



Merit Badge Counselor Orientation

Crossroads of America Council

TO DO List

- ✓ Take YPT
- ✓ **Complete MBC orientation**
- ✓ Submit BSA application
- ✓ Submit MBC info form
- ✓ Meet council standards for the merit badge

Objectives

As a result of this training, a Merit Badge Counselor should be able to

- o state the **purpose** of the merit badge program for Scouts.
- o explain the **role** of the merit badge counselor.
- o list some **methods** of counseling and coaching.
- o follow **youth protection** rules for counseling.



Why do we have merit badges?

- The merit badge program is one of Scouting's basic **character-developing tools**.
- Earning merit badges gives Scouts the kind of self-confidence that comes only from overcoming difficult obstacles to **achieve a goal**.
- Through the merit badge program, Scouts learn career skills that may help them choose their **life work**.
- Working with a merit badge counselor gives Scouts a contract with **an adult** with whom they might not be acquainted.



Youth Protection



- BSA prohibits **one-on-one** contact between an adult and a youth – in person, online, via text, phone, email, chat, instant messaging, social media, videoconferencing, or any other communication. Another registered adult or the youth's parent must be included in any conversation.
- Two **registered** adult leaders **21 years of age** or over are required at **all** Scouting activities.
- A registered **female** leader 21 years of age or over must be present for any activity involving female youth.
- A Scouts BSA youth may not attend an **opposite gender** troop activity, even with his/her parent.

Buddy System



- o Notwithstanding the requirement for **two-deep** registered adult leadership, a Scout is encouraged to have a buddy.
- o The **buddy** could be another Scout or a friend.
- o Buddy pairs may not be co-ed. The Scouts BSA program requires single gender units and single gender buddy pairs.
- o If two or more Scouts work at the same time on a badge, they are judged on their own **performance of the requirements** and should receive the maximum benefit from the knowledge, skill, character, and personal interest of the counselor.

Merit Badge Process

1. A Scout initiates the merit badge process by obtaining a signed **Application for Merit Badge** (“blue card”) from the Scoutmaster and getting the name of a Merit Badge Counselor.
2. The Scout sets up a **first appointment** with the Merit Badge Counselor.
3. At this first meeting, the counselor explains **what is expected** for the Scout to start meeting the requirements.



continued





Merit Badge Process

4. Once a Scout knows **what is expected**, work can begin to learn and do the things required. The counselor helps a Scout understand what is acceptable.
5. When the Scout is ready, the counselor should be contacted to **meet again** and review what has been accomplished.
6. The counselor will ask the Scout to **do or show each requirement** to make sure it was properly understood and completed.

continued



Merit Badge Process



7. A Scout must meet the requirements – **no less, no more**. When the counselor is satisfied that the requirements have been met, the Application for Merit Badge (“blue card”) is signed complete.
8. The counselor keeps the third section of the **card**, and returns the first two sections to the Scout.
9. The Scout meets with the Scoutmaster for a final signature, then submits the completed card to the **troop advancement coordinator**.
10. The Scout is **recognized** with the patch at a troop meeting, and with the merit badge award certificate card at the next troop court of honor.

Who may work on a badge?

- Any registered youth in **Scouts BSA***, regardless of rank, may work on a badge.
- A few badges have age or knowledge **prerequisites** to ensure the Scout is prepared to safely tackle the work.
- There is no **time limit** for completing a merit badge other than the fact that it must be completed before the Scout's 18th birthday.
- Requirements to be met by Scouts are *usually* those in place when they **begin work** on the badge. As long as they maintain active progress, they are not required to switch to an updated set of requirements in most cases.



* A properly registered Venturer who previously reached First Class rank may also continue advancement, including merit badges.

Who is a Merit Badge Counselor?

- A council-**approved/registered** adult **for a specific badge**
- Over age 18 (or age 21 in CAC for some badges)
- Qualified by
 - formal education in the field
 - work experience applying the subject area knowledge, *or*
 - experience as a hobbyist in the topic
- Counselor lists are **not distributed**. This is because the **list is dynamic**, with new counselors added and others dropped or suspended on a daily basis if their Youth Protection training or other certification or approval lapses.



