

Troop 81 Merit Badge Counselors Procedures

The merit badge program is part of the advancement plan of the Boy Scouts of America. It has guided the interests and energies of Boy Scouts for almost 90 years. A merit badge is an award that is presented to a Boy Scout when he has completed the requirements for one of more than 100 subjects in a wide variety of art, craft, hobby, sport, trade, profession, agribusiness, service, or self-improvement areas. The badge is only a small piece of 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. This could not happen without the service of merit badge counselors - like yourself- expert in a particular subject.

WHAT'S MY JOB?

Your job is to satisfy yourself that each Scout who comes to you meets all the requirements for the merit badge,

WHAT DO I AGREE TO?

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.

Make sure each Scout has a buddy present at all instructional sessions.

Renew my registration as a merit badge counselor annually if I plan to continue serving as a merit badge counselor.

EARNING A MERIT BADGE

The steps that a Boy Scout takes to earn a merit badge are outlined in Troop 81 MB procedures and the Boy Scout Handbook.

WHERE DO YOU MEET?

A scout must have a buddy with him at each meeting with the merit badge counselor. The buddy may be another scout, a parent or guardian, a brother or sister or a relative or friend. If he arrives alone, he should be told that you can not meet with him alone. **In no case should you be alone with the Scout.**

The Scout contacts you, probably at a troop meeting or by phone. If the merit badge subject relates to your job or profession, then your place of work may be the place to meet with the Scouts. Subjects that are related to your hobbies usually will be handled in your home. However most of time the counseling can take place at troop meetings. For a few subjects, coaching will happen in the field or where special equipment is at hand. Rowing, Rifle and Shotgun Shooting, Swimming, and Astronomy are good examples.

NOTE: Merit badge counselor sessions must meet the same two-deep leadership requirement expected in all Scouting activities. Also merit badge counselors should attend youth protection training.

Personal contact will make earning the badge a better experience for both you and the Scout. In your discussion of what is expected, you may want to start by finding out from the boy what he already knows, so you can spend your time on helping him learn the remaining items, or give guidance in completing projects. You can set up additional meetings with the Scout, not only for the purpose of passing him on the requirements, but rather to help him in his understanding of the subject.

The Scout, along with his buddy, should make another appointment with you when he thinks he is prepared to prove his ability. You set the date, time, and place. When he meets you, he should bring with him the projects required for completion. If the things he has done cannot be transported, he should present you with satisfactory evidence, such as a photograph of the project or adult certification. His Scoutmaster might, for example, certify that a satisfactory bridge or tower has been built for Pioneering, or that the required meals were prepared for the Cooking merit badge. Your job, in addition to coaching, is to **satisfy yourself that the requirements have been met.** Question the Scout and, if you have any doubts, contact the adult who signed the statement. When you are satisfied that the Scout has met the requirements, you sign his merit badge application.

You may work with many Scouts each year as they earn merit badges or you may only work with a few. However, your contact with these Scouts is tremendously important. Your influence is measured not by how many Scouts you work with, but the effect upon the lives of those you have an opportunity to work with. Throughout your association with the Scout, keep in mind that you are in reality assisting the Scoutmaster in the program of advancement which the Scoutmaster helps each of his Scouts plan. You should feel free to discuss his work with the Scoutmaster.

MORE OR LESS?

The Scout is expected to meet the requirements as stated - **no more and no less.** Furthermore, **he is to do exactly what is stated.** If it says "show or demonstrate," that is what he must do. Just telling about it isn't enough. The same thing holds true for such words as "make," "list," "in the field," and "collect, identify, and label." On the other hand, **you cannot require more of a Scout than stated.** You might wonder, then, if the requirements as stated are the limits, what there is for you to do other than help the Scout with the specifics of the requirements. Actually, you can go far beyond them in your discussions with the Scout. He probably will welcome your willingness to share with him your knowledge well beyond the requirements, and you will be making a real contribution to him by doing so. But it isn't required. That's the key. The Scout does not have to show his knowledge of those things beyond the requirements.

HOW MANY AT A TIME?

Frequently the skills of a subject can be taught to several Scouts at one time. However, the completing of the requirements always must be done on an individual basis. Scouts may not qualify for merit badges by just being members of a group that is instructed in skills. They must qualify by **personally satisfying you that they can meet all the requirements.** It's pretty hard to do this in a group. When one Scout in a group answers a question it can't possibly prove that all the others in the group also know the answer. Then, too, each Scout learns at his own pace. He should not be held back or pushed ahead by his association with a group. You can coach more than one at a time, but **only one Scout at a time can satisfy you that he can meet the requirements.**

DO YOU NEED A MERIT BADGE PAMPHLET?

The information in the pamphlet is probably familiar to you, but it will help you to know what the Scout is told. They are written for Scout-age boys. They also contain suggestions for projects that might give you ideas for being helpful. It would be well to obtain the latest printing of the pamphlet on your subject. It will usually contain the latest requirements and information on meeting them.

NOTES:

There is NO DEADLINE for earning Merit Badges, except the Scout's 18th birthday.

There is NO ONE YEAR LIMIT ON SO-CALLED "PARTIALS"

If the requirements change while a Scout is working on the badge, he may continue to use the OLD requirements until he completes the work, or he may use the new requirements if he wishes. It is HIS choice.

There is no restriction or limit on the number of merit badges an individual may be approved to counsel.

There is no limit on the number of merit badges a Scout may earn from one counselor.

An approved counselor may counsel any Scout, including his or her own son, ward or relative.

If the Scout changes counselors for any reason, it is up to the new counselor whether or not he or she will accept the work the Scout has already done.

The Scout must have a blue card signed by the Scoutmaster before he meets with the counselor.

Unless otherwise specified, work for a requirement can be started at any time.

When completed the counselor signs the blue card in the appropriate places and returns the card to the scout. The scout must have the Scoutmaster sign the back and then gives the card to the Advancement Chairperson.

Web Sites with valuable Merit Badge information:

www.meritbadge.com

www.usscouts.org

www.boyscouttrail.com

Helpful Hints

Here are some simple tips that every merit badge counselor should keep in mind.

- Make the Scout feel welcome and relaxed.
- Stimulate the Scout's interest by showing him something related to the merit badge subject, but don't overwhelm him; remember, he is probably a beginner.
- Carefully review each requirement, start with easy skills or questions, and encourage practice.
- Insist that the Scout do exactly what the requirements specify. Many of the requirements involve hands-on activities that call for a Scout to show or demonstrate; make; list; discuss; or collect, identify, and label—and he must do just that.
- Don't make the requirement more difficult—or any easier—than stated. A Scout may undertake more activities on his own initiative, but he cannot be pushed to do so.
- During testing, the Scout might need help in a particular area or with a certain skill, and may need to be retested later to ensure the requirement has been fulfilled.
- Encourage self-evaluation and self-reflection, and establish an atmosphere that encourages the Scout to ask for help.
- Take a genuine interest in the Scout's projects, and encourage completion.