

MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR ORIENTATION

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Introduction:

Advancement through the higher ranks of Scouting requires earning merit badges. Merit badges fall into two general categories- Eagle Required and non-Eagle Required. Scouts should pay particular attention to earning the Eagle Required merit badges.

BSA Policies:

All merit badges must be earned prior to the scout turning 18 years of age. The only exception is if the council agrees in writing to provide accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Unless otherwise exempted under the ADA scouts must satisfy and complete all requirements for the merit badge in order for the counselor to sign off. Prerequisites, if any, must be met prior to completing any merit badge.

Individual Merit Badge pamphlets detail the requirements and lesson content to meet the requirements. Merit Badge Counselors cannot require additional work or knowledge beyond that required by BSA in order to earn the merit badge.

Merit badge counselors must comply with all BSA Safe Practices as outlined in the Guide to Safe Scouting. Merit Badge counselors must also adhere to the Youth Protection Policy. Additional information is available in the BSA Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures Manual.

Merit badge counselors need to complete a BSA Adult Registration form to be registered with the district as a merit badge counselor. The council advancement committee has approval authority over merit badge counselors. There is no associated cost to the council to be a merit badge counselor.

Documentation of the merit badge class and completions is the troop and counselor's responsibility. It is possible for the troop to be sanctioned by BSA for not complying with BSA Policy and could jeopardize any Troop Eagle Scout credentials.

Troop 410 General Guidelines:

Merit badge classes must be made available to any and all scouts in the troop. Troop 410 will not allow any "stealth" merit badge classes. A "stealth" merit badge is when a parent or leader decides to teach their scout(s) a merit badge without making it also available to the remainder of the troop.

It is highly recommended troop merit badge counselors establish a deadline for completion allowing for no more than three months after the class is complete for the scout to get with the original counselor to finalize the work. By committee decision merit

badges, once started, must be completed within a year. After that time the partial merit badge is dropped and the scout must start over if they desire to complete the merit badge. As a matter of practice no class should ever be held where there is only one scout and one adult. If for some reason only one scout shows up counselors are strongly recommended to get the parent to stay or to postpone the class.

Merit Badge Requirements:

Only current requirements are acceptable. The merit badge books are constantly being updated. Some requirements have been updated and reversed in a matter of a few years- notably the swimming merit badge. Should the requirements change during the year the requirements at the time the scout started will be followed in accordance with BSA policy.

Please make sure you are using current requirements. BSA publishes an annual summary of all advancement requirements entitled Boy Scout Requirements. Additionally, current requirements can be found on line at *Meritbadge.com*.

Each scout is encouraged to obtain and read the merit badge book for use during the class. Troop 410 has a library of merit badge books for check out by the scouts. The scout should see their troop librarian before removing the book. It is possible to take and to teach a merit badge class without the scout ever seeing the book.

The requirement is only completed when the merit badge counselor is satisfied the scout knows the material or has verified the requirement has been met.

Documentation: Blue Cards and Files

Documentation is important to the creditability of the troop merit badge program. It is also your record of what each scout has accomplished. The simplest documentation is the BSA Merit Badge Card which is otherwise referred to as the "Blue Card". This card is a three-part card which you parse out to the scout, troop and keep a portion for your own records. It is a handy place to document each requirement completed. One recommended way to avoid having to fill each one out yourself is to have the scouts do so and then you retain until completed.

Completed Blue Cards are turned over to the Merit Badge Coordinator, Scoutmaster or Advancement Chair. Final archive is with the Advancement Chair. Note: Other written documentation of group completions may be accepted but is discouraged as a document of record for the troop.

Partial Merit Badges.

It is important to also report partial merit badge work for documentation for possible completion within the year. A completed Blue Card showing items completed will provide sufficient documentation for Troop Records. Partial cards are retained by the Advancement Chair as part of the scout's records.

Scouts should complete a partial merit badge with the original counselor. However, that is not always possible. In such cases the scout can complete the requirements with another counselor, assistant scoutmaster, scoutmaster, or committee chair, advancement coordinator. Once the new counselor is satisfied the requirement has been fulfilled they will update the partial cards and sign.

Merit Badge Classes:

There is no required format for merit badge classes. Attached are sample lesson plans from Meritbadge.com and from previous Troop 410 classes. Each class should be modeled after the merit badge requirements and time frames the counselor determines within limitations of the scouts and facilities. Marathon, one day classes, are generally tiring to the scout and counselor and therefore not the recommended method. Considerations for the class might include the subject, age of the scout, time of day/night and teaching method preferred by the counselor.

