



# Kayaking

## Merit Badge Workbook



This workbook can help you but you still need to read the merit badge pamphlet.

This Workbook can help you organize your thoughts as you prepare to meet with your merit badge counselor.

You still must satisfy your counselor that you can demonstrate each skill and have learned the information.

You should use the work space provided for each requirement to keep track of which requirements have been completed, and to make notes for discussing the item with your counselor, not for providing full and complete answers.

If a requirement says that you must take an action using words such as "discuss", "show", "tell", "explain", "demonstrate", "identify", etc, that is what you must do.

**Merit Badge Counselors may not require the use of this or any similar workbooks.**

No one may add or subtract from the official requirements found in Boy Scout Requirements (Pub. 33216 – SKU 621535).

The requirements were issued in 2012 • This workbook was updated in October 2016.

Scout's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor's Phone No.: \_\_\_\_\_

<http://www.USScouts.Org> • <http://www.MeritBadge.Org>

Please submit errors, omissions, comments or suggestions about this **workbook** to: [Workbooks@USScouts.Org](mailto:Workbooks@USScouts.Org)  
 Comments or suggestions for changes to the **requirements** for the **merit badge** should be sent to: [Merit.Badge@Scouting.Org](mailto:Merit.Badge@Scouting.Org)

**Editor's Note: The notations in Parentheses after some requirements identify requirements for the Kayaking BSA Award which either correspond directly or in part to the requirement for the Kayaking Merit Badge.**

1. Do the following

- a. Explain to your counselor the most likely hazards you may encounter while participating in kayaking activities, including weather- and water-related hazards, and what you should do to anticipate, help prevent, mitigate, and respond to these hazards.


- b. Review prevention, symptoms, and first-aid treatment for the following injuries or illnesses that can occur while kayaking: blisters, cold-water shock and hypothermia, heat-related illnesses, dehydration, sunburn, sprains, and strains.

Blisters:


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Cold water shock:


Hypothermia:


Heat related illnesses:


Dehydration:


Sunburn:


Sprains:


Strains:


- c. Review the BSA Safety Afloat policy. Explain to your counselor how this applies to kayaking activities.  
*(The BSA Safety Afloat policy can be found at the end of this workbook.) (Similar to KBSA 3a)*


2. Before doing requirements 3 through 8, successfully complete the BSA swimmer test: Jump feet first into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating. *(KBSA 1)*

3. Do the following

a. Review the characteristics of life jackets most appropriate for kayaking and why one must always be worn while paddling. Then demonstrate how to select and fit a life jacket for kayaking. *(Similar to KBSA 3b)*


b. Review the importance of safety equipment such as a signal device, air flotation bags, extra paddle, sponge, bilge pump, rescue sling, and throw bag. *(Similar to KBSA 3c)*

Signal device:


Air flotation bags:


Extra paddle:


Sponge:

