GUIDELINES FOR
MERIT BADGE COUNSELORS

Prepared by the

Colonial District Committee
National Capital Area Council
Boy Scouts of America

Version 2008.1.0

This is an unofficial publication. It is intended to supplement official information published by the Boy Scouts of America. Any conflict between information in this and in official publications of the Boy Scouts of America should be resolved in favor of the official publications.

The Colonial District wishes to express eternal thanks to Goose Creek District for providing the information that formed the basis of this Guideline.

Version number	Date of issue	Author(s)	Brief description of change(s)
2008.1.0	12/01/2008		New issuance

Preface

This document is designed specifically to provide supplementary guidance to volunteer adults who agree to be Merit Badge Counselors for Boy Scouts. It provides instructions and lists references for further guidance.

Reading this document adds to the Colonial District training requirement for district merit badge counselors. Individuals should report the date they review this document to the District Committee.

Merit Badge Counselors and other adult leaders are invited to offer suggestions for improving these guidelines. Please contact the Colonial District Advancement Committee.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Table of Contents

Preface ii
Section 1 – Introduction to Merit Badge Counseling 4
Section 2 – Requirements for Merit Badge Counselors 5
Section 3 – Counseling Procedures 7
MERIT BADGE PAMPHLETS 7
MERIT BADGE REQUIREMENTS 7
THE COUNSELING PROCESS 8
Where Do You Meet? 8
How Many Scouts at a Time? 8
What is the Time Limit for Earning Merit Badges? 8
Counseling Techniques. 9
How Long Should It Take to Complete A Merit Badge? 9
RECORD KEEPING 10
CONCLUSION 12
Section 4 – Other Resources and References 13
APPENDIX 1 14
MERIT BADGE INFORMATION 14
APPENDIX 2 18
GUIDANCE ON MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR 18
BACKGROUND 18
SCOPE 18
GUIDANCE 18
Aquatics Related Badges. 19
Shooting Skills Related Badges. 20
Sports Related Merit Badges 21
APPLICABILITY 22
EFFECTIVE DATE 22
APPENDIX 3 23
Mr. D's Merit Badge Review 23

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Section 1 – Introduction to Merit Badge Counseling

The Boy Scouts of America is a movement dedicated to supplementing and enlarging the education of youth. The merit badge program plays a key role in the fulfillment of this educational commitment. As a vital part of the BSA's advancement plan, the merit badge program is one of Scouting's basic character-building tools. There are over 100 different merit badges in the program. Without dedicated volunteers who are proficient in the subject matter of the various badges, the program will not be successful.

Earning merit badges provide Scouts with more than just opportunities to advance to a higher rank. The process of earning badges gives boys the kind of self-confidence that comes only from overcoming difficult obstacles to achieve a goal. The merit badge program also provides boys a chance to learn career skills that might help them select their lifework. Many merit badges help boys develop physical fitness and provide hobbies to give a lifetime of healthful recreation. Merit badge counselors provide the means for Scouts to explore many subjects that may not be available to them otherwise. The Scout who has earned a number of merit badges gains confidence, finds greater purpose in life, and becomes a better person from his experience. This cannot happen without the service of merit badge counselors knowledgeable in particular subjects and interested in helping Scouts grow into men of character who are ready to take their place in the world of work as participating citizens.

An important aspect of the merit badge program is the opportunity for boys to widen their contacts with other adults. Meeting with adults whom they might not be acquainted provides boys a chance to develop social skills and self-confidence in situations, which initially may cause them to be uncertain and shy. Because merit badge counselors must be proficient in the subject of the badge being worked on, the boys receive highly accurate and technical instructions while being coached on the topic.

This document provides local guidance to prospective and present merit badge counselors in the Colonial District, National Capital Area Council. Section 2 addresses basic requirements and registration procedures for merit badge counselors. Section 3 discusses the process of coaching and counseling Scouts on merit badges. Additional resources and references are included in Section 4 and in the Appendices.

Section 2 – Requirements for Merit Badge Counselors

Following are the basic requirements to qualify as a Boy Scout Merit Badge Counselor:

1. Be at least 18 years old.
2. Be proficient in the merit badge subject either by vocation or avocation.
3. Be able to work with Scout-age boys.
4. Be registered with the Boy Scouts of America.

Each person who agrees to become a merit badge counselor must complete two forms and submit them for approval. The first is the standard BSA Adult Application for membership. Unlike other positions in Scouting, no fee is required for merit badge counselors. The Adult Application Form is submitted upon initial registration only.

The second form that must be submitted is the Merit Badge Counselor Information form, BSA number 34405, along with the NCAC supplementary page 2 (Appendix 1). This form identifies which merit badge subjects you are applying to counsel. There are columns to indicate how you claim your proficiency in the subject – by job, business, or profession, or as a hobby or other qualification. Use the back of the form to provide sufficient justification for the District Committee to evaluate your qualifications. You should not list a merit badge to counsel without first reviewing the stated requirements of the badge. You can read the requirements on the World Wide Web at the National Council web site:
http://www.scouting.org/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges.aspx.

Note that only seven rows are included on the Merit Badge Counselor Information form. Although there is no "official" limit on the number of merit badges a single counselor can be certified, it is the belief of the Colonial District Committee that the objectives of the merit badge program can best be achieved ***if no one counselor is responsible for more than about six merit badges.***

Potential counselors must include in the second page of the form explicit background and experience that qualifies that individual to counsel Scouts for each badge. Additionally, there is specific guidance for 13 badges based on *Guide to Safe Scouting* (BSA Supply #34416D) specifying qualifications of counselors. These are stated in Appendix 2. Of the 13 badges which require outside certification of proficiency (such as for aquatics badges or shooting badges), copies of those proficiency certificates need to be provided to be kept on file with the District Committee. Expiration dates will be maintained by the District Committee.

The Merit Badge Counselor Information form includes two option boxes to allow you to choose whether you will work only with boys from a particular unit that is listed or if you will work with boys from any unit in the District. We encourage you to consider working with all boys in the District, especially if you are counseling a badge that requires particularly rare or precise skills. Colonial District's objective is for each Scout to have a

counselor for every merit badge available. This objective can be achieved only if most Merit Badge Counselors agree to work with all boys.

The Merit Badge Counselor Information form is submitted to the Colonial District Committee for certification and approval. Certified merit badge counselors are included in an access controlled master database maintained by the Colonial District Committee.

Each year you must be recertified as a Merit Badge Counselor. Instructions for recertification will be provided to units with their annual Rechartering packages. If you were required to provide evidence of safety-related certifications (such as for aquatics-related badges), updated certificates need to be submitted when acquired to ensure the files are current. Failure to participate in annual recertification process results in an individual being dropped from the Merit Badge Counselor list and invalidates any badges subsequently signed by that former counselor.

