

The Whys and Hows of the Eagle Court of Honor

A Training Module for Roundtable, Scoutmastership
Fundamentals, and Other Training Courses

by Mark Ray



Excerpted from
The Eagle Court of Honor Book
by Mark Ray

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| Learning Objectives | As a result of this training experience, participants should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain the purposes of holding Eagle Scout courts of honor• Understand the steps involved in planning courts of honor• Explain the elements of an effective court of honor• Identify resources for ceremony scripts |
| Technique | Talk, using prepared flip chart; buzz groups |
| Materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepared flip chart• “Eagle Court of Honor Survival Kit” handout—one copy per participant• Display materials, including <i>The Eagle Court of Honor Book</i>, <i>Troop Program Resources</i> (formerly <i>Woods Wisdom</i>), sample ceremony props, sample printed programs, etc. |
| Reference | <i>The Eagle Court of Honor Book</i> |

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|---|---|
| Why We Hold Eagle Courts of Honor (8 min.) | <p>Divide the participants into buzz groups of 6 to 8 people each.</p> <p>Say, “The primary purpose of the Eagle court of honor is obviously to recognize one or more Scouts for earning the Eagle Scout award. But that’s not the only reason we hold courts of honor.”</p> <p>Tell the buzz groups to take three minutes to think of other reasons for holding Eagle courts of honor. Each group should select a spokesperson to write down its answers and be prepared to report on them.</p> <p>Write “Why?” at the top of the flipchart. Below that heading, write “Recognize the new Eagle Scout.” Then, when the time is up, have each spokesperson read his or her group’s answers. Write the answers on the flip chart.</p> <p>Here are some possible answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presenting the new Eagle Scout with a challenge (such as to use his skills and experience to be a leader in his troop and community)• Recognizing other people (such as parents and Scout leaders) who helped along the Eagle trail• Setting an example for other Scouts• Informing and inspiring family members, friends, Scout parents, and other people in the audience <p>If the groups don’t come up with these answers on their own, you may want to suggest them.</p> |
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How We Fulfill Our Purposes
(3 min.)

Say, “So how do we accomplish all these things in an hour-long (or shorter) ceremony?”

Suggest the following “rules” of effective Eagle courts of honor:

- **One Eagle, one court of honor:** The Eagle Scout award should generally be presented at a special court of honor held to honor a single new Eagle—not at a regular troop court of honor or multi-Eagle affair.
- **Fit the ceremony to the Scout:** Even if you use an off-the-rack ceremony, you should tailor it to the individual. Tell about the merit badges *he* earned, the leadership positions *he* held, *his* camp staff experience, and *his* Eagle Scout service project.
- **Involve the family:** Consult with the family early and often, but don’t expect them to put the whole event together. The Eagle court of honor is a troop function, which means a troop leader—not the honoree’s parent—should be responsible for running it.

Planning the Court of Honor
(4 min.)

Ask if anyone knows the answer to the old riddle, “How do you eat an elephant?” Explain that the answer—“One bite at a time”—applies to Eagle courts of honor as well.

Say, “Planning a court of honor can be a daunting task. After all, you have to worry about not only writing a script but also securing a location, ordering awards and programs, requesting congratulatory letters from dignitaries, and planning a reception.”

Point out that one effective way to plan a court of honor is to use the court of honor backdater in the handout. Explain that a backdater is simply a step-by-step list of what you need to do and when you need to do it. Once you’ve set the court of honor date, you can calculate all the other dates to create a customized backdater for your court of honor. (Note: an online version of the backdater is available from the Scouting Links page at www.eaglebook.com.)

Distribute the handout (if you haven’t already) and give the participants a chance to review the backdater. Answer any questions they might have.

The Ceremony Itself
(8 min.)

Say, “As we’ve seen, there’s a lot more to a good Eagle court of honor than just handing a boy a badge.”

Ask the participants to think of specific activities that should be part of the ceremony. Turn to the next flip chart page—labeled “How?”—and record their ideas.

Say, “Obviously, all these things should be done in a logical order. You wouldn’t, for example, want to present the badge at the beginning of the ceremony and then do a dozen other things before the closing.”

