



Volunteer Essentials 2013/2014



Volunteer Quick Reference

My troop #: _____

My service unit name: _____

My service unit meets at (location, day, time, and months): _____

My service team contact information:

Service Unit Manager: _____

Finance Consultant: _____

Registrar: _____

Cookie Manager: _____

Our council name: Girl Scouts of Western New York, Inc. Our council code: 192

Service unit registration number: _____

My Membership Manager's (staff contact) name, phone number, and e-mail address:

Contents

[Quick-Start Guide](#)

[We Are Girl Scouts](#)

[Who Can Join Girl Scouts—and How?](#)

[Girl Scouts' Organizational Structure](#)

[Getting Started with the National Leadership Program through Journeys](#)

[Planning in a Girl-Led Environment](#)

[Leader's Checklist for Getting Started](#)

[Meeting with Girls for the First Time](#)

[Using Safety Activity Checkpoints](#)

[Understanding How Many Volunteers You Need](#)

[Following the Girl Scouts Safety Guidelines](#)

[Chapter 1: Sharing Your Unique Gifts](#)

[Understanding Your Role as a Girl Scout Volunteer](#)

[Your Responsibilities](#)

[Your Volunteer Support Team](#)

[Taking Advantage of Learning Opportunities](#)

[Knowing How Much You're Appreciated](#)

[Chapter 2: Girl Scouting as a National Experience](#)

[What Girl Scouting Does for Girls](#)

[ToGetHerThere](#)

[Fun with Purpose](#)

[The National Program Portfolio](#)

[National Leadership Journeys](#)

[The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting and National Proficiency Badges](#)

[Putting It All Together](#)

[Emblems and Patches](#)

[Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards](#)

[Other Initiatives and Opportunities](#)

[Girl Scout Traditions and Celebrations](#)

[Girl Scout Calendar](#)

[Time-Honored Ceremonies](#)

[Signs, Songs, Handshake, and More!](#)

[Chapter 3: Engaging Girls at All Grade Levels](#)

[Arranging a Time and Space for Girl-Led Meetings](#)

[Understanding Healthy Development in Girls](#)

[Creating a Safe Space for Girls](#)

[Recognizing and Supporting Each Girl](#)

[Promoting Fairness](#)

[Building Trust](#)

[Managing Conflict](#)

[Inspiring Open Communication](#)

[Working with Parents and Guardians](#)

[Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion](#)

[Chapter 4: Safety-Wise](#)

[Knowing Your Responsibilities](#)

[Responsibilities of the Volunteer: Girl Scout Safety Guidelines](#)

[Responsibilities of Parents and Guardians](#)

[Responsibilities of the Girls](#)

[Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need](#)

[Transporting Girls](#)

[Checklist for Drivers](#)

[Approaching Activities](#)

[Health Histories \(Including Examinations and Immunizations\)](#)

[Girl Scout Activity Insurance](#)

[Experts](#)

[Providing Emergency Care](#)

[First-Aid/CPR](#)

[Procedure for Accidents](#)

[Chapter 5: Managing Group Finances](#)

[Establishing an Account](#)

[Money-Earning Basics](#)

[Understanding the Girl Scout Cookie Program](#)

[Your Council's Role](#)

[Knowing Where Proceeds Go](#)

[Safely Selling Girl Scout Cookies and Other Products](#)

[Selling at Girl Scout Cookie Booths](#)

[Using Online Resources to Market Cookies and Other Products](#)

[Additional Group Money-Earning Activities](#)

[Collaborating with Sponsors and Other Organizations](#)

[Helping Girls Reach Their Financial Goals](#)

[Reviewing Financial and Sales Abilities by Grade Level](#)

[Appendix: For Troop Volunteers](#)

[Forming a Troop Committee](#)

[Holding Troop Meetings](#)

[Letting Girls Lead](#)

[Looking at a Sample Troop Year](#)

[Reengaging Girls](#)

[Appendix: For Travel Volunteers](#)

[Traveling with Girls](#)

[Using Journey and The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting in Their Travels](#)

[Seeking Council Permission](#)

[Involving Chaperones](#)

[Letting Girls Lead](#)

[Staying Safe During the Trip](#)

[Reengaging Girls](#)

[Appendix: Girl Scouts of Western New York Volunteer Policies, Standards and Procedures](#)

[Forms](#)

Quick-Start Guide

Welcome to the great adventure of Girl Scouting! Thanks to volunteers like you, generations of girls have learned to be leaders in their own lives and in the world.

We know you're busy and need to be efficient with your time. For that reason, this Quick-Start Guide to *Volunteer Essentials* gives you the nitty-gritty . . . what you need to know now, as you plan for your first meeting with girls. We encourage you to read through these tips as soon as you can, and then feel free to put down this handbook for the time-being.

That's because the rest of *Volunteer Essentials* is a reference for you to use only as needed. When you have a question, simply look up the topic in the Table of Contents, and you'll find your answer. Think of *Volunteer Essentials* as your encyclopedia to Girl Scout volunteering. It's there when you need it but, rest assured, there's no need for you to read the entire book today.

Need to know where to turn for help? Here is the list of locations for your local council.

Girl Scouts of Western New York Council Service Centers

Corporate Headquarters

3332 Walden Ave, Suite 106
Depew, NY 14043
Phone: 1-888-837-6410
Fax: (716) 706-1359

Lockport Service Center

5000 Cambria Road
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone: (716) 434-6212
Fax: (716) 434-9983

Batavia Service Center

5 Jackson St.
Batavia, NY 14020
Phone: (585) 344-7050
Fax: (585) 344-0765

Niagara Falls Service Center

1522 Main Street, Suite 307
Niagara Falls, New York 14305
Telephone: (716) 935-6082
Fax: (716) 285-0831

Jamestown Service Center

2661 Horton Road
Jamestown, NY 14701
Phone: (716) 665-2225
Fax: (716) 488-9501

Rochester Service Center

1000 Elmwood Ave., Suite 200
Rochester, NY 14620
Phone: (585) 292-5160
Fax: (585) 292-1086

Please visit our website at www.gswny.org to find more information about our local council.

We Are Girl Scouts

Girl Scouts was founded in 1912 by trailblazer Juliette Gordon Low. We are the largest girl-serving organization in the United States and a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, a sisterhood of close to 10 million girls and adults in 145 countries.

Our Mission and Vision

Girl Scouts builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. We strive to be the premier leadership organization for girls, and experts on their growth and development.

Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:

To serve God* and my country,

To help people at all times,

And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

*Girl Scouts of the USA makes no attempt to define or interpret the word "God" in the Girl Scout Promise. It looks to individual members to establish for themselves the nature of their spiritual beliefs. When making the Girl Scout Promise, individuals may substitute wording appropriate to their own spiritual beliefs for the word "God." **Note:** This disclaimer appears in the National Leadership Journey adult guides, but not in the girls' books. It is included here as a reminder to you, as a volunteer, that it's your responsibility to be sensitive to the spiritual beliefs of the girls in your group and to make sure that everyone in the group feels comfortable and included in Girl Scouting. Please feel free to share this information with girls' families.

Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be

honest and fair,

friendly and helpful,

considerate and caring,

courageous and strong,

and responsible for what I say and do,

and to

respect myself and others,

respect authority,

use resources wisely,

make the world a better place,

and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

More than 3 Million Strong

We are urban, rural, and suburban. We are in schools, churches, temples, mosques, public housing, foster homes, and detention centers. We are in virtually every zip code and in 90 countries around the world.

- **2.3 million** girls 5 to 18 years of age
- **16,800** Girl Scouts overseas
- **888,000** adult volunteers
- **59 million** alumnae
- **112 councils** throughout the United States

At any given time, approximately 10 percent of girls are Girl Scouts, and it's interesting to know that:

- 80 percent of women business owners were Girl Scouts.
- 69 percent of female U.S. Senators were Girl Scouts.
- 67 percent of female members of the House of Representatives were Girl Scouts.
- Virtually every female astronaut who has flown in space was a Girl Scout.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

We have identified Three Keys to Leadership: girls Discover themselves and their values; Connect with others; and Take Action to make the world a better place. At Girl Scouts, everything centers around the girl: activities are girl-led, which gives girls the opportunity to learn by doing in a cooperative learning environment.

100 Years Young

We're celebrating a century of trailblazing, leadership, fun, and friendship—and we're just getting started. Connect with Girl Scouts of the USA at www.girlscouts.org, www.facebook.com/GirlScoutsUSA, www.twitter.com/girlscouts, and www.pinterest.com/GSUSA. Your local council also shares event information, learning opportunities, tips, and advice at www.gswny.org, www.facebook.com/gswny, and [twitter.com/girlscoutswny](https://www.twitter.com/girlscoutswny).

ToGetHerThere



What will the next century bring? More of what Girl Scouts is known for, of course! And we're also rallying the nation around the cause of girls' leadership.

We know you've seen girls back down, opt out, and shy away from leading. You may have seen girls bullied by their peers, pressured by industries that celebrate unattainable beauty, and encouraged not to pursue science and math. You may have even struggled to explain to girls why women are in only 17 percent of seats in the U.S. Congress and 3 percent of the top positions at *Fortune* 500 companies.

We believe that, together, we can do better for girls, setting in motion a generational change, so that every girl born today blossoms into her full potential, whether that's running a science lab, running a corporation, or running a household. Together, we can transform the leadership landscape, so that every girl, in every zip code, stands up, stands out, and stands tall. Together, we can get her there.

That's why we created ToGetHerThere, a cause that partners Girl Scouts with nonprofits and leading corporations under a bold and ambitious banner: achieve gender-balanced leadership—in every industry and every community—in a single generation. Want to learn more? You can find us at www.ToGetHerThere.org, www.facebook.com/ToGetHerThere, and www.twitter.com/togetherthere.

Who Can Join Girl Scouts—and How?

Girl Scouts is about sharing the fun, friendship, and power of girls and women together. Any girl—from kindergarten through 12th grade—can join Girl Scouts. Girl Scout volunteers are also a diverse group—you may be a college volunteer working on a community-action project, a parent volunteer ready for an outdoor adventure with your daughter’s group, or any responsible adult (female or male, who have passed the necessary screening process) looking to help prime girls for the day when they’ll lead—however and wherever they choose.

What all members share, both girls and adults, are the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Each member also agrees to follow safety guidelines and pay the annual membership dues of \$15. (Adults have the option to purchase a lifetime membership for \$375).

Girls at Every Grade Level

After girls join, they team up in the following grade levels:

- Girl Scout Daisy (grades K–1)
- Girl Scout Brownie (grades 2–3)
- Girl Scout Junior (grades 4–5)
- Girl Scout Cadette (grades 6–8)
- Girl Scout Senior (grades 9–10)
- Girl Scout Ambassador (grades 11–12)

Flexible Ways to Participate

Across the country, the Girl Scout community is hard at work on a whole new approach to make sure that everyone can participate in Girl Scouting in the ways they want to. As a volunteer, you can choose from flexible ways to participate that can be tailored to fit your schedule and lifestyle. You can also volunteer behind the scenes, in your council office, instead of volunteering directly with girls.

Girls can choose any one, all, or some of the options—camp, events, series, troop, travel, and virtual*— within a single membership year. (*Note that virtual is still in development.) As a volunteer, you, too, have the option of partnering with girls throughout a membership year or committing to an opportunity for only a few weeks or months. Based on independent research and extensive surveys with thousands of council staff members from around the country, we have a good sense of which options will interest girls, based on their grade levels. These are reflected in the chart on the right.



GRADES												
K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
TROOP												
		CAMP										
					SERIES							
									EVENTS			
						TRAVEL						
			VIRTUAL									

Girl Scouts' Organizational Structure

Girl Scouts is the world's largest organization of and for girls, currently encompassing 2.3 million girl members and nearly one million volunteers! Three core structures support all these members: the national headquarters, your council, and your support team.

National Organization and Worldwide Sisterhood

The national office of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA), located in New York City, employs roughly 300 employees. GSUSA is a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). (Visit [GSUSA online](#), where you'll find a wealth of resources for both girls and volunteers.)

Global Girl Scouting ensures that girls have increased awareness about the world, cross-cultural learning opportunities, and education on relevant global issues that may inspire them to take action to make the world a better place. Visit [Global Girl Scouting online](#) for additional information.

Since 1925, USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO), a division of Global Girl Scouting, has helped ease the transition for American families relocating overseas by offering the familiar traditions and exciting opportunities of Girl Scouting to girls abroad. USAGSO now serves thousands of American girls living overseas, as well as girls attending American or international schools. Through Global Girl Scouting, members participate in World Thinking Day on February 22, visit the four WAGGGS world centers (see the "For Travel Volunteers" appendix), participate in international travel, promote global friendship and understanding by supporting the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund, and take action on global issues.

Your Council

Girl Scout councils are chartered by the national office to attract and retain members in a geographic area, provide ways for girls to participate in Girl Scouting, create an environment that reflects Girl Scout values and ideals, manage volunteers' experience with Girl Scouting, and keep girls and volunteers as safe as possible. The national office provides support materials to all councils to ensure that the Girl Scout experience is nationally consistent.

Girl Scouts of Western New York serves every girl who wants to be a Girl Scout and lives within Erie, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Genesee, Livingston, Niagara, Orleans, Monroe, and Wyoming counties. The Council currently serves approximately 10,000 adult volunteers and 20,000 girls. Adult volunteers conduct a variety of grade-appropriate programs and opportunities for girls at the troop and service unit level. Girls also participate in council-wide projects.

Your Support Team

A team of volunteers and staff provides you with local support, learning opportunities, and advice. As a volunteer, you will have the most contact with your Girl Scout support team, which may be called a service unit or another name. Never hesitate to contact them, because your support team will guide and assist you in all things Girl Scouting. If you have questions about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, resources in the National Program Portfolio (National Leadership Journeys and *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*), or selling Girl Scout cookies and other products, go to your team for answers and ongoing support.

