

# Trail Life USA Troop 317

## Johns Creek, Georgia

### Frequently Asked Questions

## Advancement

### 1. What are the 3 most important things to know about advancement?

Advancement is not the end-goal of TLUSA, nor of Troop 317. It is only one of the ways for us to achieve our Vision, Mission, and Goals. The overall Advancement program attempts to provide a series of surmountable obstacles and steps in overcoming them through the advancement method. The Trailman plans his advancement and progresses at his own pace as he meets each challenge. The Trailman is rewarded for each achievement, which helps him gain self-confidence. The steps in the advancement system help a Trailman grow in self-reliance and in the ability to help others.

The Trailman needs to be intentional about advancement. While he needs to proceed at his own pace, those youth who fall significantly behind the group often get discouraged and drop-out. **Parents should encourage their Trailman to advance, but should not push.**

The Trailman needs to make sure he understands each requirement and needed resources to help him accomplish each surmountable obstacle. The Trailman needs to read the Handbook or Trail Badge worksheets to understand what is expected. Then the Trailman works through an Adult Leader to demonstrate that the task was properly completed. The Trailman needs to make sure he is obtaining the proper signatures and paperwork to record the accomplishment.

### 2. What is a Leader Conference and how are they scheduled?

A Leader Conference is a meeting with the youth conducted before each rank advancement. The Leader Conference allows the Troop Leader to review:

- The youth's growth in his understanding of TLUSA's ideals, mission and vision;
- How the youth applies these ideals in his daily life;
- The requirements of the youth's next rank or award so that he can be properly encouraged

Why does the Troop Leader engage in this one-on-one review? The relationship between a Trailman and his Troop Leader is important for the Troop's health and for the youth's success. The Troop Leader must watch the Troop dynamics to see who is showing leadership, who is holding back, who is shy, who is working with the younger Trailmen, who is skilled in outdoor activities, etc. Further, the Troop Leader must watch the individual Trailman to determine whether he is advancing, whether he is having fun, and whether he seems eager or uneasy.

One important aspect of the Leader Conference in Troop 317 is the chance for the Troop Leader to assess each youth's spiritual condition and to encourage the youth to pursue his spiritual advancement, as well. If we provide TLUSA advancement, but fail to provide spiritual encouragement, our vision and mission are not being fulfilled.

### 3. What is a Board of Review?

A Board of Review is a meeting between the Trailman and two or three adults active in the Troop. The Board of Review is how the Troop Committee tracks the progress of a Trailman to determine his understanding of the components of Trail Life and how he applies them in daily life. If the Board of

Review is for rank or award advancement, the board will satisfy itself that the youth has done what he was supposed to do for that rank (or award) and will review with the youth the requirements for the next rank or award. The Board of Review is also a way of reviewing the Troop's progress and providing spiritual encouragement to the Trailman as well. It's also a time where the Troop leadership can hear from the youth as to what's working well in the Troop, and what might need improvement.

Boards of Review are an excellent way for parents to be involved in the life of the Troop. Be on the lookout for Board of Review requests, and volunteer often.

#### **4. Can parents volunteer to assist with the advancement program – reviewing Trail Badge requirements for example?**

Absolutely, parents can support the advancement program. In fact, they are dearly needed and are critical for a successful advancement program. They can serve in several ways. They can use their own talents to be Trail Badge Instructors. They can assist in the management of the advancement and Trail Badge process and paperwork. Last, they can become Trail Guides and work directly with the youth on rank or award advancement.

#### **5. Can parents assist their son with their badge requirements?**

The youth are responsible for self-performing each requirement. Parents can encourage the Trailman to work on requirements, and can help explain any details that need to be completed. However, rank or award requirements must be signed off by an Adult Leader other than the youth's parents.

#### **6. How will my son know what types of badges to pursue?**

Your son's Trail Guide will provide suggestions and direction. There are a certain number and type of Required Trail Badges in each program, which should receive a good deal of focus. The others are elective and can be used for the youth to pursue items of interest and/or talents.

##### **Woodlands Trail:**

Advancement is attained through active participation in Troop meetings and other events. Steps are tracked and earned through attendance and participation.

##### **Navigators:**

Part of every Troop meeting is dedicated to earning Trail Badges. Each of the nine Navigator-required Trail Badges are taught for a two-month period, giving enough time for each Trailman to cycle through the required badges twice in their 3-year time in the Navigators. Trailmen who have already earned the badge, or mastered the concepts, can assist by instructing or assisting other Trailmen in the pursuit.

##### **Adventurers:**

Adventurers, by design, will be much more self-starting. While we may dedicate some time to various Trail Badges, it is expected that the Adventurer will pursue his advancement activities in a more independent fashion, taking responsibility for his own advancement.

#### **7. Is there a recommended sequence for obtaining Trail Badges?**

The Trail Life experience is designed more around outdoor experiences, and learning from doing and being outdoors than classroom instruction. Therefore, we have segmented out Trail Badges into the different programs.

Certain badges are only able to be earned during their associated program. For example, there are six Trail Badges required for the Freedom Award which can only be earned in the Adventurers program.

Working with your son's Trail Guide will help to give you an understanding about which Trail Badges are earned in which program.

#### **8. How can I schedule a Leader Conference or Board of Review for my son?**

Without putting too fine of a point on it, YOU should not be scheduling these activities for your son. Part of the value of the TLUSA program is the youth learning to interact with Adults in a positive, forthright fashion. This trains the Trailman to take responsibility for himself, to take responsibility for his own advancement, to self-advocate in an appropriate manner, and to exercise courtesy.

Parents should be involved, but as a coach or encourager for their youth – not as a social secretary planning the youth's events for them. This guidance applies to every area of a Trailman's involvement.

Once a Trailman completes all the requirements for a rank, he should contact his Trail Guide for verification. Once a youth has clearance from his Trail Guide that he's ready, the Trail Guide will instruct the Trailman as to the necessary next steps for participating in a Leader Conference.

Once the Leader Conference is completed (and marked as complete in the online system), then a Board of Review can be scheduled. There is no need for the youth to separately request a Board of Review, as we will work with him to schedule it once the Leader Conference is complete.