

# For Parents: Merit Badge Fact Sheet

## **What are they?**

Merit Badges are the second main area of the Boy Scout advancement program. Unlike ranks, there is a degree of choice in the merit badge program. A sub-group of Merit Badges are known as Eagle required merit badges. To earn Eagle Scout, most of these badges must be earned although some are "either/or" badges. The remainder of the badges as well as Eagle Palms after the Eagle Scout award has been earned help with earning ranks.

## **When can they be earned?**

Merit Badges can be earned at any time, by any Scout – including summer time when the troop does not meet. There is no minimum rank requirement to start earning Merit Badges.

## **What about required Merit Badges?**

A Scout will have to earn Merit Badges to advance in rank as follows:

Rank	Required Merit Badges (total)	Non- Required Merit Badges (total)	Total Merit Badges Needed
Star	4	2	6
Life	7 (3 more)	4 (2 more)	11
Eagle	13 (6 more)	8 (4 more)	21

### **Required Merit Badges:**

First Aid	Environmental Science OR Sustainability
Citizenship in the Community	Personal Management
Citizenship in the Nation	Swimming OR Hiking OR Cycling
Citizenship in the World	Camping
Communications	Family Life
Personal Fitness	Cooking
Emergency Preparedness OR Lifesaving	

## **How can I help?**

Encourage him. Behind most Eagle Scouts are supportive parents. Many times a Scout will be discouraged because some of the badges look like they require so much work to be completed. This will likely happen with your Scout and you can suggest that he just chip away at it. You might suggest he complete one requirement every day or every week.

You can help direct him if he needs to research a topic, or talk things over to help him understand concepts. Encourage him to speak with his Merit Badge Counselor if he is stuck or unsure.

Be sure he fully reads the requirements and does them as written. We often see Scouts that have skipped steps, like discussing something with their counselor before doing it. This may result in the Scout having to repeat the requirement.

### ***What shouldn't I do?***

Do not do the work for the Scout. The Scout should do all the work to meet the requirements. This includes contacting counselors, finding references, filling out any paperwork or forms, and doing any of the actual work. Scouting continually promotes and seeks to develop a sense of responsibility for oneself, honesty, and integrity (the basics of the Scout Law). The Scout grows morally through both self-sufficiency and teamwork within the troop.

### ***Who can they see to do a Merit Badge?***

Suffolk County Council maintains a list of Merit Badge counselors that are available to complete any offered Merit Badges. The Scoutmaster has this list and it is available for the Scouts to review at any meeting. Several of our adult leaders are Merit Badge counselors and the Scouts can work on requirements with the counselors at most meetings. You should (as we do) also encourage the Scout to pursue Merit Badges with counselors outside of our Troop. A Scout's past work is reviewed at the Eagle Board of Review and you don't want to show a lack of effort in earning badges outside our Troop.

Merit Badges can also be earned at summer camp. Some of the badges earned at summer camp may require certain prerequisites to be completed prior to coming to camp. Merit Badges earned at summer camp are considered to be earned within the Troop.

When a Scout is meeting with a counselor, he should always be attending the meeting with a buddy and he should always be dressed in a Class A uniform. If a buddy is not available, a parent will need to be at the meeting to ensure 'two-deep' leadership, which is a basic child protection Scouting rule.

### ***What are the Blue Cards for?***

Blue Cards are a record of completion of a Merit Badge. A Scout must have a Blue Card signed by the Scoutmaster prior to starting a Merit Badge. Upon completion of the Merit Badge, the counselor will mark the requirements as completed. The counselor will then keep one of the three sections of the Blue Card. The remaining two sections are returned to the Scoutmaster. One section goes to Council as part of the Scout's record of a completed Merit Badge. When the Scout is awarded the Merit Badge at a Court of Honor, he will receive the third section of the Blue Card for his records. It is important for the Scout to keep the returned Blue Card section in a safe place.