

MERIT BADGE 101

1. What is a Merit Badge?

Scouts have an opportunity to build skills and learn about a variety of subjects and future careers through the merit badge program. A scout can pick a subject where they would like to focus, and work with a merit badge counselor who has special knowledge in that field to learn and build skills until ultimately meeting the requirements to earn the merit badge.

2. What is the significance of a Merit Badge?

As scouts progress through the ranks, merit badges become more important for advancement. For instance, to earn the Star rank, a scout is required to earn 6 merit badges – 4 of which must be from the Eagle required list. More merit badges are required for the Life Rank, until ultimately, 13 specific merit badges plus 8 electives are required to achieve the Eagle rank (in combination with other requirements).

Additionally, merit badges show mastery of skills that allow for more opportunities on troop campouts and adventures. For example, the swimming merit badge is required for a scout to participate in many aquatic activities or aquatic merit badges. The canoeing merit badge is required for a scout to be able to canoe with another scout on the canoe trip, similarly the kayaking merit badge is required for a scout to kayak with another scout – otherwise they will be partnered with an adult.

Merit badges are also part of the requirements to earn specific BSA awards. For example, to earn the World Conservation Award, a scout must earn the Environmental Science or Sustainability, Fish & Wildlife Management or Soil & Water Conservation, and Citizenship in the World merit badges and participate in a conservation project.

3. What Merit Badges are required for the Eagle Scout Rank?

A scout must earn a total of 21 merit badges for his Eagle rank - which must include the following plus 8 electives:

- First Aid
- Citizenship in the Community
- Citizenship in the Nation
- Citizenship in the World
- Communication
- Personal Fitness
- Emergency Preparedness OR Lifesaving*
- Environmental Science OR Sustainability*
- Personal Management
- Swimming OR Hiking OR Cycling*
- Camping
- Cooking
- Family Life

There is no limit to the number of merit badges a scout may earn!

4. What is a Merit Badge Counselor?

A merit badge counselor is an adult with special knowledge in a field or skill. Merit badge counselors must be registered with the Boy Scouts of America and can either register as a counselor for our troop or for the district.

Once approved, merit badge counselors are expected to offer their expertise to the entire troop, not just to individual scouts. A great way to do this is to offer the merit badge(s) at a designated time of year – either through a single outing/event where the requirements can be met by the scouts, or through a series of meetings/events where required (e.g. personal fitness, family life).

Merit badge counselors may assign prerequisites and/or homework for scouts to work on outside of meeting times. Examples may range from research on careers to keeping/managing budgets, to tracking physical fitness, or building a project for the family depending on the merit badge requirements. Merit badge worksheets are often required by counselors and can be found here: http://meritbadge.org/wiki/index.php/Merit_Badge_Worksheets

Troop 713 encourages all adult members to share their knowledge and experience with our scouts! You can become a Merit Badge Counselor simply by:

1. Completing the Youth Protection Training online: <http://olc.scouting.org/info/ypt.html>
2. Submitting a troop Adult Application: <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/524-501.pdf>
3. Submitting a Merit Badge Counselor Application form to SDIC: <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34405.pdf>
4. Checking out the requirements & workbook for the merit badge that you're interested in.
5. Offering the merit badge to the troop!

Our troop especially needs parents to volunteer to be counselors for the following merit badges, which are required to earn the Eagle rank:

- Camping
- Citizenship in the Community
- Citizenship in the Nation
- Citizenship in the World
- Communications
- Cooking
- Personal Management

5. How does a scout find a Merit Badge Counselor?

A list of Troop 713 merit badge counselors is/will be posted on the troop website. If a scout wishes to work on a merit badge that is not offered by the troop, he has the option to find a local merit badge counselor through the council website: <http://www.sdicbsa.org/Advancement/CounselorLookup.php> . Contact the counselor and make plans to work on the merit badge and/or meet to discuss.

***DON'T FORGET THE BUDDY SYSTEM! A scout must be accompanied by a buddy at all merit badge counselor meetings. The buddy can be another scout, a parent, relative or friend.

6. What is a blue card?

Blue cards are used to track a scout's progress through earning the merit badge, ensure that it is recorded with the council, and serve as a record for the scout, counselor, and troop. Blue cards are provided by Troop 713 at troop meetings or can be purchased at the scout store.

