

# Trail to Eagle

## A Guide for Life Scouts



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*Roughly one boy in every 172 earns Eagle (0.6%). Yet over 15% of all US astronauts are Eagle Scouts. So are 10% of the cadets at both West Point and the Air Force Academy.*

*"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles."  
Isaiah 40:31*

*"Now I see the secret of making the best persons, it is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth."  
Walt Whitman*

*Eagle Scout is the most significant honor a boy can earn, in or out of Scouting. It marks him for life! An Eagle is an achiever who will always do great things. An Eagle is a leader who will always be ahead of the group. Society will always expect much from an Eagle, and he will deliver.*

*He soars high for all to see. His vision is clear and sharp. His bearing is majestic. His direction is certain and his flight swift and sure. Such is the eagle, our nation's symbol. Such is the Eagle, our nation's future.*

*Eagle Scouts who enlist in the US Air Force or the US Marine Corps start out one rank higher than others who enlist (and with about \$100 more pay each month).*

## The Trail to Eagle

The trail to Eagle Scout requires commitment to stay on a long and sometime rough path. As a Life Scout, you are just one step away from youth's most significant accomplishment and honor. But that's a big step, and only 56% of our Life Scouts complete Eagle.

Happily, the choice is yours. And you probably have actively involved parents (few Scouts make it to Life, let alone Eagle, without this support).

You can advance at whatever rate you want, but remember that all Eagle requirements except the Board of Review must be finished before your 18th birthday.

You are close to the top of a high mountain climbed by fewer than one out of every 172 boys, and less than 3% of all Scouts (and only 22% of Troop 97 Scouts).

Eagle Scouts are valued in our society, because they have proven that they can achieve a long-term goal despite many obstacles. This will help on college admission and on job applications, among many other benefits.

This pamphlet will provide you and your parents with key information to help you make the final steps to Eagle. You should also carefully read the Thompson-Poudre district "Guidelines for the Steps from Life to Eagle" (available on the troop website).

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## The Paper Trail

The trail to Eagle is rugged, but the part most people put off until last is one of the easier sections of the trail.

You can make your last few steps to Eagle go smoother if you do a little homework along the way. This is the Paper Trail. Collect, write, and keep the following records up to date—

- Date you earned each merit badge (12 Eagle badges and 9 other badges). If you don't have complete records, the Scoutmaster has these dates.
  - Dates you held all leadership positions since earning Life (write in your Scout Handbook).
  - Eagle Service Project Workbook (available on our website)—***This is required by BSA before you begin your service project!*** Make sure you fill it in and get all the needed signatures.
  - Eagle Scout Application (available on our website)
  - Letter of Recommendation form to give each letter writer
  - Letters of Recommendation
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## Eagle Scout Service Project

The Eagle Scout Service Project is different from other service projects you have done because you are now the leader. The Eagle project must meet three criteria—

- It must be of significant value to the community outside of Scouting (town, church, school, etc.).
- It must take considerably more time than a Star or Life project (though planning and preparation time count).
- You must provide leadership to others during the project (the project idea does not have to be original, but you must be in charge; and two people cannot lead the same project).

So here's what you need to do to successfully complete the Eagle Scout Service Project—

- Use the Eagle Service Project Workbook!
- Come up with a workable idea. This is the hardest part! Talk to the Scoutmaster and the troop advancement chairman for help. Talk to local agencies that serve the needy, or that provide services to the elderly.
- Write up a preliminary plan, showing what you will do, who it will benefit, materials needed, costs, number of people involved, etc (see Eagle Service Project Workbook).
- Present your preliminary plan to the troop advancement chairman. They will help you develop your plan into an achievable project.
- Write up your plan and present it to the district Eagle chairman. Set up an appointment at his office by yourself. Don't forget the Eagle Service Project Workbook.
- Get necessary donations of material. Get volunteers. Do the project. If an overnight or out-of-town trip is required, you'll need to file a BSA Local Tour Permit (get from the Scoutmaster). You and your parents are responsible to provide necessary support for the project (transportation, snacks, meals, etc.).
- Keep a detailed time log of every hour you spend planning, phoning, coordinating, executing, etc. This will be useful at the Board of Review.
- **Take photos of the project!!!** This will show the Eagle Board of Review what you have done better than words.
- Throughout the process, make sure you keep the Eagle Service Project Workbook up to date, and make sure all signatures are there.

