



A Guide for Merit Badge Counselors

First - General Facts:

1 - There are 121 BSA Approved Merit Badges. A scout must have 12 specifically required Badges to obtain the Eagle Rank, along with 9 badges that are the scout's choice. Of these twelve "Eagle Required" - ten are specific with no exception. The eleventh badge, the scout has a choice from two specific badges. The twelfth badge, the scout has a choice from three specific badges. Therefore, there are fifteen badges certified as "Eagle Required". They have a silver ring on the actual badge versus the green ring on the regular badges. The First Aid badge is a prerequisite to Emergency Preparedness but all other "Eagle Badges" can be pursued in any order pending scoutmaster pre-approval.

No badges are required for Scout, Tenderfoot, 2nd Class or 1st class. Although not prohibited, we actually discourage a lot of hard MB activity at this age as Scouts should focus on fundamentals and Rank Requirements

To Obtain the Star Rank, the Scout must obtain 4 Eagle required badges for Star plus two regular badges. -
- 6 total

To Obtain the Life Rank, the scout must earn three more Eagle required badges for a total of seven, and two additional regular badges for a total of four regular badges. - - - 11 total

To Obtain the Eagle Rank, the scout must earn the final five Eagle required badges for a total of twelve plus four more regular for a total of nine regular badges - - 21 total.

After obtaining Eagle, by maintaining involvement for three months and a few other things, AND five additional "scout choice" regular badges, an Eagle will receive an Eagle Palm. There are bronze, silver and gold palms an Eagle can earn by remaining involved three month intervals and five badges per level. Scout choice badges earned along the way to Eagle Rank can be counted for palms. So if a scout gets his Eagle with 20 personal choice badges, he gets his palm by basically staying involved. There is no limit to the number of palms that can be earned up till the scout turns 18 years of age.

2 - A Boy Scouts may work on merit badges from they time they join a Scout troop until they turn 18 years old. There is no time limit for completion of merit badges other than age 18. Some Merit Badge requires prior approval before starting certain requirements. Most do not.

3 - Most Merit Badges have a portion that is taught in a classroom setting followed by homework the scout does on his own. Sometimes the homework can be done as a group outside the classroom. Sometimes they do the homework first and bring it to the class. That is your call as a counselor. Once completed, the Scout is responsible for showing, explaining, or demonstrating to the counselor the homework was done

properly. The Counselor, while in the classroom setting, should be clear on what the homework is and how completion should be documented.

4 - Boy Scouts are taught to follow the rules, to the letter. Cub Scouts are allowed to get close and count an achievement but Boy Scouts need to do 100% of the requirements. For instance, a Cub Scout may try to tie a square knot five times before he gets it right, and the Den Leader quickly signs off as done. A Boy Scout will need to tie that same knot efficiently and consistently to get credit for it, not once out of five tries. This 100% compliance leads to consistency within the program, a true understanding of the subject and prevents accusations of favoritism or discrimination.

Deciding What to Teach:

1 - There are literally over a hundred choices, 121 to be exact. In practically any field, there are multiple choices somewhat related to that field. For an quick overall view, www.meritbadge.com. Once on this website, click "Enter", then under "section" on the left is Merit Badge Requirements. All badges are listed here. Requirements, worksheet and helpful hints are available for every badge.

2 - If you have an interest, check the T-32 Merit Badge Counselor list. We can e-mail you a copy or it is available at the back table at every Troop meeting. Maybe you will want to teach a badge that is currently unassigned. Maybe you are unsure and want help with the first one, in which case, you may pick a badge of interest that currently has an instructor. Contact this individual and talk to him about the class. Maybe the two of you co-teach it a time or two and when his son moves on, you become the primary instructor. This is an excellent way for the folks committed to helping with the Eagle Badges to get experience, a ready made outline, and "on the job" training before taking on a critical badge.

3 - Talk to some of the Geezers you know. Our Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster's or our Advancement Chair, ask what is needed and what gaps exist in our current program. We have the badges broken down by specific interest so if you have a hobby or desire, maybe we could give you half a dozen choices close to that field of interest.

4 - We certainly appreciate an enthusiastic attitude, but try not to jump out there with a real hard one to start with. Go through the system with a tools oriented, hobby type, arts & Craft perhaps, sports type badge first. Give yourself a chance to work the system before jumping off into an Eagle required badge with lots of homework to track. A good rule of thumb is pick something you are passionate about, if you have enthusiasm for the subject that will help you. And remember we are not trying to make the scouts experts in the subject, just a good working knowledge. Many scouts find their life's work in the form of a merit badge someone like you has taught to them.

