

COUNSELOR'S COMPASS

Vol. 2, No. 2

Spring 2015



Things to Do

Changes Counselors Need to Know

Informing counselors of changes in the merit badge program is an important aspect of *Counselor's Compass*. The 2015 *Guide to Advancement* points out eight significant topic changes in section seven that counselors need to be aware of. Listed below are the topics affected:

- **Topic 7.0.0.1:** Initial effort on a merit badge may begin before the Scoutmaster signs a blue card. In other words, a Scout may begin working on merit badges as soon as he's registered.
- **Topic 7.0.1.1:** Counselors providing Web-based opportunities must now be registered and approved. This includes keeping their Youth Protection training current.
- **Topic 7.0.2.3:** Unit merit badge counselor lists should not be accessible to Scouts on-line. Respecting the privacy of merit badge counselors is the reason for this addition.
- **Topic 7.0.3.0:** A small-scale approach in merit badge counseling is encouraged. Teaching a badge to a Scout and his buddy or a small group affords the counselor coaching and guidance opportunities not possible in a large group setting.
- **Topic 7.0.3.0:** The recommended merit badge process was amended from 10 to 12 steps.
- **Topic 7.0.3.1:** If merit badge instruction includes Web-based interaction, it must be conducted in accordance with BSA *Social Media Guidelines*. For example, always copy one or more authorized adults on email messages between counselors and Scouts.

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- **Topic 7.0.3.2:** Bullets were added for actions that should be implemented for merit badge group instruction. For example, it should now be an acceptable practice to issue partial completions at the end of each group session. This practice ensures counselors sign off only requirements that Scouts have actually and personally completed.
- **Topic 7.0.4.11:** A new topic was added about merit badge prerequisites. Unless it states another badge must be earned before proceeding with the remaining requirements such as Scuba Diving's Swimming merit badge requirement, Scouts may treat prerequisites as requirements.

Counselors are urged to read the 2015 version of the *Guide to Advancement* (No. 33088) recently posted to the Advancement Resources web page (www.scouting.org/advancement).

News You Can Use

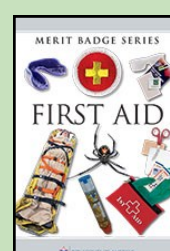
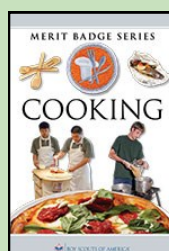
Interactive Digital Pamphlets Now on Sale at ScoutStuff.org

On Friday, May 22nd, BSA's first set of interactive, digital pamphlets went on sale: First Aid, Cooking, Robotics, and the new Animation merit badge. Scouts and adult volunteers can now purchase their digital pamphlets for the same price as the printed versions. This new format provides interactive ways for boys to explore in detail and see illustrations of the topics being covered, adding excitement to their overall merit badge experience. Pamphlet topics are searchable and accessed quickly on any PC, tablet, or mobile device.

Scouts will enjoy the interaction, and counselors will be able to use the digital pamphlets to demonstrate a particular topic more efficiently. People wishing to get the latest information about interactive, digital pamphlets should visit: www.boyslife.org/meritbadges. At this webpage, an overview video, information on augmented reality, and the next group of pamphlets coming soon and where to buy them are provided. Scouts who choose to utilize the printed pamphlets will not be penalized or tested on information contained only in the digitally enhanced pamphlets.

Interactive Digital Merit Badges:

- ♦ Animation
- ♦ Cooking
- ♦ First Aid
- ♦ Robotics



Steps for Success

Be Sure to Read the Notes

Merit badge counselors need to know their subject matter, but they should also understand the mission and aims of Scouting if they are to fully appreciate how they can help Scouts grow and learn through the process. In addition to making sure the Scout has completed the requirements as stated, counselors should look for ways to influence each Scout's character, citizenship, and personal fitness in a positive way.

Because a Scout's association with a counselor relates to more than just the advancement method in Scouting, the process in this larger context begins when the Scout first meets with the counselor and then continues until the blue card is signed off. What should the counselor do to be prepared for that initial meeting with a Scout? What can be done to make that particular merit badge experience fun and exciting—as well as informative—in a way that supports the aims and mission of the BSA? The answers can often be found in the least likely yet most obvious of place: the merit badge pamphlet.

