MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR TRAINING

Don Schreeck, Council VP of Field Operations
Past HVC Advancement Chairman
AGENDA

- The aims of Scouting
- BSA advancement & Merit Badge processes
- The role of a MBC
  - Duties & Responsibilities to Scout and BSA
- Understand registration requirements

Mission:
To prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law

Vision:
The Boy Scouts of America will prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law
1. Character development
2. Citizenship training
3. Leadership Training
4. Personal Fitness
   physical, mental, spiritual, emotional

Every activity in Scouting should support one or more of these aims.

1. Scouting Ideals (Oath, Law, Motto, Slogan)
2. Patrol method
3. Advancement
4. Association with adults
5. Personal Growth
6. Leadership Development
7. Outdoor Activities
8. Uniforms
BROAD RANGE OF SUBJECTS

130+ merit badges in 14 subject areas:

- Agribusiness
- Arts and crafts
- Business and industry
- Communications
- Conservation
- Hobbies
- Natural science
- Personal development
- Physical science
- Professions
- Public service
- Sports
- Trades
- Transportation

"In Scouting, a boy is encouraged to educate himself instead of being instructed."

– Lord Robert Baden Powell
MB RECENT CHANGES

2020

American Business*
American Heritage
Animal Science***
  Athletics**
  Bugling
  Chemistry
  Cooking**
  Crime Prevention
Environmental Science***
  Geology
  Kayaking

Model Design and Building
  Painting
  Personal Fitness
  Reading
  Rifle Shooting****
  Safety
  Space Exploration
  Sustainability
  Traffic Safety
  Whitewater

* Listed on inside front cover, but no changes
** Merit Badge changes but not listed on inside front cover
*** Changes in addition to those listed on inside front cover
****Not listed on inside front cover and no changes, but a note is missing

2019

American Business
American Labor
Archery
Bird Study
Communication
Disabilities Awareness
Family Life
First Aid
Fly Fishing
Forestry
Geocaching
Golf
Law
Lifesaving
Motor boating
Personal Management
Railroading
Reptile and Amphibian Study
Rifle Shooting
Rowing
Scouting Heritage
Search and Rescue
Soil & Water Conservation
Theater
Welding
Woodwork
BENEFITS OF MERIT BADGES

- Adult Association method – meet leaders and experts
- Exposure to positive role models
- Development of confidence, self-reliance and social skills
- MBCs have the opportunity to shape lives
- Career and hobby choices may result
WHAT IS A MBC?

- Volunteer, Teacher, Mentor
- Coach – helps overcome obstacles, provides insights
- Examiner
- Maintainer of Standards
  - Requirements – no changes
  - Buddy system – no exceptions

Four Parts of Advancement
- A Scout Learns
- A Scout is Tested
- A Scout is Reviewed
- A Scout is Recognized
MBC ROLE

- To bring about learning on the part of the Scout
  - Advises Scout on steps to take to fulfill reqs
  - Evaluates each Scout’s performance
  - Determines whether the Scout has met the prescribed objectives

- To be a coach and a friend as the Scout learns about a new field of interest
COUNSELOR REQUIREMENTS

- Register **annually** with HVC
- Be at least 18 years old*
- Be of good character
- Be proficient in the badge subject matter
- Have good rapport with leaders and Scout-aged youth
- Complete the training – YPT and MBC
  - *Some require age 21*
Specific training is required for some BSA activities, including merit badges.

HVC requirement - A counselor *must* hold the specific certification.

*Guide to Advancement* topic 7.0.1.1
Details provided on Council Web Site:

Archery, Canoeing, Climbing, Kayaking, Life Saving, Motor Boating, Rifle Shooting, Rowing, Small-boat Sailing, Scuba Diving, Shotgun Shooting, Snow Sports, Swimming, Water Sports, Whitewater
Be approved by Council and District
http://www.hudsonvalleyscouting.org/youth-development/merit-badge-counselors/41912

Annual renewal is simply “take me off the list”, otherwise you will be auto renewed

Signed & scanned forms may be emailed to Council registrar: debra.federici@scouting.org and copied to advancement@hudsonvalleyscouting.org. (may take a month or longer to be approved)

May choose to counsel up to 8 MB, only 4 from the eagle required list
FORMS NEEDED TO REGISTER AS A MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR

Use position code 42.

