

Merit Badge Counselor Orientation

Instructor's Guide

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Cape Henry District, Tidewater Council, BSA
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Updated from Chris Hagerty's 1995 Wood Badge ticket presentation

Information for the Instructor

This Guide was designed using the references listed on this page including portions from the Merit Badge Counselor Orientation Supplemental Adult Leader Training outline. The authors have expanded on the BSA outline, organizing the material in an easy to follow format and supplementing information, which the author feels, is important in his local area. This guide was designed to be used in conjunction with a Youth Protection Training (YPT) training session or to adults already YPT trained.

This guide contains an appendix, which are masters for making transparencies for an overhead projector. If no overhead projector is available, use newsprint. If you use newsprint, it is recommended that you prepare the pages in advance. The mbc_# numbers are used to reference the overheads in this guide. The slides are also available as a PowerPoint presentation in addition to this guide.

This guide also provides suggested examples and text to use with the masters. This estimate length of this course is about 50 minutes. This allows for questions during the training and five minutes of questions at the end.

References

**Merit Badge Counselor Orientation #34542
A guide for Recommending Merit Badge Counselors #34532
Boy Scout Requirements (current edition) #33217
Advancement Policies and Procedures Committee Guide #33088
Merit Badge Counseling #34520
Application for Merit Badge #34124
Boy Scout Handbook #33229
BSA Adult Application #28-501J
Delivering the Promise #18-917**

Handouts

Merit Badge Counseling #34520
Application for Merit Badge #34124
Delivering the Promise #18-917
Merit Badge Counselor Application, local version

INTRODUCTION

Instructors introduce themselves and provide background.

Explain that as a result of this unit of training, the merit badge counselor (MBC) should be able to:

(Place mbc_1 on overhead or newsprint / present slide #1)

- Use the buddy system for counseling.
- State the purpose of the merit badge program for Scouts.
- Explain the role of the merit badge counselor.
- List some methods of counseling and coaching.

Go over class outline explaining this is how we plan to cover these training objectives.

(Place mbc_2 on overhead or newsprint / present slide #2)

Merit Badge Counselor Orientation

- Introduction
- Scout Buddy System
- Purpose of the Merit Badge Program
- The Merit Badge Process and the Role of the Counselor
- Counseling Techniques
- Review

SCOUT BUDDY SYSTEM

Since Scouts who come to you are under your temporary guardianship, the Boy Scouts of America have established certain guidelines for all counselors and Scouts. As part of this MBC training, we will be doing the BSA Youth Protection Training, using the on-line course available at the Tidewater Council web site <<http://www.tidewaterbsa.com/>>. The successful completion of this YPT will be documented on the MB Counselor application. Briefly, at this point we want to cover the buddy system and BSA's policy on group instruction.

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A Scout must have a buddy with him at each meeting with a MBC.

Buddies may be:

- **Another scout working on the same merit badge.**
- **A parent, guardian, brother, sister, or relative.**
- **A friend.**

Due to the way the merit badge process is normally described, we frequently get questions about Group Instruction of Merit Badges? Here is the National Executive Board policy statement:

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"To the fullest extent possible, the merit badge counseling relationship is a counselor-Scout arrangement in which the boy is not only judged on his performance of the requirements, but receives maximum benefit from the knowledge, skill, character, and personal interest of this counselor. Group instruction and orientation are encouraged where special facilities and expert personnel make this most practical, or when Scouts are dependent on only a few counselors for assistance. However, this group experience should be followed by attention to each individual candidate's projects and his ability to fulfill all requirements."

Go over what this means, answering any questions. Stress that the real emphasis of merit badge work should be Scout-counselor, as much as possible. (Ref. Adv. Policies pg. 15.)

PURPOSE OF THE MERIT BADGE PROGRAM

(Distribute: Delivering the Promise - The Aims and Methods of Boy Scouting and display mbc_5 on overhead or newsprint / present slide #5.)

- **Basic character-developing tools.**
- **Scouts learn career skills.**
- **Scouts develop physical fitness and hobbies that give a lifetime of healthful recreation.**
- **Contact with adults with whom they might not be acquainted.**

One of the methods of Scouting is "Advancement". Go over what is in Delivering the Promise and how that relates to the Three Aims. Specifically:

The merit badge program is one of Scouting's basic character-developing tools. Earning merit badges gives a boy the kind of self-confidence that comes only from Overcoming difficult obstacles to achieve a goal.

