

Merit Badge Clinic Quality

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All leaders are concerned about the quality of the experience their Scouts will have when they attend a merit badge clinic. The good news is that the sponsors of the clinics are also Scouters, and share this concern. Here are the factors we think contribute to a quality merit badge clinic:

1. **Qualifications of Counselors:** Qualified counselors are essential to Scout success. Persons serving as merit badge counselors must be registered with their BSA local Council. Counselors must be men and women of good character, age 18 or older, and recognized as having the skills and education in the subjects for which they are to serve as merit badge counselors. They should have the ability to work with Scout-age boys.
2. **Training Merit Badge Counselors:** All merit badge counselors must be trained in the aims of Scouting and in advancement procedures.
3. **Group Instruction of Merit Badges:** Class size limit, or the ratio of Scouts to counselors, is fundamental to Scout success. BSA Advancement Policies and Procedures include the following: "To the fullest extent possible, the merit badge counseling relationship is a counselor-Scout arrangement in which the boy is not only judged on his performance of the requirements, but receives maximum benefit from the knowledge, skill, character, and personal interest of his 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 his ability to fulfill all requirements."
4. **The Merit Badge Counselor's job:** The Merit Badge Counselor must assure that *each* Scout meets *all* the requirements for the merit badge. To earn a merit badge, the Scout must complete the requirements of the merit badge exactly as stated. The counselor is not authorized to make any deletions or additions to requirements, assuring that the advancement standards are fair and uniform for all Scouts.
5. **Merit Badges are important learning experiences for Scouts:** The counselor introduces the Scout to subjects that may lead to a career choice or to a lifetime hobby.
6. **Buddy System:** BSA policy requires that at least two scouts are present in any meeting with a Merit Badge Counselor.
7. **The most effective clinics are fun:** Scouts should be ready to learn on a FUN and interactive environment.
8. **Preparation is essential:** Requirements that cannot practically be completed during the clinic should be required to be done as prerequisites. Counselors should announce all prerequisite work prior to registration. Scouts are encouraged to complete the prerequisites before attending the merit badge clinic. Limited registration time permits Scouts to do prerequisite work and to read the merit badge book before class. Walk-ins should be discouraged unless there is evidence of completed prerequisite work.
9. **Partially completed Merit Badges:** If some merit badge requirements are not completed during the clinic, the counselor should provide clear documentation of what requirements were successfully completed, and which ones remain to be completed. The counselor should keep a record of this in case the scout loses the information.
10. **Availability of counselor after the clinic:** Counselors should provide contact information, and offer a means of communication for follow-up, both by scouts and by adults who may later work with the scout in connection with the merit badge offered.