

# SCOUTS-L

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**Date:** Mon, 14 Apr 1997 16:44:43 -0600  
**From:** Amick Robert <amick@SPOT.COLORADO.EDU>  
**Subject:** Re: Teaching techniques (Merit Badge University)

**Jim's comments on teaching merit badges are very appropos. We just completed our fifth Merit Badge University sponsored by Alpha Phi Omega and Explorer Post 492 at the University of Colorado at Boulder. 250 Scouts participated earning more than 700 merit badges.**

**Among the offerings were the law merit badge. The two Scouters who taught the badge are attorneys and one has also been a district attorney, police officer, and a county clerk and recorder. Together, they set up a "mock trial" for the Scouts who were put into the roles of prosecutor, defense attorney, jury, judge, and bailiffs.**

**Scouts had a \*great\* time with this and learned a great deal about the legal system with gentle coaching by the counselors. Similarly for Citizenship in the Nation, we have set up a \*mock\* federal government in which the Scouts elect a House and Senate, a President, and Supreme court Justices. Then the instructors feed them scenarios on various legislation, executive and judicial situations and let them "hash it out" just like the elected/appointed folks do. It is pretty amazing how well they get into the role playing and solve the "big problems." The citizenships are among the more "challenging" merit badges to keep from being "boring;" and doing role plays for many of the requirements seems to really help the Scouts learn and even enjoy the experience.**

**Even when lectures are necessary, they should be delivered in the form of open-ended questions to the Scouts. Their store of knowledge and thoughts are often quite impressive, if given a chance to voice them and demonstrate their knowledge. The instructor who asks good questions of all the students, and who is a good listener, often is far more successful than one who delivers a "monologue" about a topic and fails to ask the students to demonstrate their knowledge and opinions.**

**First Aid and Emergency Prep are done similarly with simulations and scenarios which require the Scouts to actually assume the role of first responder and administer care to "simulated victims" with moulaged**

**injuries, or to actually perform rope rescues under the supervision of qualified mountain rescue instructors and equipment. Similarly for Fire Safety, the course was taught by a Scouter who is a fire chief and brought in an engine, fire bunker gear for Scouts to try on and use, and fire extinguishers which he provided to let the Scouts actually extinguish controlled fires. Fire Explorers could also assist in this area.**

**Another major plus is to use older Scouts and Explorers in various specialities as Instructors. "Youth teaching youth" is always a winning concept. The younger Scouts relate to them and follow their example much more readily than with adults. I often have my First Responder-trained Explorers teach most of the First Aid Merit Badge because they are very good at it and they know how to make it fun for the younger Scouts. Law Enforcement Explorers teach fingerprinting and crime prevention, and Alpha Phi Omega/Explorer Post members teach their specialties in areas such as Engingeering, Oceanography, Architecture Space Exploration, etc.**

**Using the University facilities such as the planetarium and observatory; and the Center for Astrophysics and Space Astronomy where they build satellites and rockets, really gets the attention of the Scouts and heightens their interest in Astronomy and Space Exploration respectively.**

**Part of Baden-Powell's philosophy of Scouting is to teach through "games with a purpose." When Scouts are having fun, they are also learning and reinforcing behavioral skills and knowledge that will be with them throughout their lives. Much educational research has shown that "experiential" learning is retained and utilized far more effectively than didactic or "lecture" methods. While some lecture is always necessary, it should be minimized in favor of creative "hands-on" activities. This takes a little advanced planning and creativity, but the end result is far more enjoyable for both the counselors and the Scouts.**

**Anyone who is interested in sharing information on hosting and administering a Merit Badge University is welcome to contact me. There is a coalition of Alpha Phi Omega chapters who host Merit Badge Universities or similar events on university campuses, and who share information on an e-mail discussion group called ScoutsU-L**

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