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.1.5
MBC program in the Hudson Valley Council has key contacts:

- Council Advancement Chair – Amy Dick
- Council MBC coordinator – Fabio White
- District coordinators
  - Delaware River – Gillian Kaiser
  - Dutchess – Michael Barresi
  - Heritage – Fabio White
  - Rockland – Lynn-Marie Schnalzer
1. No One-on-One Contact
2. Another registered adult or a parent/guardian
3. Respect of Privacy, reporting as needed

All adults, regardless of registration status, are required to adhere to YPT policies when working with Scouts. HVC requires YPT annually, required by district re-charter month.

YPT training available at:
http://www.scouting.org/Training/YouthProtection.aspx, and is also in the 2019 Guide to Safe Scouting
Scout indicates interest; discusses with unit leader; gets MBC name and blue card

Scout contacts counselor

Scout/counselor first meeting

Subsequent Scout/counselor meetings

Unit reports advancement and obtains badge for presentation

Scout returns completed merit badge card to unit leader

Counselor approves completion

Scout completes requirements
The unit leader signature:

- Required for Scouts to work with counselors
- Does not indicate unit leader “approval”
- Evidence of discussion between unit leader and Scout
- Indicates registered counselor has been recommended
- Not required for Scout to get started on requirements

“I have discussed this merit badge with this Scout and recommended at least one merit badge counselor.”

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.0.2
APPLICATION FOR MERIT BADGE
THE BLUE CARD

Information for Applicant
- A merit badge application can be approved only by a registered merit badge counselor.
- You must have a buddy with you (Scout buddy system) at each meeting with the merit badge counselor.
- Turn in your approved application to your unit leader. You will be awarded the merit badge emblem and certificate at a suitable occasion.

Information for Counselor
- Merit badge applications must be signed in advance by the applicant’s unit leader.
- The Scout must have his buddy (Scout buddy system) in attendance at all instructional sessions.
- You may not change any requirement, but you may share your knowledge or experience that will make the counseling more interesting and valuable.

Record of completed requirements
Scout’s information

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.0.2
Counselor’s information

Counselor signs in two places once all requirements are complete

1/3 goes to the unit as application for the badge

1/3 goes to Scout for own records

1/3 goes to the counselor’s records

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.0.2
COUNSELING TECHNIQUES

- Create relaxed atmosphere – remember, the Scout is probably a beginner
- Spend time helping to understand the requirements
- Help to keep the Scout on track, have fun
- Keep it conversational, not a final exam
- If more work is needed, offer help, re-test
- Can ask Scout to appear in uniform, but cannot require it
- Can use helpers for some requirements, sign-off is limited to approved MBC only
TIPS FOR COUNSELING

Use the Teaching EDGE method.

- Explain
- Demonstrate
- Guide
- Enable
FAST FACTS FOR MBCs

- Any MBC can counsel any Scout
- A MBC must be approved for each subject they volunteer to counsel
- Scouts are encouraged to work with multiple MBCs
- You can limit your service to just a specific troop, but must still be approved by the Council (Council would prefer no restrictions)
- Scoutmasters are not automatic MBCs – they must apply
- Only time constraint is 18th birthday
FAST FACTS FOR MBCs

- Should retain blue cards for a minimum of 1 year, preferably until the Scout becomes 18.
- Scouts can change MBC at any time.
- MBC should confirm with unit leaders, or other adults, concerning the completion of requirements done elsewhere.
- You can choose to accept or reject requirements done elsewhere.
GROUP INSTRUCTION

Benefits

- Guest experts
- Interactive learning
- Slide shows, skits, demonstrations, and other dynamic approaches

The Challenge

*Every* Scout must actually and personally fulfill every requirement as written.

*Guide to Advancement* topic 7.0.3.2
MERIT BADGE EVENTS

✦ Merit badge fairs may provide an overview or introduction to multiple badges.

✦ It should be rare that Scouts begin and finish badges at one or two-day events.

✦ Prerequisites should be made known early.

✦ Scouts must actually and personally fulfill all requirements.

✦ HVC has its own event

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.3.2
SCOUTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

- Merit badge requirements must not be waived or changed for any Scout.
- Scouts with disabilities must complete all requirements, no substitutions allowed.
- Once a badge is started, all requirements must be met to complete it.
- The “Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges” may be submitted if necessary.

