

How to Earn a Merit Badge

For a new Boy Scout, the first priority is to complete requirements for early ranks. The basic Scoutcraft skills and experience gained in working on the ranks through First Class will be valuable in pursuing other interests and advancements throughout a Scouting career.

There are, however, a number of opportunities to work on merit badges during this time. Scouts can work on a merit badge as a patrol activity, or the youth leaders may plan to work on one during a troop meeting or outing. Badges are also offered at merit badge universities and are a mainstay of the summer camp experience.

As a Scout advances in rank, earning merit badges will be required for Star, Life, and Eagle rank. To achieve the Eagle Scout rank, a Scout must earn the following badges, plus additional badges of his choice for a total of 21.

Eagle-required Merit Badges: Camping, Citizenship in the Community, Citizenship in the Nation, Citizenship in the World, Communications, Cooking, Cycling OR Hiking OR Backpacking, Emergency Preparedness OR Lifesaving, Environmental Science OR Sustainability, Family Life, First Aid, Personal Fitness, Personal Management, and Swimming.

When a Scout has chosen a badge that he would like to work on, the steps to be followed are:

- Obtain a blue merit badge card from your Scoutmaster. He will sign the front of the card indicating his approval for you to begin work on the badge. (If Mr. Dziwlik is unavailable, check with Mr. Considine or Mrs. Gormley for help.)
- Mr. Dziwlik will look in Scoutbook to identify a merit badge counselor for the badge, and will provide contact information to you. Often, the counselor will be an adult in Troop 202. In order to counsel a Scout on a merit badge, the adult must be registered, trained, and approved as a counselor for that particular badge. No one other than the registered counselor can sign off completed requirements.
- Contact the counselor and determine a good time to meet and plan your work on the badge. At the counselor's discretion, you might complete this planning in a phone call, in a troop meeting, or at a separate time and place. If you meet outside of a troop meeting with your merit badge counselor, you should plan to take a buddy with you. Your buddy can be your parent, but the badge might be more fun to work on with friends in your patrol.
- Complete the requirements. You may do this on your own, or the counselor may instruct you. Don't take shortcuts. A merit badge counselor cannot add to or take away from the requirements you must complete for the badge. The requirements are exactly as written in the merit badge booklet that is current at the time you begin work on the badge.
- When you complete the requirements, obtain your counselor's approval and signature on your blue merit badge card. (If you attend a merit badge university or camp program, you may receive a different form of documentation instead of the traditional blue card.) Once you begin work on a merit badge, there is no deadline for completion. You may continue to work on the badge until you reach age 18.
- Return to your Scoutmaster and obtain his signature on the completed card. This will let the Scoutmaster know that you have completed this badge so that he will not hesitate to endorse your future request to start another badge. He will discourage you from having too many merit badges in progress at one time.
- Submit the completed and signed merit badge card to the troop advancement coordinator (Mr. Considine) for processing and award of your badge. Your accomplishment will be announced at the end of the troop meeting or gathering.
- Before the next troop court of honor, you will be given the merit badge patch to sew on your merit badge sash.
- At the next court of honor, you will receive the wallet card that officially acknowledges you have earned the badge. This card is more important than the badge itself, as it will be your documentation that you have earned the badge if you must prove it at a later time (e.g., when applying for your Eagle rank).