A Leader's Checklist for Getting Started

- Complete required training for position
- Select troop meeting day, time and place
- Reserve a meeting place
- Plan and hold a Parents' Meeting
- Become familiar with the SafetyWise chapter of this document, as well as the Safety Activity Checkpoints available [online](#)
- Get to know the program resources for the girls' grade level
- With co-leader(s), plan and hold first meeting
- Help girls plan troop meetings for the year
- Become familiar with financial expectations and procedures for troops

Parent/Guardian Meeting

Before meeting with your troop for the first time, hold a parent/guardian meeting to help form your troop committee and share important information with parents. Ask parents to bring cash or checks to cover annual Girl Scout membership dues, as well as any troop activity fees/dues you will be collecting.

Items to Bring to the Parent Meeting:

- Registration forms (Girl and Adult) – available on GSWNY website
- Financial assistance forms – available on GSWNY website
- Permission Slip/Girl Health History Record (Annual Participation) – available on GSWNY website
- Calendar
- Pens
- Paper clips (to attach payments to registration forms)
- Large envelope for completed forms and money

Things to Discuss at a Parent's Meeting:

- Troop number, meeting day, place, starting/ending times, leader contact information.
- As needed, recruiting parents to serve as volunteers to fulfill [girl to adult ratio](#).
- Troop committee assignments. Pass around sign up sheet.
- Importance of regular girl attendance.
- Girls being picked up on time is the responsibility of the parent, not the leader's.
- Girl Scout Promise and Law – parents should know the Girl Scout values.
- Troop finances, troop dues and financial assistance.
- Registration forms and fees. Invite all parents to register.
- Permission slip and medical history – must be signed and completed fully. Event permission slips are legally required for every single trip.
- Journey Handbook and *Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* – bring to show if possible.
- Uniforms
- Field trips and transportation. Explain trips will be limited unless parents can help drive.
- Discuss whether snacks and beverages will be provided at each troop meeting or event. Decide who will provide and get signups on a calendar.
- Solicit parent ideas for troop activities

Commonly Used Troop Forms

Health, Consent and Photo Release Forms

At the time of registration, all parents should complete a Health History for their child. You can download the Health History from the website. Please note: consent for photo release is on the girl registration form. These forms should be with the adult in charge of the troop at all times. Any child denied photo release permission cannot be in any pictures taken by the troop, service unit or council. It is the responsibility of the leader to make sure the girl complies.

Permission Slips

Any activity which takes the troop away from the regular meeting place (i.e. local day trips) requires parent or guardian permission. You can download the [permission form](#) from the website. Troop leaders will give parents contact info for all field trips so parents can reach their daughters in the event of an emergency. Additionally, you'll want to have a parent who can serve as your emergency contact, in case you need to reach all the parents. This emergency contact person would then notify parents and share pertinent information so that you can focus on the girls.

Other commonly used forms found on our website are listed in the Forms Appendix.

Service Unit Support

In your community, Girl Scouts is delivered through a geographic unit known as the service unit. Service units are run completely by administrative volunteers (known as the service team), with assistance from council staff members.

The service team is made up of the following members. (Some service units may have more or fewer than the key positions listed below.)

- **Service Unit Manager** develops and directs volunteers within the service unit.
- **Service Unit Registrar** coordinates registration for all girls and adults in the service unit; receives registration forms from troop leaders and school organizers, reviews for accuracy and submits to a council staff member.
- **Service Unit Finance Consultant** records financial transactions of the service unit and collects and reviews bi-annual financial reports from troops.
- **School Organizer** sets location and date for recruitment and registration at schools. Recruits new leaders or troop committees. Gives registration forms to service unit registrar. May organize special events at the school during the year.
- **Grade Level Consultant** provides resources for leaders related to appropriate age level activities for Girl Scout troops.
- **Service Unit Product Sales Manager** manages the annual Girl Scout product sales.

Service units participate in council-wide projects and promote council, national and international events. **As a leader, you agree to have one adult representative from your troop attend every service unit meeting.**

What Will You Find at a Service Unit Meeting?

Answers, moral support and new friends are waiting for you at your service unit meetings.

- Materials and information on upcoming program and training opportunities.
- A link between your troop and the rest of the council.
- An opportunity to meet the service team of your unit.
- Mini trainings to make you more successful.
- Networking and great ideas from other volunteers.

If you have a question or concern, start by contacting a member from your local service team.

Following the Girl Scouts Safety Guidelines

Every adult in Girl Scouting is responsible for the physical and emotional safety of girls, and we all demonstrate that by agreeing to follow these guidelines at all times.

1. **Follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints.** Instructions for staying safe while participating in activities are detailed in the Safety Activity Checkpoints, available from your council. Read the checkpoints, follow them, and share them with other volunteers, parents, and girls before engaging in activities with girls.
2. **Arrange for proper adult supervision of girls.** Your group must have at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers present at all times, plus additional adult volunteers as necessary, depending on the size of the group and the ages and abilities of girls. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old (or the age of majority defined by the state, if it is older than 18) and must be screened by your council before volunteering. One lead volunteer in every group must be female.
3. **Get parent/guardian permission.** When an activity takes place that is outside the normal time and place, advise each parent/guardian of the details of the activity and obtain permission for girls to participate.
4. **Report abuse.** Sexual advances, improper touching, and sexual activity of any kind with girl members are forbidden. Physical, verbal, and emotional abuse of girls is also forbidden. Follow your council's guidelines for reporting concerns about abuse or neglect that may be occurring inside or outside of Girl Scouting.
5. **Be prepared for emergencies.** Work with girls and other adults to establish and practice procedures for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost girls/adults, and site security. Always keep handy a well-stocked first-aid kit, girl health histories, and contact information for girls' families.
6. **Travel safely.** When transporting girls to planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities that are outside the normal time and place, every driver must be an approved adult volunteer and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle. Insist that everyone is in a legal seat and wears her seat belt at all times, and adhere to state laws regarding booster seats and requirements for children in rear seats.
7. **Ensure safe overnight outings.** Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in planning, so they know what to expect. Avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. During family or parent-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in program areas. When parents are staffing events, daughters should remain in quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.
8. **Role-model the right behavior.** Never use illegal drugs. Don't consume alcohol, smoke, or use foul language in the presence of girls. Do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls unless given special permission by your council for group marksmanship activities.
9. **Create an emotionally safe space.** Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouting a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect the emotional safety of girls by creating a team agreement and coaching girls to honor it. Agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting a diversity of feelings and opinions; resolving conflicts constructively; and avoiding physical and verbal bullying, clique behavior, and discrimination.
10. **Ensure that no girl is treated differently.** Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, helping plan, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.
11. **Promote online safety.** Instruct girls never to put their full names or contact information online, engage in virtual conversation with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group websites, publish girls' first names only and never divulge their contact information. Teach girls the [Girl Scout Online Safety Pledge](#) and have them commit to it.
12. **Keep girls safe during money-earning activities.** Girl Scout cookies and other council-sponsored product sales are an integral part of the program. During Girl Scout product sales, you are responsible for the safety of girls, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to be their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, girls cannot participate in money-earning activities that represent partisan politics or that are not Girl Scout-approved product sales and efforts.

Understanding How Many Volunteers You Need

Girl Scout groups are large enough to provide a cooperative learning environment and small enough to allow for development of individual girls. It is recommended that group sizes, when possible, are as follows:

- Girl Scout Daisies: 5–12 girls
- Girl Scout Brownies: 10–20 girls
- Girl Scout Juniors: 10–25 girls
- Girl Scout Cadettes: 5–25 girls
- Girl Scout Seniors: 5–30 girls
- Girl Scout Ambassadors: 5–30 girls

Girl Scouts’ adult-to-girl ratios show the **minimum** number of approved, registered adults needed to supervise a specific number of girls. (Councils may also establish **maximums** due to size or cost restrictions.) These supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of girls—for example, if one adult has to respond to an emergency, a second adult is always on hand for the rest of the girls. It may take you a minute to get used to the layout of this chart, but once you start to use it, you’ll find the chart extremely helpful.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	<i>Two</i> unrelated adults* (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus <i>one</i> additional adult* for each additional number of this many girls:	<i>Two</i> unrelated adults* (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus <i>one</i> additional adult* for each additional number of this many girls:
Girl Scout Daisies (grades K–1)	12	6	6	4
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2–3)	20	8	12	6
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4–5)	25	10	16	8
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6–8)	25	12	20	10
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9–10)	30	15	24	12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11–12)	30	15	24	12

*"Adult" here refers to an approved, registered adult

Here are some examples: If you’re meeting with 17 Daisies, you’ll need three adults, at least two of whom are unrelated, and at least one of whom is female. If this isn’t making sense to you, follow the chart: you need two adults for 12 Daisies and one more adult for up to six more girls. You have 17, so you need three adults. If,

however, you have 17 Cadettes attending a group meeting, you need only two unrelated adults, at least one of which is female (because, on the chart, two adults can manage up to 25 Cadettes).

In addition to the adult-to-girl ratios, please remember that adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old or at the age of majority defined by the state, if it is older than 18.

Using Safety Activity Checkpoints



When preparing for any activity with girls, start by reading the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints for that particular activity. You can find these on your council's website; your council may also provide them in some additional electronic or printed form.

Each Safety Activity Checkpoint offers you information on where to do this activity, how to include girls with disabilities, where to find both basic and specialized gear required for the activity, how to prepare yourselves for the activity, what specific steps to follow on the day of the activity, and so on.

In addition to reading these checkpoints yourself, you can email or print them for co-volunteers, parents/guardians, and the girls themselves. The checkpoints are formatted as checklists, so that you, your co-volunteers, and the girls can check off each step that has been accomplished.

In keeping with the three processes of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, be sure that:

- **All activities are girl-led.** Take into account the age and abilities of the girls. Older girls can take the bulk of the responsibility for carefully planning and executing activities, while younger girls will require more of your guidance but should still be deeply involved in making decisions about their activities.
- **Girls have the chance to learn cooperatively.** Have girls teach each other new skills they may need for the activities, rather than hearing all that from you.
- **Girls learn by doing.** If research or special equipment is needed, they'll learn better by doing that research themselves than by having you do the legwork and report back to them. Even Daisies can do basic research and give reports or do show-and-tell for each other. Ambassadors may need you only for moral support as they research, teach each other, and plan every detail of their excursions.

If Safety Activity Checkpoints do not exist for an activity you and the girls are interested in, check with your council **before** making any definite plans with the girls. A few activities are allowed only with written council pre-approval and only for girls 12 and over, while some are off-limits completely:

- **Caution:** You must get written pre-approval from your council for girls ages 12 and older who will operate motorized vehicles, such as go-carts and personal watercraft; use firearms; take trips on waterways that are highly changeable or uncontrollable; experience simulated skydiving and zero-gravity rooms; or fly in noncommercial aircraft, such as small private planes, helicopters, sailplanes, untethered hot air balloons, and blimps.
- **Warning:** The following activities are never allowed for any girl: potentially uncontrolled free-falling (bungee jumping, hang gliding, parachuting, parasailing, and trampolining); creating extreme variations of approved activities (such as high-altitude climbing and aerial tricks on bicycles, skis, snowboards, skateboards, water-skis, and wakeboards); hunting; shooting a projectile at another person; riding all-terrain vehicles and motor bikes; and taking watercraft trips in Class V or higher.

An additional note: Girl Scouts welcomes and serves girls and families from a wide spectrum of faiths and cultures. When girls wish to participate in discussions or activities that could be considered sensitive—even for some—put the topic on hold until you have spoken with parents and received guidance from your council. When Girl Scout activities involve sensitive issues, your role is that of a caring adult who can help girls acquire skills and knowledge in a supportive atmosphere, not someone who advocates a particular position. You are required to obtain permission slips signed by the girls' parents/guardians; see the "[Engaging Girls at All Grade Levels](#)" chapter of this handbook for more information.

Getting Started with the National Leadership Program through Journeys

The Girl Scout program is based on the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), in which girls Discover themselves, Connect with others, and Take Action to make the world a better place—all within the safety of an all-girl environment where girls take the lead, learn by doing, and learn cooperatively.

Starting on page 19, you'll find an overview of the National Program Portfolio, as well as a one-sheet summary of the resources available at each level.

At the core of the GSLE are National Leadership Journeys, fun and challenging experiences grouped around a theme and spread over a series of sessions. Each Journey has all the important components of the GSLE sewn right in. So, to guide girls on a great Journey, all you need is enthusiasm and a sense of adventure. Before you dive in, try these six simple tips:



1. **Check out the Journey maps** at www.girlscouts.org/program/journeys/maps. These maps show you how all the fun and meaningful traditions of Girl Scouting fit right into any National Leadership Journey. There, you can also find information about the topics that each Journey covers, which you can share with girls. And you'll find even more fun traditions to complement your Journey in *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*, a resource for each grade level of Girl Scouting.
2. **Choose a Journey.** Because Girl Scouting is girl-led, it's important to give girls the chance to pick the Journey they want to do. Talk to them about what each Journey for their grade level is about and let them choose one.
3. **Get to know the Journey.** Pick up a girls' book and an adult guide. Read the girls' book for the pleasure of it, just to get an overview of the Journey's theme and content.
4. **Review the sample session plans in the adult guide.** These sample session plans give you ideas about bringing the Journey to life with girls while leaving plenty of room for creativity and customization.
5. **Invite girls (and their parents/guardians) to use their imaginations** to make the Journey come to life in ways that excite them. Remember that you and the girls don't have to do everything exactly as laid out in the sample sessions.
6. **Step back and watch** how the girls, with your knowledge, support, and guidance, have enormous fun and a rewarding experience. Celebrate with them as they earn their National Leadership Journey awards—and perhaps some Girl Scout badges, too!

Planning in a Girl-Led Environment

To start planning your time with girls, visit www.girlscouts.org/MyCalendar. There, you'll consider the following questions and begin to map out your Girl Scout year:

- How many times each month will you meet? When do you plan to break for holidays?
- How many weeks do you need to allocate for the Girl Scout Cookie Program?
- Will you have time in your schedule for guest speakers and other visitors?
- If you've worked with this group before, what are their preferences: badge work? field trips? other activities? For specific ideas on how to incorporate badges, trips, and other Girl Scout traditions into a Journey, check out the online [Journey maps](#) for the grade level of the girls you're partnering with.