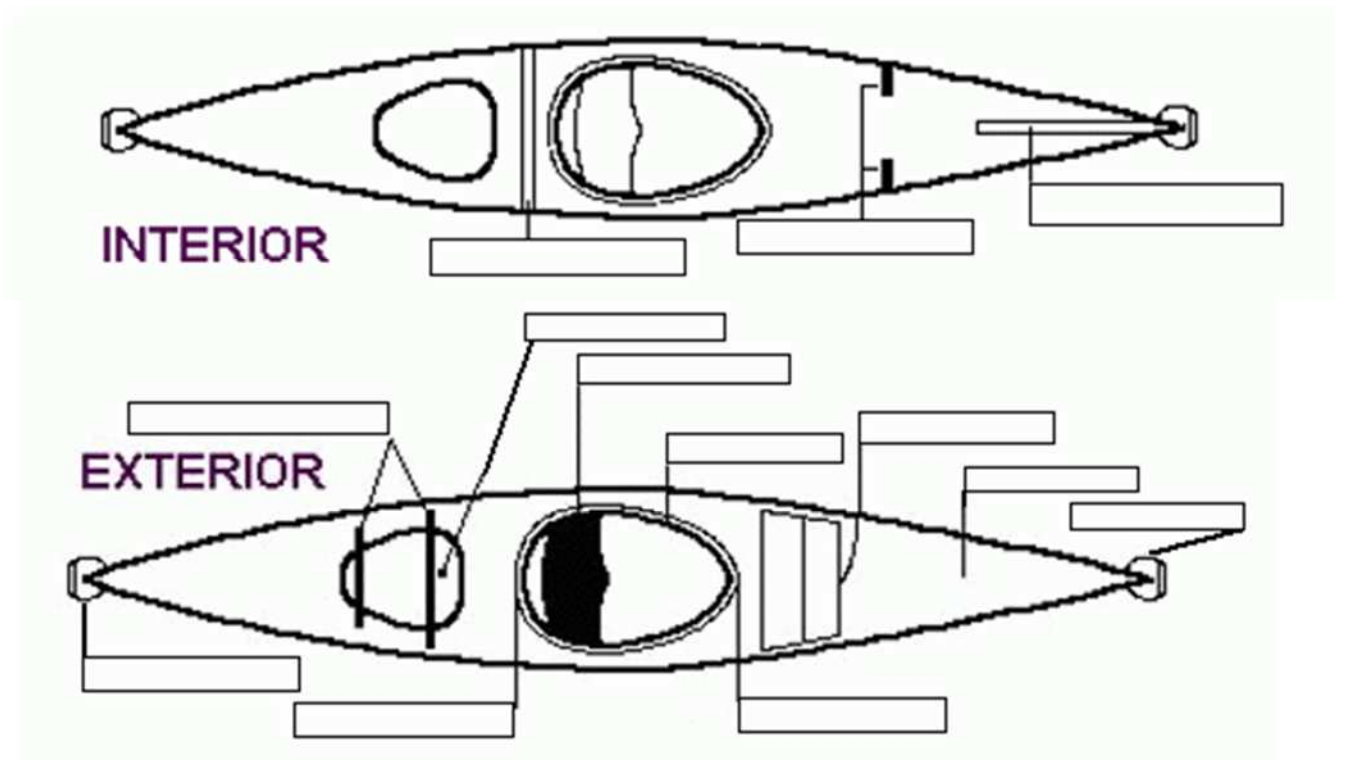

Bilge pump:


Rescue sling:


Throw bag:


4. Do the following:

- a. Name and point out the major parts of a kayak. *(Similar to KBSA 2b)*



- b. Review the differences in the design between recreational, whitewater, and sea or touring kayaks. Include how length, width, stability, and rocker are involved in the design of each type. *(Similar to KBSA 2a)*

recreational kayaks


Whitewater kayaks


Sea or touring kayaks


- c. Review the advantages and disadvantages of the materials most commonly used to make kayaks

Material	Advantages	Disadvantages

Explain the care, maintenance, and storage of a kayak.


- d. Using the trucker's hitch and bowline, demonstrate how to secure a kayak to a rack on a vehicle or a trailer, or to a rack on land.

5. Discuss the following:

a. How to choose a kayak paddle. *(Similar to KBSA 2a)*


b. The different materials from which paddles are made, parts of a paddle, and the care and maintenance of a paddle


6. Using a properly equipped kayak with an open cockpit, a sit-on-top, or an inflatable kayak, do the following:

- a. Safely capsize and perform a wet exit. *(KBSA 4a)*
- b. Reenter the kayak with assistance from a buddy boat.
- c. Demonstrate a kayak-over-kayak rescue.
- d. Demonstrate the HELP position
- e. Capsize the kayak, swim it, and then paddle to shore, and empty water from the kayak with assistance if needed.

7. As a solo paddler, use a properly equipped kayak to demonstrate the following:

- a. Forward stroke. *(KBSA 5c)*
- b. Backstroke. *(KBSA 5h)*
- c. Forward sweep. *(KBSA 5d)*
- d. Reverse sweep. *(KBSA 5e)*
- e. Draw stroke. *(KBSA 5f)*
- f. Stern draw.

