



February 3, 2011

Trail to Eagle – Short and Sweet

OK. I'll keep this short. School's got you wrapped around the axle and band or sports is taking up the rest of your life. But you still want to make Eagle. Good. You should have heard all this from your Scoutmaster at your Life Scoutmaster's Conference but either he was lame or it's been so long you forgot and now you're too embarrassed to ask him again. (Silly, but there it is.) Let's begin:

Read the requirements

Start by reading your Scout handbook. Then download a copy of the application at the San Diego / Imperial Council (SDIC) "[Eagle's Nest](#)". (Note all the other good stuff here. Note also that if you don't have Internet access you can obtain all these documents from your Scoutmaster or from Council.) Read the application thoroughly. You'll note some "extra" stuff is required which we'll rapidly go through below.

Next download a copy of the Requirement 5 "Project Workbook" listed below the application at the "Eagle's Nest" Read pages 2-4, skim the middle, and read the last page, "The 12 Steps from Life to Eagle." Take the 12 steps with a grain of salt because SDIC does things a little differently.

Requirements

OK, let's go through them one by one. I'll add stuff I think you should know as well as differences from the published documentation:

1. Be active – Easy; well not necessarily for the high schoolers. Scouts sometimes disappear for months then show up out of the blue saying, "OK, I'm ready to make Eagle." Doesn't work that way. Can't make Eagle if you aren't "active" and in 680 we have by-laws that define active as attending $\frac{3}{4}$ of the meetings. The only exception is if you get a leave-of-absence from the Scoutmaster.
2. References – They want six. I've seen as few as four. Some kids are missing "Educational" if they're home-schooled. Some don't have "Employer". Try to find somebody related to the topic, perhaps an advisor for "Educational" or somebody you once did something significant for as an "Employer". Otherwise just add somebody important.

The "12 steps" tells you Council will solicit your references. Not so. You're expected to obtain written references yourself. See the "Eagle's Nest" for the appropriate forms. Note that references can take a month or more to obtain. Note also that there's no requirement to wait until you're ready for your Scoutmaster's Conference to get them; six months ahead would be fine, although years ahead may not be.

Give your references the stamped envelope, addressed to the Advancement Chair's home address. You're not to receive the references. When the A-Chair gets them all they'll put them in a manila envelope and give them to you to put in your Eagle book. No, you don't get to look at them.

3. Merit Badges – You know how to get these, right? The only thing to watch out for is the three "long term" badges that require 12 or more weeks of documented effort: Personal Management, Personal Fitness, and Family Life. Obviously there's a lot more work in all the Eagle required badges but these have definite calendar restrictions. If you start them two months before your 18th birthday you're out of luck.

OK, you've got all your merit badges. Theoretically all you need to do is list them on the application. However we've always included copies of the merit badge cards and summer camp forms in the Eagle



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Book. (Don't put in the originals. Indeed, you should be fully prepared to have Council lose your book. You should have copies of everything and the only originals in the book should be the signature pages of the project.) If cards or forms are missing you can include the TroopMaster "Individual History" report as evidence of compliance.

