MERIT BADGE SERIES

CANOEING

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®
CANOEING

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

1. Do the following:
   a. Explain to your counselor the most likely hazards you may encounter while participating in canoeing activities and what you should do to anticipate, help prevent, mitigate, and respond to these hazards.
   b. Review prevention, symptoms, and first-aid treatment for the following injuries or illnesses that could occur while canoeing: blisters, cold-water shock and hypothermia, dehydration, heat-related illnesses, sunburn, sprains, and strains.
   c. Discuss the BSA Safety Afloat policy. Tell how it applies to canoeing activities.

2. Before doing the following requirements, successfully complete the BSA swimmer test: Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.

3. Do the following:
   a. Name and point out the major parts of a canoe.
   b. Describe how the length and shape of a canoe affect its performance.
   c. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the different materials used to make canoes.

4. Do the following:
   a. Name and point out the parts of a paddle. Explain the difference between a straight and bent-shaft paddle and when each is best used.
   b. Demonstrate how to size correctly a paddle for a paddler in a sitting position and a kneeling position.
5. Do the following:
   a. Discuss with your counselor the characteristics of life jackets most appropriate for canoeing and tell why a life jacket must always be worn while paddling.
   b. Demonstrate how to select and properly fit the correct size life jacket.

6. Discuss with your counselor the general care and maintenance of canoes, paddles, and other canoeing equipment.

7. Do the following:
   a. Discuss what personal and group equipment would be appropriate for a canoe camping trip. Describe how personal and group equipment can be packed and protected from water.
   b. Using the containers and packs from requirement 7a, demonstrate how to load and secure the containers and other equipment in the canoe.
   c. Using appropriate knots, including a trucker’s hitch, tautline hitch, and bowline, demonstrate how to secure a canoe to a vehicle or a trailer, or if these are not available, a rack on land.

8. With a companion, use a properly equipped canoe to demonstrate the following:
   a. Safely carry and launch the canoe from a dock or shore (both, if possible).
   b. Safely land the canoe on a dock or shore (both, if possible) and return it to its proper storage location.
   c. Demonstrate kneeling and sitting positions in a canoe and explain the proper use for each position.
   d. Change places while afloat in the canoe.

9. With a companion, use a properly equipped canoe to demonstrate the following:
   a. In deep water, exit the canoe and get back in without capsizing.
   b. Safely perform a controlled capsize of the canoe and demonstrate how staying with a capsized canoe will support both paddlers.
   c. Swim, tow, or push a swamped canoe 50 feet to shallow water. In the shallow water, empty the swamped canoe and reenter it.
d. In deep water, rescue a swamped canoe and its paddlers by emptying the swamped canoe and helping the paddlers safely reenter their boat without capsizing.

10. With a companion, use a properly equipped canoe to demonstrate the following paddling strokes as both a bow and stern paddler:
   a. Forward stroke
   b. Backstroke
   c. Draw
   d. Pushaway
   e. Forward sweep
   f. Reverse sweep

For stern paddling only:

   g. J-stroke
   h. Rudder stroke
   i. Stern pry

11. Using the strokes in requirement 10, and in an order determined by your counselor, use a properly equipped canoe to demonstrate the following tandem maneuvers while paddling on opposite sides and without changing sides. Each paddler must demonstrate these maneuvers in both the bow and stern and on opposite paddling sides:
   a. Pivot or spin the canoe in either direction.
   b. Move the canoe sideways or abeam in either direction.
   c. Stop the canoe.
   d. Move the canoe in a straight line for 50 yards.

12. Use a properly equipped canoe to demonstrate solo canoe handling:
   a. Launch from shore or a pier (both, if possible).
   b. Using a single-blade paddle and paddling only on one side, demonstrate proper form and use of the forward stroke, backstroke, draw stroke, pushaway stroke, forward sweep, reverse sweep, J-stroke, and rudder stroke. Repeat while paddling on the other side.
   c. Using a single-blade paddle and paddling only on one side, demonstrate proper form and use of a combination of a forward stroke, rudder stroke, and stern pry by canoeing to a target 50 yards away. Repeat while paddling on the other side.
   d. Make a proper landing at a dock or shore (both, if possible). Store canoe properly (with assistance, if needed).