8. As a solo paddler, use a properly equipped kayak to demonstrate the following:

- a. Paddle a straight line for 25 yards, make a sharp turn, and return 25 yards in a straight line. *(Part is similar to KBSA 6a)*
- b. Spin or pivot 360 degrees to the right and 360 degrees to the left. *(Similar to KBSA 6c)*
- c. Move abeam to the right 10 feet and to the left 10 feet. *(Similar to KBSA 6b)*
- d. Stop the boat in one boat length. *(Similar to KBSA 6d)*
- e. Paddle a buoyed course of a length determined by your counselor that includes two right and two left turns performed while underway

**Requirement resources can be found here:**  
[http://www.meritbadge.org/wiki/index.php/Kayaking#Requirement\\_resources](http://www.meritbadge.org/wiki/index.php/Kayaking#Requirement_resources)



# Kayaking BSA

## Workbook



This Workbook can help you organize your thoughts as you prepare to meet with your counselor. You still must satisfy your counselor that you can demonstrate each skill and have learned the information. You should use the work space provided for each requirement to keep track of which requirements have been completed, and to make notes for discussing the item with your counselor, not for providing full and complete answers.

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The requirements were last issued or revised in 2005 • This workbook was updated in October 2016.

Scout's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor's Phone No.: \_\_\_\_\_

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Comments or suggestions for changes to the **requirements** for the **award** should be sent to: [Advancement.Team@Scouting.Org](mailto:Advancement.Team@Scouting.Org)

**Editor's Note: The notations in parentheses after some requirements identify requirements for the Kayaking Merit Badge which either correspond directly or in part to the requirement for the Kayaking BSA award.**

- 1. Before fulfilling the following requirements, successfully complete the BSA Swimmer test. *(MB- 2)*
- 2. Do the following:

- a. Describe various types of kayaks and how they differ in design, materials, and purpose. *(Similar to MB 4b)*


- b. Name the parts of the kayak you are using for this exercise. *(Similar to MB 4a)*


- c. Demonstrate how to choose an appropriately sized kayak paddle and how to position your hands. *(Similar to MB 5a)*

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3. Do the following:

- a. Tell what precautions must be taken for a safe trip afloat. *(Similar to MB 1c)*


- b. Demonstrate how to select and properly fit a PFD. *(Similar to MB 3a)*

- c. Explain the importance of safety equipment such as PFD's, air bags, grab loops, and helmets. *(Similar to MB 3b)*

PFDs:


Air Bags:


Grab Loops:


Helmets:




## 4. Demonstrate your ability to aid yourself and others in the event of a capsize:

- a. Capsize your kayak in water at least seven feet deep, perform a wet exit if necessary, and swim the boat to shore. . (Similar to MB 6a)
- b. With assistance, if needed, ready the capsized craft for use.
- c. Show how to approach a capsized paddler in your kayak and tow him to shore.
- d. While upright in your kayak, right a capsized kayak, empty it of water, and assist the paddler aboard without returning to shore.

## 5. As a solo paddler, demonstrate the following:

- a. Entering and launching a kayak from shore or dock.
- b. Landing or docking and exiting a kayak.
- c. Forward stroke (MB 7a)
- d. Sweep stroke (MB 7c)
- e. Reverse sweep (MB 7d)
- f. Draw stroke (MB 7f)
- g. Rudder stroke
- h. Back stroke (MB 7b)

## 6. As a solo paddler, do the following:

- a. Paddle forward in a reasonably straight line. (Similar to part of MB 8a)
- b. Move the kayak sideways to the right and to the left. (Similar to MB 8c)
- c. Pivot 360 degrees to the right and left. (Similar to MB 8b)
- d. Stop the kayak. (Similar to MB 8d)

BSA groups shall use Safety Afloat for all boating activities. Adult leaders supervising activities afloat must have completed Safety Afloat training within the previous two years. Cub Scout activities afloat are limited to council or district events that do not include moving water or float trips (expeditions). Safety Afloat standards apply to the use of canoes, kayaks, rowboats, rafts, floating tubes, sailboats, motorboats (including waterskiing), and other small craft, but do not apply to transportation on large commercial vessels such as ferries and cruise ships. Parasailing (being towed airborne behind a boat using a parachute), kitesurfing (using a wakeboard towed by a kite), and recreational use of personal watercraft (small sit-on-top motorboats propelled by water jets) are not authorized BSA activities.

Safety Afloat training may be obtained from the BSA Online Learning Center at [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org), at council summer camps, and at other council and district training events. Confirmation of training is required on local and national tour permits for trips that involve boating. Additional guidance on appropriate skill levels and training resources is provided in the *Aquatics Supervision* guide available from council service centers.