Guide to Advancement section 10
COMPLETING THE “PARTIAL” BLUE CARD

- The merit badge counselor records and initials the front of the card in the middle section as each requirement is completed.
- The back of the card is not signed in either place until all requirements are fulfilled.
- Partials do not expire as long as the Scout is a registered youth member.
- Not accepting a “partial” is at the follow-up counselor’s discretion, although it not the norm.

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.3.3
Merit badge “worksheets” from the Web or other sources are unofficial, but may aid in learning.

These tools must relate to current Scouts BSA requirements, which still must be fulfilled as written.

Worksheets may be used to meet “in writing” requirements.

Worksheets are not a substitute for “telling,” “showing,” or “demonstrating,” etc.

Scouts must not be required to use them.

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.4.8
FAST FACTS FOR UNIT LEADERS

- Cannot limit the Scout from working with a specific MBC
- Cannot stop a Scout from working on any MB
- Cannot take a badge away from a Scout if the blue card has been signed by a properly registered MBC
- Unit leaders do have limited resource for unearned MBs. Details provided in GTA 2019, in section 7.0.4.7. This must be a clear and evident case of non-completion or non-participation within 30 days of the sign-off date
- May file the Merit Badge Counseling Concerns form if a MBC does not follow mandated procedures
A Scout, to whom it has been made clear that only registered and approved counselors are to be used, chooses to ignore this mandated procedure.

It becomes plainly evident that it could not have been possible for a Scout to actually and personally fulfill requirements as written. In this case a limited recourse is available, according to the details outlined in topic 7.0.4.7.
1. At what age or rank may Scouts work on merit badges?
   There is no limit if registered as a Scout.

2. What is the maximum number of merit badges a Scout may work on at the same time?
   There is no limit.

3. Is a Scout allowed to begin work on a merit badge without his unit leader’s approval?
   Approval to begin work is not required; signed blue card, following a discussion, is approval to contact the merit badge counselor.
4. If a Scout has too many unfinished merit badges, may the Unit Leader limit how many others may be started?

No - during the discussion of a new merit badge, the unit leader should provide counseling on what to do.

5. Is it appropriate to tell a Scout that all or most of the Eagle-required badges must be earned before working on any others?

A unit leader can only suggest this.
Finding current requirements for a merit badge

- Scouts BSA Requirements (current edition)
- Merit badge pamphlet (latest printing)

Are the requirements flexible?

- No, they must be fulfilled as written.
- Wording matters!
- “Show,” “demonstrate,” “describe,” “make,” “list,” etc., are to be taken literally.
The annual edition of the Scouts BSA Requirements is the official guide (usually released in January)

Any Scout just _beginning_ work must use the new requirements

Mid-year changes in requirements allow the Scout to decide which to follow (all old or all new requirements)

If a badge has been started, the Scout may continue using the old requirements, unless there is a specific directive from National.
Some badges have requirements that must be approved by the counselor before the Scout begins working on them.

Be aware of these before you start counseling scouts. Examples:

**Communications Merit Badge:**
6) With your counselor's approval, develop a plan to teach a skill or inform someone about something. Prepare teaching aids for your plan. Carry out your plan. With your counselor, determine whether the person has learned what you intended.

**First Aid:**
6c) With your counselor's approval, arrange a visit with your patrol or troop to an emergency medical facility or through an American Red Cross chapter for a demonstration of how an AED is used.
MBC RESOURCES

- **Adult Application**, no. 28-501
- **Merit Badge Counselor Information Form**, no. 34405
- **A Guide to Merit Badge Counseling**, no. 512-065
- **MB Application** (Blue Card) no. 34124
- **2019 Guide to Advancement**
- **BSA Guide to Safe Scouting**
- **Scouts BSA Requirements**, no. 33125C
- **Scouts BSA Handbook**, no. 3105
- **Merit Badge Pamphlets**
- **Troop Leader Guidebook** (two volumes)
- **Internet**
  - BSA MBC pages: [https://www.scouting.org/resources/guide-to-advancement/the-merit-badge-program/](https://www.scouting.org/resources/guide-to-advancement/the-merit-badge-program/)
    [http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges.aspx)
SUMMARY OF TRAINING

- Understand the aims of Scouting
- Understand BSA advancement & Merit Badge processes
- Understand the role of MBC
  - Duties & Responsibilities to the Scout and BSA
  - Enforce the use of the buddy system
- Registration requirements
- Methods of counseling and coaching
- Be able to successfully guide a Scout through the merit badge process
OTHER Q&A?

