



Troop 236 – Danville, CA

Tips for Conducting Online Merit Badge Classes

Troop activities can still continue during our COVID-19-related Shelter-in-Place orders. One activity that can be performed virtually is a Merit Badge class. Here's how you might do so:

- 1. Select a Merit Badge:** Review merit badge requirements and select one that lends itself well to online presentations, and that can be completed (or mostly completed) at a Scout's home. Be creative. For example, some merit badges require field trips, but there may be creative ways to conduct virtual field trips.
- 2. Prepare the Presentation:** Assemble presentations (Powerpoint, etc) to help visually guide the Scout through the learning. Avoid using a lot of text. Take advantage of great photos and videos available online to incorporate into your presentation. A picture is worth a thousand words.
- 3. Select Virtual Meeting Software:** Select a webinar platform, like GoToMeeting, Zoom or Webex, and get familiar with the software. These services are not expensive, and there is a good chance that your Troop already has an account nowadays.
- 4. Communicate Expectations & Progress:**
 - a. Have scouts make use of the Merit Badge Workbooks available from the [US Scouting Service Project](#) to convey what they have learned to you.
 - b. Set expectations for how requirements needing “demonstration” are to be fulfilled. For example, do you want a picture or a video e-mailed to you?
 - c. Assign homework at the end of every session. “Today we covered material that should help you answer or demonstrate requirements “1a, 2a, 2c, …”.
 - d. Set expectations of by when you expect the scouts to have completed submitting all of their materials. Scouts will complete requirements at different rates, but it helps to communicate a goal.
 - e. Keep track of each scout’s requirement completions online where they can see it. For example, in an online Google spreadsheet.
- 5. Conduct the Merit Badge Virtual Meeting(s):**
 - a. Start the virtual meeting 15 minutes early so scouts can log in with plenty of time before you begin. It’s also a great time for the Troop to jabber with each other, when Troops are not meeting in person.

- b. Use a webcam, and encourage the scouts to turn their webcams. Seeing each other makes the meeting more personal, and helps you gauge attention and comprehension.
- c. Ask another adult to help you manage questions. Depending on the size of the group that you will be teaching, you may want to ask that questions be submitted in chat, or that hands be raised. The second adult can keep an eye out for questions so that you can address them at an appropriate time.
- d. End the webinar on time, but leave the session open for 15 minutes to the scouts to chat with each other.

6. **Follow Up:** After all of your sessions are completed, follow up with the scouts about completing their requirements. Don't let them forget about finishing the job and getting that Merit Badge!
7. **Have Fun:** Don't take it too seriously. Make sure that YOU and the scouts are all having fun!