



Special Merit Badge Qualification Requirements | All Certifications must be current FROM THE GUIDE TO ADVANCEMENT HANDBOOK

In addition to the standard requirements and approvals for being a merit badge counselor, selected merit badges have specific skills requirement in order to serve as a counselor in those areas.

General Supervision Requirements

- **Swimming and watercraft activities** must be conducted in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense or BSA Safety Afloat, respectively, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the program applicable. Counselors for merit badges involving swimming or the use of watercraft must be so trained or use others who are.
- **CPR instruction**, wherever it is required, must be taught by instructors currently trained by a nationally certified provider. Several such providers are mentioned in the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#).

The following merit badges have special qualifications or certifications for either the merit badge counselor or the supervisor of certain activities that may be involved. Counselors and advancement administrators should consult the merit badge pamphlets for details and to maintain awareness of changes and updates as pamphlets are revised.

Canoeing. Canoeing merit badge counselors must have either BSA Aquatics Instructor or Canoeing Instructor certification from the American Canoe Association, American Red Cross, or equivalent; OR local councils may approve individuals previously certified as such or trained by an instructor so qualified.

Citizenship in Society. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training certificate. Attend an in-person DEIB in Scouting course. Courses are held quarterly by the Greater New York Councils' DEIB Committee. <https://nycscouting.org/citizenshipinsociety/> Verify training here <https://form.jotform.com/220277009350044>

Climbing. All climbing, belaying, and rappelling exercises and activities must be supervised by a qualified rock-climbing instructor who is a mature and conscientious adult at least 21 years old, and who is trained in BSA Climb On Safely and understands the risks inherent to these activities. Training as BSA climbing director or instructor is highly recommended. Someone with certification in First Aid/CPR/AED from the American Red Cross (or equivalent) must be present at these activities.

Lifesaving. Demonstrations or activities in or on the water must be supervised by an adult at least 21 years old with certification in Red Cross First Aid/CPR/AED or equivalent, and also as BSA Lifeguard or Aquatics Instructor or equivalent.

Rifle Shooting. The merit badge counselor must take responsibility to assure that all instruction involving any handling of firearms or live ammunition must be supervised by a certified BSA National Camping School (NCS) shooting sports director, or National Rifle Association (NRA) Rifle Shooting Instructor or Coach. That involving muzzleloaders must be supervised by an NCS shooting sports director or NRA/National Muzzleloader Rifle Association (NMLRA)—certified muzzleloader firearms instructor. Shooting must be supervised by an NRA-certified Range Safety Officer (RSO). If instruction and shooting are to occur at the same time, both the RSO and qualified instructor must be present. The supervisor and instructor may not be the same person. Note that commercial shooting ranges may provide RSOs. See the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#) and the BSA [National Shooting Sports Manual, No. 30931](#), for further details on shooting sports.

Rowing. Rowing merit badge counselors must have either BSA Aquatics Instructor certification or equivalent; OR local councils may approve individuals previously certified as such or trained by an instructor so qualified.

Scuba Diving. All phases of scuba instruction—classroom, pool, and open-water training—are limited to instructors trained and sanctioned by one of the following agencies: Professional Association of Diving Instructors, National Association of Underwater Instructors, Scuba Schools International, International Diving Educators Association, Professional Diving Instructors Corporation, or Scuba Diving International, or be a member of the World Recreational Scuba Training Council.

Shotgun Shooting. The merit badge counselor must take responsibility to assure that all instruction involving any handling of firearms or live ammunition must be supervised by a certified NCS shooting sports director or NRA Shotgun Instructor or Coach. That involving muzzle-loading shotguns must be supervised by an NCS shooting sports director or NRA/NMLRA certified muzzle-loading shotgun instructor. Shooting must be supervised by an NRA-certified Range Safety Officer. If instruction and shooting are to occur at the same time, both the RSO and qualified instructor must be present. They may not be the same person. Note that commercial shooting ranges may provide RSOs. See the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#) and the [BSA National Shooting Sports Manual, No. 30931](#), for further details on shooting sports.

Snow Sports. Activities in the field must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult 21 years or older who is committed to compliance with BSA Winter Sports Safety as defined in the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#). Swimming. Demonstrations or activities in or on the water must be conducted according to BSA Safe Swim Defense and BSA Safety Afloat.

Whitewater. Whitewater merit badge counselors must be designated by the local council and certified as whitewater canoeing or kayaking instructors by the American Canoe Association or have equivalent certification, training, or expertise.

The required qualifications above for merit badge counseling and supervision not only assist in managing risk, but also give counselors credibility. Scouts will see them as people of importance they can look up to and learn from. A well-qualified counselor can extend a young person's attention span: More will be heard and understood, discussions will be more productive, and true interest developed. The conversations can lead to a relationship of mutual respect where the Scout is confident to offer his thoughts and opinions and value those of his merit badge counselor. Thus, it is that social skills and self-reliance grow, and examples are set and followed.