

YOUTH CURRICULUM

Honor and Progressive Class Development Guide



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This handbook is designed for those who are not part of the Seventh-day Adventist Junior Youth programs and are interested in developing merit badge requirements, honor requirements, and progressive class or rank requirements for their youth groups. Some centrally organized groups will have additional guidelines or preferred guidelines for you to follow, always keep in mind that they establish those standards for a variety of reasons and it is important for you to use them in each project.

A merit badge or an honor patch is normally earned for completing a short course of study in a very specific area. Almost all large youth organizations have some variation of this concept and print handbooks or guides with the requirements in them. If you have a small local group and are not sure of the possibilities or are having trouble developing your ideas even with this handbook you may want to purchase an existing manual from *Adventsource.com* or the local Boys Scouts of America office to help you.

Progressive classes and ranks are also widely used but rather than being a narrow course of study they are for the broader development of the youth you are working with. They provide a structured track of study and build on previous years, while not relying on them for completion. The use of this type of system can be very helpful to groups; that work with junior youth through adulthood, in keeping counselors and instructors on-track and getting the best experience to your youth.

Do not be afraid to start from scratch in the building of any idea you have. You may find that the original format you planned will not work as well as desired but you can always change to make things work. Be careful to keep in mind the developmental needs and state of those whom you intend to teach, if you do not plan for the age you need to work with they will not be interested in the activity. Sometimes as adults we overshoot the reasoning and understanding of those we teach, other times in trying to bring the ideas down to their level we miss again and undershoot their reasoning. No doubt this is a challenge that only practice and experience can help you overcome. This handbook will offer information that may make the development of activities for a variety of age groups easier for you by setting some basic guidelines for development. Since this is only a handbook and not at all comprehensive please contact *Xtreme Youth Resources International* if there is any other way we can help.

Developing Honors and Merit Badges

First if your group does not already have merit badges or the like you will want to determine some general categories for development. Take some time at this point to get familiar with your insurance policy and determine what activities must be specifically excluded as a result of no coverage and then for safety reasons. Some things require expertise or even certification to teach this will be another important item in consideration of your honor. Some basic categories that can help you along are: Recreation, Camping, Household Arts, Arts and Crafts, Vocational, Health and Science, Ministry and Mission. These are only a few of the possibilities.

Next you will want to choose a way to award these items. If your group wears uniforms, then pins, buttons, or patches are three good ways to let your youth show their achievements. Color coding your categories and finding a uniform method of representing your honors is important. Simple certificates are another fine way to give your youth a record of their achievements.

Standards for development will vary with the structure and belief of the sponsors of any group. Some groups will find such things as the Martial Arts perfectly normal to teach while others see it as offensive or inappropriate. In addition to some logistical guidelines you will find here we at *XYRI* encourage you to maintain Christian morals and the ethics of good citizenship in all of your activities. Most groups who will use this guide are Christian groups so simply making sure you remain within the moral standards and Doctrine of your church or sponsoring agency will be sufficient for the foundation.

Skill levels are identified for youth by breaking down age groups. Average is the only guide for this; your activities must be geared to the average person in a general age group. Try these as a basic separation of groups: 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-12, 13-15, 16 and up. Certainly most groups do not deal with all of these age categories so how you number or assign your skill levels should be based upon what best suits your organization.

Some items can be divided into two or even several separate badges. Camping for example includes a wide range of skills and talents. Some of them are quite basic and a younger child can be, easily, taught these skills. Other skills are advanced and even young adults may have difficulty in trying to learn them. You would then, not have a single camping badge rather a whole group of camping skills and categories will make up a whole group of badges. Narrower categories such as Model Rocketry are likely to have only two badges a basic and an advanced. Most topics should be developed with both a lower level basic category and an advanced category requiring the completion of the first to earn the second. Some items though, will be such narrow topics as to only need a single skill level; for example housekeeping. Although my wife would argue the simplicity of the activity it is unlikely that you would develop an advanced housekeeping badge, the skills needed to keep a home clean are limited in number and somewhat easily taught to younger kids (8-9) indicating that a single badge will do.

