

Exploration

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 August 5, 2026.
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. General Knowledge. Do the following:

(a) Define exploration and explain how it differs from adventure travel, trekking or hiking, tour-group trips, or recreational outdoor adventure trips.

Scouting America resources: What's the Difference Between Adventure and Exploration? (website) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 1a explained

Exploration in my own words

Type of trip	How it differs from exploration
adventure travel	
trekking or hiking	
tour-group trips	
recreational outdoor adventure trips	

(b) Explain how approaches to exploration may differ if it occurs in the ocean, in space, in a jungle, or in a science lab in a city.

Scouting America resources: What Is Exploration (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 1b explained

Approaches to exploration

Where it occurs	How the approach may differ
in the ocean	
in space	
in a jungle	
in a science lab in a city	

Requirement 1 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

2. History of Exploration. Discuss with your counselor the history of exploration. Select a field of study with a history of exploration to illustrate the importance of exploration in the development of that field (for example, aerospace, oil industry, paleontology, oceanography, etc.).

Scouting America resources: 50 Years of Space Exploration (video)
Into the Abyss: How Humans Became the Astronauts of the Deep Sea (video) · The Age of Exploration (video)
How the Higgs Boson Was Discovered (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 2 explained

Notes on the history of exploration

Field of study I picked

How exploration mattered in the development of that field

Requirement 2 completed on counselor initials

3. Importance of Exploration. Explain to your counselor why it is important to explore. Discuss the following:

Why it is important to explore

(a) Why it is important for exploration to have a scientific basis

Scouting America resources: What It Takes to Be an Adventurer (video)

Why exploration needs a scientific basis

(b) How explorers have aided in our understanding of our world

Scouting America resources: Why We Explore (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 3b explained

How explorers have helped us understand our world

(c) What you think it takes to be an explorer

Scouting America resources: Why Is It Important To Explore? (video) · Greatest Explorers in History (video)
ScoutSmarts: Requirement 3c explained

What I think it takes to be an explorer

Requirement 3 completed on counselor initials

4. Real-Life Exploration. Do ONE of the following:

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 4 explained

☐ **(a)** Learn about a living explorer. Create a short report or presentation (verbal, written, or multimedia slide presentation) on this individual's objectives and the achievements of one of the explorer's expeditions. Share what you have learned with your counselor and unit.

Scouting America resources: 50 Years of Discovery | Jane Goodall and The Leakey Foundation (video)
The World's Greatest Living Explorer | Ranulph Fiennes (video)
Levison Wood / Walking the Nile / Himalayas / Americas / Arabia Badlands & Beyond (video)
Unsung Heroes of Everest | Nat Geo Live (video)

Living explorer _____ Expedition I picked _____

Topic	What I learned
Their objectives	
Achievements of the expedition	

Report or presentation format _____ Shared with my unit on _____

☐ **(b)** Learn about an actual scientific exploration expedition. Gather information about the mission objectives and the expedition's most interesting or important discoveries. Share what you have learned with your counselor and unit. Tell how the information gained from this expedition helped scientists answer important questions.

Scouting America resources: Mars 2020: Perseverance Rover (website)
Expedition Amazon - Into the Waters | National Geographic (video)

Expedition _____ When it took place _____

Topic	What I learned
Mission objectives	
Most interesting or important discoveries	
How it helped scientists answer important questions	

Shared with my unit on _____

☐ **(c)** Learn about types of exploration that may take place in a laboratory or scientific research facility (medicine, biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, etc.). Explain to your counselor how laboratory research and exploration are similar to field research and exploration.

