

# Merit Badges

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You can learn about sports, crafts, science, trades, business, and future careers as you earn merit badges. There are more than 130 merit badges. Any Boy Scout may earn a merit badge at any time. You don't need to have had rank advancement to be eligible.

## Benefits of Merit Badges

There is more to merit badges than simply providing opportunities to learn skills. There is more to them than an introduction to lifetime hobbies, or the inspiration to pursue a career—though these invaluable results occur regularly. The uncomplicated process—beginning in a discussion with a Scoutmaster, continuing through meetings with a counselor, and culminating in advancement and recognition—provides several learning experiences. It gives a Scout the confidence achieved through overcoming obstacles. Social skills improve. Self-reliance develops. Examples are set and followed. And fields of study and interest are explored beyond the limits of the school classroom.

**Pick a Subject and Discuss.** Choose from over 130 merit badges. The current listing is available on the Troop's website under "merit badges". Talk to the Troop's merit badge advisor (Assistant Scoutmaster – Mr. Welborn) about your interest in earning a merit badge. Read the requirements of the merit badges you think might interest you. Badge descriptions are available on the meritbadge.com website. Choose one to earn. Mr. Welborn will give you a signed merit badge application (the "blue card") and the name and contact information of a merit badge counselor. These individuals have special knowledge in their merit badge subjects and are interested in helping you.

**Requirements.** You are expected to meet the requirements as they are stated—no more and no less. You must 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."

**Changes from Old to New Requirements.** The requirements when you start a merit badge class are the official requirements of the Boy Scouts of America at that time.

If you have already started working on a merit badge when a new edition of the pamphlet is introduced, *you may continue to use the same merit badge pamphlet and fulfill the requirements therein to earn the badge.* You do not need to start all over again with the new pamphlet and revised requirements.

A Scout has until the following January 1 to decide what to do. You may continue—or begin work—using the old merit badge requirements and the old pamphlet; or you may switch to—or begin work—using the new requirements and the new pamphlet. Unless it is otherwise stated in the merit badge pamphlet, Boy Scout Requirements, or official communications from the National Council, if a Scout chooses to use the old merit badge requirements and pamphlet, he may continue using them until he has completed the badge.

**Application for Merit Badge ("Blue Card").** It is important to note the "blue card" is the nationally recognized merit badge record. It is needed for proper posting and for evidence and reference as needed later. The card has three parts: the actual "Application for Merit Badge" portion, the "Applicant's Record," and the "Counselor's Record." It requires a total of four signatures—two each from the merit badge advisor – Mr. Welborn and a merit badge counselor. Mr. Welborn will sign first on the front and back of the Application for Merit Badge portion and give the entire blue card to you. After the blue card is signed, you will need to contact the merit badge counselor for the badge or attend a merit badge class.

**Use the Scout Buddy System.** When working a badge, outside of a merit badge class, have a buddy. *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. Your parent can be your merit badge counselor; however, you must have a buddy attend all the meetings with your parent or attend a class of Scouts taught by your parent.

**Working a Merit Badge (on your own or in a merit badge class - there are several opportunities for classes).**

**Work for requirements can be started at any time – on your own.** You are advised to have a brief discussion with the Troop's merit badge advisor - Mr. Welborn before beginning to work a badge with a merit badge counselor. Mr.

Welborn will review the badge you are interested in working, whether on your own or through a merit badge class, and approve it.

**See Troop 599 Merit Badge Advisor and find Merit Badge information on the Troop website.** Mr. Welborn will share with you how to work, on your own or in a class, aspects of the badge i.e.; the counselor and/or class you would like, and help you to prepare for them. He will cover the badge and work involved. Then further how to get a badge using:

- 1) Those counselors teaching various badges who are members of the Troop.
- 2) Those merit badge counselors teaching a badge outside the Troop.

See the Merit Badge tab/link on the Troop's website (website under the Merit Badge tab/link) to find a listing of the merit badges available through counselors in the Troop. A separate listing of merit badges that are available through counselors outside the Troop is available on this same website. The contact information for either of these counselors is available from Mr. Welborn.

Then contact the merit badge counselor and explain that you are interested in the badge or the class he/she teaches. Ask the merit badge counselor to help you learn the things you need to know or do. You should also discuss work that you have already started or possibly completed. As a rule you do not have to attend a merit badge class to earn a merit badge.

You should obtain and read the merit badge pamphlet on the subject. The troop has copies of some merit badge pamphlets that can be checked out for your use. These are in the Troop's library of merit badges. Check with the Troop Librarian to see if a pamphlet is available for your class.

**Show Your Stuff.** Once you have done work to satisfy a badge it will need a merit badge counselor's signature. When you are ready, call the counselor again to make an appointment. 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 test you on each requirement to make sure 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/she will sign your application (the "blue card"). Give the two blue card sections, the "Applicant's Record" and the "Counselor's Record", after being signed by your counselor to the Troop advancement advisor - Mr. Klein. If he is unavailable give it to the Troop advancement chair - Mr. Vickery or to Mr. Welborn. Mr. Vickery will be the adult member who will secure a merit badge emblem to be given to you at the next Court of Honor.

