

Canoeing

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 December 31, 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.
This workbook is unofficial and not endorsed by Scouting America.

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1. Do the following:

(a) Review with your counselor the most likely hazards you may encounter while participating in canoeing activities and what you should do to anticipate, help prevent, mitigate, and respond to these hazards.

Scouting America resources: Canoe Trip Risks (website) · Canoe Safety (video)
Golden Rules of Canoeing | How To Stay Safe on the Water (video) · Safety on Wilderness Canoe Trips (website)

Canoeing hazards

Hazard	How I anticipate and help prevent it	How I mitigate and respond to it

(b) Review prevention, symptoms, and first-aid treatment for the following injuries or illnesses that could occur while canoeing: blisters, cold-water shock and hypothermia, dehydration, heat-related illnesses, sunburn, sprains, and strains.

Scouting America resources: How To Prevent and Treat Blisters (website)
Cold Water Shock—How To Deal With Cold Water Shock (video) · Cold Water Paddling Safely (video)
What Happens If You Don't Drink Enough Water (video)
Great Ways To Beat the Heat and Avoid Heat-Related Illness on the Water (website)
What To Do if You Are Overheated After a Paddling This Summer? (website) · What Causes Sunburns (video)
Sprain Care With RICE Method (video)

Injuries and illnesses while canoeing

Injury or illness	Prevention	Symptoms	First aid
blisters			
cold-water shock and hypothermia			
dehydration			
heat-related illnesses			
sunburn			
sprains			
strains			

(c) Discuss the Scouting America Safety Afloat policy. Tell how it applies to canoeing activities.

Scouting America resources: Safety Afloat (website)

Safety Afloat, and how it applies to canoeing

Requirement 1 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

2. Before doing the following requirements, successfully complete the Scouting America swimmer test, found in the Swimming merit badge pamphlet.

Swimmer test passed on _____ Witnessed by _____

Requirement 2 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

3. Do the following:

(a) Name and point out the major parts of a canoe.

Scouting America resources: Basic Canoe Parts Identified (video) · The Parts of a Canoe (video) · Parts of a Canoe (video)

Major parts of a canoe

Part	Where it is or what it does

(b) Describe how the length and shape of a canoe affect its performance.

Scouting America resources: How To Choose the Right Canoe | Comparing Length, Width and Hull Shape (video)
Canoe Design Features and How They Affect Performance (video)

Feature	How it affects performance
Length	
Shape	

Requirement 3 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

4. Do the following:

(a) Name and point out the parts of a paddle.

Scouting America resources: Parts of a Canoe Paddle Explained (video)

Parts of a paddle

Part	Where it is or what it does

(b) Demonstrate how to correctly size a paddle for a paddler in a sitting position and a kneeling position.

Date _____ Paddler I sized it for _____

- ☐ Sitting position
- ☐ Kneeling position

Requirement 4 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

5. Do the following:

(a) Review with your counselor the characteristics of life jackets most appropriate for canoeing and tell why a life jacket must always be worn while paddling.

Scouting America resources: How To Pick & Fit a PFD (video) · How To Choose the Right Life Jacket (website)

Life jacket characteristics most appropriate for canoeing

Why a life jacket must always be worn while paddling

(b) Demonstrate how to select and properly fit the correct size life jacket.

Date _____ Life jacket type and size I picked _____

(c) Review the importance of safety and rescue equipment such as a sound signal device, extra paddle, sponge, bailer, bilge pump, rescue sling, ropes, and throw bag.

Scouting America resources: Essential Safety Gear for Canoeing (video)
13 Pieces of Essential Safety Equipment for WW Canoeing (website)

Safety and rescue equipment

Equipment	Why it's important
sound signal device	
extra paddle	
sponge	
bailer	
bilge pump	
rescue sling	
ropes	
throw bag	

Requirement 5 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

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6. Review with your counselor the general care and maintenance of canoes, paddles, and other canoeing equipment.

Scouting America resources: How To Check, Clean, and Dry Your Canoe (video) · Canoe Care and Maintenance (video)
How To Care for an Ultralight Canoe (video)

Care and maintenance

Equipment	General care and maintenance
canoes	
paddles	
other canoeing equipment	

Requirement 6 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

7. With a companion, use a properly equipped canoe to demonstrate the following:

(a) Safely carry and launch the canoe from a dock or shore (both, if possible).

Scouting America resources: How To Get Into and Out of a Canoe Smoothly and Safely (video)

Date _____ Companion _____ Launched from (dock, shore) _____

(b) Safely land the canoe on a dock or shore (both, if possible) and return it to its proper storage location.

Date _____ Companion _____ Landed on (dock, shore) _____

(c) Demonstrate kneeling and sitting positions in a canoe and explain the proper use for each position.

Scouting America resources: Should You Kneel or Sit in a Canoe? (video)

Date _____

Position	Proper use
Kneeling	
Sitting	

(d) Change places while afloat in the canoe.

Scouting America resources: How To Switch Places in a Canoe (video)

Date _____ Companion _____

Requirement 7 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

8. With a companion, use a properly equipped canoe to demonstrate the following:

(a) Safely exit the canoe in deep water without losing contact with the canoe. Reenter the canoe with the assistance of the other paddler without capsizing the boat.

