

Can being an Eagle Scout help you get into college? Here's what 17 schools told us



The campus of Florida State University — one of several schools that responded to our questions about how their admissions office perceives the rank of Eagle Scout. Photo by Denis Tangney Jr./Getty Images

Editor's note: An earlier version of this item incorrectly identified the Georgia Institute of Technology.

We tell our Scouts that their experiences in Scouting will help them get into college.

And it certainly makes sense. Through engaging, immersive activities, Scouts learn how to manage their time, research a subject, communicate with others and work in a group — skills sure to impress any college admissions officer.

But when a Scout sends off a college application, the response comes back “yes” or “no.” There’s no further explanation about what exactly did the trick or where the application fell short.

Today, we’re hoping to shed some light on that mystery.

Bryan on Scouting contacted dozens of colleges and universities across the U.S. — everything from large public schools to small liberal arts colleges.

The question was simple: “What kind of effect does being an Eagle Scout have on a prospective student’s

application to your school?"

We received a handful of boilerplate responses encouraging applicants to pursue whatever extracurricular activities interest them. But we also received a number of thoughtful answers from the decision-makers themselves: college admissions professionals.

We're sharing 17 of them below. The common thread: being an Eagle Scout won't get you into your dream school on its own. But when combined with strong grades, a quality essay, solid test scores (if the colleges on your list still require them) and impressive letters of recommendation, that Eagle Scout Award can give you the extra edge you need.

"As an Eagle Scout myself, I remember how many years it takes to acquire the necessary merit badges and then the time and effort to go through your Eagle Scout project and the board of review for approval," says Kevin Mathes, a Class of 2000 Eagle Scout and dean of admissions at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. "I feel the words 'Eagle Scout' indicate to an admissions reader that the student spent considerable time and energy on something that is meaningful to them."

Jeff Schiffman, director of admission at Tulane University in New Orleans, agrees.

"A lot of applicants will do something once or twice, but to be an Eagle Scout requires years of commitment and dedication, and our admission committee is keenly aware of the time needed to achieve this rank," he says. "It's definitely one of those few extracurricular activities that can help an applicant stand out."

How to include 'Eagle Scout' on an application

We know that applicants *should* include their Eagle Scout Award on a college application, but what's the best place for that information?

Admissions professionals say you have several options, including your résumé, application or personal essay. The bottom line is this: Don't just include the words "Earned Eagle Scout in 2019." Provide the context, too.

"We recommend that Eagle Scouts not simply list the achievement on the application," says Mark Cortez, director of outreach and recruitment at The Ohio State University. "For example, their project management, organization and leadership development could be highlighted in their activity description or in their essay."

When doing so, remember that application readers might not know Scouting terminology like "senior patrol leader" or "Eagle project." Include the context there, too.

You might want to do one or more of the following:

- Briefly outline the process for earning the Eagle Scout Award
- Share how many hours of volunteer time you completed as a Scout
- Explain the leadership opportunities you experienced ("As the top elected youth member of my Scout

troop, I led 30 Scouts over the course of six months.”)

- Talk about how you planned, developed and gave leadership to others for your Eagle project
- Describe a memorable Scouting trip, especially one where you overcame difficult circumstances to have an enjoyable experience

Bucknell University

Lewisburg, Pa.

“Being an Eagle Scout shows the admissions office that the student has a great deal of dedication and perseverance. ... We know that students who work hard to reach their goals will thrive at Bucknell. The words “Eagle Scout” indicate to an admissions reader that the student spent considerable time and energy on something that is meaningful to them. It also elicits an interest in the outdoors, developing leadership skills and the potential to make a positive impact on the world.”

Florida State University

Tallahassee, Fla.

“When we see that a student is highly involved outside the classroom and in their community, it is always a positive factor. I know that earning the title of Eagle Scout comes at no easy task. In the eyes of an application reader, it shows exemplary commitment and dedication, which is a title that an applicant should be very proud of putting on a résumé.”

Georgia Institute of Technology

Atlanta, Ga.

“While we cannot make specific comments about a particular activity, we always place emphasis on a student’s impact and involvement. Boy Scouts of America is one of many ways that a student can articulate their contribution to community.”

Hamilton College

Clinton, N.Y.

“Hamilton considers all applicants within the context of ‘how did they challenge themselves in light of opportunities they experienced.’ We know that earning the rank of Eagle Scout requires years of dedication, pursuit of merit badges, community activism and leadership, which means that the candidate has challenged themselves and achieved recognition. I would say it is a favorable indicator, as it helps us

understand the applicant's values and willingness to commit to challenging themselves."

Johns Hopkins University

Baltimore, Md.

"When we review an application, we look for three things: academic character, impact and initiative, and personal contributions. Anything a student does to make a difference through service, leadership, or innovation — from participating in the Boy Scouts, to caring for family members, or participating in a school club — is considered as we try to get a sense of who they are and what impacts they're making on the community around them."

