

# The Essentials of Merit Badge Counseling

#### **Expiration Date** This presentation is not to be used after January 31, 2025. Obtain an updated version at <u>www.scouting.org/advancement</u>





# A Merit Badge Success Story

There once was a boy who had never held a camera, but he decided to work on the Photography merit badge. He selected the "movie" option.

He made an 8-mm movie for his merit badge. He enjoyed it so much he thought he might like to do this all his life.

#### That boy was Steven Spielberg.

A good merit badge counselor can impact the world.



# **This Training Will Cover**

- Scouting overview: mission, objectives, and methods
- Merit badge program role and benefits
- Merit badge counselor qualifications
- How to become a counselor
- The merit badge counseling process
- Merit badge requirements: fulfill as written
- Effective counseling
- Group instruction and camp settings

#### Boy Scouts of America Mission Statement

The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral **Choices** over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

#### **Objectives of the Scouting Program**

- Character development
- Citizenship training
- ✤ Leadership
- Mental and physical fitness

Every activity in Scouting should support one or more of these aims.

# **Methods of Scouting**

- Scouting ideals
- Patrol method
- Advancement
- Association with adults
- Outdoors
- Leadership development
- Uniform
- Personal growth



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# Four Steps In Scout Advancement

- 1. The Scout learns.
- 2. The Scout is **tested**.



- 3. The Scout is **reviewed**.
- 4. The Scout is **recognized**.

Merit badge counselors are directly involved in the first two steps.



# Merit Badges: Their Role in Advancement

- Merit badges are integral to advancement.
- Any Scout may earn them at any time, including qualified Venturers and Sea Scouts.
- Merit badges are required for Star, Life, and Eagle.
- A total of 21 must be earned for the Eagle rank.
- Some merit badges are "required;" some "elective."
- Fourteen of 18 specific badges are required to earn the rank of Eagle Scout.



# **Broad Range of Subjects**

More than 130 merit badges in 14 subject areas:

Agribusiness Arts and crafts Business and industry Communications Conservation Hobbies Natural science

Personal development **Physical science Professions Public service** Sports Trades Transportation





# **Benefits of Merit Badges**

- Contribution to the objectives of Scouting:
  citizenship, character, leadership and fitness
- Development of confidence, self-reliance, and social skills
- Physical fitness and healthy lifestyles
- Career and hobby choices may result
- Exposure to positive role models: You!





# Qualifications to Become a Merit Badge Counselor

- At least 18 years of age
- Good character
- Recognized as having skills and education in the subject area



Good rapport with leaders and Scout-age youth

# **Special Certifications and Trainings**

Specific training is required for some BSA activities, including merit badges.





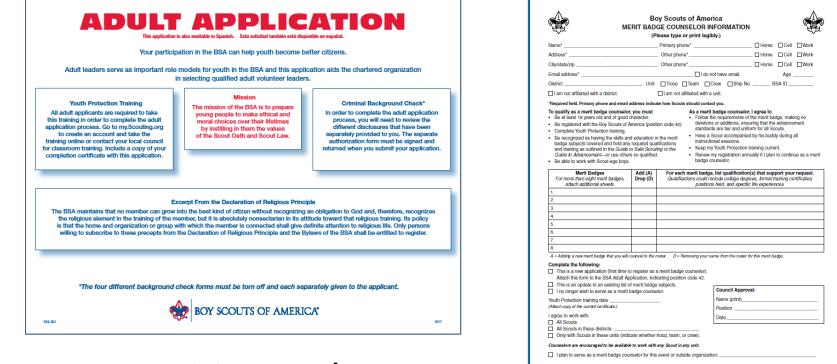
A counselor *must* hold the specific certification or involve someone who does.



# Registering as a Merit Badge Counselor

- Even if already registered, every counselor must submit a BSA adult application for the position of merit badge counselor (code 42). There are no exceptions.
- Merit badge counselors who are re-registering need not complete a new application.
- "Merit badge counselor" is a council or district position.
- Approval of merit badge counselors is the responsibility of the council advancement committee, not the unit.

