



**merit badge**

**COUNSELOR  
ORIENTATION**

**BOY SCOUT TROOP 555  
NORTH STAR DISTRICT  
LAS VEGAS AREA COUNCIL**



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®



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**BSA TROOP 555**  
 LAS VEGAS AREA COUNCIL  
 DUPLICATION PERMITTED WITH CREDIT  
 THIS GUIDE WAS COMPILED FROM A VARIETY OF RESOURCES,  
 INCLUDING OFFICIAL BSA PUBLICATIONS



## Introduction

### *The Aims of Scouting*

The Scouting program is an educational program aimed at teaching youth character development, citizenship, and mental and physical fitness. These aims of Scouting are accomplished by the use of eight fundamental methods:

- The ideals of Scouting (Scout Oath, Scout Law, Scout motto, Scout slogan);
- The patrol method;
- The outdoors;
- Advancement;
- Association with adults;
- Personal growth;
- Leadership development;
- The uniform.

### *What Is Advancement?*

Advancement is the process by which a Scout progresses from rank to rank in the Scouting program. It is simply a means to an end and not an end in itself. Everything done to advance and earn higher ranks is designed to help the Scout have an exciting and meaningful experience.

The advancement method is designed to encourage a young man to accomplish a progressive series of fun and educational tasks. Earning merit badges allows Scouts to explore many fields, helps them round out their skills, and perhaps introduces them to subjects that will become lifelong interests and rewarding careers.

### *What Is a Merit Badge?*

A special part of a Scout's learning adventure, merit badges are awards presented to a Scout when he completes the requirements for one of the merit badge subjects. There are more than 100 different merit badges a Scout may earn. The subject matter ranges from vocational and careers introduction, to personal development, hobbies, sports, high adventure, citizenship, and life-skills development.

Every merit badge is designed to teach the Scout new skills while outwardly encouraging him to challenge himself and have fun in the process. Merit badges offer a range of difficulty over a breadth of subject matters, and a Scout is free to pursue any merit badge he wishes. The merit badge itself is a simple embroidered patch, but the intangible end result of earning it is that the Scout gains self-confidence from overcoming obstacles to achieve a goal.

### *Why Does the BSA Use Merit Badge Counselors?*

One of the methods of Scouting is association with quality adults. Besides a Scout's parents and relatives, his schoolteachers, his religious leaders, and possibly his sports coaches, most Scout-age youth do not have much contact with many other adults or professionals. Merit badge counselors provide an excellent means for a Scout to grow through his exposure to outstanding adults who serve as examples and mentors to them. The opportunity to deal with business leaders, trained specialists, and experienced hobbyists while in the pursuit of a merit badge offers the Scout a chance for personal growth and possibly a life-altering experience.



### *What Is a Merit Badge Counselor?*

A merit badge counselor is both a teacher and a mentor to the Scout as he works on the merit badge. Merit badge counselors should be satisfied that each Scout under their guidance meets all the requirements set forth for the merit badge. In this sense, a merit badge counselor is an examiner. In a larger sense, the real opportunity for a counselor lies in coaching—helping Scouts over the different hurdles of the requirements and helping make them aware of the deeper aspects of the subject from their knowledge and experience.

The merit badge counselor may help a Scout by providing instruction and guidance on the subject matter. However, the counselor must not complete the Scout's work on the requirements.

The counselor needs to test the Scout to ensure that he has completed all the required work but may not modify the merit badge requirements in the process. This standard ensures that the advancement requirements are fair and uniform for all Scouts.

A merit badge counselor must always ensure that a Scout has a “buddy” present at all instruction sessions. Working on merit badges is especially enjoyable when Scouts work together, and the BSA encourages this by making the buddy system a part of the merit badge program. Together the two meet with merit badge counselors, plan projects, and keep their enthusiasm high. The Scout's buddy could be another Scout, a parent or guardian, brother or sister, relative, or friend. The Scout should bring a buddy to all his appointments with his counselor.

