not be surprised if you are given suggestions to change or add things. Take notes. Follow his lead. Do not let these suggestions upset you or frustrate you. Mr. Martin

has experience in helping several hundred Scouts make the rank of Eagle. Consider the source and be sure to thank him for his help! Once you have secured this final signature, make all requested changes and your Project Notebook is basically done, for now at least. Follow the suggestions of the District Advancement Committee member about how to turn in your “Eagle Scout Application.” Typically you bring it to Roundtable to turn in with your notebooks, unless of course you are too close to your 18th birthday deadline, in which case you may be told to send the “Eagle Scout Application” in to the appropriate person via Federal Express! If so, keep your sender’s copy receipt and be sure to pull a copy of the tracking information off of the internet to prove that it was timely delivered before you turned 18!

Once you have all signatures and are proud of your notebooks schedule a time to meet with the District person(s) at Roundtable to look over and approve your Eagle Scout Application, Project Notebook, Advancement Notebook, and Scout Book. Be sure to ask or invite either your Scoutmaster or Eagle Scout Coordinator to accompany you and your parent to the meeting at Roundtable. The District personnel will be using the attached checklists in this meeting and will discuss with you what they see (right or wrong) in your notebooks at that time. Assuming all is good, they will take your notebooks and materials home with them for a more detailed review. You will be called (or e-mailed) in a week or two to come and pick them up, or to come to the next month’s Roundtable meeting to get them. If there are no required / requested changes then you are ready to call District to schedule a Board of Review. Otherwise, you should make the changes suggested and then call District to schedule a Board of Review.

DETAILS ON HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR PROJECT NOTEBOOK:

Saddleback District has a two page supplement that contains “requirements” over and above what is set forth in the “Eagle Scout Project Leadership Service Workbook.” While one might argue that no one is allowed to ADD requirements beyond what BSA National requires, it nevertheless behooves the Eagle Scout Candidate to simply follow these “requirements” as instructional guidelines in order to make their Project Notebook comply with what is expected at the local District level (i.e. just make them happy). A copy of this two page supplement is attached for your

review. Although the supplement is relatively self-explanatory it's basic provisions are set forth here.

Purchase and use a three ring binder separate from your Advancement Notebook. Use this notebook to contain all of the materials from your Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project. Purchase and use plastic page protectors – place all of your papers in these so that they can not be accidentally torn out of your notebook, or stained/soiled. Purchase and use divider tabs; the problem that you will likely experience here is that it is almost impossible to find tabs wide enough to be seen beyond the edge of the plastic page protectors (to fix this simply use an Exacto blade or razor and slice the plastic page protector to allow your divider tab to slip through). Your Project Notebook MUST contain (at a minimum) the following sections: (1) Project Summary, (2) Project Description/Project Details, (3) Carrying Out Project, (4) Hours, (5) Materials/Funding, (6) Approvals, and (7) Photos. Your Project Notebook necessarily must also contain your “Eagle Scout Leadership Project Workbook” as well. You may decide to use more divider tabs to create more sections as you feel it helpful or necessary; many Scouts also keep a “Miscellaneous” section for all of those loose papers and notes. The most important thing to remember is that this is YOUR PROJECT and you should be proud of your accomplishment. Make it a keep sake. Color graphics, fancy paper, borders, downloads, photographs with legends or labels, all of these things help make your Project Notebook special to you and your parents.

DETAILS ON HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR ADVANCEMENT NOTEBOOK:

At a bare minimum your Advancement Notebook should contain all of the necessary proof that you made it to Life Scout and that you earned all of your merit badges. As you have undoubtedly been told many times before your rank advancement cards and blue cards are “like gold.” These constitute the proof required that you earned them. These all must be included in your Advancement Notebook. Be sure to include copies of all Troop Advancement Records from either your Advancement Chairperson or Committee Chair for inclusion in your Advancement Notebook. Our Troop uses a program called Troopmaster so it should be easy to print out copies of all of these records, as well as your leadership history, camping history, and service hour history.

Typically you want your Advancement Notebook to match your Project Notebook, and of course you want it to look good. Use a three ring binder, plastic page protectors, and divider tabs, as before. Break it down into sections. Be sure to include the following sections for ease of reference: (1) Rank Advancement, (2) Merit Badges, (3) Eagle Scout Application (keep a copy before you turn it in), (4) Leadership, (5) Camping Record, (6) Service Hours Record, (7) Hiking/Canoeing Record, (8) Other Achievements, (9) Photos. These sections are not required per se, but helpful for the people who will be reviewing your Advancement Notebook – i.e. the members of your Board of Review. Why not make it easy for them to see why they should sign your Eagle Scout Application? You should also show that you are proud of your Scouting career to date. This is the best place to do that, as well as to showcase your other life accomplishments such as academics, sports, music, and other activities. For example, if you get good grades report cards or certificates from the Principal look great in here. Be sure to include all certificates and other accolades that you might have.

PREPARING FOR YOUR EAGLE BOARD OF REVIEW:

Meet with your Eagle Scout Coordinator and go over what to expect in an Eagle Board of Review. Typically you have between three and five members on the Board, however you are allowed to have one of those people be from your own Troop. Take advantage of that opportunity for your own comfort level. Ask an adult leader whom you respect and admire – they'll probably be honored that you even asked. In addition, your Scoutmaster should be the one to accompany you to the Board of Review and to recommend you to the Board. Therefore you must be sure to include your Scoutmaster in the decision of what date and time you will appear for your Board of Review (the person from District will give you a number of choices). If your Scoutmaster is unavailable for any reason on the date of your Board of Review you should have a back up contingency plan. What are you going to do?!?! If you were prepared in advance what you should have done is to have asked your Eagle Scout Coordinator if he could be available on the date and time you are scheduling for your Eagle Board of Review. This will ensure that you have someone qualified from your Troop who can honestly tell the Board that they know you, and are proud to recommend you for the rank of Eagle Scout. You can also invite friends from your Troop to accompany you and provide moral support.

After meeting with your Eagle Scout Coordinator, be sure to meet with your Scoutmaster to go over what to expect at an Eagle Scout Board of Review. You may consider doing a “mock Board” at the Troop level. Some Scouts find that this extra preparation makes them more comfortable when they arrive for the real thing.

At the end, make sure that your Class A uniform is clean and looks good. All of your patches should be sewn on correctly, including all merit badges on your sash. Be sure that you can pass a uniform inspection and are proud of how you look. Go over your notebooks so that you are familiar with them. Review the Scout Oath, Scout Law, Outdoor Code (yes, they often ask about that), and the basic historical information about Scouting that you have been expected to know from Tenderfoot on up. Be prepared. Eat a good meal, get a good night’s sleep before hand. Make sure Mom and Dad bring their camera (with disc/film and new batteries). Relax. Remember, these people on your Board of Review are no different from any of your prior Boards – while you may not know them all, they are true friends of Scouting and are donating their personal time to be with you on your big day because they really want to see you succeed. In answering questions, be honest and thoughtful. Typical questions require introspection and there is usually no right or wrong answer. Ultimately you will be asked why they should put their honor on the line and sign your “Eagle Scout Application” – there is only one correct answer here: “Because I earned it.”

After it is all over you get to fulfill your first and most important duty as an Eagle Scout – to give your Mom a hug and a kiss. Public displays of affection (“PDAs”) are normal and expected. Parents get to take pictures and record for posterity your big accomplishment that day, so be sure to let them take those photos. Get the names and addresses of your Board members so that you can invite them to your Court of Honor.

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