

Troop 223 Merit Badge Policy

Introduction:

There are more than 100 merit badges in the merit badge program. Each one has a corresponding merit badge pamphlet, and the series is written with the 12-year-old Scout in mind. In addition, the pamphlets are designed for a very broad audience of Scouts. The pamphlets are available from Scouting retailers, or may be ordered online at www.Scouting.org. To provide the Scouting experience to as many boys as possible, the diversity of the Scouts regarding economics, ethnicity, and social and religious background is considered. While the pamphlet is not required for the Scout to earn the merit badge, it helps the counselor to know what the Boy Scout may be studying and the level of learning expected of the Scout. Many of the merit badge pamphlets contain suggested projects and other activities or demonstrations to help the Scout fulfill the requirements or to stimulate other ideas from the Scout and his merit badge counselor. Each book also contains a helpful resources section.

Any Boy Scout may earn any merit badge at any time. You don't need to have had rank advancement to be eligible. The troop's goal is to provide, in a three year period, an opportunity for each Scout to earn the following merit badges:

- Swimming or Hiking or Cycling
- Emergency Preparedness or Life Saving
- Camping
- Citizenship in the Community
- Citizenship in the Nation
- Citizenship in the World
- Communications
- Environmental Science
- Family Life
- First Aid
- Personal Fitness
- Personal Management

Scout Responsibility:

Merit badges may be earned in two ways; first, through merit badge classes, and secondly, via the scout's own initiative.

The procedure for a scout to begin earning a merit badge in a class setting (i.e., Summer Camp, Camporees, Merit Badge University, Merit Badge Mania, ASM led) is for the scout to sign up for the class, attend all class sessions, and to be responsible for all requirements of the merit badge including any pre-requisites. In some instances the troop will be provided with a list of the scouts who have completed the merit badge or who have completed partial requirements for the merit badge. It is the responsibility of the scout to get a "blue card" for partials and to keep paperwork on the merit badge for future reference. If the merit badge class requires the scout to get a blue card it is the responsibility of

the scout to acquire the “blue card”. The scout can obtain a blue card from the Merit Badge Coordinator or an electronic copy can be downloaded from http://meritbadge.org/wiki/index.php/Merit_Badge_Application.

The “Scout’s Own Initiative” procedure for earning a merit badge is:

- **Picks Subject.** The scout picks a subject and reads the requirements of the merit badges they think might be of interest. The scout will then talk to their patrol ASM about the merit badge and get the ASM approval. Once the patrol ASM has given permission for the scout to begin a Merit Badge the scout gets a blue card from the Merit Badge Coordinator and is assigned a troop level Merit Badge Counselor. These counselors have special knowledge in their merit badge subjects and are interested in helping you.
- **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.
- **Call the Counselor.** Get a signed merit badge application from your Scoutmaster. 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. In some cases the counselor is not the instructor. In all cases where the scout should work on his own initiative, printing the Merit Badge Worksheet and filling it out as completed entirely. The counselor shall review the work sheet and have a friendly conversation about what the scout has learned or achieved in earning the particular merit badge. The scout should keep the merit badge worksheet for his own future reference.
- **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.
- **Show Your Stuff.** When you are ready, call the counselor again to make an appointment to meet the requirements. 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.
- **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 to the Merit Badge Assistant Scoutmaster so that your merit badge emblem can be secured for you. Maintain your portion of the application for your records until you received the actual badge and completion card. Keep the completion card forever.
- **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."

If a scout has already started working on a merit badge when a new edition of the merit badge pamphlet is introduced, he should continue to use the same merit badge pamphlet and fulfill the requirements therein to earn the badge. He need not start all over again with the new pamphlet and possibly revised requirements. 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 "Blue Card" Application for Merit

Badge from his ASM, 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.

There is no one year limit on so-called "partials".

Merit Badge Counselor:

As a merit badge counselor, your mission is to join fun with learning. You are both a teacher and mentor to the Scout as he works on a merit badge and learns by doing. By presenting opportunities for growth via engaging activities like designing a Web page (Computers), performing an ollie and a wheelie (Snowboarding), or fabricating rope (Pioneering), you can pique a young man's interest in the merit badge subject. Just think . . . your hands-on involvement could inspire a Scout to develop a lifelong hobby, pursue a particular career, or become an independent, self-supporting adult.

A Scout first expresses an interest in a particular merit badge by letting his unit leader know. To get him started, the leader may give him a signed Application for Merit Badge (blue card) along with the name and telephone number of a district/council approved merit badge counselor. The Scout then contacts the merit badge counselor and makes an appointment. The merit badge counselor sets a date and time to meet with the Scout and his buddy, and may suggest the Scout bring the merit badge pamphlet along with the blue card.

At the first meeting, the Scout and his merit badge counselor review and start working on the requirements. In some cases, the Scout may share with the merit badge counselor the work he has started or accomplished. As the merit badge counselor, you and the Scout work out a tentative schedule for completing the requirements. You should consider both short-term and long-term goals, keeping other obligations (school, Scouting, sports, and so on) in mind, and set dates, times, and a location for future meetings. The number of meetings will depend on the difficulty of the requirements and the preparation and ability of the Scout.

Your duty is to be satisfied that each Scout who comes to you meets all the requirements for the merit badge you are coaching. You do this by helping Scouts overcome the different hurdles of the requirements and making them aware of the deeper aspects of the subject through their learning experience. You may tell about your own experiences to help positively reinforce the subject matter. However, you may not tack on new requirements or extra work. While you may guide and instruct a Scout on the subject matter, he must do the work himself.

As each requirement is completed, you will test the Scout individually, with his buddy present. If you are using a blue card, update this card as the Scout completes each requirement. When the young man has completed all the requirements, you sign off on the blue card and the Scout returns the completed card to his unit leader.

Merit Badge Counselor Resources:

These resources may be helpful to individuals who are interested in serving as a merit badge counselor. These items are available through your local council service center or on the Web at www.scouting.org.

- **Adult Application (to Be a Scouting Volunteer), No. 28-501C.** To serve as a merit badge counselor, an individual must complete and return this adult registration form. The Adult Application is valid for one year only and must be renewed annually. To register as a merit badge counselor, mark the box labeled "Council/district position" in the upper right-hand block

with "merit badge counselor." Fill in the "Position Code" with code "42," and fill in the "Position (Description)" with "merit badge counselor." When this application is completed it shall be given to the Troop Merit Badge Coordinator for processing.

- **Merit Badge Counselor Information, No. 34405.** Local councils use the information from this form to identify merit badge counselors, the merit badges they are willing to coach, and other pertinent information. This form also includes the merit badge counselor's agreement to follow the merit badge requirements, and other BSA policies. This form, available online in PDF format, should be submitted to the BSA local council along with the Adult Application.
- **Merit Badge Counselor Orientation, No. 34542.** Merit badge counselors in training can use this two-page resource as a quick reference.
- **A Guide for Merit Badge Counseling, No. 34532C.** This tri-fold flier gives a well-rounded explanation about the merit badge program and spells out the counselor's responsibilities.
- **Supplemental Training: Merit Badge Counselor Instructors Guide.** This module, which may be reviewed online or used to conduct a training event, is designed to guide new and potential merit badge counselors through their responsibilities in the role and will give them an understanding of the methods of counseling Scouts. It is intended as a short orientation course for new merit badge counselors before they begin working with Scouts.
- **Boy Scout Requirements (current year), No. 33215.** This is the book for complete, official requirements for each merit badge, rank advancement, and special awards and recognitions. This booklet is revised every year and takes precedence over any other resource regarding rank and merit badge requirements.