

How to Register as a Merit Badge or NOVA Awards Counselor

Adult volunteers can play an important role in the advancement of Scouts, whether or not they have any youth of their own in the program. By serving as a merit badge counselor, you share your professional experiences and personal interests with Scouts and not only assist them with their advancement journey but may also inspire them to pursue a career or take up a hobby in that field.

There are over 135 merit badges in the Scouting program that cover all manner of skills, careers and interests. Of these, 18 are identified as Eagle-required, and a Scout needs to earn 13 of these on their way to their Eagle Scout rank.

Adult volunteers with a particular interest or professional experience in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) may also be interested in signing up as Nova Counselors and Supernova Mentors for the BSA's STEM Nova Awards program. These awards combine merit badges with additional activities to earn additional awards in STEM fields. The application process is similar - please see below for a more detailed discussion of the application requirements.

To register as a new Merit Badge Counselor within Pacifica District, you must complete the following steps:

- 1) Complete the BSA's **Adult Application Form**. The PREFERRED, and most secure, method is to submit an online application form but if you are unable to do so, you may complete a paper form instead.
 - You can submit an online application form as follows:
 - i. Go to: <https://my.scouting.org/VES/OnlineReg/1.0.0/?tu=UF-MB-033p217>
 - ii. Sign in with your My.Scouting account (or create one if you don't already have one.)
 - iii. If you are already a registered member, select 'Continue' to dual-register (merit badge counselor is a district-level position so you will be registered with Pacifica District as well as your home unit).
 - iv. Fill out any personal information requested by the form (some may be picked up automatically if you have an existing registration), and enter some names of references. At some point it may ask you if you want to register as a merit badge or Nova counselor - you will need to select 'Yes' and then which one (merit badge). Then follow the remaining instructions to the end. There is no charge to register as a merit badge counselor.
 - OR, if you have to register using the paper form, please download and complete the latest version, available here: <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/524-501.pdf>
 - i. On page 3, please use "42" for the position code and "Merit Badge Counselor" for the Scouting position title. Your SSN is **REQUIRED** in order to complete your application.
 - ii. On page 3, the right hand column **MUST** be completed (references and background information).
 - iii. This form does NOT need to be signed by a unit leader or COR, only by the applicant.
 - iv. Please be sure to complete and sign the Background Check Authorization on page 9. This is **REQUIRED** in order to complete your application.

- 2) Complete the BSA's **Youth Protection Training (YPT)**. This training may be completed online by logging into <https://my.scouting.org/> and clicking on the YPT logo. For more information about YPT, please visit: <https://www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/>
 - If you have already completed YPT, your certificate **MUST** be valid for the remainder of the current BSA registration year (which runs from October to September, starting in 2021). If it expires for the end of the current year, please retake YPT.

- 3) Complete all the required modules of the **Scouts BSA Merit Badge Counselor Position Specific Training** plan and print out the completion certificate. This training may be completed online by logging into <https://my.scouting.org/> and clicking on the BSA Learn Center logo. Click on the "Catalog" link and search for the "Scouts BSA - Merit Badge Counselor Position Specific Training" training plan. The current modules that need to be completed (as of 9/1/20) are:
 - Scouts BSA - Merit Badge Counselors - Before the First Meeting
 - Aims & Methods of Scouts BSA
 - What is a Merit Badge Counselor
 - Introduction to Merit Badges
 - Scouts BSA - Merit Badge Counselors - Position Trained
 - Advancement
 - Scouters who have completed older versions of some of these classes do not have to retake the new versions, as the old versions never expire. However, if you have not completed any of the classes listed here, please complete those training courses and submit the individual completion certificates for those training courses.

- 4) Some merit badges may require evidence of additional training or certification before you can be approved as a counselor, e.g. badges involving first aid, aquatics, shooting or other potentially hazardous activities. Please refer to the requirements listed in section 7.0.1.1 "Qualifications of Counselors" of the BSA's *Guide to Advancement*, here: <https://www.scouting.org/resources/guide-to-advancement/the-merit-badge-program/> and submit any additional required proof of certification.

- 5) Complete the BSA's **Merit Badge Counselor Information Form** to specify which badge(s) you intend to counsel. Please use the latest version, available here: <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34405.pdf>
 - You may apply to add ("A") up to 8 badges on one form – use additional forms if necessary (complete and sign each one).
 - Please provide a short (one line) justification to show why you are qualified to counsel each merit badge.
 - Scouters are strongly encouraged to offer to counsel other Scouts in the district, not just within their own unit.

- 6) Submit your completed paperwork (Merit Badge Counselor Information form, BSA Adult Application form, YPT certificate and proof of completion of your Merit Badge Counselor Training and any other badge-specific certification) to Alison Crompton, Pacifica Merit Badge Counselor Dean, using one of the following methods:
 - Scan it and email it to Alison at meritbadge@pacificabsa.org.