### 1. Qualified Supervision

All activity afloat must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the wellbeing and safety of those in his or her care and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the nine points of BSA Safety Afloat. That supervisor must be skilled in the safe operation of the craft for the specific activity, knowledgeable in accident prevention, and prepared for emergency situations. If the adult with Safety Afloat training lacks the necessary boat operating and safety skills, then he or she may serve as the supervisor only if assisted by other adults, camp staff personnel, or professional tour guides who have the appropriate skills. Additional leadership is provided in ratios of one trained adult, staff member, or guide per 10 participants. For Cub Scouts, the leadership ratio is one trained adult, staff member, or guide per five participants. At least one leader must be trained in first aid including CPR. Any swimming done in conjunction with the activity afloat must be supervised in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense standards. It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained in BSA Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety to assist in the planning and conduct of all activities afloat.

### 2. Personal Health Review

A complete health history is required of all participants as evidence of fitness for boating activities. Forms for minors must be signed by a parent or legal guardian. Participants should be asked to relate any recent incidents of illness or injury just prior to the activity. Supervision and protection should be adjusted to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. For significant health conditions, the adult supervisor should require an examination by a physician and consult with parent, guardian, or caregiver for appropriate precautions.

### 3. Swimming Ability

Operation of any boat on a float trip is limited to youth and adults who have completed the BSA swimmer classification test. Swimmers must complete the following test, which should be administered annually.

Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.

For activity afloat, those not classified as a swimmer are limited to multiperson craft during outings or float trips on calm water with little likelihood of capsizing or falling overboard. They may operate a fixed-seat rowboat or pedal boat accompanied by a buddy who is a swimmer. They may ride in a canoe or other paddle craft with an adult swimmer skilled in that craft as a buddy. They may ride as part of a group on a motorboat or sailboat operated by a skilled adult.

### 4. Life Jackets

Properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets must be worn by all persons engaged in boating activity (rowing, canoeing, sailing, boardsailing, motorboating, waterskiing, rafting, tubing, and kayaking). Type III life jackets are recommended for general recreational use.

For vessels over 20 feet in length, life jackets need not be worn when participants are below deck or on deck when the qualified supervisor aboard the vessel determines that it is prudent to abide by less-restrictive state and federal regulations concerning the use and storage of life jackets, for example, when a cruising vessel with safety rails is at anchor. All participants not classified as swimmers must wear a life jacket when on deck underway.

Life jackets need not be worn when an activity falls under Safe Swim Defense guidelines—for example, when an inflated raft is used in a pool or when snorkeling from an anchored craft.

### 5. Buddy System

All participants in an activity afloat are paired as buddies who are always aware of each other's situation and prepared to sound an alarm and lend assistance immediately when needed. When several craft are used on a float trip, each boat on the water should have a "buddy boat." All buddy pairs must be accounted for at regular intervals during the activity and checked off the water by the qualified supervisor at the conclusion of the activity. Buddies either ride in the same boat or stay near each other in single-person craft.

## 6. Skill Proficiency

Everyone in an activity afloat must have sufficient knowledge and skill to participate safely. Passengers should know how their movement affects boat stability and have a basic understanding of self-rescue. Boat operators must meet government requirements, be able to maintain control of their craft, know how changes in the environment influence that control, and undertake activities only that are within their personal and group capabilities.

Content of training exercises should be appropriate for the age, size, and experience of the participants, and should cover basic skills on calm water of limited extent before proceeding to advanced skills involving current, waves, high winds, or extended distance. At a minimum, instructors for canoes and kayaks should be able to demonstrate the handling and rescue skills required for BSA Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety. All instructors must have a least one assistant who can recognize and respond appropriately if the instructor's safety is compromised.

Anyone engaged in recreational boating using human powered craft on flatwater ponds or controlled lake areas free of conflicting activities should be instructed in basic safety procedures prior to launch, and allowed to proceed after they have demonstrated the ability to control the boat adequately to return to shore at will.

For recreational sailing, at least one person aboard should be able to demonstrate basic sailing proficiency (tacking, reaching, and running) sufficient to return the boat to the launch point. Extended cruising on a large sailboat requires either a professional captain or an adult with sufficient experience to qualify as a bareboat skipper.

Motorboats may be operated by youth, subject to state requirements, only when accompanied in the boat by an experienced leader or camp staff member who meets state requirements for motorboat operation. Extended cruising on a large power boat requires either a professional captain or an adult with similar qualifications.

