



Kirkwood, MO

Merit Badge Basics

“Badges!?! We ain't got no badges.” from *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*.
Don't let this happen to you.

How to choose a merit badge:

- 1) Required for Eagle. You don't choose these, they have chosen you. There is no required order to achieve these.
- 2) Others. Pick something that you know something about already, or wish to learn more about. Some Merit badges are relatively simple, while others can be quite challenging (the Invention merit badge required merely that the Scout obtain a US patent).

The Merit Badge Counselor

These are volunteers who may or may not be active adult Scouters. All have been approved by the council for the Merit Badges they counsel. Most counsel subjects that are within their areas of special training, career or avocation.

Finding a Counselor

Go to www.stlbsa.org. On the left hand column is a list of menu options; choose Advancement. Within this select Merit Badge Counselor Directory. Choose the Merit Badge, and district (we are in New Horizons). You can narrow things further by selecting a particular zip code.

Who to pick is up to you. You might know a name because of a recommendation from another scout, from other merit badge work, or from outside Scouting. Odds are you will not know anyone on the list. This can be one of the most intimidating parts of the Merit Badge process, making a cold call to someone you do not know.

Before you call:

- 1) Review the requirements for the merit badge. Some Merit Badges have requirements with long lead times. For example Family Life requires a 90 day diary, so start early. Meritbadge.org lists requirements for all Merit Badges. Check here to be certain that you are using the most current requirements.
- 2) Prepare with some study, reading or other appropriate activity relevant to the merit badge.

When you call:

- 1) Have a list of dates and times for which you are able to meet; clear this with your parent who will have to drive you.
- 2) The buddy system applies to merit badges. If your parent is not planning on staying during the meeting, then another scout should be with you.
- 3) Plan to call the counselor during the evening at their home phone number. Identify yourself as a Scout and address those with whom you speak with proper titles, Mr. or Ms. (while work phone numbers are listed, generally avoid using these as first contact; e-mail can be used if listed)



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- 4) Objective with this phone call:
 - schedule a meeting time and place
 - determine what work you need to complete before this meeting
 - determine whether there is any special equipment or clothing that is necessary for your meeting (Class A uniform unless determined otherwise)

Going to the Merit Badge counselor

- 1) You must have a Merit Badge card signed by the scoutmaster or other Troop representative to take with you to the meeting; do not forget this step.
- 2) Wear your full Class A uniform unless you determined with your counselor that civilian clothes were to be worn.
- 3) Have a scout buddy, or your parent present with you at all times.
- 4) You may complete your requirements on one visit, or return visits may be necessary. When your work is completed the counselor will sign off on your Merit Badge card.
- 5) Return this card to Mrs. Hall.

Merit Badge Cards

You will receive the card back at the next court of honor along with the Merit Badge award. Keep the card in a safe place. Make copies of the card, and keep the copies in a separate safe place. When you apply for the Eagle Award you will need to produce these Merit Badge cards.