



SCOUTMASTER BUCKY

Merit Badge Advancement Quick Reference

Overview

While every Scouting unit operates differently, the merit badge advancement process is clearly defined in *Scouting America's Guide to Advancement*.

This document highlights key terms, best practices, and responsibilities for Scouts, leaders, and parents, offering a quick reference to navigate the merit badge advancement process. For more detailed guidance, the full content can be found in Scouting America's *Guide to Advancement*.

By understanding these core principles, Scouts and their leaders can ensure a smooth and successful journey through merit badges while maintaining the integrity of the Scouting experience.

Words Have Meaning

Scouting America's Guide to Advancement defines the following terms, which are important when interpreting requirements.

must - A mandated procedure [GtA Forward]

should - Recommended best practices [GtA Forward]

may or **can** - Other options and guidelines [GtA Forward]

unit leader - Scoutmaster, Venturing Advisor, or Sea Scout Skipper. [GtA Forward]

leader / unit leadership - Generic references to any registered adult leader in a unit [GtA Forward]

attend a meeting - In-person participation is strongly preferred; virtual attendance should be extremely rare and must be approved in advance. [GtA 5.0.8.0]

discuss - Interactive conversation between the Scout and the merit badge counselor. Video conversation might meet this standard, a few text messages do not. [GtA 5.0.8.0]

explain - A substantive description in written or oral. More than just a few words. [GtA 5.0.8.0]

demonstrate - Physically do the activity, either in front of the counselor or with video of the Scout doing the activity. If video is used, the Scout must perform the skill correctly and all essential aspects must be clearly seen. [GtA 5.0.8.0]

Using Technology

All tools that a Scout could use to assist with completion of a requirement, such as artificial intelligence, spell checkers, grammar checkers, autofill, etc.) may be used but must be fully disclosed. The Scout's final output must be the Scout's own original work. [GtA 5.0.8.0]

Prohibited works would include plagiarism, copying search engine results, copying another Scout's notes, and copying another Scout's work.

Parents and Scouts

Scouting America encourages parents to participate in Scouting activities with their children. Overnight activities require parents to be a registered leader. [GtSS Accommodations]

Scoutmaster Bucky in-person and online events STRONGLY ENCOURAGE and welcome parent participation.



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Relationships and Responsibilities

Scouts may work on any merit badge at any time. Before starting, the Scout must meet with their unit leader or their delegate. It's the Scout's decision whether or not to proceed. [GtA 7.0.0.3]

When attending group merit badge opportunities, it must be discussed with the unit leader well before the event. [GtA 7.0.0.3]

The unit leader will see that at least one merit badge counselor is identified for the Scout. The unit leader and Scout should agree on the counselor to be used. The Scout must be allowed to work with the registered and approved counselor of their choice. [GtA 7.0.0.3]

The council advancement committee determines who approves merit badge counselors, not individual units. [GtA 7.0.1.3] [GtA 7.0.1.4] Merit badge counselors can approve merit badges for Scouts in any council. [GtA 7.0.0.3]

Merit badge counselors are expected to guide Scouts and verify requirements for merit badges. [GtA 4.2.1.2] Nothing says the merit badge counselor teaches or instructs - it simply states "guide."

Workbooks, Worksheets, Learning Aids

Scouts may use these resources as long as they match the current requirements. Scouts must not be required to use these learning aids to complete a merit badge. [GtA 7.0.4.8]

Online Classes

Scouts must be engaged with cameras enabled and a parent or guardian present. Simply being logged in is not enough. [GtA 7.0.4.12]

Requirements must still be met exactly as written, using show, tell, discuss, explain, demonstrate, etc. Forms and checklists as substitutions are not permitted. [GtA 7.0.4.12]

GtA: *Scouting America's Guide to Advancement (2025)*

<https://www.scouting.org/resources/guide-to-advancement/>

GtSS: *Scouting America's Guide to Safe Scouting (as of Jan 2025)*

<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/>