Each Boy Scout adult leader and volunteer must take Youth Protection Training. This training course is available both online and in periodic training sessions conducted by the Colonial District. Periodic training sessions are announced on the local District web page at www.colonialdistrict.org. As a Merit Badge Counselor, you are to work with Scouts ***only*** when they are accompanied by a buddy: another Scout, a parent or guardian, a brother or sister, a relative, or a friend.

NEVER ONE ADULT WITH ONE BOY!

Section 3 – Counseling Procedures

MERIT BADGE PAMPHLETS

Your certification as a Merit Badge Counselor attests to your proficiency with the subject matter. However, to be effective, you should know what the Scouts coming to you have as a resource. Most likely they will have a booklet specifically for the merit badge. The Boy Scouts of America publish merit badge pamphlets for each merit badge. These pamphlets are prepared by committees of experts in the subject matter and reviewed thoroughly for their age appropriate content. The pamphlets also contain suggestions for projects that may be required for the badge. You can obtain copies of merit badge pamphlets for those you are counseling by contacting either the National Capital Area Scout Shop or the Northern Virginia Scout shop. Most pamphlets are reprinted each year, and the contents are periodically updated.

MERIT BADGE REQUIREMENTS

The requirements listed within the merit badge pamphlet ***may not be current***! There is a lag from when merit badge requirements change and when a pamphlet is corrected. Current requirements may be found on the BSA National Council Internet web site that maintains updated requirements as they are changed: http://www.scouting.org/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges.aspx. Unless a new pamphlet is issued ***after*** the Requirements Book, the requirements listed in the Requirements Book are the controlling requirements.

If the requirements for a merit badge change ***after*** you begin working with a Scout, the Scout may decide which set of requirements to follow completely, either all the old requirements or all the new requirements. He ***cannot*** do part of the old and part of the new requirements. (This rule refers to completely new elements of the requirements, not to elements that are identical in both the old and new set of requirements.)

Merit badge requirements ***may not be changed or modified*** by local authorities. A Scout cannot be required to do more than what is stated in the requirements. If the Scout is to collect 20 items for a collection, you cannot tell him to collect 30 items to merit your signature. However, it is acceptable for a Scout on his own initiative to exceed what the requirements state. As a counselor, you may require the Scout to repeat a demonstration or refine a project until the Scout has adequately satisfied the requirement. The Scout is expected to meet the requirements as stated – no more and no less. He is to do exactly what is stated in the requirement. If it says “show and demonstrate,” that is what he must do. Just telling how to do it isn’t enough. The same holds true for requirements such as “make,” “list,” “in the field,” and “collect, identify, and label.”

STATEMENT ON SCOUTING WITH DISABILITIES

A male member of any of the youth programs of the Boy Scouts of America who has a physical or mental disability may qualify for Eagle Scout Rank by qualifying for alternate merit badges. This does not apply to individual requirements for merit badges. Merit badges are awarded only when all requirements are met. You, as a merit badge counselor, should contact the District Committee chairperson for instructions if a Scout who may have a qualifying disability contacts you.

THE COUNSELING PROCESS

When a Scout decides to work on a merit badge you are counseling, he will obtain from his unit leader a signed merit badge application (the "Blue Card" – see page 10) and your name and telephone number. The Scout will call you to make an appointment for him and his buddy (make sure he understands he ***must*** bring a buddy) to meet with you. Because this is an official Scouting activity, the Scout working on the merit badge should appear in uniform unless there are good reasons not to do so.

Where Do You Meet? If the merit badge relates to your job or profession, then your place of work might be the best place to meet with Scouts. Hobby related subjects usually are handled in your home where you will have the proper materials for use in coaching Scouts. A few subjects are more appropriately done in the field or where special equipment is at hand, such as Rowing, Rifle Shooting, Swimming, or Astronomy (although the first meeting might be accomplished indoors).

How Many Scouts at a Time? Some subjects can be taught to several Scouts at the same time. In fact, many units schedule merit badge classes to be conducted during unit meetings. ***However, completing the requirements of all merit badges always must be done on an individual basis!*** A Scout may not qualify for a merit badge simply by just being a member of a group that is instructed in skills. A Scout must qualify by personally satisfying their merit badge counselor that he can meet all the requirements. This may be hard to do in a group. When one Scout in a group answers a question, that can't possibly prove all the other members of the group also know the answer. Each Scout learns at his own pace; no Scout should be held back or pushed ahead by his association with a group. Written tests of knowledge may not be appropriate for a Scout who does not take tests well. ***You may coach more than one Scout at a time, but only one Scout at a time can satisfy you that he has met the requirements of the merit badge!***

What is the Time Limit for Earning Merit Badges? There is no deadline for earning Merit Badges, except the Scout's 18th Birthday. If the Scout becomes 18 years of age before you examine him for satisfactory completion of the merit badge, he may not be awarded the badge! You ***should not sign*** the blue card. Once a Scout has started working on a Merit Badge (i.e., obtained a signed "Blue Card" Application for Merit Badge from his Scoutmaster, had an initial discussion with a merit badge Counselor, and started working on the requirements), he may continue using those requirements until he completes the badge or turns 18.

If a Merit Badge is discontinued, Scouts already working on the badge when it is removed from the Boy Scout Requirements booklet may continue to work toward completing the badge, and get credit for earning the badge, until they turn 18. However, it may not be possible to obtain an actual merit badge patch, once the local council's supply is exhausted.

If a discontinued Merit Badge is replaced with one or more other Merit Badges covering the same or similar topics (such as Rifle and Shotgun Shooting MB which was replaced by Rifle Shooting MB and Shotgun Shooting MB), a Scout that has earned the

discontinued badge may also earn the new badge or badges. If the badge is simply renamed (such as Firemanship MB which was changed to Fire Safety MB), Scouts may NOT earn the badge again. If the badge number in **BSA's numbering system** is the same before and after the change, it is a renaming. If a new number is assigned, it is a replacement.

Counseling Techniques. For the Scout to get the most benefit from the counseling session, he must feel welcome and relaxed. One way for the counselor to put him at ease is to ask a simple question. For example, "How long have you been in Scouting?" or "What got you interested in the astronomy merit badge?" Another way to put a Scout at ease is to show him something related to the merit badge subject. For example, a Coin Collecting merit badge counselor might show the Scout his coin collection. However, don't overwhelm the Scout. Remember, he is probably a beginner. A third way to put a Scout at ease is to ask him to do a simple skill. For example, a Woodworking merit badge counselor might say, "Would you sand this piece of wood while I get some tools ready?" At the first meeting with the Scout, the merit badge counselor should carefully review each requirement to be sure the Scout understands what he must do. When reviewing the requirements with a Scout or testing him, the merit badge counselor may find that the boy needs help in learning a particular skill. One of the jobs of a merit badge counselor is to teach the Scout the skills required. The most effective way to teach a skill is to get the Scout to practice while learning.

