



## A Response Against The Two Merit Badge Per Month Rationale

The Boy Scouts of the Philippines (BSP) has always maintained that a Scout cannot earn more than two-(2) merit badges for a given month. The rationale being:

*It is within the capability of the Scout to earn only two (2) Merit Badges per month. The rationale behind this limitation is to provide a guaranty on standards that the Scout has to follow in earning a Merit Badge. With the help of an understanding Counselor, a Scout is given full encouragement and opportunity to make him more skillful in all the things he likes and wants to do. Likewise, he is given a chance to experience new activities under the Merit Badge scheme so that he may be aware of new fields of interest as he grows to be a man.*

*Experience has shown that when a Scout takes more than two (2) Merit Badges within a month, there is a liability to sacrifice standards and the quality of training. These Scouts suffer as a result.*

*Scouts working for more Merit Badge as they could, eventually relegate to the background the equally important requirements for the next advancement badge. The idea is not to produce Scouts who will be "Merit Badge Seekers" instead of "Merit Badge Earners."*

I have been against this policy ever since I learned of it while still a Senior Scout in Quezon City and have been vocal about my opposition to the policy throughout the years while a Senior Crew Leader to the point of being Assistant Outfit Advisor and District Member-at-Large. I have approached the Program and Adult Resource Development Division (PARDD), verbally voiced my opposition to the policy, and received a half-serious half-hearted response. I have, in writing, made known my opposition to the policy with PARDD and am yet to receive a response.

### Why Am I Against the Policy?

Several reasons why I am against the rationale, which I will explain in detail:

1. It undermines the entire Merit Badge Scheme.
2. It undermines the role of the Unit and Institutional Leadership.
3. It undermines the Fundamental Principles of Scouting.
4. It simply does not make sense.

#### **It Undermines the Entire Merit Badge Scheme.**

The rationale places into question the quality of the Merit Badge Counseling process, which is the core of the Merit Badge scheme. The rationale claims that:

*Experience has shown that when a Scout takes more than two (2) Merit Badges within a month, there is a liability to sacrifice standards and the quality of training. These Scouts suffer as a result.*

The statement indirectly states that the counseling process just does not work if it involves more than 2 Merit Badges. It also indirectly places into serious question the honor and character of the Merit Badge Counselors involved. This indirectly claims that counselors (not just 1, but 2 or more) would be more lenient to a Scout who is working on more than 2 Merit Badge a month

#### **It Undermines the Role of the Unit and Institutional Leadership.**

The rationale places into serious question the honor and character of the unit and institutional leadership, who is responsible in recruiting Merit Badge Counselors. Indirectly, the rationale claims that the unit and institutional leadership will be lenient to Scouts earning more than 2 Merit Badges during their Board of Review.



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The statement claims that the unit and institutional leadership will place more focus on earning Merit Badges rather than working on the requirements for the advancement badge.

### **It Undermines the Fundamental Principles of Scouting.**

Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouting Movement stated this in “Aids to Scoutmastership”:

*The Badges are merely intended as an encouragement to a boy to take up a hobby or occupation and to make some sort of progress in it; they are a sign to an outsider that he has done so; they are not intended to signify that his is a master in the craft he is tested in. If once we make Scouting into a formal scheme of serious instruction in efficiency, we miss the whole point and value of Scout training, and we trench on the work of the schools without the trained experts for carrying it out.*

*Our standard for Badge earning is not the attainment of a certain level of quality of knowledge or skill, but the **amount of effort the boy has put into acquire such knowledge or skill.** This brings the most hopeless case on to a footing of equal possibility with his more brilliant or better-off brother.*

As such the rationale’s way of placing too much importance to the maintenance of standards and quality of training falls into what it tries to avoid of placing too much importance to the Merit Badge process rather than the bigger picture of the Scout training.

### **It Simply Does Not Make Sense.**

If the rationale leads us to believe that the Merit Badge Counseling process becomes too unreliable when Scouts tries to earn more than 2 Merit Badges, then the number of Merit Badge being earned is not the problem, but the Merit Badge Scheme itself. What is the difference between earning 2 Merit Badge and 3 Merit Badges? If we are to believe that there is the liability of quality in earning more than 2 Merit Badges, what reason are we to believe that there is no liability of quality with earning only 2 Merit Badges, if they are to be done under the guidance of the same Merit Badge Counselor and under the same system of Merit Badge scheme?

If we are to believe that a problem exists in terms of the maintenance of standard and quality. The rationale refuses to deal with the actual problem but simply tries to remedy something that isn’t the problem in the first place. Remember the cough syrup commercial where the man simply bends the water hose to stop the water from running? That is what the rationale is doing if we are to believe that there is something wrong with earning more than 2 Merit Badge a month. The actual problem can be solved by turning off the faucet or by dealing with the Counseling process by revising and the Merit Badge Counselors by providing stricter rules in recruiting them.

The rationale does not take into consideration that a Scout could have started a hard to earn Merit Badge two or three months earlier, another hard to earn Merit Badge a month earlier, a easy Merit Badge this current month, and completes all three the following month. What happens in this scenario? Do we then tell the Scout that he has to postpone earning one because the BSP does not believe he is capable of what he obviously has done? A Board of Review panel answered yes to this question and I say that he is instructing the Scout to lie to everyone including himself. Also, I have witnessed a number of times where the panel of the Board of Review explicitly instructed Scout candidates to revise the dates on their applications as it conflicts with the 2 Merit Badge per month policy. It simply teaches the Scouts to follow the policy to get the rank and forget about the truth that they did earn and are more than capable of earning more than 2 Merit Badges.

### **My Recommendation**

Scrap the policy.