

**Hello Scouts, Parents,
Counselors, and Leaders,**

Welcome to our Scout at Home:
Summer Series!

The virtual world is always changing, evolving as new technology is developed, and others retired. For many of us, it may be a new world of uncharted territory where they need to spend time learning the ropes so please be patient. This summer we are expanding our offering of merit badge classes offered virtually.



There will be four week-long (Monday to Friday) sessions of offerings starting 7/20 and ending 8/17. A final schedule will be released on 7/1, with registration opening the same day. Each Merit Badge Class is offered at a cost of \$20 per participant. If required, any kits to complete a Merit Badge will be added as an additional fee. You will be contacted beforehand about any prerequisites for your classes.

A draft schedule of Merit Badge offerings will be posted and updated on our website as soon and as often as possible. Each Merit Badge class is unique. It may be offered during one session or many, taught by one instructor or multiple, and meet at different dates and times. All such details will be listed on the schedule.

Our classes will be based out of Google Classroom. You must have a Google Account in order to register and participate in our classes. You will be emailed specific information about your classes before the start date. During classes, you are expected to have an internet connection and functioning webcam so you can actively participate. As a reminder, each scout must demonstrate they have completed the requirements as written. Each instructor will have slightly different mythologies to ensure this outcome.

Scouts are required to complete the current Cyber Chip appropriate to their age before starting any virtual sessions. This training can be completed at <https://www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/cyber-chip/>.

At the end of the summer, blue cards will be issued to each unit. These items will be available in September in each unit's folder at the Richard E. Garman Scouting Center. Out of Council Units will have items mailed to them. Scouts will also be given the opportunity to purchase the Merit Badge Patch for any Merit Badge they complete. These patches will be issued with blue cards.

Please take a moment to read and understand the expectations listed on the next page. Remember, this technology allows us to come together as a Scouting Community, let's make the most of it! If you have any questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Yours in Scouting,

Josh Stellrecht
Josh@gnfccamps.org
Scouts BSA Director
Scout at Home: Summer Series

Virtual Merit Badge Guidelines

The following are guidelines for participating in virtual merit badge sessions in lieu of personal face-to-face instruction due to special circumstances.

As a Counselor:

- I agree to follow all BSA's Youth Protection Policies to ensure the safety of the Scouts in my virtual merit badge(s) sessions, including BSA Social Media Guidelines and Guide to Safe Scouting.
- I agree to follow the BSA Guide to Advancement, Guide for Merit Badge Counseling, and Merit Badge Group Instruction Guide while counseling Scouts doing the merit badge program virtually.
- I agree that when communicating with Scouts virtually, I will ALWAYS ensure that at least one other adult and/or Scout are present in those communications; whether it be via video conference, email, text, phone call, or any other form not specifically listed here.
- I agree that merit badge requirements will be done 'as stated', no more, no less. If requirements cannot be completed 'as stated', encourage the Scouts to wait until the Scout can complete the requirement 'as stated'.
- I agree that I "must know that every Scout—actually and personally—completed the requirements and there must be attention to each individual's projects and fulfillment of all requirements".
- I agree that I will enter requirement information of completions and partials in the registration system, as well as communicating them to the Scouts.
- I agree that any questions, concerns, issues, information sharing, feedback, etc. will be brought to the Virtual Merit Badge Team ASAP so they can be addressed, explored, looked at, etc.
- I agree that upon reading the information expressed in this "Virtual Merit Badge Guidelines" and "Important excerpts from the Guide To Advancement - 2019, No.33088", that upon joining the Virtual Merit Badge Team that I as a counselor, I am communicating that I agree to follow these guidelines.

