**Parents’ Guide to Merit Badges**

**What is a Merit Badge?** You can learn about sports, crafts, science, trades, business, and future careers as you earn merit badges. There are more than 135 merit badges, and any Scout may earn any of these at any time.  It is an uncomplicated process that gives a Scout the confidence achieved through overcoming obstacles. Social skills improve. Self-reliance develops.

**Pick a Subject.** A new scout should think about their interests and hobbies, and what they are learning in school. A lot of times, a merit badge will match up with one of these. Read the requirements of the merit badges you think might interest you, and pick one to earn.

**Ask your Scoutmaster.** When a scout knows what merit badge he would like to start, the scout (not a parent) needs initiate merit badge with the Scoutmaster. The scoutmaster will provide the scout with a signed Blue Card, and at least one Merit Badge Counselor suggestion. It is important to note the “blue card” is the nationally recognized merit badge record. The blue card is also the record of any partial merit badges.

**Merit Badge Counselor.**  A Merit Badge Counselor is a person who has special knowledge in their merit badge subjects and are interested in helping you. Our Troop has a list of Merit Badge Counselors available. If our Troop does not have a counselor for that subject, we can reach out to the District and obtain a merit badge counselor.

**Contact the Merit Badge Counselor**. The scout will need to get in touch with the merit badge counselor and explain that you want to earn the badge. The counselor may ask to meet you to explain what is expected and to start helping you meet the requirements. You should also discuss work you have already started or possibly completed.

At the first meeting, you and your merit badge counselor will review and may start working on the requirements. In some cases, you may share the work you have already started or completed.

**Scout Buddy System**. *You must have another person with you at each meeting with the merit badge counselor*. This person can be your parent or legal guardian, or another registered adult.

Ask your counselor to help you learn the things you need to know or do. You should read the merit badge pamphlet on the subject. Our Troop has a library of merit badge pamphlets that can be borrowed.

**Requirements.** You are expected to meet the requirements as they are stated—no more and no less. You must do exactly what is stated in the requirements. If it says “show or demonstrate,” that is what you must do. Just telling about it isn’t enough. The same thing holds true for such words as “make,” “list,” “in the field,” and “collect,” “identify,” and “label.”

**Show Your Stuff**. When you are ready, contact the counselor again to make an appointment. When you go, take along the things you have made to meet the requirements. If they are too big to move, take pictures or have an adult tell in writing what you have done. The counselor will test you on each requirement to make sure you know your stuff and have done or can do the things required.

**Get the Badge.** When the counselor is satisfied you have met each requirement, he or she will sign your Blue Card. Give the signed application to your unit leader or Advancement Coordinator.

**Time Limits.** There is no time limit for starting and completing a merit badge, but all work must be completed by the time a Scout turns 18. This is significant for merit badges that have 30,60, and 90 day requirements. For instance, a scout wants to start the Personal Fitness Merit Badge on March 15th, and he is going to turn 18 on May 1st. This Merit Badge has a 90 day requirement and therefore cannot be completed in time for the scout to complete prior to his 18th birthday.