



Signs, Signals, and Codes

Merit Badge Workbook



This workbook can help you but you still need to read the merit badge pamphlet.

The work space provided for each requirement should be used by the Scout to make notes for discussing the item with his counselor, not for providing the full and complete answers. Each Scout must do each requirement.

No one may add or subtract from the official requirements found in **Boy Scout Requirements** (Pub. 33216 – SKU 620714).

The requirements were last issued or revised in 2015 • This workbook was updated in March 2015.

Scout's Name: _____ Unit: _____

Counselor's Name: _____ Counselor's Phone No.: _____

<http://www.USScouts.Org> • <http://www.MeritBadge.Org>

Please submit errors, omissions, comments or suggestions about this **workbook** to: Workbooks@USScouts.Org
Comments or suggestions for changes to the **requirements** for the **merit badge** should be sent to: Merit.Badge@Scouting.Org

1. Discuss with your counselor the importance of signs, signals, and codes, and why people need these different methods of communication.

Briefly discuss the history and development of signs, signals, and codes.

2. Explain the importance of signaling in emergency communications.

Discuss with your counselor the types of emergency or distress signals one might use to attract airborne search-and-rescue personnel if lost in the outdoors or trying to summon assistance during a disaster.

Illustrate these signaling examples by the use of photos or drawings.

3. Do the following:

a. Describe what Morse code is and the various means by which it can be sent.

Spell your first name using Morse code.

Send or receive a message of six to 10 words using Morse code.

b. Describe what American Sign Language (ASL) is and how it is used today.

Spell your first name using American Sign Language.

Send or receive a message of six to 10 words using ASL.

4. Give your counselor a brief explanation about semaphore, why it is used, how it is used, and where it is used. Explain the difference between semaphore flags and nautical flags.

Explanation:

Why is it used?

How is it used?

Where is it used?

Explain the difference between semaphore flags and nautical flags.

Then do the following:

- a. Spell your first name using semaphore.
- Send or receive a message of six to 10 words using semaphore.
- b. Using illustrations or photographs, identify 10 examples of nautical flags and discuss their importance.

	Type	Importance
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

(Note: Remember to provide illustrations or photographs of the flags!)

5. Explain the braille reading technique and how it helps individuals with sight impairment to communicate.

Then do the following:

- a. Either by sight or by touch, identify the letters of the braille alphabet that spell your name.
- By sight or touch, decode a braille message at least six words long.
- b. Create a message in braille at least six words long, and share this with your counselor.

NOTE: To satisfy this requirement, you do not need to emboss braille dots in thick paper. Rather, you may use a pencil or pen to draw the dots on ordinary paper, copying the characters of the braille alphabet to spell out your message letter by letter.

6. Do the following:

a. Describe to your counselor six sound-only signals that are in use today.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Discuss the pros and cons of using sound signals versus other types of signals.

b. Demonstrate to your counselor six different silent Scout signals.

<input type="checkbox"/>	1.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	2.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	3.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	5.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	6.	

Use these Scout signals to direct the movements and actions of your patrol or troop.

- 7. On a Scout outing, lay out a trail for your patrol or troop to follow. Cover at least one mile in distance and use at least six different trail signs and markers.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

- After the Scouts have completed the trail, follow no-trace principles by replacing or returning trail markers to their original locations.

- 8. For THREE of the following activities, demonstrate five signals each. Tell what the signals mean and why they are used:
 - a. Sports official's hand signs/signals
 - b. Heavy-equipment operator's hand signals
 - c. Aircraft carrier catapult crew signals
 - d. Cyclist's hand signals
 - e. An activity selected by you and your counselor

Activity 1: _____

	Signal	Meaning	Purpose
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Activity 2: _____

	Signal	Meaning	Purpose
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Activity 3: _____

	Signal	Meaning	Purpose
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

9. Share with your counselor 10 examples of symbols used in everyday life.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

(Note: Remember to provide illustrations or photographs of the symbols so you can show them to your counselor!)

Design your own symbol. Share it with your counselor and explain what it means.

Then do the following:

- a. Show examples of 10 traffic signs and explain their meaning.

	Sign	Meaning
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

(Note: Remember to provide illustrations or photographs of the signs so you can show them to your counselor!)

- b. Using a topographical map, explain what a map legend is and discuss its importance. Point out 10 map symbols and explain the meaning of each.

Point out 10 map symbols and explain the meaning of each.

	Symbol	Meaning
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

- c. Discuss text-message symbols and why they are commonly used.

Give examples of your favorite 10 text symbols or emoticons.

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- Then see if your counselor or parent can identify the meaning or usage of each symbol.

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10. Briefly discuss the history of secret code writing (cryptography).

Make up your own secret code and write a message of up to 25 words using this code.

- Share the message with a friend or fellow Scout.
- Then share the message and code key with your counselor and discuss the effectiveness of your code.

Requirement resources can be found here:
<http://www.meritbadge.org/wiki/index.php/Signs, Signals, and Codes#Requirement resources>

Important excerpts from the [Guide To Advancement - 2013](#), No. 33088 (SKU-618673)

[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, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, Venturing, and Sea Scouts. It replaces any previous BSA advancement manuals, including *Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures*, *Advancement and Recognition Policies and Procedures*, 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*, No. 34416, apply to all BSA activities, including those related to advancement and Eagle Scout 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 where others can view the interaction, or the Scout must have a buddy: a friend, parent, guardian, brother, sister, or other relative—or better yet, another Scout working on the same badge—along with him attending the session.

When the Scout meets with the counselor, he should bring any required projects. If these cannot be transported, he should present evidence, such as photographs or adult verification. His 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 or similar events. Interactive group discussions can support learning. The method 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.

There must be attention to each individual's projects and his 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.

- 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 not to assume prerequisites 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.
- There must be attention to each individual's projects and his fulfillment of all requirements. We must know that every Scout—actually and *personally*—completed them.

[7.0.3.3] — Partial Completions

A Scout 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., he must meet with a different counselor to finish the 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, if he believes he is being treated unfairly, may work with his unit leader to find another counselor. An example for the use of a signed partial would be to take it to camp as proof of prerequisites. Partials 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.