4. Leadership – They list the applicable positions in the requirements. *any* of these suffice; you don't have to be SPL. You need six months of service. These do not have to be contiguous or in the same job. They DO have to be while you're a Life Scout. (Time starts at your successful Life Board of Review.)
5. The Project –The twice-dreaded Eagle Project. The big dooky. A lot can be written, I'll try to summarize the important points, the ones specific to 680 and some things you might not hear anywhere else.
 - a. Number 1 rule: Everything takes twice as long as you think.
 - b. There is, in fact, no size requirement. However we've held the line on 125 hours because it's easy to do and we would hate to have a Scout rejected for insufficiency and have to do it all over again.
 - c. The 125 hours includes *everybody's* work; yourself, your consultants, (including the Scoutmaster when he helps you,) and your worker-bees. It does not include "approval" meetings unless significant consulting occurs.
 - d. There is no "permanency" requirement. In the past we've said the project must last five years. I think we can dispense with that. Remember, the key here is *leadership*. That's all that's required.
 - e. Make sure you speak to an Eagle Counselor before you even think of thinking about your project. They can be had at Council's Eagle's Nest, above. The Eagle Counselor is Council's representative, but having the Eagle Counselor approve your project is no guarantee you're going to pass your Scoutmaster's Conference or Board of Review. (It is, however, a good indication.)
 - f. Where do you go to find a project? The requirement says "religious institutions, schools, or your community," which means you should contact religious institutions, (otherwise known as churches,) schools, and community institutions, such as state, city, and county governments. Don't be shy. They all love potential Eagle Scouts. Talk to pastors, priests, principals, counselors, mayors, administrative assistants, and your parents. Ask them what they'd like you to do. You can also look around your community. Maybe there's an eyesore you can get rid of. Maybe someone needs some help running a big event. Maybe you can make up your own big event.
 - g. You *must* use the Project Workbook (see above), though most Eagles make an "Eagle Project" book using a three-ring binder with the Project Workbook interspersed by additional pages. You can reference these additional pages by re-paginating the Workbook, or using Appendices, or tabs. We at 680 insist that your book be organized so the important sections can be readily accessed. (Table of Contents, or tabs, or neon lights.)
 - h. Remember that your Project book will be transferred to your Eagle application when you're done. Many Scouts simply augment their Project book with the remaining Eagle requirements when they're done with their project.
 - i. The Eagle Counselor signs off for Council, but the Scoutmaster signs off for the Troop. The current Scoutmaster requires that your project planning be complete enough and detailed enough that another Scout could pick up your planning and complete the project without thought. Why? It's good practice, and we simply don't want to test what's the minimum an Eagle board will allow. This raises the following points:
 - i. You must locate the project exactly using maps or charts.
 - ii. You must specify materials and other hardware exactly. (Not "screws" but "1/4-20 x 3 flat head machine screws". Not "drill" but "3/8 portable drill". Not "software" but "Microsoft Word". You get the idea.)



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- iii. You must specify source, quantity, unit cost, and total cost exactly. (Not “store” but “Home Depot”.)
 - iv. Your fund raising details must be similarly exact, so that another Scout could run your fund-raising.
 - v. You must include the total costs, and the total income, and the difference must work out to zero. (You do this by making up the difference, or donating the excess.)
 - vi. You should have a very specific step-by-step procedure for completing the project. Visuals help a lot. (Pictures, maps, plots, tables, etc.)
 - vii. You must address safety, first aid, and the health and well-being of your workers.
 - viii. You don’t get to start “doing” your project until you have the four approval signatures.
 - ix. You’d better record all your and everybody else’s hours. Remember you’ve got to show *leadership*.
 - x. Since you’re trying to show leadership, you don’t do much, if any, of the work yourself, you supervise, instruct, document (take pictures,) and delegate.
- j. Once you’re done write up your results with special emphasis given to *changes*. Your Board wants to see how you handled all the screw-ups you made when you planned the thing, plus all the problems Murphy threw at you. You know- leadership stuff. Changes should be explicitly defined, including re-printing as-built bills of materials, modified drawings or plans, and modified procedures. You’ll also want to include your final accounting, including actual expenditures and income, all balanced to zero.
- k. Make sure you include the results of your efforts, usually with pretty pictures of smiling Scouts working hard, showing off, and gathered before your magnificent edifice.
6. Scoutmaster’s Conference – Not the same as you’ve experienced in the past. Reading the Eagle application you’ll notice they want you to write (Oh no!) a “. . .statement of your ambitions and life purpose and a listing of positions held in your religious institution, school, camp, community, or other organizations during which you demonstrated leadership skills. Include honors and awards. . .”

Some Scouts have a resume they use to document their positions and awards. Remember to include *everything* you can think of, no matter how trivial. (Eraser boy, 6th grade.) Though you’re trying to show leadership, individual responsibility counts too.

