



2025 CUA Merit Badge University Counselor Handbook

Hosted by the Washington DC District, Scouting America National Capitol Area Council

November 1st & 2nd | 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. both days

Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to be a Merit Badge Counselor and lead a session at the CUA Merit Badge University! Your skills and your presence will inspire a group of excited Scouts to prepare for their futures and to become better people.

This guide provides all the information you will need to prepare for your session and deliver a program that helps fulfill the promise of the Scouts BSA Program.

For any questions or clarifications about these materials, please feel free to contact event lead Alex Pham at alexpham.mbc@gmail.com at any time. Additional points of contact are listed at the end of this document (Part 5).

This is an approved event of Scouting America National Capitol Area Council administered by the Washington, DC District. The Scouts BSA advancement program is administered in compliance with the requirements in the [Guide to Advancement 2025](#) and applicable Scouting America National Capitol Area Council large Merit Badge event policies.

Related Documents:

- [2025 CUA MBU – Participant Event Guide](#)
- [2025 CUA MBU – Pre-Requisites and Outside Work](#)

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Part 1 - Registration for Merit Badge Counselors

As a prerequisite for the event, all counselors must be properly registered and trained as “Position 42” Merit Badge Counselors.

Please carefully follow the guidance of Scouting America National Capitol Area Council staff and volunteers to ensure you are registered as a counselor before the start of the event.

Part 2 - Event Code of Conduct

The following code of conduct has been written to ensure the safety and enjoyment of all involved at the CUA Merit Badge University. Please review this document carefully before attending CUA Merit Badge University.

Follow the Scout Oath, Scout Law, & Outdoor Code: All attendees are expected to uphold the values in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Scouts are expected to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent throughout the entirety of Merit Badge University.

Treat all members of volunteers, counselors, university staff, participants, and other personnel with respect: We expect that all participants treat each other respect, as they have volunteered their time to make MBU happen. This includes, and is not limited to, respecting participants’ race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family responsibilities, genetic information, disability, matriculation, or political affiliation.

Respect the property and materials of The Catholic University of America: This Merit Badge University is hosted at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. We expect that you will respect the spaces and materials provided to you for MBU. This includes but is not limited to: only using materials provided to you, not using CUA technology unless explicitly instructed by your counselor, and not being in any CUA rooms unless a volunteer or counselor is present.

Personal responsibility for breakage or loss of personal property: CUA and the MBU staff are not responsible for any breakage or loss of personal property. It is the personal responsibility of attendees to keep track of their belongings throughout MBU.

No drugs, alcohol, firearms, vaping, or tobacco: We want MBU to be a fun and safe time for all involved. As such, absolutely no drugs, alcohol, firearms, vaping or tobacco products are permitted during MBU.

By attending MBU, you are agreeing to abide by the rules and regulations outlined in this code of conduct. As event staff reserves the right to remove any event participant in violation of this code of conduct.

Part 3 - CUA Merit Badge University Expectations & Standards

Scouts for this event have been provided with a Participant Event Guide detailing the steps they should take to get the most out of the event. Those documents are available here:

Preparing for your Session

Please keep these items in mind as you plan your program sessions and follow up with participating Scouts:

- **Fill all your time with content** – Please make every effort to use all the time for your session and not dismiss Scouts early. If need be, dazzle the Scouts with stories, experiences, collections, and facts which will encourage and inspire them to explore the topic on their own. Share your love of the topic for all available hours.
- **Merit badge requirements may not be waived or changed for any Scout.** Counselors and event staff may not add, subtract, or modify requirements from Merit Badges, they must be completed as written.
- **Each Scout must “actually and personally” complete their own requirements.** Attendance to the session alone is not sufficient to earn a badge. Completion is an individual effort for each Scout.
- **Scouts must provide some evidence documenting prior or prerequisite work.** Pictures and letters from other Merit Badge Counselors or unit leaders are the best form of prerequisite documentation. Other evidence may be accepted at your discretion. Scouts have been instructed to bring evidence with them to the event.
- **Only registered counselors may sign off requirements.** – Guest experts or speakers are welcome to assist you, but they may not accept the responsibilities of, or behave as, Merit Badge Counselors during or after this event.
- **Partial Merit Badge completions are a common and acceptable outcome.** Please do not give credit for work that has not been completed.
- **If possible, assist Scouts with partial completions after the event** – Merit Badge Counselors are encouraged to share their contact information with Scouts attending sessions and follow up with Scouts after the event to help with partially completed Merit Badges. Following up is strictly at your own convenience. If you do choose to meet Scouts outside of the event, ensure that you have their parent or a unit leader present, NEVER meet with Scouts 1-on-1. When e-mailing a Scout, carbon copy (CC:) another adult or alexpham.mbc@gmail.com. If you are not able to meet with Scouts after the event, advise them to contact their unit leader and locate another registered counselor.

