

Small-Boat Sailing

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) Explain to your counselor the most likely hazards you may encounter while participating in small-boat sailing activities, and what you should do to anticipate, help prevent, mitigate, and respond to these hazards.
Scouting America resources: Environment, Rules Afloat and General Safety (video)

Small-boat sailing 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 can occur while sailing: blisters, cold-water shock and hypothermia, dehydration, heat-related illnesses, sunburn, sprains, and strains.
Scouting America resources: Cold Water Shock (video) · What Happens if You Don't Drink Enough Water? (video)
Dangers of Heat-Related Illnesses (video) · What Causes Sunburns? (video) · Sprain Care With RICE Method (video)

Injuries and illnesses while sailing

Injury or illness	Prevention	Symptoms	First aid
blisters			
cold-water shock and hypothermia			
dehydration			

Injuries and illnesses while sailing (continued)

Injury or illness	Prevention	Symptoms	First aid
heat-related illnesses			
sunburn			
sprains			
strains			

(c) Discuss the Scouting America Safety Afloat policy. Tell how it applies to small-boat sailing activities.

Scouting America resources: Safety Afloat (website)

Safety Afloat, and how it applies to small-boat sailing

Requirement 1 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

2. Before doing the following requirements, successfully complete the Scouting America swimmer test. Note: See the Swimming merit badge pamphlet for details about the Scouting America swimmer test.

Scouting America resources: Swimming Merit Badge Pamphlet (PDF)

Swimmer test passed on _____ Witnessed by _____

Requirement 2 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

3. Describe the boat you will be using for the sailing requirement, naming all of the major parts and the function of those parts. Note: The skills may be demonstrated on any boat available to the Scout; sailboards are not acceptable. While no specific sail plan is recommended, it is suggested that the craft be smaller than 20 feet. The boat must be capsizable and have the capability of sailing to windward.

Scouting America resources: Sailboat Parts Explained: Overview and Names (video)

The boat I will use _____ Length _____

Major parts of my boat

Part	Its function

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Major parts of my boat (continued)

Part	Its function

Requirement 3 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

4. Before going afloat, do the following:

(a) Discuss the nine points of the Scouting America Safety Afloat plan.

Scouting America resources: Safety Afloat (website)

The nine points of Safety Afloat

Point	What it means
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	

(b) Explain the rules of the road in general and any specific rules or laws that apply to your area or state.

Scouting America resources: Steering Rules: Crossing, Meeting & Overtaking (video)

Rules of the road in general

Rules or laws for my area or state

(c) Explain how water conditions, the hazards of weather, and heavy winds can affect both safety and performance in sailing.

Condition	Effect on safety	Effect on performance
Water conditions		
Hazards of weather		
Heavy winds		

(d) Discuss the warning signs of inclement weather and what to do should heavy winds develop or a storm approach.

Scouting America resources: How To Prepare for Heavy Weather Conditions (website)
Science of Sailing | Level 3 | Clouds and Breezes (video) · How To Read Clouds (video)

Warning signs of inclement weather

What to do if heavy winds develop or a storm approaches

(e) Prepare a typical float plan.

Scouting America resources: Filing a Float Plan (video) · How To Complete a Float Plan (website)

My float plan

Item	Details

My float plan (continued)

Item	Details

(f) Discuss the proper clothing, footwear, and personal gear required for small-boat sailing in warm weather and in cool weather. Explain how choosing the proper clothing, footwear, and personal gear will help keep you comfortable and safe while sailing.

Scouting America resources: What To Wear for Dinghy Sailing (video)

Weather	Clothing	Footwear	Personal gear
Warm weather			
Cool weather			

How the right choices keep me comfortable and safe

Requirement 4 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

5. Discuss with your counselor how to identify the wind direction and wind indicators. Explain the importance of this task before setting sail.

