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Scouting Brings Youth to the Hobby

Scouting America offers a stamp collecting merit badge to its scouts who meet eight requirements as listed on its website, found at <https://www.scouting.org/merit-badges/stamp-collecting/>.

The stamp collecting merit badge offers a wonderful resource to teach the fun of our favorite hobby. The requirements to earn the badge are the basics anybody would teach a beginner. I am so proud of the APS members who are Scout leaders that provide this merit badge opportunity.

For 20 years, Brian Jones, president of the San Jose Stamp Club, has held stamp collecting classes for up to 30 scouts, including at the Filatelic Fiesta stamp show. He makes a starter kit for each participant with a three-ring binder with stock sheets, tongs, hinges, a sample of mounts, and a perforation gauge. Brian has helped more than 500 scouts earn the stamp collecting merit badge in the years he has taught

the merit badge classes. He has written a document with guidelines for others to follow and hopes that, in the future, a nationally coordinated effort will increase how many scouts qualify for stamp collecting merit badges to ensure the merit badge's future.

Bob Zahm, vice president of the American Helvetia Philatelic Society, has conducted two merit badge workshops at Chicagopex, qualifying 12 to 14 scouts each year. He plans to make it an annual event.

Requirement 7 for the badge has the option to attend a stamp show. Holding the merit badge workshop at a show helps fulfill that requirement. More importantly, the excitement that a show creates increases by seeing exhibits with a range of topics, possibly acquiring "free" stamps (often in a youth area), and interacting with friendly (and even generous) dealers. If there is a first day of issue ceremony, that makes the experience even better for the scouts.

At the Great American Stamp Show (GASS) in Hartford last year, Bob assisted Bill Shea, past president of the Scouts on Stamps Society International, with merit badge sessions. Fifty-one scouts over two days of sessions earned the badge.

Boston 2026 World Expo, May 23 to 30, 2026, has an exciting vision for youth activities, including opportunities for scouts to participate the Stamp Collecting Merit Badge. If you have a child or grandchild in scouting, this would be a great way to share a bonding experience with philately.

Several stamp shows currently host merit badge sessions and workshops. A club or show interested in hosting a scout merit badge program should contact its local Scout Council to understand the requirements and have assistance with registration.

Planning is needed to supply stamps to the participants. Fortunately, many low-value stamps are available to ensure great activities. Stamp show committees would welcome new volunteers to take on this important community project!



A Boy Scout stamp collecting merit badge.

