

Search and Rescue

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. Hazards and First Aid. Do the following:

(a) Show or explain first aid for, and prevention of, injuries and conditions that searchers and subjects could develop during an SAR situation, including:

(1) Dehydration
Scouting America resources: Dehydration (video)

(2) Heatstroke
Scouting America resources: Heat Exhaustion vs Heat Stroke (video) · Heat Stroke (video)

(3) Hypothermia
Scouting America resources: Hypothermia (video)

(4) Shock
Scouting America resources: Recognizing and Treating Shock (video) · Shock (video)

(5) Blisters
Scouting America resources: Blisters (video)

(6) Eye injuries
Scouting America resources: First Aid for Eyes (video)

(7) Ankle and knee sprains
Scouting America resources: Figure 8 Ankle Wrap (video) · Orthopedic Injuries (website) · Bone, Joint, and Muscle Injuries (video)

(8) Bug bites of chiggers, ticks, mosquitoes, and biting gnats
Scouting America resources: Tick Checks (video) · Mosquito Bites (video)

(9) Bee stings
Scouting America resources: Bee Stings (video) · Treatment of a Bee Sting (video)

(10) Bites of spiders
Scouting America resources: What You Need To Know About Spider Bites (video)

(11) Sting of a scorpion
Scouting America resources: Scorpion Stings (video)

(12) Bite of a wild mammal
Scouting America resources: Treatment of Animal Bites (video)

(13) Bite of a venomous snake
Scouting America resources: Snakebites (video) · Rattlesnake Bites (video)

First aid and prevention during a search

Injury or condition	How to prevent it	First aid
Dehydration		
Heatstroke		
Hypothermia		
Shock		
Blisters		
Eye injuries		
Ankle and knee sprains		
Bug bites of chiggers, ticks, mosquitoes, and biting gnats		
Bee stings		
Bites of spiders		
Sting of a scorpion		
Bite of a wild mammal		
Bite of a venomous snake		

(b) Explain how the Scout Basic Essentials address hazards outdoors and help lost Scouts stay safe before they are rescued.

Scouting America resources: Scout Outdoor Essentials (website) · Scout Essentials and Outdoor Hazards (PDF)
Essentials for Safe Hiking (video)

The Scout Basic Essentials

Item	Hazard it helps with, or how it keeps a lost Scout safe until rescue

(c) Discuss how the safety gear carried by SAR team members in their field packs addresses SAR hazards.

Scouting America resources: What I Carry in My Search and Rescue Pack (video)

Safety gear in a SAR team member's field pack

Safety gear	The SAR hazard it addresses

Requirement 1 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

2. Staying and Getting Found. Do the following:

(a) Explain how a trip plan and the buddy system help Scouts with staying found and getting found.

Scouting America resources: How To Plan an Adventure (video) · Scout Trip Planning (website)
Why You Should Make Trip Plans (website)

	How it helps with staying found	How it helps with getting found
Trip plan		
Buddy system		

(b) Explain how seasonal and daily weather changes affect Trip Plans.

Scouting America resources: Search and Rescue Expert Stresses Importance of Preparedness (video)

Weather change	How it affects a trip plan
Seasonal	
Daily	

(c) Explain and show how a lost Scout could send signals that would alert a ground, airborne, or water SAR team to their location.

Scouting America resources: 5 Ground To Air Signals That Save Lives (video) · Various Ways To Signal for Search and Rescue (video)
Signaling for Help in the Wilderness (website)

Signals a lost Scout could send

SAR team	Signals that would alert them	How I showed it
Ground		
Airborne		
Water		

Shown to _____ Date _____

(d) Demonstrate how to use a signaling mirror.

Scouting America resources: How To Use a Signal Mirror (video) · The Signal Mirror: A Low-Tech Lifesaver (website)

Demonstrated to _____ Date _____

(e) Explain how a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) works and the role of the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC).