Scouting America resources: Research Scientist (video) · Inside the World's Largest Science Experiment (video)
Day in the Life of a Research Scientist (video)

Types of exploration in a laboratory or research facility

How lab research and exploration are similar to field research and exploration

Requirement 4 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

5. Exploration in Lab and Field. Do ONE of the following, and share what you learned with your counselor:

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 5 explained

☐ **(a)** With your parent or guardian's permission and counselor's approval, visit either in person or via the internet an exploration sponsoring organization (such as The Explorers Club, National Geographic Society, Smithsonian Institution, American Alpine Club, World Wildlife Fund, or similar organization). Find out what type(s) of exploration the organization supports.

Scouting America resources: The Explorers Club (website) · National Geographic Society (website) Smithsonian Institution (website) · World Wildlife Federation (website) · American Alpine Club (website)

Organization _____ Date _____ In person or online _____

Types of exploration the organization supports

_____

☐ **(b)** With permission and approval, visit either in person or via the internet a science lab, astronomical observatory, medical research facility, or similar site. Learn what exploration is done in this facility.

Site I visited _____ Date _____ In person or online _____

Exploration done at this facility

_____

Requirement 5 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

6. Expedition Planning. Discuss with your counselor each of the following steps for conducting a successful exploration activity. Explain the need for each step.

Why each step is needed

Step	Why it is needed
Objectives	
Mission plan	
Budget	
Equipment and supplies	
Communication and transportation	
Safety and first aid	
Team selection	
Recordkeeping	

(a) Identify the objectives (establish goals).

Scouting America resources: EXPEDITIONS | How to Get Started! (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 6a explained

Objectives (goals)

_____

(b) Plan the mission. Create an expedition agenda or schedule. List potential documents or permits needed.

Scouting America resources: How to Plan an Expedition (video)
Plan Your DREAM ADVENTURE: Expert Tips From a Pro Expedition Leader (video)
How to Plan an Adventure | Plan a Camping Trip (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 6b explained

Expedition agenda or schedule

Day or time	What we will do

Documents or permits that may be needed

(c) Budget and plan for adequate financial resources. Estimate costs for travel, equipment, accommodations, meals, permits or licenses, and other expedition expenses.

Scouting America resources: How to Plan for Permits and Reservations (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 6c explained

Expedition budget

Expense	What it covers	Estimated cost
Travel		
Equipment		
Accommodations		
Meals		
Permits or licenses		
Other expedition expenses		
Total		

(d) Determine equipment and supplies required for personal and mission needs for the length of the expedition.

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 6d explained

Equipment and supplies

Personal needs	Mission needs

(e) Determine communication and transportation needs. Plan how to keep in contact with your base or the outside world, and determine how you will communicate with each other on-site.

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 6e explained

Need	My plan
Contact with base or the outside world	
Communicating with each other on-site	
Transportation	

(f) Establish safety and first-aid procedures (including planning for medical evacuation). Identify the hazards that explorers could encounter on the expedition and establish procedures to prevent or avoid those hazards.

Scouting America resources: Essential Expedition Essentials Medical Kit Guide (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 6f explained

Hazards explorers could encounter

Hazard	How to prevent or avoid it

Safety, first-aid, and medical evacuation procedures

(g) Determine team selection. Identify who is essential for the expedition to be successful and what skills are required by the expedition leader.

Scouting America resources: Flight of the Osprey Media Team Selection (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 6g explained

Who is essential for the expedition to succeed

Skills the expedition leader needs

(h) Establish detailed recordkeeping (documentation) procedures. Plan the interpretation and sharing of information at the conclusion of the expedition.

Scouting America resources: The 7 Fundamentals of Documenting Your Travels (website) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 6h explained

How we will keep records

How we will interpret and share the information afterward

Requirement 6 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

7. Prepare for an Expedition. With your parent or guardian's permission and counselor's approval, prepare for an actual expedition to an area you have not previously explored; the place may be nearby or far away. Do the following:

Area I will explore _____ Counselor approved on _____

(a) Make your preparations under the supervision of a trained expedition leader, expedition planner, or other qualified adult experienced in exploration (such as a school science teacher, museum representative, or qualified instructor).