QUESTIONS MAY ALSO BE SENT VIA EMAIL TO

Advancement@hudsonvalleyscouting.org
MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR QUIZ
A merit badge counselor may be a counselor for an un-limited number of merit badges.

FALSE

The HVC has a restriction that a counselor may be approved for up to **8** badges, and a max of **4** from the Eagle Required list.

Since this is up to the members of the approving body to decide, they also may decide how many merit badges they feel it is necessary for a counselor to coach based upon need within the district or council. This is shown on the council web site.
A merit badge counselor may not coach their own son/daughter or close relative (i.e., nephew) unless part of a group of Scouts all working on the same merit badge.

FALSE

“…Approved counselors may work with and pass any member, including their own child. But we often teach young people the importance of broadening horizons.

Scouts meeting with counselors beyond their families and beyond even their own units are doing that. They will benefit from the perspectives of many "teachers" and will learn more as a result. They should be encouraged to reach out.” (2019 Guide to Advancement)
A merit badge counselor who works only with a single unit needs only the unit committee’s approval before being approved by the Scout Executive.

FALSE

All counselors must be approved by the district/council advancement committee by following the standard process to register.
Persons serving as merit badge counselors must be registered as a merit badge counselor with the Boy Scouts of America.

**TRUE**

Even volunteers who serve in multiple positions must fill out another adult registration form and request registration as a merit badge counselor, even Scoutmasters.
A Scout may earn no more than five merit badges from the same merit badge counselor.  

FALSE

A Scout may earn as many badges from a counselor as the counselor is qualified and approved to coach.  

However, since it is in the Scout’s best interest to experience a diversity of adult contacts, it is not in the spirit of the program to do so unless conditions warrant. The Scoutmaster is permitted to set a limit, as long as it applies to all scouts within the unit.
Once a Scouter is approved as a merit badge counselor, he/she is approved for life and never has to be re-approved. **FALSE**

Counselor registrations are for one year only. Annual renewals are required, where each MBC will be contacted by the Council MB Coordinator by year-end and given the choice to renew or not. YPT must also be current. (Should be taken in the August – December timeframe each year)

If not currently registered, MBCs should not be working with any scouts.
A Scout must complete all the requirements for a merit badge within 12 months, otherwise must start over.

FALSE

There is no time limit except that all requirements work must be completed before the Scout’s 18th birthday. Scouts receiving a partial also do not have to worry about specific times to complete the entire badge. Once completed, they are permanent when working with the same counselor.
A merit badge counselor may require the Scout to work beyond the specific requirements of the merit badge in order to discover more about the subject and continue the learning process.

FALSE

No additions or deletions are permitted. The requirements are to be completed exactly as written. However, a counselor may share additional information or resources in the hope of encouraging the Scout to challenge themselves.
Due to the BSA policies related to Youth Protection and two-deep leadership, a merit badge counselor must have another **scouter** present during all merit badge counseling sessions.

**FALSE**

There must always be a third person present, but it may be either the Scout’s parent, or a registered adult leader, or another scout. If the scout is a female, one of the adults must be a registered female leader over 21.
If the weather, locale, or some other condition makes meeting all of the conditions of the merit badge requirements impractical, the merit badge counselor may substitute requirements for those stated for the merit badge.

FALSE

No additions or deletions are permitted. The requirements are to be completed exactly as written. This includes requirements at summer camp, which cannot be shortened to fit within the typical week of camp. Partials are to be used in that case.
Merit badge counselors must be at least 18 years old.

TRUE

Note that there are some badges where the counselor must be 21 or older.
If the requirements for a merit badge differ between the merit badge pamphlet and the current edition of *Scouts BSA Requirements*, the requirements in the *Requirements* book supersede all others.

**TRUE**

The *Scouts BSA Requirements* book is revised annually and reflects any changes that have been made, whereas the merit badge pamphlets are not revised annually and may be outdated.
OTHER Q&A?

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