

# Boy Scout Railroading Merit Badge

Running a Railroading Merit Badge (RRMB) Program is a great way to introduce railroading, railroad safety, and model railroading to young men. Some of you may have been involved in Scouting before either as a Scout or as an Adult Leader. The beginning of this section will include information that many of you are probably already familiar with. Remember that there will be some NMRA members attempting to conduct a RRMB program in your Division that are not that familiar with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA).

I am a member of the Piedmont Division in the Southeastern Region. I live just south of Atlanta. I have been coordinator for our division RRMB Program since its inception in 2002. We currently present our program twice a year at the Southeastern Railway Museum, which is owned by the Atlanta Chapter of the NRHS. We have currently had 440 scouts earn the RRMB through our program. Throughout this section, I will be using our program as an example of one way to run a RRMB Program.

## History and organization of the Boy Scouts of America

The BSA is headquartered in Arlington, Texas. It was founded in February 1910. As this section is being written, the BSA is holding a yearlong celebration of their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Many of the companies within the railroading and modeling industry are helping the BSA celebrate their birthday. As an example, Union Pacific Railroad has numbered a locomotive #2010 and decorated it with the BSA emblem and badges representing the ranks a Scout must earn to earn Eagle Scout.

The BSA runs three distinct but similar programs based on age range: Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Venturing.

1. The lowest level program is Cub Scouts. This is a program for young boys from the age of 7-10 years old that are in grades 1-5. Cub Scouts is an adult run program. In the spring of 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Cub Scouts may “crossover” into Boy Scouts in an elaborate ceremony that is part of the Annual Blue and Gold Banquet. (Note: it is not necessary for a young man to have first been a Cub Scout in order to become a Boy Scout).

2. The intermediate-level program is Boy Scouts. This program is for young men ages 11-17, or ones who are 10 years old and have finished 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Boy Scouts is a Scout-run program that is run by the Boy Scouts themselves and supervised by Adult Scout Leaders.

3. The highest-level program is Venturing which is a high adventure co-ed program for young people age 14-20 or who are 13 years old and have finished 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Venturing activities are planned and run by the Venture Scouts themselves, with advice from an Adult Venture Crew Advisor.

Although there are many volunteer opportunities in each of these three programs, Boy Scouts is the only BSA program that has any type of program involving railroading.

The BSA has divided the country into councils. These are much like our regions. The councils are divided into districts which would equate to our divisions. Within each district there are numerous troops.

A Scout Troop is normally comprised of from 15-45 Boy Scouts plus their Adult Scout Leaders, although there are some troops that approach 100 Scouts. Each troop has to have a sponsoring organization which is usually a church, PTA, or social group. Each troop is divided into patrols of normally from 8-20 Scouts per patrol. They are usually the scouts that “crossed over” together. The patrol is the smallest unit in Boy Scouting.

You can find a troop near you by going to the BSA website [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org). Find and click “Get Involved”. This page requires your personal information to find the troop nearest you. Once you have entered this information, you will be led to a page with a map showing the troops near you. It will also include contact information for those troops. There should also be information about the council that you live in.

# Scout Ranks

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Getting started as a “Scout”: When a boy decides to become a Scout, either by “crossing over” as a Cub Scout or by applying to a Scout Troop without prior Cub Scouting, he immediately starts the BSA Advancement process. There are several requirements he has to meet to actually become a Scout. These include memorizing the Pledge of Allegiance, the Scout Oath, the Scout Law, the Scout Motto “Be Prepared”, and the Scout Slogan “Do a Good Turn daily”. Once he has demonstrated he has met all of these requirements, he will have a Scoutmaster Conference (a combination counseling session, review of what the Scout has done, and a “pep talk”). If the Scoutmaster feels that the boy has successfully met all the requirements, then the young man will be “invested” (designated) as a Scout.