There are three sections of the blue card, with some repeated information. Once complete, the counselor will retain one section for his/her records, the advancement coordinator will retain one section to record with council and keep with Troop records, and the scout will keep the final section for his records.

Scouts – keep your blue cards – you may need them to confirm dates or completion when presenting for your Eagle Board of Review. Plastic binder sheets for baseball cards are a great way to keep these safe!

7. Decoding the Blue Card

There are 3 sections of the blue card – one for the Applicant (scout), one for the MB counselor, and one for the Troop Advancement chair. Keep all 3 sections attached until instructed otherwise.

The responsibilities for completion are color-coded in the image of the blue card.

- **Orange:** To be completed by the Scout **in PEN and legible**
- **Red:** To be completed by the Scoutmaster
- **Green:** To be completed by the Merit Badge Counselor
- **Blue:** To be completed by the Troop Advancement Chair

Information for Applicant

- A merit badge application can be approved **only** by a registered merit badge counselor.
- You **must** have a buddy with you (Scout buddy system) at each meeting with the merit badge counselor.
- Turn in your approved application to your unit leader. You will be awarded the merit badge emblem and certificate at a suitable occasion.

Information for Counselor

- Merit badge applications **must** be signed in advance by the applicant's unit leader.
- The Scout **must** have his buddy (Scout buddy system) in attendance at all instructional sessions.
- You may not change any requirement, but you may share your knowledge or experience that will make the counseling more interesting and valuable.

APPLICATION FOR MERIT BADGE

Name SCOUT FULL NAME

Address Scout address

City Scout City, State Zip


is a registered
☒ Boy Scout ☐ Varsity Scout ☐ Venturer
of Troop No. 713
Troop, team, crew, ship

District Rancho Coastal

Council SDIC

I have discussed this merit badge with this Scout and recommended at least one merit badge counselor.


Date approved Scoutmaster
to begin work _____
Date _____
Signature of unit leader _____


BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

34124

Counselor initial	TO BE COMPLETED									
Date of approval	BY A BSA-APPROVED									
Requirement No. and letter	MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR									
Counselor initial										
Date of approval										
Requirement No. and letter										

SKU 34124



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APPLICANT'S RECORD		COUNSELOR'S RECORD	
<p>The applicant has personally appeared before me and demonstrated to my satisfaction that he has met all requirements for the (please print)</p> <p>SCOUT NAME _____</p> <p>COUNSELOR NAME _____</p> <p>COUNSELOR ADDRESS _____</p> <p>City _____ Zip code _____</p> <p>COUNSELOR SIGNATURE _____</p> <p>Signature of counselor _____ Date _____</p> <p>Checked and recorded: _____</p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>Certificate and badge presented _____</p> <p>Applicant will turn in this portion to his unit leader for record posting.</p>		<p>SCOUT NAME _____</p> <p>Applicant _____</p> <p>has given me his completed application for the _____</p> <p>MERIT BADGE NAME _____</p> <p>Completed on _____ by _____</p> <p>COUNSELOR SIGNATURE _____</p> <p>SCOUTMASTER SIGNATURE _____</p> <p>Signature of unit leader _____</p> <p>NOTE TO BOY SCOUT, VARSITY SCOUT, OR VENTURER: Retain this copy for your permanent records.</p>	
<p>DATE SUBMITTED TO SDIC/INITIALS _____</p> <p>COH DATE _____</p>		<p>SCOUT NAME _____</p> <p>713 _____</p> <p>MERIT BADGE NAME _____</p> <p>DATE COMPLETED _____</p> <p>Remarks: _____</p> <p>COUNSELOR REMARKS _____</p> <p>It is suggested that the counselor keep this record for at least 1 year in case any question is raised later in regard to this award.</p>	

8. When will the scout receive the merit badge?

As with other ranks/awards, the merit badges will be presented at a troop Court of Honor which is held three times per year (May, September, December).

Though the scout may not physically hold the patch/award until the COH, the effective date of the merit badge or rank will be the date that it was earned - noted on the blue card (MB) or board of review date in the scout book (rank). This will also be the effective date that is submitted to council.