5 - There is a small paper back book, most are 10 to 15 pages, small magazine size, for every Merit Badge. This guide gives you all the answers necessary to teach the class. If you have narrowed your interest, get one of these guides and read through it. The Troop has a library box set up on the back table at every troop meeting that pretty much has all of the badges. You can check out a book but you will need to return it. The Longhorn council office / Scout store has them for a few dollars apiece. You will certainly need your own personal one when you decide, so you can use it for reference, make notes etc.

Ready to go – Almost:

- 1 - A new MB Counselor must: fill out a adult BSA Application – even if they are already registered with troop. There are no fees for this.
- 2 - You need to complete the Youth Protection Training. It can be done free, on-line in 15 or 20 minutes. Real simple deal, but all Scouters need to have Youth Protection. The following is a link to the Longhorn Council website - - http://www.longhorncouncil.org/training/youth_protection/youth_prot.htm - You will need your BSA personal Id # to take the class and once complete, It will go on your BSA record. Please check with the advancement chair if you do not know your number. Also once complete, please e-mail the T-32 Adult Training coordinator and he/she keeps records of all our adults.
- 3 - Congrats on picking a subject. There is a **Merit Badge Counselor form** that needs to be completed. You can find a PDF version that can be opened and printed on the website. Please turn this in to the advancement chair at the back table at all the troop meetings.
- 4 - Existing MB counselors who simply want to add another MB class to their list need only fill out the MB application.

Really Ready to Go:

- 1 - Tell our scoutmaster you would like to teach the class. Y'all will discuss when, where and how many do you think you can handle in the class.
- 2 - We will post a notice, through our e-mail distribution list, and to the troop's website to the troop of the upcoming class and the date - - and if applicable, open to the first 15 or however many you can handle. The date should be out at least three of four weeks to allow time for scouts to sign up.
- 3 - The Sr. Patrol Leader will put it on his announcement card and inform the troop at the Tuesday meetings. That there is a sign up sheet on the back table for those interested.
- 4 - You can have a reminder send out an e-mail distribution list reminding everybody the day before, stating time and place.
- 5 - Then simply meet them at the Knights Hall, Bear Creek Park, Football Field, Natatorium . . . wherever you need to be to do your subject.
- 6 – Make sure you have two deep adult leadership per Youth Protection Training guidelines during all meetings with scouts during the classes.

Blue Card Procedure:

- 1 - A scout wishing to take a Merit Badge Class must first fill out a Blue Card. There is a PDF file available on the website showing the front and back of a typical Blue card.
- 2 - The scout must fill it out complete, his name, address and so forth as well as the counselors name, address, phone number, class subject and so forth. The areas that must be filled out are noted with a Star on the attached form.
- 3 - The Scout places his card in a box located at the back table at the Troop Meeting for our Scoutmaster's signature. The Scout has to have the Scoutmaster's signature / permission to take a Merit Badge Class.
- 4 - The next week the scout will retrieve his card with our Scoutmaster's signature and retain it until the start of class.
- 5 - The first thing you do when class starts is collect the Blue Cards. All need to be signed by the Scoutmaster. You check for signatures and return the card to each scout. It is the Scouts responsibility to keep up with this card, not yours. The scout is now able to begin work on the subject, so you can start the class.
- 6 - Upon completion of the class, there is typically some homework the scout must do. Once the homework is complete, the scout needs to get the results back to you, e-mail, show you at a troop meeting, bring you a report, bring you a craft project, whatever you have assigned them to do. Once you are satisfied the scout has completed all phases of the Merit Badge, the scout will hand you the card for your final signature. The card is three parts and requires your signature on two of them. You will retain one part for your records and return the other two parts to the scout.
- 7 - With two counselor signatures signifying completion, the scout will return the two remaining parts to the Scoutmasters "box" so our Scoutmaster can sign off on the completed card.
- 8 - Once our Scoutmaster has signed off the remaining two parts of the blue card, one part goes into our advancement chair's for award at the next Court of Honor and one part goes into a file under the scouts name. The scout should retrieve his part the following Troop meeting and will keep it for his records.

Blue Card protocol is a practice in procedure and the scout's responsibility. They need to get it signed and if filled out incorrectly, it will get bounced back to them and they will re-do it. They need to follow the exact rules. They need to get it done before class. They need to keep up with it, stay organized. There are exceptions to everything but they are rare. Besides the ability to track and control the advancements, the protocol does teach planning, forward thinking, organization and responsibility. The Blue Card Protocol may seem extensive but it, in and of itself, is a lesson for the Scouts.

Merit Badges are a huge part of scouting and one of the strengths T-32 is proud of. Thank you for **Stepping Up** and being part of the Program.