

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA  
MERIT BADGE SERIES

# CITIZENSHIP IN SOCIETY



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*“Enhancing our youths’ competitive edge through merit badges”*



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

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# Citizenship in Society Merit Badge Counselor Guidelines

**Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Vision:** To partner with all families and communities in raising young people of high moral character, developing their leadership skills, and preparing them to serve and thrive in a world of increasing diversity, complexity, and challenge.

**Our DEI Mission:** The Boy Scouts of America promotes a culture in which every youth, volunteer, and employee feels a sense of belonging and builds communities where every person feels respected and valued. Leading by example and encouraging each other to live by the values expressed by the Scout Oath and Scout Law, we welcome families of all backgrounds and help prepare young people to serve as successful members and leaders of our nation's increasingly diverse communities.

**Our Goal:** The goal of the Citizenship in Society merit badge is to help educate Scouts on what diversity, equity, and inclusion are; why they are important; and how to lead ethically and inclusively to contribute to the cultivation of an environment of belonging for all Scouts. This merit badge is one of the educational and awareness initiatives the BSA is implementing to ensure every youth feels welcomed and wholly included, to achieve a sense of belonging with the Scouts, and to prepare them for success in our ever-evolving world.

## COUNSELING THE MERIT BADGE:

- Unlike other merit badges, there is no Citizenship in Society merit badge pamphlet.
- Counselors should be:
  - Skilled in listening and in guiding discussions.
  - Knowledgeable in the subject matter (as determined by their local council) before meeting with Scouts.
    - \* Completion of the DEI volunteer training is strongly recommended for all counselors; it includes integral information on key concepts the Scouts will be studying:  
[https://training.scouting.org/courses/SCO\\_1800](https://training.scouting.org/courses/SCO_1800)

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- \* Review of the counselor facilitation guide is necessary as it includes important information to aid in your research and preparation:  
[https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/diversity\\_equity\\_and\\_inclusion/Citizenship-in-Society-Merit-Badge-Counselor-Guide-2021.pdf](https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/diversity_equity_and_inclusion/Citizenship-in-Society-Merit-Badge-Counselor-Guide-2021.pdf)
  - ❑ Available to openly communicate with the Scout's parent(s)/guardian(s) if questions or discussions require their assistance.
  - There is a plethora of very important and sensitive topics included for Scouts to learn about and address; it is important to be open in listening and asking questions without imparting your own feelings or views.
    - ❑ Everyone has biases that can inform how people listen, so focusing on openness, objectivity, and inclusivity is paramount.
  - We feel strongly that our Scouts' understanding of different identities and abilities is integral to empowering them to help make all Scouts feel welcomed. That is the intent of this merit badge, to help achieve our vision of partnering with all families and communities in raising young people of high moral character, developing their leadership skills, and preparing them to serve and thrive in a world of increasing complexity and challenge. Citizenship involves people working together to make positive differences in the society in which they live. These goals align with our Scout Oath and Scout Law.

## WHAT'S INVOLVED FOR THE SCOUT:

- Learning key terminology.
- Understanding how diversity, equity, and inclusion relate to the Scout Oath and Scout Law.
- Evaluating scenarios to understand how they make others feel and how each person can serve as a supportive and inclusive leader who values others' thoughts and opinions.
- Collaborating with a Scout or youth from a different background to exchange information and experiences.
- Brainstorming how to optimize the welcoming environment of their Scouting units and actions they personally commit to taking.
- Documenting key recommendations to share with their counselor.

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## KEY CONSIDERATIONS AS THE CITIZENSHIP IN SOCIETY MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR:

- **This merit badge does not include a pamphlet.** It will require a Scout to do their own research and to dig as deeply and as detailed as the Scout desires.
- **The counselor is to serve as a facilitator** who draws out from the Scout what they have discovered and learned, and how they plan to put it into action. The counselor is not to interject their own opinions and beliefs but instead should consider the Scout's experience and journey into these topics. The role of the counselor is that of a skilled listener and discussion leader, as well as someone informed on key concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion through BSA-provided training and self-guided exploration.
- **A safe environment must be provided** for the Scout to discuss these topics and their observations without judgment. The Scout Oath and Scout Law are the appropriate boundaries to use in these discussions, and your skills as the counselor should demonstrate inclusive leadership and how to value everyone's thoughts and opinions. In addition, review the Boy Scouts of America Scouter Code of Conduct (including Youth Protection Guidelines, with which all in-person and virtual interactions must comply): <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/bsa-scouters-code-of-conduct/>
- Due to the maturity and skill needed to serve as the counselor of this badge, **it is recommended that this merit badge not be offered in a summer-camp setting.** It is not intended to be added onto the existing duties of summer-camp staff members or included in a class setting like a merit badge college. The intent is for the true learning to be experienced through the Scout's own research. It will work most effectively in the Scout's discussions with their merit badge counselor or in a small group setting. The goal is to have openness and depth of conversation. (This can be offered in a small group setting or with the merit badge counselor following Youth Protection two-deep leadership requirements of two adults and one youth.).

