

# Year Pins & How to Wear 'em!

(Adapted from Scouts-L youth programs mailing list) by Mike Walton

The Service star has been used since our earliest days in Scouting. It's an important part of uniforming, and all units should be using those pins to recognize adult and youth tenure in the Boy Scouts of America and the Girl Scouts of the USA's programs. It's inexpensive to purchase and the rules are fairly simple to follow. Take a look and see how the different colors are OFFICIALLY used and the way that they should be obtained and worn.

## Here's some basic rules concerning them:

1. The Service star program is a UNIT PROGRAM. There are no records concerning how many service stars you've received kept at the National nor local Council levels. HOWEVER, registration data IS kept at both locations for the various Veteran Awards starting with the ten-year Veteran's card and pin awarded by the local Council and going upwards from there.

2. There's only SIX OFFICIAL BSA service star backings:

- Orange for Tiger Cub YOUTH
- Yellow for Cub Scout YOUTH
- Green for Boy Scout YOUTH
- Brown for Varsity Scout YOUTH
- Red for Exploring/Career Awareness Exploring YOUTH
- Light Blue for ADULT service (either as a volunteer or professional)



BSA Service Stars

The colors correspond to the program in which they have been associated with; green has been used for Boy Scouting since the program started, which is why that instead of red (for Exploring) has been chosen for Boy Scouting. Yellow, and not light blue, is used for Cub Scouting because of the piping. Light blue is traditionally associated with the local Council (the Council flag is lighter blue).

3. ADULTS WEAR ADULT AWARDS AND YOUTH WEAR YOUTH AWARDS with some exceptions. This means that adults need to wear the adult backing (light blue) with their service star if they have NO youth service; if they did participate in Scouting as a youth, they wear the HIGHEST youth service star for each level of the program that they participated in.

This means that if you've served as a Tiger Cub leader and later as a Cub Scout leader for three years, you would wear ONLY a four year pin with a light blue backing...NOT pins with either orange nor yellow backings, because those are ONLY for youth members.

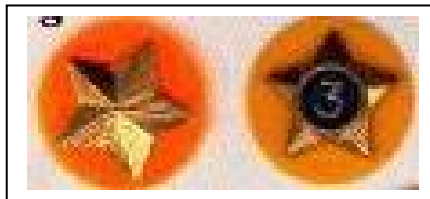
Look at this as the same thing behind the wearing of the youth Religious emblem knot by those adults that have earned a religious emblem(s) as a youth member.

4. SOME COUNCILS MAY LET FORMER GIRL SCOUT LEADERS WEAR THEIR SERVICE STARS WITH THE BSA UNIFORM. Please check with your local Council Executive for guidance. Some will allow former Girl Scouters to wear their service stars (which is of a different design and color backing than the Boy Scout service stars, so there's no confusion there) while others believe that those items belong onto the Girl Scouting uniforms. Whatever the local Council Exec says, goes, because it's THEIR call to make. Not yours.

5. **SERVICE STARS ARE CALCULATED BASED ON REGISTRATION INFORMATION.** That's the reason why they are called "service stars". They are not based on "graduation" or "movement" from one program element to another (from Wolf to Bear, for instance) nor from program to program (from Cub Scouting to Boy Scouting, for instance). Each period of service starts with the date of registration (which is why the capturing of that information is important by the UNIT) and goes for a one-year period to the following year.

There is some consensus on the fact that since this entire thing is up to the unit to present, that those Cubs and Scouts that "advanced early than the time period" (for instance, earned the Arrow of Light two months before the end of their fourth year as a Cub Scout; or has six years and eleven months' tenure as a Boy Scout at age 18) to be presented and to wear the service star for the following year. That's a UNIT'S CALL

6. **EITHER THE "NO NUMBER" or the "NUMBERED" SERVICE STAR MAY BE USED AT THE INDIVIDUAL'S OPTION.** The original service stars were unnumbered, and required the wearer to wear multiple stars to combine and represent the length of service. In 1971, the BSA went to using service stars with numbers in the center to represent the year of service and to reduce the amount of pins worn on the field uniform. Either is acceptable; it's the backing and the number that matters more than anything.



