

**2015-2016**

**A Scout's Guide to Merit Badges**



**PATHFINDER DISTRICT**

**QUEENS COUNCIL  
GREATER NEW YORK COUNCILS  
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA**

Prepared: September 2015



Hi Scout,

My name is Donna Manetta. I am Pathfinder Districts' Dean of Merit Badge Counselors. My main responsibility is to ensure you have competent, enthusiastic, qualified and BSA registered merit badge counselors who will work with you on acquiring merit badges.

This booklet is designed to help newer Scouts understand the merit badge process and how to best take advantage of the program. Some of the information in this booklet might be repetitive to you older Scouts. Please bear with me. You may actually learn something you didn't know before.

So let's get started ... **What is the BSA Merit Badge Program?**

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 100 years and is one of the most unusual educational programs ever devised.

A merit badge is an award that is presented to a Boy Scout or Varsity 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 a patch of cloth with a design embroidered in color -- but its significance is as large as the interest of the Scout who earned it and the Merit Badge Counselor who assisted him.

Boy Scout merit badge awards are for young men not yet 18 years old. Merit badges, badges of rank, and Eagle Palms are for registered Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, or qualified Venturers. Any registered Boy Scout or Varsity Scout may earn these awards until his 18th birthday. Any Venturer who achieves the First Class rank as a Boy Scout or Varsity Scout in a troop or team may continue working for the Star, Life, and Eagle Scout ranks and Eagle Palms while registered as a Venturer up to your 18th birthday.

Any Scout can earn any badge at any time. You don't need to have any rank advancement to be eligible. Just complete all of your badges by your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Please note that Eagle Scout required merit badges tend to be harder and take longer to complete. Why? The name says it all. They are required merit badges that a Scout needs to earn before he is eligible for Eagle Scout consideration.

## **I want to work on a merit badge...what do I do?**

### **First...Pick a subject**

Talk to your Scoutmaster/Advisor about your interests. Read the requirements of the merit badges you think might interest you. If you don't have the merit badge pamphlet you can look them up online at

[http://meritbadge.org/wiki/index.php/Merit\\_Badges](http://meritbadge.org/wiki/index.php/Merit_Badges)

This site provides a list of current merit badges, requirements and worksheets you can use. These worksheets are in PDF format which can be printed and the answers can be hand-written in.

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

offers MS Word worksheets which you can type directly into using the MS Word application on your computer.

Please note that these sites provide the latest merit badge requirement changes.

### **Second...Pick a merit badge to earn**

Your Scoutmaster/Advisor will recommend the name of a person from a list of current merit badge counselors. These counselors have special knowledge in their merit badge subjects and are interested in helping you.

### **Third...Follow the Scout Buddy System**

You must have another person with you at each meeting with the merit badge counselor. This person can be another Scout, your parents or guardian, a brother or sister or other relative, or a friend.

### **Fourth...Call or email the counselor**

Get a signed merit badge application (aka blue card) from your Scoutmaster/Advisor. Get in touch with the merit badge counselor and tell him or her that you want to earn the merit badge. The counselor may ask to meet you to explain what is expected of you and to start helping you meet the requirements. You should also discuss work that you have already started or possibly completed. Unless otherwise specified, work for a requirement can be started at any time. Ask your counselor to help you learn the things you need to know or do. You should read the merit badge pamphlet on the subject. Many troops and school or public libraries have them. The pamphlets make the badges easier to learn.

### **Fifth...Show your stuff**

When you are ready with all of your requirements call or email the counselor again to make an appointment. When you go take along the things you have made to meet the requirements. If they are too big to move, take pictures or have an adult tell in writing what you have done. The counselor will ask you to do each requirement to make sure that you know your stuff and have done or can do the things required.

Please dress in full Scout uniform when you visit the counselor. No sneakers or white socks.

### **Sixth...Get the badge**

When the counselor is satisfied that you have met each requirement, he or she will sign your application (blue card). Give the signed application to your Scoutmaster/Advisor so that your merit badge emblem can be secured for you.

### **So what is the merit badge application (aka blue card)?**

A blue card is a three-part record of a merit badge status. As you complete each requirement the merit badge counselor will sign them off on the card.

You need to keep the incomplete application together and bring it with you every time you meet with your merit badge counselor. Once all requirements are met the card is then separated. The merit badge counselor will take his section. The other two sections are turned over to you to give to your Scoutmaster/Advisor.

The Scoutmaster/Unit Committee member are responsible for filling out an Advancement Form. This form along, with the now two-part signed application, are turned over to your local Scout Shop. They stamp the forms and both sections of the card. Your Scoutmaster/Unit Committee member can then purchase the merit badge for you.

At a Court of Honor or another unit event the Scoutmaster/Advisor will give you the merit badge and your section of the blue card. You **MUST** hold onto all of your blue cards. Put them in a safe place. These are your official Scout merit badge records. You will be asked to produce the cards when you pursue your Eagle Rank.

