

Merit Badge Counselor Special Certifications

Merit badge counselors may personally meet the required qualifications, or they may use others so qualified. Additionally, the BSA Guide to Safe Scouting has specific requirements and procedures for shooting sports and for aquatics, winter, and other activities. These policies apply to all BSA activities, including merit badge instruction.

For other merit badges where specific BSA requirements do not exist, counselors should have sufficient depth of knowledge and experience to understand how to safely present the material.

Below are the specifics for the badges that require special certifications. All certifications must be current. If the organization providing the certification credentials requires periodic recertification/renewal, it is the responsibility of the Counselor to keep that certification current. Copies of current certification should accompany your application, and/or request to add a new badge to the list you currently are approved to counsel.

The guide to Safe Scouting can be found at this link: [GTSS](#). The main page for safety documentation can be found [here](#).

Archery. Archery merit badge counselors must have National Archery Association certification, or equivalent.

Canoeing. Canoeing merit badge counselors must have either BSA Aquatics Instructor or Canoeing Instructor certification from the American Canoe Association, American Red Cross, or equivalent. Swimming and watercraft activities must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained, or use others who are.

Climbing. All climbing, belaying, and rappelling exercises and activities must be supervised by a qualified rock climbing instructor who is a mature and conscientious adult at least 21 years old, and who is trained in BSA Climb On Safely and understands the risks inherent to these activities. Training as BSA climbing director or instructor is highly recommended. Someone with certification in First Aid/CPR/AED from the American Red Cross (or equivalent) must be present at these activities.

Kayaking. Swimming and watercraft activities must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained, or use others who are.

Lifesaving. Demonstrations or activities in or on the water must be supervised by an adult at least 21 years old with certification in Red Cross First Aid/CPR/AED or equivalent, and also as BSA Lifeguard or Aquatics Instructor or equivalent. Swimming and watercraft activities must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained, or use others who are.

Motorboating. Swimming and watercraft activities must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained, or use others who are.

Rifle Shooting. The merit badge counselor must take responsibility to assure that all instruction involving any handling of firearms or live ammunition must be supervised by a certified BSA National Camping School (NCS) shooting sports director, or National Rifle Association (NRA) Rifle Shooting Instructor or Coach. That involving muzzleloaders must be supervised by an NCS shooting sports director or NRA/National Muzzleloader Rifle Association (NMLRA)-certified muzzleloader firearms instructor. Shooting must be supervised by an NRA-

certified Range Safety Officer (RSO). If instruction and shooting are to occur at the same time, both the RSO and qualified instructor must be present. The supervisor and instructor may not be the same person. Note that commercial shooting ranges may provide RSOs.

Rowing. Rowing merit badge counselors must have either BSA Aquatics Instructor certification or equivalent. Swimming and watercraft activities must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained, or use others who are.

Small-Boat Sailing. Swimming and watercraft activities must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained, or use others who are.

Scuba Diving. All phases of scuba instruction—classroom, pool, and open-water training—are limited to instructors trained and sanctioned by one of the following agencies: Professional Association of Diving Instructors, National Association of Underwater Instructors, Scuba Schools International, International Diving Educators Association, Professional Diving Instructors Corporation, or Scuba Diving International, or be a member of the World Recreational Scuba Training Council. Swimming and watercraft activities must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained, or use others who are.

Shotgun Shooting. The merit badge counselor must take responsibility to assure that all instruction involving any handling of firearms or live ammunition must be supervised by a certified NCS shooting sports director or NRA Shotgun Instructor or Coach. That involving muzzle-loading shotguns must be supervised by an NCS shooting sports director or NRA/NMLRA certified muzzle-loading shotgun instructor. Shooting must be supervised by an NRA-certified Range Safety Officer. If instruction and shooting are to occur at the same time, both the RSO and qualified instructor must be present. They may not be the same person. Note that commercial shooting ranges may provide RSOs.

Snow Sports. Activities in the field must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult 21 years or older who is committed to compliance with BSA Winter Sports Safety as defined in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*.

Swimming. Demonstrations or activities in or on the water must be conducted according to BSA Safe Swim Defense and BSA Safety Afloat. Swimming and watercraft activities must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained, or use others who are.

Water Sports. Swimming and watercraft activities must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained, or use others who are.

Whitewater. Whitewater merit badge counselors must be designated by the local council, and certified as whitewater canoeing or kayaking instructors by the American Canoe Association or have equivalent certification, training, or expertise. Swimming and watercraft activities must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained, or use others who are.