

Merit Badge Counselor Training

Chief Seattle Council Program & Training Conference November 4, 2023

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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.

https://www.scouting.org/



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

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 Scout ranks
- A total of 21 must be earned for the Eagle Scout rank
- Some merit badges are "required;" some "elective"
- 14 of 17 specific badges are *required* for Eagle Scout Rank



Broad Range of Subjects

More than 135 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



https://www.scouting.org/skills/merit-badges/

Benefits of Merit Badges

- Contribution to the objectives of Scouting: citizenship, character development, 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 work with someone who does.



Registering as a Merit Badge Counselor

- New merit badge counselors must submit a BSA adult application for the position of merit badge counselor (code 42). In Chief Seattle Council, this requirement is waived for persons who are <u>currently registered</u> and have a BSA Adult Application on file
- Merit badge counselors who are re-registering need not complete a new adult 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.



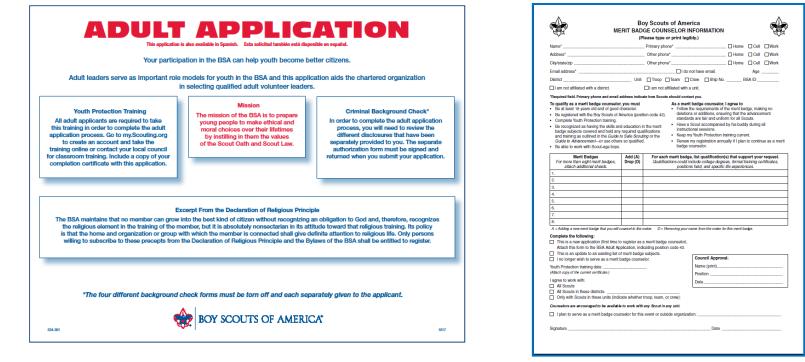
Registering as a Merit Badge Counselor

- Starting August 1, 2023: The merit badge counselor application fee is \$25 which covers the background check. If the applicant is already a registered adult leader, then the background check fee is already paid and completed through that application process and not required for MBC application.
- This fee is paid directly to Chief Seattle Council via cash, check, or credit card.

https://seattlebsa.org/membership/



Forms Needed to Register as a Merit Badge Counselor



Adult Application - position code 42

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.1.3



MB Counselor Information 34405

Complete Youth Protection Training

my.scouting.org

Welcon	ne to my.Scou	ting		
New to Scout	ing or don't have an acc	count?		
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	CREATE ACCOUNT			





Login to my.Scouting

Username
The username field cannot be blank
Password
The password field cannot be empty





Approval by Local Council

- Local councils establish procedures for registration, re-registration, approval, and for reviewing:
 - Background checks
 - Youth Protection Training
 - Any council-required certifications
- Approval is for specific merit badges
- Counselors may work with just one unit, but registration and council advancement committee approvals are still required