Before a unit using human-powered craft controlled by youth embarks on a float trip or excursion that covers an extended distance or lasts longer than four hours, each participant should receive either a minimum of three hours training and supervised practice, or demonstrate proficiency in maneuvering the craft effectively over a 100-yard course and recovering from a capsized.

Unit trips on whitewater above Class II must be done with either a professional guide in each craft or after all participants have received American Canoe Association or equivalent training for the class of water and type of craft involved.

## 7. Planning

Proper planning is necessary to ensure a safe, enjoyable exercise afloat. All plans should include a scheduled itinerary, notification of appropriate parties, communication arrangements, contingencies in case of foul weather or equipment failure, and emergency response options.

**Preparation.** Any boating activity requires access to the proper equipment and transportation of gear and participants to the site. Determine what state and local regulations are applicable. Get permission to use or cross private property. Determine whether personal resources will be used or whether outfitters will supply

equipment, food, and shuttle services. Lists of group and personal equipment and supplies must be compiled and checked. Even short trips require selecting a route, checking water levels, and determining alternative pull-out locations. Changes in water level, especially on moving water, may pose significant, variable safety concerns. Obtain current charts and information about the waterway and consult those who have traveled the route recently.

**Float Plan.** Complete the preparation by writing a detailed itinerary, or float plan, noting put-in and pullout locations and waypoints, along with the approximate time the group should arrive at each. Travel time should be estimated generously. **Notification.** File the float plan with parents, the local council office if traveling on running water, and local authorities if appropriate. Assign a member of the unit committee to alert authorities if prearranged check-ins are overdue. Make sure everyone is promptly notified when the trip is concluded.

**Weather.** Check the weather forecast just before setting out, and keep an alert weather eye. Anticipate changes and bring all craft ashore when rough weather threatens. Wait at least 30 minutes before resuming activities after the last incidence of thunder or lightning.

**Contingencies.** Planning must identify possible emergencies and other circumstances that could force a change of plans. Develop alternative plans for each situation. Identify local emergency resources such as EMS systems, sheriff's departments, or ranger stations. Check your primary communication system, and identify backups, such as the nearest residence to a campsite. Cell phones and radios may lose coverage, run out of power, or suffer water damage.

## 8. Equipment

All craft must be suitable for the activity, be seaworthy, and float if capsized. All craft and equipment must meet regulatory standards, be properly sized, and be in good repair. Spares, repair materials, and emergency gear must be carried as appropriate. Life jackets and paddles must be sized to the participants. Properly designed and fitted helmets must be worn when running rapids rated above Class II. Emergency equipment such as throw bags, signal devices, flashlights, heat sources, first-aid kits, radios, and maps must be ready for use. Spare equipment, repair materials, extra food and water, and dry clothes should be appropriate for the activity. All gear should be stowed to prevent loss and water damage. For float trips with multiple craft, the number of craft should be sufficient to carry the party if a boat is disabled, and critical supplies should be divided among the craft.

## 9. Discipline

Rules are effective only when followed. All participants should know, understand, and respect the rules and procedures for safe boating activities provided by Safety Afloat guidelines. Applicable rules should be discussed prior to the outing and reviewed for all participants near the boarding area just before the activity afloat begins. People are more likely to follow directions when they know the reasons for rules and procedures. Consistent, impartially applied rules supported by skill and good judgment provide stepping-stones to a safe, enjoyable outing.

For additional information on Safety Afloat, go to [www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/Aquatics/safety-afloat.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/Aquatics/safety-afloat.aspx).

BSA groups shall use Safe Swim Defense for all swimming activities. Adult leaders supervising a swimming activity must have completed Safe Swim Defense training within the previous two years. Safe Swim Defense standards apply at backyard, hotel, apartment, and public pools; at established waterfront swim areas such as beaches at state parks and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes; and at all temporary swimming areas such as a lake, river, or ocean. Safe Swim Defense does not apply to boating or water activities such as waterskiing or swamped boat drills that are covered by Safety Afloat guidelines. Safe Swim Defense applies to other nonswimming activities whenever participants enter water over knee deep or when submersion is likely, for example, when fording a stream, seining for bait, or constructing a bridge as a pioneering project. Snorkeling in open water requires each participant to have demonstrated knowledge and skills equivalent to those for Snorkeling BSA in addition to following Safe Swim Defense. Scuba activities must be conducted in accordance with the BSA Scuba policy found in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*. Because of concerns with hyperventilation, competitive underwater swimming events are not permitted in Scouting.