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 7a explained

Qualified adult supervising me _____ Their experience in exploration _____

(b) Use the steps listed in requirement 6 to guide your preparations. List the items of equipment and supplies you will need. Discuss with your counselor why you chose each item and how it will be of value on the expedition. Determine who should go on the expedition.

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 7b explained

My equipment and supplies

Item	Why I chose it and how it will be of value

Who should go on the expedition, and why

(c) Conduct a pre-expedition check, covering the steps in requirement 6, and share the results with your counselor. With your counselor, walk through the Scouting America SAFE Checklist for your expedition. Ensure that all foreseeable hazards for your expedition are adequately addressed.

Scouting America resources: Scouting America SAFE Checklist (PDF) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 7c explained

My pre-expedition check

Step from requirement 6	Results
Objectives	
Mission plan	
Budget	
Equipment and supplies	
Communication and transportation	
Safety and first aid	
Team selection	
Recordkeeping	

- ☐ Shared the results with my counselor
- ☐ Walked through the SAFE Checklist with my counselor
- ☐ All foreseeable hazards addressed

Requirement 7 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

8. Go on an Expedition. Complete the following:

(a) With your parent or guardian's permission and under the supervision of your counselor or a counselor-approved qualified person, use the planning steps you learned in requirement 6 and the preparations you completed in requirement 7 to personally undertake an actual expedition to an area you have not previously explored.

Where I explored _____ Dates _____ Supervised by _____

(b) Discuss with your counselor about the vital role of outdoor ethics in exploration, explaining how they promote responsible and mindful adventuring. Explain how you applied the Outdoor Code, Leave No Trace, and Tread Lightly! principles during your expedition.

Scouting America resources: Leave No Trace Basics (video) · Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics (video) · **ScoutSmarts:** Requirement 8b explained

The role of outdoor ethics in exploration

How I applied outdoor ethics on my expedition

Principles	How I applied them
Outdoor Code	
Leave No Trace	
Tread Lightly!	

(c) After you return, compile a report on the results of your expedition and how you accomplished your objective(s). Include a statement of the objectives, note your findings and observations, include photos, note any discoveries, report any problems or adverse events, and have a conclusion (whether you reached your objective or not). The post-expedition report must be at least one page and no more than three; one page can be photos, graphs, or figures.

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 8c explained

- ☐ Statement of the objectives
- ☐ Findings and observations
- ☐ Photos
- ☐ Discoveries
- ☐ Problems or adverse events
- ☐ Conclusion

Number of pages _____ Report finished on _____

Notes for my report

Requirement 8 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

9. Career Opportunities. Do ONE of the following:

ScoutSmarts: Requirement 9 explained

☐ **(a)** Explore careers related to this merit badge. Research one career to learn about the training and education needed, costs, job prospects, salary, job duties, and career advancement. Your research methods may include—with your parent or guardian's permission—an internet or library search, an interview with a professional in the field, or a visit to a location where people in this career work. Discuss with your counselor both your findings and what about this profession might make it an interesting career.

Scouting America resources: Ocean Exploration Careers (website)
Unlocking Space Careers: Beyond Astronauts and Rocket (video) · How I Became a Researcher (video)

Career I researched _____ How I researched it _____

Topic	What I found
Training and education	
Costs	
Job prospects	
Salary	
Job duties	
Career advancement	

What might make it an interesting career

☐ **(b)** Explore how you could use knowledge and skills from this merit badge to pursue a hobby. Research any training needed, expenses, and organizations that promote or support it. Discuss with your counselor what short-term and long-term goals you might have if you pursued this.

Scouting America resources: Ready to Dive Into the Adventure of a Lifetime? Become a PADI Scuba Diver (video) Astronomy for Beginners (video) · Permanent Orienteering Course (video)

Hobby

Topic	What I found
Training needed	
Expenses	
Organizations that promote or support it	

Goals	If I pursued this
Short-term	
Long-term	

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