



# Merit Badge Program

## Background and Purposes

As chartered by the Congress of the United States, the Boy Scouts of America is a movement dedicated to supplementing and enlarging the education of youth. The merit badge program, which provides opportunities for youth to explore more than 100 fields of skill and knowledge, plays a key role in the fulfillment of this educational commitment.

A 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 a troop or team), 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 Badge Pamphlets

Each merit badge subject is outlined and explained in a pamphlet that contains short, introductory information written for Boy Scouts/Varsity Scouts by recognized authorities. More than a million pamphlets are sold yearly, and many are used as approved reference texts in libraries and school curricula. The merit badge pamphlet can be obtained by checking it out from the troop library, borrowing it from another scout or purchasing it. Be sure that the merit badge pamphlet is the current version as they are updated and changed periodically.

## Counselors

People who are knowledgeable about the various merit badge subjects are selected, approved, and trained by council and district advancement committees to serve as merit badge counselors. For example, a dentist might be asked to serve as a counselor for the Dentistry merit badge. A counselor must not only possess the necessary technical knowledge, but have a solid understanding of the needs, interests, and abilities of Scouts. A counselor must also be a registered adult with the BSA.

## Badges for Eagle

To qualify for the Eagle Scout Award, Scouting's highest rank, a Scout must along with meeting five other requirements earn a total of 21 merit badges including 12 required merit badges. Merit badges required for the Eagle Scout Rank include Camping, Citizenship in the Community, Citizenship in the Nation, Citizenship in the World, Communications, Family Life, First Aid, Emergency Preparedness OR Lifesaving, Environmental Science, Personal Fitness, Personal Management, and Swimming OR Hiking OR Cycling.

# Procedure

## Choose Merit Badge

The scout determines which merit badge he wishes to earn. There may be a group merit badge class being offered by a merit badge counselor or he may decide to work on his own. Not all merit badges are offered in a group class and there is no schedule for those that are; the scout should not wait for classes to be offered for a merit badge. If the scout is working individually with a counselor, the scout will schedule appointments with the counselor. The scout is expected to keep these appointments and to notify the counselor well in advance if the scout will be unable to meet. If the scout is signed up for a merit badge class, he will make every effort to attend each session. It will be the scout's responsibility to make-up any material missed due to non-attendance.

## Obtain Merit Badge Application

The scout requests a merit badge application (blue card). The scout must first obtain an application before any merit badge work is started. He checks the troop Merit Badge Counselor List in order to choose a merit badge counselor. If the merit badge does not have a counselor listed from the troop, the scout may choose a counselor from the list maintained by council. The scout talks to the counselor and attains the counselor's agreement to work with him on the merit badge. The scout then fills out the merit badge application and gains the signatures of the scoutmaster and the merit badge counselor indicating permission to begin work on the chosen merit badge.

## Merit Badge Requirements

The scout will acquire materials needed for the merit badge. He should obtain the merit badge pamphlet and download the merit badge worksheet from [meritbadge.com](http://meritbadge.com). The scout and the merit badge counselor will go over the requirements and decide how the scout should accomplish the requirements. The scout will come prepared to all merit badge sessions (group classes or individual meetings with the counselor) and with the assigned requirements already completed. The role of the merit badge counselor is not necessarily to teach the merit badge material; some counselors teach but many do not. Learning the material is the responsibility of the scout. The scout will keep detailed records on how each requirement was accomplished and when it was completed; the merit badge worksheet is ideal for this purpose. As each requirement is completed, the scout requests the counselor to sign off the requirement on the merit badge application card. The merit badge counselor certifies completion of the merit badge when all of the requirements are completed. The scout then obtains the scoutmaster's signature on the scout's section of the merit badge application.

## Completed Application

The scout turns the completed merit badge application (all 3 sections) into the Advancement Chair. The Advancement Chair will initial and date all sections and enter the merit badge into the scout's records. The Advancement Chair will return the counselor's section to the merit badge counselor. The Chair will also complete all council required paperwork, turn in the unit section of the application with the Advancement Report, and purchase the merit badge. When council returns the unit section, the Advancement Chair will annotate the date of the Court of Honor when the scout receives the presentation card and will retain the unit section for seven years.

## Recognition

The scout will receive the merit badge and the scout's section of the merit badge application at the beginning of the next troop meeting. The Merit Badge Presentation card will be presented to the scout at the next scheduled Court of Honor. The scout must keep the Presentation Card and the scout's section of the merit badge card for his records. These two cards will be required documentation in the scout's Eagle Project book.