Scouting America resources: How Does an EPIRB Work? (video)
How Modern Rescue Beacons Work—The Anatomy of a Rescue | EPIRB and Personal Locator Beacons (video)
Emergency Beacons (website)

How a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) works

The role of the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC)

Requirement 2 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

3. Maps. Using a map, a compass and a GPS device or app approved by your counselor, do the following:

Map I used _____ GPS device or app _____

(a) Point out and explain the 5 D's (Date, Description, Details, Direction or Declination, Distance) of the map.

Scouting America resources: The 5 D's in Navigation (video) · The Five D's in Map Navigation (website)

The 5 D's of my map

The D	Where I found it on the map, and what it tells me
Date	
Description	
Details	
Direction or Declination	
Distance	

(b) Choose a location on the map and record the altitude, latitude, longitude, and US National Grid coordinates. Describe how these coordinate systems differ.

Scouting America resources: How To Read a US National Grid Map (website) · Work With a Grid in ArcGIS Pro (video)

Location I chose _____

Coordinate	What I recorded
Altitude	
Latitude	
Longitude	
US National Grid coordinates	

How these coordinate systems differ

(c) Orient the map and take a bearing to another map location. Estimate the distance between, and describe the terrain between, the two locations.

Scouting America resources: How To Use a Map and Compass (website)

From | To

My bearing | Estimated distance

The terrain between the two locations

(d) Show a hypothetical place last seen and point out an area on your map that could be used for containment using natural or human-made boundaries.

Scouting America resources: Search Containment (video)

Hypothetical place last seen

My containment area and its natural or human-made boundaries (sketch here or attach)

Requirement 3 completed on | counselor initials

4. Incident Command System (ICS). Do the following:

(a) Explain how a local ICS is organized and how it compares with Scouting's patrol method.

Scouting America resources: Introduction to ICS (video) · Incident Command System (website w/ video)

How a local ICS is organized

How it compares with Scouting's patrol method

(b) Explain how local community agencies work to train for and manage search and rescue situations.

Scouting America resources: Search & Rescue Training (video) · CERT Search & Rescue Training (video)
What It Takes To Be on a Search and Rescue Team (video)

Local community agencies

Agency	How it trains for SAR	How it manages SAR situations

Requirement 4 completed on | counselor initials

5. SAR Teams. Do the following:

(a) Explain the official duties of a search and rescue team.

Scouting America resources: What You Should Know As A Search & Rescue Team Member (video)

The official duties of a search and rescue team

(b) Explain the differences between wilderness, urban, and water SARs.

Scouting America resources: Types of Search and Rescue (website)

Type of SAR	What makes it different
Wilderness	
Urban	
Water	

(c) Identify four types of search and rescue teams and explain situations where they are used.

Scouting America resources: Types of SAR Teams (website)

Four types of search and rescue teams

Type of team	Situations where it is used

Requirement 5 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

6. Search and Rescue Procedures. Do the following:

(a) Explain the difference between search and rescue.

Scouting America resources: Search or Rescue (video) · Search Methods (PDF)

The difference between search and rescue

(b) Explain the difference between PLS (place last seen) and LKP (last known point).

Scouting America resources: PLS and LKP (website)

The difference between PLS (place last seen) and LKP (last known point)

(c) Explain the importance of effective communication in SAR operations.

Scouting America resources: Urban Search and Rescue Communications Specialist Training (video)

Why effective communication matters in SAR operations

(d) Explain how predictions of "lost person behavior" determine SAR search plans for a young child, a teenager, and an adult.

Scouting America resources: Lost Person Behavior Scenario (video) · Help Us Find You (video)

Lost person	Predicted behavior	How it shapes the search plan
A young child		
A teenager		
An adult		

(e) Explain the following terms:

Scouting America resources: Search and Rescue Glossary (website)

(1) Evaluating search urgency

(2) Establishing confinement

Scouting America resources: Establishing Confinement (video)

(3) Scent item

(4) Area air scent dog

Scouting America resources: Training For A Search And Rescue (video) · Scent and Rescue Dogs (website)

(5) Briefing and debriefing

Scouting America resources: Thorns and Roses (website) · Start, Stop, Continue (video)

