

ELIOT INSTITUTE
SWIMMING & BOATING BADGES
(Revised July 2018)

WHO NEEDS A SWIM BRACELET?

All campers 17 and younger are required to have a swim bracelet plus specific badges in order to participate in any waterfront activity. Campers are banded with a swim bracelet around the wrist on the first full day of camp after lunch, before the waterfront officially opens. Campers usually have a chance to get a bracelet on the second day also. The bracelet provides a platform for badges representing various achievements, earned by campers during the week.

THE BRACELET

The bracelet consists of a 3/8” braided nylon rope, cut to fit snugly over the hand, with the ends melted then bonded together and cooled before wearing, by dipping in water and rolling the join between two fingers to smooth it (the bracelet shrinks slightly over the following days with exposure to water, usually tightening enough to prevent removal.) Usually a team of two makes the bracelets — one measuring and cutting, and the other melting and joining.

The equipment needed for swim bracelets comprises:

- Spool of 3/8” braided nylon rope
- Metal snips (to cut the rope cleanly; a pocketknife works, too)
- Mug (to hold water to quench the melted nylon join)
- Bucket (5 gallon, to hold these supplies)
- Flame source (a candle or a propane torch) [Note: This is not stored at camp.]

Safety: Dangers to avoid include inadvertent contact with the flame source —the person joining the bracelet ends should caution bystanders, and inadvertent contact with the melted nylon — the person joining the bracelet ends should dip their fingers in water before rolling the join.

THE BADGES

The badges consist of colored electrician’s tape, as a solid or multi-colored design, cut and wrapped around the bracelet. A bracelet may hold up to 5 to 8 badges, depending on size.

A blue badge, for example, represents passing the swim test and an orange badge represents doing the Cannonball. Combinations of two colors are used to represent other waterfront activities, with a narrow colored band on top of a wider band of a different color. For example, a narrow red strip over a grey stripe allows taking out a rowboat without an adult. Youngest campers can earn badges such as the green Wade to Belly Button badge or Blow Bubbles Underwater badge with a black stripe over the the green.

Design notes — The intent is to:

- Group items by background color
- Keep construction as simple as possible for badge creators (e.g. triangles are easier to cut than circles)
- Show simpler exercises before more difficult ones
- Add advanced activities on the back, if we end up with more than a full (one-sided) page

THE BADGES CHART (See separate Badge Chart document)

- The colored Swimming and Boating Badges Chart (usually 4 or 5) are stored in a gray plastic toolbox that is, in turn, stored with the other waterfront equipment. The waterfront equipment is stored in the Eliot storage closet.
- Digital copies of the chart are distributed to a number of people, just for safety sake, primarily the lifeguards. A copy is also on the website at: www.eliotinstitute.org → Volunteers → Camp Jobs → Waterfront - Boating & Swimming → Badge Chart
- What the chart shows are the common badges that we dispense. Sometimes custom ones are also made. Lamination is completed by the Registrar.

THE SWIM DOCK KIT

The Swim Dock Kit is stored at Seabeck in Colman for use at all summer camps. It contains the following items:

- two rolls of each major color tape – green, white, yellow, orange, gray, blue, red
- at least one substantial role of minor tapes – black, purple, brown, pink (preferably two rolls each)
- two pairs of scissors that are clean and sharp
- a box cutter (a.k.a. crate knife) that is clean and sharp, with extra new blades inside the device itself
- 3 or 4 laminated Badge Charts (the two pages printed Two-Sided)
- it is also desirable that there be a screwdriver (Phillips) that can be used to remove the spindle on which the primary tapes reside, to allow adding or removing tapes

THE BOAT DOCK KIT

A plastic bin is provided for the Boat Dock Coordinator. It holds the following items for badges:

- A pair of scissors
- A roll of gray tape
- A small roll of tape in the following colors: red, orange, purple, blue and yellow
- A laminated Badge Chart (the two pages printed Two-Sided)

AWARDING BADGES

The waterfront staff and volunteers award the badges and have several badge charts that display the possible badges. Occasionally young adults and others will also get swim bracelets. Often high-achieving children will ask for a second bracelet. Some campers wear their bracelets all year.

The basic swim test – the plain blue badge — is required before any other swim badges can be dispensed (except for Shallow-Water Swimmers).

Badge Dispensers: It is ideal if there are 2 people to dispense badges on the first 2 days of camp, when the dock is first opened (first shift). The 2nd later shift and days later in the week can generally be handled by one person.

For events requiring many badges, such as basic swim badge, watermelon polo, and polar bear swim, it is optimum to make them ahead. They can be stored on the back of the laminated charts or other plastic surfaces.

Equipment Needed at the Swim Dock: A towel (to dry arms and bands prior to application of tape), a chair (standing or stooping for several hours does not work well), the Swim Dock Kit. At the Boat Dock: the Boat Dock Kit.

Generally the person dispensing swim badges is under the sun canopy, so a hat and sunscreen are only necessary if you intend to spend part of your time out in the sun. A swimsuit is also necessary only if you intend to swim.

HINTS, IDEAS, AND TIPS

- Other Badges: Individuals can provide suggestions for new badges or revisions of existing badges.

RESTOCKING THE SWIMMING & BOAT DOCK KITS

Restocking of the swim & boating badges supplies is accomplished by the Registrar annually:

- old tape strips and any other debris are cleaned out
- tape colors that are low or absent are restocked
- scissors are cleaned and periodically sharpened and oiled
- the crate knife is checked
- the Swimming and Boating Badges Charts are checked, and replaced if needed.

HISTORY

Swim bracelets were first created in 1963 by Prue/Polly Kaye, who as assistant to the Waterfront Director developed them as a way to ration life jackets — IDing which children and youth could swim. They quickly grew to a fully-formed “activity motivator”, with dozens of potential badges to “earn.” Skinny dipping was once represented by Scotch tape, but we haven’t heard of it being awarded for some time. Some younger campers are known to arrive at camp with their bracelet still on from the previous year!

The Badge Chart was created by Larry Adams, a July camper. He also offered suggestions in refining this document. (2018)

Many thanks to both these people for their contributions to Eliot.