



GROUP MERIT BADGE DAY INSTRUCTION POLICY

This Orange County Council policy is to ensure that all Merit Badges earned in a group setting are instructed and earned in compliance with the aims and goals of Scouting.

POLICY STATEMENT

The question arises as to whether it is permissible to have Scouts earn Merit Badges in groups. Many subjects may be presented to groups of Scouts without defeating one of the purposes of the Merit Badge plan—working closely with a qualified adult.

The National Executive Board has approved this policy statement on Merit Badge counseling: *“To the fullest extent possible, the Merit Badge counseling relationship is a counselor– Scout arrangement in which the Scout is not only judged on their performance of the requirements, but receives maximum benefit from the knowledge, skill, character, and personal interest of their 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 their ability to fulfill all requirements.”*

In the end, **the Scout must be reviewed individually by the counselor** to ensure completion of the badge’s requirements.

General Guidelines for All Group Merit Badge Day Instruction

- A. The Council Advancement Committee shall:
1. Post this policy on the Council’s Advancement website
 2. Publicize the policy through the District Roundtables
 3. Maintain current District Merit Badge Counselor lists
 4. Receive and give prompt review to all applications for Group Merit Badge day events
- B. Class structure and operations must comply with the following:
1. The class size shall be limited to 8 Scouts for each counselor, to provide sufficient opportunity for individual review with each Scout.
 2. A single Merit Badge session must be 3 hours in length (no mini sessions allowed). Depending on the Merit Badge, pre-requisites allow the Merit Badge to be completed in the time allotted. (See OCC list of Merit Badge day pre- requisite information.)
 3. Each class must be taught by a qualified and certified Merit Badge counselor who is registered (for the Merit Badge they are instructing) within an Orange County Council District. All event counselors must be trained in the aims of Scouting and in advancement procedures. A 1-hr lunch will be offered between the merit badge class sessions.
 4. No more than 2 badges shall be earned by any Scout in a single Merit Badge Day’s event. "Only 1 of the Merit Badges earned at an event can be an Eagle required Merit Badge." **This statement must be included in all advertisements and flyers.**
 5. The location of the event must provide an appropriate venue for reviewing the subject matter of the Merit Badge(s).
 6. Requirements cannot be altered in any way to fit the event format. For example, if the

requirement is for a Scout to create a spreadsheet on a computer, they must do it individually and not as a group. Showing the Scout how to do a requirement does not meet the requirement for the Scout to demonstrate the requirement.

7. **First Aid Merit Badge** - requirement 3b requires current Red Cross or equivalent certification for CPR instruction. If the Merit Badge Counselor is not certified, any currently certified adult may conduct this training in support to the First Aid Merit Badge Counselor. Include a copy of the certification in the Group Merit Badge Day event documentation signed by the event point of contact.
8. General Supervision Requirements – Guide to Advancement No. 33088 (latest revision) Swimming and watercraft activities must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least **21 years old** and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained, or use others who are.
CPR instruction, wherever it is required, must be taught by instructors currently trained by a nationally certified provider. Several such providers are mentioned in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*.

C. Advancement standards are:

1. The Scout must be reviewed individually by the counselor to ensure that the Scout has met all of the requirements.
2. Partial credit must be given for partial completion of a Merit Badge.
3. All attending Scouts must bring a Merit Badge application (blue card) with them, signed by their Unit Leader. Fliers and registration materials should urge Scouts to contact a counselor and complete certain requirements **prior to the event**. Blue cards shall not be issued at the event. (If a Scout does not bring a signed Blue Card, the Scout may not be signed-off at the event.)
4. Units **must** use the National BSA Council's **Activity Consent Form and Approval by Parents or Legal Guardian** form 680-673.

Additional Guidelines for Group Merit Badge Day Events

D. Council Advancement Committee application approval should be requested at least 90 days in advance of the event date. The request must include:

1. A completed Orange County Council Application for Group Merit Day with appropriate attachments.
2. Proposed publicity flyer(s) showing the date, location, times, Merit Badges offered and permission slip with consent to treat a minor (see C.4). No flyers or other publicity may happen prior to approval by the Orange County Council Advancement Committee and the Council Advancement Committee Advisor.
3. When circulated after approval, the flyer(s) must note the approval of the event by the Orange County Council Advancement Committee.

E. Group Merit Badge Day Fees

1. Registration fees may not exceed \$20.00 per Scout.
2. Lunch must be optional, and may not exceed \$5.00.
3. Reasonable material fees may be charged for Merit Badges requiring materials, which is in addition to the Registration Fee.

- F. Event publicity flyers must state that Scouts who cannot afford the registration fee will be allowed to apply to the event sponsors for a scholarship.
- G. Chartered organization responsibilities include:
 - 1. Complying with this policy and all other BSA activity policies.
 - 2. Providing a list of all counselors and their phone numbers at the event for Scouts to follow- up and complete the partially approved badges.
 - 3. Providing two Merit Badge Coordinators that have been certified.
- H. OCC Group Merit Day Approved Merit Badges and Prerequisites. See the OC Council Group Merit Day prerequisite list on the Advancement website.
 - 1. No Merit Badge sessions will be approved for Merit Badge pre-requisites that are “Do all requirements.”
 - 2. The Advancement Committee will consider special approvals if the Merit Badge Day point of contact can make a case for additional prerequisites in writing.
 - 3. If your pre-requisite list does not include any listed, attach an explanation of how you are planning to accomplish the unlisted pre-requisites at your event.
 - 4. If you plan to request offering a not normally permitted Merit Badge, attach an explanation of why this should be offered and how you plan to accomplish this Merit Badge.

Additional Notes:

- I. Organizations planning group instruction for members of their unit only do not need to obtain Council approval, but must meet all other requirements of this policy.
- J. A Council-issued tour plan must be obtained when the nature or location of the event requires one (i.e. water safety. See the OC Council web site for the current tour plan policy).
- K. A Trail to First Class session may be offered at a Group Merit Badge Day event. Only requirements appropriate to the time allowed for the event and the location are permitted. The Group Merit Badge Day application for the event must have attached an outline what requirements will be completed to gain approval. The flyer for the event should notify Scouts that they must bring a written note from their Scoutmaster approving their attendance.
- L. Orange County Council will only approve 2 Merit Badge events within the Council on any single date. No more than one event may occur within the same District on the same day. This will be decided based on the date of application for an event.
- M. No Group Merit Badge Day event will be approved for days when a Council sponsored event is scheduled (Scout-o-Rama, Scouting for Food, Encampment, etc.) The OCC Advancement Committee reserves the right to decline approval for any event.
- N. Scouts should dress in field uniform (shirt only is okay) for the event. The field uniform is determined by the Scout’s unit (Venture Crew’s specifically have a choice of uniform.) Shoe wear should be appropriate for the activities the Scout will be involved in. The point of this is not to add to the MB requirements, but to have the Scout in an appropriate attitude at the event.

O. When a Merit Badge is offered that requires the counselor's prior approval of any part of it, then either a phone number or email of that counselor needs to be provided. It is up to each participant to individually contact the counselor prior to the Merit Badge day to obtain that approval.