As a Scout:

- I agree that in order for me to begin any merit badge in a virtual setting I must request and obtain my unit leader's (Scoutmaster's) permission.
- I agree that I will only work and connect with a merit badge counselor virtually with my parent's permission.
- I agree that I will complete the current Cyber Chip appropriate to my age.
(<https://www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/cyber-chip/>)
- I agree that when communicating with my virtual merit badge counselor, I will ALWAYS ensure that at least one other adult is present in those communications; whether it be via video conference, video chat, email, text, phone call, or any other form not specifically listed here.
- I promise that I will actually and personally complete each project and fulfill all requirements for the merit badges that I request instruction and counseling in a virtual setting.
- I understand that if a requirement uses action words like "show," "demonstrate," "tell", "explain" or "discuss" and etc., I agree that I must be prepared to exhibit said action word(s) through the use of electronic or digital technology when fulfilling requirements. If I am unable to do so, I must wait until such a time as I can present those requirements to a merit badge counselor in person.
- I promise that I will not abuse the privilege that I have been given to conduct a merit badge in a virtual setting. I will not bully, or otherwise disparage, any scout that may be in a virtual setting with me, and understand that if I do so this privilege may be revoked and I may not be allowed to continue in this setting.

As a Parent:

- I agree to allow my scout to engage with youth and adults in a virtual setting while working on a virtual merit badge.
- I understand that my scout will be required to interact and communicate with an adult in a virtual setting and that I will monitor such interaction as necessary to ensure the safety of all individuals involved in those activities.
- I agree to ensure that my scout actually and personally completes all projects and requirements for the merit badges, which are requested to be performed in a virtual setting.

- I agree that upon reading the information expressed in this “Virtual Merit Badge Guidelines” and “Important excerpts from the Guide To Advancement - 2019, No.33088”, that upon registering, I am communicating that both my scout and I agree to follow these guidelines with the merit badge counselor and my scout’s unit leader.

Special Considerations for Parents: Please consider strongly the following as a precaution for your Scout's safety and youth protection to prevent future contacts of one-on-one by allowing your Scout to use your email and phone numbers as they roam the virtual merit badge world.

Important excerpts from the [Guide To Advancement - 2019](#), No. 33088

[1.0.0.0] — Introduction

The current edition of the Guide to Advancement is the official source for administering advancement in all Boy Scouts of America programs: Cub Scouting, Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Sea Scouts. It replaces any previous BSA advancement manuals and previous editions of the Guide to Advancement.

[Page 2, and 5.0.1.4] — Policy on Unauthorized Changes to Advancement Program

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 special needs. For details see section 10, “Advancement for Members With Special Needs”.

[Page 2] — The “Guide to Safe Scouting” Applies

Policies and procedures outlined in the Guide to Safe Scouting apply to all BSA activities, including those related to advancement and Eagle Scout, Quartermaster, and Summit Award service projects.

[7.0.3.1] — The Buddy System and Certifying Completion

A youth member must not meet one-on-one with an adult. Sessions with counselors must take place in accordance with the Guide to Safe Scouting (www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss01). Notwithstanding the minimum leader requirements, age- and program- appropriate supervision must always be provided. Youth should be encouraged to bring a buddy, such as a friend, parent, guardian, brother, sister, other relative— or, better yet, another Scout working on the same badge. If merit badge counseling includes any web-based interaction, it must be conducted in accordance with BSA’s social media guidelines (www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection). For example, always copy one or more authorized adults on email messages between counselors and Scouts. When meeting with the counselor, the Scout should bring any required projects. If these cannot be transported, the Scout should present evidence, such as photographs or adult verification. The unit leader, for example, might state that a satisfactory bridge or tower has been built for the Pioneering merit badge or that meals were prepared for Cooking. If there are questions that requirements were met, a counselor may confirm with adults involved. Once satisfied, the counselor signs the blue card using the date upon which the Scout completed the requirements, or in the case of partials, initials the individual requirements passed. Note that from time to time, it may be appropriate for a requirement that has been met for one badge to also count for another. See “Fulfilling More Than One Requirement With a Single Activity,” 4.2.3.6.