Scoutbook



- Scoutbook is where the official Merit Badge Counselor list can now be found by Scoutmasters and their designees in a troop.
- Lists of Merit Badge Counselors are **not published or circulated**, and are not provided to Scouts. A Scout obtains a counselor recommendation from the Scoutmaster.
- Progress on a merit badge may be documented in Scoutbook rather than on a paper '**blue card**', but BSA recommends continued use of blue cards even if Scoutbook has been adopted.

Merit Badge Events



- A counselor may not offer a merit badge session in person or online to Scouts from multiple units without prior consent from the council.
- Before granting permission for the event, the council will confirm that the counselor is properly and currently registered and trained, and that the proposed event is consistent with the BSA standards of youth protection and program integrity.

Higher Risk Activities

- Some activities have **higher inherent risk**, and require special training for instructors, supervisors, or counselors.
- Each **council** establishes its own standards, which must be **at least as stringent** as those laid out in the Guide to Safe Scouting, the Shooting Sports Manual, and other activity-specific policy documents.



Higher Risk Activities

(SEE THE COMPLETE LIST FOR DETAILS)

In the **Crossroads of America** council:

Shooting Sports

- Current **NRA certification** is required for Rifle Shooting and Shotgun Shooting counselors.
- **USA Archery certification** is required for Archery counselors.

Aquatics

- Swimming, Lifesaving, SCUBA, Canoeing, Kayaking, Motorboating, Rowing, Small Boat Sailing, Water Sports, and Whitewater counselors must be approved by the council Aquatics committee.

Climbing

- Climbing activities must be supervised and led by a certified climbing **instructor**.



Who Can Make Changes?

- An adult **volunteer may request** to be added or dropped from the Merit Badge Counselor list, or to change assigned badges by filling out the proper forms and submitting them to the council registrar:
 - BSA adult application for position code 42
 - Merit Badge Counselor Information Form
- Some badges require **additional training or certification**.
- Applications for badges with **higher inherent risk** will be held pending approval by the appropriate council risk committee.
- Only the **council registrar** can process an adult application or associate a specific merit badge with a counselor.

Troubleshooting



If **you believe you are a counselor** for a badge but you don't show up in Scoutbook ...

- o Your **registration** may have lapsed at some point due to expired YPT, out-of-date background check authorization, missing training, or other reason. Check your Scoutbook profile to see if Merit Badge Counselor is listed as a current registered position.
- o Your **YPT** may be expired.
- o You may need to submit a **Merit Badge Counselor Information Form** requesting approval for the badge.
- o Your own **Scoutbook profile** settings may show that you are unavailable or prefer not to serve in this role.

Counseling Techniques



- For Scouts to get the most benefit from a counseling session, they must feel welcome and relaxed. The counselor can put Scouts at ease by asking simple **open-ended questions** about their interests and time in Scouting.
- A counselor can **show** a Scout his/her own work, collection, or other evidence of achievement in the field.
- The Scout can demonstrate mastery of **simple skills** first, and build up to more **challenging** requirements.

Understanding Requirements

○ A counselor must require no more and no less than the requirement as it is written. The verbs are key:

- describe
- demonstrate
- make
- list
- collect
- visit
- research
- show



○ The requirements are found in the current merit badge pamphlet or on the national BSA website

<https://www.scouting.org/programs/scouts-bsa/advancement-and-awards/merit-badges/>

Proper Protocol



- The idea and effort to work on a badge should be **initiated by the Scout**, not the adult.
- Adults may work with their own son, daughter, or close relative on a badge, but BSA urges that they only do so if the youth is part of a group of Scouts working on it.
 - For instance, a parent should not become a counselor and just work with the Scout at home to complete a badge, as it deprives their child of the chance to **meet and work with other adults**.
- BSA discourages the use of the merit badge 'workbooks' prepared and shared online by volunteers, as they encourage a **fill-in-the-blanks** approach vs. a full exploration and discussion of the material with the counselor. Use of a workbook cannot be required.

