# PAINTING MERIT BADGE

## NOTE TO COUNSELOR

## SAFETY NOTE

**Primary Safety Concerns:**

Painting involves chemicals, tools, and ladders that can cause allergic reactions, chronic health effects, or injury ranging from minor to life-threatening. Follow the current Scouting America SAFE Checklist and *Guide to Safe Scouting*.

**Before Painting Activities:**

**Supervision**

The Painting merit badge counselor should know paint chemistry and types, surface preparation, ladder safety, and safe handling of hazardous materials, consistent with the *Guide to Safe Scouting* and SAFE Project Tool Use.

**Assessment**

- Homes and structures built before 1978 are presumed to contain lead-based paint. Before any project, Scouts must ask a parent or guardian when the structure was built. If it was built before 1978 or the date is unknown, that surface may not be used for the project.

- Scouts must never attempt to remove, sand, or scrape paint that may contain lead. Lead paint removal is professional, EPA-certified work only and is outside the scope of this badge.

- Scouting America safety guidelines require a helmet and other safety gear when climbing higher than shoulder height. Work at that height is best left to a trained adult or professional; scaffolding and lifts are professional-only equipment and are not required for this badge.

- Reference the SAFE Project Tool Use document to confirm all tool and equipment use is age appropriate. As a rule, Scouting activities may not include tasks that, by law, youth would not be allowed to perform in the workplace.

- Obey all restrictions and instructions manufacturers impose on their paints, solvents, and other products.

**Fitness**

- Counselors should be aware of and accommodate participants who may be allergic or sensitive to paint fumes, solvents, or other finishing chemicals.

**Equipment and Environment**

- Provide a clutter-free, well-ventilated work area (open windows and fans). Never mix solvents or cleaning products together, as this can produce hazardous gases.

- Keep flammable materials away from heat sources, and keep an appropriate fire extinguisher (Class A/B/C as needed) on hand.

- Ensure all participants wear proper personal protective equipment: safety glasses or goggles, a respirator appropriate to the product's safety data sheet (SDS), chemical-resistant gloves, heavy-duty long-sleeved clothing (canvas or denim), and sturdy work shoes or boots.

- Review the SDS for every paint, stain, or solvent used before the activity begins, and read all product labels carefully.

- Long hair should be tied back or secured, loose jewelry removed, and loose clothing removed or secured.

## COUNSELOR NOTE

**Purpose**

Help the Scout understand that paint serves two purposes—protecting a surface and decorating it—while giving them hands-on experience with color theory, paint chemistry, surface preparation, and application technique. Just as important, help them build an attitude of safety-first planning before any painting activity begins.

**Teaching Tips**

The Home Depot's Path to Pro Skills Explorers program provides video resources for leaders to use in teaching skilled trades merit badges, including electricity, painting, emergency prep, gardening, plumbing, woodwork, and others. Register today!

Home Depot - Path to Pro | Skills Explorers

- Emphasize surface preparation as the most important (and most tedious) step: cleaning, sanding with the grain, priming bare wood or metal, and masking correctly (apply tape bottom-up, peel it back at a 90-degree angle) largely determine whether a paint job holds up.

- Teach color theory hands-on: primary, secondary, and intermediate colors; warm versus cool colors; color schemes (complementary, analogous, triad); and how natural versus electric light changes how a color reads in a room.

- Compare paint types side by side—oil-based versus water-based (latex/acrylic), alkyd versus polyurethane—and sheen levels from flat to gloss, matching type and sheen to the surface's real-world use.

- Demonstrate brush and roller technique: matching bristle type (synthetic for latex, natural bristle for oil or varnish) and roller nap length to the surface, using short overlapping strokes, and working while edges are still wet.

- Have Scouts test paints and stains on scraps first, and practice calculating paint quantity and area coverage before starting so they don't run out mid-project.

- Reinforce cleanup and disposal: proper tool cleaning and storage, and disposing of solvents and paint per local, state, and federal regulations.

**Helpful Resources**

- *Painting* merit badge pamphlet
- Current Painting requirements
- Scouting America *Guide to Safe Scouting*
- Scouting America SAFE Checklist
- SAFE Project Tool Use
- EPA Lead-Safe Renovation Guidance
- American Coatings Association