- Drop it off at the next Pacifica District Roundtable meeting (or send it with a troop representative such as your troop’s Scoutmaster, Committee Chair or Merit Badge Counselor Coordinator).
 - Contact Alison at meritbadge@pacificabsa.org to arrange where to mail or deliver it.
- If you completed the online BSA application form, please just mention this when submitting the rest of your application forms.

- 7) Your approval notification will be emailed to you and to your unit’s Merit Badge Counselor Co-ordinator.
- Please note that it may take 3-5 days to review your application, and longer if any paperwork is incomplete.
 - Please wait for approval before counseling any Scouts for a particular merit badge.
- 8) An updated list of merit badge counselors operating within Pacifica District is sent monthly to unit Scoutmasters, Committee Chairs, Advancement Chairs and Merit Badge Counselor Co-ordinators.

Merit Badge Counselor Resources

The BSA provides a wealth of resources for merit badge counselors online at:

<https://www.scouting.org/resources/guide-to-advancement/the-merit-badge-program/>

In particular, please review the *Guide for Merit Badge Counseling* before counseling youth:

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-065.pdf>

The latest merit badge requirements may be found online at:

<https://www.scouting.org/programs/scouts-bsa/advancement-and-awards/merit-badges/>

Please also consult the BSA’s *Guide to Safe Scouting* for any particular requirements relating to your field of expertise: <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/>

BSA STEM Nova Awards

The BSA provides a wealth of resources for Nova Award counselors and mentors online at:

<https://www.scouting.org/stem-nova-awards/>

There are specific Nova Awards for Scouts of all BSA programs, so please follow these instructions for all levels of the program.

Individuals who wish to serve as a Nova Counselor should apply as follows:

- 1) Complete the BSA **Adult Application Form** as per step 1 above. If using the paper form, use position code 58, position name “Nova Counselor”.
- 2) Complete the BSA’s **Youth Protection Training (YPT)** as per step 2 above.
- 3) Complete all the required modules of the **STEM in Scouting - STEM Nova** training plan and print out the completion certificate. This training may be completed online by logging into

<https://my.scouting.org/> and clicking on the BSA Learn Center logo. Click on the “Catalog” link and search for the “STEM in Scouting - STEM Nova” training plan. The current modules that need to be completed (as of 9/1/20) are:

- BSA STEM Nova
 - Nova Counselor
- 4) There is no official Nova Counselor information form so please complete the BSA’s **Merit Badge Counselor Information Form**, as per step 5 above, and list each Nova award that you wish to counsel.
 - 5) Submit paperwork as per step 6 for merit badge counselors above.

Individuals who wish to serve as a Supernova Mentor should apply as follows:

- 1) Complete the BSA **Adult Application Form** as per step 1 above. If using the paper form, use position code 52, position name “Supernova Mentor”.
- 2) Complete the BSA’s **Youth Protection Training (YPT)** as per step 2 above.
- 3) Complete all the required modules of the **STEM in Scouting - STEM Nova** training plan and print out the completion certificate. This training may be completed online by logging into <https://my.scouting.org/> and clicking on the BSA Learn Center logo. Click on the “Catalog” link and search for the “STEM in Scouting - STEM Nova” training plan. The current modules that need to be completed (as of 9/1/20) are:
 - BSA STEM Nova
 - Supernova Mentor
- 4) Complete the BSA’s **Supernova Mentor Information Form** to specify which award(s) you intend to mentor. Please use the latest version, available here: https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/stem/pdf/514-017_WB.pdf
- 5) Submit paperwork as per step 6 for merit badge counselors above.

Changing and Renewing Your Counselor/Mentor Status

Once you have been approved as a Counselor or Mentor, you may add (“A”) badges/awards to, or drop (“D”) badges/awards from, your approved list, or change which Scouts you are willing to counsel (district-wide or unit only) at any time simply by completing and submitting another copy of the Merit Badge Counselor or Supernova Mentor Information Form. If there are any changes to your contact information, please let me know as soon as possible and I will update your contact status in the next list.

You will need to renew your Counselor or Mentor status and your Youth Protection Training every year. You will receive your renewal form and renewal instructions through your unit later this fall. If your Youth Protection Training expires before the end of the next Scouting registration year, please plan to retake it by the end of September in order to speed up the renewal process and keep your name on the list of active counselors.

Counselors and Mentors who do not renew before the deadline will be dropped from the approved list as soon as their Youth Protection Training expires. If you no longer wish to serve as a Counselor or Mentor, please indicate as so on the renewal form, and sign and return it to your unit co-ordinator.

Questions? Comments?

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Alison Crompton, Pacifica Merit Badge Counselor Dean, at meritbadge@pacificabsa.org.

THANK YOU for offering this valuable service to our Scouts!