REQUIREMENTS BY SKILL

Navigation & Hiking Requirements by Rank

Hiking safety, map and compass, the 5-mile hike, orienteering, and GPS.

Navigation starts at Tenderfoot with hiking safety and what to do if you're lost. Second Class is where map and compass become real: orienting a map, finding direction without a compass, and the map-and-compass 5-mile hike. First Class finishes with an orienteering course and electronic navigation. Map and compass skills take practice, so these are often the requirements that hold scouts up. Plan to give them several chances, not a single meeting.

> Requirements are paraphrased for planning, and numbers follow the current Scouts BSA Requirements book. Verify wording at scouting.org before signing off.

How Navigation & Hiking Builds Across the Ranks

Tenderfoot

5a	Explain the buddy system for outings and in your neighborhood, and use it on a troop or patrol outing.
5b	Describe what to do if you get lost on a hike or campout. **Sign-off:** Listen for the STOP idea: stay calm, think, observe, plan. Staying put is usually the right answer.
5c	Explain the rules of safe hiking on roads and cross-country, during the day and at night.

Second Class

3a Show how a compass works and how to orient a map. Point out five map symbols and explain them.

Sign-off: Hand them a real topo map. They should orient it to the terrain, not just name the compass parts.

3b Using a map and compass together, take a 5-mile hike (or 10-mile bike ride) approved by your leader and parent.

Sign-off: The scout navigates. If an adult led the hike and the scout carried a compass, it doesn't count.

3c Describe hazards or injuries you might face on that hike and how to prevent them.

3d Show how to find directions in the day and at night without a compass or electronic device.

Sign-off: Use the shadow-stick method in daylight and the North Star (or a similar method) at night, done outside.

First Class

4a Using a map and compass, complete an orienteering course of at least one mile that includes measuring the height or width of objects.

Sign-off: Include at least one height or width measurement in the course. It's the part that's most often skipped.

4b Use a GPS unit or phone app to find your location and a destination, plan a route, and follow it there.

After First Class

Hiking merit badge is one Eagle-required option (with Swimming and Cycling). Orienteering builds directly on First Class 4a, and Geocaching on 4b.

Hiking EAGLE — Eagle-required option. A series of progressively longer hikes.

Orienteering — The natural next step after the First Class orienteering course.

Geocaching — A fun way to keep practicing GPS skills.

Cycling EAGLE — Eagle-required option. The 10-mile bike route for Second Class 3b is a good warm-up.

Can rank work count toward a merit badge? Sometimes. Under the Guide to Advancement (4.2.3.6), one activity can count for both when the two requirements match exactly and have the same purpose, like camping nights for the ranks and the Camping merit badge. For safety skills such as first aid and CPR, the counselor should be satisfied the Scout still remembers what was learned. When requirements only look alike, the Scout still does each one's own work. The unit leader or merit badge counselor makes the call.

Life rank tie-in: Two Life rank Teaching EDGE choices are navigation: Second Class 3a and 3d, or First Class 4a and 4b.

Navigation Day Hike

A park or nature area with trails and a topo map. Half a day, plus a short evening session for night navigation.

1. **Trailhead briefing**
   Tenderfoot scouts explain the buddy system, safe hiking rules, and what to do if lost (T 5a, 5b, 5c). Pair everyone with a buddy for the day.

2. **Map orientation**
   Second Class candidates orient the map, identify five symbols, and explain how the compass works (SC 3a). First Class scouts coach.

3. **The hike**
   Plan a 5-mile route. Second Class candidates take turns navigating each leg with map and compass (SC 3b) and talk about hazards along the way (SC 3c).

4. **Orienteering course**
   Before the hike, set a 1-mile course with a few control points, including one where scouts estimate a tree's height or a creek's width. First Class candidates run it (FC 4a).

5. **GPS and no-compass navigation**
   At lunch, First Class candidates use a GPS app to locate the next waypoint and follow it (FC 4b). Everyone does a shadow-stick direction check. Save the night-sky method for a campout evening (SC 3d).

Signing It Off

The 5-mile hike needs approval from both a leader and a parent before it happens, not after.

Navigation is the area where a scout who "passed" may still not actually know the skill. A quick re-check at the next outing is fair.

A First Class orienteering course doesn't need a formal orienteering meet. A leader-built course in a local park works.

Common Mistakes

Counting a hike the scouts merely attended. For Second Class 3b, the scout has to do the navigating.

Teaching compass parts indoors and never taking scouts outside to use one.

Leaving out the measurement element of First Class 4a.