

Troop 944 Merit Badge Advancement Plan

As a special part of a Scout's learning adventure, Merit Badges are awards presented to a Scout when he completes the requirements for one of the Merit Badge subjects. There are more than 100 Merit Badges that a Scout may earn. The subject matters range from vocational and careers to introduction to personal development, hobbies, sports, high adventure, citizenship, and life-skills development.

Each Merit Badge is designed to teach the Scout new skills, while outwardly encouraging him to challenge himself and to have fun in the process. Merit Badges offer a range of difficulty over a breadth of subject matters. The Merit Badge itself is a simple embroidered patch, but the intangible end result of earning it is that the Scout gains self-confidence from overcoming obstacles to achieve a goal, as well as enhancing his background for more challenging activities.

Troop 944 uses guidelines for Merit Badges and Scouts for three reasons.

1. Merit Badges should be appropriate for the experience level and educational grade of the Scout. They should not frustrate him and be within his current level of understanding. For example, first year Scouts should focus on the First Aid skills in rank requirements, and plan to take First Aid Merit Badge in later years. The later repetition helps remind the Scout of the correct procedures.
2. The Scout should be able to comprehend the concepts behind the requirements. He should not skate over the surface, minimally performing the requirements without developing an understanding to be able to use the information in the future. For example, Merit Badges such as American Business and Personal Management have concepts that Scouts will need in high school and college, as well as later in life.
3. Many of the Merit Badges are “windows” into possible careers. Vocational guidance may be provided to older Scouts in particular at this stage. Merit Badges in this classification depend on the particular requirements and may be positioned in any of the categories.

A matrix of which Merit Badges are appropriate for which Scouts has been developed with this in mind. The goal of the first year in Scouting is primarily to attain First Class. First year Scouts are not trained in leadership nor do they have the experience or abilities in most Troop leadership positions.

Most Scout camps, District, and Council events use age guidelines similar to those of the Troop.

Some Merit Badges are best performed in summer camps where special arrangements and equipment setups are developed for demonstration and

testing. These Merit Badges are not typically done in regular meetings or on camping trips.

Camping Merit Badge should be started after the Scout has been several camping trips so he can relate some experiences to the Counselor, and understand safety requirements. After he has camped on 8-12 trips, he will have the experience to complete the Merit Badge.

In order to serve as a Merit Badge counselor, an adult must submit the Merit Badge Counselor Application (available on the Troop 944 website) and the BSA Adult Volunteer Application (available from the Scoutmaster or Council Service Center) to the Troop Merit Badge Coordinator. The forms must be approved by both the Troop and the District.

The Troop has additional guidelines to assure all Scouts are treated consistently.

To begin work on a Merit Badge, a Scout must request a Merit Badge Application (a.k.a. Blue Card) from the Scoutmaster or his designee.

Many counselors (especially for Eagle-required Merit Badges) do not consider themselves a “teacher” as in schools, but a facilitator for the Scout to learn the information and review with them for learning/skills completeness. Scouts are expected to obtain a Merit Badge book for reference and be familiar with the current annual Boy Scout Requirements book that must be used for the badge.

If several counselors are available, a Scout should work with a non-relative on a Merit Badge.

Merit Badge counselors may counsel their own son if they are working with a group of Scouts. They may NOT meet only with their son on a Merit Badge.

In general, the PLC/Troop will arrange for counselors to present Merit Badges at regular troop meetings. Patrol Leaders may also arrange Patrol Merit Badge sessions - as in all planned activities, these should be discussed in PLC sessions before undertaking. Scouts must still obtain Blue Cards from the Scoutmaster. Patrol Leaders should only arrange sessions within the guidelines of the Troop.

If a Scout wishes to take a Merit Badge from a non-Troop Counselor, he should request a Blue Card from the Scoutmaster (or his designee) and inform the Scoutmaster who the counselor is before obtaining a Blue Card.