(6) Clue awareness

Scouting America resources: Clue Awareness (video) · Tracking in SAR (website) · Clue Awareness and Detection (PPT)

(7) Evidence preservation

Scouting America resources: Evidence Search (video)

(8) Tracking a subject

Scouting America resources: Footprint Tracking (video) · Dog Scent Tracking Demo (video) · Tracking With Drones (video) Human Tracking, Whistle Science @ 8:30 (video) · Tracking Dog Scent-Preservation (video)

(9) Locating a subject using attraction

Scouting America resources: Ground Search Techniques (website)

(10) Hasty search

Scouting America resources: Hasty Searching (video) · Search Types (video)

(11) Trail sweep search

Scouting America resources: Conducting a Sound Sweep (website)

(12) Grid search

Scouting America resources: Zone Search (video)

SAR terms

Term	What it means
Evaluating search urgency	
Establishing confinement	
Scent item	

SAR terms (continued)

Term	What it means
Area air scent dog	
Briefing and debriefing	
Clue awareness	
Evidence preservation	
Tracking a subject	
Locating a subject using attraction	
Hasty search	
Trail sweep search	
Grid search	

Requirement 6 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

7. Plan and Complete a Search. Do the following with a team of Scouts, friends, or family to execute a practice SAR exercise:

My team (Scouts, friends, or family) _____

(a) Choose a hypothetical SAR scenario, either one presented in the Search and Rescue merit badge pamphlet or one approved by your counselor.

Scouting America resources: Training Scenarios (website) · Lost Scout Scenario (PDF)

Scenario I chose _____

Source (pamphlet, or counselor who approved it) _____

Scenario details

(b) Develop an Incident Action Plan (IAP) for a hasty search using the scenario information.

Scouting America resources: Developing an IAP (PDF)

My Incident Action Plan (IAP) for a hasty search (write here or attach)

(c) Before the search begins, conduct a PAUSE briefing to review hazards, safety concerns, personal and shared Scout Basic Essentials, and other gear.

Scouting America resources: Pause. Look. Act. (video) · Risk Assessment (video) · PAUSE Safety Moment (PDF)

Briefing date

- ☐ Hazards
- ☐ Safety concerns
- ☐ Personal Scout Basic Essentials
- ☐ Shared Scout Basic Essentials
- ☐ Other gear

Briefing notes

(d) Execute the search.

Date Where How long

What happened during the search

(e) After the search, hold a team debriefing to discuss the search, problems, successful and unsuccessful tactics, and ideas for improvement.

Scouting America resources: Philmont Thorns and Roses (website)

Debriefing date

Our team debriefing

Topic	What our team said
The search	
Problems	
Successful tactics	
Unsuccessful tactics	
Ideas for improvement	

Requirement 7 completed on counselor initials

8. Careers. Do ONE of the following:

☐ **(a)** Explore careers related to Search and Rescue merit badge or emergency management. Research one career to learn about the training and education needed, costs, job prospects, salary, job duties, and career advancement. With permission of your parent or guardian, your research methods may include 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: What it Means to be a Search and Rescue Responder (video)
What It Actually Takes To Be a Rescue Swimmer in the Coast Guard (video) · U.S. Air Force: Combat Search and Rescue (video)
Emergency Management Directors (video)

Careers I explored

Career	What the job involves

The one I researched _____ How I researched it _____

What I learned about it

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

What might make it an interesting career for me

☐ **(b)** Explore how you could use knowledge and skills from this merit badge to serve as a volunteer on a disaster relief team, a wilderness rescue team, or a ski patrol. 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 pursue this.

Scouting America resources: How To Prepare To Join a Search and Rescue Team | SAR Training for Finding Missing Persons (video) Volunteer Search and Rescue Teams (video) · Search and Rescue Volunteers (video)

Team I explored (disaster relief, wilderness rescue, or ski patrol) _____

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

Goals	If I pursued this
Short-term	
Long-term	

Requirement 8 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: Search and Rescue merit badge page (requirements and resources) Search and Rescue 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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