Tenderfoot Scout: As you would imagine, the requirements get a little tougher once a young man is a Scout. Since the BSA is known for camping, one would correctly assume that the requirements now include some camping. It also includes some knot tying, first aid, and physical fitness. Once he finishes all the requirements, he presents himself to the Scoutmaster for another Scoutmaster Conference. This will be followed by an interview conducted by



the troop’s Board of Review, which is made up of Adult Leaders within the troop. All ranks up through Eagle Scout will require the Scoutmaster Conference and a Board of Review. If the Scout successfully completes all of the requirements at this point, he will be awarded the rank of Tenderfoot Scout.

Second Class Scout: The next rank in the advancement progression is 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Scout. The requirements for this rank are similar to Tenderfoot but start becoming a little more intensive. Many of the outdoor skills learned are those needed for (day) hiking. There is also a requirement to spend one hour in a service project.



First Class Scout: The requirements for earning the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Class Scout are very similar to those for 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Scout, but focus more on outdoor skills needed for overnight camping and backpacking.



Star Scout: The next Rank is Star. This is the first rank which requires the Scout to earn merit badges and



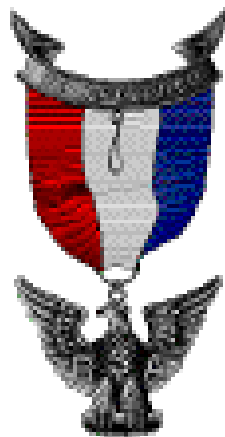
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to hold a leadership position within the troop. This is also the first rank which requires the Scout to hold the previous rank (First Class Scout) for a given amount of time.

Life Scout: The next rank is Life which requires more merit badges, more service project time, and more leadership time. It, also, has a specific time-in-rank requirement.



Eagle Scout: The highest rank in Scouting is Eagle Scout. This rank requires more merit badges and leadership time. More importantly, it requires the Scout to plan and carry out an Eagle Scout service project. This must be a service project for an organization other than the BSA. It will require the Scout to plan, raise money for, and lead his troop in a project that is approved at the local council level. Once a scout has met all the requirements, he will present himself to a District Eagle Scout Board of Review which is made up of Adult Leaders from troops throughout the district. All requirements except the District Board of Review must be completed by the Scouts 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. If a Scout successfully makes it through the District Board of Review, he will be awarded the rank of Eagle Scout.



# What is a Merit Badge?

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Merit Badges are very similar to the Certificates in the NMRA Advancement Program. There are over 120 merit badge topics in the areas of sports, crafts, science, trades, business, or future careers. A Scout has to earn at least 21 merit badges to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. To become an Eagle Scout, the Scout must earn 11 “required” merit badges which must come from a list of 15 possible required merit badges. The other 10 merit badges are chosen by each individual Scout from the remaining merit badges on the list.

Each merit badge has an 8 1/2”x 5 1/2” merit badge pamphlet. This pamphlet includes the list of requirements along with information pertaining to those requirements. Most of the information a Scout needs to fulfill the requirements for the merit badge are included in the merit badge pamphlet. For this reason, the Scout who obtains and reads through a merit badge pamphlet has a marked advantage over those who choose not to do so. Like the AP Certificates, some of the requirements are required by everyone trying to earn the merit badge as shown in the example below:



2) Do the following:

*A) Explain the purpose and formation of Amtrak. Explain, by the use of a timetable, a plan for making a trip by rail between two cities at least 500 miles apart. List the times of departure and arrival at your destination, the train number, and the type of service you want.*

*B) List and explain the various forms of public/mass transit using rail as the fixed guide path.*

Some areas allow the Scout to pick from a list of requirements as shown below. This gives him some flexibility to study the topics that he likes or the topics that he is capable of finishing with the items at his disposal. For example:

1) Do **THREE** of the following:

*A) Name three types of modern freight trains. Explain why unit trains are more efficient than mixed freight trains.*

*B) Name one Class 1 or regional railroad. Explain what major cities it serves, the locations of major terminals, service facilities, and crew change points, and the major commodities it carries.*

*C) Using models or pictures identify 10 types of railroad freight or passenger cars. Explain the purpose of each type of car.*

*D) Explain how a modern diesel or electric locomotive develops power. Explain the terms dynamic braking and radial steering trucks.*

When setting up a program to support the BSA Railroading Merit Badge in your division, just remember that the BSA states: "You are expected to meet the requirements as they are stated - no more or no less. You are expected to do exactly what is stated in the requirements."