Scouting America resources: Wind Awareness (video)

Topic	What I would discuss
Identifying the wind direction	
Wind indicators	
Why it matters before setting sail	

Requirement 5 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

6. Following the Scouting America Safety Afloat plan, show that you and a buddy can sail a boat properly. Do the following:

Buddy _____ Boat _____

(a) Prepare a boat for sailing, including a safety inspection.

Date _____ Notes from my safety inspection _____

(b) Get underway from a dock, mooring, or beach.

Scouting America resources: Beach Launching a Single Handed Boat (video)

Date | Got underway from (dock, mooring, beach)

(c) Properly set sails for a round-trip course approved by your counselor that will include running, beating, and reaching—the basic points of sail. While sailing, demonstrate good helmsmanship skills.

Scouting America resources: Points of Sail (video) · Close-Hauled (Sailing Towards the Wind) (video)
Reaching (Sailing Across the Wind) (video) · Running (Sailing Away From the Wind) (video)

Date | Where

- ☐ Running
- ☐ Beating
- ☐ Reaching
- ☐ Good helmsmanship

(d) Change direction by tacking; change direction by jibing.

Scouting America resources: How To Tack (Turn Around) a One Person Sailboat (video)
How To Jib a Single Person Sailboat (Turning Away From the Wind) (video)

Date | Notes

- ☐ Tacking
- ☐ Jibing

(e) Demonstrate getting out of irons.

Date | Notes

(f) Demonstrate the safety position.

Date | Notes

(g) Demonstrate capsize procedures and the rescue of a person overboard. Note: Capsize procedures should be conducted under the close supervision of the counselor. A rescue boat should be standing by to assist, if necessary, and to tow the capsized craft to shore. Self-bailing boats are acceptable for this requirement. Extreme care should be taken to avoid personal injury and damage to the boat or equipment.

Scouting America resources: Capsize a Single Handed Sailboat (video)

Date | Counselor supervising

- ☐ Capsize procedures
- ☐ Rescue of a person overboard

(h) Demonstrate the procedure to take after running aground.

Scouting America resources: What To Do When You Run Aground (website)

Date | Notes

(i) Accept a single line or side tow and maneuver the craft being towed safely for 20 boat lengths.

Date | Single line or side tow | Towed by

(j) Upon returning to the dock, mooring, or beach, properly secure all equipment, furl or stow sails, and prepare the craft for unattended docking or beaching overnight or longer.

Date | Secured at (dock, mooring, beach)

- ☐ Equipment secured
- ☐ Sails furled or stowed
- ☐ Craft ready to leave unattended

Requirement 6 completed on | counselor initials

7. Demonstrate a working knowledge of marlinespike seamanship. Do the following:

(a) Show how to tie a square (reef) knot, clove hitch, two half hitches, bowline, cleat hitch, and figure-eight knot. Demonstrate the use of each.

Scouting America resources: Essential Sailing Knots (video) · Overhand Knot (video)

Knots

Knot	Date tied	How it's used
square (reef) knot		
clove hitch		
two half hitches		
bowline		
cleat hitch		
figure-eight knot		

(b) Show how to heave a line, coil a line, and fake down a line.

Scouting America resources: How To Coil a Rope (video) · How To Flake and Heave a Line (video)

Date _____ Counselor _____

- ☐ Heave a line
- ☐ Coil a line
- ☐ Fake down a line

(c) Discuss the kinds of lines used on sailboats and the types of fibers used in their manufacture. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Scouting America resources: Lines and Usages for Sailing (website)

Lines and fibers

Kind of line or fiber	Where it's used	Advantages	Disadvantages

Requirement 7 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

8. Describe how you would care for and maintain a sailboat and its gear throughout the year.

Caring for a sailboat through the year

Time of year	Boat care	Gear care

Requirement 8 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

9. With your counselor, review sailing terminology and the points of sail. Discuss various types of sailboats in use today and explain their differences.

Sailing terms and points of sail we reviewed

Types of sailboats in use today

Type of sailboat	How it differs from the others

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: Small-Boat Sailing merit badge page (requirements and resources)
Small-Boat Sailing 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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