**PURPOSE:** The letterboxing badges are intended as a way for handler/dog teams to get outdoors and explore trails while searching for letterboxes. The dog and handler must locate, stamp in and collect the box’s stamp image for the required number of boxes with the dog under pack. Additionally, the dog and handler must prepare, plant and record the required number of boxes. Each of the letterboxing badges require a different number of found and planted boxes. Totals for these badges are cumulative and build towards the ability to earn letterboxing titles.

**DOG REQUIREMENTS:** The dog must wear his pack containing the required items per the Backpacking badge. He must hike under control with the handler, never creating a disturbance or chasing wildlife. The dog must stay while the handler stamps logbooks without getting into any trouble, like eating the container or contents, getting into something that he shouldn’t or wandering away. The dog may stamp into the logbook with his own stamp, or the team may have a stamp that represents both dog and handler. The dog must carry his own stamp or the team stamp, an inkpad, logbook and other supplies listed below.

**HANDLER REQUIREMENTS:** The handler must know and demonstrate the ‘leave no trace’ principles for outdoor activities. The dog should never be allowed to display poor manners on the trail or cause a disturbance that detracts from the letterboxing experience. The handler must obey all local laws, including leash laws and should only use trails and search for boxes in locations where dogs are allowed.

The handler will need to understand how to build and place a proper letterbox, write clues and directions and place the box on letterboxing.org or atlasquest.com. Badges are not considered complete until the evaluator has determined that the clues recorded are appropriate and likely to lead others to find a box.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** The dog needs to wear his backpack containing the required items as per the Backpacking badge. Additionally, he needs to carry his own stamp and other letterboxing supplies. These supplies include an inkpad, a logbook and pen, a compass, extra baggies as needed to repair boxes, and a bag or pouches to carry the items in. The team needs a trail name and this needs to be registered at atlasquest.com. This site is also where the handler gets the clues when the team is ready to begin searching for boxes.

The upper level badges require the handler to hand carve one or more stamps. The materials required to start carving custom stamps include a #1 blade on a Speedball tool, and exacto knife, larger Speedball blades or a Dremel, and a medium to use for carving. There are mediums made specifically for this person, but large erasers work well for this purpose too.

Supplies for creating boxes include water tight containers like lock-n-lock boxes, camouflage paint or tape, a card taped to the box identifying it as a letterbox, a logbook for the box, and the stamp for the box, either hand carved or store bought.

**PROCESS:** On the team’s first outing, an experienced letterboxer needs to accompany the pair and sign off on the log form indicating that the handler and dog both behaved appropriately on that first letterboxing outing. For evaluation the handler needs to provide copies of stamps found and those planted, as well as copies of the clues that the handle has posted for the team’s own boxes.

Special rules apply to boxes planted on the Michigan Camp property. No box may be placed closer than 100 yards from the lodge or behind the line of the trees if the woods are closer than 100 yards. Before considered complete, all boxes planted require a $5 fee and clues must be typed into the camp computer in the correct location. Once the clues are printed, the handler and dog must find a very experienced letterboxer, give him/her the clues for the box and accompany the person out as he/she verifies that the clues are sufficient to lead a searcher to the box. Boxes must not be placed in plain sight.

Boxes planted at camp are NOT to be posted as available to the general public on atlasquest.com or letterboxing.org. They can be listed as ‘word of mouth’ boxes located on ‘planet earth’, but no clue should be put in for the box. This keeps the general public from hunting for boxes on private property belonging to Dog Scouts of America.

Any boxes that fail to follow the rules for planting letterboxes on the property will be removed and returned to the handler. Badges may be revoked for any team that does not follow rules for planting boxes at camp or best practices for planting anywhere else.

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| ALLOWED: | NOT ALLOWED: |
| * Logging miles toward Trail Dog titles | * Logging miles towards the Backpacking |
| consecutively with LB badges | badge consecutively just because the dog |
| * Using homemade or store bought | is wearing a pack |
| logbooks | * Rough handling of the dog |
| * Dog does not need to wear his pack | * Any disruption created by the dog |
| if the box is located within sight of the handler’s vehicle and only requires a short walk (drive-up box) | * Doing anything or searching anywhere that may endanger either dog or handler |