When the Scout is ready to complete some or all of the requirements for a badge, he should call the counselor again and make an appointment for him ***and his buddy*** to meet with the counselor. He should take along with him the things he has made to meet the requirements. The counselor will ask him to do each requirement to make sure he knows his stuff and has done or can do the things required.

When the counselor is satisfied that the requirements have been met, he or she will sign the Application for Merit Badge, keeping the third section and returning the first two sections to the Scout. The Scout turns in both sections of the Application for Merit Badge to his Scoutmaster.

How Long Should It Take to Complete A Merit Badge? There is no set time that a specific merit badge should take, except that some badges do require a minimum time to complete some requirements (such as Personal Fitness or Personal Management). The time to expect Scouts to take to complete all the requirements for a Merit Badge will vary due to many factors. Some will involve the past experience of the Scout; if he previously participated in the topic of the merit badge in some other aspect of his life, then he might be able to complete the merit badge requirements quickly. If the merit badge requires relatively new skills, then he may take longer. Some badges will be difficult for younger Scouts to complete, but relatively easier for older Scouts to finish. You, the Merit Badge Counselor, must take all these factors into account. (However, to give you some idea of the time required a table of merit badge difficulties and average length of completion is included in Appendix 3).

RECORD KEEPING

Your link to the formal advancement process is BSA Form 34124, printed on blue colored card stock and folded into a trifold. Because of its color, it is commonly called "The Blue Card." It is printed front and back and may be torn apart so that after the merit badge is earned, the counselor, the Scout, and the unit may retain portions. ***Until the merit badge is completed, the card is completely retained by the Scout*** (if he transfers to another unit, this card is his record of partial achievement towards a Merit Badge). Following are images of portions of the card and instructions for completion.

APPLICATION FOR MERIT BADGE

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

is a registered

☐ Boy Scout ☐ Varsity Scout ☐ Explorer

of _____ No._____

Troop, team, post, ship

District _____

Council_____

and is qualified to begin working for merit badge noted on the reverse side.

_____ _____

Date Signature of Unit Leader

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

No. 34124 1996 Printing

The front of the Blue Card identifies the Scout and his unit. The unit leader must sign it before the Scout appears before the Merit Badge Counselor. (The reverse side is the Unit record portion.)

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.

7 30176 34124 8

Short instructions are also included on the left outside of the Blue Card. (On the opposite side of this section is the Merit Badge Counselor's copy.)

Requirement no and letter	Date of Approval	Counselor Initial	Requirement no and letter	Date of Approval	Counselor Initial

The outside center back of the Blue Card contains rows and columns to track progress for individual requirements of the Merit Badge, identified by the outline number in the merit badge requirement. As each requirement is satisfactorily completed, you initial completion in the third column. Make sure you complete it accurately and legibly. (The reverse side is the "Applicant's Record" shown on the inside center of the card.)

The applicant has personally appeared before me and demonstrated to my satisfaction that he has met all requirements for the (please print):

_____
Merit Badge

_____
Name of Counselor

_____
Address of Counselor

_____
City ZIP Code

_____
Telephone number of Counselor

_____/____/____
Signature of counselor Date

Checked and recorded:

_____
Date Initials

Certificate and badge presented: _____
Date

Applicant will turn in this portion to his unit leader for record posting.

APPLICANT'S RECORD

Name _____

has given me his completed application for the

_____
Merit Badge

Completed on _____/_____/_____ by

_____
Signature of Counselor

_____
Signature of unit leader

NOTE TO BOY SCOUT, VARSITY SCOUT, OR EXPLORER: Retain this copy for your permanent records.

COUNSELOR'S RECORD

Applicant _____

☐ Troop
☐ Team Unit number: _____
☐ Post

_____
Merit Badge

Date Completed _____/_____/_____

Remarks:

It is suggested that the counselor keep this record for at least 1 year in case any question is raised later in regard to this award.

Note that ***you must sign in two places*** above: the unit record section and the applicant's record section. Each section of the Blue Card may be detached and kept as a record by: the Merit Badge Counselor, the Scout, and the Unit.

CONCLUSION

You may work with many Scouts as they earn merit badges. Your contact with these Scouts is tremendously important. Your influence is measured not by the number of Scouts with whom you work, but by the effect upon the lives of those with whom you have an opportunity to work.

Throughout your association with Scouts, keep in mind that you are in reality assisting the Scoutmaster, the Varsity Scout Coach, and other troop and team leaders in the advancement program. You should feel free to discuss the work of each Scout with his unit leader at any time.

As a Merit Badge Counselor, you agree to …

- ***• Follow the requirements of the merit badge, making no deletions or additions, ensuring that the advancement standards are fair and uniform for all Scouts.***
- ***• Have a Scout and his buddy present at all instructional sessions.***
- ***• Renew your registration and certification annually with the Colonial District Committee if you plan to continue as a Merit Badge Counselor.***

Section 4 – Other Resources and References

1. Adult Application No. 25-501F
2. Merit Badge Counselor Information No. 34405
3. A Guide for Merit Badge Counseling, BSA pamphlet 34532A (largely incorporated herein).
4. Boy Scout Requirements, publication 33215
5. Boy Scout Handbook, publication 33105
6. Scoutmaster Handbook, publication 33009
7. Current Merit Badge Pamphlets and Merit Badge Revision dates, table: http://www.usscouts.org/usscouts/mb/mbbooks.asp.
8. Merit Badge Worksheets: http://usscouts.org/usscouts/mb/worksheets/list.asp.

[Note: As with any web site, reliable and continual access may not be possible for any of the internet sources cited above.]

APPENDIX 1

MERIT BADGE INFORMATION
FORM 34405

Adult Application No 25-501F and the MBC Information Form, No. 34405, approved by National Council and a NCAC supplemental form are to be used by individuals signing up to counsel Scouts in the Merit Badge Program. The Adult Application is required even if the counselor is already a registered leader; no fee is required to register as a Merit Badge Counselor. Use position code 43 when registering.

Form No. 34405 is attached. Please provide your email address on application.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Boy Scouts of America

MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR INFORMATION

(Please type or print.)

Name _____ Age _____ Business phone (___) _____

Address _____ Home phone (___) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

To qualify as a merit badge counselor, you must

- Be at least 18 years old.
- Be proficient in the merit badge subject by vocation, avocation, or special training.
- Be able to work with Scout-age boys.
- Be registered with the Boy Scouts of America.

As a merit badge counselor, I agree to

- Follow the requirements of the merit badge, making no deletions or additions, ensuring that the advancement standards are fair and uniform for all Scouts.
- Have a Scout and his buddy present at all instructional sessions.
- Renew my registration annually if I plan to continue as a merit badge counselor.