Troop 410 General Merit Badge Procedures:

Our troop's procedures have changed over the past several years. The current process is for the troop to;

1. Identify the merit badges the scouts are interested in working on.
2. The troop committee (Merit Badge Coordinator) identifies parents, assistant scoutmasters or other "experts" outside the troop to present the classes.
3. The Troop Scoutmaster concurs with the merit badge and scouts to attend.
4. Class time and dates are determined and announced by the counselor.
5. Classes can be held either during the monthly merit badge night (second Tuesday of each month) or at a place more suited to the scheduling or event.
6. Merit badges may be presented in conjunction with campouts or other troop activity.
7. Upon completion, the Blue Merit badge cards need to be submitted to the Merit Badge Coordinator, Advancement Chair or Scoutmaster. (Ultimately the cards go to the Advancement Chair and then the scouts file.)

8. Merit badge cards need to be signed by the scoutmaster as a document of record.
9. Merit badge information (completed and partials) is entered into TroopMaster Software for later use in generating council advancement reports.
10. Merit badges are officially presented at the Troop's COH.

References and Resources:

Individual Merit badge pamphlets (Available at council store)

Note: This provides the information BSA has determined is needed to know and understand to meet the merit badge requirements.

Boy Scout Requirements—current year (Available at council store, BSA publication 3215D)

www.meritbadge.com

Note: This an excellent resource that provides current MB Requirements, lesson outlines and other resources and links that you will find helpful.

www.macscouter.com

Note: This site is a tremendous resource for all aspects of scouting.

<http://www.meritbadge.com/files/bluecard.pdf>

Note: This is a source for “blue cards”.

(Excerpt from current Troop 410 Information Manual)

Merit Badges

Advancement through the higher ranks of Scouting requires earning merit badges. Merit badges fall into two general categories, Eagle Required and non-Eagle Required. Scouts should pay particular attention to earning the Eagle Required merit badges.

The parents and friends of the troop should make themselves available to counsel the Scouts on particular merit badges. This may be done by registering your commitment with the Merit Badge Coordinator of the Troop Committee. The Merit Badge Coordinator will provide the instructions on how to go about counseling a merit badge, particularly the procedures required to make sure that the Scout is approved to work on the badge and that his progress is tracked.

The Scout wishing to work on a merit badge should approach the Merit Badge Coordinator to get a "blue card" and determine the merit badge counselor with whom the Scout will work. The objective is for the Scout to work with a counselor other than the Scout's parents, so as to foster the Scout's communication skills.

The Merit Badge Counselor may have the merit badge pamphlet. If available, the pamphlet can be checked out from the Troop library. If lost or destroyed, the Scout will be expected to replace the pamphlet.

The steps for earning a Merit Badge are as follows:

1. The Scout decides on which badge he wants to work on. This decision is usually based on the scout's interests.
2. Obtain a copy of the merit badge pamphlet. Read the requirements and information about that badge. Note that a list of merit badge requirements may also be found in the Boy Scout Requirements book. Some merit badge pamphlets are available from the Troop Librarian. If the Troop does not have the pamphlet available, the Scout may have to purchase the pamphlet from the Council Scout Shop individually.
3. Secure permission from the Scoutmaster and Troop Merit Badge Coordinator to work on the badge. Permission is in writing on the blue, 3 part, merit badge record form. The Troop Merit Badge Coordinator will identify the proper counselor to be consulted on this form.
4. The Scout will contact the Merit Badge Counselor and arrange a mutually convenient meeting to discuss the badge. The Scout and counselor will discuss the requirements for the badge to insure that the Scout understands what the counselor requires.
5. The Scout completes the requirements for the badge and arranges another meeting. Once the counselor is satisfied that the Scout has completed the requirements for the badge, he will sign the blue merit badge record, retaining his part of the card.
6. The Scout then returns the card to the Troop Merit Badge Coordinator of the Troop Committee who retains the Troop's part of the card and returns the Scout's portion to the Scout. The Scout retains his portion of the card for his records.
7. It is the Scout's responsibility to make and keep the proper appointments to earn the badge.
8. Occasionally boys will work on merit badge requirements during Troop meetings and some campouts are oriented toward earning particular merit badges.

The combination of merit badges, leadership activities, and service projects qualify a Scout for various ranks. This begins with Tenderfoot, and proceeds through Second Class, First Class, Star, Life, and finally to Eagle. A Scout may not earn any merit badges or rank advancement after he becomes 18 years of age.

In order to allow time for Scoutmaster Conferences, Boards of Review, and purchasing of the awards, there is a minimum of two to four weeks lead time for obtaining an award once all merit badges and service projects are complete. The procedure is to complete the merit badge and service projects, then schedule a Scoutmaster conference. After the Scoutmaster conference, please allow one week to have a meeting with the Board of Review. If the Board approves the advancement, the Scout will be awarded his rank badge at the next Court of Honor.