Online Merit Badge Frequently Asked Questions

These unprecedented times have led many online to fulfill Scouting’s aim of Advancement. The bottom line is that only the method of communication has changed, and we still need to follow the well-established guidelines for how advancement, and in particular merit badge requirements are achieved. Below are some common questions and reminders of best practices, goals, and means. For more information, please see National’s statement on advancement during COVID-19 at https://www.scouting.org/coronavirus/covid-19-faq/.

- Question: Are merit badge counselors allowed to provide online instruction?
  - YES – Merit badge counselors should continue to follow the guidelines per the Guide to Advancement and ensure they are adhering to all youth protection guidelines. It is acceptable for merit badges to be taught to individual scouts and groups of scouts. When merit badges are taught in groups it is important that each scout fulfills every requirement of the merit badge to ensure they have gained the knowledge intended.

- Question: How do we ensure YPT guidelines are met?
  - We must always have “2 Deep Leadership.” When communicating electronically or by telephone, a merit badge counselor must be able to confirm that a second adult is in participation. This can be achieved by having another Scouter (or the Scout’s parent/guardian) on a video chat (visible at all times), on a conference call, or copied on all email communications.

- Question: May merit badge requirements be modified?
  - NO – All requirements must be completed as written in the merit badge pamphlet. Written works can be shared with the merit badge counselor via email. Physical projects can be demonstrated with photographs sent by email or shared with video conferencing.

- Question: Can any parent or Scouter sign off on merit badge requirements?
  - NO – Only an approved merit badge counselor can approve a scout’s completion of the requirements. Verdugo Hills Council merit badge counselors are appropriately trained to accomplish this goal. Your Scoutmaster can help you find an approved counselor.

- Question: Can a scout work with a merit badge counselor from another council?
  - YES – A scout can work with any registered and approved merit badge counselor. Please ask your Scoutmaster or Advancement Chair to help determine a merit badge counselor’s eligibility.

- Question: Can a scout continue to work on merit badges if they don’t have access to the internet and high-speed bandwidth for video conferencing?
  - YES – Contact a merit badge counselor and determine the best way to move forward. Parents or guardians may send advancement work from their own email on behalf of the scout.

- Question: Are electronic signatures acceptable for merit badge completions (blue cards)?
  - YES – Boy Scouts of America has approved the use of electronic signatures until September 30, 2020. PDF copies of blue cards are available online or you may use Scoutbook to track approvals. Scanned copies of blue cards with physical signatures can also be used and passed back-and-forth via email.

Revised: April 2020