



FACT SHEET

Merit Badge Program

- Background and Purposes** As chartered by the Congress of the United States, the Boy Scouts of America is a movement dedicated to supplementing and enlarging the education of youth. The merit badge program, which provides opportunities for youth to explore more than 120 fields of skill and knowledge, plays a key role in the fulfillment of this educational commitment.
- A vital part of the BSA's advancement plan, the merit badge program is one of Scouting's basic character-building tools. Through participation in the program (which may begin immediately upon registration in a troop or team), a Scout acquires the kind of self-confidence that comes only from overcoming obstacles to achieve a goal. Instruction is offered in everything from animal science and public speaking to swimming and communications, providing a young man with invaluable career, physical, and interpersonal skills.
- Merit Badge Pamphlets** Each merit badge subject is outlined and explained in a pamphlet that contains short introductory information written for Boy Scouts/Varsity Scouts by recognized authorities. More than a million pamphlets are sold yearly, and many are used as approved reference texts in libraries and school curricula.
- Counselors** People who are knowledgeable about the various merit badge subjects are selected, approved, and trained by council and district advancement committees to serve as merit badge counselors. For example, a dentist might be asked to serve as a counselor for the Dentistry merit badge. A counselor must not only possess the necessary technical knowledge but also have a solid understanding of the needs, interests, and abilities of Scouts. A counselor must also be a registered adult with the BSA.
- Procedure** When a Scout has an interest in earning a particular merit badge, he obtains his Scoutmaster's/Varsity Scout Coach's approval and identifies another Scout with similar interests to become his partner. They are then directed to the appropriate merit badge counselor. The counselor reviews the badge requirements with the young men and decides with them what projects should be undertaken and when they should be completed. After the counselor has certified that the Scouts have qualified for the merit badge, it is presented to them at a troop/team meeting and can be applied toward rank advancement.
- Badges for Eagle** To qualify for the Eagle Scout Award, Scouting's highest advancement rank, a Scout must—along with meeting five other requirements—earn a total of 21 merit badges, including First Aid, Citizenship in the Community, Citizenship in the Nation, Citizenship in the World, Communications, Personal Fitness, Emergency Preparedness OR Lifesaving, Environmental Science, Personal Management, Camping, Hiking OR Cycling OR Swimming and Family Life.
- New Badges** To meet the changing interests of boys, new merit badges are added from time to time. In addition, all merit badges are reviewed and revised periodically. The most recent is Composite Materials in 2006.