



Merit Badges

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Background

Scouts can earn more than 100 merit badges, including the newest merit badges—Kayaking, Search and Rescue, and Game Design. Earning merit badges gives Scouts the opportunity to participate in activities and study subjects that prepare them for life. For information on merit badge requirements and resources, go to the following link: <http://www.scouting.org/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges.aspx>.

Merit Badge Popularity

The top 10 merit badges required for Eagle rank earned in 2012:

- First Aid
- Swimming
- Environmental Science
- Citizenship in the World
- Citizenship in the Nation
- Camping
- Communications
- Citizenship in the Community
- Personal Fitness
- Family Life

The top 10 merit badges not required for Eagle rank earned in 2012:

- Rifle Shooting
- Leatherwork
- Archery
- Wilderness Survival
- Fingerprinting
- Wood Carving
- Canoeing
- Fishing
- Chess
- Art

The table below compares merit badge popularity for the past three years by merit badge name. This table also includes the overall count for each merit badge. To date, Scouts have earned more than 115 million merit badges.

| Merit Badge | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | Overall |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| American Business | 667 | 707 | 679 | 51,685 |
| American Cultures | 2,353 | 2,965 | 2,883 | 62,946 |
| American Heritage | 5,853 | 6,645 | 6,626 | 147,293 |
| American Labor | 739 | 1,168 | 811 | 20,726 |
| Animal Science | 3,591 | 3,759 | 4,503 | 52,861 |

* required for the Eagle Scout Award

** one of these three badges is required for the Eagle Scout Award

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| Merit Badge | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | Overall |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| Archaeology | 7,939 | 9,586 | 10,316 | 138,425 |
| Archery | 45,039 | 45,204 | 48,229 | 1,516,727 |
| Architecture | 2,840 | 3,586 | 3,631 | 208,470 |
| Art | 28,707 | 32,146 | 29,273 | 1,255,341 |
| Astronomy | 10,048 | 14,941 | 17,308 | 607,164 |
| Athletics | 3,728 | 3,411 | 3,465 | 1,058,055 |
| Automotive Maintenance | 9,520 | 10,762 | 10,784 | 147,238 |
| Aviation | 21,173 | 21,440 | 20,751 | 568,645 |
| Backpacking | 4,377 | 4,445 | 4,878 | 205,993 |
| Basketry | 23,899 | 23,505 | 22,073 | 2,402,980 |
| Bird Study | 6,668 | 6,881 | 6,952 | 570,139 |
| Bugling | 844 | 628 | 613 | 168,953 |
| Camping* | 62,174 | 62,492 | 60,772 | 4,549,465 |
| Canoeing | 40,160 | 41,601 | 39,042 | 2,958,392 |
| Chemistry | 8,661 | 9,569 | 9,692 | 329,138 |
| Chess | 0 | 6,002 | 29,298 | 35,300 |
| Cinematography | 6,529 | 7,245 | 8,308 | 91,624 |
| Citizenship in the Community* | 58,891 | 57,785 | 57,951 | 3,353,100 |
| Citizenship in the Nation* | 64,683 | 64,558 | 64,120 | 3,086,975 |
| Citizenship in the World* | 67,483 | 67,779 | 67,486 | 2,143,004 |
| Climbing | 23,698 | 24,617 | 24,609 | 370,449 |
| Coin Collecting | 6,785 | 7,052 | 6,043 | 486,174 |
| Collections | 6,090 | 5,027 | 5,077 | 132,597 |
| Communications* | 59,462 | 60,749 | 59,345 | 1,944,936 |
| Composite Materials | 1,603 | 1,817 | 1,610 | 9,814 |
| Computers | 14,474 | 14,712 | 14,474 | 490,686 |
| Cooking | 23,548 | 23,989 | 23,384 | 4,193,550 |
| Crime Prevention | 8,049 | 8,374 | 8,331 | 122,477 |
| Cycling** | 7,533 | 6,992 | 7,053 | 562,359 |