The screenshot shows the 'My Girl Scout Calendar' interface. On the left, there is a sidebar with a 'Welcome Kimberly!' message, a 'Log out' link, and a calendar for March 2012. Below this, it says 'Number of unscheduled meetings left: 0' and provides social media links for Facebook and Twitter, along with an 'Export/Share Calendar' button. The main area displays a calendar for June 2012. The calendar grid shows days from Sunday to Saturday. Two dates are highlighted with red boxes: June 7th is labeled 'Journey' and June 21st is labeled 'New Culinaires'. A 'Print Calendar' button is located in the top right corner of the calendar view.

If your group will be meeting for less than a year (such as at a resident camp or during a series), you'll be able to adjust the calendar to suit your needs. In the same way, if you're planning a multi-year event (such as a travel excursion), add one or two more years to the framework.

After you've drafted a loose framework, ask the girls what they think. Or, create the online calendar together! Remember that you want girls to lead, but younger girls will need more guidance, while older girls will require much less. Seniors and Ambassadors may not even want you to draft a calendar in advance, so if they balk at what you've done, let them take the reins. (Journeys for older girls include planning pages specifically designed to help them customize their Journey.) Daisies and Brownies, on the other hand, may enjoy your calendar and just fill in a few ideas here and there, which will clue you in to their interests.

As your group starts its Journey, get a discussion (or debate!) going on the Journey's theme and what it means to the girls. Probe to find out what they're most interested in accomplishing during their time together, and then help them connect those interests to their Journey.

Meeting with Girls for the First Time

When you first get together with girls (and this meeting may also include parents/guardians, or you may decide to hold a separate meeting for the adults), you'll want to get to know the girls, and give them a chance to get to know one another.

Icebreaker games that let girls share simple details about themselves are a great way to start off your first gathering. Journeys often start with such an icebreaker, so if you're digging into a Journey right away, you'll be all set. You can also check your council's resources or search the Internet for "icebreakers for kids" to find more ideas.

If you already know which Journey the girls want to do, you'll find it useful to accomplish some of the following during this meeting. (Note that all these points are detailed in the adult guide for each Journey, too). If your girls haven't chosen a Journey yet, you can spend time during the first meeting talking about the themes of the three Journeys that are available for their grade level and find out which one the group would like to do. You can then discuss these points in the next meeting, if you run out of time.

1. **Introduce the Journey, its theme, and its ties to leadership.** Each Journey's adult guide gives you ideas for talking with girls and their parents/guardians about the Journey's theme and the Three Keys to Leadership.
2. **Find out what interests the group (and be sure to include the other adult volunteers), so that you and the girls can begin to customize the Journey.** Do the girls want to dig deeper into a particular aspect of the Journey? Without promising anything (yet!), ask the girls to talk about what they're passionate about, what they've always wanted to do, and how they would spend their time if money and other barriers were no object. Build off the ideas shared, but be sure to include opinions from **all** the girls. Ask direct questions of those who seem to be holding back or are unsure about answering, so everyone is included.
3. **Get the girls talking about how they want to schedule their time together.** Use the planning pages from their Journey (referring to your draft calendar only as needed, so that the girls lead). Consider questions like these:
 - Can girls organize and plan a field trip or longer travel opportunity that will allow them to learn more about a particular Journey topic or theme?
 - Is there an event that meshes with this topic or area of interest?
 - Can the girls locate and communicate with an expert in the field via email or social media?
 - Can they invite a guest speaker to answer questions or demonstrate particular skills?
 - Which badges can the group choose to work on that will deepen their skills in this particular area?
 - If they are Juniors or older, are they interested in pursuing their Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, or Gold Awards?
 - Do they have ideas for activities that will involve younger or older girls?

Chapter 1: Sharing Your Unique Gifts

No matter how you volunteer with Girl Scouts, your investment of time and energy will pay back tenfold. With your help, girls will be able to identify issues they care about and work with one another to resolve them. Your interests and life experiences make you the perfect person to be a new kind of partner for girls, someone who creates a safe environment where they can work together and each girl feels free to work toward her highest aspirations. Have no doubt: You, and nearly one million other volunteers like you, are helping girls make a lasting impact on the world.

Understanding Your Role as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Your most important role as a Girl Scout volunteer is to be excited about everything this opportunity affords you: a chance to help girls succeed, play a critical role in their lives, and watch them blossom! You also want to be someone who enjoys the activities you'll be embarking on with the girls—whether you're volunteering at a camp, working with girls who are traveling, or partnering with girls on a short-term series on a topic that interests you.

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you'll serve as a partner and role model to girls. You'll also work closely with a co-volunteer, because two adults must be present at all times when working with girls, and at least one of those volunteers must be female and *not* related to the other adult. This is an important distinction that bears repeating: Men can serve as troop volunteers, but an adult female who is not related to the other volunteer must be present at all times, and only in cases of emergency is a girl to be alone with only one volunteer. Remember to also check the adult-to-girl ratios in the [Quick-Start Guide](#) and the "[Safety-Wise](#)" chapter of this handbook.

Your Responsibilities

Your other responsibilities as a Girl Scout volunteer include:

- Accepting the Girl Scout Promise and Law
- Understanding the Three Keys to Leadership that are the basis of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience: Discover, Connect, and Take Action
- Sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills with a positive and flexible approach
- Working in a partnership with girls so that their activities are girl-led, allow them to learn by doing, and allow for cooperative (group) learning; you'll also partner with other volunteers and council staff for support and guidance
- Organizing fun, interactive, girl-led activities that address relevant issues and match girls' interests and needs
- Providing guidance and information regarding Girl Scout group meetings with girls' parents or guardians on a regular and ongoing basis through a variety of tools, including email, phone calls, newsletters, blogs, other forms of social media, and any other method you choose
- Processing and completing registration forms and other paperwork, such as permission slips
- Communicating effectively and delivering clear, organized, and vibrant presentations or information to an individual or the group
- Overseeing with honesty, integrity, and careful record-keeping the funds that girls raise
- Maintaining a close connection to your volunteer support team
- Facilitating a safe experience for every girl



Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:

To serve God* and my country,

To help people at all times,

And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

*Girl Scouts of the USA makes no attempt to define or interpret the word “God” in the Girl Scout Promise. It looks to individual members to establish for themselves the nature of their spiritual beliefs. When making the Girl Scout Promise, individuals may substitute wording appropriate to their own spiritual beliefs for the word “God.” **Note:** This disclaimer appears in the National Leadership Journey adult guides, but not in the girls’ books. It is included here as a reminder to you, as a volunteer, that it’s your responsibility to be sensitive to the spiritual beliefs of the girls in your group and to make sure that everyone in the group feels comfortable and included in Girl Scouting. Please feel free to share this information with girls’ families.



Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be

honest and fair,

friendly and helpful,

considerate and caring,

courageous and strong,

and responsible for what I say and do,

and to

respect myself and others,

respect authority,

use resources wisely,

make the world a better place,

and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

Your Volunteer Support Team

In your role as a Girl Scout volunteer, you’ll team up with co-volunteers, parents/guardians, members of the community, council staff, and others who have expressed interest in working alongside you. The adult guide of each Journey gives you tips and guidance for creating a friends-and-family network to support you all along the way.

The other volunteers on your support team may help by:

- Filling in for you
- Arranging meeting places
- Being responsible for communicating with girls and parents/guardians
- Locating adults with special skills to facilitate a specialized meeting
- Assisting with trips and chaperoning
- Managing group records

If you have a large support team, the first thing you’ll want to do is meet with this group and discuss what brought each of you to Girl Scouts, review your strengths and skills, and talk about how you would like to work together as a team. You might also discuss:

- When important milestones will happen (Girl Scout cookie activities, field trips, travel plans, events, dates for other opportunities) and how long the planning process will take
- When and where to meet as a group of volunteers, if necessary
- Whether, when, where, and how often to hold parent/guardian meetings
- Whether an advance trip to a destination, event site, or camp needs to happen

Remember to call on your volunteer support team. This team can help you observe a meeting, assign you a buddy, help with registration forms, assist you with opening a bank account, plan your first meeting, and so on. Also plan to attend support meetings—usually held several times throughout the year—that provide excellent opportunities to learn from other volunteers.

Taking Advantage of Learning Opportunities

Girl Scouts strives to provide you with the necessary information to successfully manage your group of girls and to let you know how and where you can get additional information on certain topics when you want to learn more. Volunteer learning is offered in a variety of ways to best meet your unique learning styles: written resources, face-to-face learning, interactive online learning—and additional methods are being developed and tested all the time.

Learn about Girl Scouts online

There's a good chance you've already logged on to <http://training.girlscouts.org> to watch Girl Scouting 101 or Volunteering for Girl Scout Series and Events, our self-paced, online orientations to Girl Scouting. If you haven't, please contact your local council for your council-specific passwords. Those online sessions and *Volunteer Essentials* are designed to give you all of the information you need to start working with girls. They're always available; think of them as references you can use whenever you need them.

Please visit our website for the most up-to-date course list. New listings are added frequently. Registration is required for all courses. In the event that a course is cancelled, registrants will be notified by a council staff member. Consult the Web site for registration information and forms. Most courses are offered free of charge. A few require a nominal fee to cover supplies, books or food.

Knowing How Much You're Appreciated

Whatever your volunteer position, your hard work means the world to girls, to your council staff, and to Girl Scouts of the USA. We're calling on all members of society to help girls reach their full potential, and you've answered that call. So thank you, from the bottom of our hearts.

Just as you'll receive support throughout your volunteering experience, when you reach the end of the term you signed up for, you'll talk with your support team about the positive parts of your experience, as well as the challenges you faced, and discuss whether you want to return to this position or try something new. The end of your troop year, camp season, overseas trip, or series/event session is just the beginning of your next adventure with Girl Scouting!

If you're ready for more opportunities to work with girls, be sure to let your council support team know how you'd like to be a part of girls' lives in the future—whether in the same position or in other, flexible ways. Are you ready to organize a series or event? take a trip? work with girls at camp? work with a troop of girls as a year-long volunteer? share your skills at a council office, working behind the scenes? The possibilities are endless, and can be tailored to fit your skills and interests.

Each year, the Girl Scouts of Western New York hold recognition events throughout the region to honor our volunteers. The Adult Recognition system includes awards for significant service by individuals and groups, as well as recognitions that can be earned by completing specific criteria. GSUSA recognitions require approval by

the Board of Directors and are awarded yearly at the Adult Recognition event. GSUSA recognition nominations must be submitted by February 1 of each year. Recognitions requiring approval by a Service Unit Adult Recognition Committee (SARC) may be awarded at any time of the year, depending on each service unit's calendar.

Volunteer Appreciation Weeks



Volunteer Appreciation Week—the third week in April—is set aside especially for you. Girl Scouts pay tribute to the volunteers who help girls make the world a better place. The week centers on the long-standing National Girl Scout Leaders' Day (April 22).

In addition, Girl Scouts also celebrates Volunteers Make a Difference Week, in conjunction with Make a Difference Day, which takes place during the weekend in autumn that we set our clocks back.

Chapter 2: Girl Scouting as a National Experience

Now that you're a Girl Scout volunteer, you belong to a network of more than 1 million adults who share an important commitment: preparing girls to lead successful lives. During your time as a volunteer, you'll have fun, meet new people, and learn by doing alongside girls at every step.

The Girl Scout program—what girls do in Girl Scouting—is based on the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), a national model that helps girls become leaders in their own lives and as they grow. No matter where girls live or what their age or background, as Girl Scouts they are part of a powerful, national experience. As they build leadership skills, they also develop lifelong friendships and earn meaningful awards, two of many treasured traditions in the sisterhood of Girl Scouting.

What Girl Scouting Does for Girls

Girl Scouting guides girls to become leaders in their daily lives, their communities, and the world—helping them become the kind of person exemplified by the Girl Scout Law. When girls—as the Girl Scout Law states—are “honest and fair,” when they “use resources wisely,” and know how to be “courageous and strong,” they can be more successful in everything they do. It may start in school and on sports teams, but research shows that the courage, confidence, and character they develop as Girl Scouts follows them throughout their lives. Girl Scouting has a practical approach to helping girls become leaders:

- When girls lead in their own lives, they **Discover** their values and the confidence to do what's right. This helps girls act in ways that make us proud, no matter where they are.
- When girls lead in their communities, they **Connect** as they learn how to work with other people. This helps them get along better with others, resolve conflicts, and do better on group projects at school.
- When girls lead in the world, they **Take Action** to change the world for the better. Starting as young Girl Scouts, girls learn how to see problems—such as a food pantry in need of donations or an elderly neighbor who could use a hand—and come up with a solution.

In other words: **Discover + Connect + Take Action = leadership**. And everything you do with girls in Girl Scouting is aimed at giving them the benefits of these Three Keys to Leadership.

More details about the benefits (or outcomes) Girl Scouts offers girls can be found in *Transforming Leadership Continued*, available online at

www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/gsoutcomes/transforming_leadership_continued.asp.

ToGetHerThere

Research tells us that today's girls are backing down from leadership opportunities and that many of those who **do** want to lead don't believe they have what it takes. But as Girl Scouts, girls find themselves practicing leadership and working toward goals in a supportive environment surrounded by people who want to see them succeed: you, the volunteers!

In 2012, its centennial year, Girl Scouts launched ToGetHerThere, the boldest advocacy and fundraising cause campaign dedicated to girls' leadership issues in the nation's history. This multi-year effort is helping break down social barriers that hinder girls from leading and achieving success in everything from technology and science to business and industry.

ToGetHerThere's goal is to create gender-balanced leadership in one generation. To do that, Girl Scouts is asking all adult members of society to help girls reach their leadership potential and place this urgent issue front and center on the national agenda. We all have a role to play in helping girls achieve their full leadership potential because when girls succeed, so does society. Together, we can get her there.

For more about ToGetHerThere, including how to spread the word about the campaign, visit www.ToGetHerThere.org, www.facebook.com/togetherthere, and <http://www.twitter.com/togetherthere>.