**Partial Completions.** A Scout need not pass all the requirements of one merit badge with the same counselor. It may be that due to timing or location issues, etc., he must meet with a different counselor to finish the badge. The blue card has a place to record what has been finished—a "partial." In the center section on the reverse of the blue card, the counselor initials for each requirement passed. In the case of a partial completion, the counselor does not retain his or her portion of the card. A subsequent counselor may choose not to accept partial work, but this should be rare. An example for the use of a signed partial would be to take it to camp as proof of prerequisites. Partial completions have no expiration except the Scout's 18th birthday.

**Documenting your Merit Badge work.** Your Individual History Report (IHR) is the record of all your merit badge work. You must document all your badge work to have it be credited to your IHR. For your completed and partial merit badges you have received a Blue Card. Your documentation for all your badge work, will utilize the Blue Cards you submit (as described above), to get credit. Hold onto the one blue card section, the "Applicant's Record", and you can confirm your IHR is accurate for all your badge work. For partials have your counselor write the completed requirements on your "Applicant's Record" and initial this work for good recordkeeping.

**Not having or losing your Blue Card.** It may be that due to lapses of all kinds you need credit but, lack a blue card or have lost it and you are unable to submit a signed blue card for credit. For example; your counselor or you might move after the badge work is performed, without you getting a blue card. In these cases contact your merit badge counselor to have him/her verify to the Troop advancement chair your completion of the badge requirements, whether partial or complete.

**Merit Badge Classes and Class Counselors.**



**Get the Badge through Troop merit badge classes and during outings.** Eagle required classes are taught, following a schedule for them, by counselors within Troop 599 on selected Tuesdays each year. A merit badge class schedule for these classes is posted in the Scout Hut and on the Troop web site.

In addition, the Troop is able to offer merit badges to be worked during outings. For example Rifle Shooting, Shotgun Shooting, and Archery merit badges are offered during the King Ranch outing.

**Get the Badge during Summer Camp classes.** Other classes are offered during summer camp. Summer camp is an organized Boy Scout activity offering merit badge classes of all kinds in an ideal environmental setting. To earn his badges a Scout will select and register classes before going to camp. If you already have a Blue Card opened for the class you have registered for, bring it with you to summer camp. Take note of any prerequisites you need for any class. You should have any class prerequisites done and be able to show proof of them before going to summer camp. You will earn your badge requirements by attending classes and working the requirements during each class.

As always a Scout should discuss with each class counselor his progress and assure he completes the badge requirements before leaving camp. Any partial can be completed with other Troop counselors or those counselors who teach the subject outside the Troop. See Mr. Welborn for who they are and their contact information.

**Get the Badge at Merit Badge Fair classes.** The Mustang District hosts an annual Merit Badge Fair that brings together the Scouts and merit badge counselors from across all the Boy Scout troops in the district. The Mustang District's Merit Badge Fair offers classes for all kinds of merit badges during this gathering of Scouts which is held on a given Saturday during the school year.

This year the Merit Badge Fair will be Dec 14<sup>th</sup> at Saint Mark Lutheran Church. There are two classes offered, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Lunch is included in the price with early registration less than the day of the fair.

To earn the badges the structure is the same as attending Summer Camp classes. To earn his badges a Scout will select and register classes before going to the fair. Each Scout will earn his badge requirements by attending classes and working the badge during each class. Upon class completion a blue card will be issued to you at the fair. If you already have a Blue Card opened for the class you have registered for, bring it with you to the Merit Badge Fair.

**Get the Badge available through the Moody Gardens in Galveston classes.** The Moody Gardens promotes a Merit Badge Day on one Saturday each month from December through April. You can participate in these merit badge classes offered on location in Galveston. Advance registration and a minimum number of Scouts are required. Some are Eagle required while others are Nature based. Be sure to get approval from Mr. Welborn before registering. For more information, including costs and registration, visit the website at [www.moodygardens.com/education/scout\\_programs/boy\\_scouts/](http://www.moodygardens.com/education/scout_programs/boy_scouts/).

**Get the Badge through the Houston Museum of Natural Science classes.** During spring break and summer classes are offered at two museum locations; downtown and Sugarland. Class times vary; there are short spring break class schedules and weeklong classes held during the summer. Some are Eagle required while others are science based, like the Astronomy class held in Hermann Park. Upon class completion a blue card will be issued to you at the museum. Be sure to get approval from Mr. Welborn before registering. For more information, including costs and registration, visit the HMNS website at [www.hmns.org](http://www.hmns.org) and click on the "Scout" link at the bottom of their front page.

**Earning Eagle-Required Merit Badges for Star or Life Rank.** Candidates for Star or Life, in the selection of "any four" or "any three," respectively, of the merit badges required for Eagle, may choose from all those listed, including where alternatives are available: Emergency Preparedness OR Lifesaving; Cycling OR Hiking OR Swimming; and, beginning July 2013, Environmental Science OR Sustainability. For example, if a Scout earns Cycling, Hiking, and Swimming, all three of them count as Eagle required for Life rank. Only one, however, would serve toward the required merit badges for the Eagle Scout rank. The other two would count toward the optional merit badges required to make up the total of 21 merit badges.

Note that Star and Life requirements each allow two non-Eagle-required merit badges. It is the Scout's decision, however, to earn more—or all—of his Star and Life badges from the Eagle-required list. Beginning July 2013, Sustainability may be used for a Star or Life Eagle-required merit badge as well, even if Environmental Science has also been earned, but only one of the two would count toward an Eagle rank.