Safe Swim Defense training may be obtained from the BSA Online Learning Center at [olc.scouting.org](http://olc.scouting.org), at council summer camps, and at other council and district training events. Confirmation of training is required on local and national tour permits for trips that involve swimming. Additional information on various swimming venues is provided in the Aquatics Supervision guide available from council service centers.

### 1. Qualified Supervision

All swimming activity must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of those in his or her care, and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the eight points of BSA Safe Swim Defense. It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained in BSA Aquatics Supervision: Swimming and Water Rescue or BSA Lifeguard to assist in planning and conducting all swimming activities.

### 2. Personal Health Review

A complete health history is required of all participants as evidence of fitness for swimming activities. Forms for minors must be signed by a parent or legal guardian. Participants should be asked to relate any recent incidents of illness or injury just prior to the activity. Supervision and protection should be adjusted to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. For significant health conditions, the adult supervisor should require an examination by a physician and consult with the parent, guardian, or caregiver for appropriate precautions.

### 3. Safe Area

All swimming areas must be carefully inspected and prepared for safety prior to each activity. Water depth, quality, temperature, movement, and clarity are important considerations. Hazards must be eliminated or isolated by conspicuous markings and discussed with participants.

**Controlled Access:** There must be safe areas for all participating ability groups to enter and leave the water. Swimming areas of appropriate depth must be defined for each ability group. The entire area must be within easy reach of designated rescue personnel. The area must be clear of boat traffic, surfing, or other nonswimming activities.

**Bottom Conditions and Depth:** The bottom must be clear of trees and debris. Abrupt changes in depth are not allowed in the nonswimmer area. Isolated underwater hazards should be marked with floats. Rescue personnel must be able to easily reach the bottom. Maximum recommended water depth in clear water is 12 feet. Maximum water depth in turbid water is 8 feet.

**Visibility:** Underwater swimming and diving are prohibited in turbid water. Turbid water exists when a swimmer treading water cannot see his feet. Swimming at night is allowed only in areas with water clarity and lighting sufficient for good visibility both above and below the surface.

**Diving and Elevated Entry:** Diving is permitted only into clear, unobstructed water from heights no greater than 40 inches. Water depth must be at least 7 feet. Bottom depth contours below diving boards and elevated surfaces require greater water depths and must conform to state regulations. Persons should not jump into water from heights greater than they are tall, and should jump only into water chest deep or greater with minimal risk from contact with the bottom. No elevated entry is permitted where the person must clear any obstacle, including land.

**Water Temperature:** Comfortable water temperature for swimming is near 80 degrees. Activity in water at 70 degrees or less should be of limited duration and closely monitored for negative effects of chilling.

**Water Quality:** Bodies of stagnant, foul water, areas with significant algae or foam, or areas polluted by livestock or waterfowl should be avoided. Comply with any signs posted by local health authorities. Swimming is not allowed in swimming pools with green, murky, or cloudy water.

**Moving Water:** Participants should be able to easily regain and maintain their footing in currents or waves. Areas with large waves, swiftly flowing currents, or moderate currents that flow toward the open sea or into areas of danger should be avoided.

**Weather:** Participants should be moved from the water to a position of safety whenever lightning or thunder threatens. Wait at least 30 minutes after the last lightning flash or thunder before leaving shelter. Take precautions to prevent sunburn, dehydration, and hypothermia.

**Life Jacket Use:** Swimming in clear water over 12 feet deep, in turbid water over 8 feet deep, or in flowing water may be allowed if all participants wear properly fitted, Coast Guard-approved life jackets and the supervisor determines that swimming with life jackets is safe under the circumstances.

#### 4. **Response Personnel (Lifeguards)**

Every swimming activity must be closely and continuously monitored by a trained rescue team on the alert for and ready to respond during emergencies. Professionally trained lifeguards satisfy this need when provided by a regulated facility or tour operator. When lifeguards are not provided by others, the adult supervisor must assign at least two rescue personnel, with additional numbers to maintain a ratio of one rescuer to every 10 participants. The supervisor must provide instruction and rescue equipment and assign areas of responsibility as outlined in Aquatics Supervision, No. 34346. The qualified supervisor, the designated response personnel, and the lookout work together as a safety team. An emergency action plan should be formulated and shared with participants as appropriate.