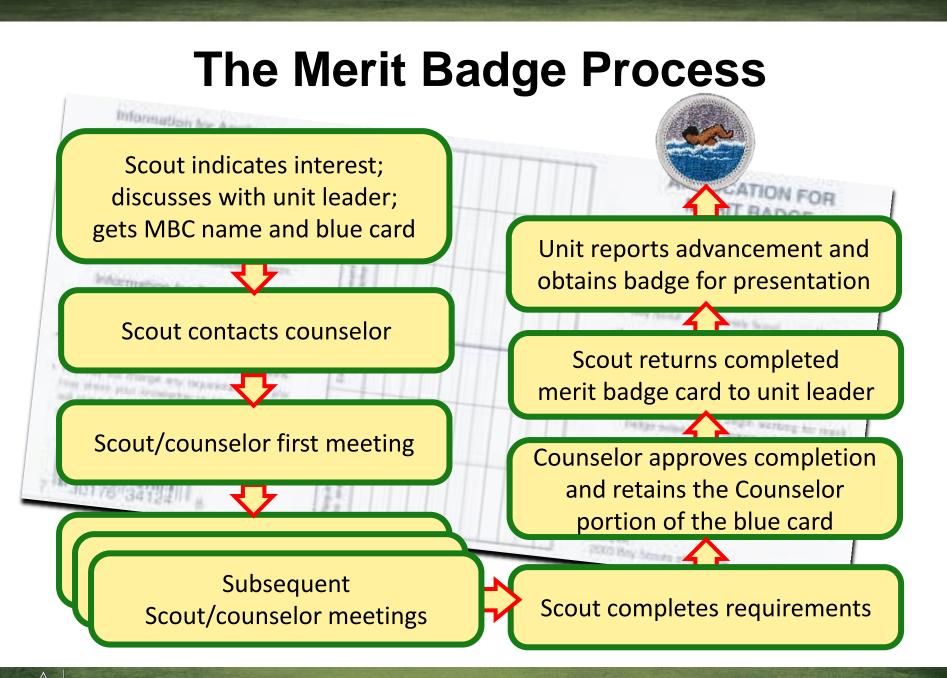
The Process of Counseling

- ✤ A Scout develops an interest in a subject
- Scouts indicate their interest and discuss the badge with their unit leader
- The unit leader signs a blue card or approves the merit badge in Scoutbook and provides at least one counselor
- The Scout contacts a counselor
- The Scout and counselor meet often several times
- The requirements are fulfilled

The Process of Counseling (cont.)

- The counselor approves completion and signs the blue card or updates Scoutbook
- The Scout returns the signed blue card to their unit leader for signature or notifies the unit leader that Scoutbook is updated
- 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"

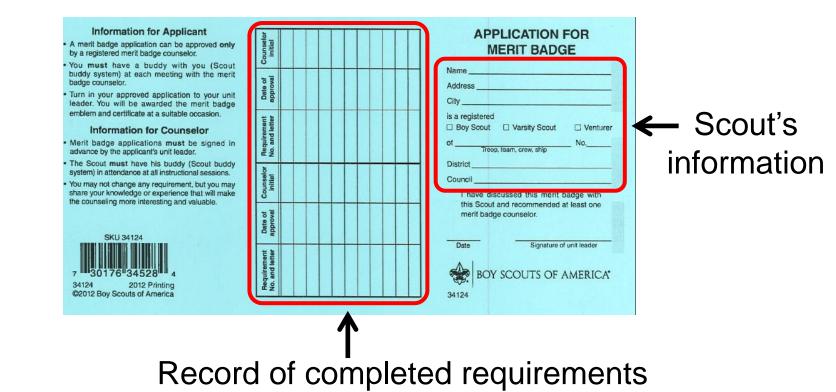
"I have discussed this merit badge with this Scout and recommended at least one merit badge counselor"



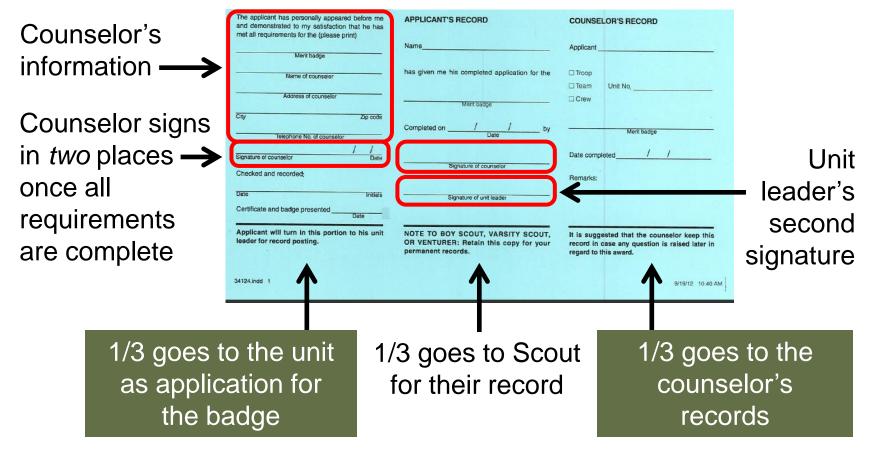
- Evidence of discussion between unit leader and Scout
- Indicates registered counselor has been recommended
- Not required for Scout to get started on requirements
 - ✤ Signature is required for Scout to work with a Merit Badge Counselor



Application for Merit Badge The Blue Card



Application for Merit Badge The Blue Card – Reverse Side





Merit Badges in Scoutbook

Whether connecting with scouts in-person or virtually, individually (with a buddy) or in a group, Scoutbook provides a way to easily record requirements that will automatically be uploaded to Internet Advancement

Steps for recording Merit Badges using Scoutbook:

- Connect with the Scout in Scoutbook
 - By invite from unit leader or parent
 - Connect yourself with scout using Scoutbook
- Check for "initial Unit Leader signature"

Insect Study MB Requirements (2015-2023)

- Work with Scout on merit badge
 - o In-person according to normal guidelines
 - Virtually paying attention to BSA Social Media & Digital Safety guidelines
- Mark completed requirements in Scoutbook
- Print "blue card" if desired (this is not necessary for advancement record-keeping purposes)
- Unit leader or designee marks the Merit Badge as "Approved/Recorded"

Role of a Merit Badge Counselor

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 also 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

- Scouts BSA Requirements (current edition)
- Merit badge pamphlet (latest printing, Kindle)
- https://www.scouting.org/skills/merit-badges/all/

Are the requirements flexible?

