

Chess

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.
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. Do the following:

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 1 explained

(a) Discuss with your counselor the history of the game of chess.

Scouting America resources: A Brief History of Chess (video)

Notes on the history of chess for my discussion

(b) Research a famous chess player and what accomplishments made him or her famous. Discuss with your counselor.

Scouting America resources: Story of World Chess Champion Magnus Carlsen! (video)
The 'Queen of Chess' Who Defeated Kasparov (video) · Chess Champ Bobby Fischer on 60 Minutes (video)

Chess player I researched _____

Accomplishments that made them famous

Requirement 1 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

2. Discuss with your counselor the following:

(a) Why chess is considered a game of planning and strategy.

Scouting America resources: Why Every Strategist Should Learn Chess (video)

Why chess is a game of planning and strategy

(b) The benefits of playing chess, including developing critical thinking skills, concentration skills, and decision-making skills, and how these skills can help you in other areas of your life.

Scouting America resources: 14 Shocking Benefits of Playing Chess (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 2b explained

Benefits of playing chess

Skill	How chess builds it	How it can help me in other areas of my life
Critical thinking skills		
Concentration skills		
Decision-making skills		

(c) Sportsmanship and chess etiquette

Scouting America resources: The Morals of Chess by Benjamin Franklin (video) · Chess Etiquette (video) Understanding Resignation and Respect in Chess (video)

Good conduct at the board

Topic	What it looks like when I play
Sportsmanship	
Chess etiquette	

Requirement 2 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

3. Demonstrate to your counselor that you know each of the following. Then, using Scouting EDGE to teach someone who does not know how to play chess:

Scouting America resources: The EDGE Method of Teaching (PDF)

Person I taught _____ Date _____

My teaching plan using Scouting EDGE

Step	What I will do
Explain	
Demonstrate	
Guide	
Enable	

(a) The name of each chess piece

Scouting America resources: Chess 101: Name the Pieces (video)

The names of the chess pieces

(b) How to set up a chessboard

Scouting America resources: How to Set Up the Chess Board (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 3b explained

My setup reminders

(c) How each chess piece moves and captures, including: four rules of castling, en passant captures, pawn promotion, check, ways to get out of check, and checkmate

Scouting America resources: How To Move the Chess Pieces? (video) · Chess: Castling and En Passant (video) Check! | Chess Term (video) · Checkmate | Chess Terms (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 3c explained

Moves, captures, and special rules

Topic	My notes
How each chess piece moves and captures	
Four rules of castling	
En passant captures	
Pawn promotion	
Check	
Ways to get out of check	
Checkmate	

(d) The five ways a game can end in a draw

Scouting America resources: Draw and Stalemate in Chess Explained (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 3d explained

Five ways a game can end in a draw

Way to draw	How it happens

Requirement 3 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

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4. Do the following:

(a) Demonstrate scorekeeping using the algebraic system of chess notation.

Scouting America resources: Learn How To Record Your Chess Games, Read Books and Communicate (video)

Game played with _____ Date _____

My score sheet (algebraic notation)

Move	White	Black

(b) Discuss the differences between the opening, the middle game, and the endgame.

Scouting America resources: What Is a Chess Opening? (video) · The Dreaded Middlegame (video)
What Is the Endgame in Chess? (video) · A Beginner's Guide to Chess: Opening, Middlegame, and Endgame Principles (video)
ScoutSmarts: Requirement 4b explained

The three stages of a game

Stage	What happens and what I focus on
The opening	
The middle game	
The endgame	

(c) Explain four opening principles. Demonstrate for your counselor the first five moves of the following openings: Ruy Lopez, French Defense, Queen's Gambit Declined, Sicilian Defense.

Scouting America resources: The Ruy Lopez: The Opening Every Chess Player Must Know (video)
The French Defense Chess Opening Explained in 4 Minutes by a Chess Master! (video) · Learn the Queen's Gambit Declined (video)
Chess Openings: Sicilian Defense (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 4c explained

Four opening principles

Principle	Why it helps

First five moves of each opening

Opening	The first five moves
Ruy Lopez	
French Defense	
Queen's Gambit Declined	
Sicilian Defense	

(d) On a chessboard, demonstrate Scholar's Mate, Fool's Mate, Légal Mate, Fried Liver Attack, and Noah's Ark Trap.