Through the merit badge program, a boy is introduced to skills, which may help him choose his adult vocation. Use Spielberg or other example - Scouting introduced Spielberg to movie making, look where he took this.

Other merit badges help a boy develop physical fitness, or discover "outside" interests and hobbies, encourage citizenship and generally become a better-rounded person.

Many youths are uncomfortable dealing with adults they are not familiar with. Working on a merit badge with an adult should provide a super environment to help youth overcome this discomfort. It can be an excellent opportunity to help the youth build confidence.

THE MERIT BADGE PROCESS AND THE ROLE OF THE COUNSELOR

(Distribute Application for Merit Badge, Merit Badge Counseling, & MBC Application. Display mbc_6 on overhead or newsprint / present slide #6)

I. The Procedures Scouts follow to earn merit badges.

A. Selecting Merit Badges and Counselors

1. The Scout selects merit badges from the Scout Handbook, requirements book, or from individual merit badge pamphlets available in his troop library or at a public library.

2. The Scout indicates his interest in a merit badge to his scoutmaster who gives him:

a. An interview to determine interest, enthusiasm, and preparedness.

b. A signed Application for Merit Badge.

c. The name and phone number of a council or district approved MBC.

d. Encouragement to wear the official uniform when he visits the counselor with a buddy.

B. The Scout gets the merit badge pamphlet on his subject from his unit library, public library, or purchases one from the Scout office.

C. The Scout calls the counselor and makes an appointment.

D. The counselor sets a date, time, and place for the meeting, making sure that the YPT guidelines are followed. He or she suggests that the scout bring the following:

- 1. Merit badge pamphlet.**
- 2. SCM signed application for MB.**
- 3. Any projects he may have started.**
- 4. Any other indication of preparedness.**
(Place mbc_7 on overhead or newsprint / *present slide #7*)

E. At the first interview the counselor and Scout decide upon

- 1. Projects.**
- 2. Short-term and long-term goals with dates of completion in mind.**
- 3. Dates, times, and places for further interviews.**

F. The scout learns and does the things that the pamphlet explains, going as far as he can to fulfill the requirements on his own. The number of sessions you have during this period depends on the difficulty of the subject and the preparation and ability of the Scout. YPT guidelines continued to be followed.

G. When the Scout has finished all required projects and learned all relevant material, he arranges with the counselor for examination. At the testing

- 1. Each Scout is tested individually.**
- 2. Scouts are expected to meet the requirements as stated in the handbook -- no more and no less.**
- 3. Individual requirements for a merit badge may be signed off and recorded on the Application for merit badge as they are completed. Re-testing of these completed requirements is not necessary. If another counselor did a partial, you may review**

these requirements to satisfy yourself that the Scout has indeed completed the project or learned the material.

4. The MBC assists the Scout to meet the requirements and certifies when he has completed them.

5. MBC keeps counselor's record of the Application for Merit Badge. Scout returns Unit copy to SCM and keeps Applicant's copy.

6. You continue to follow YPT (a buddy is present).

II. The Counselor's Role

The counselor's job is to act as a coach and an examiner. As a coach you help the Scout over the hurdles of the requirement developing his self-confidence as you proceed. Through your expertise and experience, you also make him aware of the broader and deeper aspects of the subject, developing in him an interest that may lead to further explorations of his own. As an examiner you satisfy yourself that each Scout who comes to you meets all the requirements for the merit badge and that all boys are treated equally.

(Place mbc_8 on overhead or newsprint / present slide #8)

A. Duties as a Counselor

1. Interview the Scout with a buddy present to determine
a. His preparedness.

b. The amount of knowledge he already has in the subject.

c. His interest in the subject.

2. Short-term and long-term goals are set by the Scout with encouragement from the counselor.

3. Counselor follows up with the Scout on his goals-projects, collections, written work.

4. Counselor helps the Scout evaluate his progress.

5. Counselor encourages the Scout to ask for any help he needs to gain more knowledge or skill in the subject.

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B. Duties as a Coach

- 1. Teaches the Scout the skills required.**
- 2. Gives the Scout an opportunity to practice the skills under his or her guidance.**
- 3. Takes a genuine interest in the projects and encourages completion.**
- 4. Always remember that your enthusiasm and interest not only make the merit badge experience more rewarding for the Scout, but also may induce him to pursue the topic on his own in the future.**

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C. Duties as an Examiner

- 1. Make sure you have the most current requirements for the merit badge and that you follow these requirements in a FAIR and UNIFORM manner.**

The current Boy Scout Requirements lists all of the merit badges in the back and it shows the dates when the merit badge requirements were last updated. About 15-20 merit badges are updated each year.

