

# TROOP 31 MERIT BADGE FAQ

(Frequently Asked Questions)

## MERIT BADGE AND BLUE CARD FAQ

(All Ranks)

Merit badges are an important part of scouting. They're fun and informative, and become milestones on the road of advancement. The following FAQ addresses the most commonly asked questions about merit badges.

As with rank advancement, there are no gray areas built into the BSA merit badge requirements; there is no room for subjective interpretation. Fifty miles is fifty miles, and ninety days is ninety days. Either a scout achieved the stated requirement, or he didn't. There is no pre-dating of requirements that will be accomplished at a future date nor may a scout receive credit for work done prior to the date listed on the blue card. All work on the merit badge is to be done after the date that the blue card is signed by the Scoutmaster. Furthermore, a Scout is expected to have read the merit badge book PRIOR TO demonstrating his proficiency in the merit badge skills to the counselor. Our responsibility is to uphold these requirements for all scouts. Exceptions or modifications are made only in cases of disability.

### **1. Who initiates the merit badge process?**

It is the scout's responsibility to identify a merit badge he wishes to pursue. From there he will request a "blue card" from the scoutmaster. The "blue card" is an official merit badge completion record recognized by BSA National for recording and presentation of the merit badge card. The scoutmaster will sign the front of the card after confirming the scout's intentions and that a merit-badge counselor has been identified. The scoutmaster may have suggestions on who would be a good merit badge counselor for a scout to work with.

### **2. What is a "merit badge counselor"?**

A merit-badge counselor is a registered adult who will help guide the scout through a merit badge. Most adults sign up for badges in which they have experience or interests, such as basketry, public speaking, or fishing. In many cases the only thing a counselor will do is sign off the badge after reviewing the scout's proficiency with the requirements. A merit badge counselor must be 18 years of age and a registered adult.

### **3. I'm a parent and would like to become a merit badge counselor. How do I sign up?**

Fill out a merit badge counselor sign-up form and submit it to the Advancement Chair for delivery to the scout office. As soon as your form is approved, you're official.

**4. Does the troop hold merit badge classes on outings or troop meetings to bring the scouts through their paces?**

Not necessarily. An adult advisor may sometimes help scouts through elements of a badge on an outing or a troop meeting. Rarely will this result in a scout getting through a complete badge, as there are often requirements that require other elements of participation. In the end, it is a scout's responsibility to read the material for a badge and pursue his counselor for sign-off. This is a low-impact way of teaching our young scouts to take responsibility for their actions.

**5. I don't know the merit badge counselor for this badge, so can I ask my dad (ASPL, other adult, neighbor, etc.) to sign me off?**

No. The merit badge counselor must be a registered adult merit badge counselor for that badge.

**6. My dad is a registered merit badge counselor. Can he sign me off?**

Technically, yes, however we discourage it. We discourage fathers being the signing party for any badges. Generally the troop would prefer a scout expand his horizons by getting a sign-off from another adult for all other badges.

**7. What is the Scoutmaster's role in the merit badge process?**

The scoutmaster's role is signing the blue card. After discussing the badge with a scout, the scoutmaster signs the card at the beginning of the process.

**8. Who can sign off a merit badge?**

Only the merit badge counselor may sign off merit badges. If there is no counselor in our troop for a certain badge, our scouts may ask an adult from the district merit badge counselor list for a review and sign-off.

**9. My merit badge has three sections. Who gets all these sections?**

*Applicant Record* - fill this out completely and leave it attached to the Troop Record and turn it in to the Advancement Chair when completed.

*Troop Record* - fill this out completely and leave it attached to the Applicant Record and turn it in to the Advancement Chair when completed.

*Merit Badge Counselors Record* - have your merit badge counselor sign this off. The counselor may retain this portion for their records. It does not have to be turned in.

**10. What do I write in "Council" and "District" and "Troop #" on my blue card?**

District: Maramech Hill; Council: Three Fires; Troop: 31

**11. When can I turn in my blue card?**

A scout may turn in his blue-card at any time to the Advancement Chair.

## **12. I earned merit badges at camp. What happened to them?**

At camp we gather all of the merit badges and bring them back in a bunch. It's easier to ensure they're not lost in transit. The trip coordinator is responsible for delivering the blue cards to the Advancement Chair for data entry and awards.

## **13. I only got through part of my badge at camp. What do I do with it?**

Partial merit badges are returned to scouts as soon as possible after summer camp. Usually this takes place at the first or second meeting of the year. A partial merit badge usually has a few requirements that need to be signed off before it can be submitted. Find a counselor, finish it up, and submit it as soon as possible.

## **14. To whom should a scout give their completely filled out and signed-off merit badge "blue card"?**

Completed "blue cards" should be submitted to the Advancement Chair. From there the badge will be recorded so it may be awarded at the next court of awards.

## **15. Where can I find more about merit badges and their pre-requisites?**

Very extensive information on merit badges and their requirements can be found at the following website: <http://www.meritbadge.com/>

## **16. Where can I get the Merit Badge book required for a badge?**

The troop keeps a fairly extensive library of books however, not all books are up to date. The local library also stocks quite a few books. If you want your own book to keep (and want to be sure you have the most current version) you can buy them at the Local Scout Store or at the National Store (online. Currently the cost is about \$5 per book.

## **17. Where are the Local Scout Stores and the National Scout Store?**

Norris Scout Shop  
415 North Second St. (Rt. 31)  
St. Charles, IL 60174  
P: (630) 797-4614

Deicke Scout Shop  
155 W Roosevelt Rd. (Rt. 38)  
West Chicago, IL 60185  
P: (630) 231-3192

National Store: <http://www.scoutstuff.org/bsasupply/>

## **18. What Merit Badges Should I Take at Summer Camp?**

Generally at Summer Camp up to five merit badges can be taken. First year scouts should not overwhelm themselves with merit badges as the homework load takes away from your fun at summer camp. Some of the Eagle required merit badges that you may want to look at include: Swimming, First Aid, Camping, and Environmental Science. For the other Merit Badge study periods, you should look at what interests you. Perhaps you like photography, birds, mammals or basketry. In addition, be very aware of the pre-work needed for each badge to ensure that you have the time to complete that work before summer camp.