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## Scoutmaster Conference

After you have completed all merit badges, fulfilled the minimum six months as a leader, and completed your Eagle Scout service project, phone the Scoutmaster to arrange a Scoutmaster Conference. In our troop, only the Scoutmaster does Eagle conferences (Assistant Scoutmasters can do conferences for other ranks).

- Bring your project report, Eagle Service Project Workbook, any photos, and a photocopy of the Eagle application.
  - At the conference, the Scoutmaster will guide you on how to complete the Eagle Scout application.
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## Eagle Scout Application

**G**et the Eagle Scout application (available on our troop website), and print out two copies: one to do your work on and one for your final copy. Do not fill out the final application until after the Scoutmaster Conference.

The Scoutmaster will help you fill out the application at the Scoutmaster Conference.

You'll need the dates for every merit badge (the Scoutmaster can provide these if your records come up short).

You will need the names of those you want to write letters of recommendation for you.

The Scoutmaster will help you on application requirement 6 (ambitions/life purpose, positions of leadership and honors & awards).

After the Scoutmaster Conference, fill out the final application, sign it, and take it to the committee chairman and Scoutmaster for their signatures. The Scoutmaster (or you) will then mail the application to the Longs Peak Council office in Greeley, where they will check all information and dates. If everything is OK, they will send the form back to the district Eagle chairman. If anything is not OK, they will send it back to the Scoutmaster for correction.

Phone the Council office after about a week to verify if your application has been sent to the district Eagle chairman. When it has, phone the district Eagle chairman to arrange with him to set up your Eagle Board of Review.

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## Letters of Recommendation

**T**he Eagle Board of Review will want five or six letters of recommendation for you. You need to select the recommenders, give them the letter of recommendation form, and give them a firm deadline to return the letters (about a week after the Scoutmaster Conference would be good). The letters must be sent directly to the district Eagle chairman.

The letters should show how you have lived like an Eagle Scout in all phases of your life (home, school, church, etc). You will need recommendations from—

- your parents
- religious leader (minister, teacher, etc; see the Scoutmaster for guidance if you don't have a church)
- school (teacher or principal who knows you well)
- employer (if any)
- 2 others non-relatives of your choice who know you well (neighbors, Scout leaders, etc)

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## Eagle Board of Review

**T**he district Eagle chairman chairs the Eagle Board of Review. There will be a couple of board members from the district, plus you will need to invite two adults from our troop who know you (these cannot be the Scoutmaster or any Assistant Scoutmaster), and you will need to invite two other non-Scouting adults who know you. You are also responsible to reserve a location for the Board of Review.

Arrive at the Board of Review in full Scout uniform (merit badge sash or Order of the Arrow sash optional, but you can only wear one of them, not both). Bring your Scout Handbook and any photographs or project information that is not already in the hands of the district Eagle chairman.

The Board will ask you about your project, leadership, and how becoming an Eagle affects and changes you. This is typically the easiest review you will have (though you should make sure to review the Scout Law and Promise). The Board members will enjoy seeing the fruits of several years of Scouting in you. The Eagle Board of Review is not so much a test as it is a celebration of the completion of your long, challenging, and successful journey toward Eagle.

At the end of the review, you should make sure that the signed Eagle application gets to the Scoutmaster so that it can be processed and the Eagle materials ordered, especially if you want a Court of Honor soon.

