

Merit Badges in Watchung Mountain District

We strive to strictly follow the processes and guidelines documented in the 2017 Guide to Advancement. The Merit Badge process is discussed at length in Section 7, The Merit Badge Program. This is where I go to answer questions, and I've always found the answers!

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

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

Merit Badge Counselors

- Each District maintains a list of approved Merit Badge Counselors. We have about 155 MBC on our list.
- See flowchart for the Scout MB process and the new MBC process.
- WMD requirement: MBCs can counsel up to 6 MBs, including up to 3 Eagle Required MBs. (We also allow an extra 1-2 badges if they are *underserved* MB's.)
- Some MB's have specific requirements for MBCs. For example, Rifle Shooting requires specific BSA or NRA certifications. Lifesaving requires specific certifications, etc. These are all documented in the G2A.

Notes on the Recommended Process:

- The MBC list should not be given to any scouts or parents. Only the actual Scoutmaster and another adult leader assigned by the SM should have the list and give Scouts the names of MBCs.
- The SM can't actually deny the Scout a blue card because they think the Scout is too young, too old, not mature enough, too busy, etc. (They can try to talk them out of it, suggest other badges, etc., but if the Scout persists, they should get the blue card.)
- New YPT rules change the way we'd normally suggest Scouts contact MBCs. We used to recommend a phone call (so Scouts get used to talking with new adults on the phone), but that's hard to manage these days. Emails allow easy inclusion of a third party (parent or SM) in the conversation.

Recommended Practices for Units:

- Consider limiting how many MBs a Scout does with an MBC. Scouts learn how to interact with adults by dealing with different adults with different communication styles. My Troop won't assign the same MBC for more than 2 MBs with a single Scout.
- Consider not assigning an MBC who is a Scout's parent to that Scout, if possible. There are no rules prohibiting an MBC counseling their son/daughter, but it's not going to give the Scout the best learning experience.
- Try to send the Scout "out of unit" as often as possible. The more new adults they meet and work with, the more they will get out of the MB experience.

Other Interesting Notes:

- Group instruction for MB is acceptable. However, every Scout must actually do every requirement for which they are signed off. For example, if a requirement says "Discuss" then each and every Scout must actually discuss the topic with the registered MBC. Scouts that are merely present for the discussion should not get the requirement signed off.
- Partial MB blue cards have no expiration date (except for the Scout's 18th birthday).
- Many Scouts and MBCs find the MB Worksheets on meritbadge.org very useful, but it's important that the MBC ensure the current MB requirements are being followed.
- I sometimes hear that an MBC is not responding to "multiple messages" left by a Scout, but frequently we discover that the Scout actually left a single voicemail message without a return phone number, etc. If your Scout is having trouble reaching an MBC, please let me know so I can follow up. In rare circumstances I've removed MBCs who never responded to requests from the list, but more often the MBC received a confusing voicemail and was happy to connect.
- From the G2A:
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. If merit badge counseling or instruction includes any web-based interaction, it must be conducted in accordance with the BSA Social Media Guidelines. For example, always copy one or more authorized adults on email messages between counselors and Scouts.