

General Merit Badge Supervision Requirements

All certifications listed must be current.

- **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 helpers who are.
- **All physical activities** presented in any Scouting program must be conducted in accordance with “The Sweet Sixteen of BSA Safety.” These 16 points, embodying good judgment and common sense, can be found at www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/Sweet16.aspx.
- **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.



Archery. Archery activities must be supervised by a BSA National Camping School–trained shooting sports director or USA Archery or National Field Archery Association instructor, or by someone who has been trained by one of the three; or alternatively, the activities may be supervised by someone with at least Level 1 training in the operation of an archery range from USA Archery, NFAA, or an equivalent.

Canoeing. Those supervising canoeing activities 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.

Climbing. All climbing, belaying, and rappelling exercises and activities must be supervised by a 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 a BSA climbing Level 2 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.

Kayaking. Those supervising kayaking activities must have formal training in kayaking and paddle craft instruction, evidenced by either BSA Aquatics Instructor or Paddle Craft Safety Instructor certification, or kayaking instructor certification from the American Canoe Association, British Canoe Union, or American Red Cross, or equivalent; OR local councils may approve individuals previously certified as such, or trained by an instructor so qualified.

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 is responsible for ensuring that all instruction or other activities involving any handling of firearms or live ammunition is consistent with state and federal law and supervised by a certified BSA National Camping School (NCS) shooting sports director, or National Rifle Association (NRA) Rifle Shooting Instructor or Coach. Instruction or other activities involving handling 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 RSO 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. Those supervising rowing activities 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 certified by one of the BSA’s recognized scuba agencies as found in the Guide to Safe Scouting.

Shotgun Shooting. The merit badge counselor is responsible for ensuring that all instruction or other activities involving any handling of firearms or live ammunition is consistent with state and federal law and supervised by a certified NCS shooting sports director or NRA Shotgun Instructor or Coach. Instruction or other activities involving handling 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. 420029, 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. Those supervising whitewater activities must be and certified as whitewater canoeing or kayaking instructors by the American Canoe Association or have equivalent certification, training, or expertise.