

COUNSELOR'S COMPASS

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News You Can Use

Recent Merit Badge Changes

Merit badge changes were recently announced for some very popular merit badges as a direct result of feedback from leaders across the country.

Cooking

For years, Scout leaders reported that there was not enough “cooking” in the Cooking merit badge, and it did not adequately represent all types of cooking. In 2014, the badge became an Eagle Scout-required badge once again, and these concerns were addressed. Almost immediately, feedback began to come in from leaders saying that although the new requirements were a great improvement, perhaps they went overboard.

The badge had become more technical and science-oriented, and the requirements could be better organized. The Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force heard you and got to work. In a very unusual move, an update was released this year to help Scouts earn the badge without losing the original intent of the improvements. REMEMBER... A Scout can continue to use the older requirements should he choose to, or he can switch to the new ones. The choice is his. Both sets of requirements can be found at www.scouting.org/meritbadges.aspx.

(Continued on page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE

- **News You Can Use:** Recent Merit Badge Changes; 2016 Merit Badge Updates
- **Glad You Asked:** Disabilities Awareness Merit Badge To Be Revised in 2016
- **On The Lighter Side:** Misinterpreting Requirements Isn't Hard To Do
- **Helpful Resources** : Publications in Print and Materials Posted on Scouting.org

(Continued from page 1)

Lifesaving



Several requirements were rewritten to reinforce safety and clarify for Scouts and counselors what is expected. The pamphlet has greatly been improved with new text and photos.

Boy Scout Requirements Book Error

Lifesaving merit badge requirement 1b which reads, “Swim continuously for 400 yards using each of the following strokes in a strong manner for at least 50 continuous yards: front crawl, sidestroke, breaststroke, and elementary backstroke” was accidentally left out. The requirement is still in force and must be successfully completed .

Snow Sports



Scouts have previously been able to earn this badge by demonstrating their skills in skiing or snowboarding. Now, they will also be able to do so with a third option--snowshoeing. Many Scouts participate in snowshoeing at camp, and now they can earn Snow Sports merit badge by doing so.

Counselors should note that if a Scout has already started working on a badge when a new edition of the pamphlet is introduced, he may continue using the same merit badge pamphlet and fulfill the requirements therein to earn the badge. He need not start over again with a new pamphlet and possibly revised requirements.

Therefore, counselors must often remain aware of both old and new requirements. Paying attention to such changes is especially important in the case of a partially-completed merit badge, with work reflected on a Scout’s “blue card.”

You should always check for the most current and accurate merit badge requirements at: www.scouting.org/meritbadges .

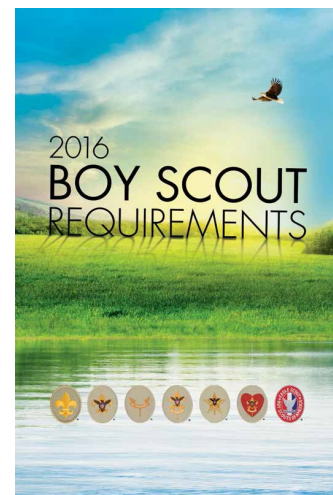
2016 Merit Badge Updates

The 2016 *Boy Scout Requirements* book contains the official requirements in effect for this calendar year. Any Scout just beginning work on a merit badge must use the current requirements listed in the book. Thus, it is important that counselors know which badges were updated.

Merit badges updated and in effect this year include:

Badges with Extensive Requirement Revisions:

Cooking — Lifesaving — Photography — Snow Sports



(Continued from page 2)

Badges with updates not as extensive include:



American Business (2a)	Citizenship in the Community (2,7)	First Aid (2b)
American Labor (3)	Citizenship in the World (4c)	Mining and Society (1a)
Archery (Options A & B, 5f3)	Emergency Preparedness (2, 3b, 6, 7, 8)	Personal Management (2a, 5, 9e)
Camping (3)	Environmental Science (3e[2], 3g)	Railroading (5b, 7d)
Chemistry (1b, 1c, 7b)		Skating (1, Ice Skating Option 2d)



Counselors are encouraged to pick up their own copy of the *2016 Boy Scout Requirements* book at their local Scout shop. The book may also be purchased through www.scoutstuff.org/ or by calling the National Distribution Center toll-free at: 800-323-0732.