- 2. Before you sign the Scout's Application for a Merit Badge, you must insist that the Scout do exactly what the requirements call for. If it says, "show or demonstrate," that is what he must do. Just telling is not enough. The same holds true for words such as "make," "list," "in the field", and "collect, identify, and label."**

Disabled Scouts must also complete all the requirements as stated, within the bounds of common sense. A special needs youth, who could not write, may use a voice recognition computer to dictate and send an E-mail letter to his congressman for Citizenship in the Nation. But he still has to fulfill the requirement in order to receive the merit badge.

- 3. On the other hand you may not require more of a Scout than stated. You must not, for example, say, "I want to be sure you really know this material, so instead of the 20 items in your**

collection, you must have 30 before I will sign your card."

No more, no less insures that every Scout plays on a "level field." No one is asked to do more; no one is allowed to do less.

(Place mbc_11 on overhead or newsprint / present slide #11)

D. Duties to the District/Council

- 1. Renew your registration annually if you plan to continue as a MBC. Notify the district if you no longer want to be a MBC.**
- 2. Get YPT training (on-line) and follow YPT guidelines.**
- 3. Follow BSA policies.**

COUNSELING TECHNIQUES

(Place mbc_12 on overhead or newsprint / present slide #12)

A. Put the Scout at ease

- 1. For the Scout to get the most benefit from counseling sessions, he must feel welcome and relaxed. One way for the counselor to put a boy at ease is to ask a simple question such as "How long have you been in Scouting?" or "How did you get interested in this merit badge?"**
- 2. Another way is to show him something related to the subject. A Coin Collecting MBC might show the Scout his own collection. But be careful not to overwhelm the Scout; remember he is only a beginner.**
- 3. A third way is to ask the Scout to do a simple skill. For instance, a Woodwork MBC might say, "Would you sand this piece of wood while I get some tools ready?"**

B. At the first meeting you should review each requirement to make sure that there is no confusion over what the Scout must do. This will avoid later misunderstandings and frustrations on both sides. Make sure you ask the boy if he has any questions and encourage him to contact you if he has future questions.

C. When reviewing completed requirements, you may find the boy needs help. You may give such aid provided that the boy himself ultimately does the work.

D. While you may test for neither more or less than the requirements, you may teach more than is required as a method of encouraging a Scout's further interest in the subject.

E. It is, of course, acceptable for a Scout on his own initiative to do more than the requirement calls for.

F. Remember that the most effective way of teaching these skills is to get the student to practice while learning.

G. KISMIF.

REVIEW

(Place mbc_1 on overhead or newsprint / present slide #13)

FREQUENT QUESTIONS

How many merit badges may one person be a counselor for? 8

Can a parent be a counselor for their son? No

How many merit badges can one counselor sign for one scout? As many as they are approved for, but no more than Eight (8) in a given year.

These and other similar questions are discussed in the Advancement Policies and Procedures Committee Guide. In the 2002 printing, they were covered on page 9 under the heading of Recruiting and Training Merit Badge Counselors and Publishing Lists. **WARNING: DO NOT EVEN ATTEMPT TO TEACH THIS COURSE IF YOU DO NOT HAVE AND ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE CURRENT ADVANCEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE GUIDE.** There is too much misinformation in this area already!

I usually add to the explanation in the Advancement Policies by pointing out that different areas have different needs. In certain rural areas I would not want to force the Scouts to travel for two to three hours just to meet with a Merit Badge Counselor because I have limited the number of badges that the few counselors in their area can teach. I would then turn around and state that if you submitted a list of up to 8 merit badges that you wanted to be a counselor for, I just may ask for evidence that you have the skills necessary to teach all these merit badges. While National states there is no limit, they also state it is the duty of the Council Advancement Committee to approval all counselors. If you submit a list of 20 badges, you will not be approved for more than Eight (8) of them.

I usually end up by stating that National's policy is "NO LIMIT", however, I recommend that they teach no more than five or six merit badges. I then remind them of one of the purposes of this program is to have the Scouts make contact with adults with whom they might not be acquainted.

Is there a time limit, from start to finish, for completing a merit badge?