Once the Scout has completed all the merit badge requirements, he fills out a BSA Form 34124 which is similar to an AP Statement of Qualifications form (SOQ). Now, to be honest with you, if you asked just about anyone involved in Scouting what a Form 34124 is they would tell you they have no idea. The reason is these forms are more widely known for the blue color of the paper on which they are printed. So, the Scout completes his "blue card" and turns it into his Troop's Advancement Committee Chairperson, who is much like an AP Chairperson. If it is completed properly and signed by the Merit Badge Counselor for the particular Merit Badge, the Scout will be awarded the merit badge at the next Troop "Court of Honor" ("awards ceremony").

Although there are ranks that require a Scout to earn merit badges, a Scout can earn a merit badge at any rank up until his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. You will find that your RRMB program will have Scouts from all ranks. In our program, we divide the Scouts into small groups of 4 or 5. You could do this any number of ways including alphabetically, age, time of registration, or Scout rank. We have chosen Scout rank. Scouts within a particular rank are usually close in age, maturity, and learning ability. I have found this helps the counselors immensely when they are dealing with the Scouts.

# Why isn't it the "Model Railroading Merit Badge"?

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The Railroading Merit Badge (RRMB) was first established in 1952. From the beginning, the RRMB requirements included the railroad industry and the hobby of model railroading. Periodically, the BSA retires merit badges which have very low numbers of Scouts earning the merit badge. Such was the situation in the early 1990's when the BSA was going to retire the RRMB. A group of individuals including Scout Adult Leaders, railway hobbyists, and railroad professionals set out to revitalize the RRMB and convince the BSA to save it. Mr. Charles Anderson, President of Western Towers, emerged to lead this effort.

There were primarily three factions involved in the revitalization of the RRMB. They were (i) the railroad industry, (ii) the hobby industry, and (iii) Operation Lifesaver. All three factions initially pushed for separate merit badges. The BSA felt that with so little interest in the current merit badge, splitting it into three separate merit badges would create a situation with even lower numbers. They denied that approach and told them that they had to agree on a single merit badge, although it could pertain to all three factions. The final solution delineates two separate paths. The first seven requirements are a mixture of prototype subjects, OLI subjects and model railroading subjects. Requirement number 8 is divided into two options. One is the model

railroading option and the other is a prototype railroading option. The current requirements are shown at the end of this section.

To publicize the revitalized merit badge, Mr. Anderson arranged to run a merit badge program at the 1997 Boy Scout Jamboree at Fort A.P. Hill in Virginia. With financial support from both the prototype and hobby industry, Mr. Anderson constructed a mock-up of a modern GE locomotive using a semi-trailer and purpose-built bolt on pieces representing the locomotive cab and the radiator section. This eye-catching prop still serves as the headquarters for a National Scout Jamboree's RRMB activity area. Using eight tents and 60 volunteer counselors, Mr. Anderson has set up an area where a Scout can spend approximately three hours to earn the merit badge. One of the tents is where the Scouts participate in a Timesaver exercise. Because of the sheer number of Scouts involved, there are 30 Timesaver layouts. No that is not a misprint...there are 30 Timesavers.

The BSA National Jamboree usually lasts for ten days. Mr. Anderson's RRMB program usually has 1200-2000 Jamboree attendees who earn the Railroading Merit Badge. The 2010 Jamboree had 1455 Scouts earn the RRMB and every one of them left with some parting gifts including a copy of the NMRA Magazine.

The good news is that, since the early 1990's when the BSA was going to retire the RRMB, the numbers have steadily increased. In 2008, over 6,000 scouts earned the merit badge. This puts the RRMB about in the middle of the list of available Merit Badges, and well out of range of those merit badges that the BSA is looking at retiring.