	Vocation Is this subject in line with your job, business, or profession? If yes, give brief information on the reverse side.	Avocation Do you follow this subject as a hobby, having more than a "working knowledge" of the requirements? If yes, give brief information on the reverse side.	Special training If not, do you have any special training or other qualifications for this subject? If yes, give brief information on the reverse side.
List merit badge subjects here. 1. _____			
2. _____			
3. _____			
4. _____			
5. _____			
6. _____			
7. _____			

CHECK ONE:

☐ I wish to work only with _____.
Unit number

☐ I wish to work with all units.

Signature _____ Date _____

Note: The BSA Adult Registration Application must be attached.

Council approval by _____ Date _____

#34405

7 30176 34405 8

34405
2001 Boy Scouts of America

Please list your qualifications for each merit badge you wish to counsel:

Merit Badge	Qualifications

District Advancement Committee Approval _____ Date_____

District Name _____ District #_____ Council_____

Processing this Application:

Merit Badge Counselors MUST register as adult Scouters and be approved by the *District Advancement Committee*. A Merit Badge Counselor does not have to pay a registration fee, but must fill out an Adult Application and this Merit Badge Counselor Enrollment form. *Both forms MUST be submitted DIRECTLY to your District Executive.* The District Executive will forward both the adult registration form and Merit Badge Counselor form (BSA # 34405) with this sheet to the Council office for inclusion in registration for the district. A copy of *all* forms will then be returned to the District Advancement Committee. *(DO NOT SEND EITHER DOCUMENT DIRECTLY TO THE COUNCIL SERVICE CENTER). You may choose to limit your role to counseling only in an affiliated unit or make yourself available to other units in the district. We encourage you to make yourself available to other units since the expertise for some merit badges is not present within many individual units. You will always be able to limit the number of scouts you work with at any one time.*

Check the box on the front of this form that indicates your desire.

(District Merit Badge approval form to accompany adult leader registration and National BSA merit badge counselor form # 34405 - 10/04)

APPENDIX 2

DISTRICT GUIDANCE ON MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR SPECIFIC BADGES

GUIDANCE ON MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR QUALIFICATIONS

References:
(1) *Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures*, BSA Publication Number 33088D.
(2) *Guide to Safe Scouting*, BSA Publication Number 34416D.
(3) *The District: How the District Carries Out the Operational Mission of the Council, BSA* Publication Number 33070B.

BACKGROUND

The only stated requirement specifically for merit badge counselors is that "They must be men and women of good character, age 18 or older, and recognized as having the skills and education in the subjects for which they are to serve as merit badge counselors, as well as having the ability to work with Scout-age boys" (Reference 1, page 13). However, Reference 2 states very specific requirements for many Scout activities reflected in the merit badge program. Merit Badge instruction is considered a Scout activity and, therefore, is covered by the policies in Reference 2. The District Committee is responsible for interpreting and carrying out the advancement policies of the council (Reference 3, page 9). To assist unit leaders in determining the qualifications of potential merit badge counselors, the Colonial District Committee is providing this document which consolidates relevant information from the referenced publications.

SCOPE

This guidance applies to counselors for 13 different merit badges:
(1) Aquatics related badges: Canoeing, Lifesaving, Motorboating, Rowing, Small-boat Sailing, Swimming, Waterskiing, and Whitewater;
(2) Shooting skills related badges: Rifle Shooting and Shotgun Shooting;
(3) Sports related merit badges: Climbing, Skating, and Snow Sports.

GUIDANCE

Merit Badge Counselors must complete and submit National Form 34405, Merit Badge Counselor Information form, and the NCAC supplemental page 2 upon registering to become a counselor. This form and the supplemental page have blanks for the prospective counselor to relate his or her experience, training, and certifications for each merit badge. The Troop Committees and the District use this form to judge the appropriateness of a person's qualifications. Therefore, its completion should not be treated lightly. The first line to evaluate a counselor's qualifications is the unit submitting the form. The District Committee is the final authority for determining if a person is

qualified. A new form 34405 must be submitted whenever a counselor adds a merit badge to his or her portfolio of badges being counseled.

Aquatics Related Badges. The approval of an individual to serve as a merit badge counselor assumes the possibility that there will be instruction with two or more Scouts with no other adult leaders present. The following are extracts from the policy on Aquatics Safety found in Reference 2 and are applicable to all eight aquatics related merit badges.

> "All swimming activity must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult **age 21 or older** who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of youth members in his or her care, who is experienced in the water and confident of his or her ability to respond in the event of an emergency, and who is **trained in** and committed to compliance with the eight points of **BSA Safe Swim Defense**." (Emphasis added; Reference 2, page 8)
>
> "This specialized skill [cardiopulmonary resuscitation, CPR] to endeavor to revive victims of cardiac arrest (no breathing-no pulse) may be taught to Boy Scouts and Venturers by an instructor currently trained by the American Red Cross or American Heart Association." (Reference 2, page 32; BSA Northeast Region expands the number of certifying organizations.)

Evidence of meeting these qualifications will be shown on National Form 34405, Merit Badge Counselor Information form, and the NCAC supplemental page 2.

- their age on page 1 (must be 21 or older);
- and a statement on page 2 that the individual has completed Safe Swim Defense Training (available on-line through the NCAC web site); and,
- a statement on page 2 that he or she is currently trained for CPR and the training organization's name.

Following are **additional requirements** for specific aquatics related merit badges. Canoeing, Motorboating, Rowing, Small-boat Sailing, Waterskiing, and Whitewater merit badges. Counselors for any of these six merit badges must meet the policy stated as follows:

> "All activity afloat must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult **age 21 or older** who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the wellbeing and safety of the children in his or her care, who is experienced and **qualified in the particular watercraft skills and equipment involved** in the activity, and who is committed to compliance with the nine points of BSA Safety Afloat. One such supervisor is required for each 10 people, with a minimum of two adults for any one group. At least one supervisor must be age 21 or older, and the remaining supervisors must be age 18 or older. All supervisors **must complete BSA Safety Afloat and Safe Swim Defense training** and rescue training for the type of watercraft to be used in the activity, and at least one **must be trained in CPR**." (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 11)

Evidence of compliance with the referenced policy should be indicated on the NCAC supplement to Form 34405 by showing he or she

• has completed the BSA Safety Afloat training (available on-line through the NCAC web site); and,
• the types and sizes of watercraft he or she has had sufficient experience by which to instruct Scouts.

Lifesaving. It is the strong belief of the District Committee that to ensure Scouts are instructed in safe and approved methods of aquatics lifesaving, instructors should be formally trained. The committee believes that certification as a BSA Lifeguard or Red Cross Lifeguard is evidence of the appropriate level of training and such certification should be indicated on the NCAC supplemental page.