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|------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| Dentistry | 5,506 | 4,491 | 4,403 | 127,755 |
| Disabilities Awareness | 7,362 | 7,503 | 7,230 | 108,582 |
| Dog Care | 3,455 | 3,407 | 3,330 | 425,156 |
| Drafting | 1,516 | 1,170 | 1,377 | 221,900 |
| Electricity | 10,419 | 11,187 | 11,350 | 783,377 |
| Electronics | 7,452 | 7,186 | 8,060 | 198,892 |
| Emergency Preparedness*** | 49,945 | 50,510 | 51,035 | 1,741,107 |
| Energy | 3,203 | 3,641 | 3,907 | 72,735 |
| Engineering | 9,459 | 9,418 | 9,682 | 124,467 |
| Entrepreneurship | 1,582 | 1,895 | 1,932 | 18,046 |
| Environmental Science* | 74,836 | 78,719 | 76,238 | 2,573,760 |
| Family Life* | 58,767 | 55,812 | 56,210 | 1,055,749 |
| Farm Mechanics | 2,387 | 2,627 | 2,457 | 215,895 |
| Fingerprinting | 46,395 | 53,189 | 46,594 | 1,585,438 |
| Fire Safety | 15,483 | 16,886 | 14,517 | 2,582,269 |
| First Aid* | 89,694 | 94,268 | 92,312 | 6,813,506 |
| Fish and Wildlife Management | 14,825 | 16,162 | 15,528 | 626,048 |
| Fishing | 29,806 | 32,048 | 31,932 | 1,931,042 |
| Fly Fishing | 475 | 4,605 | 4,291 | 17,952 |
| Forestry | 14,906 | 16,456 | 16,309 | 1,121,606 |
| Gardening | 2,403 | 2,422 | 2,258 | 383,900 |
| Genealogy | 6,386 | 5,452 | 5,641 | 220,424 |
| Geocaching | 4,533 | 19,419 | 18,711 | 42,663 |
| Geology | 21,798 | 23,695 | 24,015 | 603,737 |
| Golf | 7,236 | 5,798 | 5,128 | 157,894 |
| Graphic Arts | 3,093 | 3,620 | 3,505 | 44,614 |
| Hiking** | 7,658 | 7,946 | 8,132 | 1,315,017 |
| Home Repairs | 4,572 | 4,324 | 4,413 | 2,407,514 |
| Horsemanship | 13,230 | 13,814 | 12,670 | 618,837 |

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|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| Indian Lore | 28,530 | 28,591 | 26,705 | 1,150,336 |
| Insect Study | 3,502 | 3,579 | 4,120 | 158,306 |
| Inventing | 616 | 2,279 | 2,592 | 5,487 |
| Journalism | 1,191 | 1,285 | 1,184 | 104,482 |
| Kayaking | 0 | 0 | 21,765 | 21,765 |
| Landscape Architecture | 1,414 | 1,475 | 1,618 | 78,343 |
| Law | 7,333 | 7,315 | 7,274 | 172,356 |
| Leatherwork | 50,028 | 51,535 | 48,674 | 2,360,170 |
| Lifesaving*** | 27,739 | 29,382 | 28,228 | 2,986,989 |
| Mammal Study | 28,728 | 31,028 | 28,309 | 1,147,224 |
| Medicine | 4,547 | 4,480 | 4,507 | 64,833 |
| Metalwork | 11,597 | 12,790 | 13,674 | 1,108,431 |
| Model Design and Building | 2,123 | 2,964 | 3,120 | 213,936 |
| Motor Boating | 12,578 | 12,133 | 12,004 | 564,578 |
| Music | 16,623 | 15,875 | 15,088 | 1,291,631 |
| Nature | 16,773 | 18,453 | 18,114 | 1,634,232 |
| Nuclear Science | 5,908 | 6,965 | 7,114 | 159,413 |
| Oceanography | 11,098 | 10,720 | 10,636 | 267,586 |
| Orienteering | 18,328 | 20,221 | 18,989 | 783,361 |
| Painting | 4,217 | 5,087 | 5,412 | 552,867 |
| Personal Fitness* | 58,988 | 56,588 | 56,908 | 2,392,239 |
| Personal Management* | 56,793 | 53,459 | 54,529 | 1,710,414 |
| Pets | 6,346 | 6,068 | 5,904 | 648,183 |
| Photography | 17,479 | 18,042 | 18,879 | 469,905 |
| Pioneering | 21,008 | 23,138 | 21,550 | 2,375,566 |
| Plant Science | 1,797 | 2,614 | 2,593 | 39,409 |
| Plumbing | 6,233 | 6,417 | 5,785 | 381,218 |
| Pottery | 8,937 | 10,493 | 10,157 | 365,032 |
| Public Health | 1,958 | 1,989 | 1,783 | 1,513,818 |