# Forms Needed to Register as a Merit Badge Counselor



Signature

#### Use position code 42.

#### Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.1.5



Date

# Complete Youth Protection Training

gn in to MyScouting	New to MyScouting?
User Name:	Create an account to*
Password:	take Youth Protection and other BSA training
	access unit, district, and council tools  register for events
	keep in touch with members and alumni
Forgot your User Name or password? Erequently asked questions	*Some of these tools require a Member ID
LINE STREET, STREE	
Sign In	Create an account

#### www.my.scouting.org

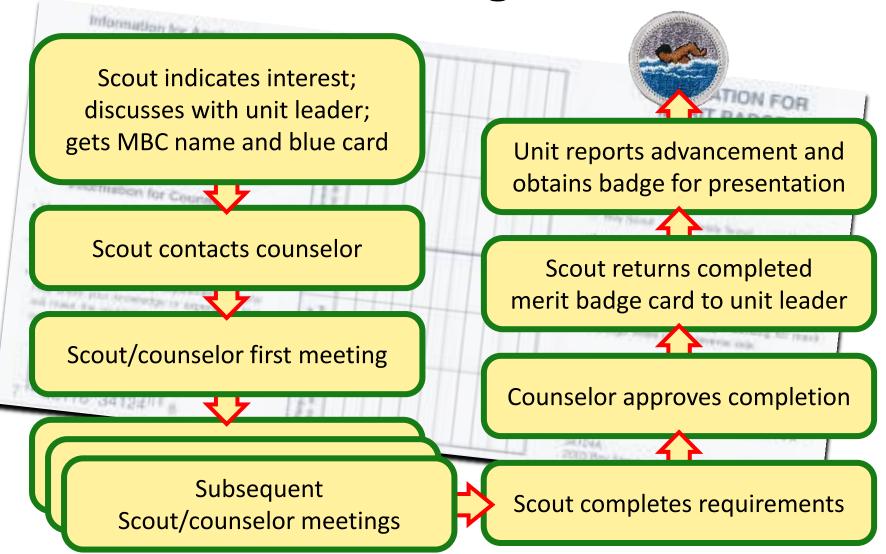




# **Approval by Local Council**

- Local councils establish procedures for registration, re-registration, approval, and for reviewing:
  - Background checks
  - Youth Protection training
  - Council-required certifications
- ✤ Approval is for <u>specific</u> merit badges.
- Counselors may choose to work with just one unit, but registration and council advancement committee approvals are still required.

## **The Merit Badge Process**



# The Process of Counseling (The Start)

- The Scout develops an interest in a subject and may begin working on the requirements.
- A Scout indicates his or her interest and discusses the badge with their unit leader.
- The unit leader signs a blue card and provides at least one counselor.



# The Process of Counseling (Work on the badge)

- The Scout contacts a counselor.
- The Scout and counselor meet—often several times. The Counselor may consider work done previously.
- The requirements are fulfilled.
- The counselor approves completion and signs the blue card.



# The Process of Counseling (Completion)

- The Scout returns the signed blue card to the unit leader for signature.
- The unit leader gives the Scout the applicant record section.
- The unit reports the merit badge as advancement.
- ✤ The merit badge is presented.