Swimming. Reference 2 provides the following policy relevant to Swimming Merit Badge requirement 8.a:

> "At a minimum, the supervisor must possess skills and knowledge matching the Snorkeling, BSA award…." (Reference 2, page 16)

This experience should be shown on the NCAC supplemental page.

Waterskiing. Counselors for Waterskiing merit badge should be aware of the following safety information:

> "The Water-Skier's Safety Code and Boat Driver's Safety Code are found in the Waterskiing merit badge pamphlet. These are guidelines to be followed by all those involved in the sport of waterskiing." (Reference 2, page 19)

Shooting Skills Related Badges. Basic BSA policy regarding shooting skills is this:

> "Boy Scouts are permitted to fire .22-caliber bolt-action, single-shot rifles, air rifles, shotguns, and muzzleloading long guns **under the direction of a certified instructor, 21 years of age or older**, within the standards outlined in current Scouting literature and bulletins. BSA policy does not permit the use of handguns in the Boy Scouting program." (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 35)

Qualifications specifically for each badge follow.

Rifle Shooting Merit Badge. In addition to the age requirement, Reference 2 requires a counselor hold a current NRA certification as a rifle instructor or coach. Furthermore, if requirement 2, Option C, Muzzle-loading Rifle Shooting, is to be taught, the counselor must be a currently certified NRA/NMLRA muzzleloading rifle instructor (Reference 2, page 36).

Shotgun Shooting Merit Badge. In addition to the age requirement, a counselor must be a currently NRA-certified shotgun instructor or coach Reference 2, page 36).

A counselor for either Rifle Shooting or Shotgun Shooting Merit Badge should show his or her qualifications by

• Stating their age (21 or older) on page 1 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form; and,
• Identify on page 2 of the information form their certification as an instructor appropriate to the badge, as described above.

Sports Related Merit Badges

Climbing Merit Badge. Following is the BSA policy for climbing and rappelling activities:

> "A qualified rock climbing instructor who is **at least 21 years of age** must supervise all BSA climbing/rappelling activities. A currently trained BSA climbing director or instructor is highly recommended. Contact your local council or regional service center to locate a qualified individual. **The climbing instructor has successfully completed a minimum of 10 hours of instructor training for climbing/rappelling from a nationally or regionally recognized organization, a climbing school, a college-level climbing/rappelling course, or is a qualified BSA climbing instructor**." (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 40)
>
> "Every instructor **must have prior experiences in teaching climbing/ rappelling to youth and must agree to adhere to Climb On Safely and the guidelines set in Topping Out."** (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 41)

A counselor for Climbing Merit Badge must show his or her qualifications by

• Stating their age (21 or older) on page 1 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form;
• Identify on page 2 of the information form their successful completion of training as required;
• Identify on page 2 of the form their prior experience teaching climbing to youth; and,
• State they have read and agree to Climb on Safely and the guidelines set in Topping Out.

Cycling. Following is BSA policy regarding cycling activities:

> "All unit, district, council, and national event activities must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult **at least age 21** who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the safety of children in his or her care, **who is experienced with the skills and equipment involved in the activity**, and who is **committed to compliance with these BSA safety guidelines**." (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 45)

A counselor for Cycling Merit Badge should describe his or her sport bicycling experience in sufficient detail to indicate qualification. Additionally, they should be aware of the BSA safety guidelines listed in Reference 2.

Skating Merit Badge. Following is BSA policy regarding skating activities:

> "BSA skating at any level shall be supervised by an adult **at least 21 years of age, experienced in the use of skates and skateboards**," (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 46)

> "This specialized skill [cardiopulmonary resuscitation, CPR] to endeavor to revive victims of cardiac arrest (no breathing-no pulse) may be taught to Boy Scouts and Venturers by an instructor currently trained by the American Red Cross or American Heart Association." (Reference 2, page 32)

A counselor for Skating Merit Badge should describe his or her experience in sufficient detail to indicate qualification. Additionally, they should be aware of the BSA safety guidelines listed in Reference 2.

Snow Sports Merit Badge. Following is BSA policy regarding winter sports safety:

> "All winter activities must be supervised by mature and conscientious adults (at least one of whom must be **age 21 or older**) who understand and knowingly accept responsibility for the well-being and safety of the youth in their care, who are **experienced and qualified in the particular skills and equipment involved in the activity**, and who are committed **to compliance with the seven points of BSA Winter Sports Safety**." (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 55)

A counselor for Snow Sports Merit Badge should describe his or her experience in sufficient detail to indicate qualification. Additionally, they should be aware of the BSA safety guidelines listed in Reference 2.

APPLICABILITY

The guidance contained herein applies to all merit badge counselors for the badges stated for those counselors to be approved by Colonial District. Unit leaders recruiting counselors for the merit badges listed under "Scope" are requested to follow these guidelines prior to submitting applications to the District and the NCAC.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This guidance is effective immediately for all new merit badge counselors for any of the badges listed herein (including any existing counselor who is adding one of these badges to his or her portfolio). Counselors for these badges already on the list of approved district merit badge counselors, or whose paperwork has been submitted for approval, are not affected for the remainder of this annual term. Present counselors for these badges must meet these guidelines upon renewal of their district certification effective June 1, of each year, and must submit a new Merit Badge Information form for the badges concerned, showing their qualifications as requested above.

APPENDIX 3

Mr. D's Merit Badge Review

Following this page is a spreadsheet listing of Mr. Richard Diesslin's recommendations on each of the currently 120 merit badges, listing the number of requirements, difficulty, how long it should take to complete, any prerequisites, and general comments. These are subjective comments by Mr. Diesslin* and do not represent any endorsement by the Colonial District, the NCAC, or the Boy Scouts of America. They are included here so that Merit Badge Counselors will have some appreciation on what to expect of Scouts who appear for counseling on a particular topic. Of course, the actual time a badge might take to complete, or the level of difficulty to a particular Scout, is dependent on many factors. For instance, a badge rated difficult for the average Scout may not be so difficult for a Scout who has had prior experience with the subject matter due to other life experiences.

(Source of Mr. Diesslin's comments:
http://www.usscouts.org/usscouts/advance/docs/MrDsReview.html.)

* Mr. Diesslin is a professional cartoonist and a volunteer Scouter. His main focus is Christian cartooning in the form of cartoon Bible commentary as well as religion and theology cartoons. He also keeps busy on freelance projects such as London's Times Cartoons, U.S. Scouting Service Project, Leadership Journal and other projects. His most recent published books include The Cartoon Gospels, The Cartoon Gospel of Mark, and coming soon, The KNOTS e-book, featuring Scouting cartoons. Other published works include: The Cartoon Gospel of Luke, The Cartoon Gospel of Matthew, The Cartoon Ten Commandments, A Journey Through Christian Theology, and A Journey Through Christian Theology Color Cartoons. Cartoon Strips include: London's Times Cartoons and KNOTS or Not (scouting cartoons). Freelance work includes: Leadership Journal and other magazines. His work can be seen at the website http://www.the-cartoonist.com and he may be contacted via email at RLDes@aol.com. Mr. Diesslin lives in Dayton, Ohio.

