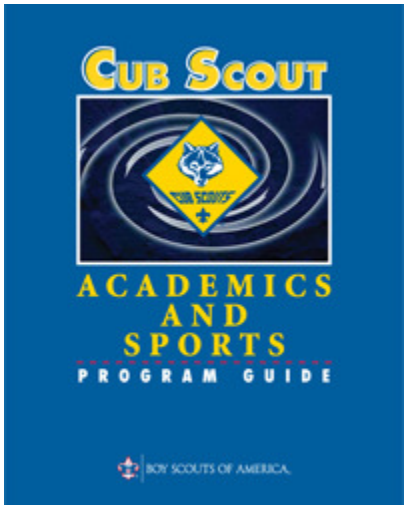
New Belt Loops, Pins, and Merit Badges are Coming

When the BSA was founded in 1910, boys weren't into video games, scuba diving, or robotics. But as we enter our second century, Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts will be able to earn awards in these topics, thanks to a new focus on change and innovation.

New for Cub Scouts



Video Games is one of 13 new belt loops and pins in the Cub Scout Academics and Sports program. It's been more than 10 years since the program expanded, so volunteers and Cub Scouts from around the country have been waiting for this change.

In late January, Scout shops across the country should begin selling a new edition of the *Cub Scout Academics and Sports Program Guide* (No. 34299), which will include these additions:

Academics Subjects:

- Disabilities Awareness
- Family Travel
- Good Manners
- Nutrition
- Pet Care
- Photography
- Reading and Writing
- Video Games

Requirements for the new awards will mirror those for the existing belt loops and pins. Besides the addition of the new awards, the Cub Scout Academics and Sports program remains the same.

Sports:

- Hiking
- Hockey
- Horseback Riding
- Kickball
- Skateboarding

New for Boy Scouts

Scuba Diving is the first new Boy Scout merit badge in three years; it will become available in December. Click here for a brochure about the badge that you can share with your volunteers.

Four other new merit badges will appear over the course of the coming year:

- Inventing (First quarter 2010)
- Geocaching (Second quarter 2010)
- Scouting Heritage (Second quarter 2010)
- Robotics (Fourth quarter 2010)

These badges are being introduced because they received positive feedback in a youth interest survey.

If five new merit badges seems like a lot, it is. By comparison, the BSA introduced just six new merit badges between 1992 (Collections) and 2006 (Composite Materials).

When you have an idea for a new merit badge, the first step is to complete a proposal form, which you can get by e-mailing merit.badge@scouting.org. Proposals that fit merit-badge criteria and rank highly with youth members are sent to a volunteer task force and the Program Content Committee for review and development.

But the new badges aren't the only innovation. In the past it took three years to create a merit badge. Now, that time has been cut to just less than a year, helping to keep the badge topics and content fresher than ever.

Please help spread the word about the new merit badges, belt loops, and pins through Web sites, newsletters, e-mails, social networking, roundtables, and events. As always, www.scouting.org is your best source for the most current information about these awards.