



Camp John J. Barnhardt

44184 Cannon Rd.

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www.centralncscouting.org



Advice for Selecting Badges/Activities at Camp John J. Barnhardt:

The process of selecting badges can be challenging as Scouts, parents, and leaders all have opinions on which activities are best. **Ideally, badge selection is scout-led with input from both parents and leaders.**

We recommend units provide scouts the list of available activities in advance of a troop meeting. This can be as simple as referring them to the website that lists the options for each timeslot or emailing them the file. Alternatively, you could print copies for each Scout. Encourage scouts to make selections with parental oversight. Some troops have the scouts bring a written list of their selections to a troop meeting and the leader registers them later. Other leaders bring a laptop to a troop/patrol meeting and register the scouts one-by-one while other activities are going on. The latter method is more efficient as the leader can show scouts what options are still available in the event that one of their primary choices is full.

In terms of guidance on the activities to select:

- Our first-year camper program (NightHawks) is one of the best in the region. We staff it heavily (generally a 1 to 6 ratio) to provide hands-on, active, and team-based learning. It isn't intended as a mechanism to rush scouts through the first four ranks, but rather a strong introduction to scouting for those that have been with a troop for less than four to six months. That being said, Scouts that complete NightHawks do pass off a large number of requirements for each of those ranks. It does take several activity blocks, but swimming instruction is incorporated into the program during summer camp. We caution against skipping this and placing Scouts directly into merit badge activities. They'd miss out on so much fun and detailed scouting training! We do offer some of the less intense merit badges in the evenings so that NightHawks can also come home with a couple of completed merit badges.
- We suggest that you not stress earning as many badges as possible. Our schedule allows scouts to earn 7-8 badges if they want during the summer, but few should go that route. After all, with badges offered at troop meetings, district events, summer camp, winter camp, and the Saturday events hosted by the Council's advancement committee, scouts have plenty of opportunities. Scouts will eventually earn enough badges for Eagle well before they even start to think about their projects.
 - Summer and winter camp offer opportunities that aren't available elsewhere. Yes, taking sailing merit badge means the scout would earn one less overall because that activity spans two time blocks; however, sailing isn't offered at many other events and it's an activity that scouts

will really enjoy! Let them take sailing if spots are available. The scouts that get to take those types of activities will be back year after year and eventually earn Eagle.

- The two block classes are often some of our best—start with them! Decide whether the scout wants to take climbing, ATV, COPE, sailing, swimming, rifle, lifesaving, and the like and then fill the schedule with single block activities.
- If a scout selects a schedule with three two-block classes, that's great. It's certainly not a problem. There's nothing wrong with spending your week earning climbing, lifesaving, and sailing. If you or they feel they need to earn more to make their summer camp an effective step towards Eagle, then they can attend the evening sessions for family life, landscape architecture, and/or mammal study (the latter two are generally completed at camp). That scout can earn three of the most exciting badges and still leave summer camp with five completed badges.
- We suggest placing minimal emphasis on whether merit badges are required unless a scout is already 14. Over time, we've seen too many scouts get frustrated by taking the less active badges earlier in their scouting career. The rush to "get them out of the way" so they can advance quickly often backfires and they lose interest in progressing to Eagle. The core badges are offered often enough that a scout will have numerous opportunities to take them over the time they are earning ranks and camping with their unit. Plus, a scout gets much more out of badges like citizenship and personal management once they are a little older. Trust us, if a youth becomes invested in scouting, merit badges won't be a problem in earning Eagle.
 - As such, we suggest postponing the citizenships and personal management until scouts are older unless they are really excited about those topics. At most, register them for only one of these unless they are at the Star rank already.
 - We do think it's a great idea to get your young scouts into swimming merit badge (assuming they can complete the swim check) and personal fitness. These required badges are very active and great for younger scouts; they also cover skills that young scouts can master. First aid is another solid option as that badge's material works particularly well for scouts that recently learned the first aid skills covered in the 2nd and 1st class ranks.
 - Please convey this message to the parents:
 - We believe scouts do best if they register for the badges they are most interested in. Pressuring them to take multiple Eagle merit badges can interfere with the things that drew them to Scouting (adventure, hanging out with friends, outdoor events, etc.). If we really want them to eventually earn Eagle, the best strategy is to let them choose their own adventure. Let them have fun. While having fun in Scouting, they'll attend events and earn numerous badges. Before they know it, they'll have 20 badges without feeling

pressured. Then they'll be motivated to hit the remaining ones needed for Eagle. Rushing might cause more harm than good.

- We do think it works for parents to be adamant that scouts take one specific activity (e.g., “you need to take canoeing because the troop is doing a canoe trip later” or “you need to take personal management so you can learn to keep track of your allowance better”). After that, we recommend giving them flexibility; Scouts enjoy the experience more if they feel like they had control to select what they wanted.
- We suggest you and your scouts think about which badges aren't often offered elsewhere. Swimming, lifesaving, sailing, skiing, climbing, COPE, cooking, and some others might not be offered outside of summer camp. In contrast, there are often frequent chances to earn badges like first aid or communications that don't require the warm weather and aquatic/tower facilities.
- We suggest you and your scouts consider the reputation of our camp's programs. For example, we have a very experienced waterfront team. All our boating programs are incredibly thorough compared to other scout camps—make sure to take these badges at Barnhardt. Similarly, our tower is the tallest scout tower in the state. There's no better place to earn climbing merit badge!
- Scouting does emphasize the buddy system—there is nothing wrong with friends picking similar activities. We encourage scouts to select what they are most interested in, but it's also valuable for them to pick at least one or two activities that overlap with their closest friends.
- We don't believe that much emphasis should be placed on only taking badges that can be completed at camp. You can see details about badges, such as which will have work to complete after camp on the same website as mentioned above. We help those scouts accomplish requirements as they are able, but some cannot be completed at camp. Scouts can't keep a budget for 90 days or complete a season on a sports team within one week at camp. When we choose to offer badges that can't be completed at camp, we do so knowing those can be accomplished within the family or unit. The requirements they have left will generally be those that do not require special facilities and the like. They are typically things like needing to visit a museum, hold a family meeting, or keep a fitness journal. You can think of these as prerequisites (and most camps label them this way), but we think it's often preferable for them to be completed after camp (they learn more from keeping their budget after taking the personal management merit badge session than they would trying to keep up with their spending before it).