



PROJECT #45

MAKE YOUR OWN MERIT BADGES!

To make your own merit badges, you will need:

Pencils

An old T-shirt to cut up

A circle to trace (see step 3 for specifics)

Scissors

Thread and needle OR permanent fabric-safe markers OR fabric paint

Ruler

Two pins or paperclips per badge

Safety pins if students want to wear their badges



Worries can creep in when you're thinking about the future—all those projects, plans, and assignments waiting for your attention. So why not stop, take a deep breath, and congratulate yourself for something you've *already* done?

It's time to give yourself an award. Or maybe several of them!

(Thank you to Laura Stanfill for contributing this project. Do you have a project to share? [Reach out to us!](#))



Step 1 of 13

To tie or not to tie?

You'll have to decide now how you're going to hold your merit badge together. Your decision will change what size circle you use as a pattern.

If you're going to sew your project together, you'll want a smaller circle to trace. We like 4 inches, but 3 inches works if you aren't planning to make fringe.

If you don't have needle and thread, you'll want to choose the tying option. Tying means you'll need a bigger circle. We found a 6-inch circle to work best. Your fringe can be 2 inches long, and you still have a 2-inch circle in the middle to create your celebratory message.

Step 2 of 13

Once you've decided on your method, hunt around your house for circle shapes to trace. You'll want something with a smooth edge.

Maybe you'll find a big can in the recycling, a circular cardboard box in the closet, or a mixing bowl in the kitchen. A take-out soup container lid might be the right size. Use your ruler to measure each idea as you decide which circular object will work best for

your plan.

Remember: 4 inches is great for the sewing version; 6 inches is better for the tying version.



Step 3 of 13

Using your object, trace two identical circles onto your T-shirt.

Since you might make more merit badges, or come up with another use for the rest of the fabric (a soft pillow? strips of fabric braided into a scarf?), make your circles close to the edge so you'll have more fabric left over.



Step 4 of 13

Cut out your circles. You can trim them a little if they aren't perfect, but don't worry too much.

When you're done cutting, you can flip both pieces of fabric over, hiding the pencil lines on what will soon be the inside of your merit badge.

Step 5 of 13

On the circle that will become the front of your badge, draw marks where the fringe will go.

This part is optional if you're sewing your pieces closed, but if you plan to tie them or make fringe, you'll need to think about your edging before making the center design.

Your fringe should be 2 inches long for tying, or 1 inch or less if you plan to sew the pieces closed but want a ruffly border.



Step 6 of 13

To mark where the fringe will be, get out your ruler and measure and mark how deep you want to cut. Make a pencil mark every inch or so, forming an inner circle. You can also make these marks by tracing a smaller circular object.

Remember, you only need to do this step for the top circle, not both.

Step 7 of 13

Okay, now that you have your border marked out, it's time to design the center of your achievement patch.

What kind of award do you want to give yourself? What are you proud of? If you took a class in *you*, what would you want the graduation certificate to look like? You can choose a word or two, a symbol, or anything you like.



Step 8 of 13

You'll be working on one of your two circles; that will be the front of your patch. The second circle will form the backing.

You can use permanent fabric markers, fabric paint ([try making your own!](#)), or a needle and thread to create your design. Or try a ball point pen or a Sharpie. You can also pencil in your design, then draw over it in permanent marker.

If you're sewing your message, work freehand at a table (not on your lap so you don't poke yourself). You can use a canning jar lid and a rubber band to create an embroidery hoop to keep the fabric stretched. The knot and the stitches on the back will be hidden once you sew it closed.

Secure the end of the thread when you're done. For techniques, we recommend checking out this wonderful **Etsy blog post** (<https://blog.etsy.com/en/how-tuesday-make-a-merit-badge/>) on embroidered merit badges.



Step 9 of 13

Once your design is complete, use your pins or paperclips to connect the front and back circles.

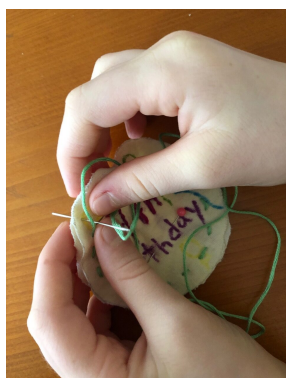
This will make it easier to stitch or tie them together.



Step 10 of 13

Now cut your fringe through both layers, using the marks you've already made on top. The width of each piece of fringe is up to you. Because it's a circle, the fringe will look like small triangles.

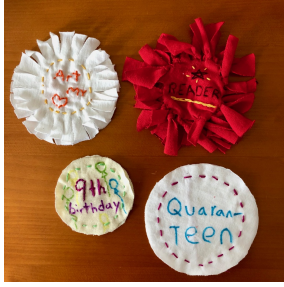
If you are using paperclips to connect the two pieces, you will have to move them around as you cut.



Step 11 of 13

If you're tying, keep the pieces pinned together and take a piece of fringe from the front and one from the back and tie them together! Double knots work well. Go around the whole edge with this technique.

If you're sewing, take your needle and thread, make a knot in the thread, and pull it up through the front layer only. That will hide your knot. Then sew a circle around the inner circle of the badge, catching both layers from now on, between the fringe and your design.



Step 12 of 13

Take the pins or paperclips off and admire your finished project.

You can use a safety pin to turn it into a wearable patch, keep it on your bedside table, use it as a coaster—whatever you want! You can even make more to give away to friends and family.

Step 13 of 13

Want to share your merit badge in our gallery? We'd love to see it!