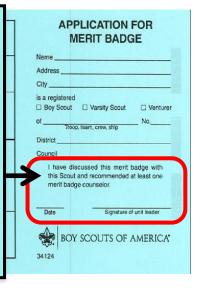


## Application for Merit Badge The Blue Card

# The unit leader signature:

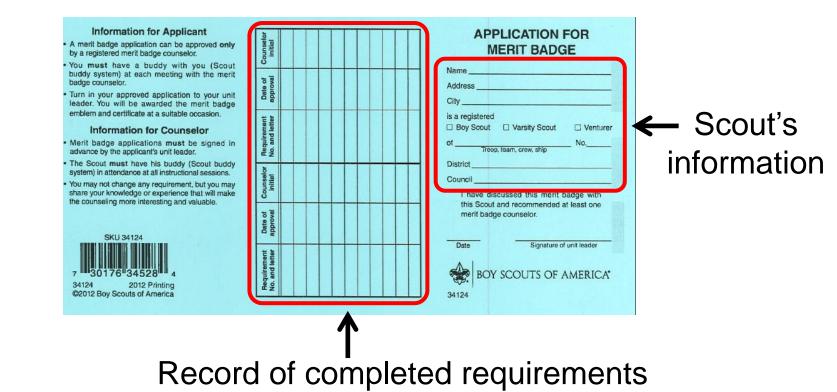
- Required for Scouts to work with counselors
- Does not indicate unit leader "approval"

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

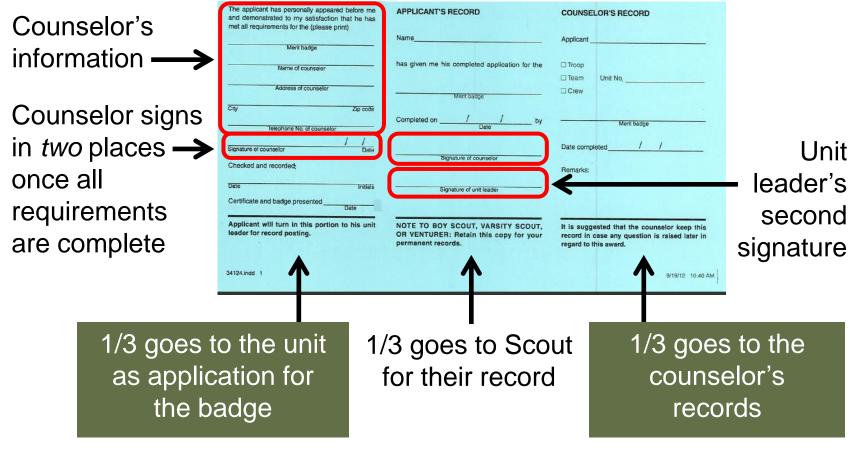


- Evidence of discussion between unit leader and Scout
- Indicates registered counselor has been recommended
- Not required for Scout to get started on requirements

### Application for Merit Badge The Blue Card



## Application for Merit Badge The Blue Card – Reverse Side





# Role of a Merit Badge Counselor

Initially interview the Scout to determine:

- Their preparedness
- Their current knowledge
- Their interest

In subsequent meetings:

- Evaluate progress
- Review completed work



# Role of a Merit Badge Counselor

# Coaching:

- ✤ Teach required skills.
- Provide opportunities to practice.
- Provide encouragement, and praise when appropriate.



- Encourage goal setting and provide help and support in reaching goals.
- Evaluate progress and respond accordingly.

# Role of a Merit Badge Counselor

# Mentoring:

- Establish a relationship, taking a genuine interest in the Scout's projects.
- Spark curiosity.
- ✤ Go for the deeper dive.
- Encourage long-term goalsetting.





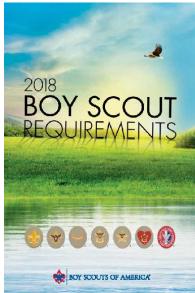
# **Merit Badge Requirements**

#### Finding current requirements for a merit badge

- Boy Scout Requirements (current edition)
- Merit badge pamphlet (latest printing)
- www.scouting.org/advancement

#### Are the requirements flexible?

- No; they must be fulfilled as written.
- Wording matters!
- "Show," "demonstrate," "describe",
  "make," "list," etc., are to be taken literally.



#### Policy on Unauthorized Changes to Advancement Program

No council, committee, district, unit, or individual has the authority to add to, or subtract from, advancement requirements.

There are limited exceptions relating only to youth members with disabilities. For details see section 10, "Advancement for Members With Special Needs."