### *Merit Badge Counselor Requirements and Registration*

To qualify as a merit badge counselor, a volunteer must:

- Register annually with the Boy Scouts of America;
- Be at least 18 years old;
- Be of good character;
- Be proficient in the merit badge subject by vocation, avocation, or special training;
- Be able to work with Scout-age youth;
- Be approved by the district/council advancement committee.

To register with the Boy Scouts of America, a potential merit badge counselor must complete the BSA's Adult Application form and submit it along with the BSA Merit Badge Counselor Information form to committee. They will approve it and turn it in to the Las Vegas Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America. Annual renewal of this registration is necessary to continue as a merit badge counselor.

The Boy Scouts of America strongly recommends, and it is the policy of Troop 555, that all merit badge counselors take BSA Youth Protection training. This program addresses strategies for personal safety awareness for youth as well as adults.

BSA Youth Protection policies include:

- Two-deep leadership;
- No one-on-one contact;
- Respecting privacy;
- Reporting problems.



## The Merit Badge Process

The requirements for each merit badge appear in the current BSA merit badge pamphlet for that award and in the current year edition of the *Boy Scout Requirements* book, available at the LVAC trading post.

### *The Five-Step Process*

The five steps for undertaking a merit badge are:

1. Decide on a merit badge and get a buddy to take the class, and find a counselor;
2. Get a signed “blue card” from the Scoutmaster;
3. Contact and meet with the counselor;
4. Complete the merit badge requirements;
5. Turn in the signed “blue card” to the Scoutmaster.

When a Scout has decided on a merit badge he would like to earn, he obtains the name and phone number of the district/council–approved merit badge counselor. If it is not a group merit badge being offered (i.e. a troop-sponsored class), then he finds a buddy to take the class with him.

At this time, the Scoutmaster can issue the Scout a signed Application for Merit Badge (“blue card”). This process is in place so the Scoutmaster knows what the Scout is working on.

The Scout telephones the merit badge counselor to make an appointment, and together they schedule a date and time for the Scout and his buddy to meet. The counselor suggests that the Scout bring the merit badge pamphlet, the signed blue card, and any work that he has started or accomplished, and that he prepare by reading over the requirements.

At their first meeting, the merit badge counselor and the Scout decide upon a tentative schedule for completing the requirements. They should keep the Scout’s other obligations (Scouting, school, worship, etc.) in mind, and set the dates, times, and locations for future meetings. The counselor will explain the requirements for the badge and help the Scout plan ways to fulfill these requirements so that he can get the most out of the experience.

Merit badge counselors help Scouts meet the requirements for the merit badge. They may expand on the information in the merit badge pamphlet based on their knowledge, experience, and expertise in the subject. They are encouraged to tell about their own experiences that positively reinforce the subject matter, but new requirements or additional work may **not** be added. The Scout is expected to meet the requirements for the merit badge as stated—no more and no less.

The number of counseling sessions will depend on the difficulty of the merit badge requirements and the Scout’s preparation and ability. The Scout and counselor are expected to meet as many times as necessary for the Scout to complete the requirements for the merit badge. The advancement program allows the Scout to move ahead in his own way and at his own speed. Rather than competing against others, he challenges himself to go as far as his ambition will carry him. The rate of advancement depends upon his interest, effort, and ability.

As the Scout completes each requirement, he is always tested, and as each requirement is completed, the merit badge counselor marks it on the application. When all the requirements for the merit badge are fulfilled, the merit badge counselor certifies that the Scout has completed



the requirements, and the Scout may return his completed Application for Merit Badge (blue card) to his Scoutmaster.

### *Counseling Techniques*

The most productive environment for the Scout when he meets with his merit badge counselor will be one in which he feels welcome and relaxed. Start the conversation by finding out what the Scout already knows about the subject, then stimulate his interest by showing him something related to it. (Be careful not to overwhelm the Scout—remember, he’s probably a beginner.)

Establish an atmosphere that encourages the Scout to ask questions and to ask for help when he needs it. Spend some time helping the Scout learn the requirements, making sure he knows he should do exactly what the requirements call for, whether “show” or “demonstrate,” “make,” “list,” “discuss,” or “collect, identify, and label.” Take a genuine interest in his projects, and encourage him to complete them.