Never simply require participation in an activity to earn a badge. Going camping does not make any child proficient in camping without the act of intentionally learning skills. Commemorating campouts with patches pins or buttons is a great idea and a motivator for your youth, try it. Develop your honor however, by mixing an understanding of the skills needed to do something with the actual learning of skills and the participation in a successful project. An example of this will be in model rocketry: If you teach first the basics of a model rocket's parts to your group then have them build and launch a model rocket of moderate skill level they have learned useful information of science as well as practiced physical skill in an area of modeling. Over time earning many honors in a variety of categories will help your youth develop skills and learning habits that will follow them into college and adulthood. They will have the knowledge that following something through to the end is its own reward, giving them an ethic that will help them be successful in anything they choose to do.

The actual development of an honor will require you to choose a topic that will be of interest to the youth you work with, and narrow the focus in that topic to make the item reasonably completed in 4-12 hours of work and teaching time. This short time for completion will help keep you focused as the developer of the honor and provide very particular experience to your youth. Develop a list of questions, for your topic, that will need to be answered for the youth to actually develop a useful understanding of the topic. This list will be your guide for the remainder of your endeavor to build your honor. All of your activities, memorization, questions, and test will be designed to answer these questions. The more activity the better, hands-on is important for most youth to stay interested and for some to learn. If you choose to develop a test keep it short, it is better to test them by the successful completion of a practical activity than a written quiz as they will receive greater enjoyment from it. Practical activity testing also proves that your youth have learned the desired lessons and skills, often tests are true/false or multiple choice allowing them to guess and that proves nothing of what they learned.

Complete the requirements yourself. Since you will need to develop an answer key for your requirements in order for others to teach the honor, it is a perfect opportunity for you to do it yourself. Your first best test of the material is to do this, by completing it yourself you will be able to critique the time required and the resources you have suggested before ever piloting the honor with a group. For groups that are part of larger organizations this and pilots with other local groups may be requirements before you submit the honor for general recognition or acceptance. Chances are after a few groups have completed the honor you will find that some small adjustments are appropriate.

Your requirements should be able to be completed without group activities where possible. Individuals should be able to complete and earn your honor on their own using the resources you have suggested. You must also be clear in stating the goal of the honor you have developed. Use of collegiate language may not be suitable to all readers, keep your choice of wording simple and straight-forward.

Please keep in mind that not all opportunities to teach your honor may be during a summer camp or other full-time setting. Make considerations for how the honor will be taught to students during a series of one hour meetings or multiple weekend outings so as to accommodate those whose work and school schedules preclude a full-time attempt at your honor.

Finally enjoy yourself, pursue topics that you will enjoy teaching as much as your youth will enjoy learning. Your time together is meant to be positive and fun. You work and they go to school full-time neither of you want evening or weekend lecture courses with stringent difficult homework. If you choose areas that they want to learn in and you will enjoy teaching the experience will be better for all of you.

Developing Progressive Learning Tracks

For those who are unfamiliar you will find that this is a way to help youth develop a variety of skills and learn a variety of lessons that will help them grow spiritually, intellectually, and physically. Again these will be aimed at specific levels. This time though rather than a wide age range the peer group is used. One easy way is based on school class. Although the ages may vary slightly dividing your youth by their grades often makes a more comfortable environment where learning and experiences will be greater appreciated.

For classes or ranks you will be identifying a variety of track categories that will follow through each age. For those in organizations that already have several such progressive tracks you will want to follow the same categories for your new track or when modifying an existing one to better suit your needs. Some track ideas are: Personal Growth, Community Service, Spiritual Development, Youth Organization, Leadership Development, Personal Development, Making Friends, and Health and Fitness. You may also want to include tracks that require outdoor skills development, good citizenship, honor/merit badge completion at their skill level, and nature studies.

Once you have identified your tracks determine what subcategories should exist in each area. For example under Health and Fitness you may want to include physical fitness requirements, health principals, diet, first aid or others. While planning you may want to consider activities youth will complete during the normal course of study for their age in school and in church. Include some of these items, for example reading requirements can include categories that will be typically required by the school, and some memorization can be worked around the memorization they complete during church schools.

The opportunity for progressive learning is important. If planned carefully you can help teach your youth proper behavior, self-discipline, manners, leadership, principals of Christianity, good citizenship, grooming and manners, and health and dietary principals in addition to physical skill development and exercise during the time you spend together. The specific items you choose for a peer group should be tailored to their age. Proper grooming and manners should be taught to those entering their teens when modesty becomes a real factor of life; temperance is another item often taught to this age group. Younger kids will need greater focus on self-discipline and obedience in their manners and activities.