-The Guide to Advancement, No. 33088

# **Scouts with Special Needs**

- Merit badge requirements must not be waived or changed for any Scout.
- Scouts with disabilities—either permanent, or expected to last at least two years or beyond age 18—still may advance.
- The "Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges" may be found at: <u>www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-</u> 730.pdf



Guide to Advancement section 10

# Meeting More Than One Requirement at a Time

A single activity may fulfill more than one requirement if...

- Requirements match and have the same intent.
- It is not specifically disallowed.
- The Scout remembers safety content.
- Common sense suggests that meeting the requirement more than once is unnecessary.

#### More work will be needed if requirements are only similar.



# **Youth Protection**

A Scout *must* not meet one-on-one with an adult.

- One Scout: Either another registered leader over 21 OR a parent / guardian.
- Two+ Youth: Normal
  2-deep leadership
  (another registered
  leader over 21).

Guide to Safe Scouting, Adult Supervision FAQ



# **Tips for Counseling**

Make Scouts feel welcome and relaxed.



- First impressions matter.
- Ask a few simple questions.
- Show them something related to the subject.
- Invite them to demonstrate a simple skill.
- Remember: This is Scouting. Have fun.

# **Tips for Counseling**

- Use the EDGE method.
- Explain
- Demonstrate
- Guide
- Enable



# **Group Instruction**

#### **Benefits**

- Guest experts
- Interactive learning
- Slide shows, skits, demonstrations, and other dynamic approaches

#### The Challenge

*Every* Scout must **actually** and **personally** fulfill **every** requirement **as written**.

# **Group Instruction** Ensuring Quality

- Limit group instruction to cases where the benefits are compelling.
- See that all counselors are registered and approved.
- Establish processes where counselors confirm prerequisites have been completed.
- Report any issues to the council advancement committee.



## **Camp Settings**

- No exemption from merit badge counselor qualifications.
- Staff members under 18 may assist, but must work with qualified counselors.



 Instruction must be done in accordance with the "group instruction" procedures found in the Guide to Advancement.

Guide to Advancement topics 5.0.1.3 and 7.0.3.2

#### **Merit Badge Events**

- Merit badge fairs may provide an overview or introduction to multiple badges.
- It should be rare that Scouts begin and finish badges at one- or two-day events.
- Prerequisites should be made known early.
- Scouts must actually and personally fulfill all requirements.



Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.3.2



#### Merit Badge Events

- Only minimal fees should be charged for events.
- Events staged as fundraisers are discouraged.
- Non-Scouting organizations or businesses are not allowed to use protected BSA trade names, images, logos, or artwork without national BSA permission.
- Non-Scouting organizations must have local council approval to present classes that are for the sole purpose of earning merit badges.

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.4.9 and 7.0.4.10



#### **Worksheets and Learning Aids**

- Merit badge "worksheets" from the web or other sources are unofficial, but may aid in learning.
- Scouts must not be required to use them.
- These tools must relate to current BSA requirements, which still must be fulfilled as written.
- Worksheets may be used to meet "in writing" requirements.
- Worksheets are not a substitute for "telling,"
  "showing," or "demonstrating," etc.

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.4.8

### **Completing the "Partial" Blue Card**

- The merit badge counselor records and initials the front of the card in the middle section as each requirement is completed.
- The back of the card is not signed in either place until *all* requirements are fulfilled.
- Partials do not expire as long as the Scout is a registered youth member.
- Accepting a "partial" is at the follow-up counselor's discretion. Not accepting should be rare.

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.3.3



#### **Once It's Earned, It's Earned**

A Scout who has earned a merit badge from a registered and approved counselor by actually and personally fulfilling the requirements as written, will have met the purpose of the merit badge program and the contributions to the objectives of Scouting. The badge is theirs to keep and count.









