



# *Catalina Council Advancement* *presents*

## Merit Badge Counselor Orientation

The Path to a Quality Program in Scouting  
Lies in Training our Adult Leaders

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*Adapted from training developed by, Northwest District*



## **136 Merit Badges . . .**

...Art, Hiking, Archery, Lifesaving,  
Citizenship in the World, Orienteering,  
Architecture, Scuba, Cooking, Small-Boat  
Sailing, Public Speaking, Camping,  
Geocaching, Theater, Personal Management,  
Weather, Signaling, Pets, Pioneering,  
Scouting Heritage, Nature...





# *Objectives*

## **1. Discuss the BSA Advancement Program**

- ✓ Aims & Methods, the 4-steps, Mentoring

## **2. The Role of the Merit Badge Counselor**

- ✓ How it Works
- ✓ Individual vs. Group Counseling

## **3. Before Beginning to Counsel**

- ✓ Qualifications, Applications, Youth Protection Training, Planning

## **4. The Process**

- ✓ Roles of Scout, Scoutmaster, Counselor
- ✓ Completing Merit Badge Card
- ✓ "Partial" Merit Badge

## **5. Troubleshooting**

## **6. Special Needs Scouts**

## **7. Unit "To Do's"**

## **8. Merit Badge Myths**



# 1a. The Purpose of the Program

**Merit Badges are an educational tool  
unique to Scouting...**

**...Designed to help youth tackle new  
subjects with the help of mentors.**

**Each new topic creates new  
experiences...**

**...Which help them grow into adults and  
citizens of good character.**



## 1b. Aims & Methods of Scouting

**AIMS** (what the BSA hopes to accomplish)

- Growth in moral strength and character
- Learning and participating in citizenship
- "Fitness" growth and development: physical, mental, and moral





# 1b. Aims & Methods of Scouting

**METHODS** (the process of growing into leaders)

- Advancement
- Ideals
- Patrols
- Outdoor Program
- Adult Association
- Personal Growth
- Leadership Development
- Uniform



# 1c. The Advancement Program

## 4 Steps

### **Learning - Testing - Reviewing - Recognition**

- Provides a unique, non-classroom-based educational tool that helps young men grow into adults of character.
- Allows the Scout to progress at his own rate.
- Accepting the challenge encourages Scouts.
- Shows that there are recognition and rewards for perseverance.
- Encourages Scouting ideals: the Oath, Law, Motto, and Slogan.



## 1d. Counselors Mentor Scouts to...

- **Develop character and self-confidence**
- **Learn and practice communication skills**
- **Overcome obstacles**
- **Meet and work with new people**
- **Research possible future careers**
- **Develop physical fitness**
- **Have fun (the best way to learn!)**
- **Discover a lifetime of hobbies and interests**





## 2a. Counselor & Scout Meet

The Scout (*not an adult*) will contact you to schedule a meeting.

### At the meeting

- Introduce yourself. Tell *why* you counsel this Badge!
- Determine:
  - ✓ Preparedness: Signed Merit Badge Card?
  - ✓ Did he read the Merit Badge pamphlet?
  - ✓ What does he already know about the subject?
  - ✓ Has he been researching possible projects?
  - ✓ Discuss requirements.
  - ✓ Set short- and long-term goals.
  - ✓ Scouts may use school assignments if they 'fit' well.
- Set the next meeting date.



## 2b. The Counselor's "Helps"

### **Merit Badge Worksheets are optional**

- They are unofficial but may aid in learning.
- Some think they are too much like school... Others love them.
- Worksheets may be used to meet "writing" requirements.
- Worksheets are not a substitute for "telling", "showing", or "demonstrating", etc.
- Scouts can not be required to use them.
- If your Badge could benefit from a Worksheet, make your own, or ask the Scout to download one.

### **One Resource:**

- ✓ [www.meritbadge.com](http://www.meritbadge.com) There are great 'Resources' at the end of these Worksheets.





## 2c. Mentoring

### **During the time you are working with the Scout on the Badge:**

- Teach the skills !
- Scouts learn best by practicing, then teaching someone else.
- Scouts must meet the all requirements as written "No More, No Less" !!!
- Scout must do what is asked in the requirements:
  - \* make \* list \* collect \* identify \* label \* in the field...\*
- Expect "no more, no less."
- If Scout wants to do more than is required, great!
- Date and initial each requirement when complete.
- Follow-up on goals
- When done, congratulate Scout!
- Keep "Counselor's Record"





## 2d. Buddies and Groups

### Buddies

- Give individual attention to each Scout during the badge.
- The Counselor must ensure that each Scout individually completes all requirements.
  - Youth Protection guidelines always apply.
- Never meet alone with a Scout.
  - Another scout, parent, or leader should be present or within clear view.
  - Two adult counselors meeting with one scout is not appropriate.





## 2d. Buddies and Groups

### **Group Counseling**

(Meetings, Weekend Camp-outs, Summer Camp, High Adventure Trips, Jamborees, Camporees, Merit Badge Days, Camporees, Skills Seminars...)