As Christian groups we should not fail the opportunity to teach Christian beliefs and morality. Find ways to give the youth practical exercise in making Christ the center of their activities each day. You may do this many ways try having them participate in daily family devotionals and as small groups give short devotionals at your meetings. Consider some Biblical memorization, in particular verses that will matter to their lives in areas of behavior, manners, modesty and respect for example. These approaches and others are subtle and help encourage the youth to take on their own learning. By showing them the path this way they will be able to make an informed choice to follow it as they grow giving them stronger relationships with God and their mentors. This will help them during their hardest times and may keep them from making life choices that they will regret.

These tracks should be designed to be completed in about nine months. Many organizations meet only during school years and others that meet throughout the year find attendance to be irregular during times when school is not in session. Not all will fit into one of these categories, since you understand your particular situation you will be able to plan for it. The nine-month recommendation is based upon the typical group meeting term; you will want your youth to be able to complete the activities of the class during your regular meeting year.

You should then plan a way to invest or promote your youth in their new class or rank in the spring before school ends. This should be a simple but public ceremony. Invite the parents and church members or other sponsors to observe the program. Allow your youth to bring other guests as well, in fact, encourage it. Have a reception after, give every one the chance to meet and mingle. The more you can get the parents to attend such mixers the more supportive they will be of your effort. Again there is the matter of display, Rank pins or bars of some type are common for those who use uniforms. After so much effort Certificates are also a good idea even if you use uniform pins.

Naming your classes and ranks should also be in a progressive theme fashion. Some organizations use ratings like second class and first class. These are fine, however; if you can think of a theme of actual names for your classes you may have a more comfortable group of kids. Some who hold the rank of second class may actually feel second-class as a result. The use of military rank insignia is not an uncommon way to display ranks on uniforms, as custom pins can be expensive to have produced. If you are a small group and a preexisting insignia is what will be best for you I suggest the use of JROTC or ROTC rank insignia for your group rather than the traditional military insignia. Even if you are outside The United States you can purchase these items on the Internet or your country may have a similar program that you can obtain insignia from.

Keep each lesson short. The individual lessons and learning experiences in your progressive tracks should be only a building block for others. Some projects such as participating in a community service activity for at least four hours will take longer. These longer projects may also fulfill a requirement in one of your honor badges as well. By overlapping your progressive tracks with some of your honor badges and encouraging your instructors or counselors to follow through on teaching badges that are started, the experience of your youth members will be enriched with even more activities.

In practical application you will want to establish a schedule for teaching. I once became involved with a group where a number of the counselors were inexperienced and had not received the proper training. One of them that had been assigned to teach a small group of eighth grade students their progressive class was using the meeting time to read allowed one of the long reading assignments in the class. The result was Randy Raynes and I spending most of a Sunday at a local park with the group teaching them the many items the instructor never covered. Only the lack of training and guidance given to the counselor was responsible. The counselor should have received a schedule for teaching and been given the resources to gain answers before hand. If proper training and resources had been given then she would have known to assign the reading as an outside activity to be completed individually and could have focused on the activities that provide participation and interest to the youth during meeting periods.

You will need to provide some kind of instructor's key or manual for new progressive classes you design. By completing this you will need to complete the activities yourself. It is always a good idea to self test your plans before trying them on others. Not every one who teaches your class may hold your knowledge and thus a key and resource list is essential. It should be comprehensive; where possible the answers should be spelled out, if not then the resource list should be clear and easily filled. Obscure resources that are difficult to obtain do no good to someone with limited access.

You may want to include an advanced rating in your progressive tracks. In each category you will have several sub categories for completion. By making one optional or requiring that two of three be completed you can easily provide an advanced rate by requiring the completion of all to earn it. This is a relatively simple action that will give opportunity to those more ambitious youth to reach a higher sense of achievement.

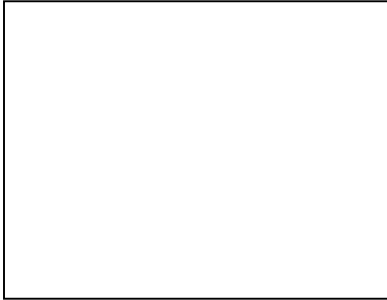
The sense of achievement that youth have by completing these learning tracks will be healthy for them as they grow. Self-confidence is not a bad thing, when you design the progressive tracks it is important that you keep Christ and good moral living at the center of all learning. Your youth need to learn that they can accomplish anything they need to through Christ and that believing this is healthy for them. Self-confidence will help them in every stage of life any place they find themselves.