Fun with Purpose

Girl Scouting isn't just about what we do; it's also about how we do it. Over time, we've noticed that girls will give almost any activity a try, as long as the adults guiding them take the right approach. Girl Scout activities ask adult volunteers to engage girls in three ways that make Girl Scouting unique from school and other extracurricular activities:

- **Girl-led:** Girls of every grade level take an active role in determining what, where, when, why, and how they'll structure activities. Of course, you'll provide guidance appropriate to the age of the girls. Plus, you'll encourage them to bring their ideas and imaginations into the experiences, make choices, and lead the way as much as they can.
- **Learning by doing:** This means that girls have active, hands-on experiences. It also means they have a chance to think and talk about what they are learning as a result of the activities. This kind of reflection is what helps girls gain self-awareness and confidence to dive into new challenges. So make sure girls always have a chance to talk with each other—and you—after an activity. It doesn't have to be formal, just get them talking and see what happens.
- **Cooperative learning:** Girls learn so much about themselves and each other when they team up on common goals. Plus, great teamwork helps girls in school now and on the job later. Look for ways to help each girl contribute her unique talents and ideas to the team, help all girls see how their differences are valuable to the team, and coach girls to resolve their conflicts productively.

We call these three methods “processes.” You might be wondering how to put these processes into action with the girls in your group. These steps should help you get started:

1. After you help girls choose a National Leadership Journey (there's more information about those [later in this chapter](#)), make sure you get the adult guide that accompanies the Journey. As you read through that guide, look at how the activities, conversations, and choice-making options are set up using the three processes. Once you start practicing the processes, you'll probably find that they become second nature when you're with girls.
2. If you haven't already, watch [Girl Scouting 101](#), our online introduction to volunteering with Girl Scouts. (Contact your council for the password.) If you've already watched Girl Scouting 101, you may want to review its “What Girl Scouts Do” section to brush up on the processes.
3. Want more detail about the processes? Take a look at the examples in *Transforming Leadership Continued*, available online at www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/gscoutcomes/transforming_leadership_continued.asp.

One last tip about using the processes: The girls' time in Girl Scouting isn't a to-do list, so please don't ever feel that checking activities off a list is more important than tuning in to what interests and excites girls and sparks their imaginations. Projects don't have to come out perfectly, and girls don't have to fill their vests and sashes with badges: what matters most is the fun and learning that happens as girls make experiences their own.

The National Program Portfolio

You'll use several books, awards, and online resources to bring the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to life with girls. We strongly recommend that each girl has her own books from the National Program Portfolio. These books—the Journeys and *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*—and national program awards—like badges and pins—are an important part of how Girl Scouting helps girls experience the power of millions of girls changing the world together.

As you use the National Program Portfolio with girls, keep in mind that Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) creates materials to serve our vast and diverse community of girls. To help bring topics off the page and into life, we sometimes provide girls and volunteers with suggestions about what people across the country and around the world are doing. We also sometimes make suggestions about movies, books, music, websites, and more that might spark girls' interests.

At GSUSA, we know that not every example or suggestion we provide will work for every girl, family, volunteer, or community. In partnership with those who assist you with your Girl Scout group—including parents, faith groups, schools, and community organizations—we trust you to choose real-life topic experts from your community as well as movies, books, music, websites, and other opportunities that are most appropriate for the girls in your area to enrich their Girl Scout activities.

We are proud to be the premier leadership organization for girls. While girls and their families may have questions or interest in programming relevant to other aspects of girls' lives, we are not always the organization best suited to offer such information. Your council can recommend local organizations or resources that are best suited to do so.

Also note that GSUSA continuously reviews national program content to guarantee that all our resources are relevant and age appropriate, and that their content doesn't include violence, sex, inappropriate language, or risky behavior. We value your input and hope that you will bring to your council's attention any content that concerns you.

National Leadership Journeys

National Leadership Journeys help Girl Scouts learn and practice the Three Keys, aid their communities, and earn leadership awards, progressing up Girl Scouting's [Ladder of Leadership](#) as they do so. There are three series of Leadership Journeys, each about a different theme; the girls in your group can choose the theme that interests them most.

After the girls choose a Journey, spend an hour or two reading the companion adult guide. It'll give you a feel for how to bring the Journey to life, and you'll get ideas for the steps girls will take (with your support) to earn their leadership awards. Don't worry; you don't have to be any kind of expert to do a Leadership Journey with girls. You just need to be willing to dive in and enjoy the learning-by-doing experience with them.

Each Journey adult guide contains sample plans that you can customize to fit the needs of your group, whether you guide a troop, volunteer at a Girl Scout camp, mentor girls on a travel adventure, or engage with girls in a series or at an event. Each Journey also offers opportunities to enjoy the longstanding traditions of Girl Scouting, from ceremonies and songs to earning awards and skill badges.

The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting and National Proficiency Badges

In addition to the Leadership Journeys, girls at each Girl Scout grade level have their own edition of *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*—a binder full of information about being a Girl Scout and how to earn certain badges, including ones about financial literacy and the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Girls who want to earn more badges can add a Skill Building Badge Set tied to the theme of the Journey they've chosen.

When a Girl Scout earns a badge, it shows that she's learned a new skill, such as how to make a healthy snack or take great digital photos. It may even spark an interest at school or plant the seed for a future career. Please remember that we don't expect you to be an expert in the badge topics; just have fun learning by doing with the girls!

While you're having fun, keep in mind: Badges are for educating girls, not for decorating their sashes and vests. The quality of a girl's experience—and the skills and pride she gains from earning leadership awards and skill-building badges—far outweigh the quantity of badges she earns.

If you're working with Girl Scout Daisies, please note that they earn Petals and Leaves (which form a flower) instead of badges.

There are several ways to supplement the National Program Portfolio and enhance girls' time as Girl Scouts—and have fun while you're doing it! A few of them are outlined below.

Digital programming

The [For Girls section](#) of girlscouts.org features a variety of videos, games, blogs, and other fun ways to enrich the GSLE. Girls will find opportunities to post their ideas for public service announcements on topics that matter to them and get inspired by watching short videos that tell the stories of women from all walks of life. If you work with Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies, you might like the site's print-and-play coloring and game pages—great for having on hand when energetic girls get together! Both girls and volunteers will have fun with Badge Explorer, an overview of all of the badges girls can earn. For Girls is updated frequently, so check back often—and invite girls to do the same!

Make Your Own Badge

Girls are welcome to develop and complete activities to make their own badge—a great way to explore a topic of personal interest. (In addition, girls who make their own badge will learn *how* to learn, which is an important skill to have in school, on the job, and in life!) Once girls check the Awards Log in *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* to make sure there's not already a badge on the topic they want to explore, they'll follow steps outlined in that handbook to complete the requirements for their very own badge. Even better, they can go online to design and purchase a badge that later arrives in the mail! For more information, check out the [Make Your Own Badge website](#).

My Promise, My Faith Pin

The Girl Scout Law includes many of the principles and values common to most faiths. And even though Girl Scouts is a secular organization, we've always encouraged girls to explore spirituality via their own faiths. Girls of all grade levels can now earn the My Promise, My Faith pin. By carefully examining the Girl Scout Law and directly tying it to tenets of her faith, a girl can earn the pin once each year she participates in Girl Scouting. You can find more about the requirements for this pin in *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program

In addition to giving girls an opportunity to earn money to fund their Girl Scouting goals, taking part in the Girl Scout Cookie Program teaches girls five important skills that serve them throughout their lives: goal setting, money management, people skills, decision making, and business ethics. For more on everything involved in the Girl Scout Cookie Program, flip to the [“Managing Group Finances”](#) chapter of this handbook.

Outdoor adventures

Being outside is a great way for girls to explore leadership, build skills, and develop a deep appreciation for nature. Whether they spend an afternoon exploring a local hiking trail or a week at camp, being outside gives girls an opportunity to grow, explore, and have fun in a whole new environment. For more information, visit www.girlscouts.org/program/basics/camping.

Spanish-language resources

Two of the Journey series—*It’s Your World—Change It!* and *It’s Your Planet—Love It!*—are available in Spanish, as are two new supporting books for Spanish-speaking volunteers to use with Spanish-speaking and bilingual Girl Scout Brownies and Juniors: *¡Las Girl Scouts Brownies Cambian El Mundo! (Girl Scout Brownies Change the World!)* and *¡Las Girl Scouts Juniors Apuntan a las Estrellas! (Girl Scout Juniors Reach for the Stars!)*. The books, which introduce the Girl Scout movement to these girls and their families, provide everything you need for a fun-filled year in Girl Scouting. For more information on these resources, contact your council.

Putting It All Together

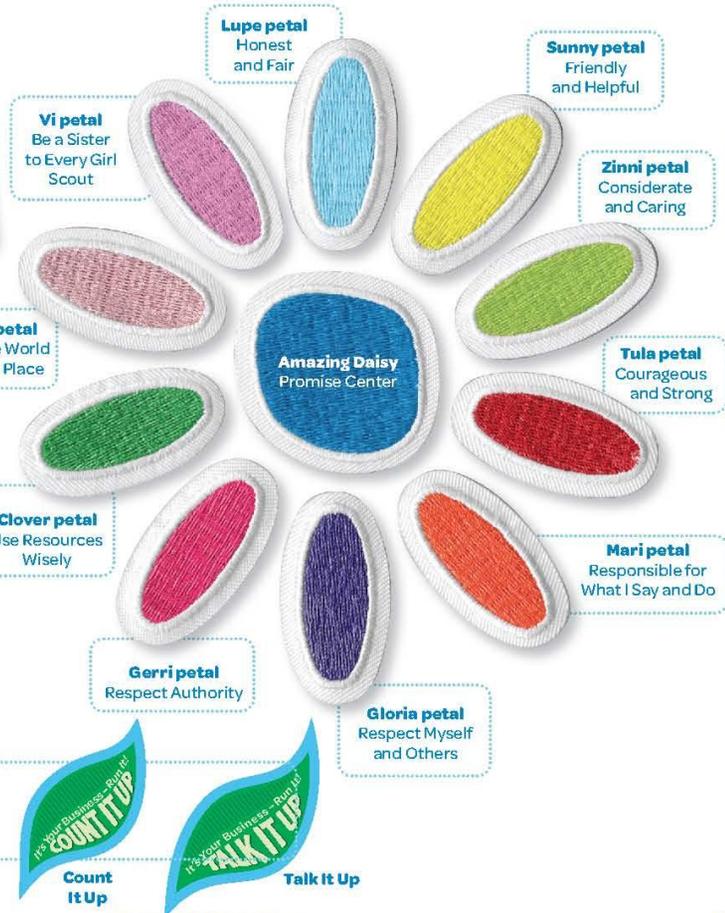
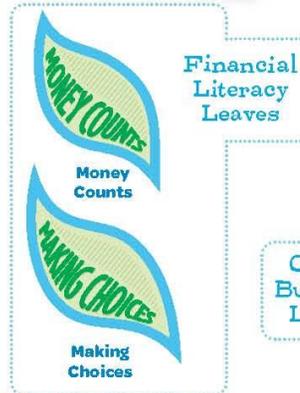
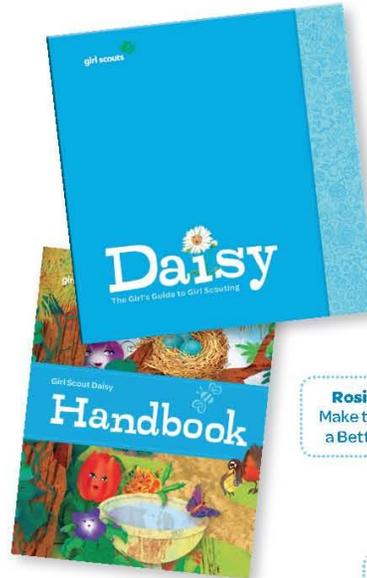
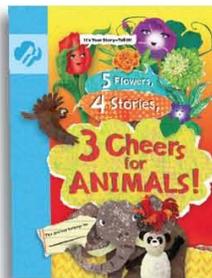
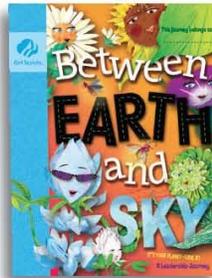
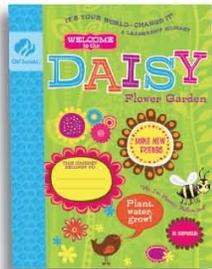
All of this may seem overwhelming, but don’t worry. The next few pages give you an idea of what’s involved when you use the National Program Portfolio with girls at each Girl Scout grade level.

What Daisies Do*

KINDERGARTEN - 1ST GRADE

Choose a Journey

Use The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting

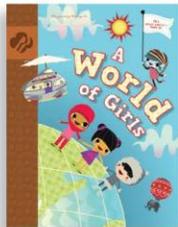
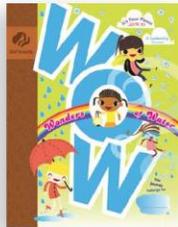


*Remember to add in trips, outdoor adventures, the cookie sale and more! See ideas in all the girl's books.

What Brownies Do*

2ND - 3RD GRADE

Choose a Journey and earn the awards



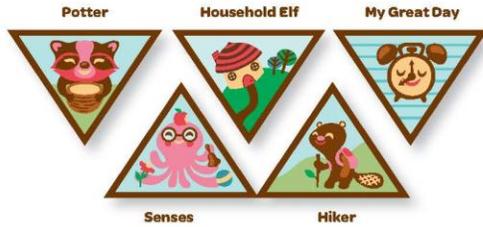
* Remember to add in trips, outdoor adventures, the cookie sale and more! See ideas in all the girl's books.

Want to earn more Badges? Add the Badge sets

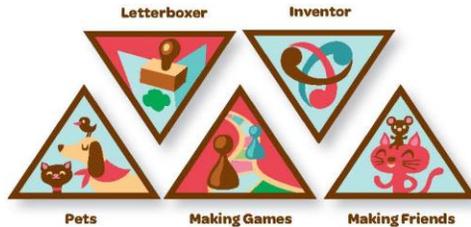
Brownie Quest



WOW! Wonders of Water



A World of Girls



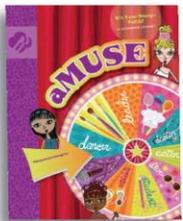
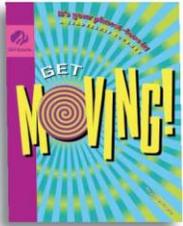
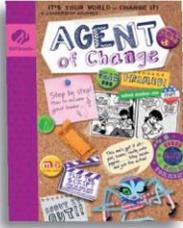
Use them all with The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting



What Juniors Do*

4TH - 5TH GRADE

Choose a Journey and earn the awards



* Remember to add in trips, outdoor adventures, the cookie sale and more! See ideas in all the girl's books.

