

2026 Frequently Asked Questions

What are the 2026 dates and locations for MBU?

- Saturday, January 31, 2026, at York High School - 355 W. St Charles Road, Elmhurst, IL.
- Saturday, May 2, 2026, at Camp Big Timber – 37W955 Big Timber Road, Elgin, IL.

What is the cost to register to attend MBU?

Any registered Scouting America Scout, troop level or higher may attend MBU. The cost is \$56 and includes 4 class periods, a commemorative patch, class schedule, and a hot lunch. Each Merit Badge takes between 1 & 2 class periods, so your Scout may work on between 2-4 badges at MBU. Webelos must have crossed over into a Scout troop to attend MBU.

Where can I find the Registration link to sign up?

[Saturday, January 31, 2026, at York High School](#)

Saturday, May 2, 2026, at Camp Big Timber – Registration opens March 6th at 5pm

What time does MBU begin & end?

Check-in runs all day. Staff check-in is from 7am on. Scout check-in is from 7:30am on. There is no formal check out. The last period ends at 4:30pm and when your Scout is finished, he or she may depart from the main entrance/exit. Please coordinate a pickup time with your Scout. Many Scouts remain after class to demonstrate their work and to meet individually with their instructors.

How does check-in and arrival work?

Parking is at a premium for both sessions of MBU. Please drop your Scout off in the entrance circle & have a nice day – then pick them back up from the circle when they are finished. There will be lots of Security Staff to direct your Scouts to Registration. If you absolutely need to come in, do your best to find a parking spot and make your way to Registration. Find the line with your last name initial and check in. Registration begins at 7:30am. You'll get an updated Merit Badge assignment sheet and a wristband indicating your lunch period. As a reminder, Parents may not accompany Scouts to class. Parents may not stay at York High School or Camp Big Timber – you must depart after you register your Scout – we just don't have the room for everyone to stay.

BRING a COPY of your Scouting America Health Forms parts A&B.

(See registration sidebar if you need a blank form.) These will be shredded after MBU. This is a Scouting America requirement. These are to be handed in before check-in.

SCOUTING For FOOD at MBU

Last year we collected over 35,000 items for local food pantries. This year we are again asking for non-perishable food items for donation to the local food bank to give back to the community. Drop off your items at the entry to MBU. For each food item donated your Scout will receive a ticket for a drawing at lunchtime to win a PlayStation 5. (Must be present to win.)

May I wait for my Scouts while they attend classes?

No. Due to limited parking, and the lack of space – every inch of space is being used for our classes – we ask that Parents/Leaders drop their Scouts off in the circle in front and return and pick them up at the end of the day. If you are coming from a distance and want something to do, please register as a Staff or Volunteer for the day – we always need help – and you may stay at MBU. We need adults to assist with registration, serving lunch, security and parking and hallway assistance. Please go to www.tfcmeritbadgeuniversity.org to pre-register as a volunteer. Volunteers also get a free hot lunch.

Does my Scout need to wear a uniform?

MBU is a uniformed event. All Scouts must wear their uniform for the entire day. We represent Scouting and can expect local Press and dignitaries throughout the day. Same, if you are an adult volunteer/committee member/volunteer parent. If you are a non-uniformed volunteer participating as Staff, you don't need to wear a uniform. Just dress in Scout appropriate attire.

How many merit badges are offered at MBU?

We teach over 90 individual merit badges. If you add in the number class periods – that's over 300 classes taught throughout our MBU sessions!

How many merit badges can my Scout earn in a single day?

There are 4 periods throughout the day. Most Eagle badges take 2 periods. Scouts can earn 2-4 badges in a day – provided they complete the pre-requisites ahead of time and participate in class. Most Scouts DO NOT earn their merit badges in a single day unless they complete the pre-reqs and bring them to class to get signed off by the Merit Badge Counselor. If your Scout earns a partial badge, they have the option of finishing remotely with their MBU Merit Badge Counselor or finding a local counselor to sign off the completion. They have until their 18th birthday to complete the badge.

Why do you put rank restrictions on MBU Eagle badges?

We have a limited number of Eagle badge classes, and we want our older Scouts (1st Class and above) to have the opportunity to choose from these badges – as they typically need them to advance to Eagle in the short term. Our younger Scouts have plenty of time to earn these badges – plus, the content of the badges may be slightly advanced for our younger Scouts in some cases.

Do you need Merit Badge Instructors or Staff?

Absolutely. We're always looking for qualified Instructors! We need primary MB Counselors and assistants – running over 1,500 Scouts through in a single day takes a ton of effort to teach and check off on requirements. Email Julie Black at jablk6@netscape.org and join the team! You may also visit www.tfcmeritbadgeuniversity.org and apply to join our team.

My Scout needs <insert merit badge here> and the class is closed. Is there a waitlist?

Can't you fit just one more Scout into the class? Registration is on a first-come first-served basis. Many classes fill quickly, but we offer multiple classes throughout the day where possible. If ALL the sessions are full, you may sign up on the waitlist, and we will notify you if a slot opens. We cannot slide in extra Scouts because it becomes more than a MB Counselor can handle and still cover the material effectively. Please check out the CLASS ATTENDEE COUNTS located on the right-hand side of the registration page for class availability and openings before registering for MBU. Plan your selections! The Class Attendee Counts document updates in real time, so it is up to the minute in accuracy.

