



Exploration

Scouts BSA · Outdoors

Name

Started

Completed

Exploration is about curiosity, careful planning, and discovering something new. You'll learn from real explorers, try fieldwork, and then plan and carry out an expedition of your own. It's adventure with a purpose.

Requirements

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

1 General knowledge

Tips for this section: Think about how exploring outer space, the deep ocean, a jungle, or a research lab would be different. What would you need for each?

Example for this section: Compare environments: in space you need life support and years of planning; under the ocean, pressure-proof subs or robots; in a jungle, ways to handle heat, insects, and thick cover; in a city research lab, careful experiments instead of travel. Then explain what they have in common.

- ☐ **1a** Define exploration and explain how it's different from adventure travel, trekking or hiking, tour groups, or recreational outdoor trips

- ☐ **1b** Explain how exploring might be approached differently in space, under the ocean, in a jungle, or in a city research lab

- ☐ **2** Discuss the history of exploration with your counselor, and pick a field of study (such as aerospace, oil, paleontology, or oceanography) to show how exploration helped that field develop

Tip: Choose an explorer or era you find exciting and connect it to a field like geology, biology, or astronomy.

- ☐ **3** Explain to your counselor why exploring matters, and discuss the following

Tip: Find an example of an expedition that led to a new discovery, and explain why it mattered.

- ☐ **3a** Why exploration should rest on science

- ☐ **3b** How explorers have helped us understand the world

- ☐ **3c** What qualities and skills you believe an explorer needs

4 Real-life exploration: Choose 1 of 3

Tips for this section: Look up a modern explorer or a recent expedition online or at the library. See if you can watch a talk they've given.

Example for this section: Learn about an ocean exploration mission that maps the seafloor with remotely operated vehicles. Note the team's question, the tools they used, a surprise they found, and how they shared it with the public.

- ☐ **4a** Learn about a living explorer and make a short report or presentation (spoken, written, or slides) on their goals and what one of their expeditions achieved; share it with your counselor and unit

- ☐ **4b** Learn about a real scientific expedition: its mission objectives, its most interesting or important discoveries, and how its findings helped scientists answer key questions; share what you learned with your counselor and unit

- ☐ **4c** Learn about kinds of exploration done in labs or research facilities (such as medicine, biology, chemistry, physics, or astronomy), and explain to your counselor how lab research and exploration resemble field research and exploration

5 Exploration in the lab and field: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Pick a visit that matches your interests, like an observatory, a university lab, or a group that sponsors expeditions, in person or online, and take careful notes on what they're exploring.

Example for this section: Visit an observatory on a public night, or tour a group like the National Geographic Society online. Find out what questions they're trying to answer and what tools they use, and write it down to share with your counselor.

- ☐ **5a** With a parent or guardian's permission and counselor approval, visit in person or online a group that sponsors exploration (like the National Geographic Society, The Explorers Club, Smithsonian Institution, American Alpine Club, or World Wildlife Fund), learn what exploration it supports, and tell your counselor

- ☐ **5b** With permission and approval, visit in person or online a science lab, observatory, medical research center, or similar facility and learn what exploration happens there; share what you learned with your counselor

6 Expedition planning steps

Tips for this section: Make a checklist for your expedition covering the goal, the team, gear, safety, and how you'll share what you find.

Example for this section: Walk through planning steps for a real trip: set a goal, choose the team and roles, research the area, plan the route and gear, write a risk and emergency plan, get permits and approvals, then decide how you'll share results.

- ☐ **6a** Discuss with your counselor setting objectives (goals) for an expedition, and why this step is needed

- ☐ **6b** Discuss with your counselor planning the mission, including an agenda or schedule and a list of documents or permits that may be needed, and why this step is needed

- ☐ **6c** Discuss with your counselor budgeting enough money, with estimated costs for travel, gear, lodging, meals, permits or licenses, and other expenses, and why this step is needed

- ☐ **6d** Discuss with your counselor working out the gear and supplies needed for personal and mission needs for the whole expedition, and why this step is needed

- ☐ **6e** Discuss with your counselor communication and transportation needs, including how you'll stay in touch with your base and the outside world and with each other on-site, and why this step is needed

- ☐ **6f** Discuss with your counselor setting safety and first-aid procedures (including medical evacuation), identifying hazards explorers might face and ways to prevent or avoid them, and why this step is needed

- ☐ **6g** Discuss with your counselor choosing the team, including who is essential to success and what skills the leader needs, and why this step is needed

- ☐ **6h** Discuss with your counselor setting up detailed recordkeeping and planning how to interpret and share findings after the expedition, and why this step is needed

- ☐ **7** With a parent or guardian's permission and your counselor's approval, get ready for a real expedition to a place, near or far, that you haven't explored before, doing the following

Tip: Plan with your counselor and a supervising adult, and make sure your route and safety plan are approved before you go.

- ☐ **7a** Prepare while supervised by a trained expedition leader or planner, or another qualified adult with exploration experience (such as a science teacher, museum staff member, or qualified instructor)

- ☐ **7b** Let the steps from requirement 6 guide your preparations; list the gear and supplies you'll need and explain to your counselor the reason for each item and how it will help; decide who should go

- ☐ **7c** Before you leave, check your preparations against each step from requirement 6 and tell your counselor how it went; go through the Scouting America SAFE Checklist with your counselor and make sure every foreseeable hazard is addressed

8 Going on an expedition

Tips for this section: Keep a field journal during your expedition, then share your results with photos, a map, or a short presentation.

Example for this section: Your expedition might be a weekend studying birds at a wetland you've never visited, with a qualified adult your counselor approves. Write a short report with your objectives, a map, your species list, photos of the place (not of other Scouts), and whether you reached your goal.

- ☐ **8a** With a parent or guardian's permission and supervised by your counselor or a qualified person your counselor approves, go on a real expedition to a place you haven't explored before, using your planning from requirement 6 and preparations from requirement 7

- ☐ **8b** Discuss with your counselor why outdoor ethics matter so much in exploration and how they encourage responsible adventuring, and explain how you followed Leave No Trace, Tread Lightly!, and the Outdoor Code on your expedition

- ☐ **8c** After returning, write a 1-3 page report on your expedition's results and how you met your objectives: state the objectives, findings and observations, photos, any discoveries, problems or adverse events, and a conclusion on whether you reached your goal (one page may be photos, graphs, or figures)

9 Careers and hobbies: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Talk with a scientist, park ranger, or explorer, or try a hobby like caving or astronomy with a club.

- ☐ **9a** Research an exploration-related career: education and training, costs, job outlook, pay, duties, and advancement (by searching, interviewing a professional, or visiting a workplace, with a parent or guardian's permission); discuss your findings with your counselor and what makes the career appealing

- ☐ **9b** Explore how skills from this badge could support a hobby: research training, costs, and groups that support it, then discuss possible short- and long-term goals with your counselor