Want to earn more Badges? Add the Badge sets

Agent of Change

Digital Photographer Staying Fit



GET MOVING!

Jeweler Gardener



aMUSE

Geocacher Animal Habitats



Playing the Past Product Designer Social Butterfly

Use them all with The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting



Financial Literacy



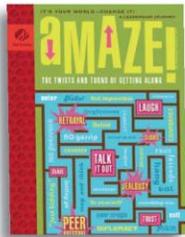
Cookie Business



What Cadettes Do*

6TH - 8TH GRADE

Choose a Journey and earn the awards



* Remember to add in trips, outdoor adventures, the cookie sale and more! See ideas in all the girl's books.

Want to earn more Badges? Add the Badge sets

aMAZE!



Breathe



MEdia



Use them all with The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting



Comic Artist Good Sportsmanship Finding Common Ground



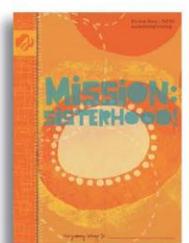
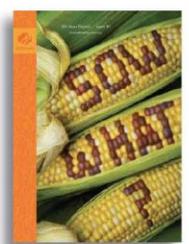
Budgeting Comparison Shopping Financing My Dreams



What Seniors Do*

9TH - 10TH GRADE

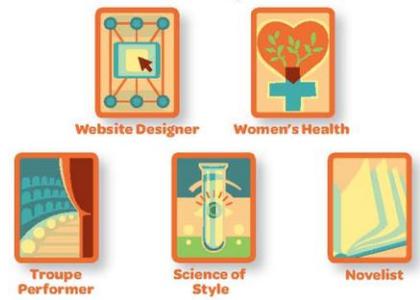
Choose a Journey and earn the awards



* Remember to add in trips, outdoor adventures, the cookie sale and more! See ideas in all the girl's books.

Want to earn more Badges? Add the Badge sets

GIRLtopia



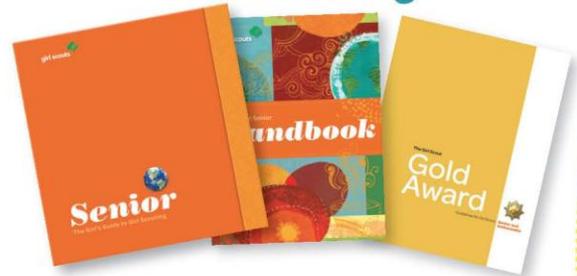
Sow What?



MISSION: SISTERHOOD!



Use them all with The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting

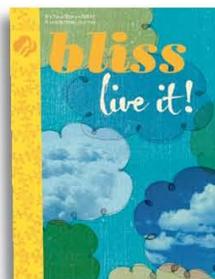
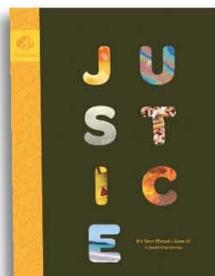
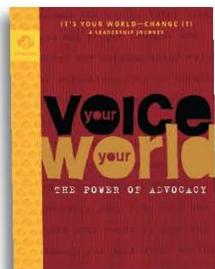


What Ambassadors Do*

11TH - 12TH GRADE

Choose a Journey

Use The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting



* Remember to add in trips, outdoor adventures, the cookie sale and more! See ideas in all the girl's books.



Photographer



Coaching



Public Policy



Dinner Party



Ambassador First Aid



Ambassador Girl Scout Way



Water

Financial Literacy



On My Own



Good Credit

Cookie Business



Research & Development



P&L

Emblems and Patches

In addition to the leadership awards tied to the Journeys and the National Proficiency badges, girls can show they belong by adding emblems to the front of their vests or sashes and participation patches on the back.

- **Emblems** show membership in Girl Scouts, a particular council, a particular troop, or in some other Girl Scout group. These can be worn on the front of a sash or vest (see the diagram in the handbook section of *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* to see where these are placed).
- **Participation patches** represent activities girls have tried and are fun ways for girls to remember special events they've attended. Since these patches and pins aren't tied to skill-building activities, they are worn on the back of a girl's sash or vest.

You can purchase emblems and patches—along with badges and leadership awards—at your council's Girl Scout shop at www.gswny.org/Shop/. Also check out Girl Scout emblems, earned awards, patches, and pins where you not only find a cool list of the earned awards for each grade level but also can click on a link that shows you exactly where girls can place all their emblems, awards, badges pins, and patches on their vests and sashes!

Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards

The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards are Girl Scouting's highest awards. These awards offer girls relevant, grade-level-appropriate challenges related to teamwork, goal setting, and community networking and leadership. They also engage girls in building networks that not only support them in their award projects, but in new educational and career opportunities.

Like everything girls do in Girl Scouting, the steps to earning these awards are rooted in the GSLE. This is why, to earn each of these awards, girls first complete a grade-level Journey (two Journeys for the Gold Award or a Silver Award and one Journey). With Journeys, girls experience the keys to leadership and learn to identify community needs, work in partnership with their communities, and carry out Take Action projects that make a lasting difference. They can then use the skills they developed during a Journey to develop and execute projects for their Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. Girl Scouts will be introducing a web app that takes girls step-by-step through the Gold Award requirements. Visit www.girlscouts.org/MyGoldAward to take a peek.

Did you know that a Girl Scout who has earned her Gold Award immediately rises one rank in all four branches of the U.S. Military? A number of college-scholarship opportunities also await Gold Award designees. A girl does not, however, have to earn a Bronze or Silver Award before earning the Girl Scout Gold Award. She is eligible to earn any recognition at the grade level in which she is registered.

As a Girl Scout volunteer, encourage girls to go for it by earning these awards at the Junior through Ambassador levels. Check out some of the award projects girls in your council are doing and talk to a few past recipients of the Girl Scout Gold Award. You'll be inspired when you see and hear what girls can accomplish as leaders—and by the confidence, values, and team-building expertise they gain while doing so. And imagine the impact girls have on their communities, country, and even the world as they identify problems they care about, team with others, and act to make change happen!

All this, of course, starts with you—a Girl Scout volunteer! Encourage girls to go after Girl Scouting's highest awards—information on the awards and guidelines for you to use when helping girls earn their awards are also available [online](#).



A Tradition of Honoring Girls

From the beginning of Girl Scouts, one prestigious award has recognized the girls who make a difference in their communities and in their own lives. The first of these awards, in 1916, was the Golden Eagle of Merit. In 1919, the name changed to The Golden Eaglet, and in 1920, the requirements for The Golden Eaglet were updated. The First Class Award existed for only two years, from 1938–1940, and was replaced in 1940 with The Curved Bar Award, the requirements for which were updated in 1947. In 1963, GSUSA re-introduced the First Class Award, for a girl who was an “all-around” person, with skills in many fields and a proficiency in one. Today’s highest award, the Girl Scout Gold Award, was introduced in 1980.

Other Initiatives and Opportunities

Other exciting initiatives and opportunities exist to support the GSLE. In the past, these have covered topics like the environment, robotics, and space exploration. You can find out how to engage your group in opportunities like these by contacting your council or by visiting www.girlscouts.org/program/basics and clicking on “Program Basics” on the left side of the screen. Note that councils may offer different experiences, based on availability of resources and partners in your area.

Girl Scout Traditions and Celebrations

Throughout the long history of Girl Scouts, certain traditions remain meaningful and important and are still practiced today. This section gives you an overview of annual celebrations in the Girl Scout year, as well as other revered Girl Scout traditions. Be sure to look in *The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting* and Leadership Journeys for more information on songs, historical anecdotes, traditions, and ceremonies.

Girl Scout Calendar

Girl Scouts celebrate several special days each year, which you’re encouraged to include in your group planning.

- **February 22:** World Thinking Day (the birthday of both Lord Baden-Powell and Lady Olave Baden-Powell, the originators of Boy Scouts and the Scouting Movement worldwide).
- **March 12:** The birthday of Girl Scouting in the USA. The first troop meeting was held in Savannah, Georgia, on this date in 1912. Note that Girl Scout Week begins the Sunday before March 12 (a day known as “Girl Scout Sunday”) and extends through the Saturday following March 12 (a day known as “Girl Scout Sabbath”).
- **Third week in April:** Volunteer Appreciation Week centers on the long-standing National Girl Scout Leaders’ Day (April 22), but expands the definition of volunteers beyond troop leaders to include all the volunteers who work in so many ways on behalf of girls in Girl Scouting.
- **October 31:** Founder’s Day (Juliette Gordon Low’s birthday).



World Thinking Day: February 22

World Thinking Day, first created in 1926, offers a special day for Girl Scouts and Girl Guides from around the world to “think” of each other and give thanks and appreciation to their sister Girl Scouts. February 22 is the mutual birthday of Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement, and his wife, Olave, who served as World Chief Guide.

Today, girls honor World Thinking Day by earning the [World Thinking Day award](#), which focuses on an annual theme selected by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. They also show their appreciation and friendship on World Thinking Day not only by extending warm wishes but also by contributing to the [Juliette Low World Friendship Fund](#), which helps offer Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting to more girls and young women worldwide.

Time-Honored Ceremonies

Ceremonies play an important part in Girl Scouts and are used not only to celebrate accomplishments, experience time-honored traditions, and reinforce the values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, but also to encourage girls to take a short pause in their busy lives and connect with their fellow Girl Scouts in fun and meaningful ways. Many examples of ceremonies—for awards, meeting openings and closings, and so on—are sewn right into the Journeys, including ideas for new ceremonies girls can create.

Girls use ceremonies for all sorts of reasons. Here’s a brief list, in alphabetical order, so that you can become familiar with the most common Girl Scout ceremonies:

- **Bridging** ceremonies mark a girl’s move from one grade level of Girl Scouting to another, such as from Junior to Cadette. (Note that **Fly-Up** is a special bridging ceremony for Girl Scout Brownies who are bridging to Juniors.)
- **Closing** ceremonies finalize the meeting, with expectations for the next. A closing ceremony may be as simple as a hand squeeze while standing in a circle.
- **Court of Awards** is a time to recognize girls who have accomplished something spectacular during the Girl Scout year.
- **Flag** ceremonies can be part of any activity that honors the American flag.
- **Girl Scout Bronze (or Silver or Gold) Award** ceremonies honor Girl Scout Juniors who have earned the Girl Scout Bronze Award (Cadettes who have earned the Silver Award; Seniors or Ambassadors who have earned the Gold Award), and are usually held for a group and combined with council recognition.
- **Girl Scouts’ Own** is a girl-led program that allows girls to explore their feelings and beliefs around a topic (such as the importance of friendship or the personal meaning they get from the Girl Scout Promise and Law) using the spoken word, favorite songs, poetry, or other methods of expression. It is never a religious ceremony.
- **Investiture** welcomes new members, girls or adults, into the Girl Scout family for the first time. Girls receive their Girl Scout, Brownie Girl Scout, or Daisy Girl Scout pin at this time.
- **Opening** ceremonies start troop meetings and can also begin other group meetings.
- **Pinning** ceremonies help celebrate when girls receive grade-level Girl Scout pins.

Rededication ceremonies are opportunities for girls and adults to renew their commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law.



Hosting a Girl-Led Event

If you're working with girls who want to host an event—large or small—be sure girls are leading the event-planning, instead of sitting by passively while you or another adult plans the event. To get girls started, ask them to think about the following questions:

- What sort of event do we have in mind?
- Who is our intended audience?
- Does the audience have to be invited, or can anyone come?
- What's our main topic or focus?
- What's our objective—what do we hope to accomplish at the end of the day?
- Will one or more speakers need to be invited? If so, who? How do we find speakers?
- Where will the event take place?
- Is there a charge for this venue?
- Is the venue large enough to accommodate the audience?
- Do we have to obtain permission to use this venue? If so, from whom?
- Are there adequate facilities for the audience? If not, how much will extra portable toilets cost, and how many do we need?
- Is there adequate parking or a drop-off point for girls?
- Do we need tables? chairs? podiums? microphones? speakers?
- What sort of entertainment will we provide?
- Will we provide or sell refreshments? If so, what kinds?
- How many chaperones will we need? Who will we ask?
- What emergency care do we need to plan for? Is the event large enough that local police and fire departments need to be notified?
- Do we need to purchase additional insurance for non-Girl Scouts?
- How will we advertise the event?
- What decorations will we use?
- Will we give away any keepsakes?
- Will we charge for the event?
- Who will set up the event?
- Who will clean up after the event?
- How will we determine whether the event was a success?

Ideas for girl-led events with family, friends, and community experts are also available in the Leadership Journey adult guides!

Signs, Songs, Handshake, and More!

Over time, any organization is going to develop a few common signals that everyone understands. Such is the case with Girl Scouts, which has developed a few unique ways to greet, acknowledge, and communicate, some of which are listed here.

Girl Scout Sign



The idea of the sign came from the days of chivalry, when armed knights greeted friendly knights by raising the right hand, palm open, as a sign of friendship. To give the sign, raise the three middle fingers of the right hand palm forward and shoulder high (the three extended fingers represent the three parts of the Girl Scout Promise). Girls give the sign when they:

- Say the Promise or Law.
- Are welcomed into Girl Scouts at an investiture ceremony that welcomes new members.
- Receive an award, patch, pin, or other recognition.
- Greet other Girl Scouts and Girl Guides.

Girl Scout Handshake



The handshake is a more formal way of greeting other Girl Scouts, and is also an appropriate way to receive an award. Shake left hands and give the Girl Scout Sign with your right hand.

Quiet Sign



The quiet sign can be extremely useful to you as a volunteer, so teach it to girls during your first meeting. Raise your right hand high with an open palm. As girls in the group see the sign, they stop talking and also raise their hands. Once everyone is silent, the meeting can begin.

Girl Scout Slogan and Motto

The Girl Scout slogan is, “Do a good turn daily.” The Girl Scout motto is, “Be prepared.”

