



Merit Badge Counseling Guidelines



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Objectives

- Provide introduction to Merit Badge counseling
- Requirements for Merit Badge counselors
- Counseling procedures
- Counseling techniques
- Resources for counselors



Introduction to Merit Badge Counseling

The Boy Scouts of America is a movement dedicated to supplementing and enlarging the education of youth. The Merit Badge Program plays a key role in the fulfillment of this educational commitment. The Merit Badge Program is a vital part of Scouting's advancement plan! Without dedicated volunteers who are proficient in the subject matter of the various badges, the program will not be successful.



Earning Merit Badges allows a Scout to:

- Advance to a higher rank
- Develop self-confidence
- Possibly learn career skills
- Develop physical and mental fitness
- Learn about things which might become lifelong hobbies
- Learn things which he may not learn otherwise
- Further develop social skills
- Widen Scout's contact with other adults



Requirements for Merit Badge Counselors

Basic requirements are:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Be proficient in the Merit Badge subject (vocation or avocation)
- Be able to work with Scout-age boys
- Be registered with the Boy Scouts of America



Registration as a Counselor involves 2 forms which are:

- Standard BSA Adult Application
 - No fee if only registering as a counselor
- Merit Badge Counselor Form
 - Form at back of this presentation



Registration Guidelines

- Most of the Scouting literature I have reviewed suggests counseling for no more than six merit badges.
- Option to work only with boys in a particular unit or boys from any unit in the District.
- Forms may be submitted to your unit Advancement Chairperson but ultimately will be submitted to the District's Advancement Chair (currently Mike Taylor) and to Council for approval.
- District keeps a master database which can be accessed.
- Registration as a counselor should occur annually!



Counseling Procedures

A counselor should:

- Be proficient with the subject matter
- Read the Merit Badge Pamphlet
- Know the current requirements for the Merit Badge
 - Requirements do change
 - "Old" or "new" - pick one after Scout starts
- Not modify requirements
- Expect Scout to meet requirements; no more, no less
- Never work one on one with a Scout (buddy system!)



Process

- Scout will obtain a signed blue card (more to come) from unit leader
- Scout will obtain list of MB counselors and contact info and then contact counselor
- Scout should have first page of blue card completed when meeting with counselor
- Scout(s) should be in uniform when working with counselor
- Counselor retains blue card and keeps track of progress
- When finished, counselor fills in remaining blanks, including date earned!
- Counselor retains last third of card (counselor's record) and gives other two-thirds back to Scout.
- Scout should give two-thirds to Unit Advancement Chair who keeps one-third. Scout keeps the remaining third.
- Scout should retain his blue card as proof!



Meet Where?

- Counselor's home
- In the field
- Unit meeting location
- Merit Badge College Classroom

How many Scouts at a time?

- Some subjects can be taught to multiple Scouts at one time
- Requirements must be met on individual basis!
- Scouts learn at different speeds. If multiple Scouts are working with you, expect progress to occur at different levels!

Timeline?

- No deadline to complete a Merit Badge except a Scout's 18th birthday
- After 18, don't sign blue card even if Scout completes badge



If Merit Badge is discontinued,
a Scout can still earn the
badge, but

- He may not be able to obtain patch!



Counseling Techniques

What can a counselor do?

- Make the Scout feel welcome and relaxed
- Stimulate Scout's interest by showing or demonstrating something related to the merit badge
- Don't overwhelm the Scout with your vast knowledge
- Make sure to carefully review each requirement at the first meeting
- Scouts will often need help. Remember you are there to teach.
- Make it fun!
- Talk with the Scout, don't examine him!
- Use visual and tactile aids when teaching
- Encourage self-evaluation by the Scout
- Follow up with the Scout

Remember: Never one adult and one Scout only!



Resources and References?

- A Guide for Merit Badge Counseling, BSA Pamphlet 34532A (largely incorporated herein)
- Boy Scout Requirements, Publication 33215
- Boy Scout Handbook, Publication 33105
- Scoutmaster Handbook, Publication 33009
- Current Merit Badge Pamphlets and Merit Badge Revision dates, table:
<http://www.usscouts.org/usscouts/mb/mbbooks.html>
- Current Merit Badge Requirements:
<http://www.usscouts.org/usscouts/mb/framesindex.html>
<http://www.meritbadge.com/bsa/mb/index.html>
<http://www.scouting.org>
- Guide to Safe Scouting (available on council website)



Note: As with any web site, reliable and continual access may not be possible for any of the internet sources cited above.

"A merit badge is only a small piece of Khaki cloth with a design embroidered in color, but its significance is as large as the interest of the Merit Badge Counselor who helps a Scout earn it."





Boy Scouts of America MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR INFORMATION



(Please type or print)

Name _____ Age _____ Business Phone (____) _____

Address _____ Home Phone (____) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

To qualify as a merit badge counselor, you must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be proficient in the merit badge subject by vocation or avocation.
- Be able to work with Scout-age boys
- Be registered with the Boy Scouts of America

As a merit badge counselor, I agree to:

- Follow the requirements of the merit badge, making no deletions or additions, ensuring that the advancement standards are fair and uniform for all scouts.
- Have a Scout and his buddy present at all instructional sessions.
- Renew my registration annually if I plan to continue as a merit badge counselor.

