

A Guide For Scouts to Obtain a Letter of Reference Occoneechee Council Advancement Committee

Eagle Scout Requirement 2 states: **Demonstrate that you live by the principles of the Scout Oath and Scout Law in your daily life. List the names of individuals who know you personally and would be willing to provide a recommendation on your behalf.**

An Eagle Scout candidate must demonstrate character. His Eagle Scout board of review must be able to measure the candidate against the standards of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

The National office permits each council to determine how it will obtain information from the scout's references. Occoneechee Council chooses to have letters submitted by each reference. This choice has proven to be the best for our scouts and units. We do not conduct telephone references as they have proven to be inferior to letters because:

- a) "Phone tag" trying to reach each reference;
- b) Incomplete or hasty answers due to catching the reference at a bad time;
- c) Notes of the conversation may be incomplete, failing to capture what the reference said;
- d) Learning that the reference barely knows the candidate, or does not believe the candidate worthy of the Eagle rank, information better shared if it were in writing;
- e) The reference has moved, or changed phone numbers, and cannot be reached;
- f) Contacting references cannot begin until the candidate submits the Eagle Scout Rank Application.

Occoneechee Council requires the Eagle candidate to solicit a letter on his behalf from each of his references. This reduces the potential for delays or inaccuracies. If the scout solicits letters early on, by the time he submits his Eagle application, the letters are already in the office.

In consultation with the National Director for Boy Scout Advancement, the Occoneechee Council Advancement committee adopted the following policies:

- 1 Letters must be written by the reference directly to the Council Eagle Service Desk. The council office must destroy the "Letters of Reference" after the Eagle Board of Review (BOR) and any appeals are completed. The letters may **NOT** be given to the scout for his Court of Honor scrapbook.
- 2 The references listed under Requirement 2 of the Eagle Application must be the people writing the "Letters of Reference". The religious reference should be from the scout's religious institution (see Item 4) and the educational reference should be from the scout's school. **Only letters from individuals listed on the application will be counted towards the minimum three references needs for a board.**
- 3 Scouts may **NOT** use any of the following people for references to satisfy the minimum of three needed:
 - a -His scoutmaster, his assistant scoutmaster(s), **or his troop committee members**;
 - b - His immediate family, including grandparents, aunts or uncles;
 - c - Youth under the age of 21

Even if it is the scout's parents that write his religious reference letter, the scout must still have three letters from persons not related to him, and not registered in his unit.

- 4 **Religious Reference:** A scout must have a belief in God (Supreme Being) to be a member of the Boy Scouts of America. What's more, each scout pledges to live by the Scout Oath (do my duty to God...) and Scout Law (A Scout is... reverent). An Eagle candidate should demonstrate excellence in this area as in all areas. The scout must do one of the following:

A- If the scout is a member of an organized religious institution, he must list a religious reference who knows of the scout's fulfillment of his duty to God, and the reference must provide a letter on the scout's behalf.

B- If the scout is not a member of an organized religious institution, his parent(s) must write a letter to the attention of the "Eagle Board of Review" stating that the family has no church affiliation at this time and outlining the reason(s) why. The letter should state whether or not the scout has a belief in God, and how he fulfills his Duty to God in his daily life.

- 5 **At least three letters of reference are needed before a board of review is held**
- 6 Letters of Reference from people other than those listed on the Eagle Application are welcome and will be submitted to the Board of Review for its use. They just won't count towards the minimum three required letters needed to schedule a board of review.

99% of Occoneechee Eagle candidates follow the spirit of this policy from the start. The policy is enforced for 100%. Submitting letters from unit leaders, family members, or even fellow scouts instead of letters from the references listed on the Eagle application is not acceptable. **It is the intent of the reference requirement to have persons who will enthusiastically confirm your demonstration of Scout Spirit based on their observation of your actions, and not biased because you are related to them.**

Since **you** select the references you list on the Eagle application, be sure to select people that are willing to write letters on your behalf.

A- Contact your references well in advance. Most people will require two to six weeks to write a letter. Don't wait until you turn in your paperwork: ask for letters NOW!

B- Request more than three references. Ask only three and, if one lets you down, your paperwork sits. Ask **everyone** listed in Requirement 2 on the Eagle application. People are honored to recommend worthy candidates!

C- Give your references a stamped, pre-addressed envelope.

D- Secure letters from the sources shown on the application.

E- Make sure the letter's author mails it directly to the Council office. BSA rules require confidentiality for all references. **Letters not mailed or personally delivered by its author are not accepted.**

F- Ask your references to address the topics listed on page 18 of this guide. The more they can tell the board about you, the easier the board of review will be.