Turn to the next flip chart page, on which should already be listed the following outline:

1. Before the Ceremony
2. Opening Period (10 min.)
3. Scouting Segment (10 min.)
4. Eagle Scout Segment (10 min.)
5. Presentation of the Eagle Badge (15-20 min.)
6. Closing Period (5 min.)
7. After the Ceremony

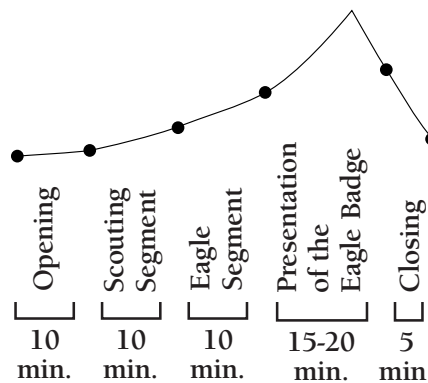
Point out that this outline appears in the handout and then explain what happens in each of the parts of the ceremony:

- **Before the Ceremony:** Displays, programs distributed, final ceremony preparation
- **Opening Period:** Call to order and welcoming remarks, introductions, announcements, invocation, opening ceremony, formal opening of the court of honor
- **Scouting Segment:** A ceremony or presentation about the purpose and meaning of Scouting (such as a Scout Law candle ceremony)
- **Eagle Scout Segment:** A ceremony or presentation about the significance and history of the Eagle Scout award (such as “Trail to Eagle”)
- **Presentation of the Eagle Badge:** Honoree’s Scouting history or personal statement, the Eagle charge, the Eagle Scout Promise, the presentation of the Eagle badge, the presentation of other awards and gifts
- **Closing Period:** Closing ceremony, benediction, closing of the court of honor
- **After the Ceremony:** Reception, clean-up

The Emotional Roller Coaster
(3 min.)

Say, “The whole ceremony should build to a single emotional peak, when the honoree is officially declared an Eagle Scout and the audience gives him a standing ovation.”

Turn to the next flip chart page, on which should already be drawn the following graph:



Say, “Notice that the audience doesn’t stay at the peak very long. Right after the standing ovation, they’ll start looking at their watches. That’s why everything after the presentation must be kept brief.”

Resources
(5 min.)

Say, “We can’t cover everything you need to know about Eagle courts of honor in a brief session like this. Fortunately, there are lots of resources available to help you.”

Mention the following resources:

- ***The Eagle Court of Honor Book***: The “complete guide to Scouting’s greatest moment”; more information is available at www.eaglebook.com.
- ***Troop Program Resources***: Formerly known as *Woods Wisdom*, this BSA publication includes several Eagle court of honor scripts.
- **Online resources**: Numerous Web sites discuss Eagle courts of honor. Among the best are www.eaglebook.com, www.eaglescout.org, www.macscouter.com, and www.scouters.com.
- **Local resources**: Mention any local resources that you know of.

Closing
(2 min.)

Say, “The next court of honor you plan may be your first or tenth or hundredth. But it’s the only one your new Eagle Scout will ever have. The Eagle court of honor is a moment the boy will remember long after he becomes a man. Make it great.”

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To order a copy of *The Eagle Court of Honor Book*, send check or money order for \$13.20 (U.S. addresses only) to: Mark Ray, P. O. Box 22314, Louisville, KY 40252-0314. Kentucky residents, please add 6% sales tax.

For quantity discounts or for other inquiries, write to the above address, call 502-327-9229, send e-mail to info@eaglebook.com, or visit our Web site at www.eaglebook.com.

Ceremony Outline

- 1. Before the Ceremony**
 - Displays
 - Programs distributed
 - Final ceremony preparation
- 2. Opening Period (10 minutes)**
 - Call to order and welcoming remarks
 - Introductions
 - Announcements
 - Invocation
 - Opening ceremony
 - Formal opening of the court of honor
- 3. Scouting Segment (10 minutes)**
 - A ceremony or presentation about the purpose and meaning of Scouting
- 4. Eagle Scout Segment (10 minutes)**
 - A ceremony or presentation about the significance and history of the Eagle Scout award
- 5. Presentation of the Eagle Badge (15-20 minutes)**
 - Honoree's Scouting history or personal statement
 - The Eagle charge
 - The Eagle Scout Promise
 - The presentation of the Eagle badge
 - The presentation of other awards and gifts
- 6. Closing Period (5 minutes)**
 - Closing ceremony
 - Benediction
 - Closing of the court of honor
- 7. After the Ceremony**
 - Reception
 - Clean-up

THE EAGLE COURT OF HONOR SURVIVAL KIT

Ask an adult Eagle Scout what he remembers most about Scouting, and he'll likely tell you about campouts in the rain, perhaps a trip to Philmont or a National Jamboree, and his Eagle court of honor. The Eagle court of honor is an event the boy will remember long after he becomes a man. It is Scouting's greatest moment, and this survival kit can help you make it just a little bit greater.



