# MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR ORIENTATION

# SUPPLEMENTAL ADULT LEADER TRAINING

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this training unit is to provide council- or district-approved and registered merit badge counselors with understanding of the methods of counseling and their role in the advancement program of Boy Scouts of America.

The merit badge counselor's role is to bring about learning on the part of the Boy Scout.

As a "coach," the counselor advises the Scout concerning steps he should take to fulfill the requirements for the merit badge.

As a "counselor," he evaluates the Scout's performance and determines whether or not the Scout has met the prescribed objectives in the requirements.

## OBJECTIVES

As a result of this unit of training, the merit badge counselor should be able to

- State the purpose of the merit badge program for Scouts.
- Explain the role of the merit badge counselor.
- List some methods of counseling and coaching.
- Use the buddy system for counseling.

## REFERENCES

*Boy Scout Requirements*

*Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures*

Pamphlet, ***Merit Badge Counseling***

Application for Merit Badge

*Boy Scout Handbook*

## SCOUT BUDDY SYSTEM

A Scout must have a buddy with him at each meeting with a merit badge counselor. A Scout's buddy could be another Scout, or be a parent or guardian, brother or sister, relative or friend. The Scout obtains a signed Application for Merit Badge and the name of the appropriate merit badge counselor from his Scoutmaster. The Scout sets up his first appointment with the counselor. At this first meeting with the Scout and his buddy, the counselor should explain to the Scout what is expected to start meeting the requirements. When the Scout knows what is expected, he can start to learn and do the things required. The counselor will help the Scout learn the things he needs to know or do.

When the Scout is ready, he should call the counselor again and make an appointment for him and his buddy to meet with the counselor and begin to meet the requirements. 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 so the merit badge can be secured.

## STATEMENT

A Scout earns a merit badge by working with a council/district-approved and registered adult counselor, an expert in the chosen subject, who is on the list provided to his troop from the district. The Scout, along with a buddy, makes an appointment with the counselor and works on the merit badge with the counselor during one or more visits. When the counselor approves the Scout's application, the Scoutmaster submits it to the council service center and obtains the badge. As with rank awards, the Scout is awarded the merit badge at the next troop meeting, and later at the next court of honor.

Any registered Scout, regardless of rank, may work on any merit badge and receive the award when he earns it.

The merit badge program is one of Scouting's basic character-developing tools. Earning merit badges gives boys the kind of self-confidence that comes only from overcoming difficult obstacles to achieve a goal.

Through the merit badge program, boys learn career skills that might help them choose their lifework. Some merit badges help boys develop physical fitness and provide hobbies that give a lifetime of healthful recreation.

Working with a merit badge counselor gives Scouts contact with an adult with whom they might not be acquainted. This is a valuable experience. The Scouts could be shy and fearful in this new situation, so the counselor must see that the counseling session is relaxed, informal, and friendly.

Although at times two Scouts will be working as buddies on the same merit badge, each Scout is judged on his own performance of the requirements and should receive the maximum benefit from the knowledge, skill, character, and personal interest of the counselor. Group instruction and orientation are encouraged where special facilities and expert personnel make this most practical or when Scouts are dependent on a few counselors for assistance. However, this group experience should include individual attention to each candidate's projects and his ability to fulfill all requirements.

## READ AND DISCUSS

The pamphlet, ***Merit Badge Counseling***

## DISCUSS THESE POINTS WITH THE MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR

1. Merit badge requirements in merit badge pamphlet
2. Merit badge pamphlets are available in each subject and
   a. May be purchased by the Scout
   b. May be available at a library
   c. May be in the troop library

3. The Scout indicates his interest in a merit badge to his Scoutmaster, who gives him
   a. An interview to determine interest, enthusiasm, preparedness
   b. A signed Application for Merit Badge
   c. The name and phone number of the council/district-approved counselor
   d. Encouragement to wear the official uniform when he visits the counselor with a buddy
4. The Scout calls the merit badge counselor and makes an appointment.
5. The merit badge counselor sets the date and time for the Scout and his buddy and suggests the Scout bring the following:
   a. Merit badge pamphlet
   b. Merit badge application
   c. Any projects he may have started
   d. Any other indication of preparedness
6. At the first interview, the merit badge counselor and the Scout decide upon
   a. Projects
   b. Short-term and long-term goals with dates of completion in mind
   c. Dates and times for future sessions
7. The number of counseling sessions depends on the difficulty of the subject and the preparation and ability of the Scout.
8. The Scout is counseled with a buddy present.
9. The Scout is always tested individually but with a buddy present, and as each requirement is completed the counselor marks it on the application.
10. The Scout is expected to meet the requirements as stated—no more and no less.
11. The merit badge counselor assists the Scout to meet the requirements and certifies when he has completed them.

**COUNSELING TECHNIQUES**

1. 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?"
2. 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.
3. A third way to put a Scout at ease is to ask him to do a simple skill. For example, a Woodwork merit badge counselor might say, "Would you sand this piece of wood while I get some tools ready?"
4. 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.
5. Before the merit badge counselor signs the Scout's Application for Merit Badge, he must insist that the Scout do exactly what the requirements call for. If it says, "show or demonstrate," that is what he must do. Just telling isn't enough. The same things hold true for words such as "make," "list," "in the field," and "collect, identify, and label."
6. On the other hand, you cannot require more of a Scout than stated. You must not, for example, say, "I want to be sure you really know your stuff, so instead of the 20 items you need for your collection, you must have 30 to get my signature."
7. It is, of course, acceptable for a Scout on his own initiative to do more than the requirement calls for.
8. 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 responsibilities of a merit badge counselor is to teach the Scout the skills required.
9. The most effective way to teach a skill is to get the Scout to practice while learning.

**A COUNSELOR**

1. Interviews the Scout with a buddy present to determine
   a. His preparedness
   b. The amount of knowledge he already has in the subject
   c. His interest in the subject
2. Encourages the Scout as he sets short-term and long-term goals
3. Follows up with the Scout on his goals—projects, collections, written work
4. Helps the Scout evaluate his progress
5. Encourages the Scout to ask for any help he needs to gain more knowledge or skill in the subject

**A COACH**

1. Teaches the Scout the skills required
2. Gives the Scout an opportunity to practice the skills under his or her guidance
3. Takes a genuine interest in the projects and encourages completion

**REQUIREMENTS**

Check over the requirements for the merit badge(s) each counselor will be using. (Have the counselors do this individually.) Merit badge requirements are available online at ***http://www.scouting.org.***

**MERIT BADGE LIBRARY**

A listing of all merit badge pamphlets can be found on the inside back cover of the current ***Boy Scout Requirements*** or any merit badge pamphlet.

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