## Read on to learn how to fill out a Merit Badge Application

Flip the blue card over so it looks like the image below.

### HOW TO PREPARE A MERIT BADGE APPLICATION PART - A

**Information for Applicant**

- A merit badge application can be approved only by a registered merit badge counselor.
- You must have a buddy with you (Scout buddy system) at each meeting with the merit badge counselor.
- Turn in your approved application to your unit leader. You will be awarded the merit badge emblem and certificate at a suitable occasion.

**Information for Counselor**

- Merit badge applications must be signed in advance by the applicant's unit leader.
- The Scout must have his buddy (Scout buddy system) in attendance at all instructional sessions.
- You may not change any requirement, but you may share your knowledge or experience that will make the counseling more interesting and valuable.

7 30176 34124 8

Requirement no and letter	Counselor Initial	Date of Approval
5		

**APPLICATION FOR MERIT BADGE**

Name  1

Address

City

is a registered  Boy Scout  Explorer Scout

of  2 Troop, team, post, ship No.

District  3

Council

and is qualified to begin working for merit badge noted on the reverse side.

4 Signature of Unit Leader

**BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA**

No. 34124 1996 Printing

{C}

{B}

{A}

Instructions for **Part A** sections C-B-A

#### SECTION (A)

You or your Scoutmaster/Advisor should fill in the information requested (1)-(2)-(3).

The District is called Pathfinder and the Council is Queens/GNYC

After the counselor is selected and you have a Scout buddy the Scoutmaster/Advisor will sign the application (4) so that you can begin.

#### SECTION (B)

This section is for the merit badge counselor.

As you complete each requirement the counselor will initial each requirement in section (5).

You now have a "partial" for this badge. The counselor will write in each requirement as you completed them (e.g. 1a, 2b, 4c, etc.) with the date of completion and the counselor's initials.

If you have completed all the requirements, the counselor should write across the face (5) "All Requirements met."

Flip the blue card over.

## HOW TO PREPARE A MERIT BADGE APPLICATION PART – B

<p>The applicant has personally appeared before me and demonstrated to my satisfaction that he has met all requirements for the (please print):</p> <p>3 _____ Merit Badge</p> <p>_____ Name of Counselor</p> <p>5 _____ Address of Counselor</p> <p>_____ ZIP Code</p> <p>_____ Telephone number of Counselor</p> <p>_____ Signature of counselor _____ Date</p> <p>Checked and recorded:</p> <p>_____ Date _____ Initials _____</p> <p>6 _____ Certificate and _____ Date</p> <p>Applicant will turn in this portion to his unit leader for record posting.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>APPLICANT'S RECORD</b></p> <p>Name _____ 1 _____</p> <p>has given me his completed application for the</p> <p>3 _____ Merit Badge</p> <p>Completed on _____ 4 _____ by</p> <p>5 _____ Signature of Counselor</p> <p>_____ Signature of unit leader _____ 6 _____</p> <p style="font-size: small;">NOTE TO BOY SCOUT, VARSITY SCOUT, OR EXPLORER: Retain this copy for your permanent records.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>COUNSELOR'S RECORD</b></p> <p>Applicant _____ 1 _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Troop <input type="checkbox"/> Team Unit number _____ 2 _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Post</p> <p>3 _____ Merit Badge</p> <p>Date Completed _____ / _____ / _____ 4 _____</p> <p>Remarks: _____</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">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 award.</p>
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{A}

{B}

{C}

Instructions for **Part B** sections A-B-C

All (1) should have your name printed in ink

(2) should have your type of unit and the unit number (e.g. Troop-Crew-Ship-Team-Post)

All (3) should have the name of the merit badge printed in ink

When you complete the merit badge the counselor will place the date of completion in (4).

The counselor will also fill in the information requested in (5) and sign the card.

When you return to your home unit give the merit badge application to your

Scoutmaster/Advisor and the appropriate leader will fill in the information in (6). The adult leader will then record this information on the unit's advancement form and submit it to the council office.

Sections: A- The Unit Leader will keep this section

B- You will keep this section along with the merit Badge

C- The counselor will keep this section for his records at the completion of the merit badge requirements

**NOTE:** Scoutmasters\Advisors\Committee will not accept any merit badge application that has an **OVERWRITE-WHITEOUT- ERASED SECTIONS** or has been **PHOTOCOPIED** where the **NAMES-DATES** and **SIGNATURES** are involved. If there is a question they can call the counselor for verification of the results.

## Other things you need to know about Merit Badges

### **Merit Badge Requirements**

You are expected to meet the requirements as they are stated—no more and no less. You are expected to do exactly what is stated in the requirements. If it says “show or demonstrate,” that is what you 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.”

### **Changes to the Requirements**

The requirements listed in the merit badge pamphlets, Boy Scout handbook or BSA online are the official requirements of the Boy Scouts of America. However, the requirements may not match those in the Boy Scout Handbook and the merit badge pamphlets. This is because Merit Badge publications are updated only on an annual basis.