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## RAILROADING

### Merit Badge Requirements

**1) Do THREE of the following:**

**A)** Name three types of modern freight trains. Explain why unit trains are more efficient than mixed freight trains.

**B)** Name one Class 1 or regional railroad. Explain what major cities it serves, the locations of major terminals, service facilities, and crew change points, and the major commodities it carries.

**C)** Using models or pictures identify 10 types of railroad freight or passenger cars. Explain the purpose of each type of car.

**D)** Explain how a modern diesel or electric locomotive develops power. Explain the terms dynamic braking and radial steering trucks.

**2) Do the following:**

**A)** Explain the purpose and formation of Amtrak. Explain, by the use of a timetable, a plan for making a trip by rail between two cities at least 500 miles apart. List the times of departure and arrival at your destination, the train number, and the type of service you want.

**B)** List and explain the various forms of public/mass transit using rail as the fixed guide path.

**3) Do ONE of the following:**

**A)** Name four departments of a railroad company. Describe what each department does.

**B)** Tell about the opportunities in railroading that interest you most and why.

**C)** Name four rail support industries. Describe the function of each one.

**D)** With your parents and counselors approval, interview someone employed in the rail industry. Learn what that person does and how this person became interested in railroading. Find out what type of schooling and training are required for this position.

4) Explain the purpose of Operation Lifesaver and its mission.

5) Do THREE of the following:

A) List five safety precautions that help make trains safer for workers and passengers.

B) Explain to your merit badge counselor why railroad rights-of-way are important for safety.

C) List 10 safety tips to remember when you are near a railroad track (either on the ground or on a station platform) or aboard a train.

D) Tell your counselor about the guidelines for conduct that should be followed when you are near or on railroad property. Explain the dangers of trespassing on railroad property.

E) Tell what an automobile driver can do to safely operate a car at grade crossings, and list three things an automobile driver should never do at a grade crossing.

F) Tell how to report a malfunction of grade crossing warning devices.

G) List safety precautions a pedestrian should follow at a public crossing.

6) Explain the appearance and meaning of the following warning signs and devices: advance warning sign, pavement marking, cross bucks, flashing red lights, crossing gates.

7) Do EACH of the following:

A) Explain how railroad signals operate and show two basic signal types using color and configuration.

B) Explain the meaning of three whistle signals.

C) Describe a way to signal a train for an emergency stop.

D) Explain the use and function of the EOTD (end-of-train device) or FRED (Flashing rear end device) used on the last car of most trains.

**8)** Select ONE of the following special-interest areas and complete the requirements:

**A) Model Railroading**

With your parents and counselors approval, do TWO of the following:

**1)** Draw a layout of your own model railroad; or one that could be built in your home. Design a point-to-point track or loop with different routings. Include one of the following: turnaround or terminal or yard or siding.

**2)** Build one model railroad car kit or one locomotive kit.

**3)** Name the scale of four popular model railroad gauges. Identify the scale of four model cars or locomotives.

**4)** Locate the Web site of four model railroad – related manufacturers or magazine publishers. Print information on their products and services and discuss the information with your counselor.

**5)** Build one railroad structure (from scratch or using a kit), paint and weather the structure, mount it on your layout or diorama, and make the surrounding area on a diorama scenic.

**6)** Alone or with others, build a model railroad or modular layout, including ballast and scenery. Make electrical connections and operate a train. Describe what you enjoyed most.

**7)** Participate in a switching contest on a timesaver layout and record your time.

**B) Rail fanning**

With your parent and counselors approval, do TWO of the following:

**1)** Visit a railroad museum, historical display, or a prototype railroad-sponsored public event. With permission, photograph, videotape, or sketch items of interest. Explain what you saw and describe your photos, sketched, or videotape.

**2)** Purchase tickets and ride a scenic or historic railroad. Under supervision, photograph the equipment and discuss with your counselor the historic significance of the operation.

3) Locate the Web site of four rail historical groups, and then find information on the history of the rail preservation operations and purpose of each group. Talk with a member of one of the groups and find out how you might help.

4) Plan a trip by rail between two points. Obtain a schedule and explain when the train should arrive at two intermediate points. Purchase the tickets and make the trip. Explain to your counselor what you saw.



