

“Blue Cards” and the Merit Badge Process

- 1) The scout selects a merit badge he wishes to complete.
- 2) The scout identifies and approved merit badge counselor. The scout should then meet with the counselor to confirm the counselor’s availability to oversee the merit badge work.
- 3) The scout contacts the Merit Badge Administrator or the Advancement Chair at a troop meeting. The blue card must be signed by a scoutmaster prior to any work beginning on the merit badge.

Note: In order to emphasize the scout’s responsibility and accountability blue cards will only be provided to and received from the scout.

- 4) The scout works on completing the merit badge requirements and meets with his counselor as appropriate to review and get approval of completed requirements.

Note: During the process of completing the merit badge the scout is responsible for retaining the incomplete blue card. This helps to serve as a reminder that work is incomplete and that the scout is responsible for ensuring progress is made toward completion.

The Blue Card consists of three sections

- 1) Application for Merit Badge
- 2) Applicants Record
- 3) Counselor’s Record

The scout should complete both sides of the Application.

- 5) Once the scout completes the requirements for the merit badge he will schedule a time to meet with his counselor and turn in anything that requires review by the counselor. Upon approval of all of the work required for the merit badge the counselor will **mark the appropriate requirements as complete, sign the blue card, retain the counselor’s copy and return the remaining two sections to the scout.**

- 6) Upon obtaining the counselor’s signature the scout will make a copy of the remaining two blue card sections for his own records and turn in the original blue card sections to the Merit Badge Administrator or the Advancement Chair. The copies will allow the blue card to be reproduced in the event that the original is lost.

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- 7) The card will be reviewed, signed and turned into Merit Badge Administrator or the Advancement Chair. Troopmaster will be updated to indicate the merit badge has been completed and at the next troop court of honor the scout will be awarded the merit badge along with the scout’s section of the blue card to retain for his records.

Note: Merit badge courses that take place outside of the troop may or may not utilize blue cards for recording progress toward the completion of a merit badge. These special situations will be handled on a case by case basis to ensure the scout is provided an accurate record of his merit badge completion.

The following FAQs address the most commonly asked questions about merit badges.

As with rank advancement, there are no gray areas built into the BSA merit badge requirements; there is no room for subjective interpretation. Fifty miles is fifty miles, and ninety days is ninety days. Either a scout achieved the stated requirement, or he didn't.

There is no pre-dating of requirements that will be accomplished at a future date.

Furthermore, a Scout is expected to have read the merit badge book PRIOR TO demonstrating his proficiency in the merit badge skills to the counselor. Our responsibility is to uphold these requirements for all scouts. Exceptions or modifications are made only in cases of disability.

1. Who initiates the merit badge process?

It is the scout's responsibility to identify a merit badge he wishes to pursue and a counselor for that badge. The troop maintains a list of registered merit badge counselors on the troop website. If the scout would like to pursue a merit badge for which there is no troop counselor the scout should ask for assistance in locating a counselor from outside the troop. From there he will request a blue card from Merit Badge Administrator or the Advancement Chair and the front of the card will be signed after confirming the scout's intentions and that a merit-badge counselor has been identified.

2. What is a blue card?

The blue card is a three part form used by BSA to track progress toward the completion of merit badges. The card has three sections which need to be filled out by the scout. Upon completion of the merit badge, one section will be given to the scout, another will be retained by the counselor and the last will be filed by the troop Achievement Chair. When a scout reaches the point of completing an Eagle Scout application, proof of completion for each merit badge will be required.

3. My blue card has three sections. Who gets all these sections?

- a. **Applicant Record** - fill this out completely and leave it attached to the Troop Record.
- b. **Troop Record** - fill this out completely and leave it attached to the Applicant Record.
- c. **Merit Badge Counselors Record** - have your merit badge counselor sign this off. The counselor may retain this portion for his/her records. It does not have to be turned in to the troop.

Note: It is recommended not to separate the blue card sections to prevent losing one section.

4. What is a merit badge counselor?

A merit-badge counselor is a registered adult who will help guide the scout through a merit badge. Most adults sign up for badges in which they have experience or interests, such as basketry, public speaking or fishing. In many cases the only thing a counselor will do is sign off the badge after reviewing the scout's proficiency with the requirements. A merit badge counselor must be 18 years of age and a registered adult.