Remember that the requirements must be completed exactly as presented—do not expand any requirement. However, the Scout may undertake more activities on his own initiative. The merit badge counselor can encourage this without pushing him off course.

Encourage the Scout to practice for his review session and to reflect on his accomplishments. The review process might be approached by the Scout with some apprehension. He is familiar with final exams in school and may see this meeting with the counselor as another such experience. The counselor can help by talking to him rather than grilling or examining him—there’s a big difference, yet it still will be evident what he knows. Expressing honest enthusiasm for the things he has done will give the Scout confidence.

During testing, the merit badge counselor may find that the Scout needs help learning a particular area. The counselor teaches the needed skill, and then retests to ensure the area has been learned.



## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Must individuals who are serving as a merit badge counselor register as a merit badge counselor with the Boy Scouts of America?**

A: Yes, an Adult Application must be completed for each position in which the individual wants to serve. The application allows only one position per form. For instance, an individual who wants to serve only as a merit badge counselor will need to complete only one application. However, a Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster who wants to serve as a merit badge counselor must complete two applications—one for the Scoutmaster position and one for the counselor position.

**Q: Once the adult leader application has been submitted, how long does the approval process take?**

A: The process usually takes from four to six weeks.

**Q: What is the minimum age requirement for merit badge counselors?**

A: An individual must be at least 18 years of age to serve as a merit badge counselor.

**Q: Once a volunteer is registered and approved as a merit badge counselor, is that registration for life?**

A: Approvals for merit badge counselors and all other adult volunteer positions are valid for one year only and must be renewed annually.

**Q: Can a merit badge counselor who works only with a single unit obtain only unit committee approval?**

A: With no exceptions, all merit badge counselors must be approved by the local council's advancement committee.

**Q: How many merit badges can a merit badge counselor support?**

A: The Las Vegas Area Council allows for Merit badge counselors to be approved for up to six badges for which they are qualified.

**Q: Can merit badge counselors coach their own sons or close relatives (for instance, a nephew)?**

A: Yes, approved counselors may coach any Boy Scout who contacts them through the proper procedures.

**Q: Is mean group instruction is allowed?**

A: A merit badge counselor may make a presentation to a group of Scouts on a merit badge subject. However, unless the merit badge requirements specifically allow for a group project, each Scout still must complete the requirements individually, and the Scout must meet with a merit badge counselor (and his buddy) to complete the requirements.



*Q: How many merit badges can a Scout earn by working with any single merit badge counselor?*

A: A Scout may earn as many merit badges from a counselor as the counselor is qualified and approved to counsel. Again, though, the spirit of the program is to expose the Scout to a wide circle of adults to help broaden his perspective.

*Q: How much time does a Scout have to complete all the requirements for a merit badge?*

A: There is no time limit as long as the Scout completes all the necessary requirements by the time he reaches age 18.

*Q: What happens when the weather, locale, or some other circumstance makes meeting all of the conditions of the merit badge requirements impractical? Can substitute requirements be created for those stated?*

A: No additions, deletions, or alterations are permitted. The requirements are to be completed exactly as written.

*Q: If the requirements for a merit badge on the required list for the Eagle Scout rank vary among the Boy Scout Handbook, the merit badge pamphlet, and the Boy Scout Requirements book (current edition), which resource takes precedence?*

A: The current edition of the Boy Scout Requirements book lists the official set of requirements for rank advancement and for each individual merit badge.

*Q: What is the buddy system, and why is it necessary?*

A: The buddy system is a safety routine that calls for a Scout to be paired with a buddy whenever he participates in Scouting activities such as aquatics, cycling, or hiking, and when he meets with his merit badge counselor. It is a way for Scouts to look after one another, stay safe, and have more fun. During meetings with adult leaders, a Scout's buddy can be another Scout or friend, or a relative.



### Merit Badge Program Quiz

Test your knowledge of the BSA merit badge counselor program.

TRUE or FALSE?