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## Eagle Court of Honor

**A**lthough occasionally an Eagle chooses to receive his badge at a regular troop Court of Honor, most prefer to receive their badge at a special Eagle Court of Honor. The Eagle and his family are responsible for all aspects of the ceremony—

- **Timing**—It takes about four weeks after the Board of Review for paperwork to be processed by the Council. This is pretty much the minimum time after your review that you can schedule a Court of Honor, and we would recommend at least six weeks.
  - **Planning**—The Longs Peak Council office, the Boy Scout catalog, and the Internet can provide you with several books and booklets about how to plan an Eagle Court of Honor. Note that there is no set way an Eagle Court of Honor must be (see the “typical” program below, but actual program is totally up to you). The troop will provide the BSA Eagle Presentation Kit (Eagle cloth badge, Eagle medal, father’s pin, mother’s pin, Eagle pin) and the Troop 97 Eagle neckerchief. Also available for the ceremony, if desired, are the troop flags & stands and Law/Promise candle stands, as well as a small Eagle banner. Most ceremonies have a reception afterward with a cake and punch, though some get much more elaborate.
  - **Date/Time/Place**—The Eagle and his family select a date and time, in consultation with the Scoutmaster and troop calendar. If you give the Scoutmaster enough notice, he can get the information into the troop newsletter. The ceremony can occur at our regular meeting place (or in the sanctuary or small chapel), or you can choose to have it at your church, home, yard, or other appropriate place.
  - **Cost**—The Eagle’s family is responsible for any costs of the ceremony, including refreshments. The troop provides the Eagle presentation kit and neckerchief.
  - **Participants**—You determine who will be the color guard, speakers, etc, and you are responsible to invite them and make sure they will be there. The most important guest is the one you select to “charge” the Eagle with his responsibilities as an Eagle Scout. He/she should be a person of importance in the Eagle’s life. You also need to choose who will pin on the Eagle badge (often but not always either a parent or the Scoutmaster).
  - **Invitations/Programs**—You can purchase special Eagle invitations from the Longs Peak Council office or make your own, and have them engraved or photocopied. You can also buy program covers for the program, which can be photocopied on the covers. The program typically also has biographical information about the Eagle, list of accomplishments, awards, etc.
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## Typical Eagle Court of Honor Program

Here is a simple and fairly typical program. You can get more elaborate, add music or a special touch unique to the Eagle. You may design the ceremony any way you wish, and you do not have to follow this program. At some point, the troop always presents the Eagle with a plaque from the troop ("Special Presentation"). And there are several items the Eagle receives (card, certificate, etc) that can be presented by brothers & sisters or other family members if desired.

It's nice to have a printed program (your responsibility). Print the date/location/title on the front cover, with biographical information and the program inside. You could also include a summary of the Eagle service project, poem, interesting statistics, etc.

It is always interesting to have photos and other Scouting memorabilia on display.

### Eagle Scout Court of Honor for William E. Trooper

Opening Ceremony .....	Panther Patrol
Invocation.....	Pastor John Smith
Presentation of the Eagle.....	John Jones
Invitation to Other Eagles.....	John Jones
The Eagle—A Brief Biography with Some Amusing (or at least embarrassing) Anecdotes .....	John Anderson
The Eagle Scout Charge.....	John Johnson
Presentation of the Eagle Badge .....	John & Jane Trooper
Parents' Pins.....	Bill Trooper
Eagle Neckerchief .....	John Jones
Eagle Certificate .....	Julie Trooper
Special Presentation .....	Joe Williams
The Eagle's Response .....	Bill Trooper
Benediction .....	Pastor John Smith
Closing Ceremony.....	Panther Patrol

*And now, may the Great Master of all Scouts be with us 'till we meet  
again, and may all trails lead to Him.*  
Scoutmaster's Benediction

Refreshments following the ceremony in the Fellowship Hall

This booklet is designed to help Life Scouts make the big jump from Life to Eagle. The original idea for it came from Troop 641 BSA of Aurora, Colorado. The booklet is one of those "why didn't I think of that" ideas that we were glad to receive permission to use and modify to fit our troop program.