



Gamehaven Council **ONLINE MERIT BADGE CLASS PARTICIPATION INFORMATION**

Dear Scout, Parent or Guardian,

The ***Gamehaven Scouting at Home*** is offering online merit badge opportunities. These offerings are being monitored closely by Gamehaven Council of the Boy Scouts of America and among other provision will adhere strictly to the rules found in the *Guide to Safe Scouting* and *Youth Protection* programs.

This is a new program for Gamehaven, and while we have put much thought and effort into the content, process, rules, and means in which these online offerings are made available, we will progress and change as we go live and learn what works and what doesn't. At the core, we are not changing anything about the merit badge, we are however delivering this opportunity in a pioneering yet familiar way to many of our youth; electronically. It must be noted that we have taken great efforts to ensure the highest of integrity in this program and, as such, Scouts will have strict rules to follow and expectations to adhere to in order to gain sign off on any single or multitude of requirements.

The Gamehaven Scouting at Home opportunities are not meant to make the earning of a merit badge any easier or more difficult, but rather offer a modern means for youth to have the opportunity to earn a merit badge. Utilizing today's technology we are bringing the Scouting program closer to home and a familiar level of technology many Scouts already are accustomed with and their future endeavors will most likely incur. Registration costs will cover materials, electronic media application subscription, and other costs incurred presenting these opportunities.

In addition to Gamehaven Scouting at Home, the staff will assist with the management of all classes. Participants will receive technical instructions shortly after registration via email.

General Rules and Expectations:

These are online classes, so Scouts need to have a high speed internet connection with internet access and a web browser. Use of a PC, MAC or laptop is the only means currently being supported (no mobile devices or tablets please) If using a laptop with a constant power source, please make sure that the batteries are fully charged prior to class.

Scouts will be required to verbally communicate via telephone (long distance phone number) or via VOIP (voice over internet protocol) thru the use of their PC/MAC/Laptop microphone and speakers. While participants may be muted to control feedback during the class, the Merit Badge Counselor will be monitoring active participation at all times.

Additionally participants must have a web cam and will be expected to be present on web cam during the duration of the class. Merit Badge Counselor will be monitoring all webcams throughout the class to insure compliance. Scouts will be instructed prior to the class by the Counselor, the means in which they will be able to ask questions and interact during the class. Often times this may be based on the manner in which the Counselor chooses to manage the class.

Online classes pose challenges and participants' communication skills will be tested. Utilizing many forms of communication, Scouts will need to "be prepared". Reading, writing (typing), and speaking will all be aspects utilized to complete these classes. It is highly recommended that Scouts utilize an electronic method to record their pre-requisites work so they can easily access their formulated answers for use during the class via any of these communication methods (writing/typing will be a lot more timely and easy with copy and paste command).

The Scout Oath and Scout Law is the expected behavior of all participants, adult leaders, staff and guests. However, some additional points of general etiquette rules will be kept in mind as well.

1. BE ON TIME

As long as there are meetings, there will be people joining them late. While it's possible to discreetly sneak into a live class a little tardy, there is no such chance in an online virtual classroom. When new members join the online class, the software announces their presence. This announcement can be an interruption to all, and considered rude. While tardiness will occasionally be unavoidable, be aware of this web meeting feature and try to make sure you are set up and logged in for your web conference on time.

2. "BE PREPARED"

Not only should you make sure you have reviewed the pre-requisites and prepared for the class, but you will also want to check your settings and equipment for the class. Each web conferencing application will be unique in what they expose to participants online, and it can be too easy to transmit information that you had no intention of sharing. Most people use their computer for personal use or even share use with other family members. Make sure that before you start a web conference that you've checked your settings and know what the program will be sharing. Nobody wants inappropriate or private information to be shared with others. Ideally, close out all applications that you will not need to be using during the duration of the class.

Remember to check your camera and microphone. The use of headphones can help minimize distractions. One disadvantage of holding meetings on the web is the potential for unwanted background noise and awkwardly framed video images. Test your camera's field of view and your microphone's output to make sure there are no audible or visual distractions that might interfere with your presentation before you begin. Most conferencing systems show you a small window that monitors what your camera sees. Check it regularly, and keep your head centered in the frame as much as possible.