# So are you still thinking about becoming an RRMB Counselor?

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It is relatively simple to become a Railroading Merit Badge Counselor. There are currently three requirements:

First: you must complete the BSA's Youth Protection Training (YPT). In order to create the most secure environment possible for its youth members, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) has developed numerous procedural and leadership selection policies for its Adult Leaders. Effective June 1, 2010, those policies include Youth Protection Training (YPT). After that date, no adult may register with the BSA as an Adult Leader in any capacity without first completing this training. The training is good for two years and can be accomplished online. The training can be found at [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org). Across the top of the page find and click Youth Protection Training. You will be required to create an account which will then allow you access to the training. Upon completion of the training, you will be able to print a certificate of completion which should be included with your next Adult Leader Application Form. The whole process should take less than an hour.

Second: you complete an Adult Leader Application Form #28-501. This is a multi-copy form used to register as an Adult Leader. If you are just going to be a merit badge counselor, you will register as a 42 in the position code.

Make sure you fill in all the pages. There is a section on the back of the first page that a lot of people seem to miss. There should be no cost to register just as a merit badge counselor.

Third: fill out a Merit Badge Counselor Information Form #34405. This form is specifically for you to sign up as a RRMB counselor.

Once you have completed YPT and the two forms, you must submit them to the BSA. You can do this through a local troop, the local district, or the local council. It usually takes 30-60 days to complete the initial process. Once you are registered, you will have to reregister every 2 years and must meet any new requirements the BSA has for Adult Leaders.

# Developing a program

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*Finding the requirements:* The first thing you need to develop your program is to find the current list of requirements for the RRMB. There are two places to find them:

a. In the merit badge pamphlet. The pamphlet includes the requirements on the first couple of pages. The rest of the pamphlet is more detailed information that the Scout would normally use to help him complete the merit badge requirements.

b. On the Internet. The best place I know is [www.meritbadge.org](http://www.meritbadge.org). That is where I got the list of requirements posted earlier. There is a wealth of other information on this site. It includes information about the Scout ranks, merit badge counselor requirements, how to fill out a blue card, and more importantly the requirements for all the current merit badges. When you find the RRMB, you will see there is a list of requirements. There is also a work sheet. I would download the work sheet also as you may find it helpful in developing your program.

*Putting your RRMB program together:* Once you have the list of requirements, the next step is to put your Division's program of instruction together. Just as the Scout does when he is trying to earn the merit badge, you will develop a program that is molded by your interests, your capabilities and

your available resources. Obviously, if you have more than one person involved, you have to take into consideration their capabilities also.

From the beginning, I decided to divide the RRMB requirements into 7 sections, or as we call them, "stations". The RRMB requirements we fulfill and the stations they are assigned to in our Division are shown at the end of this section. Our program is presented at the Southeastern Railway Museum which is owned by the Atlanta Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society. When assigning counselors to your stations look closely at the capabilities of your counselors. One of our stations is called "signals". The counselor for that station is a signal maintainer for Norfolk Southern Railroad. We have another station which covers all the "Operation Lifesaver" (OLI) topics. The counselor for that station is an OLI-certified presenter. It just makes sense to build your program and man your program using the counselors to the best of their abilities.

Our program does not cover every possible RRMB requirement. However, the requirements we do cover in our stations will allow a Scout to complete all the requirements needed to earn the RRMB. Depending upon the skill sets and resources available to you in your

division, your list may be slightly different. The requirements we fulfill in our Division are shown below:

1. Do THREE of the following:

A. Name three types of modern freight trains. Explain why unit trains are more efficient than mixed freight trains. STATION 6

C. Using models or pictures identify 10 types of railroad freight or passenger cars. Explain the purpose of each type of car. STATION 6

D. Explain how a modern diesel or electric locomotive develops power. Explain the terms dynamic braking and radial steering trucks. STATION 1

2. Do the following:

A. Explain the purpose and formation of Amtrak. Explain, by the use of a timetable, a plan for making a trip by rail between two cities at least 500 miles apart. List the times of departure and arrival at your destination, the train number and name, and the type of service you want. STATION 2