Scouting America resources: Fools Mate Scholar's Mate and a Nice Tactic (video)
Legal's Mate Trap: Chess Opening Trick To Fool Your Opponent & Win Fast (video) · The Fried Liver Attack in 1 Minute (video)
Chess Trap: Noah's Ark Trap—Guy Lopez (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 4d explained

- ☐ Scholar's Mate
- ☐ Fool's Mate
- ☐ Légal Mate
- ☐ Fried Liver Attack
- ☐ Noah's Ark Trap

Requirement 4 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

5. Do the following:

(a) Explain four of the following elements of chess strategy: exploiting weaknesses, force, king safety, pawn structure, space, tempo, and clock management.

Scouting America resources: How To Identify and Exploit Weaknesses (video)
Only One Move Wins! (Understanding Forcing Moves) (video) · The Top 5 Priorities for Any Chess Opening! (video)
Pawn Structures in Chess (video)

- ☐ Exploiting weaknesses
- ☐ Force
- ☐ King safety
- ☐ Pawn structure
- ☐ Space
- ☐ Tempo
- ☐ Clock management

Four elements of chess strategy

Element I picked	My explanation

(b) Explain any five of these chess tactics: clearance sacrifice, decoy, discovered attack, double check, double attack, fork, interposing, overloading, overprotecting, pin, skewer, remove the defender, zwischenzug, and zugzwang.

Scouting America resources: Everything You Need to Know About Chess: Tactics & Strategy! (video)
Every Chess Tactic Explained in 4 Minutes (video) · Decoy vs Deflection (video) · Interposing (video) · Zugzwang (video)
ScoutSmarts: Requirement 5b explained

Five chess tactics

Tactic I picked	My explanation

(c) Set up a chessboard as follows and with White to move first, demonstrate how to force checkmate on the Black king:

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 5c explained

(1) White king on e1, the White rooks on a1 and h1, and the Black king on e5

My moves to checkmate

(2) White king on e1, White queen on d1, Black king on e5

My moves to checkmate

(3) White king on e1, White rook on a1, Black king on e5

My moves to checkmate

(d) With White king on d4, White pawn on e3, and Black king on e6:

(1) With White to move, demonstrate how White can force Black to allow their pawn to reach the last rank and be promoted to a queen.

How White forces the pawn through (my moves)

(2) With Black to move, demonstrate how Black can force a draw.

How Black forces a draw (my moves)

(e) Set up and solve five direct-mate problems provided by your counselor.

Direct-mate problems from my counselor

Problem	Starting position	My solution
Problem 1		
Problem 2		
Problem 3		
Problem 4		
Problem 5		

Requirement 5 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

6. Explain to your counselor how chess tournaments are run, including the Swiss system tournament format, the round robin tournament format, pairings for each round, time controls, touch move, scoring, and chess ratings.

Scouting America resources: Why Swiss-Style Tournaments Are the BEST Tournaments! (video) · How To Use a Chess Clock (video) Round Robin Tournament (video) · How To Play: Touch Moves (video) Chess Piece Values—How Much Is Each Chess Piece Worth? (video) · How the Elo Rating System Works in Chess (video) The Elo Rating System for Math Nerds (video)

How chess tournaments are run

Topic	My notes
Swiss system tournament format	
Round robin tournament format	
Pairings for each round	
Time controls	
Touch move	
Scoring	
Chess ratings	

Requirement 6 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

7. Do ONE of the following:

☐ **(a)** Play at least three games of chess with other Scouts and/or your counselor. Replay the games from your score sheets and discuss with your counselor how you might have played each game differently.

My games

Game	Opponent	Date	How I might have played it differently
Game 1			
Game 2			
Game 3			

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☐ **(b)** Play in a scholastic (youth) chess tournament and use your score sheets from that tournament to replay your games with your counselor. Discuss with your counselor how you might have played each game differently.

Tournament _____ Date _____ Where _____

My tournament games

Round	Opponent	Result	How I might have played it differently

☐ **(c)** Organize and run a chess tournament with at least four players, plus you. Have each competitor play at least two games.

Scouting America resources: Example Tournament Chart (PDF)

Tournament name _____ Date _____ Where _____

How I organized and ran it

Players and results

Player	Game 1 result	Game 2 result	Total score

Requirement 7 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: Chess merit badge page (requirements and resources) · Chess merit badge pamphlet (free PDF)
All merit badges · **ScoutSmarts:** Chess Merit Badge Guide

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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