9. What are merit badge worksheets and where can I find them?

Some merit badge counselors and classes require merit badge worksheets. Although they are not required by the BSA, they can be a good tool for ensuring that all requirements of the merit badge are met and can help you keep a record of your studies for future reference. They can be found at the following website:

http://meritbadge.org/wiki/index.php/Merit_Badge_Worksheets

10. Putting it all together

Merit badges are a great way for scouts to build life skills and learn about career possibilities. Merit badges are also a required building block as scout's progress through the ranks. It is important for scouts to work closely with their merit badge counselor to ensure that they make the most of the opportunities provided. To summarize, the steps towards earning a merit badge are as follows:

- i. The scout identifies the merit badge he would like to earn*
- ii. The scout completes the orange sections of the blue card and discusses with his scoutmaster to receive signature/approval to begin work*
- iii. The scout finds and contacts a merit badge counselor (or attends a merit badge event hosted by a merit badge counselor)*
- iv. The scout completes the requirements and discusses with his merit badge counselor*
- v. The merit badge counselor signs off on the blue card and keeps the "Counselor Record" section*
- vi. The scout presents the signed blue card to his scoutmaster for final signature*
- vii. The scout presents the signed 2-part blue card to his troop advancement coordinator*
- viii. The advancement coordinator keeps the "Application for Merit Badge" section of the blue card, records the merit badge date and submits to SDIC, purchases the merit badge, and prepares the awards to be presented at the next Court of Honor*
- ix. The scout places the "Applicant's Record" signed blue card in his Scout binder plastic card holder*
- x. The scout is presented with the merit badge at the next troop Court of Honor*
- xi. Upon receipt of the merit badge card and patch, the scout places the merit badge card with the blue card in his Scout binder plastic card holder for safe keeping. The scout may sew the merit badge patch onto his official scout sash if he chooses.*

More Details from BSA-

You can learn about sports, crafts, science, trades, business, and future careers as you earn merit badges. There are more than 135 merit badges, and any Boy Scout or Varsity Scout, or any qualified Venturer or Sea Scout may earn any of these at any time.

Pick a Subject. Talk to your unit leader about your interests. Read the requirements of the merit badges you think might interest you, and pick one to earn. Your leader will give you the name of a person from a list of counselors. These individuals have special knowledge in their merit badge subjects and are interested in helping you.

Scout Buddy System. You must have another person with you at each meeting with the merit badge counselor. This person can be another Scout, your parents or guardian, a brother or sister, a relative, or a friend.

Call the Merit Badge Counselor. Get a signed Application for Merit Badge, No. 34124 or No. 34130, from your unit leader. Get in touch with the merit badge counselor and explain that you want to earn the badge. The counselor may ask to meet you to explain what is expected and to start helping you meet the requirements. You should also discuss work you have already started or possibly completed.

At the first meeting, you and your merit badge counselor will review and may start working on the requirements. In some cases, you may share the work you have already started or completed.

Unless otherwise specified, work on a requirement can be started at any time. Ask your counselor to help you learn the things you need to know or do. You should read the merit badge pamphlet on the subject. Many troops, schools, and public libraries have them.

Show Your Stuff. When you are ready, call the counselor again to make an appointment. When you go, take along the things you have made to meet the requirements. If they are too big to move, take pictures or have an adult tell in writing what you have done. The counselor will test you on each requirement to make sure you know your stuff and have done or can do the things required.

Get the Badge. When the counselor is satisfied you have met each requirement, he or she will sign your application. Give the signed application to your unit leader so your merit badge emblem can be secured for you.

The current Boy Scout Requirements book is available from your local Scouting merchandise distributor. It may also be ordered online at ScoutStuff.org.

Merit badge requirements are revised as needed to reflect updated information and technology. Click here to view new and recently revised merit badges.

Requirements. You are expected to meet the requirements as they are stated—no more and no less. You must do exactly what is stated in the requirements. If it says “show or demonstrate,” that is what you must do. Just telling about it isn’t enough. The same thing holds true for such words as “make,” “list,” “in the field,” and “collect,” “identify,” and “label.”

The requirements listed below are the current and official requirements of the Boy Scouts of America.

<http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges.aspx>

There is no time limit for starting and completing a merit badge, but all work must be completed by the time a Scout turns 18.