Do I have to have the Merit Badge book or the Worksheet for my merit badge?

At MBU we use the most current version of each Merit Badge that we offer. Please remember that the latest Merit Badge Pamphlet & the requirements for each merit badge are located at www.Scouting.org . These can be downloaded for your use. Worksheets downloaded from various sources for organizing and presenting your work, MAY NOT BE THE LATEST version. The official Scouting America pamphlet will take precedent over worksheets when it comes to requirements. If you're tracking your work in the official MB Pamphlet, you may bring it with you to class. MBU Instructors do NOT modify Scouting America requirements.

Will you be adding additional classes before registration closes?

We often add additional classes after registration opens based on popularity and MB Counselor availability or when an additional classroom becomes available. It is often advertised on our Facebook page or on the website.

Do you have a website?

- Like Us on Facebook for all the very latest info and updates (www.facebook.com/meritbadgeuniversity)
- The Home page URL is www.tfcmeritbadgeuniversity.org .
- www.ThreeFiresCouncil.org (see the calendar entry or the MBU tile on the front page of the site).

Do you accept Walk-Ins?

Walk-Ins are welcome, but Badges are limited to the ones that have space available. No exceptions. It is BEST to pre-register so you have the badges you want reserved, and a printed schedule awaiting when you arrive. Cost is \$60 for walk-Ins, and you may pay by cash, check or Credit card on site. If you DO decide you want to attend on the day of MBU, please plan your badges based on what is available from the Class Attendee Counts Document on the registration landing page.

How does my Scout prepare for their badges at MBU?

Start with the MBU Class Catalog on the registration page right sidebar. This Catalog provides a description of the merit badges being taught, any prerequisites required by the instructor and any class notes. Over the years, our instructors have developed ways to efficiently teach the classes in our 90-minute format. Please remember ALL classes have prerequisites and that most Scouts will not earn the merit badge in a single day unless those prerequisites have been completed in advance. If A Scout cannot complete the pre-reqs. ahead of time, they may do them after MBU and connect with a Merit Badge Counselor to complete the badge.

I need to make a change to my Scout's classes/Schedule. I need printout of the Schedule. How do I do that?

When you registered, you should have received an email with a registration number and a link back to your Scout's registration. Simply click on the link in the email using that number and make the desired schedule/class changes right up to our cut off a few days before the event. You may also print a copy of your Scout's schedule or correct any typos you may have made in registering. (EX: incorrect troop #, mis-spelled name, etc.)

I'm having trouble registering through your system. HELP!

Don't worry, we can assist. Send an email/call to Deb Brown djrgb@comcast.net or one of the other contacts on the MBU Registration Contacts.

The cost includes a Lunch. What's for lunch?

We provide a quality lunch through a local Caterer. It will include a salad or veggies, bread, pasta and a protein (usually chicken) along with a drink.

Can you accommodate my special dietary needs?

My Scout has allergies to xxx ingredient. Unfortunately, we can't possibly anticipate every allergen, cultural, religious, or personal preference. We don't serve peanut products at lunchtime. If your Scout has very specific dietary needs, **they may bring their own sack lunch**. They are also welcome to eat any of the food items in the hot lunch we provide as well. Please don't pack peanut or peanut butter-based products as a courtesy to others.

Please be aware that we do have a snack shack in the commons area with drinks, candy, chips and other products for sale. These products may contain allergens. Please ensure that your Scout is properly prepared for their particular allergies.

Why do I have to choose a Lunch Period?

Crowd control. We need to move nearly 2,000 people through three (3), 20-min lunch periods as efficiently as possible. Can my Scout sit with their buddies? You can coordinate lunch period choices and have everyone pick the same period. Because schedules vary – we can't make group 'reservations' for lunch, but Scouts may swap their lunch periods to coordinate eating together. ALL 3 lunch periods are the same. We rotate Scouts through the Lunchroom, Midway and Auditorium.

I'm an adult volunteer, staff, or MB Counselor at MBU. Do I get lunch?

YES! You get the hot lunch too and you may eat at any time your MBU job allows you to take your break! (11:30am-1:30pm)

AFTER MBU: WHEN will my Blue Cards be ready to access? We use electronic 'Blue Cards' which are electronically available after each session of MBU. You can access them and download them using your email registration link confirmation # and the email address you used when you signed up. Allow Badges and partials earned at MBU **TWO weeks** to be entered into the system. **The person who registered your Scouts will receive an email notification when they are ready.**

Once ALL of the MBU badge requirements have been entered into the system, we will automatically download all complete and partial Merit Badges into your unit's Scout book account, for those of you that use Scout book. (Approx. 2 weeks after the event.)

If you do not use Scout book, you will need to go into the Scout's registration and download their blue cards. Data is entered and available in real time as it is entered. You can go in your registration and check for your blue card progress and download them as they appear. Be patient, as we typically generate over 5000 badges with separate requirements ranging from 4 to 50+ per badge so the data entry is extensive.