Songs

Whether singing around a campfire or joining a chorus of voices on the Mall in Washington, D.C., Girl Scouts have always enjoyed the fun and fellowship of music. In fact, the first *Girl Scout Song Book*, a collection of songs put together by girl members, was published in 1925.

Songs can be used to open or close meetings, enhance ceremonies, lighten a load while hiking, or share a special moment with other Girl Scouts. For tips on choosing and leading songs, go to http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/activity_ideas/songleading.asp. A variety of songbooks are also available for purchase. Check out your council shop or visit the [GSUSA online shop](#).

Chapter 3: Engaging Girls at All Grade Levels

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you'll have the opportunity to guide girls of all backgrounds, behaviors, skills, and abilities. You'll help her develop leadership skills she can use now and as she grows—all in a safe and accepting environment. This chapter gives you tips for doing just that.

Arranging a Time and Place for Girl-Led Meetings

When and how often to meet is up to you, your co-volunteers, parents, and girls: it may just be one time for this particular group of girls. Or, if you meet regularly, what day and time work best for the girls, for you, for your co-volunteers, and for other adults who will be presenting or mentoring? Once per week, twice a month, once a month? Is after-school best? Can your co-volunteers meet at that time, or will meetings work better in the evenings or on the weekends?

Where to meet can be a bit trickier: a meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all girls. You might consider using meeting rooms at schools, libraries, houses or worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places girls enjoy spending time.

Here are a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations:

- **Cost:** The space should be free to use.
- **Size:** Make sure the space is large enough accommodate the whole group and all planned activities.
- **Availability:** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.
- **Resources:** Determine what types of furnishings (table? chairs?) come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby of some sort, where you can store supplies.
- **Safety:** Ensure that the space is safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and has at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure a first-aid equipment is on hand.
- **Facilities:** Sanitary and accessible toilets are critical.
- **Communication-friendly:** Be sure your cell phone works in the meeting space.
- **Allergen-free:** Ensure that pet dander and other common allergens won't bother susceptible girls during meetings.
- **Accessibility:** Be sure the space can accommodate girls with disabilities, as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.

If this is your first time asking for a Girl Scout meeting place, here are a few speaking points to get you started:

"I'm a Girl Scout volunteer, with a group of _____ girls. We're doing lots of great things for girls and for the community, like _____ and _____. We're all about leadership—the kind that girls use in their daily lives and the kind that makes our community better. We'd love to hold our meetings here because _____."

Understanding Healthy Development in Girls

Just being attentive to what girls are experiencing as they mature is a big help to girls. So take some time to understand the likes, needs, and abilities of girls at different ages.

As you listen and learn along with girls, you may find it useful to review the highlights of their development. What follows are the developmental abilities and needs of girls at various grade levels. You'll also find these listed in the adult guide of each Leadership Journey. Plus, the activities in the Journeys are set up with the

following guidelines in mind! Of course, each girl is an individual, so these are only guidelines that help you get to know the girls.

Girl Scout Daisies



At the Girl Scout Daisy level (kindergarten and first grade), girls . . .	This means . . .
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	<i>They'll enjoy going on nature walks and outdoor scavenger hunts.</i>
Are great builders and budding artists, though they are still developing their fine motor skills.	<i>Encouraging them to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need assistance holding scissors, cutting in a straight line, and so on.</i>
Love to move and dance.	<i>They might especially enjoy marching like a penguin, dancing like a dolphin, or acting out how they might care for animals in the jungle.</i>
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	<i>Showing instead of telling, for example, about how animals are cared for. Plan visits to animal shelters, farms, or zoos; meet care providers; or make a creative bird feeder.</i>
Are only beginning to learn about basic number concepts, time, and money.	<i>You'll want to take opportunities to count out supplies together—and, perhaps, the legs on a caterpillar!</i>
Are just beginning to write and spell, and they don't always have the words for what they're thinking or feeling.	<i>That having girls draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate is easier and more meaningful for them.</i>
Know how to follow simple directions and respond well to recognition for doing so.	<i>Being specific and offering only one direction at a time. Acknowledge when girls have followed directions well to increase their motivation to listen and follow again.</i>

Girl Scout Brownies



At the Girl Scout Brownie level (second and third grade), girls . . .	This means . . .
Have lots of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	<i>Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.</i>
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	<i>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances.</i>
Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.	<i>Letting girls lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow girls as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.</i>
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	<i>Doing more than just reading to girls about the Brownie Elf's adventures. Ask girls questions to gauge their understanding and allow them to role play their own</i>

	<i>pretend visit to a new country.</i>
Need clear directions and structure, and like knowing what to expect.	<i>Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share it at the start.</i>
Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.	<i>Offering support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.</i>
Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, etc.	<i>Encouraging girls to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need some assistance, however, holding scissors, threading needles, and so on.</i>
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	<i>Girls might like to create a play about welcoming a new girl to their school, or tell a story through dance or creative movement.</i>
Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job done well.	<i>Acknowledging when the girls have listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again!</i>

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Girl Scout Juniors</h2> 	
At the Girl Scout Junior level (fourth and fifth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Want to make decisions and express their opinions.	<i>Whenever possible, allowing girls to make decisions and express their opinions through guided discussion and active reflection activities. Also, have girls set rules for listening to others' opinions and offering assistance in decision making.</i>
Are social and enjoy doing things in groups.	<i>Allowing girls to team-up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities.</i>
Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others.	<i>Although it's okay to have expectations, the expectation is not perfection! Share your own mistakes and what you learned from them, and be sure to create an environment where girls can be comfortable sharing theirs.</i>
Are concerned about equity and fairness.	<i>Not shying away from discussing why rules are in place, and having girls develop their own rules for their group.</i>
Are beginning to think abstractly and critically, and are capable of flexible thought. Juniors can consider more than one perspective, as well as the feelings and attitudes of another.	<i>Asking girls to explain why they made a decision, share their visions of their roles in the future, and challenge their own and others' perspectives.</i>
Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination.	<i>Engaging girls in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow girls to express themselves through written word,</i>

	<i>choreography, and so on.</i>
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	<i>Girls might like to tell a story through playwriting, playing an instrument, or choreographing a dance.</i>
May be starting puberty, which means beginning breast development, skin changes, and weight changes. Some may be getting their periods.	<i>Being sensitive to girls' changing bodies, possible discomfort over these changes, and their desire for more information. Create an environment that acknowledges and celebrates this transition as healthy and normal for girls.</i>

Girl Scout Cadettes	
At the Girl Scout Cadette level (sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Are going through puberty, including changes in their skin, body-shape, and weight. They're also starting their menstrual cycles and have occasional shifts in mood.	<i>Being sensitive to the many changes Cadettes are undergoing and acknowledging that these changes are as normal as growing taller! Girls need time to adapt to their changing bodies, and their feelings about their bodies may not keep up. Reinforce that, as with everything else, people go through puberty in different ways and at different times.</i>
Are starting to spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>That girls will enjoy teaming-up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities, as well as tackling relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects.</i>
Can be very self-conscious—wanting to be like everyone else, but fearing they are unique in their thoughts and feelings.	<i>Encouraging girls to share, but only when they are comfortable. At this age, they may be more comfortable sharing a piece of artwork or a fictional story than their own words. Throughout the activities, highlight and discuss differences as positive, interesting, and beautiful.</i>
Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience what's known as "fun failure:" girls learn from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

Girl Scout Seniors	
At the Girl Scout Senior level (ninth and tenth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Are beginning to clarify their own values, consider alternative points of view on controversial issues,	<i>Asking girls to explain the reasoning behind their decisions. Engage girls in role-play and performances, where others</i>

and see multiple aspects of a situation.	<i>can watch and offer alternative solutions.</i>
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and are able to plan and reflect on their own learning experiences.	<i>Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.</i>
Spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>That girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.</i>
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	<i>Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.</i>
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and so on.	<i>Acknowledging girls' pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.</i>
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience what's known as "fun failure:" girls learn from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Girl Scout Ambassadors</h2> 	
At the Girl Scout Ambassador level (eleventh and twelfth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Can see the complexity of situations and controversial issues—they understand that problems often have no clear solution and that varying points of view may each have merit.	<i>Inviting girls to develop stories as a group, and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.</i>
Have strong problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, and can adapt logical thinking to real-life situations. Ambassadors recognize and incorporate practical limitations to solutions.	<i>Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.</i>
Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>Girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through artistic</i>

	<i>endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.</i>
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	<i>Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.</i>
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, etc.	<i>Acknowledging girls' pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.</i>
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home—and are looking to their futures.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience what's known as "fun failure." Girls learn from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

Creating a Safe Space for Girls

A safe space is one in which girls feel as though they can be themselves, without explanation, judgment, or ridicule. Girl Scout research shows that girls are looking for an emotionally safe environment, where confidentiality is respected and they can express themselves without fear.

The environment you create is as important—maybe more—than the activities girls do; it's the key to developing the sort of group that girls want to be part of. The following sections share some tips on creating a warm, safe environment for girls.

Girl-Adult Partnership



Girl Scouting is for the enjoyment and benefit of the girls, so meetings are built around girls' ideas. When you put the girls first, you're helping develop a team relationship, making space for the development of leadership skills, and allowing girls to benefit from the guidance, mentoring, and coaching of caring adults.

The three Girl Scout processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) are integral to the girl-adult partnership. Take time to read about processes and think about how to incorporate them into your group's experiences. (See the ["Girl Scouting as a National Experience" chapter](#) of this handbook for more about using the Journey adult guides.)

Recognizing and Supporting Each Girl

Girls look up to their volunteers. They need to know that you consider each of them an important person. They can survive a poor meeting place or an activity that flops, but they cannot endure being ignored or rejected. Recognize acts of trying as well as instances of clear success. Emphasize the positive qualities that make each girl worthy and unique. Be generous with praise and stingy with rebuke. Help girls find ways to show acceptance of and support for one another.

Promoting Fairness

Girls are sensitive to injustice. They forgive mistakes if they are sure you are trying to be fair. They look for fairness in the ways responsibilities are shared, in handling of disagreements and in responses to performance and accomplishment. When possible, consult girls as to what they think is fair before decisions are made. Explain your reasoning and show why you did something. Be willing to apologize if needed. Try to see that the responsibilities, as well as the chances for feeling important, are equally divided. Help girls explore and decide for themselves the fair ways of solving problems, carrying out activities, and responding to behavior and accomplishments.

Building Trust

Girls need your belief in them and your support when they try new things. They must be sure you will not betray a confidence. Show girls you trust them to think for themselves and use their own judgment. Help them make the important decisions in the group. Help them correct their own mistakes. Help girls give and show trust toward one another. Help them see how trust can be built, lost, regained, and strengthened.

Managing Conflict

Conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, and when handled constructively can actually enhance communication and relationships. At the very least, Girl Scouts are expected to practice self-control and diplomacy so that conflicts do not erupt into regrettable incidents. Shouting, verbal abuse, or physical confrontations are never warranted and cannot be tolerated in the Girl Scout environment.

When a conflict arises between girls or a girl and a volunteer, get those involved to sit down together and talk calmly and in a nonjudgmental manner. (Each party may need some time—a few days or a week—to calm down before being able to do this.) Although talking in this way can be uncomfortable and difficult, it does lay the groundwork for working well together in the future. Whatever you do, **do not** spread your complaint around to others—that won't help the situation and causes only embarrassment and anger.

If a conflict persists, be sure you explain the matter to your volunteer support team. If the supervisor cannot resolve the issues satisfactorily (or if the problem involves the supervisor), the issue can be taken to the next level of supervision and, ultimately, contact your council if you need extra help.

Inspiring Open Communication

Girls want someone who will listen to what they think, feel, and want to do. They like having someone they can talk to about important things, including things that might not seem important to adults. Listen to the girls. Respond with words and actions. Speak your mind openly when you are happy or concerned about something, and encourage girls to do this, too. Leave the door open for girls to seek advice, share ideas and feelings, and propose plans or improvements. Help girls see how open communication can result in action, discovery, better understanding of self and others, and a more comfortable climate for fun and accomplishment.

Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age

When communicating with girls, consider the following tips:

- **Listen:** Listening to girls, as opposed to telling them what to think, feel, or do (no “you shoulds”) is the first step in helping them take ownership of their program.

- **Be honest:** If you're not comfortable with a topic or activity, say so. No one expects you to be an expert on every topic. Ask for alternatives or seek out volunteers with the required expertise. (Owning up to mistakes—and apologizing for them—goes a long way with girls.)
- **Be open to real issues:** For girls, important topics are things like relationships, peer pressure, school, money, drugs, and other serious issues. (You'll also have plenty of time to discuss less weighty subjects.) When you don't know, listen. Also seek help from your council if you need assistance or more information than you currently have.
- **Show respect:** Girls often say that their best experiences were the ones where adults treated them as equal partners. Being spoken to as a young adult helps them grow.
- **Offer options:** Providing flexibility in changing needs and interests shows that you respect the girls and their busy lives. But whatever option is chosen, girls at every grade level also want guidance and parameters.
- **Stay current:** Be aware of the TV shows girls watch, movies they like, books and magazines they read, and music they listen to—not to pretend you have the same interests, but to show you're interested in their world.

One way to communicate with girls is through the LUTE method—listen, understand, tolerate, and empathize. Here is a breakdown of the acronym LUTE to remind you of how to respond when a girl is upset, angry, or confused.

- **L = Listen:** Hear her out, ask for details, and reflect back what you hear, such as, “What happened next?” or “What did she say?”
- **U = Understand:** Try to be understanding of her feelings, with comments such as, “So what I hear you saying is . . .” “I'm sure that upset you,” “I understand why you're unhappy,” and “Your feelings are hurt; mine would be, too.”
- **T = Tolerate:** You can tolerate the feelings that she just can't handle right now on her own. It signifies that you can listen and accept how she is feeling about the situation. Say something like: “Try talking to me about it. I'll listen,” “I know you're mad—talking it out helps,” and “I can handle it—say whatever you want to.”
- **E = Empathize:** Let her know you can imagine feeling what she's feeling, with comments such as, “I'm sure that really hurts” or “I can imagine how painful this is for you.”

