

Blue Cards Shouldn't Make You "Blue"

Merit badges are more than learning skills. They are about Scouts exploring an interest, engaging in discussions, and being recognized. When conducted properly, the merit badge process incorporates all eight of the methods of Scouting.

The MB process has been updated slightly in the new Guide to Advancement. The 2021 edition recognizes that technological advances can provide many benefits, but the overall process is unchanged and the blue card can play an important role. Alternatives to the blue card may be accepted, as long as they include the necessary information. If electronic record-keeping methods do not encompass all the steps, blue cards may be used in addition. Most importantly, a Scout should always have a permanent, hardcopy record of his or her work.

To reiterate, whether or not blue cards are included, the complete merit badge process must be followed, starting with an initial discussion between the Scout and the unit leader about the specific merit badge. The Scoutmaster (or their designee) provides advice and guidance, maybe suggesting that the Scout would get more out of the badge if they waited, or after they finished another activity. However, it is ultimately the Scout's decision to work on a particular merit badge at a particular time.

"Since blue cards support the merit badge process as it is intended to function, the Guide to Advancement continues to reference and recommend them. It is expected that when blue cards are not used, advancement administrators at all levels will find ways to carry on the processes, interactions, documentation, and other nuances that make the process such a critical element in BSA mission achievement."

Guide to Advancement: Section 7.0.0.2 – About the Application for Merit Badge (“Blue Card”)

During that initial conversation the unit leader should provide contact information for at least one council approved merit badge counselor. However, if the Scout has one already in mind, they must be allowed to work with the registered and approved counselor of their choice. This initial meeting is integral to the merit badge process, and as such should be documented by the leader signing the blue card, or by other means.

The Scout next contacts the merit badge counselor, following all Youth Protection Training guidelines, and begins the process of completing the requirements. The counselor can consider work done at any time after the Scout was a registered Scouts BSA member, as long as the Scout actually and personally completed the requirement, **as written**.

As the Scout completes requirements, the merit badge counselor documents each by initialing and dating the spaces on the blue card, or other method. **These “partial” completions do not expire until the Scout’s 18th birthday.** The Scout may choose to finish the merit badge with a different counselor, who should accept the previous counselor’s certification of any requirements completed.

When all requirements are complete, the counselor records that information on the blue card, and/or by electronic means. The counselor should retain the “Counselor’s Record” portion of the blue card for at least one year, in case questions arise.

After all requirements are completed and approved by the counselor, the Scout shows the evidence of completion to the unit leader, who initiates a discussion on how it went, but **does not retest the Scout**. The unit leader documents this discussion as well, then the troop reports the completion to council and presents the Scout with the merit badge.

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Cub Scouts The 3 R's: Recruit, Recruit & Retain

Of the six programs the BSA offers, typically over 50% of registered youth are in the Cub Scout program. Annually, we recruit more first graders to be Tigers than any other age group across all programs. In 2020, many units were unable or chose not to recruit in their communities. As a result, youth membership in the BSA plummeted.

It is time for a reset this fall, so everyone is being asked to focus on membership recruitment. As critical as that effort will be, data tells us that in a typical year we have had a problem with keeping them in the program. Voice of the Scout surveys have told us that families leave because of a poor den experience.

Dens are where the action happens, it's where we conduct activities in the form of the Adventure program. Den leaders are well meaning adults who volunteered to guide a bunch of kids through a series of activities to reach the goal of completing an Adventure. Our volunteer den leaders like to have a playbook from which to draw and know what to do when

holding a den meeting. They want to know what they should be doing with the youth and how to get it done. Our den leaders are not child development experts, they are parents and adults who volunteer. At the beginning of each program year, our den leaders and Cub Scouts are both stepping into the great unknown.

Advancement is how we deliver our program and measure the outcome, but advancement is not the end goal: it is a method for running a den meeting. Advancement should not define the activities to be completed; activities should lead to advancement. Cub Scouts do not have the developmental understanding of why they must complete certain requirements to "advance." They came to the meeting to have a good time and do something fun. Typically, that's all the Cub Scout cares about.

On the way home from a den meeting, Cub Scouts should be able to tell their families that they had FUN. They should be able to describe the meeting with glee and excitement and a need to return. If a Cub Scout looks out the car window and says, "That was boring," chances are he or she will not be back to the next den meeting or register for another program year.

Our challenge is to be sure den leaders are aware of the many resources available to help our leaders provide the best program possible; each and every meeting. Let's re-set and focus on member experiences that shine and provide great fun and adventures.

BSA resources available to provide the best Cub Scout experience for new membership – youth and adult.

Cub Scouting
Cub Chat Live!
Den Leader Resources
Adult Leader Training

2021 Distinguished Citizens Award Dinner

Distinguished Citizen Awards Dinner

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

Sheraton Framingham Hotel

**1657 Worcester Road, Framingham, MA
01701**

Reception 6:00 pm

Dinner & Program 7:00 pm

2021 Honorees



Distinguished Citizen Award Recipient

Peter J. Koutoujian Sheriff of Middlesex County

The Distinguished Citizen Award is presented to community or business leaders who provide outstanding civic service to the adult and/or youth in the community. Those who receive the award are not necessarily Scout volunteers, but rather individuals who personify what the Boy Scouts of America stand for – good citizenship, outstanding moral fiber with a dedication to others, and for living their lives by the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

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Distinguished Eagle Scout Award (DESA)



Jeffrey E. Connor Founding Member, Boston Brass

The **Distinguished Eagle Scout Award (DESA)** was established in 1969 to acknowledge Eagle Scouts who have received extraordinary national-level recognition, fame, or demonstrated eminence within their field, and have a strong record of voluntary service to their community. The DESA is presented and administered by the National Eagle Scout Association (NESA). It is NESA's highest honor.



Twenty First Century Leadership

Award

Avidia Bank

Twenty First Century Leadership Award is presented to a company or organization that consistently sets the pace for the corporate leadership and philanthropic support of the South Shore and MetroWest communities. The honoree's work and leadership exemplify the ideals and successes of the Boy Scouts of America. The organization's corporate citizenship and community involvement set the example of what can be achieved through hard work, leadership and character, traits that set both organizations apart.

Registration is now open.

You may register and pay online or fill out the mail-in registration form.

Program book ad's must be received by November 19.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Register online here

Mail-in registration

#backtoschoolbacktoscouting Photo Contest

questions, please reach out to the commissioner corps.

9.2.2021 Roundtable Powerpoint

We look forward to seeing you at October's Roundtable. Thank you for everything you do for Scouting.

Cranberry Harbors District September Roundtable

Here is the slide deck from our September Roundtable. All event slides are included at the end of the presentation. Thanks for all you do for our Scouts.

SepRT_Slides_Final