## APPENDIX - KEY TERMS

- **Identities** are something everyone has many of, which include, but are not limited to:
  - ❑ Race - Ethnicity - Gender - Age
  - Financial background - Mental and/or physical health and abilities
  - Religious or ethical values system - National origin - Language group

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- **Diversity** is the presence of the incredible range of individual identities.
  - **Equality** is the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities.
  - **Equity** in Scouting means helping to provide individuals with the resources they need to ensure their ability to access the same opportunities as everyone else.
    - ❑ What people need may differ from person to person or from community to community.
    - ❑ Equity represents impartiality and fairness by offering even opportunities.
  - **Inclusion** is the action or state of including or being included within a group or structure. Inclusion involves authentic participation and a genuine sense of belonging.
    - ❑ In Scouting, inclusion denotes sharing of power within the unit through concentrated efforts to bring traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision-making.
  - **Discrimination** is the act of making unjustified distinctions between human beings based on their diversity, be it groups, classes, or other categories to which they are perceived to belong. People may be *discriminated against* on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, or sexual orientation, as well as other categories.
  - **Ethical** means relating to moral principles or the branch of knowledge dealing with these terms.
  - **Leadership** is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, toward the achievement of a goal.
  - **Ethical Leadership** is leadership directed by respect for ethical beliefs and values and for the dignity and rights of all others. It is thus related to concepts such as trust, honesty, consideration, empathy, and fairness.
  - **Upstander** is any person who does the right thing at the right time. In Scouting, upstanders stop bullying when they see it (this means speaking up and/or getting an adult to intervene; physical altercations are not condoned or tolerated), and they support their fellow Scouts. Upstanders support equal rights and equity for all people regardless of their identities.

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# Overview for Scouts

The focus of the Citizenship in Society merit badge is to provide you with information on diversity, equity, inclusion, and ethical leadership. You'll learn why these qualities are important in society and in Scouting, as well as how to help other people at all times and serve as a leader and an upstander. The Boy Scouts of America continues to be committed to developing a culture in which every youth, volunteer, and employee feels included and welcomed — and to building communities where every person feels respected and valued.

- We welcome families and individuals of all backgrounds and identities to help prepare young people to serve as successful members and leaders of our nation's increasingly diverse communities.
- We are committed to creating inclusive environments and promoting a culture of respect and belonging for all.
- We expect all members to be guided by the Scout Oath and Scout Law.
  - ❑ As found in the definition of “reverent” in the Scout Law, we expect our Scouts to “respect the beliefs of others,” both within and outside of Scouting.
- We want everyone who follows the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law to feel welcomed and able to take advantage of the many opportunities Scouting provides, and we want every Scout to feel a sense of acceptance and inclusion in their unit and in Scouting.
- We expect and appreciate that our Scouts do their best to make all feel welcomed.
  - ❑ Learning about and understanding different identities and abilities will help each Scout understand what to do to help make other Scouts feel welcomed and find a sense of belonging in Scouting.

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# Instructions for Scouts

By now in your journey as a Scout, you have probably completed other merit badges and become familiar with using the merit badge pamphlet that usually accompanies the requirements. The process of earning this merit badge will be different, as it intentionally places the responsibility of research and identification of resources on you instead of using a merit badge pamphlet.

- You are encouraged to explore as deeply and broadly as you see fit for your personal learning and growth.
- Your merit badge counselor may, for certain requirements, ask you to identify your sources.
- Your counselor will not be providing you with answers or resources, but will be engaging you in conversation to ask about what you have learned and how you plan to apply your new knowledge to your life as a Scout and as a good citizen in society.
- As you undertake these learnings, think about how you can demonstrate the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law in your daily life.