1. A merit badge counselor may be a counselor for only up to six merit badges.
2. A merit badge counselor may not coach his own son or close relative (i.e., nephew) unless he is part of a group of Scouts all working on the same merit badge.
3. 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.
4. Persons serving as merit badge counselors must be registered as a merit badge counselor with the Boy Scouts of America.
5. A Scout may earn no more than five merit badges from the same merit badge counselor.
6. Once a Scouter is approved as a merit badge counselor, he is approved for life and never has to be re-approved.
7. A Scout must complete all the requirements for a merit badge within 12 months or he must start over.
8. A merit badge counselor may require the Scout to work beyond the specific requirements of the merit badge so he may discover more about the subject and continue the learning process.
9. 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.
10. If the weather, locale, or some other condition makes meeting all of the conditions of the merit badge requirements impractical, the merit badge counselor may substitute requirements for those stated for the merit badge.
11. Merit badge counselors must be at least 21 years old.
12. If the requirements for a merit badge differ between the merit badge pamphlet and the current edition of Boy Scout Requirements, the requirements in the Boy Scout Requirements book supersede all others.



### Merit Badge Program Quiz Answers

1. True. Although BSA has no such limitation, many local service councils do, including the Las Vegas Area Council.
2. False. A duly approved counselor may counsel any Scout who contacts him or her through proper procedures. However, it is suggested that wherever possible, Scouts should experience a variety of adult contacts and therefore, should use a diverse group of counselors.
3. False. All counselors must be approved by the district/council advancement committee.
4. True. Even volunteers who serve in multiple positions must fill out another form and show registration as a merit badge counselor.
5. False. A Scout may earn as many badges from a counselor as the counselor is qualified and approved to coach. However, since it is in the Scout's best interest that he experiences a diversity of adult contacts, it is not in the spirit of the program to do so unless conditions warrant.
6. False. Counselor approvals are for one year only.
7. False. There is no time limit except that all requirements work must be completed before the Scout's 18th birthday.
8. False. No additions or deletions are permitted. The requirements are to be completed exactly as written. However, a counselor may share additional information or resources in the hope of encouraging the Scout to challenge himself.
9. False. 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.
10. False. No additions or deletions are permitted. The requirements are to be completed exactly as written.
11. False. Merit badge counselors must be at least 18 years of age.
12. True. The Boy Scout Requirements book is revised annually and reflects any changes that have been made, whereas the merit badge pamphlets are not revised annually and may be outdated.

**BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA**  
**MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR INFORMATION**  
 LAS VEGAS AREA COUNCIL

(PLEASE PRINT) DISTRICT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ UNIT NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

(Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date (mm-dd-yyyy) \_\_\_\_\_.

**To qualify as a merit badge counselor, you must:**

- \* Be at least 18 years old.
- \* Be proficient in the merit badge subject.
- \* Be able to work with Scout-age boys.
- \* Be registered with the Boy Scouts of America.
- \* **According to the Las Vegas Area Council policy**

**Limit your selection to six (6) badges**

**As a merit badge counselor, I agree to:**

- \* 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 Scout and his buddy present at all instructional sessions.**
- \* **I will renew my registration annually** if I plan to continue return as a merit badge counselor.

**THE BSA ADULT REGISTRATION APPLICATION MUST BE ATTACHED.**

Merit Badges	Merit Badge Subject Proficiency	
Current Merit Badge list located on the back of this form.	This subject is part of my job business, or profession .I will use the merit badge pamphlet.	This subject is part of a skill in which I have better than working knowledge. I will use the merit badge pamphlet.
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