Old year pin (left); Present year pin (right)

7. **There are Two Ways for Adult Leaders to Show Tenure.** An adult has the option to wear the appropriate color backgrounds for their youth service, but they also have the option to combine ALL adult and youth service and wear ONLY the light blue Scouter's service star background.

For example, Adults could wear service stars in one of the 2 options:

**Option A:**

3 yr - yellow background (Cub Scouts)  
 7 yr - green background (Boy Scouts)  
 2 yr - red background (Explorers)  
 14 (10+4) yr - light blue background  
 (Adult service)

**Option B:**

26 yr (20+6) - light blue background  
 (ALL service, i.e. 3+7+2+14)

8. **You cannot wear a single service star to indicate more than 10 years of service.** Since the stars only come with the numbers 1 through 10 and multiples of 10 thereafter, two separate stars (a 10 and a 5, in your example) are required to indicate years of service in excess of ten, except when the total is an even multiple of ten.

There are year pins available for:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, and 80 years of service (since the BSA itself is only 87 years old).

There are VETERANS pins (which are NOT worn on the field uniform, but may be worn as a tie-tac or tie bar) for:

10, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, and 85 years of tenure.

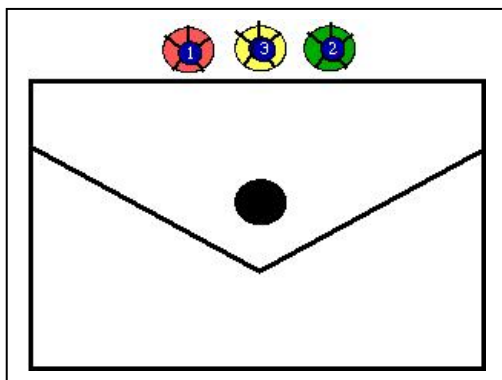
Everything ABOVE 25 years must be purchased through your local Council whom must obtain them from the BSA's Supply Division upon approval.

Of course, this is only applicable for indicating adult service or for indicating the total of all youth and adult years, since it is not possible to remain in any one division of the program as a youth for as much as ten years (except, of course, in the case of handicapped Scouts who are not subject to the age limitations).

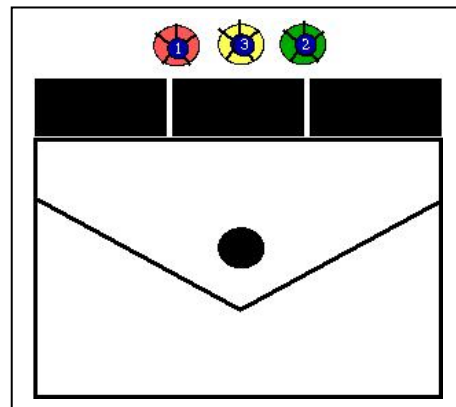
9. SERVICE STARS ARE WORN AT THE OPTION OF THE WEARER. There's nothing that says that you HAVE to wear them; but if you do decide to do so, wear them properly and with pride.

Service stars are worn centered on the left pocket button slightly above the left pocket seam. If you wear one or more square knot emblems representing special awards, the service star(s) are worn above those knot emblems as if that became the new pocket seam.

Without square knot emblems



With square knot emblems



10. One other note about the service stars: COMMISSIONERS and other leaders are responsible for insuring that adult leaders and scouts wear the service stars correctly and in the appropriate location on our uniforms. Some Leaders buy a pack of 12 Cub, Scout, Explorer, and adult backings (\$1.00 a package) from their local Council's service center before they go to camp or off to some event that has "high vis" all over it. When they see a Scout or Scouter with the pin in the wrong place, they politely ask their permission to either add the backing (the most typical problem) or to repin it in the right place. Know what they hear more than anything?? "I didn't know it \*goes\* there....I was pinned on the pocket" or "on the shirt" and I just thought it belonged there!"