Merit Badge	#Rqmnts	Difficulty	Duration	Prereqs	Comments
AMERICAN BUSINESS	6	Hard	3 Months	1st Class	Would go great with school economics course. What makes this "hard" is running a business for 3 months; otherwise it is easy to medium.
AMERICAN CULTURES	5	Medium	1-3 Months	none	Duration is mostly logistics - this one takes some planning.
AMERICAN HERITAGE	6+	Medium	2-3 Months	none	Would go great with an American History class. A fair bit of planning and reporting required.
AMERICAN LABOR	9	Medium	1 Month	none	Good companion to American Business MB requires a bit of writing and research, but nothing too difficult.
ANIMAL SCIENCE	6	Easy	1 Month	none	Some planning and visits, but most information is in an encyclopedia or library book.
ARCHAEOLOGY	11	Hard	2-5 Months	1st Class+	Very involved. Need to do research, reports, presentations and visits. Jurassic Park and Indiana Jones movies won't count as requirements, but they will help make it more interesting.
ARCHERY	5	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Skill required! But fun to learn and do. Good summer camp badge.
ARCHITECTURE	5	Medium	1 Month	none	Lots of cool PC tools to help, involves interviews. Be sure to ask the architects why they almost always under estimate the cost!
ART	5	Easy	1 Week	none	Good first merit badge - they don't get any easier than this ... fun too.
ASTRONOMY	10+	Medium	1-2 Months	1st Class	Fairly involved and requires planning. Good camp or troop badge.
ATHLETICS	6	Medium	1-3 Months	Tenderfoot	A scout is physically fit ... and this newly updated badge will prove it. Takes some planning and scheduled events.
AUTO MECHANICS	11+	Hard	2-5 Months	15-16ish	This will be invaluable later (when you need to get that thingy to stop making that noise, etc.), but not of much interest until around driving age.
AVIATION	5	Medium	1-3 Months	none	Some of this is in you Webelos book! Revisions make this a solid “medium” and do require some planning and project work.

Merit Badge	#Rqmnts	Difficulty	Duration	Prereqs	Comments
BACKPACKING	11+	Medium	3 Months	Some First Aid	Not difficult, but time consuming. Good start possible at summer camp.
BASKETRY	3	Easy	1-3 Days	none	As easy as they get!
BIRD	8	Medium	1-12 Weeks	none	Lots to study, but not too involved
BUGLING	6	Medium	3 Months	none	Good one for brass players in band, but most can learn a bugle. 3 months of bugling required.
CAMPING (E)	10+	Medium	1-2 Years	1st Class	Most requirements are simple, but to get in all the campouts takes time. Keep track of all campouts. Around 1st Class or Star should have most done.
CANOEING	10+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	First Aid, 1st Class	First Aid will cover CPR and other first aid issues and 1st Class requires basic swimming skills. Otherwise, enjoy the ride!
CHEMISTRY	7+	Medium	2-8 Weeks	Science in School	A good one to do with High School Chemistry or Science class.
CINEMATOGRAPHY	4	Easy	1-4 Weeks	none	The hard part might be finding the merit badge counselor, but otherwise this is a fairly easy one.
CITIZENSHIP - Community (E)	8+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	A good one to do with Jr. High or High School government class. Eagle Required.
CITIZENSHIP - Nation (E)	8+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	A good one to do with Jr. High or High School government class. Eagle Required.
CITIZENSHIP - World (E)	7+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Rewritten in 2006 and seems easier, but overall is still a "medium" rating. Again a good one to do with Jr. High or High School government class. Eagle Required.
CLIMBING	12+	Medium	1-12 Weeks	1st Class or 14	Some knots and climbing required. Good one for summer camp or high adventure campout.
COIN COLLECTING	10+	Medium	1-12 Weeks	none	Apparently the zealots were not content with 4 requirements, now there are 10. Helps to already have a collection started.
COLLECTIONS	9+	Medium	1-12 Weeks	none	Could do in conjunction with coin collecting ... or drier lent ... or even something useful! Fun for us packrats!
COMMUNICATIONS (E)	9	Easy	1-4 Weeks	none	Good summer camp or merit badge trail activity ... I'd tell you more, but that's your job!

Merit Badge	#Rqmnts	Difficulty	Duration	Prereqs	Comments
COMPOSITES	6+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	A new merit badge. Seems like a good introduction to the topic without going nuts! A good current materials technology to learn about.
COMPUTERS	9	Medium	1-12 Weeks	none	Good one for school keyboarding or if you already use the computer for papers, internet and other things. If it's all new to you, this will take some time!
COOKING	COOKING 8+	Medium	1-8 Weeks	none	Need to do some planning and cooking, but fairly easy. This bumped up to medium because it doubled in reqs in '02.
CRIME PREVENTION	9+	Medium	4-12 Weeks	none	Lot of trips/visits to plan, so this one will take some time.
CYCLING (E Opt with Swimming & Hiking)	9+	Medium	3-6 Months	none	Lots of bike rides required for this one. Plan to do it over a year or so. Opt with Swimming and Hiking
DENTISTRY	7+	Medium	2-6 Weeks	teeth	Easy-to-medium. My dentist would love this one, yours might too! Do your brush your tongue? Floss?
DISABILITIES AWARENESS	7	Medium	3 Months	none	While the political correctness runnth over, this is a merit badge to be proud of. Possibly a life/perspective-changing effort. Recently rewritten.
DOG CARE	9+	Medium	2 Months	Helps to have a dog	A good one to do if you have a dog or like animals. If you don't have a dog, you might be able to take care of someone else's for the badge.
DRAFTING	6	Medium	1-8 Weeks	none	Shades of my old mechanical drawing class from high school! Helps to access to a CAD system and drawing tools. Might as well do the architecture badge while you're at it.
ELECTRICITY	11+	Medium	1-2 Weeks	none	Can get most of the information from books at the library. Rated medium because it requires two small projects and has over 10 requirements.
ELECTRONICS	6	Medium	1-2 Weeks	none	Goes well with electricity, project intensive and requires some math. Perfect if you are taking it in school anyway!