Specialized facilities:

- to work on appropriate equipment
- to tour businesses specializing in subject matter
- to meet with expert personnel
- to give Scouts in rural areas access to Counselors and Badges





## 3a. Are You Qualified?

- Counselors must be 18 and registered with BSA.
- Counselors must be approved by **District** and vetted by **Council** *before beginning*
- Must Complete and keep current Youth Protection Training
- Should enjoy working with youth!
- Have interest, skill, and perhaps education, in your subjects
- No restriction on number of Badges you may Counsel
- No limit on number of Badges earned from one Counselor
- Counselors may work with any Scout, including sons and relatives.
- Scouts may do Badges with Counselors anywhere in the U.S.A





# Special Certifications and Trainings

Specific training is required for some BSA activities, including merit badges.



American  
Red Cross



A counselor *must* hold the specific certification or work with someone who does.



## 3b. Are You Current?

### For New Counselors or to Add New Badges:

- **BSA Adult Application**  
**Position code 42**  
(BSA #524-501)

- **"Merit Badge Counselor Application"**  
(BSA #34405WEB)

- <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/Resources.aspx>
- No Unit Leaders need to sign
- No fee

- **Before Counseling, submit Applications**
- **Merit badge counselors who are reregistering need not complete a new application**
- **Follow BSA Policies**
- **"Youth Protection" required for ALL**
- **Register yearly**
- **Notify District when you 'retire' from Counseling**
- **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**





# 3c. Are You Ready?

## Be Prepared!



Keep a recent "*Boy Scout Requirements*" booklet (BSA #33215) on hand. Printed yearly. Most Troops have one. This is the governing document, when there is a difference in requirements, what is in this years requirements pamphlet is what is required !!



Merit Badge Pamphlets (do **not** use © 2000 and older)

- Prepare projects
- Gather materials and references
- Search out and plan for appropriate off-site events





## 4a. The Process Begins

- **The Scout** selects Badge, talks with Scoutmaster
- **The Scoutmaster** gives the Scout a Blue Card
- **The Scout** fills in data
- **The Scoutmaster**
  - ✓ Scoutmaster talks about the badge with the scout.
  - ✓ Signs front of Card, affirming that you have met. Approval is not a requirement.
  - ✓ Provides names of Counselors (MBC)
  - ✓ Asks Scout to wear uniform and take a buddy
- Ideally, the **Scout** will study the Merit Badge pamphlet and other resources before meeting with MBC.



## 4c. The Process Continues

- **Scout** selects Counselor, calls to schedule meeting.
- **Counselor** asks Scout to bring:
  - ✓ Signed Merit Badge card
  - ✓ Merit Badge Pamphlet (optional)
  - ✓ Projects in progress, samples of school projects, ideas for requirements...



## 4c. The Process Continues

- **Scout** and **Counselor** discuss requirements, projects, goals.
- The **Scout** does work on own or with other Scouts;  
with guidance from Counselor, this may require several work days.
- **Counselor** tests each Scout individually
- **Counselor** records completed requirements





APPLICANT'S RECORD		COUNSELOR'S RECORD	
The applicant has personally signed and submitted to my jurisdiction that he has met all requirements for the degree prior.		Applicant _____	
1 Last Name _____	Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Troop _____	1 Unit number _____
First Name _____	has given me his completed application for the _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Team _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Crew _____
Address of residence _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Ship _____	_____
City _____	_____	_____	_____
Telephone number of residence _____	Completed on _____ by _____	_____	_____
Signature of counselor _____	_____	_____	_____
Checked and received _____	Signature of counselor _____	Date completed _____	_____
_____	Signature of unit leader _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
Certificate and badge presented _____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Applicant has been fully advised by the unit leader. Unit leader who this section after recording the information on a Unit Administration Report.

**NOTE TO BOY SCOUT, VENTURE SCOUT, OR VENTURER:** retain this copy for your permanent records.

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 record.

- 1) The **Scout** fills out the personal data on *both* sides of card
- 2) The **Scoutmaster** signs front of card *before* Scout begins to work on badge

# 2

14

4. Keeps "Counselor Record;" gives card to Scout.





## 4e. Completing the Card






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

Name of Scout \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Scoutmaster \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Scoutmaster \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number of Scoutmaster \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Scoutmaster \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Checked and received \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Certificate and badge presented \_\_\_\_\_ Code \_\_\_\_\_

APPLICANT'S RECORD

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Has given me his completed application for the \_\_\_\_\_

Completed on \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Scoutmaster \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of unit leader \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE TO BOY SCOUT, VARSITY SCOUT, OR VENTURER: retain this copy for your permanent records.

- 1) The **Scout** gives his completed card to the Scoutmaster
- 2) The **Scoutmaster** signs card, gives to Advancement Chair
- 3) Advancement Chair amends records, buys badge, files card
- 4) **Scout** keeps center portion

3

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

Name of Scout \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Scoutmaster \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Scoutmaster \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number of Scoutmaster \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Scoutmaster \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Checked and received \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Certificate and badge presented \_\_\_\_\_ Code \_\_\_\_\_

APPLICANT'S RECORD

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Has given me his completed application for the \_\_\_\_\_

Completed on \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Scoutmaster \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of unit leader \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE TO BOY SCOUT, VARSITY SCOUT, OR VENTURER: retain this copy for your permanent records.