	Is this subject in line with your job, business, or profession? If yes, give brief information on the reverse side.	Do you follow this subject as a hobby, having more than a "working knowledge" of the requirements? If yes, give brief information on the reverse side.	If not, do you have any special training, or other qualifications for this subject? If yes, give brief information on the reverse side.
List merit badge subjects here			
1. _____			
2. _____			
3. _____			
4. _____			
5. _____			
6. _____			
7. _____			

There is no fee for becoming a merit badge counselor. You need only to submit this form and an BSA Adult Application Form upon initial registration. Confirmation of your continued interest in serving as a merit badge counselor should resubmitted on an annual basis.

CHECK ONE:

I wish to work only with _____ (Unit Number)

I wish to work with all units.

Signature _____ Date _____

Note: The BSA Adult Application must be attached.

Council approval by _____ Date _____

Boy Scouts of America "Buffy's Helpful Resource" Merit Badge Blue Cards

As a Boy Scout Troop Advancement Chairman for Boy Scout Troop 243 and Troop 141 for many years, and Assistant Scoutmaster for Troop 149, I have had the distinct pleasure of helping scouts reach their top goal of Eagle Scout.

As the District Training Chairman, this is part of the training I have given Scoutmasters and Committee members on dealing with Merit Badge Blue Cards.

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.

Counselor's initials					
Date of approval					
Requirement no. and number					
Counselor's initials					
Date of approval					
Requirement no. and number					

**APPLICATION FOR
MERIT BADGE**

Name _____
Address _____
City _____

is a registered
 Boy Scout Varsity Scout Explorer
 of _____ No. _____
Troop, team, post, ship

District _____
Council _____

and is qualified to begin working for merit badge noted on the reverse side.

Date _____ Signature of unit leader _____

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

No. 34124 1996 Printing

The applicant has personally appeared before me and demonstrated to my satisfaction that he has met all requirements for the (please print)

Merit badge _____
Name of counselor _____
Address of counselor _____
City _____ ZIP code _____
Telephone number of counselor _____
Signature of counselor _____ Date _____

Checked and recorded _____
Date _____ Initials _____
Certificate and badge presented _____ Date _____

Applicant will turn in this portion to his unit leader for record posting.

APPLICANT'S RECORD

Name _____

has given me his completed application for the _____ Merit badge

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ by _____

Signature of counselor _____

Signature of unit leader _____

COUNSELOR'S RECORD

Applicant _____

Troop Unit number _____
 Team Post

Merit badge _____

Date completed _____ / _____ / _____

Remarks: _____

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.

NOTE TO BOY SCOUT, VARSITY SCOUT, OR EXPLORER: Retain this copy for your permanent records.

The first thing a scout should do is find a "Buddy" who wants to earn the same merit badge, and approach the Scoutmaster for a "Blue Merit Badge Card". If the scouts don't already know who the merit badge Counselor is for that particular merit badge, the scoutmaster needs to help the boys find a registered counselor.

**** The "buddy system" is always used in scouting, as per the requirements found in the Guide to Safe Scouting.****

The Scoutmaster then fills out the section of the blue card with "Application For Merit Badge" on the front (the 3rd third on the front). The Scoutmaster puts the date of the request of the blue card at the bottom of the form. The Scoutmaster may also fill out the 1st third of the reverse side of the blue card with the name, address, and phone number of the counselor only. The scouts then contact the merit badge counselor, and arranges a time for meeting with him/her. At the first meeting, the scout turns over the blue card to the counselor to keep track of until the merit badge is completed.

**** Again, 3 people must be present at all meetings with the merit badge counselor, as per the directives in the Guide to Safe Scouting.****

When the final requirement of the merit badge is completed, the merit badge counselor then fills in all the rest of the blanks on the blue card. The date of completion is the date it is earned!!! It will be the date recorded on all records of the scouts, and the date that will appear on the advancement order form and the final Merit Badge Card!

The merit badge counselor will then keep the last third of the blue card... "Counselor's Record," and give back the other 2 thirds to the Scouts who will then turn it into the Scoutmaster.

The Scoutmaster will then record it in the Scout's Handbook, then hand the scout the middle portion of the blue card for the scout's records. The scout must keep this blue card safe, and will be replaced in his records when his formal Merit Badge card is awarded at the Court of Honor. The last part of the blue card is handed to the Advancement Chairman, who will record it in their records, order the merit badge and Merit Badge Card, and keep the blue card for the troop's records.

This is very important... each person holding on to a portion of the blue card... the Merit Badge Counselor, the Troop Advancement Chairman, and the Scout must hold on to these cards for 7 years, or until the Scout makes Eagle. If anything should ever happen to the official records of the scout, the blue cards will serve as proof of earning the merit badge towards the Eagle rank. Instruct the scouts, and/or his parents, to keep the blue cards separate from the Merit Badge cards. That way if one is lost, the other can replace it!

Well, that should do it. Sometimes the blue cards are ignored in the program, but the simple fact is it is an important part of the ranking system. Use it! And Good Luck!