



Genealogy

Scouts BSA · Hobbies

Name

Started

Completed

Genealogy is about discovering where you come from and the stories of the people in your family. You'll interview relatives, search records, and build a family tree. Many Scouts find surprises and feel more connected to their families.

Requirements

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

1 Genealogy basics

Tips for this section: Look at a sample family tree and family group record to see how they work before you start filling in your own.

- ☐ **1a** Explain to your counselor what genealogy, ancestor, and descendant mean

- ☐ **1b** Explain what a family tree is and what details you'd record on one

- ☐ **1c** Describe a family group record and the details you'd record on one

2 Timeline or journal: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Pick a timeline of your own life or a family member's, or keep a journal for six weeks. Add dates and photos.

Example for this section: A family timeline could start with a grandparent's birth year and add big moments: moving to a new city, starting a job, the year each child was born, alongside world events like a war or the first Moon landing.

- ☐ **2a** Make a timeline of your life or a relative's, then write a short biography from it

- ☐ **2b** Keep a journal for six weeks, writing in it at least once each week

- ☐ **3** With your parent or guardian's help, pick a relative or family friend to interview in person, by phone, or by email or letter. Write down what you learn so you won't forget it

Tip: Prepare questions ahead of time and ask permission to take notes or record. Grandparents often love sharing stories.

Example: Bring 8 to 10 questions to your interview, like "What was your house like when you were my age?" and "Who was the oldest relative you remember?" Ask permission to record, and follow up on anything that surprises you.

4 Genealogy resources and records

Tips for this section: Look for birth certificates, old photos, letters, and family Bibles at home, and search records online with a parent.

Example for this section: Make a list with two columns. Physical: a birth certificate, a photo with names written on the back, an obituary clipping. Digital: a census record, a ship's passenger list, a military draft card you found with a parent's help.

- ☐ **4a** Name three kinds of physical genealogy resources, where to find them, and how they help you chart your family tree

- ☐ **4b** Name three kinds of digital genealogy resources, where to find them, and how they help you chart your family tree

- ☐ **4c** Get at least one genealogy document that supports an event you have recorded, or could record, on your family group record or pedigree chart

- ☐ **4d** Tell how you found the 4c document and how you'd judge how reliable its information is

- ☐ **4e** Tell where you'd likely find a birth record, a marriage record, a census record, and burial information

- ☐ **5** Contact ONE of the people or places below. Ask what genealogy services, records, or activities they offer, and report back: (choose 1 of 5 below)

Tip: Contact a local genealogical society, or a library or courthouse with family records, and ask how they can help.

Example: Have a parent help you email a county genealogical society: "I'm a Scout working on Genealogy. My great-grandparents lived in your county in the 1920s. What records do you have, and how could I search them?"

- ☐ **5a** A genealogical or lineage society

- ☐ **5b** A professional genealogist (someone paid to do genealogy research)

- ☐ **5c** A surname organization, such as one for your family name

- ☐ **5d** A school or institution that teaches genealogy

- ☐ **5e** Any kind of genealogy record repository, such as a courthouse, genealogy library, state library, or state or national archive

- ☐ **6** Start your family tree with yourself and at least two more generations, using the chart in the Genealogy pamphlet or any genealogy software you like

Tip: Start with yourself, then add parents and grandparents. Fill in names, dates, and places as you find them.

Example: Draw it in pencil: you at the bottom, your parents above, and your grandparents above them. Fill in names, dates, and places you know for sure, and mark guesses with a question mark until you find a record.

- ☐ **7** Fill out a family group record listing you and your siblings as the children, and a second one listing your parent or guardian and their siblings as the children. You may use the chart provided or any genealogy software

Tip: Use the forms to organize what you learn about each family unit. Write in pencil so you can update it.

8 How technology changed genealogy

Tips for this section: Notice how online databases make old records searchable. Ask about the volunteers who help index records.

Example for this section: Explain indexing: a volunteer reads a handwritten census page and types the names into a database. Now anyone can search for a name in seconds instead of scrolling through thousands of pages, but typos in the index can hide people.

- ☐ **8a** Explain how computers and the internet are changing genealogy

- ☐ **8b** Explain how photography, including microfilm, has shaped genealogy

- ☐ **8c** Explain how indexing records works and how it has shaped genealogy

- ☐ **9** Talk about what your genealogy research taught you about your family and its members

Tip: Share your favorite discovery with your counselor and family, and talk about how it changed how you see them.