4

APPLICANT'S RECORD

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Has given me his completed application for the \_\_\_\_\_

Completed on \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Scoutmaster \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of unit leader \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE TO BOY SCOUT, VARSITY SCOUT, OR VENTURER: retain this copy for your permanent records.

Scout receives Badge at a Unit Meeting, and will be recognized *again* at the next Court of Honor.



[illegible]





Scouts have until 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to complete a badge.

If requirements change before scout completes work he has two choices.

- 1) Continue using old requirements.
- 2) Switch to new requirements.

No mixing of requirements is allowed, i.e. all old, or all new

**\*\*Choice may be superseded by BSA National such as with Cooking MB, only new req. starting 1/1/15.**

[illegible]

## 5. Problems

### **A Counselor Should Stop Work on a Badge if**

- A Scout has no Blue Card
- Card not signed by Scoutmaster
- The Scout comes to the meeting alone (no buddy)
- The Scout is “winging it.” Sign only completed requirements.
- Summer Camp Partial...if...
  - Age 18 vs. the 3-month badges... (no time to complete)
  - Scout has made up charts, lists, or logs...
  - Parent is doing the work





## *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 aims of Scouting. The badge is his to keep and count.**



# 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 topic 7.0.4.7. of the Guide to Advancement.





## 6. Special Needs Scouts

**Counselors may accept work** from Special Needs Scouts:

- Orally
- By Taking Photos
- By Demonstration or Drawing
- By Recording
- By Dictating his answers to helper



## 6. Special Needs Scouts

### Scout may do Alternate "Eagle Required" badges

- *"Application for Alternate Eagle Scout Award Merit Badges"*
- Doctor's statement of disability
- Alternates are ONLY for badges he cannot complete
- Record of Alternate Badges submitted with Eagle Application





# 7. Unit "To Do's"

## Unit Advancement Chairs

- Maintain Merit Badge Counselor List, get a current list for your district from the District Advancement Chair or Scouting Professional.
- Work with *Troop Librarian* to maintain a library of Merit badge books
- Training the Unit's MB Counselors:
  - ✓ Ensure all counselors are trained.
  - ✓ Every MBC must have Youth Protection Training every 2 years.
  - ✓ Registration every year.



# Merit Badge Myths

1. At what age or rank may Boy Scouts work on merit badges? **There is no minimum age limit for any merit badge if registered as a Scout.**










2. What is the maximum number of merit badges a Scout may work on at the same time? **There is no limit.**

3. Is a Scout allowed to begin work on a merit badge without his unit leader's approval? **Approval to begin work is not required; signed blue card is approval to contact the merit badge counselor.**





# Merit Badge Myths

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4. If a Scout has too many unfinished merit badges, may the unit leader limit how many others he may begin? **During the discussion of a new merit badge, the unit leader should provide counseling on what to do.**
5. Is it appropriate to tell a Scout he must earn all or most of his Eagle-required badges before he earns any others? **A unit leader could only suggest this. This may actually slow a scouts progress toward Eagle.**

# Merit Badge Myths

6. Is the unit leader is permitted to serve as a unit merit badge counselor for merit badges such as Camping or Hiking?

This is permitted *only* if the unit leader is registered and approved as a counselor.

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.





# Merit Badge Myths

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

National places no limit on this. Councils may do so, within reason. Qualification rules, Vocation, Avocation, Special Training apply

9. May you counsel your own son?

Yes, but generally it is better for Scouts to learn from a variety of adults. A primary aim of the program. If a parent wishes to teach their son a badge, why not offer it also to other scouts in the unit.



# Merit Badge Myths

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

Yes. Any registered counselor can council and sign off a badge for any scout.

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

Absolutely not. No additions or deletions are permitted. Fundamental Rule is: "Scout Meets the requirements as written, no more, no less"





# Merit Badge Myths

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

Annually. Some councils/districts may have different methods to handle reregistration of counselors.

13. When does a “partial” expire?

When the youth is no longer eligible to register as a Boy Scout, Age 18 normally, no limit if Registered beyond the age of Eligibility.



# Merit Badge Myths

14. Due to the BSA policies related to Youth Protection and two-deep leadership, a merit badge counselor must have another adult present during all merit badge counseling sessions. **There must always be a third person present, but it may be any other adult familiar to the Scout, a Scout's parent, or a Scout's "buddy."** Common sense dictates that two adult counselors alone with only one Scout should be avoided.





# Merit Badge Myths

15. A merit badge counselor who works only with a single unit needs only the unit committee's approval before being approved by the Scout executive.

All counselors must be approved by the district/council advancement committee.



# The Path to a Great Program Lies in Training our Adult Leaders

We hope this presentation has been  
helpful.