13. Discuss the following types of canoeing:
   a. Olympic canoe sprint
   b. Flatwater and river touring
   c. Outrigger
   d. Marathon
   e. Freestyle
   f. Whitewater
   g. Canoe poling
Canoeing Resources

Scouting Literature
Basic Illustrated Canoe Paddling; Basic Illustrated Canoeing; Deck of First Aid; Emergency First Aid pocket guide; Boy Scout Handbook and Fieldbook; First Aid, Kayaking, Rowing, Small-Boat Sailing, and Whitewater merit badge pamphlets

Visit the Boy Scouts of America’s official retail website (with your parent’s permission) at http://www.scoutstuff.org for a complete listing of all merit badge pamphlets and other helpful Scouting materials and supplies.

Books

Organizations and Websites
American Canoe Association
108 Hanover St.
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
Telephone: 540-907-4460
Website: http://www.americancanoe.org

American Whitewater
P.O. Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723
Telephone: 866-262-8429
Website: http://www.americanwhitewater.org
Scouting Canoe Adventures


Acknowledgments

This new edition of the Canoeing merit badge pamphlet is the work of a team of experienced paddlers, instructors, and Scouters. The team was headed by Richard Thomas. Other team members included David Bell, John Brennard, Lynn Brennard, Scott Cameron, Jeff Cannon, Kevin Cordray, Michael Donigan, Douglas Kennedy, J. David McClary, Jeremy R. Oyen, Richard Shank, and Jim Virgin.

The Boy Scouts of America has a long and proud canoeing tradition. Many of the early pioneers in safety and canoeing instruction were BSA staff members and volunteer Scouters. The Boy Scouts of America gratefully acknowledges the contribution of these pioneers to canoeing and to this pamphlet: Fred C. Mills, W. Van B. Claussen, Dr. John B. May, and Ernest F. Schmidt. Recognition also is given to the previous author of this pamphlet, K. Gregory Tucker.

The Boy Scouts of America recognizes the significant contributions made to canoeing by the American Canoe Association in terms of safety, paddling technique, and teaching. The information contained in this pamphlet is consistent with American Canoe Association curriculum and safety training.

The Boy Scouts of America is grateful to the men and women serving on the Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force for the improvements made in updating this pamphlet.
Photo and Illustration Credits

Shutterstock.com, courtesy—
cover (canoe on water's edge, ©Wildnerdpix/Shutterstock); pages
21 (©Patryk Kosmider/Shutterstock), 22 (©mradlgruber/Shutterstock), 42
(©David Gallaher/Shutterstock), and
92 (©Mountainhardcore/Shutterstock)

All other photos and illustrations not
mentioned above are the property of
or are protected by the Boy Scouts
of America.

David Bell, courtesy—page 18 (Type I,
Type V)

Dan Bryant—cover (bags; Type III life
jacket); pages 18 (Type III), 30–31
(paddles), and 35 (all bags
and containers)

John McDearmon—all illustrations on
pages 14, 25–27, 36, 38, 55, 56,
58–61, 62 and 81

Frank McMahon—page 6

Brian Payne—pages 18 (type II, type
IV), 43–45 (moving a canoe;
perpendicular launch), 46 (two
canoeists), 49, 52, 63 (two canoeists),
64 (changing places), 69, 72–73
(exiting; going overboard), 79, 80,
81 (emptying a canoe), and 82–83
(canoe-over-canoe rescue)

Randy Piland—pages 32, 56–57
(backstroke; draw stroke and
pushaway stroke), 67 (onside pivot),
86, and 90

Steve Seeger—page 41