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|-----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| Public Speaking | 6,671 | 6,703 | 6,987 | 628,123 |
| Pulp and Paper | 5,549 | 6,449 | 7,495 | 101,323 |
| Radio | 6,994 | 6,257 | 6,957 | 158,609 |
| Railroading | 8,868 | 9,144 | 8,681 | 223,470 |
| Reading | 6,590 | 5,889 | 5,676 | 1,473,116 |
| Reptile and Amphibian Study | 9,797 | 9,816 | 9,772 | 632,072 |
| Rifle Shooting | 50,801 | 54,276 | 50,435 | 1,235,086 |
| Robotics | 0 | 5,407 | 13,262 | 18,669 |
| Rowing | 14,948 | 15,906 | 13,769 | 1,696,337 |
| Safety | 4,088 | 4,128 | 3,824 | 2,926,887 |
| Salesmanship | 6,286 | 6,765 | 6,425 | 311,744 |
| Scholarship | 7,034 | 6,570 | 6,310 | 1,265,396 |
| Scouting Heritage | 3,814 | 6,407 | 5,394 | 15,615 |
| Scuba Diving | 2,962 | 3,015 | 2,594 | 8,701 |
| Sculpture | 10,750 | 13,074 | 12,829 | 281,028 |
| Search and Rescue | 0 | 0 | 725 | 725 |
| Shotgun Shooting | 24,978 | 27,838 | 26,173 | 471,707 |
| Skating | 3,119 | 3,208 | 2,220 | 168,944 |
| Small Boat Sailing | 18,471 | 19,895 | 18,740 | 618,941 |
| Snow Sports | 11,394 | 10,586 | 8,636 | 433,857 |
| Soil and Water Conservation | 15,298 | 15,554 | 14,553 | 1,099,252 |
| Space Exploration | 22,914 | 23,595 | 23,557 | 513,956 |
| Sports | 9,550 | 9,167 | 9,112 | 1,128,407 |
| Stamp Collecting | 1,434 | 1,147 | 1,045 | 387,513 |
| Surveying | 1,539 | 1,145 | 1,235 | 149,276 |
| Swimming** | 78,825 | 80,938 | 80,376 | 6,169,318 |
| Textile | 2,232 | 3,657 | 4,681 | 134,643 |
| Theater | 2,174 | 2,201 | 2,776 | 79,069 |
| Traffic Safety | 7,148 | 8,665 | 7,450 | 142,901 |

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| Merit Badge | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | Overall |
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| Truck Transportation | 2,960 | 3,009 | 2,928 | 132,548 |
| Veterinary Medicine | 3,855 | 3,502 | 3,460 | 69,755 |
| Water Sports | 4,891 | 4,783 | 4,291 | 242,525 |
| Weather | 16,345 | 18,582 | 17,869 | 546,154 |
| Welding | 0 | 0 | 4,022 | 4,022 |
| Whitewater | 3,372 | 4,322 | 4,149 | 81,635 |
| Wilderness Survival | 41,627 | 46,757 | 46,829 | 1,551,775 |
| Wood Carving | 45,121 | 45,645 | 44,927 | 2,207,789 |
| Woodwork | 5,866 | 5,590 | 4,962 | 961,126 |
| TOTAL | 2,056,867 | 2,164,366 | 2,175,878 | 115,177,687 |

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New Merit Badges—Youth Interest Survey

The Research & Program Innovation Department surveys Boy Scouts and parents of Boy Scouts to gather interest and feedback on upcoming merit badges. Feedback from previous Youth Interest surveys has been used in development of recent merit badges including: Robotics, Chess, Welding, Kayaking, and Search and Rescue. Youth Interest surveys are sent to current Scouting Youth Panel and Parents of Boy Scout Panel members. To join the Scouting Youth Panel or the Parents of Boy Scouts Panel, go to: <http://scouting.org/about/research/ResearchPanel.aspx>.