



# Signs, Signals, and Codes

## Merit Badge Workbook



This workbook can help you but you still need to read the merit badge pamphlet.  
This Workbook can help you organize your thoughts as you prepare to meet with your merit badge counselor

**Merit Badge Counselors may not require the use of this or any similar workbooks.**

You still must satisfy your counselor that you can demonstrate each skill and have learned the information.  
You should use the work space provided for each requirement to keep track of which requirements have been completed, and to make notes for discussing the item with your counselor, not for providing full and complete answers.

If a requirement says that you must take an action using words such as "discuss", "show", "tell", "explain", "demonstrate", "identify", etc, that is what you must do.

No one may add or subtract from the official requirements found on Scouting.org.

The requirements were last issued or revised in 2020 • This workbook was updated in February 2024.

Scout's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please submit errors, omissions, comments or suggestions about this **workbook** to: [Workbooks@USScouts.Org](mailto:Workbooks@USScouts.Org)  
Comments or suggestions for changes to the **requirements** for the **merit badge** should be sent to: [Merit.Badge@Scouting.Org](mailto:Merit.Badge@Scouting.Org)

1. Discuss with your counselor the importance of signs, signals, and codes, and why people need these different methods of communication.


Briefly discuss the history and development of signs, signals, and codes.


**Workbook © Copyright 2024 - U.S. Scouting Service Project, Inc. - All Rights Reserved**  
**Requirements © Copyright, Boy Scouts of America (Used with permission.)**

This workbook may be reproduced and used locally by Scouts and Scouters for purposes consistent with the programs of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) or other Scouting and Guiding Organizations. However it may NOT be used or reproduced for electronic redistribution or for commercial or other non-Scouting purposes without the express permission of the U. S. Scouting Service Project, Inc. (USSSP).



3. Do the following:

a. Describe what Morse code is and the various means by which it can be sent.


Spell your first name using Morse code.

Send or receive a message of six to 10 words using Morse code.

b. Describe what American Sign Language (ASL) is and how it is used today.


Spell your first name using American Sign Language.

Send or receive a message of six to 10 words using ASL.

4. Give your counselor a brief explanation about semaphore, why it is used, how it is used, and where it is used. Explain the difference between semaphore flags and nautical flags.

Explanation:


Why is it used?


How is it used?


Where is it used?


Explain the difference between semaphore flags and nautical flags.


Then do the following:

- a. Spell your first name using semaphore.
- Send or receive a message of six to 10 words using semaphore.
- b. Using illustrations or photographs, identify 10 examples of nautical flags and discuss their importance.

	Type	Importance
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

**(Note: Remember to provide illustrations or photographs of the flags!)**

- 5. Explain the braille reading technique and how it helps individuals with sight impairment to communicate.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Then do the following:

- a. Either by sight or by touch, identify the letters of the braille alphabet that spell your name.
- By sight or touch, decode a braille message at least six words long.
- b. Create a message in braille at least six words long, and share this with your counselor.  
**NOTE: To satisfy this requirement, you do not need to emboss braille dots in thick paper. Rather, you may use a pencil or pen to draw the dots on ordinary paper, copying the characters of the braille alphabet to spell out your message letter by letter.**

6. Do the following:

a. Describe to your counselor six sound-only signals that are in use today.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Discuss the pros and cons of using sound signals versus other types of signals.


b. Demonstrate to your counselor six different silent Scout signals.

<input type="checkbox"/> 1.	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2.	
<input type="checkbox"/> 3.	
<input type="checkbox"/> 4.	
<input type="checkbox"/> 5.	
<input type="checkbox"/> 6.	

Use these Scout signals to direct the movements and actions of your patrol or troop.

- 7. On a Scout outing, lay out a trail for your patrol or troop to follow. Cover at least one mile in distance and use at least six different trail signs and markers.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

- After the Scouts have completed the trail, follow no-trace principles by replacing or returning trail markers to their original locations.

- 8. For THREE of the following activities, demonstrate five signals each. Tell what the signals mean and why they are used:
  - a. Sports official's hand signs/signals
  - b. Heavy-equipment operator's hand signals
  - c. Aircraft carrier catapult crew signals
  - d. Cyclist's hand signals
  - e. An activity selected by you and your counselor

Activity 1: \_\_\_\_\_

	Signal	Meaning	Purpose
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Activity 2: \_\_\_\_\_

	Signal	Meaning	Purpose
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Activity 3: \_\_\_\_\_

	Signal	Meaning	Purpose
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

9. Share with your counselor 10 examples of symbols used in everyday life.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

***(Note: Remember to provide illustrations or photographs of the symbols so you can show them to your counselor!)***

Design your own symbol. Share it with your counselor and explain what it means.


Then do the following:

- a. Show examples of 10 traffic signs and explain their meaning.

	Sign	Meaning
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

***(Note: Remember to provide illustrations or photographs of the signs so you can show them to your counselor!)***

- b. Using a topographical map, explain what a map legend is and discuss its importance. Point out 10 map symbols and explain the meaning of each.


Point out 10 map symbols and explain the meaning of each.

	Symbol	Meaning
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

- c. Discuss text-message symbols and why they are commonly used.


Give examples of your favorite 10 text symbols or emoticons.

1. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>	3. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>	5. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>	7. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>	9. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>
2. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>	4. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>	6. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>	8. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>	10. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"></table>

- Then see if your counselor or parent can identify the meaning or usage of each symbol.

1. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	3. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	5. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	7. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	9. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No													
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No													
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No													
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No													
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No													
2. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	4. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	6. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	8. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	10. <table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 20px;"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No													
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No													
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No													
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No													
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No													

- 10. Briefly discuss the history of secret code writing (cryptography).


Make up your own secret code and write a message of up to 25 words using this code.


- Share the message with a friend or fellow Scout.
- Then share the message and code key with your counselor and discuss the effectiveness of your code.


When working on merit badges, Scouts and Scouters should be aware of some vital information in the current edition of the *Guide to Advancement* (BSA publication 33088). Important excerpts from that publication can be downloaded from <http://usscouts.org/advance/docs/GTA-Excerpts-meritbadges.pdf>. You can download a complete copy of the *Guide to Advancement* from <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/33088.pdf>.