The Ohio State University

Columbus, Ohio

"We recognize that Eagle Scouts adhere to a number of commitments, including civic duty to their communities, team building and duty to other people. At Ohio State, we value these commitments as they reflect similar values of our university. It will be important for Eagle Scouts to include these elements, and others not mentioned, in their application so that all application readers can have a full understanding of their commitments as well as their trail to becoming an Eagle Scout. Our readers evaluate over 50,000 applications each year so the individual nature of an Eagle Scout's journey is one way that they can distinguish themselves."

Pomona College

Claremont, Calif.

"At Pomona, we value leadership, and we know that becoming an Eagle Scout requires initiative, effort and problem-solving skills, all of which are at the heart of leadership development. When I see 'Eagle Scout' on an application, I know that the student has achieved something special. Perhaps they have completed a significant project for their community, solved a challenging problem for a local organization, or contributed something real and long-lasting to their neighborhood. This dedication to service is always viewed positively in our process."

Purdue University

West Lafayette, Ind.

"We receive a significant number of applications from students that have participated or completed the

Eagle Scouts program. We tend to think these student excel in areas of leadership, perseverance, time management and teamwork. ... Essentially Eagle Scout is most often associated with positive attributes of an applicant."

Texas A&M University

College Station, Texas

"While identifying oneself as an Eagle Scout is important, it is also critical to provide detailed information about awards/recognitions, leadership opportunities, volunteer hours and employment/internship opportunities. These are often areas in which we see Eagle Scouts excel. The essay also provides another platform for Eagle Scouts to share any unique experiences they've had through Scouting."

Texas Tech University

Lubbock, Texas

"Achieving Eagle Scout status would indicate to a reader that the applicant exhibits many of the qualities that we are looking for in the review of the file. Knowing what it takes to achieve this status says a great deal about a student's ability to persist and finish their degree. It is looked at very highly in the review process. This alone would not necessary guarantee admission, as admission to the university is holistic in nature. But it is looked at favorably."

Tulane University

New Orleans, La.

"We love seeing Eagle Scouts on an application because we see a lot of value in long-lasting extracurricular activities. A lot of applicants will do something once or twice, but to be an Eagle Scout requires years of commitment and dedication, and our admission committee is keenly aware of the time needed to achieve this rank. It's definitely one of those few extracurricular activities that can help an applicant stand out."

University of California Los Angeles

Los Angeles, Calif.

"We do not consider any one kind of extracurricular activity inherently 'better' than another. What is important is that students select activities that are truly meaningful to them and that they really get involved with them. We look for long-standing dedication and significant time commitment to an activity, and we notice students' progression to positions of leadership or recognition of achievement. ... With this

in mind, students should include Eagle Scout in their application if they believe this particular extracurricular activity meets the criteria above."

University of Illinois

Urbana-Champaign, Ill.

"In the UIUC application, we do have a place for applicants to list their extracurricular activities. This will be a great place for Eagle Scouts to list their activities and accomplishments. These activities, along with their grades, course rigor, test scores (optional this year) and essay, are all a part of our holistic application review. Students that are Eagle Scouts indicate that they are dedicated and involved toward a goal and/or activity."

University of Missouri

Columbia, Mo.

"We're looking holistically. As all Eagle Scouts know, there is a large amount of work that has to be done from the very beginning. Certainly the Eagle Scout rank is going to be noticed and would be factored into the decision alongside GPA, class rank, test scores and more."

University of North Carolina

Chapel Hill, N.C.

"We appreciate the service and dedication required to earn the rank of Eagle Scout. Within the extracurricular portion of the application, students have the opportunity to tell us more about their experiences and accomplishments outside the classroom. This is where we would hope to hear from students, in their own words, about what makes their Scouting experience meaningful to them and their community. Hearing personally from students gives us a deeper and more nuanced appreciation for any activity or award."

University of Washington

Seattle, Wash.

"Applicants who have participated in Boy Scouts and have earned an Eagle Scout Award should list these activities under their Activities/Experience and/or Honors & Distinctions sections of the Coalition Application. Seeing a applicant who has earned an Eagle Scout indicates to us that they have committed a significant amount of time to the Boy Scouts and have worked hard to earn this achievement. We

recognize that earning an Eagle Scout takes years of dedication and commitment to service."

University of Wisconsin

Madison, Wis.

"At UW-Madison, we know how much time is dedicated to becoming an Eagle Scout and the commitment to projects that support the community. Being an Eagle Scout aligns well with the Wisconsin Idea, as it shows that a student is engaged and passionate about making a difference in the world. We value this experience in our holistic review and encourage Eagle Scouts to list this on their activities, and also to write about their final projects in their application. This way, our reviewers might learn more about their project and why they chose it."

Let's hear from you

How do you feel being an Eagle Scout prepares a young person for college? And how do you recommend Scouts include their Scouting experience on a college application?

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