**For the protection of the boys, and myself, I agree to the following BSA policies (information required):**

- |  |                   |                  |
|--|-------------------|------------------|
|  | <b><u>YES</u></b> | <b><u>NO</u></b> |
| * I have completed the Boy Scouts of America adult registration form.  | _____             | _____            |
| * I will use the current merit badge pamphlet for each badge listed above.   | _____             | _____            |
| * I have registered as a qualified Merit Badge counselor in previous years.  | _____             | _____            |
| *I am Youth Protection Certified. (Renew every 2 years)  | _____             | _____            |
| *I am a NRA Range Safety officer or BSA Certified firearms instructor. <b>Attach Certificate.</b>  | _____             | _____            |
| *I am BSA Safe Swim Defense Certified (Renew every 2 years)  | _____             | _____            |
| *I am BSA Safety Afloat Certified (Renew every 2 years)  | _____             | _____            |
| *I have completed "Climb on Safely, plus I am a C.O.P.E instructor, or have a BSA National Camp School Certification in C.O.P.E <b>Attach Certificate</b>  | _____             | _____            |
| *I am certified as an Advanced Canoeing Instructor by the Red Cross, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater Affiliation, or the United States Canoe Association <b>Attach Certificate</b> | _____             | _____            |

My current district/unit scouting position is: \_\_\_\_\_.

Teach in my Unit Only: \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

**Required signatures:**

Merit Badge Counselor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Unit Committee \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE: Please place a copy of this Merit Badge information in your files.**

**PLEASE return Original to the Donald W. Reynolds Scouting Resource Center  
 7220 S. Paradise Rd., Las Vegas, NV 89119 with ALL appropriate signatures.**

## MERIT BADGE SUBJECTS

American Business	Entrepreneurship	Photography
American Cultures	<b>Environmental Science</b>	Pioneering
American Heritage	<b>Family Life</b>	Plant Science
American Labor	Farm Mechanics	Plumbing
Animal Science	Fingerprinting	Pottery
Archaeology	Fire Safety	Public Health
Archery	<b>First Aid</b>	Public Speaking
Architecture	Fish and Wildlife Management	Pulp and Paper
Art	Fishing	Radio
Astronomy	Fly Fishing	Railroading
Athletics	Forestry	Reading
Auto Mechanics	Gardening	Reptile and Amphibian Study
Aviation	Genealogy	Rifle Shooting
Backpacking	Geocaching	Robotics
Basketry	Geology	Rowing
Bird Study	Golf	Safety
Bugling	Graphic Arts	Salesmanship
<b>Camping</b>	<b>Hiking</b>	Scholarship
Canoeing	Home Repairs	Scouting Heritage
Chemistry	Horsemanship	Scuba
Cinematography	Indian Lore	Sculpture
<b>Citizenship in the Comm</b>	Insect Study	Shotgun Shooting
<b>Citizenship in the Nation</b>	Inventing	Skating
<b>Citizenship in the World</b>	Journalism	Small Boat Sailing
Climbing	Landscape Architecture	Snow Sports
Coin Collection	Law	Soil and Water Conservation
Collections	Leatherwork	Space Exploration
<b>Communications</b>	<b>Lifesaving</b>	Sports
Composite Materials	Mammal Study	Stamp Collecting
Computers	Medicine	Surveying
Cooking	Metalwork	<b>Swimming</b>
Crime Prevention	Model Design and Building	Textile
<b>Cycling</b>	Motor Boating	Theater
Dentistry	Music	Traffic Safety
Disabilities Awareness	Nature	Truck Transportation
Dog Care	Nuclear Science	Veterinary Medicine
Drafting	Oceanography	Water Skiing
Electricity	Orienteering	Weather
Electronics	Painting	Whitewater
<b>Emergency Preparedness</b>	<b>Personal Fitness</b>	Wilderness Survival
Energy	<b>Personal Management</b>	Wood Carving
Engineering	Pets	Woodwork

\* Water Activities must meet the requirements of BSA Safe Swim Defense (see BSA Guide to Safe Scouting)

\* **Rifle** and **Shotgun** Counselors must be BSA Instructor or NRA Certified Range Safety Officer and meet the standards of current Scouting Literature and bulletins.

\* Counselors for **Climbing/Rapelling must** have "Climb on Safely" training, **plus** be a C.O.P.E. instructor, or have BSA National Camp School certification in C.O.P.E.

\* Counselors for the **Whitewater** merit badge **must** be certified as an Advanced Canoeing Instructor by the Red Cross, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater Affiliation, or United States Canoe Association.