

How To Earn Merit Badges

Now that you've reached First Class rank you may be wondering what's next. In the past year or so you've mastered many of the fundamental scout skills that you'll use throughout your scouting career. Now the real fun, and the real challenge begins. Merit badges are an opportunity to explore potential hobbies as well as career possibilities. Nearly 20% of all scouts end up working in fields they were first exposed to through the merit badge program.

But merit badges are quite different from the advancement programs of cub scouts and first year boy scouts. The troop doesn't teach you or steer you through the process. You pick which badges you want to work on and do them as an independent study. To earn a merit badge you should:

1. **Pick a badge to work on.** There are currently 115 merit badges. A complete list can be found in your Boy Scout Handbook. A book listing requirements for each merit badge is also available to help you make your decision.
2. **Pick a counselor.** Each of the adult leaders has a listing of available counselors in our district. Get the names and phone numbers of a few in case your first choice is not available. Also consider where the counselor lives since your parents will probably have to drive you.
3. **Get a blue merit badge application.** Mr. Berger brings blank blue cards to each meeting. Ask him for one, fill it out and make sure he signs it. That way when you meet with your counselor he can see that your Scoutmaster is aware that you are working on the badge.
4. **Read the requirements and the merit badge book.**
5. **Call a counselor to see if he is able to work on the badge with you.** If he is find out what his expectations are. Some counselors will want you to complete all the requirements before meeting with them. Others may want to meet several times to finish all the requirements. It depends on the particular counselor and which badge you are working on. In either case make as many appointments as necessary to finish the badge.
6. **Meet with your counselor and complete the requirements.** Always bring your blue card, merit badge book, and any notes you have made.

7. When all requirements have been completed get the counselor to sign your blue card. The card is in three sections. One is for the counselor' s records, one is for the troop, and one is for your own personal records. Be sure to keep your copy in a safe place. On the Eagle Scout application you have to list every badge earned and the date you earned it.

8. Turn your signed blue card in to Mrs. Puthoff. She will enter your merit badge into the troop records and get your badge from scout headquarters. You will usually get your badge at the next regular troop meeting.