

# The Merit Badge Blue Card Process

*A step-by-step reference for Scouts, parents, and unit leaders*

The blue card — formally the *Application for Merit Badge*, No. 34124 — is the required form for recording merit badge progress and completion. It is the Scout's proof that the work was done and approved. Handled well, it is a simple six-step process. Handled poorly, it is the single most common cause of advancement headaches later on, including at the Eagle board of review.

**Bottom line:** Get the unit leader signature first, keep the card readable, and never lose your copy. It is a permanent record.

## The Three Parts of a Blue Card

The card tears into three sections when the badge is complete. Each one goes to a different person, and each serves a different purpose.

| Section                     | Who keeps it                 | Why it matters                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Applicant's Record          | The Scout                    | The Scout's permanent proof of completion. Keep it forever — this is the backup if the badge is ever missing from an official record. |
| Counselor's Record          | Merit badge counselor        | The counselor retains it for at least one year in case a question comes up about the requirements or the date.                        |
| Application for Merit Badge | The unit (Advancement Chair) | The stub the troop uses to enter the badge into the advancement system and order the badge.                                           |

## The Six-Step Process

### STEP 1 Before You Begin: Talk to the Scoutmaster

Pick up a blank blue card and fill in the Scout's portions before meeting with the Scoutmaster. Then have a conversation with the Scoutmaster (or a designated assistant) about the badge you want to earn. The Scoutmaster signs the front of the card and helps you identify an approved counselor.

- This conversation is a **required** part of the process, not a formality.
- The unit leader signature must be on the card **before** the first meeting with a counselor.

- Print neatly. A card nobody can read is a card that gets questioned.

**Note:** A unit cannot impose rank or age requirements for merit badge work, and cannot force a Scout to use one specific counselor. If there is no agreement, the Scout may work with any registered, council-approved counselor.

## **STEP 2 Recording Progress with the Counselor**

As the Scout works through the requirements, the counselor initials each requirement as it is completed, in the grid on the front of the card. Requirements are signed off as they are met, not all at the end.

- Bring the blue card to every meeting with the counselor.
- The buddy system applies. A Scout must never meet one-on-one with a counselor: bring another Scout or a parent/guardian. In a group setting with two or more Scouts, at least two registered leaders must be present.

## **STEP 3 Recording Completion**

When every requirement is finished, the counselor records completion on the middle section of the front, then signs in the two places provided — on the reverse of the Application for Merit Badge portion and on the Applicant's Record.

At this point the card has both the Scoutmaster's starting signature and the counselor's completion signatures. The Scout keeps the whole card and takes it back to the troop.

## **STEP 4 Finish Up with the Scoutmaster**

The Scout schedules a second visit with the Scoutmaster. Expect a real conversation — what the Scout learned, what the experience with the counselor was like, what was hard. This closing discussion carries the same weight as any other step in the process; it is where the troop celebrates the accomplishment and catches any concerns.

The Scoutmaster signs the Applicant's Record and returns that portion to the Scout.

## **STEP 5 Turn In the Stub for Advancement Credit**

The Scout keeps the Applicant's Record permanently and hands the remaining Application for Merit Badge stub to the troop's Advancement Chair. That stub is what triggers the advancement entry and the badge order.

- Turn in to: **Troop 291 Advancement Chair**
- Turn-in deadline for the next court of honor: **2 week before**

## **STEP 6 Follow Up and Check Your Record**

Entering advancement is the troop committee's job, but verifying it is the Scout's. Pull a copy of your advancement report and confirm the badge is there and correctly named.

This matters more than it sounds. Suppose you earned Citizenship in the World and the record shows Citizenship in the Nation. Caught now, it is a two-minute fix. Caught during an Eagle review, it is a real problem. Check your record after every court of honor.

## Partial Completions

If the Scout does not finish every requirement, the counselor initials the ones that were completed and the card becomes a "partial." The work already done is banked.

- A partial has **no expiration date** other than the Scout's 18th birthday.
- Units, districts, and councils cannot impose their own expiration dates on a partial.
- A different counselor may accept the completed requirements and continue from there, though they are not obligated to — they may ask the Scout to demonstrate skills already signed off.

## Common Problems and How to Avoid Them

| Problem                                                           | How to avoid it                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Counselor will not sign because there is no Scoutmaster signature | Get the unit leader signature before the first counselor meeting. Every time.                                                     |
| Lost blue card                                                    | Photograph or scan the card after every counselor meeting. Keep the Applicant's Record in a folder or binder — not in a backpack. |
| Badge missing from the advancement record                         | Verify after each court of honor. Your Applicant's Record is the proof that fixes it.                                             |
| Wrong badge entered                                               | Check the badge name on the record, not just the count.                                                                           |
| Illegible card                                                    | Print. Use the Scout's full legal name and current unit number.                                                                   |
| Counselor met alone with a Scout                                  | Always bring a buddy or a parent. Two registered leaders for group sessions.                                                      |

## Scout's Quick Checklist

1. Pick the badge and read the current requirements.
2. Get a blank blue card and fill in your portions neatly.
3. Meet with the Scoutmaster; get the front signed and get a counselor name.
4. Contact the counselor and set up the first meeting — with a buddy.
5. Work the requirements; get each one initialed as you go.
6. Counselor records completion and signs in both places.
7. Meet with the Scoutmaster again for the closing discussion and signature.
8. Keep the Applicant's Record. Give the stub to the Advancement Chair.
9. Confirm the badge appears correctly on your advancement record.

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*Troop 291 internal reference. Where this document and the Guide to Advancement disagree, the Guide to Advancement governs.*