Addressing the Needs of Older Girls

Consider the following tips when working with teenage girls:

- Think of yourself as a partner, and as a coach or mentor, as needed (not a “leader”).
- Ask girls what rules they need for safety and what group agreements they need to be a good team.
- Understand that girls need time to talk, unwind, and have fun together.
- Ask what they think and what they want to do.
- Encourage girls to speak their minds.
- Provide structure, but don't micromanage.
- Give everyone a voice in the group.
- Treat girls like partners.
- Don't repeat what's said in the group to anyone outside of it (unless necessary for a girl's safety).



Girl Scout Research Institute

It's amazing what you can learn when you listen to girls.

Since its founding in 2000, the Girl Scout Research Institute has become an internationally recognized center for research and public policy information on the development and well-being of girls. Not just Girl Scouts, but **all** girls.

In addition to research staff, the GSRI draws on experts in child development, education, business, government, and the not-for-profit sector. We provide the youth development field with definitive research reviews that consolidate existing studies. And, by most measures, we are now the leading source of original research on the issues that girls face and the social trends that affect their lives. Visit www.girlscouts.org/research.

When Sensitive Topics Come Up

According to *Feeling Safe: What Girls Say*, a 2003 Girl Scout Research Institute study, girls are looking for groups that allow connection and a sense of close friendship. They want volunteers who are teen savvy and can help them with issues they face, such as bullying, peer pressure, dating, athletic and academic performance, and more. Some of these issues may be considered “sensitive” by parents, and they may have opinions or input about how, and whether, Girl Scouts should cover these topics should be covered with their daughters.

Girl Scouts welcomes and serves girls and families from a wide spectrum of faiths and cultures. When girls wish to participate in discussions or activities that could be considered sensitive—even for some—put the topic on hold until you have spoken with parents and received guidance from your council.

When Girl Scout activities involve sensitive issues, your role is that of a caring adult who can help girls acquire skills and knowledge in a supportive atmosphere, not someone who advocates a particular position.

You should know, GSUSA does not take a position or develop materials on issues relating to human sexuality, birth control, or abortion. We feel our role is to help girls develop self-confidence and good decision-making skills that will help them make wise choices in all areas of their lives. We believe parents and guardians, along with schools and faith communities, are the primary sources of information on these topics.

Parents/guardians make all decisions regarding their girl's participation in Girl Scout program that may be of a sensitive nature. As a volunteer leader, you must get written parental permission for any locally planned program offering that could be considered sensitive. Included on the permission form should be the topic of the activity, any specific content that might create controversy, and any action steps the girls will take when the activity is complete. Be sure to have a form for each girl, and keep the forms on hand in case a problem arises. For activities not sponsored by Girl Scouts, find out in advance (from organizers or other volunteers who may be familiar with the content) what will be presented, and follow your council's guidelines for obtaining written permission.

Report concerns: There may be times when you worry about the health and well-being of girls in your group. Alcohol, drugs, sex, bullying, abuse, depression, and eating disorders are some of the issues girls may encounter. You are on the frontlines of girls' lives, and you are in a unique position to identify a situation in which a girl may need help. If you believe a girl is at risk of hurting herself or others, your role is to promptly bring that information to her parent/guardian or the council so she can get the expert assistance she needs. Your concern about a girl's well-being and safety is taken seriously, and your council will guide you in addressing these concerns.

- Contact a staff member at your Girl Scout council and find out how to refer the girl and her parent/guardian to experts at school or in the community.
- Share your concern with the girl’s family, if this is feasible.

Here are a few signs that could indicate a girl needs expert help:

- Marked changes in behavior or personality (for example, unusual moodiness, aggressiveness, or sensitivity)
- Declining academic performance and/or inability to concentrate
- Withdrawal from school, family activities, or friendships
- Fatigue, apathy, or loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Sleep disturbances
- Increased secretiveness
- Deterioration in appearance and personal hygiene.
- Eating extremes, unexplained weight loss, distorted body image
- Tendency toward perfectionism
- Giving away prized possessions; preoccupation with the subject of death
- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, or fractures
- Avoidance of eye contact or physical contact
- Excessive fearfulness or distrust of adults
- Abusive behavior toward other children, especially younger ones]

Working with Parents and Guardians

Most parents and guardians are helpful and supportive and sincerely appreciate your time and effort on behalf of their daughters. And you almost always have the same goal, which is to make Girl Scouting an enriching experience for their girls. Encourage them to check out www.girlscouts4girls.org to find out how to expand their roles as advocates for their daughters.

Advocating for Girls



The Girl Scouts Public Policy and Advocacy Office in Washington, D.C., builds relationships with members of Congress, White House officials, and other federal departments and agencies, continuously informing and educating them about issues important to girls and Girl Scouting. The office also supports Girl Scout councils, at the state and local levels, as they build capacity to be the voice for girls. These advocacy efforts help demonstrate to lawmakers that Girl Scouts is a resource and an authority on issues affecting girls. Visit the Advocacy office at www.girlscouts.org/who_we_are/advocacy.

Using “I” Statements

Perhaps the most important tip for communicating with parents/guardians is for you to use “I” statements instead of “you” statements. “I” statements, which are detailed in the *aMAZE* Journey for Girl Scout Cadettes, tell someone what you need from her or him, while “you” statements may make the person feel defensive.

Here are some examples of “you” statements:

- “Your daughter just isn’t responsible.”
- “You’re not doing your share.”

Now look at “I” statements:

- “I’d like to help your daughter learn to take more responsibility.”
- “I’d really appreciate your help with registration.”

If you need help with specific scenarios involving parents/guardians, try the following:

If a Parent or Guardian . . .	You Can Say . . .
Is uninvolved and asks how she can help but seems to have no idea of how to follow through or take leadership of even the smallest activity,	“I do need your help. Here are some written guidelines on how to prepare for our camping trip.”
Constantly talks about all the ways you could make the group better,	“I need your leadership. Project ideas you would like to develop and lead can fit in well with our plan. Please put your ideas in writing, and perhaps I can help you carry them out.”
Tells you things like, “Denise’s mother is on welfare, and Denise really doesn’t belong in this group,”	“I need your sensitivity. Girl Scouting is for all girls, and by teaching your daughter to be sensitive to others’ feelings you help teach the whole group sensitivity.”
Shifts parental responsibilities to you and is so busy with her own life that she allows no time to help,	“I love volunteering for Girl Scouts and want to make a difference. If you could take a few moments from your busy schedule to let me know what you value about what we’re doing, I’d appreciate it. It would keep me going for another year.”

Arranging Meetings with Parents/Guardians or a Friends-and-Family Network

A parent/guardian meeting, or a meeting of your friends-and-family network (as encouraged in many of the leadership Journeys), is a chance for you to get to know the families of the girls in your group. Before the meeting, be sure you and/or your co-volunteers have done the following:

- For younger girls, arranged for a parent, another volunteer, or a group of older girls to do activities with the girls in your group while you talk with their parents/guardians (if girls will attend the meeting, too)
- Practiced a discussion on the following: Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law; benefits of Girl Scouting for their daughters, including how the GSLE is a world-class system for developing girl leaders; all the fun the girls are going to have; expectations for girls and their parents/guardians; and ideas of how parents and other guardians can participate in and enrich their daughters’ Girl Scout experiences
- Determined when product sales (including Girl Scout cookie activities) will happen in your council; parents/guardians will absolutely want to know
- Determined what information parents should bring to the meeting
- Used the Friends and Family pages provided in the adults guides for many of the Journeys, or created your own one-page information sheet (contact information for you and co-volunteers and helpers, the day and time of each meeting, location of and directions to the meeting place, what to bring with them, and information on how to get Journey resources—books, awards, and keepsakes—and other merchandise like sashes, vests, T-shirts, and so on)

- Gathered or created supplies, including a sign-in sheet, an information sheet, permission forms for parents/guardians (also available from your council), health history forms (as required by your council), and GSUSA registration forms
- Prepared yourself to ask parents and guardians for help, being as specific as you can about the kind of help you will need (the Journey's Friends and Family pages will come in handy here)



Registering Girls in Girl Scouting

Every participant (girl or adult) in Girl Scouting must register and become a member of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). GSUSA membership dues are valid for one year. Membership dues (currently \$15) are sent by the council to GSUSA; no portion of the dues stays with the council. Membership dues may not be transferred to another member and is not refundable.

Pre-registration for the upcoming membership year occurs in the spring. Girls are encouraged to register early to avoid the fall rush. Early registration helps ensure uninterrupted receipt of forms and materials from the council, helps girls and councils plan ahead, and gets girls excited about all the great stuff they want to do as Girl Scouts next year. Girl Scout grade level is determined by the current membership year beginning October 1.

Lifetime membership is available at a reduced rate. A lifetime member must be at least 18 years old (or a 17-year-old high-school graduate) and agree to the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

You're free to structure the parent/guardian meeting in whatever way works for you, but the following structure works for many new volunteers:

- As the girls and adults arrive, ask them to sign in. If the girls' parents/guardians haven't already registered them online, you'll want to email or hand out information so they can do so. If your council uses paper registration forms, you can pass them out at this time. Check with your council for its specific registration guidelines. You may also want to email or hand out a brief information sheet before or at this meeting.
- Open the meeting by welcoming the girls and adults. Introduce yourself and other co-volunteers or helpers. Have adults and girls introduce themselves, discuss whether anyone in their families has been a Girl Scout, and talk about what Girl Scouting means to them. Welcome everyone, regardless of experience, and let them know they will be learning about Girl Scouts today. (If you're new to Girl Scouting, don't worry—just let everyone know you'll be learning about Girl Scouting together!)
- Ask the girls to go with the adult or teen in charge of their activity and begin the discussion.
- Discuss the information you prepared for this meeting:
 - All the fun girls are going to have!
 - When and where the group will meet and some examples of activities the girls might choose to do
 - That a parent/guardian permission form is used for activities outside the group's normal meeting time and place and the importance of completing and returning it
 - How you plan to keep in touch with parents/guardians (a Facebook page or group, Twitter, email, text messaging, a phone tree, or fliers the girls take home are just some ideas)
 - The Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law
 - The Girl Scout program, especially what the GSLE is and what the program does for their daughters
 - When Girl Scout cookies (and other products) will go on sale and how participation in product sales teaches life skills and helps fund group activities

- The cost of membership, which includes annual GSUSA dues, any group payments (ask your council), optional uniforms, and any resources parents/guardians will need to buy (such as a girl's book for a Journey)
 - The availability of financial assistance and how the Girl Scout Cookie Program and other product sales generate funds for the group treasury
 - That families can also make donations to the council—and why they might want to do that!
 - That you may be looking for additional volunteers, and in which areas you are looking (be as specific as possible!)
- If your council doesn't offer online registration and you've distributed paper registration forms, collect them.
 - Remind the group of the next meeting (if you'll have one) and thank everyone for attending. Hold the next meeting when it makes sense for you and your co-volunteers—that may be in two months if face-to-face meetings are best, or not at all if you're diligent about keeping in touch with parents/guardians via Facebook, Twitter, text messages, email, phone calls, or some other form of communication.
 - After the meeting, follow up with any parents/guardians who did not attend, to connect them with the group, inform them of decisions, and discuss how they can best help the girls.

Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

Girl Scouts embraces girls of all abilities, backgrounds, and heritage, with a specific and positive philosophy of inclusion that benefits everyone. Each girl—without regard to socioeconomic status, race, physical or cognitive ability, ethnicity, primary language, or religion—is an equal and valued member of the group, and groups reflect the diversity of the community.

Inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. Inclusion is about belonging, about all girls being offered the same opportunities, about respect and dignity, and about honoring the uniqueness of and differences among us all. You're accepting and inclusive when you:

- Welcome every girl and focus on building community.
- Emphasize cooperation instead of competition.
- Provide a safe and socially comfortable environment for girls.
- Teach respect for, understanding of, and dignity toward all girls and their families.
- Actively reach out to girls and families who are traditionally excluded or marginalized.
- Foster a sense of belonging to community as a respected and valued peer.
- Honor the intrinsic value of each person's life.

A Variety of Formats for Publications

The Hispanic population is the largest-growing in the United States, which is why Girl Scouts has translated many of its publications into Spanish. Over time, Girl Scouts will continue to identify members' needs and produce resources to support those needs, including translating publications into additional languages and formats.

As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, you will find yourself considering the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. As you do this, include the special needs of any members who have disabilities, or whose parents or guardians have disabilities. But

please don't rely on visual cues to inform you of a disability: Approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population has a disability—that's one in five people, of every socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and religion.

As a volunteer, your interactions with girls present an opportunity to improve the way society views girls (and their parents/guardians) with disabilities. Historically, disabilities have been looked at from a deficit viewpoint with a focus on how people with disabilities could be fixed. Today, the focus is on a person's abilities—on what she *can* do rather than on what she cannot.

If you want to find out what a girl with a disability needs to make her Girl Scout experience successful, simply ask her or her parent/guardian. If you are frank and accessible, it's likely they will respond in kind, creating an atmosphere that enriches everyone.

It's important for all girls to be rewarded based on their best efforts—not on the completion of a task. Give any girl the opportunity to do her best and she will. Sometimes that means changing a few rules or approaching an activity in a more creative way. Here are some examples of ways to modify activities:

- Invite a girl to complete an activity after she has observed others doing it.
- If you are visiting a museum to view sculpture, find out if a girl who is blind might be given permission to touch the pieces.
- If an activity requires running, a girl who is unable to run could be asked to walk or do another physical movement.

In addition, note that people-first language puts the person before the disability.

Say . . .	Instead of . . .
She has a learning disability.	She is learning disabled.
She has a developmental delay.	She is mentally retarded; she is slow.
She uses a wheelchair.	She is wheelchair-bound.

When interacting with a girl (or parent/guardian) with a disability, consider these final tips:

- When talking to a girl with a disability, speak directly to her, not through a parent/guardian or friend.
- It's okay to offer assistance to a girl with a disability, but wait until your offer is accepted before you begin to help. Listen closely to any instructions the person may have.
- Leaning on a girl's wheelchair is invading her space and is considered annoying and rude.
- When speaking to a girl who is deaf and using an interpreter, speak to the girl, not to the interpreter.
- When speaking for more than a few minutes to a girl who uses a wheelchair, place yourself at eye level.
- When greeting a girl with a visual disability, always identify yourself and others. You might say, "Hi, it's Sheryl. Tara is on my right, and Chris is on my left."