5. I'm a parent and would like to become a merit badge counselor. How do I sign up?

Fill out an adult leader application and a merit badge counselor form and submit them to the Scout Master. Once you have been approved by the district advancements chair you will be notified. This process takes varying lengths of time.

6. Are there any situations in which a scout may be discouraged from starting a merit badge?

If a scout has an excessive number of partial (incomplete) merit badges he may be requested to complete one or several of these badges prior to opening another one. These situations will be handled on a case by case basis.

7. Can a parent request a blue card for the scout or turn in a blue card for the scout?

In order to emphasize the Scout's responsibility and accountability blue cards will only be provided to and received from the Scout. It is important the scout be able to articulate to the scoutmaster his intent to work on the merit badge and his selection of a counselor when requesting the merit badge. This provides an opportunity for some discussion about

his progress to date. Additionally, the scout needs to assume the responsibility for turning in the completed blue card in case there are any questions about the completed blue card.

8. Who retains the blue card while the scout is working on completing the requirements?

During the process of completing the merit badge the scout is responsible for retaining the incomplete blue card. This helps to serve as a reminder that work is incomplete and that the scout is responsible for ensuring progress is made toward completion. It is very important the scout establish a method for keeping up with the incomplete blue cards. If an incomplete blue card is lost there is no record of the progress the scout has made towards completing the merit badge.

9. Does the troop hold merit badge classes on outings to bring the scouts through their paces?

Not necessarily. An adult leader may sometimes help scouts through elements of a badge on an outing. Rarely will this result in a scout getting through a complete badge, as there are often requirements that require other elements of participation.

In the end, it is a scout's responsibility to read the material for a badge and pursue his counselor for sign-off. This is a low-impact way of teaching our young scouts to take responsibility for their actions.

10. I don't know the merit badge counselor for this badge, so can I ask my dad (ASPL, other adult, neighbor, etc.) to sign me off?

No. The merit badge counselor must be a registered adult who is approved by the district advancements chair as a merit badge counselor for that badge to ensure that BSA Eagle Board requirements are met.

11. My dad is the merit badge counselor, and he's a registered adult. Can he sign me off?

Technically, yes, however we discourage it. We discourage the parent from being the signing party for any Eagle required badges. The parent can sign off non-eagle required badges, but generally the troop would prefer a scout expand his horizons by getting a sign-off from another adult for all merit badges.

12. What is the Scoutmaster's/Assistant Scoutmaster's role in the merit badge process?

The scoutmaster's/assistant scoutmaster's role is signing the card at the beginning and at the end. After discussing the badge with a scout, the scoutmaster/assistant scoutmaster signs the card at the beginning of the process. His signature is also required at the end of the process after all items are complete and the merit badge counselor has signed off the card. From there it can be submitted to the Advancement Chair for entry into the troop record and preparation for presentation of the actual badge at the next troop court of honor.

13. When can I turn in my blue card? Does it have to be at my Board of Review?

A scout may turn in his blue-card at any time.

14. I earned merit badges at camp. What happened to them?

At camp we gather all of the merit badges and bring them back in a bunch. It's easier to ensure they're not lost in transit. The trip leader is responsible for delivering the blue cards to the scout. The scout is then responsible for turning them into the Advancement chair for data entry and awards.

15. I only got through part of my badge at camp. Where is it, and what do I do with it?

Partial merit badges are returned to scouts as soon as possible after summer camp. A partial merit badge usually has a few requirements that need to be signed off before it can be submitted. Find a counselor, finish it up and submit it as soon as possible.

16. To whom should a scout give their completely filled out and signed-off merit badge blue card?

Completed blue card should be submitted by the scout to either Merit Badge Administrator or the Advancement Chair. They will review the card with the scout, sign it and turn it in to the Advancement Chair. From there the badge will be recorded so it may be awarded at the next court of honor.

17. Can a scout change to a new counselor once he has started a merit badge.

A scout is expected to complete a merit badge working with the counselor with whom he initiated the blue card. This pertains to merit badge college as well as merit badges being worked with a troop counselor. One obvious exception to this policy is incomplete summer camp merit badges. To complete these merit badges the scout will need to select a troop counselor with whom to complete the requirements.

18. Can a blue card be reproduced?

Blue cards can be reproduced from Troopmaster records to support Eagle rank advancement if needed.