The only time limit is their 18th birthday; all merit badges must be completed before their 18th birthday. (Except for Special Needs Scouts with prior approval, via the procedures outlined in the Advancement Policies Guide. In Tidewater council we use an Individual Scouting Plan (ISP) to document and track any adjustments for a Scout with Special Needs.) This usually brings up the question of partials done with another counselor. I tell them that as the person who finally signs of the merit badge, you need to satisfy yourself that they did the work or know the material. They should not have to do the requirements over if they can demonstrate this. Keep in mind the NO LESS discussion, as well as the NO MORE when working with scouts with partials.

Why do I have to fill out another adult application?

I like to agree with them that it would be nice, if they were already registered, that they would not have to fill out another adult application. But, unfortunately the system is not yet that sophisticated. Merit Badge Counselors, even those working only with their unit, are kept on the DISTRICT CHARTER (registration), not the unit charter. This means two separate organizations with the unit responsibility (read that liability if you like) in the hands of the chartered organization and the District in the hands of the Council.

We also have problems with the registrations going in at different times. How does the person putting this in the computer already know you are registered with the unit? How often does the Merit Badge Counselor registration go in at the same time the adult's initial registration with the unit goes into ScoutNet. The second application also helps assure registration as a Merit Badge Counselor. During re-charter time, things get hectic and the registrars are very busy. I have known cases where the Merit Badge Counselors were entered in on the unit charter as committee members because they went in with the unit charters.

TEXT FOR THE NEWSPRINT / OVERHEAD SLIDES

Slide mbc_1:

Course Objectives

- **Use the buddy system for counseling.**
- **State the purpose of the merit badge program for Scouts**
- **Explain the role of the merit badge counselor.**
- **List some methods of counseling and coaching.**

Slide mbc_2:

Merit Badge Counselor Orientation

- **Introduction**
- **Scout Buddy System**
- **Purpose of the Merit Badge Program**
- **The Merit Badge Process and the Role of the Counselor**
- **Counseling Techniques**
- **Review**

Slide mbc_3:

Buddy System

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Buddies may be:

- **Another scout working on the same merit badge**
- **A parent, guardian, brother, sister, or relative**
- **A friend**

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"To the fullest extent possible, the merit badge counseling relationship is a counselor-Scout arrangement in which the boy is not only judged on his performance of the requirements, but receives maximum benefit from the knowledge, skill, character, and personal interest of this counselor. Group instruction and orientation are encouraged where special facilities and expert personnel make this most practical, or when Scouts are dependent on only a few counselors for assistance. However, this group experience should be followed by attention to each individual candidate's projects and his ability to fulfill all requirements."

Slide mbc_5:

Purpose

- Basic character-developing tools.**
- Scouts learn career skills.**
- Scouts develop physical fitness and hobbies that give a lifetime of healthful recreation.**
- Contact with adults with whom they might not be acquainted.**

The Merit Badge Process

- **Scout selects merit badge**
- **Scout indicates interest to Scoutmaster who:**

Interviews Scout(s)

Signs Application

Name & Number of MBC

Encourages uniform wear to meetings

- **Scout gets MB book**
 - **Scout calls counselor**
 - **Counselor sets date, time, and place encourages Scout to bring MB pamphlet**
- Signed application**
Started projects
Other indications of preparedness

Slide mbc_7:

- **At first interview decide upon
Projects
Goals
Further interviews**
- **Scout does work on own and with help
from counselor**
- **Examination Tested individually
No more - No less
Test as you go
MBC helps Scout
MBC keeps record
Scout turns in Unit copy
Scout keeps his copy
YPT**

Slide mbc_8:

Counselor's Role

Duties as a Counselor

- **Interview the Scout to determine Preparedness Knowledge Interest**
- **Goals**
- **Follow up**
- **Evaluate progress**
- **Offer assistance**

Slide mbc_9:

Counselor's Role

Duties as a Coach

- **Teach required skills**
- **Opportunity to Practice**
- **Genuine interest**
- **Enthusiasm**

Slide mbc_10:

Counselor's Role

Duties as an Examiner

- **Current Requirements**
- **NO MORE**
- **NO LESS**

Slide mbc_11:

Counselor's Role

Duties to the District

- **Renew registration**
- **Notify District when stop**
- **YPT**
- **Follow BSA policies**

Slide mbc_12:

Counseling Techniques

- **Put the Scout at ease**
- **Review each requirement**
- **Assistance when reviewing completed requirements**
- **May teach more than required**
- **Scout may do more than required**
- **Practice while learning**
- **KISMIF**