

Active Participation

Guide to Advancement 2011

4.2.3.1 Active Participation

The purpose of Star, Life, and Eagle Scout requirements calling for Scouts to be active for a period of months involves *impact*. Since we prepare young people to go forth, and essentially, make a positive difference in our American society, we judge that a member is “active” when his level of activity in Scouting, whether high or minimal, has had a sufficiently positive influence toward this end.

Use the following three sequential tests to determine whether the requirement has been met. The first and second are required, along with either the third *or its alternative*.

1. The Scout is registered. The youth is registered in his unit for at least the time period indicated in the requirement, and he has indicated in some way, through word or action, that he considers himself a member. If a boy was supposed to have been registered, but for whatever reason was not, discuss with the local council registrar the possibility of back-registering him.

2. The Scout is in good standing. A Scout is considered in “good standing” with his unit as long as he has not been dismissed for disciplinary reasons. He must also be in good standing with the local council and the Boy Scouts of America. (In the rare case he is not, communications will have been delivered.)

3. The Scout meets the unit’s reasonable expectations; or, if not, a lesser level of activity is explained. If, for the time period required, a Scout or qualifying Venturer or Sea Scout meets those aspects of his unit’s pre-established expectations that refer to a level of activity, then he is considered active and the requirement is met. Time counted as “active” need not be consecutive. A boy may piece together any times he *has* been active and still qualify.

Units are free to establish additional expectations on uniforming, supplies for outings, payment of dues, parental involvement, etc., but these and any other standards extraneous to a level of activity shall not be considered in evaluating this requirement.

Alternative to the third test if expectations are not met:

If a young man has fallen below his unit’s activity oriented expectations, then it must be due to other positive endeavors— in or out of Scouting—or to noteworthy circumstances that have prevented a higher level of participation (see below). In this case a Scout is considered “active” if a board of review can agree that Scouting values have already taken hold and been exhibited. This might be evidenced, for example, in how he lives his life and relates to others in his community, at school, in his religious life, or in Scouting. It is also acceptable to consider and “count” positive activities outside Scouting when they, too, contribute to his growth in character, citizenship, or personal fitness. Remember; it is not so much about what a Scout has done. It is about what he is *able* to do and how he has grown.

There may be, of course, registered youth who appear to have zero level of activity. Maybe they are out of the country on an exchange program, or away at school. Or maybe we just haven’t seen them and wonder if they’ve quit. To pass the first test above, a Scout must be registered. But he must also have made it clear through outright participation or by communicating in some way that he still considers

himself a member, even though—for now—he may not meet full expectations. A conscientious leader might make a call and discover the boy’s intentions. If however, a Scout has been asked to leave his unit due to behavioral issues or the like, or if the council or the Boy Scouts of America has directed—for whatever reason—that he may not participate, then according to the second test he is not considered “active.”

In considering the third test, it is appropriate for units to set reasonable expectations for attendance and participation. Then it is simple: Those who meet them are “active.” But those who do not must be given the opportunity to qualify under the third-test alternative above. To do so, they must first offer an acceptable explanation. Certainly, there are medical, educational, family, and other issues that for practical purposes prevent higher levels of participation. These *must* be considered. Would the Scout have been more active if he *could* have been? If so, for purposes of advancement, he is deemed “active.”

We must also recognize the many worthwhile opportunities beyond Scouting. Taking advantage of these opportunities and participating in them may be used to explain why *unit* participation falls short. Examples might include involvement in religious activities, school, sports, or clubs that also develop character, citizenship, or personal fitness. The additional learning and growth experiences these provide can reinforce the lessons of Scouting and also give young men the opportunity to put them into practice in a different setting.

It is reasonable to accept that competition for a Scout’s time will become intense, especially as he grows older and wants to take advantage of positive “outside” opportunities. This can make full-time dedication to his unit difficult to balance. A fair leader therefore, will seek ways to empower a young man to plan his growth opportunities both within and outside Scouting, and consider them part of the overall positive life experience for which the Boy Scouts of America is a driving force.

A board of review can accept an explanation if it can be reasonably sure there have been sufficient influences in the Scout’s life that he is meeting our aims and can be awarded the rank regardless of his current or most recent level of activity *in Scouting*. The board members must satisfy themselves that he presents himself, and behaves, according to the expectations of the rank for which he is a candidate. Simply put: Is he the sort of person who, based on present behavior, will contribute to the Boy Scouts of America’s mission? Note that it may be more difficult, though not impossible, for a younger member to pass through the third-test alternative than for one more experienced in our lessons.