B. List and explain the various forms of public/mass transit using rail. STATION 2

3. Do ONE of the following:

A. Name four departments of a railroad company. Describe what each department does. STATION 2.

4. Explain the purpose of Operation Lifesaver and its mission. STATION 4

5. Do THREE of the following:

A. List five safety precautions that help make trains safer for workers and passengers. STATION 4

B. Explain to your merit badge counselor why railroad rights-of-way are important for safety. STATION 4

D. Tell your counselor about the guidelines for conduct that should be followed when you are near railroad property. Explain the dangers of trespassing on railroad property. STATION 4

6. Explain the appearance and meaning of the following warning signs and devices: advance warning sign, pavement markings, cross bucks, flashing red lights, and crossing gates. STATION 4

7. Do EACH of the following:

A. Explain how railroad signals operate and show two basic signal types using color or configuration. STATION 5

B. Explain the meaning of three horn signals. STATION 5

C. Describe a way to signal a train for an emergency stop. STATION 5

D. Explain the use and function of the EOTD (end-of-train device), or FRED (flashing rear end device), and used on the last car of most trains. STATION 3

8. Select ONE of the following special-interest areas and complete the requirements.

A. Model Railroading

With your parents and counselors approval, do TWO of the following:

(3) Name the scale of four popular model railroad gauges. Identify the scale of four model cars or locomotives. STATION 3

(7) Participate in a switching contest on a Timesaver layout and record your time. STATION 7



# Where am I going to present this program?

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Programs get developed for two reasons. The first reason is because a BSA unit comes to an NMRA member and asks them to present a program for the RRMB. Chances are the unit who approaches the member already has a meeting place. That place may work out pretty well. But, it may turn out that you would be better off someplace else. If you have a local train museum, that is an excellent choice. Part of their charter probably includes educating the public. A BSA RRMB program is a highly visible way to do that.

The second reason is because you have decided to present a program on your own. One of your biggest issues is the fact that you don't have a place in mind to present your program. Most districts in the country hold what is called a Merit Badge Day, Merit Badge College, or Merit Badge Jamboree. This is usually a one day program where numerous merit badges are presented. They are usually held in the non-camping time of year for your area. You can find them on the website you found when you were looking for the BSA troop nearest you.

Most of the merit badges required for earning the rank of Eagle Scout will be presented at one of these programs. There will also be other merit badges made available. A major advantage of a program such as this is the fact that you

get to tell the organization running the program how many Scouts you can handle. They will take care of registering all the Scouts and will give you a list of names and Scout ranks in advance so you can set up your groups. The downside to using a location like this is the fact that it is usually in a school or a church. If you are breaking up into smaller groups, you will need to make sure you get enough rooms to hold your program. I wouldn't put more than two stations in each classroom as the noise will be very distracting.

# Now, the moment you have all been waiting for...

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As I told you in the beginning, our division holds a RRMB program twice a year. As previously noted, our program is divided into seven stations. Six of these stations are sit down stations manned by an individual counselor. They are (1) Locomotive Power, (2) Railroad Dept/Amtrak/Mass Transit, (3) FRED/Scale & Gauge, (4) OLI, (5) Signals, (6) Car identification. The seventh station includes five Timesaver layouts each manned by a counselor. We restrict the Scout attendance to 30 scouts per session. I also ask that each troop have at least one adult remain for the day for every 5 Scouts they will have in attendance. This is primarily to meet the BSA standards of adult to Scout ratio, but it is also helpful for emergency situations or in case you have a discipline issue with one of the Scouts. This requirement usually is not a problem. I usually have 10-15 adults stay through the day.

The day starts at 9:30 with an Opening Ceremony which lasts approximately one hour. I have a Power Point presentation that tells them what will be happening during the program. I also take attendance. I then show them a 20 minute movie. While the movie is playing, I split the Scouts into groups based on Scout rank. After the movie, I assign the groups. I also assign an adult to each group. Before the Scouts leave to go to their first station, we also talk

about safety.

