

Journalism

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. Explain what freedom of the press is and how the First Amendment guarantees that you can voice your opinion. In your discussion, tell how to distinguish between fact and opinion, and explain the terms libel, slander, defamation, fair comment and criticism, public figure, privacy, and malice. Discuss how these matters relate to ethics in journalism.

Scouting America resources: Freedom of the Press in the United States (video) · What Are Libel and Slander? (video)
How To Identify Fact vs Opinion in Writing & Research (video) · Understanding News Media: Fact vs. Opinion (PDF)
Fair Comment and Criticism (website)

What freedom of the press is, and how the First Amendment guarantees I can voice my opinion

How to tell fact from opinion

Terms to explain

Term	What it means
Libel	
Slander	
Defamation	
Fair comment and criticism	
Public figure	
Privacy	
Malice	

How these matters relate to ethics in journalism

Requirement 1 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

2. Do ONE of the following:

☐ **Option A—Newspaper, Magazine, and Online Journalism. (Ask your parent or guardian's permission for the online option.) Do ALL of the following:**

(1) On the same day, read a local news source or newspaper, a national news source or newspaper, a news magazine (online or printed), and a social media news feed. From each source, clip, read, and compare a story about the same event. Tell your counselor how long each story is and how fair and accurate the stories are in presenting different points of view. Tell how each source handled the story.

Date (all on the same day) _____ The event the stories covered _____

The stories I compared

Source	Name of the source	How long the story is	Fair and accurate? Points of view shown	How it handled the story
Local news source or newspaper				
National news source or newspaper				
News magazine (online or printed)				
Social media news feed				

(2) Visit the office of a newspaper, magazine, or internet news site. Ask for a tour of the various divisions (editorial, business, and printing). During your tour, talk to an executive from the business side about management's relations with reporters, editors, and photographers, and what makes a "good" newspaper, magazine, or internet news site. Note: If there are no opportunities for in-person visits in your community, a virtual visit is acceptable with the news site of your choice, provided your counselor approves this option in advance. (You can request a virtual visit with Scout Life magazine)

News office I visited _____ Date _____ In person or virtual _____

☐ Editorial
☐ Business
☐ Printing

Business executive I talked to _____

Management's relations with reporters, editors, and photographers

What makes a "good" newspaper, magazine, or internet news site

☐ **Option B—Radio and Television Journalism. Do ALL of the following:**

(1) All on the same day, watch a local and national network newscast, listen to a radio newscast, and (with your parent or guardian's permission) view a national broadcast news source online. List the different news items and features presented, the different elements used, and the time in minutes and seconds and the online space devoted to each story. Compare the story lists and discuss whether the stories are fair and accurate. Explain why different news outlets treated the stories differently and/or presented a different point of view.

Date (all on the same day) _____

My story lists

Source	News items and features	Elements used	Time (min:sec) or online space
Local network newscast			
National network newscast			
Radio newscast			
National broadcast news source online			

Are the stories fair and accurate? Why outlets treated them differently or showed a different point of view

(2) Visit a radio or television station. Ask for a tour of the various departments, concentrating on those related to news broadcasts. During your tour, talk to the station manager or other station management executive about station operations, particularly how management and the news staff work together, and what makes a "good" station. If possible, go with a reporter to cover a news event.

Station I visited _____ Date _____ Manager I talked to _____

How management and the news staff work together

What makes a "good" station

News event I covered with a reporter (if possible) _____

Requirement 2 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

3. Discuss the differences between a hard news story and a feature story. Explain what the five W's and H are. Then do ONE of the following:

Scouting America resources: Feature Writing vs News Writing (video) · What Are the 5 W's and H in Journalism? (video)

Differences between a hard news story and a feature story

The five W's and H

W or H	What it asks

☐ **(a)** Choose a current or an unusual event of interest to you, and write either a hard news article OR a feature article about the event. Gear the article for print OR online OR audio OR video journalism. Share your article with your counselor.

Event _____ Hard news or feature _____

Print, online, audio, or video _____

My article (write here or attach)

Shared with my counselor on _____

☐ **(b)** With your parent or guardian's permission and counselor's approval, interview someone in your community who is influential because of his or her leadership, talent, career, or life experiences. Then present to your counselor either a written or oral report telling what you learned about this person.

Person I interviewed _____ Why they are influential _____ Date _____

My interview questions

What I learned about this person (notes for my written or oral report)

☐ **(c)** With your parent or guardian's permission and counselor's approval, read an autobiography written by a journalist you want to learn more about. Write an article that tells what you learned about this person and the contributions this person has made to the field of journalism.

Journalist _____ Autobiography title _____

My article: what I learned about this person and their contributions to journalism (write here or attach)

☐ **(d)** Attend a Scouting event and write a 200-word article (feature or hard news) about the event. Use either the inverted pyramid style or the chronological style. Review the article with your counselor, then submit it to your community newspaper or Scouting America local council or district newsletter for consideration.

Scouting America resources: What Is the Inverted Pyramid? (video)

Scouting event _____ Date _____

Feature or hard news _____ Inverted pyramid or chronological _____

My 200-word article (write here or attach)

Reviewed with my counselor on _____ Submitted to _____

Requirement 3 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

4. Attend a public event and do ONE of the following:

Public event _____ Date _____ Where _____

☐ **(a)** Write two articles about the event, one using the inverted pyramid style and one using the chronological style.

Article 1: inverted pyramid style (write here or attach)

Article 2: chronological style (write here or attach)

☐ **(b)** Using a radio, television, or podcasting style, write a news story, a feature story, and a critical review of the event.

Scouting America resources: How To Write Scripts For Your Podcast (video)

Style I used (radio, television, or podcast)

News story (write here or attach)

Feature story (write here or attach)

Critical review (write here or attach)

☐ **(c)** Take a series of photographs to help tell the story of the event in pictures. Include news photos and feature photos in your presentation. Write a brief synopsis of the event as well as captions for your photos.

Scouting America resources: What Is Photojournalism? (video)

Brief synopsis of the event

My photo series

Photo	News or feature	Caption
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Requirement 4 completed on counselor initials

5. Identify three career opportunities that would use skills and knowledge in journalism. Pick one and research the training, education, certification requirements, experience, and expenses associated with entering the field. Research the prospects for employment, starting salary, advancement opportunities and career goals associated with this career. Discuss what you learned with your counselor and whether you might be interested in this career.

Scouting America resources: How To Become a Journalist (video) · What Can I Do With a Journalism Degree? (video)
26 Jobs for Journalism Majors (Wordsmith Careers Await) (website) · What Can You Do With a Journalism Degree? (website)

Three careers in journalism

Career	How it uses journalism skills and knowledge

The one I picked

What I found out about this career

Topic	What I learned
Training	
Education	
Certification requirements	
Experience	
Expenses	
Prospects for employment	
Starting salary	
Advancement opportunities	
Career goals	

Might I be interested in this career? Why or why not

Requirement 5 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: Journalism merit badge page (requirements and resources) · Journalism merit badge pamphlet (free PDF)
All merit badges

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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