

DETAILED MERIT BADGE PROCEDURE

As vital part of the BSA's advancement plan, the merit badge program is one of Scouting's basic character building tools. Through participation in the program (which may begin immediately upon registration in the troop), a Scout acquires the kind of self-confidence that comes only from overcoming obstacles to achieve a goal. Instruction is offered in everything from animal science and public speaking to swimming and communications, providing a young man with invaluable career, physical, and interpersonal skills.

Merit Badges

A merit badge is an award that is presented to a Scout when he completes the requirements for one of the merit badge subjects. These requirements are found in the current Boy Scout Requirements Book. The badge is only a small piece of khaki cloth with a design embroidered in color. But the energy and commitment the Scout put into earning the badge gives this bit of cloth great significance.

Scouts can learn about outdoor skills, sports, crafts, science, trades, business, government, and future careers as they earn these merit badges. There are more than 100 merit badges overall. Any Boy Scout may earn any merit badge at any time. You don't need to have had rank advancement to be eligible.

It is the individual Scout's responsibility, after selecting a merit badge, to follow the Merit Badge Procedure below and complete the requirements for the badge. Merit badges are not a regular part of the Troop meeting. But from time to time, the Troop leaders will make arrangements for a group merit badge class or instruction on some of the merit badge requirements that tie in with a theme of a Scout meeting. One of the best ways to earn merit badges is by attending summer camp. Scouts may be able to earn three (3) to five (5) merit badges during the week-long stay at summer camp. Another good way to earn some of the merit badges is to attend some of the Merit Badge colleges that are offered during the year.

Merit Badge Counselors

A Scout earns a merit badge by working with a council/district-approved and registered adult counselor, an expert in the chosen subject, who is on the troop's approved Merit Badge Counselor list. The Scout, along with a buddy, makes an appointment with the counselor and works on the merit badge with the counselor during one or more visits. Working with a merit badge counselor gives Scouts contact with an adult with whom they might not be acquainted.

This is a valuable experience that gives the Scout practice with adult association (one of the eight methods of Scouting). The Scouts could be shy and fearful in this new situation, so the counselor must see that the counseling session is relaxed, informal, and friendly. With the Scout initiating and maintaining contact with the counselor as needed and the counselor working closely with the Scout, this experience helps the Scout become more confident and skilled with the adult interaction ability that he will need to succeed in his progression toward the Eagle rank, as a student working with teachers and professors and, later, in his career interacting with employees, customers, and others.

Group Instruction of Merit Badges.

The National Executive Board has approved this policy statement on merit badge counseling:

"To the fullest extent possible, the merit badge counseling relationship is a counselor-Scout arrangement in which the boy is not only judged on his performance of the requirements, but receives maximum benefit from the knowledge, skill, character, and personal interest of his counselor. Group instruction and orientation are encouraged where special facilities and expert personnel make this most practical, or when Scouts are dependent on only a few counselors for assistance. However, this group experience should be followed by attention to each individual candidate's projects and his ability to fulfill all requirements."

In harmony with this policy, Troop 198 may use merit badge counselors in group meetings.

Merit Badge Advancement at Camps (Summer or Winter)

Many Boy Scout advancement opportunities take place during 'long term' camps (Summer or Winter camps). Troop 198 often participates in these camps that offer merit badge classes. These camps may be sponsored by Circle Ten Council or other BSA councils across the country. In either case, the procedures for advancement in summer camp are established by the council advancement committee for the council that sponsors the camp in cooperation with the committee responsible for summer camp, the camp director, and the program director for the summer camp in question. These procedures are typically given to the troop as part of pre-camp orientation.

Troop 198 will modify its merit badge procedure for summer camps based on camp procedures. However, the spirit and intent of the standard merit badge procedure will be maintained.

The general idea is:

- 1.) Before a Scout leaves for camp, he has been approved by the ScoutMaster to attend the merit badge and has followed the appropriate registration rules
- 2.) The Scout has reviewed the Merit Badge requirements and completes the necessary prerequisite work specified by the camp.
- 3.) The Scout attends the classes as scheduled by the camp and insures his name is on the 'roll call' for class attendance.
- 4.) Before the Scout leaves camp, he should meet with the Merit Badge Counselor and understand his completion status for all of the merit badges started during the camp.
- 5.) The troop will receive a 'troop report' (for all participating scouts and their MB status) as they leave the camp. This information will be updated into Troopmaster and distributed to the scouts as soon as possible. Sometimes, there are requirements that must be completed in advance -- unless the Scout does this, he will leave camp with a "partial".

To maximize the number of badges completed at summer camp, Scouts should look carefully at the requirements and complete as much in advance as possible (at least any stated "prerequisite" requirements). The camp will have access to a wide range of counselors to sign off on badges once all requirements have been met. Leaving even one requirement incomplete means the Scout will need to find a counselor approved by the Scoutmaster when the Scout gets home to sign off that last requirement. It is far better to walk away from camp with a completed Merit Badge.

