

Backpacking

Merit Badge Workbook

Merit badges are earned by doing: reading the pamphlet, practicing the skills, and showing your counselor what you have learned.
This workbook gives you a place to organize your notes and track your progress along the way.
Merit badge counselors may not require the use of this or any similar workbook.
You still must satisfy your counselor that you can demonstrate each skill and have learned the information.
Use the space under each requirement to note what you have done and what you want to talk about, not to write out full answers.
When a requirement says discuss, show, tell, explain, or demonstrate, that is what you must do.
No one may add to or subtract from the official requirements found on scouting.org (Guide to Advancement 7.0.4.8).

Scouting America last updated this badge's requirements page on September 19, 2025.
Requirements change from time to time. Double-check scouting.org before you start.

Scout's name: _____ Unit: _____ Date started: _____

Counselor's name: _____ Phone no.: _____ Email: _____

Links marked "Scouting America resources" are the ones Scouting America shares on its official badge page.
Links marked "ScoutSmarts" open the matching part of Cole's guide. This workbook is unofficial and not endorsed by Scouting America.

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1. Discuss the prevention of and treatment for the health concerns that could occur while backpacking, including hypothermia, heat reactions, frostbite, dehydration, insect stings, tick bites, snakebite, and blisters.

Scouting America resources: Outdoor Emergency Plan (website) · Preventing and Treating Blisters (video) Preventing and Treating Frostbite (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 1 explained

Backpacking health concerns

Health concern	Prevention	Treatment
hypothermia		
heat reactions		
frostbite		
dehydration		
insect stings		
tick bites		
snakebite		
blisters		

Requirement 1 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

2. Do the following:

(a) List the 10 Scout Basic Essentials to be carried on any backpacking trek and explain why each item is necessary.

Scouting America resources: What Are the 10 Essentials? (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 2a explained

The 10 Scout Basic Essentials

Item	Why it's necessary

(b) Describe 10 ways you can limit the weight and bulk to be carried in your pack without jeopardizing your health or safety.

Scouting America resources: 10 FREE Ways to Reduce Base Weight Backpacking (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 2b explained

Ten ways to limit weight and bulk

Way to limit weight or bulk	Why it's still safe

Requirement 2 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

3. Do the following:

(a) Define limits on the number of backpackers appropriate for a trek crew.

Scouting America resources: Philmont Crew Requirements (website) · Ideal Hiking Group Size (website)
ScoutSmarts: Requirement 3a explained

Limits on the number of backpackers in a trek crew

(b) Describe how a trek crew should be organized.

Scouting America resources: Philmont Crew Positions (website) · Ideal Hiking Group Size (website) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 3b explained

How a trek crew should be organized

(c) Tell how you would minimize risk on a backpacking trek.

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 3c explained

How I would minimize risk on a backpacking trek

(d) Explain the purpose of an emergency response plan.

Scouting America resources: Backpacking Emergency Response Plan (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 3d explained

The purpose of an emergency response plan

Requirement 3 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

4. Do the following:

(a) Describe the importance of following the Leave No Trace Seven Principles and the Outdoor Code while backpacking, and at least five ways you can lessen the crew's impact on the environment.

Scouting America resources: What is Leave No Trace? (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 4a explained

Why following Leave No Trace and the Outdoor Code matters while backpacking

Ways our crew can lessen our impact on the environment

Way	How I'd do it

(b) Describe proper methods of handling human and other wastes while on a backpacking trek. Describe the importance of and means to assure personal cleanliness while on a backpacking trek.

Scouting America resources: How to Poop in the Woods (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 4b explained

Handling human and other wastes on a trek

Personal cleanliness on a trek: why it matters and how to keep it up

(c) Tell what factors are important in choosing a campsite.

Scouting America resources: How to Select a Campsite (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 4c explained

Factors that matter in choosing a campsite

Requirement 4 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

5. Do the following:

(a) Demonstrate two ways to treat water and tell why water treatment is essential.

Scouting America resources: The Best Way to Filter Water While Backpacking (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 5a explained

Treatment method 1 _____ Treatment method 2 _____ Date _____

Why water treatment is essential

(b) Explain to your counselor the importance of staying well-hydrated during a trek.

Scouting America resources: Hydrate! (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 5b explained

Why staying well-hydrated matters during a trek

Requirement 5 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

6. Do the following:

(a) Demonstrate that you can read topographic maps.

Scouting America resources: How to Read a Topographic Map (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 6a explained

Map I read _____ Date _____

What I showed my counselor on the map

(b) While on a trek, use a map and compass to establish your position on the ground at three different locations, OR use a GPS receiver to establish your position on a topographic map and on the ground at three different locations.

Scouting America resources: How to Use a Compass (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 6b explained

Trek _____ Date _____ Map and compass, or GPS _____

Location	Where I was on the trek	Position I found
Location 1		
Location 2		
Location 3		

(c) Explain how to stay found, and what to do if you get lost.

Scouting America resources: What to Do If You Get Lost (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 6c explained

How to stay found

What to do if I get lost

Requirement 6 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

7. Tell how to properly prepare for and deal with inclement weather.

Scouting America resources: Backpacking in Rain, Lightning, Hail, and Wind (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 7 explained

How to prepare for inclement weather

How to deal with it on the trail

Requirement 7 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

8. Do the following:

(a) Explain the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of backpacking stoves using at least three different types of fuel.