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Eagle Court of Honor Backdater

Photocopy this backdater and use it as a worksheet as you begin planning the court of honor. Give copies to all participants so they know what is expected of them.

| Weeks | Date | Action | Assigned To | Days | Date | Action | Assigned To |
|-------|-------|--|-------------|------|-------|--|-------------|
| -8 | _____ | Board of review is held. | _____ | -2 | _____ | Have programs printed. | _____ |
| -7 | _____ | Chairperson is selected. | _____ | -2 | _____ | Mail press releases. If possible, include a black-and-white photo. | _____ |
| -7 | _____ | Chairperson meets with family to begin planning. | _____ | -2 | _____ | Call troop families to promote. | _____ |
| -7 | _____ | Set date and time for court of honor. | _____ | -1 | _____ | Gather all necessary materials, props, awards, etc. | _____ |
| -7 | _____ | Secure location. | _____ | | | | |
| -7 | _____ | Send confirmation letter to person in charge of location. | _____ | | | | |
| -7 | _____ | Order invitations. | _____ | -2 | _____ | Hold a rehearsal with all presenters. | _____ |
| -6 | _____ | Develop invitation list. | _____ | -2 | _____ | Confirm attendance of all presenters. | _____ |
| -6 | _____ | Begin promoting the event within the troop. | _____ | -1 | _____ | Confirm access to building. | _____ |
| -5 | _____ | Order needed supplies from council (awards, program covers, etc.). | _____ | 0 | _____ | Set up and decorate room. | _____ |
| -5 | _____ | Order plaques and other recognition items. | _____ | 0 | _____ | Set heater or air conditioner. | _____ |
| -5 | _____ | Solicit congratulatory letters from public officials and other VIPs. | _____ | 0 | _____ | Check all audio-visual equipment (microphones, projectors, etc.). | _____ |
| -5 | _____ | Flesh out program and prepare script. | _____ | 0 | _____ | Make sure all awards and other props are in place. | _____ |
| -5 | _____ | Order NESAs membership. | _____ | 0 | _____ | Reserve seats for presenters, the honoree, and his family. | _____ |
| -4 | _____ | Mail invitations. | _____ | 0 | _____ | Set up refreshments. | _____ |
| -4 | _____ | Recruit master of ceremonies and presenters. | _____ | 0 | _____ | Position greeters at the door(s) to hand out programs. | _____ |
| -4 | _____ | Recruit volunteers to coordinate support functions. | _____ | 0 | _____ | Check with all presenters one last time. | _____ |
| -4 | _____ | Distribute scripts to presenters. | _____ | 0 | _____ | THE COURT OF HONOR | _____ |
| -3 | _____ | Order refreshments. | _____ | +1 | _____ | Send thank-you notes. | _____ |
| -3 | _____ | Visit the court-of-honor location to check facilities. | _____ | +3 | _____ | Send write-up (with pictures) to newspapers. | _____ |
| | | | | +5 | _____ | Evaluate the event and make notes for next time. | _____ |

the Eagle Court of Honor book

BY MARK RAY

The complete guide to Scouting's greatest moment.

Now in a revised and expanded second edition.

Since it first appeared, thousands of Scouters have relied on *The Eagle Court of Honor Book* to make Scouting's greatest moment just a little bit greater. Now, the complete guide to Scouting's greatest moment is better than ever. This revised and expanded second edition includes twice as many ceremonies, more ceremony parts, and a new section on congratulatory letters.



Highlights

- Six complete ceremonies
- Original inspirational pieces
- 20 pages of charges, poems, and quotations
- Nine planning checklists
- Inexpensive props you can make
- Support job descriptions
- The history of the Eagle award

the Eagle Court of Honor book

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