

Merit Badge Counselor Orientation

Maui County Council
Boy Scouts of America

What is the Merit Badge Program?

- Merit badges are experience programs tied in with the rank advancement program
- There are over 130 subjects
- Divided into several groups:
 - Cultural/self improvement
 - Vocations/Careers
 - Craftwork
 - Hobbies

Merit Badge Counselors

- These volunteers are the key to the success in the merit badge program
 - You offer your time, experience, and knowledge to help guide Scouts in various subjects
- The counselor's responsibility is to:
 - Assist the Scout as he plans the assigned projects and activities to meet the merit badge requirements
 - Coach Scouts through interviews and demonstrations on how to do the required skills of the craft, business, or hobby
 - Certify the Scout after determining whether he is qualified for the merit badge

Merit Badge Counselors

- Most local councils list merit badge counselors by district, so that the Scouts can call for appointments
- The number of Scouts requesting help is usually no burden to the counselor – the popular badges have many counselors, often at the troop level
- Counselors schedule appointments at their convenience

What do you do?

- Your main task is to satisfy to yourself that each Scout that comes to you meets ALL the requirements for the merit badge
- You are the examiner, but your larger opportunity is to coach
 - Help the Scout meet the challenge of the requirements and make him aware of the deeper aspects of the subject through your knowledge and experience

What do you agree to do?

- Follow the requirements of the merit badge, making no deletions or additions, ensuring that the advancement standards are fair and uniform for all Scouts
- Have a buddy present with each Scout at all instructional sessions
 - Buddies can be friends, parents, other Scouts, siblings, etc.
- Renew your registration as a merit badge counselor annually if you plan to continue serving as a merit badge counselor

Earning a merit badge

- Requirements for each merit badge can be found in the current BSA merit badge pamphlet for that subject and in the current *Boy Scout Requirements*
- While many boys attempt to use the internet to fill out the worksheets, having the pamphlet is the easiest and quickest way for the boys to gain mastery of the subject
- The boys should have the most recent pamphlet
 - I've seen pamphlets from when I visit some Scout Troops in some of the local troop libraries!

Earning a Merit Badge

- A boy must follow these steps:
 - Obtain from his Scoutmaster a signed Merit Badge application (“blue card”)
 - Obtain the name of a qualified counselor for that merit badge
 - Usually from the Troop’s Advancement Chair
 - Set up and attend the first appointment with the merit badge counselor (with a buddy!)
 - The counselor should explain the requirements for the badge and help the Scout plan ways to fulfill them so the Scout gets the most out of the experience
 - Complete the requirements, meeting with the counselor whenever necessary until finished.

Pace

- The advancement program allows the Scout to move ahead in his own way and at his own speed
 - Rather than compete with others, he challenges himself to go as far as his ambitions will go
- The rate of advancement depends upon his interest, effort, and ability

How do you help?

- When the Scout contacts you, you may tell him what is expected
 - You can tell him what is expected or have him make an appointment
- The Scout should bring a merit badge application signed by his Scoutmaster on his first visit
 - He **MUST** be accompanied by a buddy
- In your discussions, you can find out what the Scout already knows and then spend time to learn the remainder of the requirements
- Continue with as many appointments and reviews as necessary
 - Talk, don't grill; express honest enthusiasm especially if projects are involved

Where do you meet?

- It depends.
 - If the merit badge is related to your occupation, perhaps your place of work would be the best place
 - Hobbies can be usually handled in your home
 - Other situations may require you to meet in the field
 - Astronomy, Rowing, Rifle Shooting are good examples

How many Scouts?

- It depends.
 - Often a subject can be taught to several Scouts at a time
 - But completing the requirements **MUST** be based on individual performance
 - A Scout should **NOT** qualify for a merit badge just by being a member of a group that is instructed in skills
 - Scout must qualify by personally satisfying that they can meet all the requirements
 - This may be hard in a group, especially if only one Scout answers all the questions!

Applying to be a Counselor

- Fill out the Adult Volunteer application
- Take Youth Protection training
 - Your certificate from YPT should be attached to your application
 - Fill out interests card and which merit badges you would like to work with the boys on; turn this in with your application
 - Once approved by Council, your name and contact information will go on a master list at the council level

Blue Cards: Practicalities

- Three-part records:
 - Council
 - The troop/the boy
 - You
- The boy fills out the card (make sure it's legible!)
 - Different troops have different traditions/procedures
 - Blue cards **SHOULD** be signed by an appropriate adult leader prior to the boy starting
 - **WHY?**

What the boy SHOULD do...

- Pick a subject
- Use the Scout Buddy System
- Call the Merit Badge Counselor
 - Contact information should be available from the Troop advancement person, who gets it from Council
 - This protects your personal information
- Unless otherwise specified, work for a requirement can be started at any time

Merit Badge Worksheets

- These are DISCOURAGED by BSA
 - But they are convenient ways of having a boy organize his information
- So what are the issues?
 - BSA does not want the worksheets to take the place of
 - Discuss
 - Demonstrate
 - Interview
 - Etc.



Thank You

- Any Questions or Comments