[7.0.3.2] - Group Instruction

It is acceptable—and sometimes desirable—for merit badges to be taught in group settings. This often occurs at camp and merit badge midways, fairs, clinics, or similar events, and even online through webinars. These can be efficient methods, and interactive group discussions can support learning. Group instruction can also be attractive to “guest experts” assisting registered and approved counselors. Slide shows, skits, demonstrations, panels, and various other techniques can also be employed, but as any teacher can attest, not everyone will learn all the material. Because of the importance of individual attention and personal learning in the merit badge program, group instruction should be focused on those scenarios where the benefits are compelling.

There must be attention to each individual’s projects and fulfillment of all requirements. We must know that every Scout—actually and personally—completed them. If, for example, a requirement uses words like “show,” “demonstrate,” or “discuss,” then every Scout must do that. It is unacceptable to award badges on the basis of sitting in classrooms watching demonstrations, or remaining silent during discussions.

It is sometimes reported that Scouts who have received merit badges through group instructional settings have not fulfilled all the requirements. To offer a quality merit badge program, council and district advancement committees should ensure the following are in place for all group instructional events.

- A culture is established for merit badge group instructional events that partial completions are acceptable expected results.
- A guide or information sheet is distributed in advance of events that promotes the acceptability of partials, explains how merit badges can be finished after events, lists merit badge prerequisites, and provides other helpful information that will establish realistic expectations for the number of merit badges that can be earned at an event.
- Merit badge counselors are known to be registered and approved.
- Any guest experts or guest speakers, or others assisting who are not registered and approved as merit badge counselors, do not accept the responsibilities of, or behave as, merit badge counselors, either at a group instructional event or at any other time. Their service is temporary, not ongoing.
- Counselors agree to sign off only requirements that Scouts have actually and personally completed.
- Counselors agree not to assume that stated prerequisites for an event have been completed without some level of evidence that the work has been done. Pictures and letters from other merit badge counselors or unit leaders are the best form of prerequisite documentation when the actual work done cannot be brought to the camp or site of the merit badge event.
- There is a mechanism for unit leaders or others to report concerns to a council advancement committee on summer camp merit badge programs, group instructional events, and any other merit badge counseling issues—especially in instances where it is believed BSA procedures are not followed. See “Reporting Merit Badge Counseling Concerns,” 11.1.0.0.

Additional guidelines and best practices can be found in the Merit Badge Group Instruction Guide, developed by volunteers in conjunction with the National Advancement Program Team. This guide for units, districts, and councils includes several important event planning considerations as well as suggestions for evaluating the event after it is over to identify opportunities for improvement. The guide can be downloaded from www.scouting.org/advancement.

[7.0.3.3] — Partial Completions

Scouts need not pass all the requirements of one merit badge with the same counselor. It may be that due to timing or location issues, etc., they must meet with different counselors to finish a badge. The Application for Merit Badge has a place to record what has been finished—a“partial.” In the center section on the reverse of the blue card, the counselor initials for each requirement passed. In the case of a partial completion, the counselor does not retain his or her portion of the card. A subsequent counselor may choose not to accept partial work, but this should be rare. A Scout who believes he or she is being treated unfairly may work with the unit leader to find another qualified counselor. An example for the use of a signed partial would be to take it to camp as proof that the camp’s prerequisites have been met. Partial completions have no expiration except the Scout’s 18th birthday. Units, districts, or councils shall not establish other expiration dates for partial merit badges.

[7.0.4.8] — Unofficial Worksheets and Learning Aids

Worksheets and other materials that may be of assistance in earning merit badges are available from a variety of places including unofficial sources on the internet and even troop libraries. Use of these aids is permissible as long as the materials can be correlated with the current requirements that Scouts must fulfill. Completing “worksheets” may suffice where a requirement calls for something in writing, but this would not work for a requirement where the Scout must discuss, tell, show, or demonstrate, etc. Note that Scouts shall not be required to use these learning aids in order to complete a merit badge.