



Search and Rescue

Scouts BSA · Health & Safety

Name

Started

Completed

Search and Rescue teaches you how teams find people who are lost or hurt. You will learn how to plan trips so you don't get lost, how search teams organize, and how to use maps and GPS to search an area. These skills help you and others stay safe outdoors.

Requirements

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

1 Hazards and first aid

Tips for this section: List hazards searchers face, like weather and rough ground, and the gear that keeps them safe.

- ☐ **1a** Show or explain how to prevent and give first aid for each of these problems that searchers or lost people might face during a search

- ☐ **1a1** Dehydration

- ☐ **1a2** Heatstroke

- ☐ **1a3** Hypothermia

☐ **1a4** Shock

☐ **1a5** Blisters

☐ **1a6** Eye injuries

☐ **1a7** Sprained ankles and knees

☐ **1a8** Insect bites from chiggers, ticks, mosquitoes, and biting gnats

☐ **1a9** Bee stings

☐ **1a10** Spider bites

- ☐ **1a11** Scorpion stings

- ☐ **1a12** Bites from wild mammals

- ☐ **1a13** Venomous snakebites

- ☐ **1b** Explain how the Scout Basic Essentials protect you from outdoor hazards and keep a lost Scout safe until help arrives

- ☐ **1c** Discuss how the safety gear in a SAR team member's field pack deals with the hazards of search work

2 Staying found and getting found

Tips for this section: Write a trip plan before your next outing and leave it with a parent. Practice signaling with a whistle.

Example for this section: Say you're separated from your group on a hike. Talk through what staying found looks like: stop, stay put, stay warm, and signal. Show how you'd use a whistle, a bright bandanna, or a mirror to help searchers spot you.

- ☐ **2a** Explain how using the buddy system and leaving a trip plan help keep Scouts from getting lost, and help searchers find them if they do

- ☐ **2b** Explain how weather changes over the seasons and through the day affect trip plans

- ☐ **2c** Explain and show signals a lost Scout could use to let a ground, air, or water search team know where they are

- ☐ **2d** Demonstrate signaling with a signal mirror

- ☐ **2e** Explain how a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) sends a distress signal and what the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC) does with it

3 Map, compass, and counselor-approved GPS

Tips for this section: Practice with a map and compass on a troop hike, then try the same route with a GPS.

Example for this section: On a map of a local park, draw a search area and divide it into smaller segments. Take compass bearings along one segment's boundary, then walk it with a GPS to compare your track with the map.

- ☐ **3a** On the map, point out and explain its 5 D's: Date, Description, Details, Distance, and Direction or Declination

- ☐ **3b** Pick a spot on the map and record its latitude, longitude, altitude, and US National Grid coordinates, then explain how those systems differ

- ☐ **3c** Orient the map, then take a bearing from one spot to a second spot on it. Estimate how far apart they are and describe the ground in between

- ☐ **3d** Mark a pretend place last seen, then show an area on the map that natural or human-made boundaries could help contain

4 Incident Command System

Tips for this section: Ask a local sheriff's office or SAR team which agencies help in your area and how they work together.

Example for this section: Draw a simple chart of how a search might be organized under the Incident Command System: an incident commander at the top, then operations, planning, logistics, and finance. Add which local agencies might fill each role.

- ☐ **4a** Explain the setup of a local Incident Command System (ICS) and how it is like or unlike the patrol method in Scouting

- ☐ **4b** Explain how agencies in your community train for and run search and rescue operations

5 Search and rescue teams

Tips for this section: Talk with a SAR volunteer about the different team roles, like ground teams or dog teams.

- ☐ **5a** Explain what a search and rescue team is officially responsible for

- ☐ **5b** Explain how wilderness, urban, and water search and rescue differ

- ☐ **5c** Name four kinds of SAR teams and describe when each would be called in

6 How searches work

Tips for this section: Learn how searchers think about where lost people tend to go, and use that to plan a search.

Example for this section: Pick a type of lost person, like a young child or a hiker, and explain where searchers would look first and why. For example, young children often hide or stay close, so searchers check small spaces and call their name.

- ☐ **6a** Explain how a search is different from a rescue

- ☐ **6b** Explain how PLS (place last seen) differs from LKP (last known point)

- ☐ **6c** Explain why good communication is so important during search and rescue

- ☐ **6d** Explain how predicted lost person behavior shapes the search plan for a young child, for a teenager, and for an adult

- ☐ **6e** Explain what each of these search terms means

- ☐ **6e1** Evaluating search urgency

- ☐ **6e2** Establishing confinement

- ☐ **6e3** Scent item

- ☐ **6e4** Area air scent dog

- ☐ **6e5** Briefing and debriefing

- ☐ **6e6** Clue awareness

- ☐ **6e7** Evidence preservation

- ☐ **6e8** Tracking a subject

- ☐ **6e9** Locating a subject using attraction

- ☐ **6e10** Hasty search

- ☐ **6e11** Trail sweep search

- ☐ **6e12** Grid search

7 Plan and run a practice search with a team

Tips for this section: Plan the practice search with your counselor and patrol, using a safe area and a buddy system.

Example for this section: With your patrol or family as the team, pick a scenario, like a hiker overdue in a park, and write a hasty-search plan. Lead a PAUSE briefing on hazards and the gear everyone carries, run the search while an adult places clue objects along the trails, then debrief on what worked and what you'd change.

- ☐ **7a** Form a practice search team of Scouts, family, or friends. Choose a pretend SAR scenario from the pamphlet or one your counselor approves

- ☐ **7b** Using the scenario details, draft a hasty-search Incident Action Plan (IAP)

- ☐ **7c** Before searching, lead a PAUSE briefing to go over hazards, safety issues, the Scout Basic Essentials each person and the team carry, and other gear

- ☐ **7d** Carry out the practice search with your team

- ☐ **7e** Afterward, debrief with your team about how the search went, any problems, which tactics worked or didn't, and ideas to do better

8 Careers: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Ask a SAR volunteer or ranger how they got involved and what training they needed.

- ☐ **8a** Explore careers in search and rescue or emergency management. Research one for its education and training, costs, job outlook, pay, duties, and advancement (with a parent's or guardian's OK, by searching, interviewing a pro, or visiting a workplace). Discuss your findings and its appeal with your counselor

- ☐ **8b** Explore how this badge's skills could help you volunteer with a ski patrol, wilderness rescue team, or disaster relief team. Research training, expenses, and supporting groups, and discuss short- and long-term goals with your counselor