

Opening a Merit Badge and "blue card"

A scout begins a Merit Badge course of study by signing up for a merit badge and being issued a "blue card"--and yes, the blue card is literally a piece of special blue card stock, where the scout and merit badge counselor record his completed requirements throughout the course of earning the badge. It is the scout's responsibility to keep up with the blue card, and the troop's responsibility to also record those same achievements in the troop software records.

There are two primary ways that scouts open, work on, and earn merit badges: at the troop level, usually on an individual basis, and large-scale environments such as summer camp. The procedures are significantly different, so please read and familiarize yourself with the following.

Troop Level: the usual protocol throughout the year is for the scout to sign up with the Advancement Chair during a troop meeting. The Advancement Chair and scout will discuss the goals and benefits of the particular merit badge. The Advancement Chair will then generate the blue card and provide counselor contact information at that time. It is the scout's responsibility to initiate contact with the MB counselor to set up counseling sessions. The scout may begin work immediately however, even if he has not yet met with the counselor.

It should take some time, and several meetings between the scout and counselor before the merit badge is completed. The blue card should be updated after each session as requirements are completed. At the next troop meeting the scout should then take the blue card to the Advancement Chair and show him his newly completed requirements. The Advancement Chair will update the troop records. When the merit badge has been fully completed, it is officially "earned." The MB counselor will then sign the blue card as "complete"; the scout once again shows it to the Advancement Chair, who updates the troop records as complete. The scout is immediately acknowledged at the end of that troop meeting. The actual badge will be presented formally at the next Court of Honor.

Large-scale group MB environments such as summer camp, Aquatics Weekend, etc.

The usual process is conducted in reverse, as follows:

- The scout signs up for the merit badge course as part of registration for the event.
- Usually no blue card is generated in advance
 - Possible exception: some scouts may have an already-open MB that they hope to complete at the event; also, sometimes troops are asked to generate a blue card in advance—that will be clearly noted if the case.
- The scout attends the event and participates in the activity.
- At the end of the event, an "Advancement Report" spreadsheet is created by the event hosts, detailing everything accomplished by the scouts, which is then given to the troop.
- The Advancement Chair will then update the troop records as follows, depending on whether or not the scout finished the merit badge. *Keep in mind that many merit badges, by design, may require further work by the scout after the event.*

Successful course completion: If the scout successfully completed the merit badge during the event, he is usually just marked as "complete." The troop records are updated and the merit badge awarded. No blue card is ever created.

Course not complete: If a scout began a merit badge at the event but did not complete it, the Advancement Chair will do the following:

- Update the troop records with the requirements that have been completed
- Create a blue card and type or write in the already completed requirements on the card
- Assign a MB counselor from the troop roster
- Issue the partially completed blue card to the scout. It is then the scout's responsibility to complete the MB course in the traditional manner with his assigned MB counselor.