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



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 (ex: Cooking MB)
- 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.



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."



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

Two-deep leadership and no one-on-one contact between adults and youth members includes digital communication.

Leaders may not have one-on-one private online communications or engage one-on-one in other digital activities (games, social media, etc.) with youth members. Leaders should copy a parent and another leader in digital and online communication, ensuring no one-on-one contact exists in video chats, text, social media, or other forms of online or digital communication.

https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safetymoments/digital-safety-and-online-scouting-activities/

Guide to Safe Scouting,



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

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.3.2

Merit Badge Group Instruction Guide pdf



Group Instruction Ensuring Quality

- Limit group instruction to cases where the benefits are compelling
- See that all counselors are registered and approved and trained
- 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
- 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
- Scouts must not be required to use them

<u>http://usscouts.org/mb/worksheets/list.asp</u>

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
- Scoutbook makes it easy to track partial work

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.

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.4.6

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 GTA 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?
- 2. What is the maximum number of merit badges a Scout may work on at the same time?
- 3. Is a Scout allowed to begin work on a merit badge without their unit leader's approval?

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- 3. Is a Scout allowed to begin work on a merit badge without their unit leader's approval?

Yes. Approval is not required; a discussion is 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?

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

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

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No. A Scout may earn merit badges in any order.



 Is the Scoutmaster permitted to serve as a troop merit badge counselor for some merit badges like Camping or Hiking?

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



6. Is the Scoutmaster permitted to serve as a troop merit badge counselor for some merit badges like Camping or Hiking?

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

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Yes - *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. A unit leader may set a limit, but it must apply to all Scouts in the unit.



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

9. May you counsel your own son or daughter?

10. May you counsel in other units, districts, or councils?



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 Yes, but generally it is better for Scouts to learn from a variety of adults.
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- 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 this is encouraged!

11. Due to tight schedules, is a camp staff member allowed to make minor adjustments so requirements can be finished at camp?

12. Once you are registered and approved as a counselor, at what point must you re-register and become re-approved?

13. When does a "partial" expire?



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Annually.

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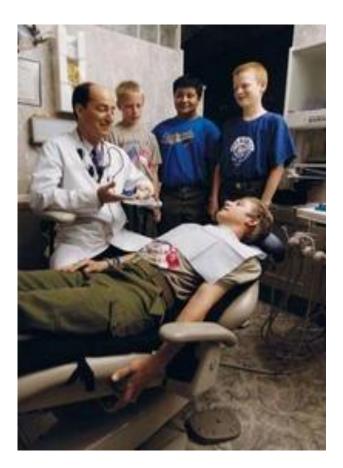
Annually.

13. When does a "partial" expire? On the Scout's 18th birthday.



Merit Badge Counselors

- Share passion
- Teach skills
- Touch lives



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Chief Seattle Council MBC registration

- Complete a <u>BSA Adult Application</u> if you are not currently registered with a unit (Pack, Troop, Team, Crew).
- 2. Complete <u>BSA Youth Protection Training</u> and save a copy of your training certificate.
- 3. Complete the <u>Merit Badge Counselor Information</u> form.
- 4. Email the Merit Badge Counselor Information form, BSA Youth Protection Training certificate, and Adult Application (if needed) to membership@seattlebsa.org and CC both your district/territory Merit Badge Counselor Coordinator and Advancement Chair.





For More Information

Resources

- Guide to Advancement, No. 33088
- BSA's <u>Guide to Safe Scouting</u>, No. 34416
- Merit badge pamphlets
- A Guide for Merit Badge Counseling, No. 512-065 (2022)
- 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
- Scouting.org: <u>https://www.scouting.org/programs/scouts-bsa/advancement-and-awards/resources/</u>
- Merit Badge Counselor Training (this powerpoint as a pdf)





Merit Badge Counselor Training

Questions? Feedback?

Download a copy of this presentation (and all PTC presentations) <u>www.seattlebsa.org/ptc</u>

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