



American Heritage

Scouts BSA · Citizenship

Name

Started

Completed

American Heritage is about the people, ideas, and places that made the country what it is, including your own family's story. You'll read founding documents, explore local history, and talk with people who lived history. It helps you see how the past still shapes your life today.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/american-heritage/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

- ☐ **1** Read the Declaration of Independence; rewrite the "self-evident truths" passage (through "new Guards for their future security") in simple words of your own, share it with your counselor, and discuss why the Declaration matters to all Americans

Tip: Read the Declaration a section at a time with a parent. Talk about which ideas still matter today and where you see them in the news.

Example: Pick the phrase "all men are created equal" and talk about how its meaning has grown since 1776, through changes like the end of slavery and women's right to vote, and where people still debate it today.

2 People and groups who shaped America: Choose 2 of 4

Tips for this section: If you choose a veteran interview, ask a relative or a local veterans group. Write your questions ahead of time and thank them afterward.

Example for this section: If you choose a veteran interview, sit down with a parent present and ask where they served, what a normal day was like, and what they want young people to know. Record it only with their permission and share a summary with your counselor.

- ☐ **2a** Pick a political leader (such as a president or senator) and a private citizen (such as a writer or religious leader) from U.S. history; learn what each achieved and compare their contributions

- ☐ **2b** With counselor approval, pick an organization that brought positive change to American society; learn why it pushed for the change and how it helped, and discuss its links to America's past

- ☐ **2c** With counselor approval, interview two U.S. military veterans about their experiences and what they feel they accomplished

- ☐ **2d** With counselor approval, interview three local people of different ages and jobs about what America means to them, what makes it special, and which traditions should be kept

3 Current events, symbols, and family history

Tips for this section: Ask grandparents or older relatives about where your family came from. A simple family tree on poster board is a fun way to share it.

Example for this section: Your family history could be a simple three-generation tree with a short note on each person: where they were born, what work they did, and one story about them. Mark spots where you don't know yet and keep asking.

- ☐ **3a** Pick a U.S. topic in the news now, describe it to your counselor, and explain how America's past events and values connect to or shape it

- ☐ **3b** For the flag, Pledge of Allegiance, Great Seal, national motto, and national anthem: describe how each was adopted, any changes since, and how it still influences Americans

- ☐ **3c** Research your family history and how events in American history affected your family (including why they immigrated, if they did); share it with your counselor

4 Local history: Choose 2 of 5

Tips for this section: Check your town's historical society, old cemeteries, or historic markers. Take photos and notes about what happened there.

Example for this section: Visit a historic house, courthouse, or battlefield with your family. Take notes on who lived or worked there, what happened, and why it was saved. Then compare it with what the marker or sign says.

- ☐ **4a** Explain what the National Register of Historic Places is and how a property qualifies; map local points of historic interest, note any Register properties, and walk your counselor through the map

- ☐ **4b** Research a historically important event in or near your area and visit the site if you can; tell your counselor about it, its local impact, and how the place looked then compared with now

- ☐ **4c** Learn how, when, and why your town or neighborhood began and which ethnic, national, or racial groups took part; find out how it has changed in the last 50 years and try to explain why

- ☐ **4d** Take an active role in a program about a person or event in American history, then report to your counselor on the program, your part, and the subject

- ☐ **4e** Visit a local historic trail or walk; share what you learned with your counselor, discuss why the place matters, and explain why it might qualify for the National Register

5 History through film, books, or music: Choose 1 of 3

Tips for this section: Pick a film, biography, or set of songs about a time period you find interesting. Jot down what surprised you.

Example for this section: Read a biography of someone like Harriet Tubman, Benjamin Franklin, or Sacagawea, then write down three choices they made that changed their lives and one question you'd ask them if you could.

- ☐ **5a** With approval from your counselor and a parent or guardian, watch two movies set in a period of U.S. history; tell your counselor how accurately each shows the events and the people

- ☐ **5b** With counselor approval, read a biography of someone who contributed to America's heritage; share what you admire and don't admire about them and whether their contribution was positive or negative

- ☐ **5c** Listen to popular songs from different periods of U.S. history; share five with your counselor (lyrics are fine if no recording) and describe how each reflects how people felt at the time

- ☐ **6** Discuss American heritage careers with your counselor; choose one you find interesting and explain how you would prepare for it, including the education and training it requires

Tip: Think about jobs like museum curator, park ranger, historian, or archivist. Ask someone in one of those jobs how they got started.