

Citizenship in Society Merit Badge FAQ

RATIONALE / CONTEXT

1. What is the Citizenship in Society merit badge?

The new Citizenship in Society merit badge encourages Scouts to explore information on diversity, equity, inclusion, and ethical leadership, and learn why these qualities are important in society and in Scouting. The new merit badge is designed to help Scouts learn about the different identities and characteristics we each possess, understand different perspectives and experiences, and promote good citizenship in society.

Scouts will conduct research, explore resources on their own, host conversations with adults, peers, parents and community members and identify actions they can take to ensure inclusivity and to act as upstanders.

This merit badge aligns with the Scout Oath and Scout Law, which collectively encourage Scouts to respect the beliefs of others, be kind and courteous, and help other people at all times.

2. Why did BSA create the Citizenship in Society merit badge?

Scouting has always promoted “doing a good turn daily,” and as our world evolves, we want to ensure our Scouts evolve with it in understanding, appreciating, and respecting the differences that make us each unique. The Citizenship in Society merit badge is an important initiative designed to help Scouts learn about the unique identities and perspectives we each possess and the importance of encouraging a culture – in Scouting and society – where every person feels respected and valued.

3. What age group is the merit badge intended for?

Anyone who is a part of the Scouts BSA program (11 – 17 years old) can pursue the Citizenship in Society merit badge. This merit badge includes some advanced and complex topics, so we recommend Scoutmasters, Counselors and parents weigh-in on a Scout’s readiness for participation.

4. Why is it required for the rank of Eagle Scout?

The Eagle Scout Rank represents the highest achievement in Scouting and embodies a commitment to leadership and service, and we believe learning to respect and understand people with different identities and perspectives is foundational to becoming a good leader. The Citizenship in Society merit badge builds upon existing merit badges, including the American Cultures, Citizenship in the Community, Disability Awareness and American Heritage merit badges, which require Scouts to grow their understanding of diverse perspectives and spur positive action in their communities.

5. How does this fit into the merit badge and broader Scouting programs?

This merit badge aligns with the Scout Oath and Scout Law, which collectively encourage Scouts to respect the beliefs of others, be kind and courteous, and help other people at all times. The new merit badge complements existing merit badges, such as the American Cultures, Citizenship in the Community, Disability Awareness and American Heritage merit badges, which require Scouts to grow their understanding of diverse perspectives and spur positive action in their communities.

6. How does this merit badge relate to BSA’s previous commitment to better promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within Scouting?

BSA is committed to encouraging a culture – in Scouting and society – where every person feels respected and valued. The Citizenship in Society merit badge is the latest initiative as part of our ongoing commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. It encourages Scouts to grow their understanding of the unique identities and perspectives we each possess and promote good citizenship in society.

MERIT BADGE PROCESS

7. Who designed the merit badge patch?

The merit badge patch was designed by our Youth Development Office, in collaboration with BSA's Chief Diversity Officer, Elizabeth Ramirez-Washka.

8. Can you explain the symbolism behind the Citizenship in Society merit badge patch design?

In the Citizenship in Society merit badge patch, the red, white and blue background represents the United States flag, and the leadership role the Scouts play in their communities, our country and society. The globe symbolizes the many cultures and identities represented in our communities, and the hand is our Scout sign. The silver outline represents that this merit badge is required for Eagle Scout, in line with the design of the other Eagle-required merit badges.

9. Did BSA consult any external partners or experts on the merit badge requirements? If so, who?

Yes. We worked with external advisors and looked at other non-profit youth organizations to learn best practices for advancing DEI throughout our communities and society.

10. Who developed the merit badge requirements?

The Citizenship in Society merit badge was developed carefully and thoughtfully by BSA's Office of Diversity and Youth Development Office, with input from a dedicated group of Scouting volunteers, youth, and professional staff.

11. What are the implementation deadlines for this merit badge?

The merit badge officially launches November 1, 2021, and Scouts can begin completing the requirements at that time. Eagle Scout candidates will continue to use the current rank requirements until June 30, 2022, and will not be required to complete the new Citizenship in Society Merit Badge as long as they complete all of the current Eagle Rank requirements before July 1, 2022. They do not have to submit their final Eagle Scout application nor complete their Eagle Scout Board of Review prior to July 1, 2022 but must complete all current Eagle Scout requirements before then.

Starting July 1, 2022, Eagle Scout candidates will be required to complete all Eagle Scout requirements including the new Citizenship in Society merit badge.

As has been the practice, the Local Council will be responsible for verifying in the system the Eagle Scout candidate and their completion of the Eagle Scout requirements. The Local Council will determine those Scouts that meet all requirements before July 1, 2022, under the current requirements, and those Scouts that fall under the new Eagle Scout requirements as of July 1, 2022.

12. Will this delay any Scouts who are close to achieving Eagle Scout? Will the deadline for reaching Eagle Scout be pushed back?

This will not delay Scouts close to achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. As with all new Eagle Scout requirements, there will be a grace period for it to become essential to allow for adequate planning time. The merit badge will be available starting November 1, 2021, but won't be required for attainment of the rank of Eagle Scout until July 1, 2022, giving Scouts plenty of time to prepare.

13. Does the Citizenship in Society merit badge increase the number of merit badges required for Eagle Scout?

No. The Citizenship in Society merit badge replaces one of the optional merit badges, with a total of 21 total merit badges still required (which will now include seven optional and 14 required merit badges) to attain the rank of Eagle Scout.

14. What qualifications do Citizenship in Society merit badge counselors have?

BSA has provided specific guidance to local councils on how to prepare counselors for this merit badge. The intent is for Citizenship in Society merit badge counselors to guide Scouts on their journey of self-discovery and facilitate important discussions about the diverse world we live in. Counselors should not advocate for a particular point of view; instead, they will determine whether that Scout's response is based on a good faith effort and rooted in the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Counselors must also adhere to the BSA Code of Conduct and Youth Protection Guidelines in all interactions with youth.

15. How will you make sure that the merit badge is achieving its objectives?

Like all BSA programs, we will continuously evaluate and improve the Citizenship in Society merit badge based on feedback shared by those within the Scouting program.