

MERIT BADGE FAQs

The following are common questions that Merit Badge Counselors, Scoutmasters and other adult leaders, and Scouts have about the Merit Badge process. Except as noted, the answers state BSA policy that must be followed, and apply to everyone involved in the merit badge process. This information can be found in section 7 of the Guide to Advancement at <http://www.scouting.org/Home/GuideToAdvancement/TheMeritBadgeProgram.aspx>.

What rank does a scout have to be to earn merit badges?

A Scout can earn merit badges at any time after becoming a Bot Scout.

How long does a Scout have to complete a merit badge once it's started?

Do blue cards expire?

There is no time limit between starting and completing a badge. Blue cards do not expire. A Scout has until the day before his 18th birthday to complete the merit badge. However, occasionally a merit badge is discontinued. If a Scout is not actively working on that badge, he may not be permitted to complete it.

If a Merit Badge Counselor is only counseling Scouts from his or her Troop, does he or she have to be registered?

If a Merit Badge Counselor is only counseling Scouts at a specific event or at camp, does he or she have to be registered?

The answer to both questions is that all Merit Badge Counselors must submit an application to Counsel and be registered as a Merit Badge Counselor even if counseling is only done in the Troop or at an event. In addition, the Merit Badge Counselor must be approved by Counsel for the badges he or she is counseling.

Can the Scoutmaster sign off on final requirements of a merit badge that was started at camp (partials)?

The Scoutmaster can sign off on the final requirements only if he or she is a registered Merit Badge Counselor and approved by Counsel for that specific badge.

Can a parent be a Merit Badge Counselor for his or her own son?

Yes, a parent can be a Merit Badge Counselor for his or her own son for any badge including Eagle required badges. There are no special rules for a parent as a Merit Badge Counselor.

Do merit badge requirements ever change?

Where can a Merit badge Counselor or Scout find recent changes to the requirements for a merit badge?

Yes, merit badge requirements change from time to time. There are changes to badges every year. The changes that have occurred each year can be found online at <http://www.ussscouts.org/ussscouts/advance/changes/advchanges.asp>.

Where can a Merit badge Counselor or Scout find the most current requirements for a merit badge?

The most current requirements for a merit badge can be found in the current year's version of the "Boy Scout Requirements" book or online at <http://www.scouting.org/meritbadges.aspx>.

When requirements for a badge do change, what requirements must a Scout satisfy?

A Scout must begin working on the merit badge requirements in effect when he starts the badge. If requirements change while he is working on the badge, the Scout, at his option, can continue the old requirements or use the new ones.

May a Merit Badge Counselor choose to require a previous version of the requirements?

No.

Can a Scout earn a merit badge after the BSA has eliminated the badge?

Only if he started working on the badge before it was eliminated.

When should merit badges be awarded to the Scout?

Instant recognition is encouraged. Most units present the actual badge at the next meeting.

How many merit badges may a Merit Badge Counselor be approved to counsel?

The BSA allows each Council to set a limit. The Garden State Council's limit is 8 badges.

Is there a limit to the number of merit badges that a Scout may earn from one counselor?

There is no limit on the number of merit badges a youth may earn from one counselor. However, in situations where a Scout is earning a large number of badges from just one counselor, the unit leader is permitted to place a limit on the number of merit badges that may be earned from one counselor, as long as the same limit applies to all Scouts in the unit.

Can a Scoutmaster withhold his signature on a Scout's merit badge application if he feels the Scout is not ready?

Or if he wants to limit what badges the Scout earns at camp or any other event?

Or if he feels that the Scout must earn a different badge first?

Can a Scoutmaster require that a Scout complete a specific merit badge?

No. It is the Scout, and the Scout alone, who decides what merit badge he wishes to earn. Neither the Scoutmaster nor anyone else can withhold approval of a Scout's desire for a particular merit badge. There are no prerequisites except what is specifically stated in the requirements of a merit badge.

How many merit badges can a Scout work on at any one time?

The Scout can work on as many merit badges as he wishes.

Can a Scoutmaster or Committee Member retest the Scout or review what the Scout did to satisfy the requirements of a merit badge before awarding the badge to the Scout?

No. Once the Merit Badge Counselor signs off on a blue card indicating that the Scout has completed all requirements of a merit badge, the Scout has earned the merit badge.

May the Scoutmaster direct that the Scout work with a particular Merit Badge Counselor?

No. Although it is the unit leader's responsibility to see that at least one merit badge counselor is identified from those approved and made available, the Scout must be allowed to work with the counselor of his choice.

Can a Scout change Merit Badge Counselors while completing the requirements for the badge?

Yes. If a Scout wants to change counselors, he should speak with the unit leader to verify that the new counselor is properly registered and approved. The Merit badge Counselor may not withhold the blue card from the Scout. The Merit Badge Counselor does not have to be registered in the Scout's Troop or home council.

Can a Merit Badge Counselor change the requirements of a merit badge if the counselor decides that an enhancement to the basic skill is more practical or a better learning experience?

Or to fit the summer camp's capabilities?

No. Merit badge requirements may not be changed for any reason. Requirements cannot be made easier, nor may they be made more challenging. The requirements exactly as written represent the standard for completing the merit badge. To meet the requirements, the Scout is expected to do exactly what is stated. If it says, "Show or demonstrate," that is what he must do; just "telling" isn't enough. The same holds for words and phrases such as "make," "list," "in the field," "collect," "identify," and "label." However, a Merit Badge Counselor may teach skills beyond the requirements so long as these are not included as additional requirements.

Can a Merit Badge Counselor require the Scout to complete a worksheet in order to complete the merit badge?

No. Requiring a worksheet would be an additional requirement. The Merit Badge Counselor does not have the authority to add to, or subtract from, merit badge requirements.

Can a Merit badge Counselor change the requirements of a merit badge if the Scout has a physical handicap that prevents him from completing the requirements as stated?

No. The Scout must complete all of the requirements exactly as written in order to earn the merit badge. Requirements may not be modified or substituted.

Can merit badge tasks completed before the Scoutmaster has signed the blue card be used to satisfy merit badge requirements?

Yes. Unless otherwise specified, work on a requirement can be started at any time but must be met while a registered Boy Scout (or a qualified Venturer or Sea Scout). Accomplishments before joining, or while a Cub Scout, do not apply.

What can a Scout do if a Merit Badge Counselor is not following BSA and Counsel policies or fails to be available to the Scout?

The Scout can change Merit badge Counselors.

Where can additional information about the merit badge program be found?

The merit badge program is governed by section 7 of the BSA Guide to Advancement which is available online at <http://www.scouting.org/Home/GuideToAdvancement/TheMeritBadgeProgram.aspx>.

What can I do if a Merit Badge Counselor is not following BSA procedures?

You should report your concerns to Council using form submit a form 512-800.

During the Merit Badge Process, who should hold the blue card?

There is no specific BSA policy on this, but it is preferable that the Scout maintain his own blue card for a couple of reasons: the Scout should be responsible for his own advancement, if something changes (the Scout moves, the Merit Badge Counselor moves or is no longer available, there is a need to change Merit Badge Counselors for some other reason) the Scout will have his blue card and will not have to track it down or start the badge over again.

During the merit badge process, is it okay to put the blue card aside and sign off on everything once the last requirement is completed?

There is no specific BSA policy on this, but it is better to sign off on requirements as they are completed for a couple of reasons: the Scout can track his progress on his blue card, if something changes (the Scout moves, the Merit Badge Counselor moves or is no longer available) the Scout can bring his partial blue card to the new Merit Badge Counselor and continue instead of having to track down his card or start the badge over again.