

## Advancement — Scouts BSA, Venturing and Sea Scouts

◆ **Q: Can merit badge counseling or Nova/Supernova counseling be done using digital technologies like Zoom or WebEx?**

Yes, registered merit badge counselors or Nova counselors/Supernova mentors may work with youth using digital platforms, ensuring that all youth protection measures noted in the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#) and [BSA's social media guidelines](#) are in place. In addition to youth protection, the advancement guidelines in [Guide to Advancement \(GTA\) Section 7](#) are required.

◆ **Q: Are merit badge counselors allowed to provide online instruction?**

Yes. Merit badge counselors should follow the guidelines in the Guide to Advancement 7.0.3.2 and ensure you are adhering to all youth protection requirements and online communications guidelines. It is acceptable—and sometimes preferable—for merit badges to be taught in group settings, including online instruction. We currently allow group instruction at camp and merit badge midways, fairs, clinics, or similar events. These can be efficient methods, and interactive group discussions can support learning. Gathering a group online can also be beneficial. Guest experts and speakers that assist registered and approved counselors may be more willing to speak to a larger online audience. 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. Therefore, the standards we use to verify that each Scout has fulfilled requirements must not be relaxed. Merit badge counselors must be sure that each Scout has individually gained the knowledge intended. When accomplished, counselors can easily sign off requirements via ScoutBook.

**Q: Can I connect directly with my Scouts/Venturers/Sea Scouts if I am a merit badge counselor?**

Yes. In ScoutBook, merit badge counselors can now connect directly with the Scouts they are counseling; see <https://discussions.scouting.org/t/march-23-2020-scoutbook-updates/165970> NOTE: Scouts/Venturers/Sea Scouts still must get approval from their leader, according to Guide to Advancement 7.0.3.0.

**Q: How will I know if a Scout/Venturer/Sea Scout has obtained approval from their leader to work on a merit badge?**

In the member profile, you will see if the leader has signed off with their approval.

**Q: What if my member profile shows that my merit badge counselor status has expired:**

Check with your council. Local councils may need to upload their latest list of approved merit badge counselors.

**Q: Will unit leaders know that a merit badge counselor has connected with one of their Scouts/Venturers/Sea Scouts?**

Yes. The unit Key 3 will receive an email that includes the name of the merit badge counselor, the Scout, and the name of the merit badge.

## **Q: What if I have other merit badge/ScoutBook questions?**

See <https://help.scoutbook.com/knowledge-base/scoutbook-merit-badge-counselor-council-upload-faq/>

### **◆ Q: What changes have been made to rank advancement/camping requirements given the need to maintain social distancing during this time?**

We have implemented temporary changes, detailed below, to allow Scouts to complete rank requirements, detailed below, by video conferencing through September 1, 2020. This deadline will be re-evaluated as needed.

The goal when using video conferencing must be to preserve the ideals and intent of each requirement as best as possible. Scoutmasters or their designee(s) should remain mindful of the Methods of Scouting, such as the Patrol Method, before implementing the modified requirements listed below. Some advancement activities can be completed by video conferencing but not all. For example, virtual visits to a city council meeting, national historic landmarks, museums, and art galleries may be acceptable, but swimming, rifle shooting, and motorboating merit badges cannot be completed virtually.

Even when using video conferencing, all virtual campouts and activities should consist of as many elements found on a normal outdoor campout or activity as possible. The most significant difference is that patrol or troop members are not all in the same location. All existing youth protection policies and digital safety guidelines must be followed.

#### **Tenderfoot rank requirements**

- 1b. – Virtual patrol or troop campouts via video conferencing will be permitted.
- 2a. – During the same day as your virtual patrol or troop campout, assist in preparing one meal with the help of those with whom you live. Tell your patrol or troop why it was important for each person to share in meal preparation and cleanup.
- 2b. – During the same day as your virtual campout, demonstrate the appropriate method of safely cleaning items used to prepare, serve and eat a meal.
- 5a. – Explain the importance of the buddy system as it relates to your personal safety on outings and in your neighborhood. Verbally commit to following the buddy system on your next troop or patrol outing.
- 7a. – Tell how to display, raise, lower, and fold the U.S. flag.

#### **Second Class rank requirements:**

- 1a & 1c. – Virtual patrol or troop activities via video conferencing will be permitted.
- 3b. – Using a compass and map together, **plan** a 5-mile hike approved by your adult leader.
- 4. – Evidence of wild animals can be demonstrated with information or photos of your local area found online.
- 5c. – May be completed virtually via video conferencing on dry land.
- 7c. – Learn about the dangers of using drugs, alcohol and tobacco and other practices that could be harmful to your health. Discuss what you learned with your family and explain the dangers of substance addictions. Report to your Scoutmaster or other adult leader in your troop about which parts of the Scout Oath and Scout Law relate to what you learned.

8a. – May be completed virtually using video conferencing.

8d. – May be completed by comparing costs at three (3) online sites or locations.

**First Class rank requirements:**

1a – Virtual patrol or troop activities via video conferencing will be permitted.

2e. – On the same day as your virtual campout, serve as the cook. Supervise your assistant(s) in using a stove or building a cooking fire. Prepare the breakfast, lunch, and dinner planned in First Class requirement 2a. Supervise the cleanup.

4a. – By drawing, computer software, or other virtual methods, plan an orienteering course that would cover at least one mile. Explain why measuring the height and/or width of designated items (tree, tower, canyon, ditch, etc.) is helpful. Explain how you would complete your course using a real map and compass.

4b. – Scouts do not need to follow their route.

5a. – Evidence of native plants can be demonstrated with information or photos of your local area found online.

6e. – May be completed on dry land.

9a. – Visit may take place virtually or by phone.

9c. – Outings can include past or future plans.

10. – Invite the potential new member to a **virtual meeting or future activity using video conferencing.**

**◆ Q: Will virtual camping count toward Order of the Arrow nights camping?**

No, virtual camping will not count toward the 15 nights camping required for membership in the Order of the Arrow.