

Earning Merit Badges with Other Councils' Counselors

"With the rise of virtual merit badge classes, a world of new opportunities has opened for Scouts. They can earn all kinds of merit badges on different schedules, well beyond those available through in-person meetings with Golden Gate Area Council counselors. However, with this new freedom come renewed responsibilities—for the Scout, for the Merit Badge Counselor, and for the Unit Leader—to ensure that BSA policies and procedures are still being followed."

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BSA's [Guide to Advancement](#) (GTA) guidance:

Topic 7.0.0.3 *The Scout, the Unit Leader, and the Merit Badge Counselor*

. . . before working with a counselor or attending a group or virtual merit badge opportunity, a Scout should meet with his or her unit leader."

- This means that, if at all possible, the Scout and unit leader should discuss in advance the merit badge and the presentation environment (in-person/online, group/individual, etc.).
- Counselors verify by asking their Scout contact for a 'Blue Card'.
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Topic 7.0.3.2 – *Group Instruction*

- The Unit leader should investigate the quality of the session, or if a Scout will be required to "actually and personally" fulfill each of the requirements.
- Counselors should be prepared to explain their process.
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Topic 7.0.4.9 – *Merit Badge opportunities with Non-Scouting Organizations or Businesses*

- There may be opportunities for Scouts to earn merit badges through participation in activities presented by organizations or businesses not affiliated with the BSA. Zoos, museums, recreation centers, major home improvement stores, and even individuals may be involved.
- Outside organizations and businesses are not allowed to present classes, events, or similar activities that are largely for the purpose of offering merit badges—even if no fee is involved—without approval from the (organization's) local council. A written agreement should be involved in approving such a merit badge opportunity. The council must assure compliance with applicable BSA policies and procedures, including those related to Youth Protection and safety, National Council consent to use protected brand images, and the merit badge counseling and approval process.
- Because there are issues beyond advancement, the Scout executive should be the one to grant final permission. Council approval should not be granted if it is believed merit

badge opportunities will generate a profit or revenue that is surplus to recovering costs related to presenting the opportunity.

Topic 5.0.8.0 – *Using Technology-Based Tools in Advancement*

Procedures for using web-based tools in advancement are established by the council advancement committee in compliance with national procedures.

- Consider how to confirm with their home councils that counselors operating online are registered and approved for the merit badges they counsel.

Golden Gate Area Council procedures

- There are merit badge programs advertised online that are available to our Scouts. The Advancement Team has contacted some of the counselor's home councils to check qualifications. Those contacted and vetted appear in the 'Qualified Out of Council Merit Badge Classes' section.
 - Scouts may take Merit Badge classes from other Council sources provided their unit leader confirms that the counselor has been qualified and approved for the particular merit badge by the counselor's home council and their Youth Protection Training is current. Counselors in California councils also need AB506 training and LiveScan. The unit leader's "blue card" signature verifies their counselor credentials verification.
 - Unit leaders should use Scoutbook to connect the Scout and the counselor for communication and requirement completion recording. Scoutbook:
 - Connection "proves" blue card signature.
 - Automatically includes the parent's address on emails.
 - Prevents communications if the counselor's Youth Protection Training is not current.
 - Not included in this process are district, council, or internal unit programs.
 - A GGAC Merit Badge Counselor desiring to offer a virtual merit badge opportunity must contact the Council Advancement Team for the process.
 - If an out of council MBC wishes to be added to the list they can request that [HERE](#).
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