Currently we will be using Zoom for all classes.

3. CHOOSE A PROPER LOCATION AND SETTING

Find a secluded area or room with a door preferably. Hang a “Do Not Disturb” sign on your door to let others know you are busy, so they do not barge in on you and your web class. You may want to let those you know and who will be around a head of time since this may raise more curiosity than its intended message.

Avoid distractions. Shut off your social media, video games, homework, hobbies and focus on the class. While you may think it is easy to multi task it will likely be evident to the counselor and others that you are not fully participating. Remember a Scout is trustworthy and if suspected of multi-tasking you may be asked to leave the online class.

If using a phone, utilize a land line if possible. Cell phones and cordless landline phones can often broadcast a lot of background noise. If you use a cell phone or cordless phone, utilize the mute feature (unless you are speaking) so others will not hear the additional noise. This is just good practice since some phones may have hold music or background noise that can distract the rest of the class. Use your mute button instead of hold when needed.

4. DRESS SCOUT FRIENDLY

Since you are at home it might seem all right to show up to the online class in your pajamas or sports clothes, but it’s not. Scouts are expected to be in their official Scout uniform (often referred to as the class A uniform). This is not optional and is viewed as a manner of respect to our Scouting program and will help create uniformity and a sense of comradery.

5. BE FRIENDLY, POSITIVE AND SELF-REFLECTIVE

Be ready to introduce yourself. You will likely be participating with others that do not know you, nor you them, to create a sense of comfort and friendliness, everyone will be introducing themselves to the others during the class.

Remember when people do not know you, judgement of you as a person can be inaccurate if you are not careful in how you express yourself. The old saying “*think before you speak*” is important here. Think before you write. One word of advice is, do not respond when you feel angry or excited. Wait. Write it down somewhere and come back to it. When you do, you may find that you no longer felt the same way as you did when you wrote it, because you have had time to reflect about the situation. Lastly, if you still feel the need to be heard, than edit before you post or speak in terms that are easily embraced. This is also true when you feel a critique is necessary; say it in a positive tone. Review what you have written or are going to say to be sure it is positive.

6. USE PROPER LANGUAGE AND TITLES

Do not use profanity or even slang words in an online environment, even if they are words you consider “not so bad”. Do not refer to your counselor or other adults by his or her first name, unless it is acceptable with him or her to do so (only if they gave you permission). Address all adults with the proper salutation of Mr., Miss or Mrs. Of course proper titles such as Doctor, Professor, etc. should be utilized when known and appropriate.

Also, when typing, do not use caps lock or type in all capital letters, it will insinuate yelling. This could hurt someone's feelings and possibly give him (her) the wrong impression of you and the message you are relaying.

7. USE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Say what you mean to say. This takes practice and thought. Try to speak and write clearly at all times. Review, define, and restate your words when necessary. Correct a misunderstanding right away. Chances are, if one person felt a certain way about what you said, another may have as well. Likewise, be mindful of those words and joking. Let's say for example, I write "Get Out!" This slang term can be interpreted in several ways, either positively or negatively, especially when only presented in writing.

Additionally, keep characters like smiley faces and instant message abbreviations to an absolute minimum if not completely absent. Save those for personal conversations. This is good practice as many people may find these as childish, or too casual in certain environments. Practice your professional online and communication persona.

Finally, the two most powerful words (also known as the magic words) demonstrating appreciation and respect are "please" and "thank you". Practice using these and soon they will become natural and offer many unforeseen rewards.

8. ASK FOR CLARIFICATION

If you are unsure of what was said, or the counselor's directive, or have any other uncertainty, then ask again. Do not sit in silence either misunderstanding or feeling offended. Do not interrupt though; wait until there is a break in the conversation, or until the open interaction occurs. Your responsiveness and maturity will be recognized and appreciated. A simple way to do this is to say (or write), "I did not understand...", which will always keep the onus for the misunderstanding on yourself.

If you have any questions, you can contact Gamehaven Scout Executive, Jason Dugan via email at Jason.Dugan@scouting.org or call 507-287-1410.

We are looking forward to seeing you at an upcoming Gamehaven Scouting at Home online opportunity.

Yours in Scouting

Jason Dugan