Scouting America resources: Getting Into a Canoe From Deep Water (video)

Date _____ Companion _____

(b) Safely perform a controlled capsize of the canoe and demonstrate how staying with a capsized canoe will support both paddlers.

Scouting America resources: How To Deal With a Flipped Canoe | Canoe Rescue Techniques (video)
Capistrano Flip, Canoe Solo Self Rescue (video) · Capsizing a Canoe: What To Do if It Happens to You (website)

Date _____ Companion _____

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(c) Swim, tow, or push a swamped canoe 50 feet to shallow water. In the shallow water, empty the swamped canoe and reenter it.

Scouting America resources: Rescue a Swamped Canoe With the Capistrano Flip (website) · Unswamp a Canoe (video)

Date _____ Swam, towed or pushed _____

(d) In deep water, rescue a swamped canoe and its paddlers. After checking that those in the water do not need immediate assistance, empty the swamped canoe and help the paddlers safely reenter their boat without capsizing.

Scouting America resources: Canoe Deep Water Rescue (video) · Open Canoe to Open Canoe Rescue (video)

Date _____ Paddlers I rescued _____

(e) Perform a canoe rescue of a conscious swimmer.

Date _____ Swimmer _____

(f) Using a rescue (throw) bag from shore, lay the line within 3 feet of a conscious swimmer 30 feet away. Show how to repack the bag when done.

Scouting America resources: Swiftwater Rescue—Throw Bag Toss (video) · Water Rescue: Throw Bags (video)

Date _____ Swimmer _____

- ☐ Line laid within 3 feet
- ☐ Bag repacked

Requirement 8 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

9. With a companion, using a properly equipped canoe to demonstrate the following tandem maneuvers while paddling in unison on opposite sides and without changing sides. Each paddler must demonstrate these maneuvers in both the bow and stern and on both sides of the canoe while maintaining trim and balance of the canoe:

Scouting America resources: 3 Golden Rules of Canoeing Technique (video)

(a) Pivot (spin) the canoe 180° (half circle) to the right from a stationary position, stop, and return to the starting position by pivoting to the left using draw and pushaway strokes or using forward and reverse sweeps staying within 2 boat lengths of the starting position.

Scouting America resources: Pivot Turns—Maneuvering a Canoe (video)

Date _____ Companion _____

- ☐ Bow, left side
- ☐ Bow, right side
- ☐ Stern, left side
- ☐ Stern, right side

(b) Move a canoe sideways (abeam) in one direction for 10 feet and then return to the starting position using the draw and pushaway strokes.

Date _____ Companion _____

- ☐ Bow, left side
- ☐ Bow, right side
- ☐ Stern, left side
- ☐ Stern, right side

(c) While in forward motion, stop the canoe within two boat lengths using the backstroke.

Date _____ Companion _____

- ☐ Bow, left side
- ☐ Bow, right side
- ☐ Stern, left side
- ☐ Stern, right side

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(d) While in the stern position and without assistance from the bow paddler, paddle in a straight line 15-20 boat lengths using an appropriate steering stroke, e.g., the J-stroke or thumb-down rudder stroke with or without a stern pry.

Scouting America resources: How To Do a J-Stroke—Canoe Technique (video) · Canoe tips with Chris Brain—The J stroke (video)

Date _____ Steering stroke I used _____

- ☐ Stern, left side
- ☐ Stern, right side

(e) Move the canoe in a straight line 15-20 boat lengths with the bow paddler using as necessary the forward stroke, draw stroke or forward sweep and the stern paddler using an appropriate steering stroke, e.g., the J-stroke or thumb-down rudder stroke with or without a stern pry.

Scouting America resources: Tandem Canoe Basics (video) · How To Paddle a Tandem Canoe (video)

Date _____ Companion _____

- ☐ Bow, left side
- ☐ Bow, right side
- ☐ Stern, left side
- ☐ Stern, right side

(f) While maintaining forward motion, turn the canoe 90° in an arc to the right in 5-10 boat lengths with the bow paddler using as necessary either the draw stroke or forward sweep and the stern paddler using only the forward stroke. Repeat the maneuver turning the canoe 90° to the left.

Date _____ Companion _____

- ☐ Bow, left side
- ☐ Bow, right side
- ☐ Stern, left side
- ☐ Stern, right side

(g) Move the canoe backwards in a straight line 3-4 boat lengths using as necessary the back stroke, reverse sweep or draw stroke in the bow or the stern.

Scouting America resources: Canoeing—How To Paddle Straight Back (video)

Date _____ Companion _____

- ☐ Bow, left side
- ☐ Bow, right side
- ☐ Stern, left side
- ☐ Stern, right side

(h) Complete a figure of 8 course around markers 3-4 boat lengths apart using appropriate strokes including the draw stroke, and the forward and reverse sweeps.

Date _____ Companion _____

- ☐ Bow, left side
- ☐ Bow, right side
- ☐ Stern, left side
- ☐ Stern, right side

Requirement 9 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: Canoeing merit badge page (requirements and resources) · Canoeing merit badge pamphlet (free PDF)
All merit badges

Made by Cole at ScoutSmarts.com, an Eagle Scout who loves helping Scouts.
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