Appendix

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Skill Badge™ Planner

F
O
R
M
A



Badge Name: _____

Category: _____

Skill Level: _____

Estimated time to complete: _____

Developer's name: _____

Token design

What is the goal of the skill badge?

SAMPLE

What specific questions should be answered while completing the badge?

What specific skills must be developed to answer these questions?

What items must be obtained and used in the completion of this skill?

What resource material in wide circulation is available to assist the instructor?

What terms should be learned and what are their definitions?

Should there be an advanced skill badge for this topic?

What badges should be prerequisites for this skill badge?

Are there any safety issues or special considerations in teaching this skill?

Does this skill require a certified instructor for completion?

Please use additional pages for your answers if needed. Upon completion mail to: ...

Skill Badge™ Book Layout Sample

BADGE NAME

Skill level:
Objective:

Token Design

Requirements:

- 1.
2.
 - a.
 - b.
- 3.

SAMPLE

This form will help you with a basic layout style for your new badge.

Skill Badge™ Evaluation Form
This is a sample form intended only as a suggested format

**FORM
C**

(BADGE TITLE)
EVALUATION FORM

Please print clearly and answer all questions thoroughly. Thank you for pilot testing this badge.

Your name _____ Daytime Phone # _____

Your mailing address

_____ Zip/Postal Code _____

E-mail address _____

Group Name _____

Sponsor/Church _____

Group Director _____ Area Director _____

Conference/Region _____

Date you began badge _____ Date Completed _____ How many completed? _____

Years experience as a youth leader/counselor _____ Was this the first time you taught a badge Y/N

Was the goal of the badge clear?

Were the resources and the key thorough?

Was completion in a timely manner practical?

Was it necessary to make changes to the requirements? If so what did you change and why?

Were there problems with the resources and key? If so what changes do you recommend?

What did you like about the badge?

What did you like about the key and the resources?

What advice might you give future instructors?

Did you find the skill rating appropriate?

Would you teach this badge again?

Please use additional pages for your answers if needed. Upon completion mail to: ...

Progressive Track™ Planner

**F
O
R
M
D**

Name of track _____ Age group _____

Estimated time to complete _____ Suggested start time _____

Developer's name _____

Developed for _____

Category one:

Subcategories:

SAMPLE

Category two:

Subcategories:

Category three:

Subcategories:

Category four:

Subcategories:

Category five:

Subcategories

Progressive Track™ Planner Continued

**F
O
R
M
D**

Category six:

Subcategories:

Category seven:

Subcategories:

SAMPLE

Category eight:

Subcategories:

Category nine:

Subcategories:

Category ten:

Subcategories:

Progressive Track™ Planner

Category number _____ Category title _____

Subcategory number _____ Subcategory title _____

Is this Subcategory required or optional? _____

How many subcategories are in this category? _____ Number of optional subcategories? _____

If there are optional subcategories name the ones that are required for the basic track _____

Name the ones that are required for the advanced track _____

What are the requirements for the subcategory on this page? _____

Fill out a form similar to this one for each of your categories and subcategories of study. After review and editing, each will be combined into a single document formatted in the fashion preferred by your organization.

SAMPLE

Progressive Track™ Evaluation Form
This is a sample form intended only as a suggested format

FORM
E

(PROGRESSIVE TRACK TITLE HERE)
EVALUATION FORM

Please print clearly and answer all questions thoroughly. Thank you for pilot testing this Progressive Track™.

Your name _____ Daytime Phone # _____

Your mailing address

_____ Zip/Postal Code _____

E-mail address _____

Group Name _____

Sponsor/Church _____

Group Director _____ Area Director _____

Conference/Region _____

Date you began track _____ Date Completed _____ How many completed? _____

Years experience as a youth leader/counselor _____

Was this the first time you taught a **Progressive Track™** Y/N

Were the goals of the track clear?

Were the resources and the instructor's guide thorough?

Was completion in a timely manner practical?

Was it necessary to make changes to the requirements? If so what did you change and why?

Were there problems with the resources or instructor's guide? If so what changes do you recommend?

What did you like about the track?

What did you like about the instructor's guide and the resources?

What advice might you give future instructors?

Did you find the age rating appropriate?

Please use additional pages for your answers if needed. Upon completion mail to: ...