The “Statement of ambitions and life purpose” should include your future in Scouting. The Board frowns on “YEAH. I’m OUTTA here! No more Scouting for me!”

Finally, don’t forget your 680 Scout Spirit Sheet and Scoutmaster’s Conference form. As an Eagle candidate your Scout Spirit responses should each be a short paragraph reflecting your maturity and an understanding of each item developed over years of Scoutmaster’s Minutes.

Planning

Most important to your success will be planning your work. There’s a lot of it plus all the other stuff you have to do for your parents, school, church, teams, etc. First you define how much time you have to complete your Eagle. Maybe it’s until your 18th birthday, or maybe you want to finish sooner. Then write down everything you have to do during that period, including school, Scouts, church, sports, family vacations, everything. Try to figure out start and end dates for everything you know. Now write down everything you need to do for your Eagle, being as specific as you can. Try to figure out how long each item will take, in days. (You can use fractional days.) Then order the Eagle work as you want, noting that some things *must* be done before others. Assign dates to each item, staggering the



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work so you're not working on too many things at once or are conflicting with your other responsibilities. Spreadsheets are very useful for this task, and you can find free Excel Gantt Chart templates online that will facilitate ordering all this data, and then providing a nice picture of your schedule you can then pin to your wall. This is what Kit Fach did for his Eagle Project:

Gantt Chart

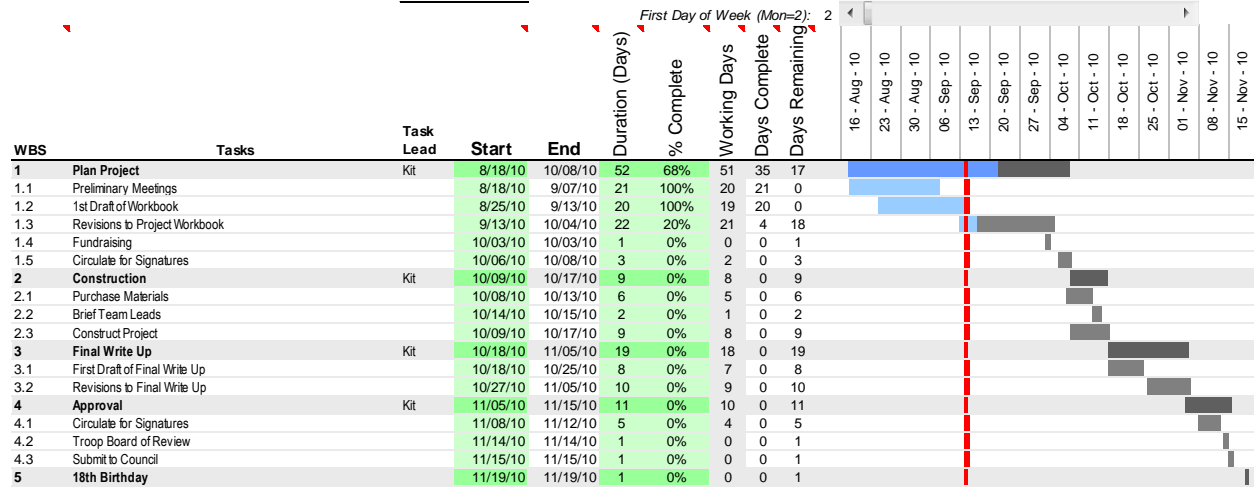
To purchase an unlocked version of this template, visit <http://www.vertex42.com/ExcelTemplates/excel-gantt-chart.html>

Kit Fach's Eagle Project - Plan B

BSA Troop 680

Today's Date: 9/14/2010 Tuesday
(vertical red line)

Project Lead: Kit Fach
Start Date: 8/18/2010 Wednesday



Resources

Council web page "Eagle's Nest": <http://www.sdicbsa.org/Advancement/eagle/eagle.asp>

Really great resource site with lots of helpful information: <http://www.eaglescout.org/>