Who Can Sign?



- o Once a Scout starts work on a merit badge, the requirements may be **signed off** by
 - o the original merit badge counselor (if currently registered)
 - o another counselor for the same badge
 - o a camp director authorized by the council as a seasonal counselor for the specific badge
- o Requirements cannot be signed off by
 - o a parent
 - o a Scoutmaster (who is not a counselor for the badge)
 - o another adult leader who is not a counselor for the badge

Citizenship in Society



Information for Scouts:

- o The Citizenship in Society merit badge became available in **November 2021**.
- o The new badge is required for all Eagle Scout rank applications submitted to the council after **July 1, 2022**.
- o There is **no merit badge pamphlet**. Requirements may be found on the BSA website.
- o The badge is worked on by a **single Scout** or a **small group** within **2 years** of age in the **same troop**.
- o A Scout has completed a **requirement** when the counselor determines they have given a response based on good faith and rooted in the Scout Oath and Law.

Citizenship in Society Merit Badge



Information for Counselors:

- This badge is not offered in other **groups** -- in camps, at merit badge workshops, or online with a distant counselor.
- Counselors must complete **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** (DEI) training and review the **counselor guide** specific to this badge.
- Counselors are **facilitators and listeners**, not subject matter experts.
- Counselors do not advocate a particular point of view or share their own **opinions or biases**.
- Counselors do not **create or distribute** supplemental worksheets or other materials.

Health Care Professions



- o The Health Care Professions merit badge became available in December 2021. As of January 2022, Scouts may not begin work on the Medicine merit badge.
- o This new merit badge is an update/replacement for the Medicine merit badge, so it is not intended that a Scout earn both badges, or count both as elective merit badges for Eagle rank.

Merit Badges

American Business	Cit – Nation	Exploration	Inventing	Pioneering	Signs,Signals,Codes
American Cultures	Cit – Society	Family Life	Journalism	Plant Science	Skating
American Heritage	Cit – World	Farm Mechanics	Kayaking	Plumbing	Small Boat Sailing
American Labor	Climbing	Fingerprinting	Landscape Arch.	Pottery	Snow Sports
Animal Science	Coin Collecting	Fire Safety	Law	Programming	Soil/Water Conserv
Animation	Collections	First Aid	Leatherwork	Public Health	Space Exploration
Archaeology	Communications	Fish & Wildlife	Lifesaving	Public Speaking	Sports
Archery	Composite Matls	Fishing	Mammal Study	Pulp and Paper	Stamp Collecting
Architecture	Cooking	Fly Fishing	Metalwork	Radio	Surveying
Art	Crime Prevention	Forestry	Mining in Society	Railroading	Sustainability
Astronomy	Cycling	Game Design	Model Design	Reading	Swimming
Athletics	Dentistry	Gardening	Motorboating	Reptile/Amphibian	Textile
Auto Maintenance	Digital Technology	Genealogy	Moviemaking	Rifle Shooting	Theater
Aviation	Disabilities Aware	Geocaching	Music	Robotics	Traffic Safety
Backpacking	Dog Care	Geology	Nature	Rowing	Truck Transport
Basketry	Drafting	Golf	Nuclear Science	Safety	Vet Medicine
Bird Study	Electricity	Graphic Arts	Oceanography	Salesmanship	Water Sports
Bugling	Electronics	Health Care Prof.	Orienteering	Scholarship	Weather
Camping	Emergency Prep	Hiking	Painting	Scouting Heritage	Welding
Canoeing	Energy	Home Repairs	Personal Fitness	SCUBA Diving	Whitewater
Chemistry	Engineering	Horsemanship	Personal Mgmt	Sculpture	Wilderness Surv
Chess	Entrepreneurship	Indian Lore	Pets	Search & Rescue	Wood Carving
Cit - Community	Environmental Sci	Insect Study	Photography	Shotgun Shooting	Woodwork

Questions?

**CLICK TO
RECORD COMPLETION
OF THIS TRAINING**

*Thank you for serving Scouts
in this important role!*