#### 5. **Lookout**

The lookout continuously monitors the conduct of the swim, identifies any departures from Safe Swim Defense guidelines, alerts rescue personnel as needed, and monitors the weather and environment. The lookout should have a clear view of the entire area but be close enough for easy verbal communication. The lookout must have a sound understanding of Safe Swim Defense but is not required to perform rescues. The adult supervisor may serve simultaneously as the lookout but must assign the task to someone else if engaged in activities that preclude focused observation.

#### 6. **Ability Groups**

All youth and adult participants are designated as swimmers, beginners, or nonswimmers based on swimming ability confirmed by standardized BSA swim classification tests. Each group is assigned a specific swimming area with depths consistent with those abilities. The classification tests should be renewed annually, preferably at the beginning of the season.

**Swimmers pass this test:** Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.

**Beginners pass this test:** Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and swim 25 feet on the surface. Stop, turn sharply, resume swimming and return to the starting place.

Anyone who has not completed either the beginner or swimmer tests is classified as a nonswimmer.

The nonswimmer area should be no more than waist to chest deep and should be enclosed by physical boundaries such as the shore, a pier, or lines. The enclosed beginner area should contain water of standing depth and may extend to depths just over the head. The swimmer area may be up to 12 feet in depth in clear water and should be defined by floats or other markers.

#### 7. **Buddy System**

Every participant is paired with another. Buddies stay together, monitor each other, and alert the safety team if either needs assistance or is missing. Buddies check into and out of the area together.

Buddies are normally in the same ability group and remain in their assigned area. If they are not of the same ability group, then they swim in the area assigned to the buddy with the lesser ability.

A buddy check reminds participants of their obligation to monitor their buddies and indicates how closely the buddies are keeping track of each other. Roughly every 10 minutes, or as needed to keep the buddies together, the lookout, or other person designated by the supervisor, gives an audible signal, such as a single whistle blast, and a call for "Buddies." Buddies are expected to raise each other's hand before completion of a slow, audible count to 10. Buddies that take longer to find each other should be reminded of their responsibility for the other's safety.

Once everyone has a buddy, a count is made by area and compared with the total number known to be in the water. After the count is confirmed, a signal is given to resume swimming.

#### 8. **Discipline**

Rules are effective only when followed. All participants should know, understand, and respect the rules and procedures for safe swimming provided by Safe Swim Defense guidelines. Applicable rules should be discussed prior to the outing and reviewed for all participants at the water's edge just before the swimming activity begins. People are more likely to follow directions when they know the reasons for rules and procedures. Consistent, impartially applied rules supported by skill and good judgment provide stepping-stones to a safe, enjoyable outing.

#### 9.

For more information regarding Safe Swim Defense, go to [www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/Aquatics/safe-swim.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/Aquatics/safe-swim.aspx).

## **Important excerpts from the Guide To Advancement - 2015, No. 33088 (SKU-620573)**

### **[1.0.0.0] — Introduction**

The current edition of the *Guide to Advancement* is the official source for administering advancement in all Boy Scouts of America programs: Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, Venturing, and Sea Scouts. It replaces any previous BSA advancement manuals and previous editions of the *Guide to Advancement*.

### **[Page 2, and 5.0.1.4] — Policy on Unauthorized Changes to Advancement Program**

**No council, committee, district, unit, or individual has the authority to add to, or subtract from, advancement requirements.** There are limited exceptions relating only to youth members with special needs. For details see section 10, "Advancement for Members With Special Needs".

### **[Page 2] — The "Guide to Safe Scouting" Applies**

Policies and procedures outlined in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, No. 34416, apply to all BSA activities, including those related to advancement and Eagle Scout service projects.

### **[7.0.3.1] — The Buddy System and Certifying Completion**

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 (<http://www.scouting.org/Marketing/Resources/SocialMedia>). For example, always copy one or more authorized adults on email messages between counselors and Scouts.