Our program is setup so that the counselors stay in one place and the groups move throughout the museum. The adults help the groups move between stations. While I am doing the Opening Ceremony, all the counselors prepare their stations and the counselors at the Timesavers get set up and insure everything is in running order.

I identify the stations by number, but in the time honored tradition of Scouting, I have named the Scout groups for animals. The first two groups are the Bears and the Cougars. The schedule for the Bears and Cougars is shown on the next page.

We assign one counselor and two Scouts to a Timesaver. One Scout acts as the engineer and operates the throttle. The other Scout acts as the conductor and directs the engineer. Once they have completed the Timesaver, they swap roles.

At the end of the day, the Scouts will have completed sufficient requirements to earn a blue card. We also give them a bag including handouts and giveaways from OLI, a back issue of the NMRA Magazine and any other gifts/donations I have been able to score.

	Bears	Cougars
10:30-11:00	Station 1	Station 2
11:00-11:30	Station 2	Station 1
11:30-12:00	Station 3	Station 4
12:00-12:30	Station 4	Station 3
12:30-1:30	Lunch	Lunch
1:30-2:00	Station 5	Station 6
2:00-2:30	Station 6	Station 5
2:30-3:00	Station 7	Station 7
3:00-3:30	Station 7	Station 7
3:30-4:00	Closing Ceremony.	



# The AP Program

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Being a registered merit badge counselor is a great way to earn Time Units (TU's) for the AP Volunteer Certificate. You earn one TU for every month you are a registered counselor and one TU for every Scout that earns the RRMB through your efforts. If your program includes multiple counselors, make sure that you divide the TU's amongst all the counselors including those who already have earned the Volunteer Certificate.

It takes a minimum of 12 counselors to operate our program, but I usually get 17-18 to attend a session. We usually have 30 Scouts in attendance. You have to credit every counselor with at least one Scout, but you also can't give them credit for partial Scouts. So using that as an example, 18 counselors will get credit for 1 Scout each leaving 12 scouts left. I usually have 6-8 counselors who don't have the Volunteer Certificate, so I divide the remaining Scouts up amongst them.

Not every counselor will be able to make every session you hold. We hold our sessions approximately every six months. If a member misses one session, I will continue to credit him TU's as a merit badge counselor. If a member misses two sessions, I stop crediting him until such time that he attends one of our sessions.

The most important thing when crediting TU's is to use common sense. The Volunteer Certificate is awarded to a member that volunteers a lot of his time to the hobby of model railroading. You want to make sure that a member that is earning TU's from your program is earning them at a reasonable rate. From our earlier example, I had 18 counselors and 30 Scouts. I credit each counselor with one Scout. If I only have one counselor that is trying to earn TU's, I don't want to credit him with the remaining 12 Scouts. A member who is an active counselor will earn 12 TU's for being a merit badge counselor and 6 TU's for Scouts earning the merit badge for a total of 18 TU's per year. That is a lot of TU's. Much more than I think you can possibly earn from any other category. You just want to make sure that the member doesn't earn an excessive amount of TU's per year from your program.

# In Conclusion

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I believe that running our merit badge program is one of the best things I do in model railroading. It is a great outreach program. It also allows me to introduce young men to our great hobby.

There are a number of things that you have to remember when developing or running a program.

- Remember that the RRMB belongs to the BSA. We are just one organization that runs programs that allows Scouts to earn the merit badge.
  - Insure that you or your program is in compliance with all directives and policies of the BSA. In particular when it comes to contact with the Scouts, make sure that you have no one-on-one contact.
  - Make sure you fulfill the requirements. You can do more, but you should never do less than what the requirement calls for.
  - When you design your program, try to make it so that you fulfill all the requirements during your program. If you find it too difficult to fulfill a requirement, the Scouts will probably find it too difficult to complete also and they won't earn the merit badge.
- If you have any questions about developing or presenting a program, please contact your Division or Region Coordinator. If you find it difficult to contact them, please contact the National Coordinator at [scouts@hq.nmra.org](mailto:scouts@hq.nmra.org).