#### A Second Counselor Review May Be Warranted If...

- A Scout, to whom it has been made clear that only registered and approved counselors are to be used, chooses to ignore this mandated procedure.
- It becomes plainly evident that it could not have been possible for a Scout to actually and personally fulfill requirements as written. In this case a limited recourse is available, according to the details outlined in topic 7.0.4.7.

Guide to Advancement topics 7.0.4.6 & 7.0.4.7



1. At what age or rank may Scouts work on merit badges?

There is no limit if registered as a Scout.

- What is the maximum number of merit badges a Scout may work on at the same time? There is no limit.
- 3. Is a Scout allowed to begin work on a merit badge without their unit leader's approval?

Yes. Approval is no longer required; a discussion is now held before contacting a counselor.



4. If a Scout has too many unfinished merit badges, may the Scoutmaster limit how many others he or she may begin?

No. During the discussion of a new merit badge, the Scoutmaster should provide counseling on what to do.

5. Is it appropriate to tell a Scout he or she must earn all or most of the Eagle-required badges before earning any others?

A Scoutmaster can only suggest this.

 Is the Scoutmaster permitted to serve as a unit merit badge counselor for merit badges such as Camping or Hiking?

This is permitted *only* if the unit leader is registered and approved as a counselor for that badge.

7. What is the maximum number of badges a youth may earn from one counselor?

There is no BSA limit. The unit leader or council may set a limit, but it must apply to all Scouts in the unit or council.



8. How many badges may one counselor be approved to counsel?

The national office no limit on this. Councils may do so, within reason.

- May you counsel your own son or daughter?
  Yes, but generally it is better for Scouts to learn from a variety of adults.
- 10. May you counsel in other units, districts, or councils?
  - Yes, if you are properly registered.

- 11. Due to tight schedules, is a camp staff member allowed to make minor adjustments so requirements can be finished at camp? Absolutely not.
- 12. Once you are registered and approved as a counselor, at what point must you re-register and become re-approved?

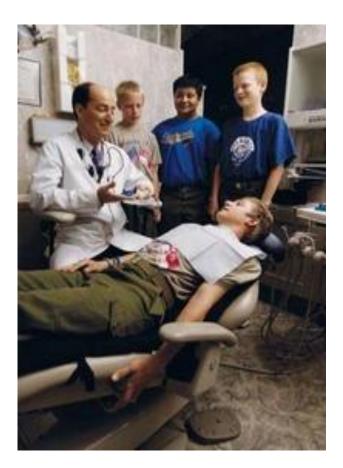
#### Annually.

13. When does a "partial" expire?

When the youth is no longer eligible to register as a Scout.

#### **Merit Badge Counselors**

- Share passion
- Teach skills
- Touch lives



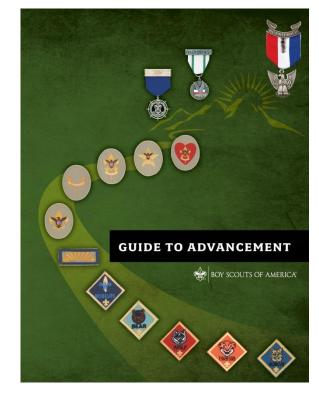
#### **For More Information**

# Other advancement presentations available at:

www.scouting.org/advancement

#### Resources

- Guide to Advancement, No. 33088
- BSA's Guide to Safe Scouting, No. 34416
- Merit badge pamphlets
- Boy Scout Requirements, No. 33216
- Application for Merit Badge, No. 34124
- A Guide for Merit Badge Counseling, No. 512-065
- Scouts BSA Handbook (previously Boy Scout Handbook
- Merit Badge Counselor Information, No. 34405
- BSA Adult Application, No. 524-501
- Merit Badge Group Instruction Guide, No. 512-066



## Merit Badge Counselor Essentials

- Bob Faulkner
- Northern Trail Advancement Chair
- <u>BobFaulkner@iName.com</u>
- https://www.scouting.org/programs/scoutsbsa/advancement-and-awards/advancementpresentations/