If you have already started working on a merit badge when a new edition of the pamphlet (or new requirements) are introduced, you should continue to use the same merit badge pamphlet and fulfill the requirements therein to earn the badge. You need not start all over again with the new pamphlet and possibly revised requirements.

### **Do I need a merit badge pamphlet?**

It is not necessary but strongly recommended. You can probably “GOOGLE” your requirement questions and answers. Think about how much more time it will take to sort through all of those search results. It may be easier for you just to use the pamphlet where all the information you need is right there.

Most likely the counselor will be using the pamphlet to teach you. This way you can follow along. The information in the pamphlet will help you to know what you’re expected to do. The pamphlets are written for Scout-age boys. They also contain suggestions for projects that might give you ideas.

It’s a good idea to obtain the latest printing of the pamphlet on your subject. It will contain the latest requirements and information on meeting them. The printing dates are in each pamphlet. A complete list of merit badge pamphlets is printed on the inside back cover of all pamphlets with the latest revision date of each. By checking this list in any current year’s pamphlet, you can find out whether your pamphlet is updated. Most pamphlets are reprinted each year, and the contents are updated periodically.

### **How many Scouts can go for a badge at one time?**

Frequently the skills of a subject can be taught to several Scouts at one time, and are always taught to at least two individuals (remember the Scout buddy system). The completion of the requirements must always be done on an individual basis. You cannot qualify for a merit badge by just being a member of a group that is instructed in skills. You must qualify by personally satisfying the counselor that you can meet all the requirements.

You learn at your own pace and should not be held back or pushed ahead by members of the group.

### **Earning merit badges with more than one counselor**

From time to time circumstances cause a Scout to complete a merit badge with a merit badge counselor other than the one with whom he started. This situation is sometimes called '**having a partial.**' When a Scout presents a 'partial' to the merit badge counselor, **the work previously completed may or may not be accepted.** Most merit badge counselors will discuss with the Scout any work previously completed. This discussion will continue until the counselor is satisfied that the Scout did in fact complete the requirements indicated on the 'partial'.

### **How long is a partial valid?**

The answer is quite simple. It is valid as long as a Scout is not yet 18 years old and can satisfy the counselor that he is knowledgeable about the subject. After a Scout has completed all the requirements for a merit badge, the merit badge counselor signs the merit badge application card. The counselor's signature attests to your Scoutmaster/Advisor that the requirements have been completed.

### **How many badges can I do with a counselor?**

Each counselor has a limit of five merit badges they can do with a Scout. There are rare exceptions where a counselor may have six badges. This is due to the expertise needed to teach a certain badge.

### **What about badges at summer camp?**

If you're going to summer camp then earn the badges you can there. Make sure you check to see what prerequisites you'll need to bring. These are usually provided in the summer camp guide your Scout leaders receive from the camp.

One thing I want to point out is that some of the Eagle required badges are easier to earn at summer camp than back home. Why? Because the summer camp programs are designed to complete certain badges in a week as oppose to a month or longer. If you have an opportunity to work on an Eagle required badge and your Scoutmaster/Advisor approves then go for it.

### **How do badges work with rank advancements?**

Please keep in mind that you do not need to earn badges until you reach the rank of First Class Scout. You need a total six badges, four of them have to be Eagle required, as part of your requirement for Star Scout. Of course, it's a good idea to earn badges when you can but you're not required to work on them until you're a First Class Scout. You will need to earn five more badges (including any three Eagle badges) for the rank of Life Scout. Merit badges must be earned in the proper sequence as you advance in rank.

There is a six month wait from the time you make Life until you are able to have an Eagle Board.

### **How many badges do I need for the rank of Eagle Scout?**

You must have a total of 21 badges. They must include First Aid, Citizenship in the Community, Citizenship in the Nation, Citizenship in the World, Communications, Cooking, Personal Fitness, Environmental Science, Personal Management, Camping, and Family Life.

You must also choose between Swimming OR Hiking OR Cycling. Also choose between Emergency Preparedness OR Lifesaving.



The remaining eight badges can be any badges that you are interested in. You do not need to stop at 21 badges. You can earn as many as your Scoutmaster/Advisor recommends.

### **What are Eagle Palms?**

These awards are meant for those Scouts who have earned the rank of Eagle and are younger than 18 years of age. Scouts can earn bronze, silver or gold eagle palms depending on the number of additional merit badges they earn. Please note there are other requirements in addition to earning merit badges.

### **I have a problem with a Merit Badge Counselor?**

Merit Badge Counselors are given guidelines as to how to prepare and teach their merit badges. If you have a problem with a counselor please let your Scoutmaster or Advisor know. They should reach out to me immediately so that this issue can get resolved.

Some examples of problems could be a counselor never being available, trying to change/add/remove badge requirements, making you go over or redo requirements that you feel you have successfully completed. Please do not keep it to yourself and let your adult leaders know.

*Check out the newly released Merit Badges:*

**Animation**

**Signs, Signals, and Codes**