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# Requirements

**“Discussion” requirements will be either with a counselor and another individual (in accordance with Youth Protection Guidelines <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss01/>), or with your counselor and a small group (of Scouts), depending upon your preference.**

1. Before beginning work on other requirements for this merit badge:
  - a. Research the following terms, and then explain to your merit badge counselor how you feel they relate to the Scout Oath and Scout Law:
    - Identities
    - Diversity
    - Equity
    - Equality
    - Inclusion
    - Discrimination
    - Ethical Leadership
    - Upstander
2. Document and discuss with your counselor what leadership means to you. Share what it means to make ethical decisions.
  - a. Research and share with your counselor an individual you feel has demonstrated positive leadership while having to make an ethical decision. (It could be someone in history, a family member, a teacher, a coach, a counselor, a clergy member, a Scoutmaster, etc.)
  - b. Explain what decision and/or options that leader had, why you believe they chose their final course of action, and the outcome of that action.
3. Consider ethical decision-making.
  - a. Think about a time you faced an ethical decision.
    - Discuss the situation, what you did, and how it made you feel.
    - Share if you would do anything differently in the future and if so, what that would be.



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- b. List three examples of ethical decisions you might have to make in the future at school, at home, in the workplace, or in your community, and what you would do.
    - Share how your actions represent alignment with the Scout Oath and Scout Law
  - c. Explain to your counselor how you plan to use what you have learned to assist you when that time comes, and what action(s) you can take to serve as an upstander and *help other people at all times*.
4. Repeat the Scout Oath and Scout Law for your counselor. Choose two of the three following scenarios and discuss what you could do as a Scout to demonstrate leadership and your understanding of *what it means to help others who may seem different from you*:
- a. Scenario 1: While at camp, a youth accidentally spills food on another camper. The camper who gets spilled on gets angry and says something that is offensive to people with disabilities; their friends laugh. What could/should you do?
  - b. Scenario 2: Your friend confides in you that some students in school are making insulting comments about one of their identities, and that those same students created a fake social media account to impersonate your friend online and post messages. What could/should you do?
  - c. Scenario 3: A new student in your class was born in another country (or has a parent who was born in another country). Your friends make rude comments to the student about their speech or clothes and tell the student to “go back home where you came from.” What could/should you do?
5. Document and discuss with your counselor:
- a. Ideas on what you personally can do to create a welcoming environment in your Scouting unit.
  - b. An experience you had in which you went out of your way to include another Scout(s) and what you did to make them feel included and welcomed.
  - c. Things you can do to help ensure all Scouts in your unit are given an opportunity to be heard and included in decision-making and planning.

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6. With your parent's or guardian's approval, connect with another Scout or youth your own age who has an identity that's different from yours. (This means a trait, belief, or characteristic different from you.)
- Share with each other what makes the different aspect of your identity meaningful/special to you.
  - Share with each other either one of the following:
    - A time you felt excluded from a group.
      - What was the situation?
      - How did it make you feel?
      - What did you do?
      - Did anyone stand up for you?
      - What did you learn?
      - Would you do anything differently today?
    - This imaginary situation:
      - You're attending a new school and don't know anyone there yet. You notice they dress very differently than you do. At lunchtime, you decide you'll try to sit with a group to get to know other students. People at two tables tell you there is someone sitting at the currently empty seat at their table, so you end up eating by yourself.
        - How would that make you feel?
        - What could the students have done?
        - If that happened at your school, what would you do?
  - Discuss with your counselor what you learned from the discussion with the other Scout or youth.
7. Identify and interview an individual in your community, school, and/or Scouting who has had a significant positive impact in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. If you feel your community, school, or local Scouting group does not have such an individual, then research a historical figure who meets these criteria, and discuss that person with your counselor.
- Discover what inspired the individual, learn about the challenges they faced, and share what you feel attributed to their success.
  - Discuss with your counselor what you learned and how you can apply it in your life.

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8. With the help of your parent or guardian, study an event that had a positive outcome on how society viewed a group of people and made them feel more welcome. Describe to your counselor the event and what you learned.
  9. Document and discuss with your counselor three or more areas in your life outside of Scouting where you feel you can actively provide stronger leadership in.
    - a. Making others feel included.
    - b. Practicing active listening.
    - c. Creating an environment where others feel comfortable to share their ideas and perspectives.
    - d. Helping others feel valued for their input and suggestions.
    - e. Standing up for others.
  10. Discuss with your counselor how stereotyping people can be harmful, and how stereotypes can lead to prejudice and discrimination. Share ideas you have for challenging assumptions and celebrating individuality.
  11. Scouting strives to develop young people to be future leaders in their workplaces, schools, and community environments. As you look at your current involvement in school, your family, Scouting, your job, and/or community, think about how you can have a positive impact in diversity, equity, and inclusion.
    - a. Describe your ideas on how you can and will support others with different identities to feel included and heard at your school, workplace, and/or social settings in your community.
    - b. Explain how including diverse thoughts and opinions from others with different identities can:
      - Make your interactions more positive.
      - Help everyone benefit by considering different opinions.
    - c. Give three examples of how limiting diverse input can be harmful.
    - d. Give three examples of how considering diverse opinions can lead to innovation and success.