

Recently, a Scoutmaster writes about a young man in his Troop that is extremely terrified of water due to a near-death experience at a younger age and inquires about alternate swimming requirements to meet the advancement requirements of Second Class and First Class.

My first thought was to follow the published alternate requirements policy for Tenderfoot-2nd Class-1st Class (often called T21). I directed the Scoutmaster to the following US Scouting Service Project link:

<http://www.usscouts.org/advance/boyscout/bsrankalt.html>

Understandably, the published alternative requirements are more geared for permanent disabilities, requiring Doctor's notes defining the extent of the disability, and a Doctor-Parent-Scoutmaster recommendation of a replacement requirement.

Being that a fear of the water is not exactly a permanent medical condition, although we acknowledge that it can be in some instances, we enlisted the help of the Council Advancement Committee. The Council Advancement committee shed the following light on the topic:

*Here's how the BSA rules break out regarding the Second and First Class rank swimming requirements:*

*BSA handbook, 11th Edition:*

*Second Class requirement #7b. Demonstrate your ability to jump feet first into water over your head in depth, level off and swim 25 feet on the surface, stop, turn sharply, resume swimming, then return to your starting place. (This requirement may be waived by the troop committee for medical or safety reasons.)*

*First Class requirement #9b. Successfully complete the BSA swimmer test. (This requirement may be waived by the troop committee for medical or safety reasons.)*

*Although the footnotes were deleted without notice in 2001 from the BSA Requirements book (in part due to the national uproar following the major 1999 Swimming Merit Badge and advancement requirements changes,) the underlying concepts still exist and apply today for the swimming requirements for Second and First Class.*

*The wording in the current BSA Requirements book and the BSA Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures booklet about alternative requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class Ranks generally apply to the broad range of requirements for these ranks.*

*The specific "in-the-water" requirements for Second and First class may be waived by the unit committee based on compelling medical or safety reasons. For example, Scouts who do not have any sort of access to a safe swimming area may still advance to Second and*

*First class upon permission of the unit committee.*

*In addition, the Swimming merit badge is currently one of three aerobic required badges in one group (with Hiking and Cycling) on the Eagle Required list. Only one of these three must be earned in the Scout's quest for Eagle Scout. A non-swimmer can earn the Eagle Scout award.*

*Your Tenderfoot Scout is not precluded from advancing. However, any action taken by the unit committee in this regard on behalf of this Scout must be done in writing, clearly stating what action was taken and exactly why the decision was made. A copy of this letter should be provided to the Scout for his advancement records, and another copy forwarded to the Council Advancement Committee for our records.*

*Finally, we would hope that the Scout's parents can get him some professional help regarding his swimming fears, sooner rather than later. They should be strongly encouraged to do so. He will be missing a great deal of fun associated with the Scouting program, and his lack of swimming survivability could jeopardize his personal safety in years to come.*