Merit Badge	#Rqmnts	Difficulty	Duration	Prereqs	Comments
EMERGENCY PREP. (E Opt if Lifesaving complete)	9+	Medium	1-6 Weeks	First Aid	This or Lifesaving are Eagle Required. This badge is a goes well right after First Aid and Pioneering. 2004 revisions reduced some redundancy with some other badges.
ENERGY	8	Medium	3-6 Weeks	Jr/Sr High Science	This is best done in conjunction with a school science class and requires oral and written reports.
ENGINEERING	9+	Medium	1-2 Months	1st Class	Another badge prepared by zealots! You'll know a lot about engineering and get to do some visits and hands-on projects. Learn why most engineers should be required to take the communications merit badge!
ENTREPRENEURSHIP	6+	Hard	3 Months	1st Class	This badge was probably prepared by consultants (like a zealot only with no stake in the outcome)! Does require you to start a business, good joint badge with American Business.
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE (E)	6+	Medium	1-8 Weeks	2nd Class	Rewritten to be a bit less zealous, which is good. An important badge, of course! A good one to do at Summer Camp.
FAMILY LIFE (E)	7	Easy	3 Months	none	Earn brownie points at home! A simple enough merit badge, but it does require some discipline. 90 days is a must for requirement 3.
FARM MECHANICS	9+	Medium	1-6 Weeks	none	If you live on a farm this is a breeze! If not, your camp ranger or a local farmer would appreciate your projects on this one.
FINGERPRINTING	5	Easy	1 Week	none	You can probably pick up a finger printing kit from your local police department ... and convince network TV to do a CSI spin-off for your home town.
FIRE SAFETY	12+	Medium	3 Weeks	1st Class	Pyros ... this is the one for you - please! Not hard, but lots of stuff to do, explain, and demonstrate and includes a visit to the fire department.

Merit Badge	#Rqmnts	Difficulty	Duration	Prereqs	Comments
FIRST AID (E)	7+	Hard	1 - 4	none	You must know Tenderfoot, 2nd and 1st Class first aid for this, but it's a good way to kill 4 birds with one stone (okay, wound 4 birds and then fix them up). Requires learning and demonstrating CPR. Good one to do before many other badges!
FISH AND WILDLIFE MGMT	8	Medium	1 - 4 Weeks	none	Good Summer Camp badge.
FISHING	9	Medium	1 - ? Weeks	none	Time to complete this is mostly dependent on how quickly you can catch two fish. Scout fishermen are exempt from "trustworthy" only in reporting the size of the fish that got away (simply because it's tradition)!
FLY FISHING	10	Medium	1 - ? Weeks	none	Why are there 10 requirements here and only 9 for Fishing you ask? Good question. If you do both together that would make sense, but this does have some special skills needed!
FORESTRY	7+	Hard	1 - 8 Weeks	1st Class	This is a good Summer Camp badge. It requires several "collections"/identifications of plants, trees and shrubs.
GARDENING	6	Easy	2 Months	none	Just need to watch your garden grow ... and a few other things!
GENEALOGY	9	Medium	2-4 Weeks	none	The revision brings this badge down a notch from the over-zealous category. It is now more in-line with an introduction to the topic, albeit involved. It should be an interesting badge to do.
GEOLOGY	5+	Medium	1-16	none	If you are a rock hound ... this is for you. Totally rewritten in 2006, it is now a more reasonable introduction. Still involved, but one you are more likely to tackle, rock-hound or not.
GOLF	8	Easy	1-4 Weeks	none	This is definitely a fun one, play golf and earn a badge!
GRAPHIC ARTS	7+	Medium	2-4 Weeks	none	Good intro to graphic arts and includes a field trip.
HIKING (E Opt with Swimming & Cycling)	7	Medium	1-4 Weeks	1st Class First Aid	Eagle alternate badge (swimming or cycling). This is a good one to do over a longer period of time based on troop hikes/events.

Merit Badge	#Rqmnts	Difficulty	Duration	Prereqs	Comments
HOME REPAIRS	6+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Make the folks happy by becoming Mr. Fix-it. I'm for this one!!! Thrift vs. the money pit (a house)!
HORSEMANSHIP	11	Medium	2 Months	Helps to have a horse	A good one to do if you have a horse or like animals. You even get to be "in harmony" with your horse. You could be the next horse whisperer!
INDIAN LORE	4	Easy	1 Week	none	Could go well with history. This is a nice introductory level approach to the topic. Kudos to the authors.
INSECT STUDY	11	Hard	1-3 Months	none	If your school biology class still requires an insect collection, this will be a natural; otherwise the bug collection could be a show stopper. Have definite summer camp possibilities!
JOURNALISM	5	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	This is a nice introductory level approach and very useful for understanding what you read and hear in the news.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	6	Easy	1 Week	none	This is fairly straightforward and a good intro to landscaping. I expected a high-falutin' set of requirements, but found these quite reasonable. A good intro.
LEATHERWORK		Easy	1 Week	none	Good camp badge in terms of having the materials you need, but can be done at home too.
LIFESAVING (E Opt if Emergency Prep completed)	15+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	Swimming MB, CPR	Good camp badge for pool, etc. This is Eagle required, but optional if Emergency Preparedness has been earned. A good one to do regardless.
MAMMAL STUDY	5	Medium	1 Week	none	Has many options, some more time-consuming than others.
MEDICINE	10+	Hard	1 Month	none	Good introduction, but prepared by zealots. Lots of details in this one. Might be able to get into med school after this!
METALWORK	5+	Medium	1 Week	none	A good one to do in conjunction with metal shop. Access to proper tools is helpful. Should be able to forge the tetsighga with these skills.
MODEL DESIGN AND BUILDING	6	Medium	2 Weeks	none	Project planning and model creation required, but a fun one.

Merit Badge	#Rqmnts	Difficulty	Duration	Prereqs	Comments
MOTORBOATING	6+	Medium	1-6 Weeks	CPR	This is a good one to be an older scout, having 1st Class swimming requirements and CPR (via First Aid or other merit badges) - access to a motorboat is required.
MUSIC	4	Easy	1-6 Months	none	Don't let 6 months scare you off -- one option is being in a band or choir for that long. Good introduction to music.
NATURE	4+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Good summer camp or merit badge trail activity.
NUCLEAR SCIENCE		Medium	1-3 Months	1st Class	Would go well with high school science. Not hard, but involves research and projects. (formerly atomic energy)
OCEANOGRAPHY	9	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Good in conjunction with high school biology, good selection of options to choose from.
ORIENTEERING	10+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Might be better to be 2nd Class or above, but not essential. You'll know map reading and compass use well after earning this one! Still as a male you may only ask for directions as a last resort!
PAINTING	8	Easy	1-2 Weeks	none	An easy one, but useful none-the-less. You do not have to paint the counselor's house!
PERSONAL FITNESS (E)	9+	Medium	3 Months	none	Eagle required. This'll get you in shape!
PERSONAL MANAGEMENT (E)	10+	Medium	3 Months	none	Eagle required. This is medium because it requires planning and discipline, but provides good life skills!
PETS	4+	Easy	4 Months	none	Easier than Dog and Horse MBs, but you need 4 months of pet care to earn it.
PHOTOGRAPHY	5	Easy	2-4 Weeks	none	Rewritten in 2006, this badge is now more of a general introduction to the subject. Should be an easy one to complete.
PIONEERING	10	Medium	1 Week	none	Good scout weekend or summer camp badge. Helps to earn this one on your way to Emergency Preparedness and after First Aid (or rank-level First Aid). If you like camp gadgets, you like this!