Scouting America resources: Trying Every Type of Backpacking Stove! (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 8a explained

Backpacking stoves and fuels

Stove type	Fuel	Advantages	Disadvantages

(b) Demonstrate that you know how to operate a backpacking stove safely and to handle liquid fuel safely.

Scouting America resources: Trying Every Type of Backpacking Stove! (video)
How To LIGHT a CAMP STOVE! Both Canister and Liquid Fuel Stoves (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 8b explained

Stove I used _____ Date _____

- ☐ Operated a backpacking stove safely
- ☐ Handled liquid fuel safely

(c) Prepare three meals using a stove and fuel you can carry in a backpack.

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 8c explained

My three backpacking meals

Meal	Date	What I cooked	Stove and fuel
Meal 1			
Meal 2			
Meal 3			

(d) Demonstrate that you know how to keep cooking and eating gear clean and sanitary, and that you practice proper methods for food storage while on a backpacking trek.

Scouting America resources: Clean-Up/Washing Dishes (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 8d explained

Date _____ Where _____

- ☐ Kept cooking and eating gear clean and sanitary
- ☐ Stored food properly

Requirement 8 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

9. Do the following:

(a) Write a plan that includes a schedule for a patrol/crew backpacking hike of at least 2 miles.

Scouting America resources: How To Plan Your First Backpacking Trip (video) · Backpacking Trip Schedule (PDF)
ScoutSmarts: Requirement 9a explained

Route _____ Date _____ Distance _____

Our hike schedule

Time	What we'll do	Where

The rest of my plan

(b) Conduct a prehike inspection of the patrol and its equipment.

Scouting America resources: Testing Your Backpacking Gear (video)
Hiking Backpack Inspection: The Ultimate Safety Checklist for Outdoor Enthusiasts (website) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 9b explained

Date _____ Patrol or crew _____

Prehike inspection

Scout or crew gear	What I checked	What needed fixing

(c) Show that you know how to properly pack your personal gear and your share of the crew's gear and food.

Scouting America resources: How to Pack Your Backpack (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 9c explained

Date _____ Checked by _____

My share of the crew's gear and food

(d) Show you can properly shoulder your pack and adjust it for proper wear.

Scouting America resources: How to Fit a Backpack (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 9d explained

Date _____ Checked by _____

(e) While using the plan you developed for requirement 9(a), carry your fully loaded pack to complete a hike of at least 2 miles.

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 9e explained

Date _____ Route _____ Distance _____

How the hike went with my plan

Requirement 9 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

10. Following the Leave No Trace Seven Principles and the Outdoor Code, participate in at least three backpacking treks of at least three days each and at least 15 miles each, and using at least two different campsites on each trek. Carry everything you will need throughout the trek.

Scouting America resources: What is Leave No trace? (video) · 7 Principles - Leave No Trace (website)

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 10 explained

My backpacking treks

Trek	Dates	Where	Days	Miles	Campsites used
Trek 1					
Trek 2					
Trek 3					

How we followed Leave No Trace and the Outdoor Code, and carried everything we needed

Requirement 10 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

11. Do the following:

(a) Write a plan for a backpacking trek of at least five days using at least three different campsites and covering at least 30 miles. Your plan must include a description of and route to the trek area, a schedule (including a daily schedule), a list of food and equipment needs, a safety and emergency plan, and a budget.

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 11a explained

- ☐ Description of the trek area
- ☐ Route to the trek area
- ☐ Schedule
- ☐ Daily schedule
- ☐ Food needs
- ☐ Equipment needs
- ☐ Safety and emergency plan
- ☐ Budget

The trek area and my route to it

Trek schedule

Day	Date	Campsite	Miles	Route and plans
Day 1				
Day 2				
Day 3				
Day 4				
Day 5				

My daily schedule (times and activities for a day on the trail)

Food and equipment needs

Food	Equipment

Safety and emergency plan

Budget

Item	Cost

(b) Following the Leave No Trace Seven Principles and the Outdoor Code, take the trek as planned in requirement 11(a) that is at least five full days, covering at least 30 miles and utilizing at least three different campsites. While on trek, complete at least one service project approved by your counselor.

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 11b explained

Dates | Miles covered | Campsites used

Service project | Approved by

What I did for the service project

(c) Keep a daily journal during the trek that includes a day-by-day description of your activities, including notes about what worked well and thoughts about improvements that could be made for the next trek.

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 11c explained

Day 1: what we did, what worked well, what I'd improve next time

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Requirement 11 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

Counselor sign-off

Your counselor signs your blue card or approves the badge in Scoutbook, and your unit records it. This line is for your own records.

Counselor's signature _____ Date completed _____

Official Scouting America resources

Scouting America resources: Backpacking merit badge page (requirements and resources) · Backpacking merit badge pamphlet (free PDF) All merit badges · **ScoutSmarts:** Backpacking Merit Badge Guide, Part 1 · Backpacking Merit Badge Guide, Part 2

Made by Cole at ScoutSmarts.com, an Eagle Scout who loves helping Scouts.
Spot an error or a requirement change? Tell me at scoutsmarts.com/contact.
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