

Thank you for your interest in Signs, Signals, and Codes Merit Badge. This Merit Badge was added to scouting about 10 years ago and it is a fun introductory look at several different communication methods.

As a pre-requisite, scouts must utilize the Signs, Signals, and Codes Merit Badge pamphlet and other sources to compile an understanding and response for sharing during the class. It is critical to the class participation to have read the Merit Badge Pamphlet in advance. Scouts that are “Not Prepared” will be asked to leave the class in fairness to the others that have prepared. Scouts that are not aware of the pre-reqs will be asked to leave the class.

The Online Pamphlet can be found at the following link [Signs Signals Codes.pdf](#) and is also available by emailing me at brose@kcc.com. It would be beneficial to bring a copy of this pamphlet to class with or have access by phone, tablet, or laptop.

REQUIRMENTS

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.

PRE-REQ - Scouts must complete the requirement in writing discussing the history of signs, signals, and codes. Only Scouts having prepared for this requirement will have an opportunity to be signed off on this requirement. While Scouts may learn in the class, they must bring some knowledge in written proof for this requirement and actively participate in the class discussion in order to be considered for sign off.

2. Explain the importance of signaling in emergency communications. Discuss with your counselor the types of emergency or distress signals one might use to attract airborne search-and-rescue personnel if lost in the outdoors or trying to summon assistance during a disaster. Illustrate these signaling examples by the use of photos or drawings.

PRE-REQ - Scouts will find it beneficial to have their drawings or photos ready prior to the class. There will be time allotted at the end of class to review any drawings or photos Scouts bring for this requirement, however it cannot be guaranteed that the class will have enough time to complete the drawings during the class time allotted. Scouts should consider this potential and decide how they want to approach potential completion of this requirement. It is strongly recommended to consider doing this ahead of the class.

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.

Scouts will want to review the Signs, Signals, and Codes Merit Badge pamphlet prior to the class and make sure they have a basic understanding of Morse Code and American Sign Language. The class will allot time for each Scout to demonstrate their knowledge and complete the rest of each of these

components for requirement 3. Scouts MUST be familiar with both Morse code and ASL as we will utilize in class to communicate a message.

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. Then do the following:

a. Spell your first name using semaphore. Send or receive a message of six to 10 words using semaphore.

Scouts should review the Signs, Signals, and Codes Merit Badge pamphlet and have a solid understanding of semaphore and nautical flags, their differences, and the basics for using them. Scouts will be given the opportunity to complete this requirement component during the class. Practice spelling your first name in class.

b. Using illustrations or photographs, identify 10 examples of nautical flags and discuss their importance.

PRE -REQ - Scouts should prepare for the class by putting together the 10 examples asked for in this requirement component ahead of time. The counselor will allow all Scouts to share their work during the class for consideration and sign off. Only Scouts coming to the class with this requirement component ready will have the opportunity to get signed off.

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.

Scouts MUST utilize the Braille supplement in the Signs, Signals, and Codes Merit Badge pamphlet to familiarize themselves with Braille prior to the class. Scouts will have time during the class to complete these two components of the class, providing they can satisfactorily show that they have done preparation work prior to class in familiarizing themselves with the Braille system.

NOTE: To satisfy the braille writing requirement 5b for this merit badge, 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. **You can do this in advance as well to give you more time in the class.**

6. Do the following:

a. Describe to your counselor six sound-only signals that are in use today. Discuss the pros and cons of using sound signals versus other types of signals.

PRE-REQ - Scouts should make notes prior to the class to utilize during the discussion in the class to help fulfill and completed this component of the requirement.

b. Demonstrate to your counselor six different silent Scout signals. Use these Scout signals to direct the movements and actions of your patrol or troop.

Scouts should review the respective section in the Signs, Signals, and Codes Merit Badge pamphlet on Scout and Silent Signals. Scouts will be placed into small groups or patrols to demonstrate their understanding of these signals. Only Scouts showing proficiency in giving and receiving these signals, and properly executing them, will be considered for sign off on this requirement component.

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

This requirement will take place outdoors and likely will take a significant portion of the class. Scouts will lay a course and follow one of the other groups' courses to complete this requirement. It is strongly recommended that Scouts familiarize themselves with the different types of trail markings and methods in order to successfully complete this requirement.

8. For THREE of the following activities, demonstrate five signals each. Tell what the signals mean and why they are used:

- a. Sports officials hand signs/signals
- b. Heavy-equipment operators hand signals
- c. Aircraft carrier catapult crew signals
- d. Cyclists hand signals
- e. An activity selected by you and your counselor

This requirement will be completed during the class. Scouts should be familiar with the hand signals for components A thru D to ensure successful completion of this requirement during the class. This familiarization can easily be accomplished by reviewing the Signs, Signals, and Codes Merit Badge pamphlet. For those not coming with a Signs, Signals, and Codes Merit Badge pamphlet and/or not reviewing this requirement prior to the class, will find it extremely difficult to complete this requirement during the class.

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

PRE-REQ - Scouts must do this requirement prior to the class and bring their work and resources with to share in the class. Have fun with this.....There are some really fun signs out there.

- 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.

We will do this in class.

- c. Discuss text-message symbols and why they are commonly used. Give examples of your favorite 10 text symbols or emoticons. Then see if your counselor can identify the meaning or usage of each symbol.

PRE-REQ - Scouts must do this requirement prior to the class and Be creative – I don't know Emojis, so teach me.

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.

PRE-REQ - Scout must develop their own secret code prior to the class. While time will be allotted for sharing this activity, it will not be enough time for those who have not started this requirement ahead of time.

Counselor – Brian Rose, brose@kcc.com, 920-636-3998