

## Merit Badge Policy for Troop 7

When acting as a Merit Badge counselor for a scout, the counselor should keep in mind the following items

1. **No More, No Less** -The Merit Badge process is one of “no more, no less” meaning that counselors cannot add or subtract any requirements on the scout which are not in the book. A counselor can use their discretion to determine if the scout has learned the material. A test is completely acceptable as long as it is designed to test the understanding of the items and not necessarily “Facts”. Where requirements say “discuss or explain”, it can be considered an oral test. “Discuss” should not be considered sitting in a classroom environment without scout interaction and still earn the requirement. “Explain” on the other hand can be oral or written at the counselor’s discretion. Written materials should never be more than ½ typed or written page unless specified in the requirements.
2. **Equal Standards** - Each adult counselor should apply the following standard when working with scouts: Each scout should be treated as all those before him. If “breaks” are given to a specific scout it cheapens and cheats those who came before. An adult should always be able to say they treated each scout equally and fairly. For instance: all Eagle scouts have a standard to meet to ensure they “earned” the rank. It is not fair for those who earned Eagle to have a scout join their ranks who were “given” a merit badge just to make their goal. Counselors should take into account the abilities of the scout. Some scouts may have learning disabilities. The counselor should adjust their questions and expectations to allow for this. Always keep in mind "no more, no less" as long as they comprehend the material. In rare cases, alternate requirements are available for certain learning/physical disabilities.
3. **Time Limits** – Many Troops have a one year time limit from the start of the merit badge until the scout completes it. This is entirely at the troop discretion. Troop 7 has had no time limit for merit badge completion. However, if a merit badge has taken a long period of time the counselor should review all requirements to make sure the scout has retained all the knowledge required of the merit badge. The one caveat is that if new requirements come out, the scout must fulfill the additional requirements even if they only have one requirement left to do under the old rules. <http://www.meritbadge.org> has the latest requirements.
4. **Working with the scout** - Most merit badges are designed for the scout to work on them individually. Counselors should have at least 3 meetings with the scout before the badge is completed. 1) Start of the badge and review what is required, assign task to complete before next meeting 2) review completed materials and assign items for next meeting 3) if necessary, finish completion of requirements. Some long term Eagle required merit badges will likely require more and should have regularly scheduled meetings to ensure the scout stays on track.
5. **Scouts earning the Badge** - Merit Badges are designed to expand the knowledge of a scout, giving him opportunities to experience the types of careers and hobbies that are available to him.. Scouts should be encouraged to obtain as many merit badges as they can. However they are responsible for the work and documentation. Parents should take a "hands off" approach with a bit of “encouragement” thrown in.

6. **The Scout Comfort Zone** -The merit badge process is designed for scouts to get outside their comfort zone to do things they may not necessarily want to do. This includes the learning activities as well as interaction with adults.
  - a. Many scouts will try to get by with one sentence answers to questions. It is the intent of the merit badge that they actually comprehend the material. A good rule of thumb is that no requirement can be "discussed or explained" in less than 3 sentences. The counselor should take into account the personality and learning ability of the scout as sometimes "leading" them to the right answer may be required.
  - b. Interactions with adults. This is probably the most important aspect of the merit badge. Many scouts will shy away from dealing with adults that are not their parents. By forcing them to seek out adults, it helps them meet new people and start dealing with situations they will encounter as they enter high school and possibly college. The more they do, the more comfortable they will become in these situations.
  
7. **Parents as Counselors** - To have a fully functional scouting program it is necessary for parents to be involved. This includes being a merit badge counselor. Cases will arise when a scout's parent will be his merit badge counselor (MBC). The following is the guideline for this situation.
  - a. **How Many for Parents** - Parents should shy away from conducting "many" merit badges with their son. Remember, one of the primary purposes is for the scout to interact with adults outside his comfort zone. We want the scout to learn these skills to be better prepared for life beyond high school. Troop 7 shall recognize no more than 5 parent/son merit badges (including a maximum of 2 being Eagle required) during the career of the scout (age 18).
  - b. **How to decide to do an MB with a son** - We should be fostering the concept of working with other adults. Should the scout want to do a merit badge that has more than 2 counselors available, the scout should first attempt to use a counselor who is not their parent. This includes attempting to use counselors outside of the troop associated with the Hopewell District. A list of counselors is available on line or the scout can request assistance from the advancement chair. Many of the merit badges are unique and only have one counselor available which could be a parent. In these cases, rule "7c" must be in place.
  - c. **Keeping the process honest** - Should a scout use his parent as a MBC, (because others are not available or his parent is the ONLY MBC for that badge) he should always conduct the MB with one or more additional scouts at the same time. This will prevent the perception that the parent is giving a scout the MB without actually doing the work. It will also give others the opportunity to earn "uncommon" merit badges. In the rare case that there are no other scouts interested in working on a particular merit badge, the scout may seek approval from the advancement chair to work one-on-one with his parent.
  
8. **Parental Help** - Parents are encouraged to help the scout find the resources necessary to complete the requirements of the merit badge. They should never do any tracking, requirement typing (writing) as long as the scout is capable of doing it themselves. In some cases, the scouts will struggle with finding ways to track their progress. The merit badges will challenge them to find ways to do this but many times it is a "first experience". There is nothing wrong with the parent starting a tracking sheet on a paper or computer to illustrate what needs to be done. Just be sure to let the scout complete the task. Remember the scout will be meeting with the MBC to discuss what they did to complete the badge and the last thing you want said is "my parents did this and then they did that" or " I don't know because my parents did that part for me". To most MBC's, that would be an instant disqualification for completion.
  
9. **Effective date** - Upon approval of the committee, the policy will take effect January 1, 2011. All merit badges with a parent as the MBC started before this date will not count towards the troop limit of 5.