

NEW EAGLE REQUIREMENTS: COOKING & SUSTAINABILITY MERIT BADGES

As of January 1, 2014, an Eagle Scout candidate will be required to earn the Cooking merit badge. Also, a candidate will be able to earn the Sustainability merit badge as an alternative to the Eagle-required Environmental Science merit badge. Below are details about these merit badges reprinted from two articles (“More Details on the Soon-to-be Eagle-Required Cooking Merit Badge” and “A Leader’s Guide to the New Sustainability Merit Badge”) found on the *Scouting Magazine* website:

<http://scoutingmagazine.org/?s=cooking+and+sustainability+merit+badges&submit=Search>

COOKING MERIT BADGE

What’s changing? There are two major revisions that should be considered separately. The first is that Cooking merit badge will become Eagle-required beginning January 1, 2014. The second is a major overhaul to the requirements, which will take effect January 1, 2015.

When will Cooking merit badge become required to earn the Eagle Scout Award?

Beginning January 1, 2014. Regardless of when a Scout earned the Life rank or began working on Eagle, unless he fulfills all the requirements — with the exception of his board of review — before January 1, 2014, he must earn the Cooking merit badge to become an Eagle Scout.

What about the new requirements? The process for implementing changes to merit badges is covered in the *Guide to Advancement*, topic 7.0.4.2, “What to Do When Requirements Change.” The changes to Cooking will first appear in a revised merit badge pamphlet that will be released during 2013. The new requirements then become effective January 1, 2015, with the release of *Boy Scout Requirements*, No. 34765.

What if a Scout has already started earning Cooking with the old requirements?

The *Guide* then allows the following options for the period of time between the release of the revised pamphlet and the January 1, 2015, effective date:

- If Scouts have already started on the merit badge, they may switch to the new requirements or continue with the old ones until the badge is completed.
- If Scouts have not already started on the merit badge, they may opt to use the new requirements and the new pamphlet.
- If work on the merit badge begins before January 1, 2015, they may use the old requirements and old pamphlet until the badge is completed.

Is there a time limit involved? The *Guide to Advancement*, under the same topic, goes on to say, “There is no time limit between starting and completing a badge, although a counselor may determine so much time has passed since any effort took place that the new requirements must be used.” This will apply to Cooking merit badge as well.

My Scout earned Cooking merit badge before it became Eagle-required. Does he have to earn it again?

No. Scouts who already earned Cooking merit badge *are not required* to re-earn the badge under the new requirements in order to qualify for Eagle.

The Eagle-required Cooking merit badge will have a silver border. Can a Scout who already earned Cooking switch his badge from the green-bordered version to one with the silver border? Yes. Once the Supply Group has released a new Cooking merit badge patch with a silver border — signifying it is Eagle-required — then any Scout who earned and received a green-bordered Cooking patch (regardless which requirements were involved) may purchase or be presented with one that has a silver border. A Cooking merit badge certificate or blue card must be presented to buy the new patch. The green-bordered patch may then be retained as a keepsake.

Can this Scout wear both versions on his sash? No. Scouts are not permitted to wear both merit badge patches at the same time.

Will there be a trade-in program for exchanging for the silver version? No.

What happened to the 2014 revisions we were told about? They have been moved to 2015 because the new requirements and the new pamphlet are coming out so close to the end of the year. This is an extension to the transition time during which Scouts can use either set of requirements as indicated above. The process will be the same as described in the *Guide to Advancement*—just extended through 2014.

On January 1, 2015, any Scout who begins working on Cooking must use the new requirements and the new pamphlet.

SUSTAINABILITY MERIT BADGE

To learn more about the new Sustainability merit badge, *Scouting Magazine* editorial personnel talked with four Scouters who served on the Sustainability Merit Badge Task Force: Scott Berger of Scotch Plains, N.J., chairman of the Sustainability Leadership Team overseeing the merit badge's development and chairman of the Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force; Scott Harmon of Portola Valley, chairman of the content team; Steve Bowen of El Centro, Calif., a member of the National Advancement Committee; and David Disney of Kansas City, Mo., a member of the National Executive Board; the responses of these Scouters are presented below.

What is sustainability in the simplest terms? “Sustainability is more of a new way of thinking as opposed to the science in the Environmental Science merit badge,” Berger says. “The idea is not just to conserve but to truly be stewards of our environment, our energy sources, and more—to think in terms not just of having enough for our lifetime but enough for future generations.”

Those challenges can seem overwhelming. Is that why the requirements focus so much on Scout-size projects? “It’s a hard concept for a Scout to feel that he himself, as a single person, can have an impact on the world, but he certainly can have an impact within his own family,” Berger says. “We’re hoping to bring [sustainability] down to a level where a Scout can feel he can make a difference, where his actions matter.”

How does the new badge compare with Environmental Science? “Environmental Science is more about studying the scientific end, whereas Sustainability is trying to teach a way to think—to live more responsibly and sustainably,” Berger says. “It’s a state of mind as opposed to the science.” Drawing similarities between the two is kind of like comparing macroeconomics vs.

microeconomics, Harmon says. “Sustainability is macro, looking outward at the whole global problem. Environmental Science is micro, looking at the science and chemistry of what’s going on.”

Should interested Scouts pursue both badges, counting the second as an elective for Eagle? “I would encourage them to earn both,” Berger says. Bowen agrees, pointing out that earning Environmental Science could be good preparation for Sustainability. “You’ve got to understand the environment a bit before you can start figuring out how we can do a better job,” he says.

Can a Scout earn this badge if he lives in an urban area? Yes, says Berger. “There are a lot of things we’ve done to make this badge viable for any Scout, regardless of where he’s living,” he says. “Sustainability is certainly not just for suburban Scouts; it’s for everybody.”

Who can counsel this badge? Bowen suggests science teachers as potential counselors, although he points out that the badge is about more than just science. “Trees are very important to it, but so is not filling up our landfills,” he says. Disney suggests seeking out people who are doing the sorts of projects the badge requires. “Who’s helping with glass recycling? Who’s helping with the community garden? Who’s helping with other things and might have a passion for a component of this? They would be ideal counselors,” he says. Another source would be people who have responsibility for sustainability efforts at work. “Most companies have an energy team, or a green team, or an efficiency team,” Harmon says. “There’s a huge grassroots movement going on—in big companies in particular—that was not there five years ago.” Of course, all merit badge counselors must register with the BSA and be approved by the council advancement committee before beginning work.

What impact could this badge have beyond the Scouts who earn it and their families? “I would hope that our awareness of our footprint on this earth will be recognized at an earlier age and will start the conversation about how we protect the earth,” Disney says. “Many young people are concerned about that and don’t know how to approach it. This gives them a path.” Harmon adds, “We really want to empower the Scouting movement to make a difference, to make a visible difference in the world outside Scouting.”