When the Scout meets with the counselor, he should bring any required projects. If these cannot be transported, he should present evidence, such as photographs or adult verification. His unit leader, for example, might state that a satisfactory bridge or tower has been built for the Pioneering merit badge, or that meals were prepared for Cooking. If there are questions that requirements were met, a counselor may confirm with adults involved. Once satisfied, the counselor signs the blue card using the date upon which the Scout completed the requirements, or in the case of partials, initials the individual requirements passed.

Note that from time to time, it may be appropriate for a requirement that has been met for one badge to also count for another. See "Fulfilling More Than One Requirement With a Single Activity," 4.2.3.6.

### **[7.0.3.2] — Group Instruction**

It is acceptable—and sometimes desirable—for merit badges to be taught in group settings. This often occurs at camp and merit badge midways, fairs, clinics, or similar events. Interactive group discussions can support learning. The method can also be attractive to "guest experts" assisting registered and approved counselors. Slide shows, skits, demonstrations, panels, and various other techniques can also be employed, but as any teacher can attest, not everyone will learn all the material.

There must be attention to each individual's projects and his fulfillment of *all* requirements. We must know that every Scout—actually and *personally*—completed them. If, for example, a requirement uses words like "show," "demonstrate," or "discuss," then every Scout must do that. It is unacceptable to award badges on the basis of sitting in classrooms *watching* demonstrations, or remaining silent during discussions.

It is sometimes reported that Scouts who have received merit badges through group instructional settings have not fulfilled all the requirements. To offer a quality merit badge program, council and district advancement committees should ensure the following are in place for all group instructional events.

- A culture is established for merit badge group instructional events that partial completions are acceptable expected results.
- A guide or information sheet is distributed in advance of events that promotes the acceptability of partials, explains how merit badges can be finished after events, lists merit badge prerequisites, and provides other helpful information that will establish realistic expectations for the number of merit badges that can be earned at an event.
- Merit badge counselors are known to be registered and approved.
- Any guest experts or guest speakers, or others assisting who are not registered and approved as merit badge counselors, do not accept the responsibilities of, or behave as, merit badge counselors, either at a group instructional event or at any other time. Their service is temporary, not ongoing.
- Counselors agree to sign off only requirements that Scouts have actually and personally completed.
- Counselors agree not to assume prerequisites have been completed without some level of evidence that the work has been done. Pictures and letters from other merit badge counselors or unit leaders are the best form of prerequisite documentation when the actual work done cannot be brought to the camp or site of the merit badge event.
- There is a mechanism for unit leaders or others to report concerns to a council advancement committee on summer camp merit badge programs, group instructional events, and any other merit badge counseling issues—especially in instances where it is believed BSA procedures are not followed. See "Reporting Merit Badge Counseling Concerns," 11.1.0.0.
- There must be attention to each individual's projects and his fulfillment of all requirements. We must know that every Scout—actually and personally—completed them.

It is permissible for guest speakers, guest experts, or others who are not merit badge counselors to assist in the counseling process. Those providing such assistance must be under the direction of a registered and approved counselor who is readily available onsite, and provides personal supervision to assure all applicable BSA policies and procedures—including those related to BSA Youth Protection—are in place and followed.

### **[7.0.3.3] — Partial Completions**

A Scout need not pass all the requirements of one merit badge with the same counselor. It may be that due to timing or location issues, etc., he must meet with a different counselor to finish the badge. The Application for Merit Badge has a place to record what has been finished—a "partial." In the center section on the reverse of the blue card, the counselor initials for each requirement passed. In the case of a partial completion, the counselor does not retain his or her portion of the card. A subsequent counselor may choose not to accept partial work, but this should be rare. A Scout, if he believes he is being treated unfairly, may work with his unit leader to find another counselor. An example for the use of a signed partial would be to take it to camp as proof of prerequisites. Partial completions have no expiration except the Scout's 18th birthday. Units, districts, or councils shall not establish other expiration dates for partial merit badges.

### **[7.0.4.8] — Unofficial Worksheets and Learning Aids**

Worksheets and other materials that may be of assistance in earning merit badges are available from a variety of places including unofficial sources on the Internet and even troop libraries. Use of these aids is permissible as long as the materials can be correlated with the current requirements that Scouts must fulfill. Completing "worksheets" may suffice where a requirement calls for something in writing, but this would not work for a requirement where the Scout must discuss, tell, show, or demonstrate, etc. Note that Scouts shall not be required to use these learning aids in order to complete a merit badge.