About *Counselor's Compass*

Counselor's Compass is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America's National Advancement Task Force and Program Development Team. Its intent is to provide volunteers with practical counseling advice through a concise, informative approach in order to communicate advancement procedures more efficiently. Therefore, districts and councils may reprint articles from this publication. Our plan is to make *Counselor's Compass* available quarterly. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at merit.badge@scouting.org.

Glad You Asked

Disabilities Awareness Merit Badge To Be Revised in 2016

The intent of the Disabilities Awareness merit badge is to create an understanding of what a disability might feel like and the different means a person with a disability has to deal with in their daily life. The current requirements and pamphlet content touch lightly on the “invisible” disabilities and contain errors in the portrayal of deafness and person-first language. The current badge requirements and resources can be found at: http://www.scouting.org/filestore/Merit_Badge_RegandRes/Disabilities_Awareness.pdf



In an effort to make the badge current and relevant to today’s youth, a task force of knowledgeable volunteers reviewed the current requirements and content, and recommended various improvements. Implementation of requirements that portray individuals with disabilities as people like you and me will give Scouts a more realistic view of those in the community where they live. Likewise, understanding the variations in person-first language will help members to better understand individuals with specific disabilities.

The recommended updates will enable Scouts working on the badge to understand better the types of disabilities, the needs of those who have disabilities, and resources to help those who have disabilities. The revised requirements should be posting towards the ladder part of the year.



On the Lighter Side



Misinterpreting a Requirement Isn't Hard To Do

A Scout's mom once called and spoke to a National staff member expressing her concern over Fishing merit badge requirement No. 9:

"Catch at least one fish and identify it. If regulations and health concerns permit, clean and cook a fish you have caught. Otherwise, acquire a fish and cook it."

Her Scout son could not eat any type of seafood due to a severe allergic reaction. The staff member explained no where in the requirement does it state the Scout must eat the fish he caught. Needless to say, she expressed a sight of relief!

We share this example to point out just how easily a badge requirement can be misinterpreted. Our brains have a remarkable way of filling in what our eyes don't see. Thus, the mom thought the final logical step was to eat the fish her son cooked and cleaned. Had she re-read the requirement, she would have saved the expense of calling the National office.

In hindsight, merit badge requirements are intentionally written for a reason. They take into consideration enhancing a Scout's outdoor experience as well as his special needs that may arise.

Helpful Resources

Access to merit badge requirements:

www.scouting.org/meritbadges

Guide to Advancement:

www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/33088.pdf

Guide to Safe Scouting:

www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34416.pdf

The Essentials of Merit Badge Counseling:

www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/Resources/advancement_presentations.aspx



(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

Merit badge pamphlet series

Boy Scout Requirements book, No. 33216

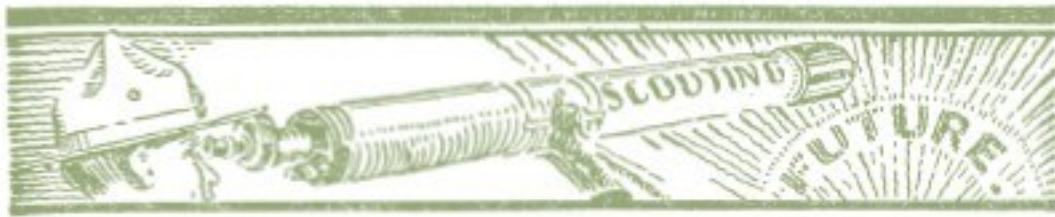
Application for Merit Badge, No. 34124

A Guide for Merit Badge Counseling, No. 34532

Boy Scout Handbook, No. 34554

Merit Badge Counselor Information, No. 34405

www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34405.pdf



Updated Merit Badge Requirements Link

Attention! The requirements you see posted at: www.scouting.org/meritbadges are the most current, accurate, and official. This will always be the best place to find the most up-to-date requirements.

As you browse through the merit badges, you'll notice most having the current and previous requirements listed. This was done for the benefit of Scouts who started working on a badge prior to being revised, and wishing to continue working on the old requirements until completing the badge. Topic 7.0.4.3 in the current *Guide to Advancement* explains further what one does when requirements change.