

# Introduction To Merit Badges

All scouts have the potential to earn the rank of Eagle. This will require dedication, regular attendance at meetings and outings, work for advancement in rank and 21 merit badges.

Because we are a large troop, we have many merit badge counselors. One advantage of this is that you can work with many different counselors while earning the 21 required badges. Since each counselor will have a different style and a different point of view meet/talk with the merit badge counselor so you get an complete understanding of how they want you to work with them. This is your responsibility not the Merit Badge Counselors.

## Procedure for earning a merit badge

1. Review the merit badges available. A good resource for a general list is your scout handbook. For a more detailed description of the requirements, you can purchase a book from the scout shop that lists all the requirements for every merit badge. The current merit badge pamphlet revision dates and requirements are also available online at [www.ussscouts.org/ussscouts/meritbadges.asp](http://www.ussscouts.org/ussscouts/meritbadges.asp).
2. Get a merit badge application form at the advancement table during the Monday night meeting. If you do not know where the advancement table is, ask your patrol leader. While at the table ask for a list of counselors for the merit badge you want to earn. The adult at the advancement table has the name, address and phone number of the counselors that are signed up for the badge. These counselors have special knowledge in their merit badge subjects and are interested in helping you.
3. Fill out the top part of the application and get it signed by the scoutmaster prior to starting on the merit badge.
4. Get a copy of the merit badge book. This book has information that will help you earn the badge. The troop library has many merit badge books that can be borrowed. If you borrow a book, make sure the requirements are up to date (see procedure 1 above). If the library does not have an up to date book, the merit badge book can be purchased at the scout shop. If you purchase a book, consider donating it to the troop library after you have earned the badge.
5. Call up the merit badge counselor and set up a time to meet before you start the work on the merit badge. You must use the scout buddy system described on the other side of this page.

The counselor will review the requirements with you. When you know what is expected, start to learn and do the things required. Ask your counselor to help you learn the things you need to know or do. The counselor can give you advice and perhaps provide some resources.

6. Complete the requirements and be sure to document your work. Use a three ring binder to keep your paperwork together. Some badges require projects. Take "before" and "after" pictures of your projects (a digital camera works great for this if you have one or can borrow one).
7. Set up a meeting to review your work with the merit badge counselor. Bring your merit badge application and all your paperwork to the meeting. (In some cases, you may need to meet at the site of your project).

If the requirements are complete, the counselor will sign your application. If the counselor feels some of the requirements need more work, ask for specific instructions on what needs to be completed. The counselor wants you to succeed, so ask for his or her advice. Go back and complete the work, and meet again for the final sign off on the merit badge.

8. Make a copy of the signed merit badge application and take the original back to the advancement table. When the advancement table has received the badge, the badge will be presented to you at the next Court of Honor.

## MERIT BADGE GUIDE

You can learn about sports, crafts, nature, science, trades, business, hobbies and future careers as you earn these merit badges. There are more than 100 merit badges.

You can start any of these badges as soon as you achieve the rank of Scout. Since merit badges are required for advancement to the higher ranks, it is highly recommended that you start to earn merit badges as soon as you can. If you do not yet have your Scout rank, read the requirements for Scout in your scout handbook. Learn the requirements and then ask your patrol leader to review the information with you. When you are ready, meet with a scoutmaster that is not your parent.

You can work on advancement and earn merit badges at summer camp. A wise scout will sign up for three merit badges at camp. The troop also works on a merit badges at meetings during the year. So by attending meetings, trips and summer camp, you can earn several badges a year.

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 parent or guardian, a brother or sister, a relative or a friend.

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."

Show your stuff. When you are ready, call the counselor again to make an appointment to meet the requirements. When you go, take along proof of the things you have done 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.

Get the badge. When the counselor is satisfied that you have met each requirement, he or she will sign your application. Give the signed application back to the adult in charge of the advancement table so that your merit badge emblem can be secured for you. Return any borrowed merit badge book to the troop library, or consider donating the one you purchased. When the next Court of Honor is held the badge will be presented to you.

There is no deadline for earning Merit Badges, except the scout's 18th Birthday. Once a scout has started working on a Merit Badge (i.e., obtained a signed Application for Merit Badge from the advancement table, had an initial discussion with a merit badge Counselor, and started working on the requirements), he may continue using those requirements until he completes the badge or turns 18.

If you discontinue work on the badge, you can pick it up later with the same or another counselor. Have the counselor sign off on the requirements you have completed on the merit badge application. YOU are responsible for keeping a record of the requirements that have been signed off by the counselor.

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 the scout's choice, and his alone.

If a Merit Badge is discontinued, scouts working on the badge when it is removed from the Boy Scout Requirements booklet may continue to work toward completing the badge, and get credit for earning the badge, until they turn 18. However, it may not be possible to obtain an actual merit badge patch, once the local council's supply is exhausted.