Prerequisite / Outside Work Requirements & Supplies

It's very rare that Merit Badges can be completed in one session. Merit Badge event best practices include informing Scouts of any outside work for their badges so that they may prepare for their sessions and be aware of follow work that needs to be finished for badges.

Scouts will receive a link to requirements and will be expected to review them before attending. Counselors are responsible for communicating and confirming a list of “outside work” requirements with event staff in advance of the event.

Should supplies need to be purchased for the event, counselors are responsible for communicating needs to staff in advance of the event for budgeting and acquisition.

Event Day

Please arrive at the event before your session begins to check in with staff, receive your room assignment, and receive your finalized attendee list. **For 2025, check-in will occur at McGivney Hall(see below for a campus map).** We anticipate that parking will be available in the McMahon Parking lot and throughout campus.

In the interest of fairness, please honor the list of registered attendees and do not admit additional Scouts to your session without notifying of event staff.

During the event, please contact staff if any assistance is needed. Should a Scout or adult attending your session become disruptive to the group, please contact event staff immediately. Session coordinators may dismiss Scouts or adults at their discretion.

Budget permitting, event staff will cater for merit badge counselors and volunteers. Advance notice will be provided.

2025 D.C. Area Merit Badge University Participant Guide:

[2025 CUA MBU – Participant Event Guide](#) | [2025 CUA MBU – Pre-Requisites and Outside Work](#)

It is recommended that counselors review this participant guide to understand how the Scouts have been instructed to prepare for this event.

Staff will also have contact information for all Scouts at your session. Reach out to alexpham.mbc@gmail.com to receive a list.

Part 4 – Documenting Scout Progress with Blue Cards

Each Scout tracks their Merit Badge requirements with an individual Application for Merit Badge (**BLUE CARD**). Counselors are expected to document the progress of each Scout on their individual blue cards clearly and accurately and to give blue cards back to the Scouts at the end of the session.

For those counselors who are familiar with [Scoutbook Advancement Tracking](#), you are welcome to manage your blue cards through this system if you have prior familiarity. For those who are not well versed in Scoutbook, please know that a **BLUE CARD** can still be accepted by a unit as proof of badge completion.

IMPORTANT: Do not hold on to individual Scout blue cards at the end of your session. Give them back to the Scouts. Scouts are responsible for tracking their progress and reporting back to their unit after completing badges. Holding on to blue cards prevents Scouts from continuing their badges and advancing.

Scouts will show up to your session with their own blue cards. Before the Scout departs, the counselor must record all completed requirements in the chart segment of the card by entering the requirement number, the date completed, and their initials. You may have the Scouts write out the requirement numbers, but the date and signature must come from the counselor after requirement completion.

If a Scout does not complete a Merit Badge, record their progress by listing and signing off only the requirements that they have completed. Leave the contact information sections on the blue card blank. Leave the counselor signature on the applicants record blank, and give the card back to the Scout.

Do not write your contact information in the counselor section, only the “closing” counselor fills that part out at the completion of the merit badge.

It is also strongly recommended that counselors list out the numbers of requirements that the Scout did not finish and to intentionally leave those initial and date boxes blank so that there is absolute clarity on what the Scout needs to finish to complete the badge.

