

MERIT BADGES

The MERIT BADGE program is one of Boy Scouting's basic measurement tools. Earning merit badges gives a boy the kind of self-confidence that comes from overcoming obstacles to achieve a goal. Through the merit badge program, a boy also learns career skills, develops socially and may develop physical skills and hobbies that give a lifetime of healthful recreation.

The steps to follow in the merit badge program are outlined in the current **Boy Scout Requirements** book. The book lists the requirements a Scout must meet to earn each of the more than 100 merit badges that are available. Scouts must be tested individually, and they must meet all the requirements.

Scout Buddy System: A Scout must have a buddy with him at each meeting with a merit badge counselor. A Scout's buddy can be another Scout, a parent or guardian, a brother or sister, or a relative or friend. From his Scoutmaster, the Scout obtains a signed merit badge application and the name of the appropriate merit badge counselor. The Scout sets up his first appointment with the counselor. The counselor should explain the requirements to the Scout. The Scout and his buddy then meet as appropriate with the counselor until the Scout completes the badge's requirements.

Group Instruction of Merit Badges: The question arises as to whether it is permissible to have boys earn merit badges in groups. Many subjects may be presented to groups of Scouts without defeating one of the purposes of the merit badge plan – working closely with a qualified adult.

The National Executive Board has approved this policy statement on merit badge counseling:

"To the fullest extent possible, the merit badge counseling relationship is a counselor/Scout arrangement in which the boy is not only judged on his performance of the requirements, but receives maximum benefit from the knowledge, skill, character, and personal interest of his counselor. Group instruction and orientation are encouraged where special facilities and expert personnel make this most practical, or when Scouts are dependent on only a few counselors for assistance. However, this group experience should be followed by attention to each individual candidate's projects and his ability to fulfill all requirements."

In harmony with this policy, a troop or team may use merit badge counselors in unit meetings. The merit badge counselor can make a presentation covering the highlights of a merit badge subject. Scouts should then be given an opportunity to try some skill related to the badge. This introduction to a merit badge can spark an interest in the subject.

Scout Merit Badges: All requests for merit badges should be submitted on a standard Advancement Report signed by the Troop Advancement Chairman or other designated committee member. Each request **must** also be accompanied by a completed Merit Badge Application signed by an approved Merit Badge Counselor. A progress review is not required for merit badges.

Merit Badge Counselors: All Merit Badge Counselors must submit a Merit Badge Counselor registration form, available from the Scout Service Center, and be currently registered with the Boy Scouts of America.

The District Advancement Committee shall issue and periodically update the official District Merit Badge Counselor Listing.