Merit Badge	#Rqmnts	Difficulty	Duration	Prereqs	Comments
PLANT SCIENCE	7+	Hard	1-3 Months	none	Good companion to gardening MB. Does require growing some plants, hence 1-3 Months. The 2006 rewrite move this into the difficult and "created by zealots" category. It's more like 15 requirements than 7.
PLUMBING	7	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Does require using a torch and solder, and some plumbing materials and equipment.
POTTERY	6+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	You might find a ceramic/pottery shop offering a course or your counselor providing resources to assist you in doing the projects.
PUBLIC HEALTH	8	Medium	1-2 Months	none	Requires a few visits, so you'll need some extra time for logistics. And remember to wash your hands!
PUBLIC SPEAKING	5	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Good to do in conjunction with a high school speech class, or possibly find a Toastmaster's Club! A good skill to acquire. A close companion of the Communications MB.
PULP AND PAPER	8	Medium	2-6 Weeks	none	Requires some time to arrange a visit and carry-out your projects.
RADIO		Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Almost zealot status, but fairly straight forward. Find a local ham (radio operator) if your counselor isn't one!
RAILROADING.	8+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Good Merit Badge trail or local model RR club activity. Now has a spiffy new patch.
READING	4+	Easy		none	Includes a good service project. The reading can likely be done in conjunction with school or sr. citizens' home.
REPTILE AND AMPHIBIAN	10+	Medium	1 Month	none	Requires keeping a reptile or amphibian for a month ... tell mom you have to for your badge. This does get a zealot award.
RIFLE SHOOTING	2+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Good Summer Camp badge. Options include rifle shooting, air rifle or black-powder rifle shooting.
ROWING	11+	Medium	1 Week	CPR, Swim Test	Do this one after First Aid and 1st Class or swimming MB.
SAFETY	7	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Fairly easy with one project involved.

Merit Badge	#Rqmnts	Difficulty	Duration	Prereqs	Comments
SALESMANSHIP	7	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	You are likely already a pro based on school and scout sales alone ... might as well earn the badge!
SCHOLARSHIP	5	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Good student or improving those grades, get credit with a MB. Does have some writing, interviewing and visits.
SCULPTURE	3	Easy	1 Week	none	Play with clay, earn a badge! Probably have done this in art class at some time or another.
SHOTGUN SHOOTING	12+	Hard	1-8 Weeks	none	Might be good to do in conjunction with rifle shooting.
SKATING	6+	Medium	1 Week	1st Class First Aid	Good basic intro on your choice of three types of skating does require a demonstration of skill.
SMALL-BOAT SAILING	9+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	1st Class and CPR	Good summer camp or park district badge. Take after canoeing and/or rowing badges.
SNOW SPORTS	15	Medium	1-4 Weeks	1st Class First Aid	A fun badge, but requires study and skill, so this may take awhile to complete. Was called Skiing MB which better describes it.
SOIL AND WATER CONS	7+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Good Summer Camp or merit badge trail project, but can do any time.
SPACE EXPLORATION	8	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	You get to shoot a model rocket - got to like that!
SPORTS	5	Medium	1 Month	1st Class First Aid	Requires participation in 2 sports. Should be a simple one for boys already doing recreational or school sports.
STAMP COLLECTING	8+	Medium	1 Month	none	If you like stamps and/or collecting, this is a good one. Think of stamps as trading or gaming cards!
SURVEYING	8	Medium	1 Week	none	Good basic intro to surveying. Your counselor, city manager/engineering dept., local college, etc. are all likely to have equipment and time to help you with this one.
SWIMMING (E Opt with Cycling & Hiking)	10+	Medium	1 Week	CPR, 1st Class Swim Test	An eagle required badge (an option with cycling and hiking). I recommend this one, if physically able, even if you don't like to swim. It's an important life skill, even if just for safety.
TEXTILE	6	Easy	1 Week	none	Good introduction to textiles and the industry.

Merit Badge	#Rqmnts	Difficulty	Duration	Prereqs	Comments
THEATER	6+	Medium	1 Week	none	Good one if you are involved in school Muse or Theater productions. This can be fun for campfires as well!
TRAFFIC SAFETY	5	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Requires a project related to traffic safety, but a good one to do before or during driver's training!
TRUCK TRANSPORTATION	10	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	The 2006 rewrite brings this down to level of a good introduction to the industry.
VETERINARY MEDICINE	6+	Medium	1 Month	none	Rewritten in 2006 and is a bit less intense now. A good badge for animal lovers.
WATERSPORTS (waterskiing)	7	Medium	1-4 Weeks	1st Class, CPR	A fun badge just made easier. Does require some demonstration of basic skills. Access to equipment is important - which your counselor usually has access to. Sometimes local park districts have programs that might assist with many or all requirements.
WEATHER	10	Medium	1 Week	none	While there are several requirements, the fall in the easy category. Does require a 5 minute talk.
WHITEWATER	14	Hard	1-4 Weeks	1st Class, CPR, Canoeing	This one is hard by virtue of the number of requirements and pre-requisites. Designed by zealots, but at least it was mostly for safety reasons.
WILDERNESS SURVIVAL	12	Medium	1-4 Weeks	1st Class First Aid	Fun, useful, but fairly involved. A good summer camp badge, but can be done in conjunction with campouts.
WOOD CARVING	7	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Fun and only rated "medium" because two carvings are required ... watch your fingers!
WOODWORK	7+	Medium	1-4 Weeks	none	Requires a visit and a project or two, but if you like to make things out of wood ... this is for you.

E = 12 Eagle Required Merit Badges E Opt. = Eagle Required Merit Badge with an option (Emergency Preparedness or Lifesaving; Swimming, Hiking or Biking)

Tips: you might be able to do some interviews over the internet via e-mail, instant messages, or newsgroups. **Notes:** 10 or more requirements generally means a badge is a more recent badge and/or the authors were, shall we say, a tad bit over-zealous. + means that there are multi-part requirements, sometimes so many you wonder why they just didn't number them.

Copyright © 1999, 2005, 2006, 2008 by Rich Diesslin, all rights reserved.
Permission granted to the U.S. Scouting Service Project Inc. to freely distribute this web page or spreadsheet. Permission granted to the Boy Scouts of America to freely distribute this web page or spreadsheet. This web page or spreadsheet may not be licensed or sold, except to recover media costs of the distributor, without written permission from the developer. The opinions expressed here are strictly that of t he reviewer and not the Boy Scouts of America.