If a Scout finishes all requirements of a Merit Badge, proceed to add your contact information to the back of the card, sign the Counselor’s information section of the card, sign the Applicant’s Record, and then tear off and keep the “Counselor’s Record” third of the document for your own records. Give the remaining 2/3 back to the Scout.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR DIAGRAMS

Application for Merit Badge

The Blue Card

Information for Applicant

- A merit badge application can be approved only by a registered merit badge counselor.
- You **must** have a buddy with you (Scout buddy system) at each meeting with the merit badge counselor.
- Turn in your approved application to your unit leader. You will be awarded the merit badge emblem and certificate at a suitable occasion.

Information for Counselor

- Merit badge applications must be signed in advance by the applicant's unit leader.
- The Scout must have his buddy (Scout buddy system) in attendance at all instructional sessions.
- You may not change any requirement, but you may share your knowledge or experience that will make the counseling more interesting and valuable.

APPLICATION FOR MERIT BADGE

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____

is a registered
☐ Boy Scout ☐ Varsity Scout ☐ Venturer
 of _____ No. _____
 District _____
 Council _____

I have discussed this merit badge with this Scout and recommended at least one merit badge counselor.

Date _____ Signature of unit leader _____

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Record of completed requirements

Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.0.2

Application for Merit Badge

The Blue Card – Reverse Side

Counselor's information →

Counselor signs in two places once all requirements are complete →

Unit leader's second signature →

1/3 goes to the unit as application for the badge

1/3 goes to Scout for their record

1/3 goes to the counselor's records

The applicant has personally appeared before me and demonstrated to my satisfaction that he has met all requirements for the (please print)

Merit badge _____
 Name of counselor _____
 Address of counselor _____
 City _____ ZIP code _____
 Telephone No. of counselor _____ / _____

Signature of counselor _____ / _____ Date _____

Checked and recorded _____
 Date _____ Initials _____
 Certificate and badge presented _____ Date _____

Applicant will turn in this portion to his unit leader for record posting.

APPLICANT'S RECORD

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ ZIP code _____
 Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ by _____

Signature of counselor _____
 Signature of unit leader _____

COUNSELOR'S RECORD

Applicant _____
 Unit No. _____
 Date completed _____ / _____ / _____
 Remarks _____

NOTE TO BOY SCOUT, VARSITY SCOUT, OR VENTURER: Retain this copy for your permanent records.

It is suggested that the counselor keep this record in case any question is raised later in regard to this award.

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Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.0.2

Part 5 – Scouting America National Capitol Area Council Contact Information:

If you have any questions about this document, suspect unfair treatment at the event, or suspect that Scouting America procedures have not been followed during or after this event, then please contact the following individuals:

For general event questions, please contact:

- Alex Pham, Washington, DC District Merit Badge Dean & CUA Merit Badge Event Lead
- alexpham.mbc@gmail.com

For registration questions, please contact:

- Christa Waterwiese, Washington DC Senior District Executive
Christa.Waterwiese@scouting.org

For counselor feedback or Scouts BSA advancement related questions, please contact:

- Alex Pham, Washington, DC District Merit Badge Dean & CUA Merit Badge Event Lead
- alexpham.mbc@gmail.com
- David Astle, Merit Badge Lead, National Capital Area Council
dave.sonia@verizon.net

To report abuse in the Scouting America program, contact 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871) directly.

Appendix 1 - Campus Map

Link to view and download a campus map: <https://www.cua.edu/res/docs/cuamap.pdf>

Parking - Please use Flowbird app [Google Play](#) OR [Apple Store](#)

Appendix 2 – Scouts BSA Merit Badge Counselor Standards

Counselors are expected to know for the most current requirements for their Merit Badges and be familiar with Merit Badge Counselor essentials. Please download review the most recent requirements for your badges and review the linked PowerPoint presentation prior to the event:

Current Merit Badge Requirements:

<https://www.scouting.org/skills/merit-badges/all/>

(SCROLL DOWN ON THE WEBSITE TO FIND YOUR BADGE)

Guide to Advancement 2025:

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/33088.pdf>

(This document outlines the rules for the BSA advancement program. The merit badge section begins at Chapter 7.0.0.0 – Scouts BSA and event policies are derived from this guide)

Counselor Handbook Changes

- September 25, 2025 – Second Edition