The information presented in the pamphlet helps the counselor understand what the Scout should be studying and the level of learning expected for that particular badge. Many pamphlets also contain clarifications and suggestions for projects or demonstrations that are required.

Most pamphlets include an introductory section called "Note to the Counselor." Some notes address safety considerations, training, or special qualifications needed for presenting merit badge activities. Many also provide suggestions on what, when, and how to counsel or coach Scouts in subject matter important to the BSA's risk management plan. The following pamphlets have extensive "Notes to the Counselor:"

Camping	Home Repairs	Reptile & Amphibian Study	Small Boat Sailing
Canoeing	Inventing	Rifle Shooting	Snow Sports
Climbing	Kayaking	Robotics	Swimming
Composite Materials	Lifesaving	Rowing	Water Sports
Emergency Preparedness	Metalwork	Scuba Diving	Welding
Game Design	Pioneering	Shotgun Shooting	Whitewater
Gardening	Reading	Skating	Woodwork

We must keep in mind skills learned and knowledge gained are important, but not so important as achieving the aims of Scouting met through the process of earning a merit badge. Similar to a Scoutmaster's coaching role in guiding young men in the Scouting program, counselors likewise encourage Scouts to expand their horizons as they pursue merit badges.

Glad You Asked

Merit Badge Myths: Fact vs. Fiction

In the Winter issue, we reviewed topics that have generated much discussion among Scouters over the years, and provide answers supported by the *Guide to Advancement*. We're continuing this approach beginning with the first merit badge myth:

Myth: A Scout must first discuss the merit badges he wishes to pursue with his Scoutmaster before starting to work on requirements.

Fact: According to topic 7.0.0.1 in the 2015 *Guide to Advancement*, a Scout may begin working on merit badge requirements as soon as he's registered. Discussing the badges with his unit leader is still part of the merit badge plan as it ensures the Scout receives contact information of a currently registered, approved merit badge counselor and a signed blue card.

Myth: Instructing a merit badge to a large group of Scouts is ideal because it creates synergy among the participants.

Fact: According to topic 7.0.3.0 in the 2015 *Guide to Advancement*, teaching a badge to a Scout and his buddy or a small group such as a patrol affords the counselor coaching and guidance opportunities not possible in a large group setting. It also ensures each individual Scout has actually and personally completed the required work.

Myth: A Scout must earn all or most of the Eagle-required merit badges first before he can begin working on his elective badges.

Fact: Any registered Scout can work on any merit badge at any time (*Guide to Advancement*, topic 7.0.0.3).

"No council, committee, district, unit, or individual has the authority to add to, or subtract from, advancement requirements. There are limited exceptions relating only to youth members with disabilities." – 2015 Guide to Advancement.



Completing Requirements as Stated Matters

In our inaugural issue of *Counselor's Compass*, we discussed Camping merit badge requirement 9a and how easily a long-term camping experience can be misinterpreted by parents. Let's now consider a different scenario not typically encountered — a legally blind Scout working on the Astronomy merit badge. Requirement four states:

"4. Do the following:

A. Identify in the sky at least 10 constellations, at least four of which are in the zodiac."

The legally blind Scout claims he has completed all of the requirements for the Astronomy merit badge. When asked how he identified the constellations in requirement four, he replied his merit badge counselor punched holes in paper plates and held them over the Scout's head outside at night in the right place where each constellation is located in the night sky. The Scout then used his hands to feel and identify the constellations. His response begs the question, "Did he complete the requirement as written?"

The answer is Yes. He completed the requirement using a technique for "seeing" through his sense of touch. He felt the shape of the constellations, and through discussion with his counselor the Scout sensed the vastness and inspiration we all feel when we gaze into the night sky. He identified all of the constellations correctly.

Counselors need to be creative about ways to help Scouts be successful. If we can do that, they will learn and grow from the experiences.