Merit Badge Procedure

1. The Scout selects a merit badge of interest. The Scout should make sure that the requirements of the merit badge are within his capabilities. For example, it may be for the Scout that the Chemistry merit badge is best obtained after taking high school chemistry.
2. The Scout identifies a buddy. A Scout must have a buddy with him at each meeting with a merit badge counselor. A counselor cannot, by Boy Scout regulations, meet with a Scout (other than his/her own son) without another person present. The Scout's buddy can be another Scout interested in earning the merit badge with the Scout, a parent or guardian, a brother or sister, or a relative or friend.
3. The Scout obtains a blue card (Application for Merit Badge) and arranges to meet with the Scoutmaster or the Scout's ASM/Patrol Advisor. Before meeting with the Scoutmaster/ASM, the Scout is expected to have the name of the buddy identified as well as have the front part of the Application for Merit Badge section completed (exclusive of the date and signature of unit leader).
4. After discussing the merit badge with the Scout and approving work on the badge, the Scoutmaster or ASM either fills out the reverse side of the Application for Merit Badge section with the name, address, and phone number of the counselor or supplies a list of approved merit badge counselors with contact information from which the Scout may select a counselor, in which case the Scout completes that section after contacting the counselor.
5. The Scoutmaster signs the blue card before the merit badge counselor AND again at the completion of the merit badge requirements.

6. The Scout and his buddy then meet with the merit badge counselor to go over the merit badge requirements and the projects needed to complete the requirements. When the Scout meets with the counselor, he is expected to be prepared, polite, and dressed in a Class A uniform.
7. The merit badge counselor will sign off on completed requirements. When the final requirement is completed, the merit badge counselor fills in the rest of the blanks and signs and dates the blue card. The date of completion is the date it is considered earned. This is the date recorded on all Scout records, including the advancement order form and the final Merit Badge Card. The merit badge counselor will then keep the Counselor's Record portion, and give the other 2 portions to the Scout.
8. The Scout turns in the remaining blue card sections to the Advancement Committee who will record the Merit Badge completion in the Troop Records (TroopMAster), order the merit badge and Merit Badge card.
9. The Scout updates their Scout's Handbook and keeps the remaining Applicants Record portion for their records. When the Scout receives the next Individual History Report from the Troop, he needs to verify the data is correct. If there are discrepancies, the Scout needs to meet with the Advancement Committee at the next Troop meeting and bring the appropriate records.
10. The Scout receives his Merit Badge at the first troop meeting of the month (as long as their Dues are current) and the formal Merit Badge card at the Court of Honor.

Throughout the process, until the completed & signed off blue card is turned in, ***the Scout is fully responsible for the card*** (though the counselor may choose to retain the card until completion). Once merit badges are awarded, Scouts should keep the Applicant's record of the blue cards separate from the Merit Badge cards. That way if one is lost, the other can replace it. If anything should ever happen to the official records of the Scout, the blue cards or Merit Badge cards will serve as proof of earning the merit badge towards the Eagle rank. The Merit Badge Card and each portion of the blue card and should be retained until the Scout turns 18 or is awarded the rank of Eagle.

Scouts are expected to go to different merit badge counselors, unless otherwise approved by the Scoutmaster. Merit badge counselors do not have to be associated with Troop 198 but must be on the Troop Merit Badge Counselors list. The Patrol Advisor AMS's and troop librarian have the list of merit badge counselors.

Merit badge pamphlets can be checked out from the Troop 198 librarian or purchased at the Scout Shop.

Completion Timeframe

There is NO DEADLINE for earning Merit Badges, except the Scout's 18th Birthday. Once a Scout has started working on a Merit Badge (i.e. obtained a signed Blue Card Application for Merit Badge from the Scoutmaster, had an initial discussion with a merit badge Counselor, and started working on the requirements), he may continue using those requirements until he completes the badge or turns 18. If the requirements change while a Scout is working on the badge, he may continue to use the OLD requirements until he completes the work, or he may use the new requirements if he wishes. It is HIS choice, and his alone.

THERE IS NO TIME LIMIT ON SO-CALLED "PARTIALS" (see summer camp discussion below).

Discontinued Merit Badges

If a Merit Badge is discontinued, Scouts working on the badge when it is removed from the Boy Scout Requirements booklet may continue to work toward completing the badge, and get credit for earning the badge, until they turn 18. However, it may not be possible to obtain an actual merit badge patch, once the local council's supply is exhausted.

If a discontinued Merit Badge is replaced with one or more other Merit Badges covering the same or similar topics (such as Rifle and Shotgun Shooting MB which was replaced by Rifle Shooting MB and Shotgun Shooting MB), a Scout that has earned the discontinued badge may also earn the new badge or badges. If the badge is simply renamed (such as Firemanship MB which was changed to Fire Safety MB), Scouts may NOT earn the badge again. If the badge number in BSA's numbering system is the same before and after the change, it is a renaming. If a new number is assigned, it is a replacement.