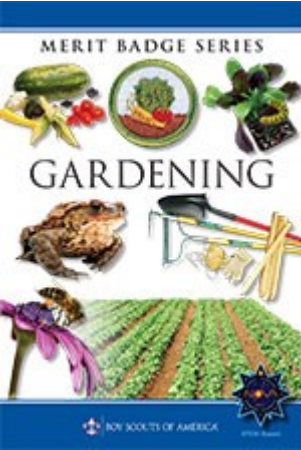

About *Counselor's Compass*

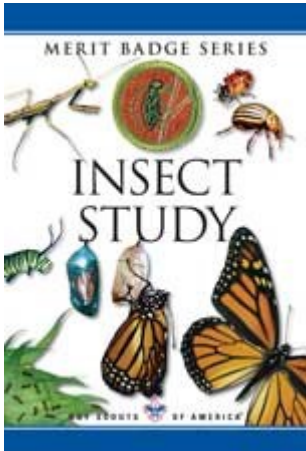

Counselor's Compass is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America's National Advancement Committee and Content Management Team. Its intent is to provide volunteers with practical counseling advice through a concise, informative approach in order to communicate advancement procedures more efficiently. Therefore, districts and councils may reprint articles from this publication. Our plan is to distribute *Counselor's Compass* quarterly, but special editions may go out whenever there is important information to share. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at merit.badge@scouting.org.

Beekeeping—A Part of Existing Merit Badges

Following an overwhelming response from concerned beekeepers across the country to reinstate the Beekeeping merit badge (discontinued in 1995), the BSA revised Beekeeping requirements and content, and integrated the updates into some existing merit badges. Recently updated badges include: Gardening, Insect Study, Nature, and Plant Science. Environmental Science and Forestry, once updated, completes the bee integration effort.

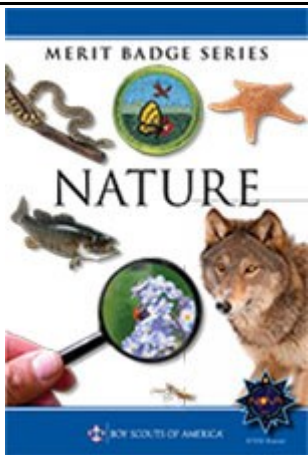

This initiative, implemented three years ago, enables Scouts to learn about the plight of the honeybee while creating awareness of their important stewardship role in protecting their community's natural resources. Those who want to further their experience by handling and keeping bees are given the option to do so. Some updated requirements include:

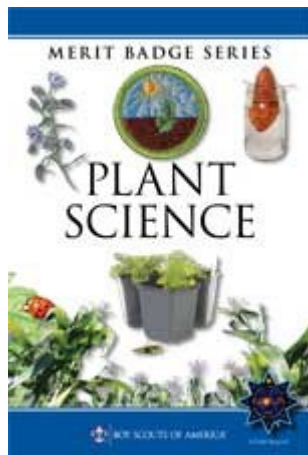

Gardening Merit Badge		
Pamphlet	Emblem	Bee Requirements
		<p>6. Explain to your counselor how and why honey bees are used in pollinating food crops. Discuss the problems facing the bee population today, and tell what you think would be the impact to humanity if there were no pollinators.</p> <p>8. Do ONE of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Prepare a honey super for use on a hive or colony. Remove a filled honey super from the hive or colony and prepare the honey for sale.

Insect Study Merit Badge		
Pamphlet	Emblem	Bee Requirement
		<p>8. Observe an ant colony or a beehive. Tell what you saw.</p>

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Nature Merit Badge		
Pamphlet	Emblem	Bee Requirement
		<p>4. Do all of the requirements in FIVE of the following fields:</p> <p>d. Insects and Spiders</p> <p>2. Hatch an insect from the pupa or cocoon; OR hatch adults from nymphs; OR keep larvae until they form pupae or cocoons; OR keep a colony of ants or bees through one season.</p>

Plant Science Merit Badge		
Pamphlet	Emblem	Bee Requirement
		<p>3. Explain how honeybees and other pollinating insects are important to plant life.</p>

Beekeepers wishing to mentor Scouts may want to consider becoming merit badge counselors for any of these badges. Contact your local council or visit www.scouting.org for more information.



Helpful Resources

Publications in Print and Materials Posted on Scouting.org

- Merit badge requirements: www.scouting.org/meritbadges
- *Guide to Advancement*: www.scouting.org/advancement
- *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
- *Merit Badge Counselor Information*, No. 34405: www.scouting.org/advancement
- 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



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