Registering Girls with Cognitive Disabilities



Girls with cognitive disabilities can be registered as closely as possible to their chronological ages. They wear the uniform of that grade level. Make any adaptations for the girl to ongoing activities of the grade level to which the group belongs. Young women with cognitive disorders may choose to retain their girl membership through their 21st year, and then move into an adult membership category.

Chapter 4: Safety-Wise

In Girl Scouting, the emotional and physical safety and well-being of girls is always a top priority. Here's what you need to know.

Knowing Your Responsibilities

You, the parents/guardians of the girls in your group, and the girls themselves share the responsibility for staying safe. The next three sections flesh out who's responsible for what.

Responsibilities of the Volunteer: Girl Scout Safety Guidelines

Every adult in Girl Scouting is responsible for the physical and emotional safety of girls, and we all demonstrate that by agreeing to follow these guidelines at all times.

1. **Follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints.** Instructions for staying safe while participating in activities are detailed in the Safety Activity Checkpoints, available from your council. Read the checkpoints, follow them, and share them with other volunteers, parents, and girls before engaging in activities with girls.
2. **Arrange for proper adult supervision of girls.** Your group must have at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers present at all times, plus additional adult volunteers as necessary, depending on the size of the group and the ages and abilities of girls. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old (or the age of majority defined by the state, if it is older than 18) and must be screened by your council before volunteering. One lead volunteer in every group must be female.
3. **Get parent/guardian permission.** When an activity takes place that is outside the normal time and place, advise each parent/guardian of the details of the activity and obtain permission for girls to participate.
4. **Report abuse.** Sexual advances, improper touching, and sexual activity of any kind with girl members are forbidden. Physical, verbal, and emotional abuse of girls is also forbidden. Follow your council's guidelines for reporting concerns about abuse or neglect that may be occurring inside or outside of Girl Scouting.
5. **Be prepared for emergencies.** Work with girls and other adults to establish and practice procedures for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost girls/adults, and site security. Always keep handy a well-stocked first-aid kit, girl health histories, and contact information for girls' families.
6. **Travel safely.** When transporting girls to planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities that are outside the normal time and place, every driver must be an approved adult volunteer and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle. Insist that everyone is in a legal seat and wears her seat belt at all times, and adhere to state laws regarding booster seats and requirements for children in rear seats.
7. **Ensure safe overnight outings.** Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in planning, so they know what to expect. Avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. During family or parent-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in program areas. When parents are staffing events, daughters should remain in quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.
8. **Role-model the right behavior.** Never use illegal drugs. Don't consume alcohol, smoke, or use foul language in the presence of girls. Do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls unless given special permission by your council for group marksmanship activities.
9. **Create an emotionally safe space.** Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouting a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect the emotional safety of girls by creating a team agreement and coaching girls to honor it. Agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting a

diversity of feelings and opinions; resolving conflicts constructively; and avoiding physical and verbal bullying, clique behavior, and discrimination.

10. **Ensure that no girl is treated differently.** Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, helping plan, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.
11. **Promote online safety.** Instruct girls never to put their full names or contact information online, engage in virtual conversation with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group websites, publish girls' first names only and never divulge their contact information. Teach girls the [Girl Scout Online Safety Pledge](#) and have them commit to it.
12. **Keep girls safe during money-earning activities.** Girl Scout cookies and other council-sponsored product sales are an integral part of the program. During Girl Scout product sales, you are responsible for the safety of girls, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to be their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, girls cannot participate in money-earning activities that represent partisan politics or that are not Girl Scout-approved product sales and efforts.

Responsibilities of Parents and Guardians

You want to engage each parent or guardian to help you work toward ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of girls. Clearly communicate to parents and guardians that they are expected to:

- Provide permission for their daughters to participate in Girl Scouting as well as provide additional consent for activities that take place outside the scheduled meeting place, involve overnight travel, involve the use of special equipment, and/or cover sensitive issues.
- Make provisions for their daughters to get to and from meeting places or other designated sites in a safe and timely manner and inform you if someone other than the parent or guardian will drop off or pick up the child.
- Provide their daughters with appropriate clothing and equipment for activities, or contact you before the activity to find sources for the necessary clothing and equipment.
- Follow Girl Scout safety guidelines and encourage their children to do the same.
- Assist you in planning and carrying out program activities as safely as possible.
- Participate in parent/guardian meetings.
- Be aware of appropriate behavior expected of their daughters, as determined by the council and you.
- Assist volunteers if their daughters have special needs or abilities and their help is solicited.

Responsibilities of Girls

Girls who learn about and practice safe and healthy behaviors are likely to establish lifelong habits of safety consciousness. For that reason, each Girl Scout is expected to:

- Assist you and other volunteers in safety planning.
- Listen to and follow your instructions and suggestions.
- Learn and practice safety skills.
- Learn to “think safety” at all times and to be prepared.
- Identify and evaluate an unsafe situation.
- Know how, when, and where to get help when needed.

Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

Girl Scouts' adult-to-girl ratios show the **minimum** number of adults needed to supervise a specific number of girls. (Councils may also establish **maximums** due to size or cost restrictions.) These supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of girls—for example, if one adult has to respond to an emergency, a second adult is always on hand for the rest of the girls. It may take you a minute to get used to the layout of this chart, but once you start to use it, you'll find the chart extremely helpful.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	<i>Two</i> unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus <i>one</i> additional adult for each additional number of this many girls:	<i>Two</i> unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus <i>one</i> additional adult for each additional number of this many girls:
Girl Scout Daisies (grades K–1)	12	6	6	4
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2–3)	20	8	12	6
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4–5)	25	10	16	8
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6–8)	25	12	20	10
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9–10)	30	15	24	12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11–12)	30	15	24	12

Here are some examples: If you're meeting with 17 Daisies, you'll need three unrelated adults, at least two of whom are unrelated (in other words, you and someone who is not your sister, spouse, parent, or child), and at least one of whom is female. (If this isn't making sense to you, follow the chart: you need two adults for 12 Daisies and one more adult for up to six more girls. You have 17, so you need three adults.) If, however, you have 17 Cadettes attending a group meeting, you need only two unrelated adults, at least one of which is female (because, on the chart, two adults can manage up to 25 Cadettes).

In addition to the adult-to-girl ratios, please remember that adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old or at the age of majority defined by the state, if it is older than 18.

Transporting Girls

How parents decide to transport girls between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent's individual decision and responsibility.

For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities—outside the normal time and place—in which a group will be transported in private vehicles:

- Every driver must be an approved adult* volunteer and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle.
- Girls never drive other girls.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers in the vehicle, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in *Volunteer Essentials* must be followed.
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in *Volunteer Essentials* must be followed. Care should be taken so that a single car (with a single adult driver) is not separated from the group for an extended length of time.

*“Adult” is defined by the age of majority in each state.

Private transportation includes private passenger vehicles, rental cars, privately owned or rented recreational vehicles and campers, chartered buses, chartered boats, and chartered flights. Each driver of motorized private transportation must be at least 21 years old and hold a valid operator's license appropriate to the vehicle—state laws must be followed, even if they are more stringent than the guidelines here. Anyone who is driving a vehicle with more than 12 passengers must also be a professional driver who possesses a commercial driver's license (CDL)—check with your council to determine specific rules about renting large vehicles.

Please keep in mind the following non-negotiable points regarding private transportation:

- Even though written agreements are always required when renting or chartering, you are *not* authorized to sign an agreement or contract—even if there is no cost associated with the rental. Such an agreement must instead be signed by the person designated by your council. See Bus/Leased Vehicle Form on www.gswny.org for more information.
- Check with your council to make sure you are following accepted practices when using private transportation; this ensures that both you and your council are protected by liability insurance in the event of an accident.
- If your council has given permission to use a rented car, read all rental agreements to be sure you comply with their terms and avoid surprises. Note the minimum age of drivers (often 25), as well as the maximum age (often under 70). Be sure the car is adequately insured, knowing who is responsible for damage to or the loss of the vehicle itself. Also, ensure you have a good paper trail, with evidence that the vehicle rental is Girl Scout-related.
- Obtain parent/guardian permission for any use of transportation outside of the meeting place.

Checklist for Drivers

When driving a car, RV, or camper, take the following precautions and ask any other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all drivers are adults—girls should not be transporting other girls.
- Never transport girls in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper-trailer.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first-aid kit and a flashlight.

- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns, and fluid levels before each trip and check them periodically on long trips.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date, such as your driver's license, vehicle registration, any state or local inspections, insurance coverage, and the like.
- Wear your seat belt at all times, and insist that all passengers do the same; keep girls under 12 in the back seats.
- Follow all the established rules of the road in your state (following the speed limit, keeping a two-car-length between you and the car ahead of you, not talking or texting on a cell phone or other personal electronic device, not using earbuds or headphones, driving with your headlights on, and so on).
- Avoid driving for extended periods at night, when tired, or taking medication that makes you drowsy.
- Plan rest stops every few hours; if driving with others, prearrange stopping places along the way. When planning longer trips, arrange for relief drivers. Check with your council for specific guidelines.

Approaching Activities

How can you, as a Girl Scout volunteer, determine whether an activity is safe and appropriate? Good judgment and common sense often dictate the answer. What's safe in one circumstance may not be safe in another. An incoming storm, for example, might force you to assess or discontinue an activity. If you are uncertain about the safety of an activity, call your council staff with full details and don't proceed without approval. Err on the side of caution and make the safety of girls your most important consideration. Prior to any activity, read the specific Safety Activity Checkpoints (available on your council's website or from your support team in some other format) related to any activity you plan to do with girls.

If Safety Activity Checkpoints do not exist for an activity you and the girls are interested in, check with your council **before** making any definite plans with the girls. A few activities are allowed only with written council pre-approval and only for girls 12 and over, while some are off-limits completely:

- **Caution:** You must get written pre-approval from your council for girls ages 12 and older who will operate motorized vehicles, such as go-carts and personal watercraft; use firearms; take trips on waterways that are highly changeable or uncontrollable; experience simulated skydiving and zero-gravity rooms; or fly in noncommercial aircraft, such as small private planes, helicopters, sailplanes, untethered hot air balloons, and blimps.
- **Warning:** The following activities are never allowed for any girl: potentially uncontrolled free-falling (bungee jumping, hang gliding, parachuting, parasailing, and trampolining); creating extreme variations of approved activities (such as high-altitude climbing and aerial tricks on bicycles, skis, snowboards, skateboards, water-skis, and wakeboards); hunting; shooting a projectile at another person; riding all-terrain vehicles and motor bikes; and taking watercraft trips in Class V or higher.

When planning activities with girls, note the abilities of each girl and carefully consider the progression of skills from the easiest part to the most difficult. Make sure the complexity of the activity does not exceed girls' individual skills—bear in mind that skill levels decline when people are tired, hungry, or under stress. Also use activities as opportunities for building teamwork, which is one of the outcomes for the Connect key in the GSLE.

Health Histories (Including Examinations and Immunizations)

Each council handles health histories differently. The staff at your council office may take care of obtaining and storing girls' health histories—which may include a physician's examination and a list of immunizations—as needed. Or, you may be asked to maintain these records for your group. Either way, keep in mind that

information from a health examination is confidential and may be shared only with people who must know this information (such as the girl herself, her parent/guardian, and a health practitioner).

See Troop Volunteer Appendix for details on how troop leaders should handle health histories.

For various reasons, some parents/guardians may object to immunizations or medical examinations. Councils must attempt to make provisions for these girls to attend Girl Scout functions in a way that accommodates these concerns.

It is important for you to also be aware of any medications a girl may take or allergies she may have.

- Medication, including over-the-counter products, must never be dispensed without prior written permission from a girl's custodial parent or guardian. (Your council can provide this form.) Some girls may need to carry and administer their own medications, such as bronchial inhalers, an EpiPen, or diabetes medication.
- Common food allergies include dairy products, eggs, soy, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, and seafood. This means that, before serving any food (such as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, cookies, or chips), **ask** whether anyone is allergic to peanuts, dairy products, or wheat! Even Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies should be aware of their allergies, but double-checking with their parents/guardians is always a good idea.

Girl Scout Activity Insurance

Every registered Girl Scout and registered adult member in the Girl Scout movement is automatically covered under the basic plan upon registration. The entire premium cost for this protection is borne by Girl Scouts of the USA. The basic plan is effective during the regular fiscal year (October to the following October). Up to 14 months of insurance coverage is provided for new members who register in the month of August. This insurance provides up to a specified maximum for medical expenses incurred as a result of an accident while a member is participating in an approved, supervised Girl Scout activity, after the individual's primary insurance pays out. This is one reason that all adults and girls should be registered members. Non-registered parents, tagalongs (brothers, sisters, friends), and other persons are not covered by basic coverage.

This insurance coverage is **not** intended to diminish the need for or replace family health insurance. When \$130 in benefits have been paid for covered accident medical or dental expense, any subsequent benefits will be payable only for expenses incurred that aren't compensable under another insurance policy. If there is no family insurance or healthcare program, a specified maximum of medical benefits is available.

An optional plan of activity insurance is available for Girl Scouts taking extended trips and for non-members who participate in Girl Scout activities. These plans are secondary insurance that a council may offer to cover participants taking part in any council-approved, supervised Girl Scout activity. Optional insurance coverage is available for any Girl Scout activity that involves non-Girl Scouts or lasts longer than three days and two nights. Contact your council to find out how to apply. Your council may make this mandatory, in some cases, particularly for overseas travel.

Review the [Girl Scouts insurance plan](#) description here.

Procedure for Filing an Insurance Claim

1. Fill out the council's Accident/Incident Report Form.
2. Submit to a council staff member within 24 hours of incident/accident.
3. Complete claim form and return to council service center.
4. Council service center will file the claim with United of Omaha.

Experts

The Safety Activity Checkpoints for most activities require having an expert on hand to help girls learn an activity. To make it a bit easier, many councils keep lists of local experts (such as sailing instructors) and facilities (such as rollerskating rinks) they've already approved. Check out the *GSWNY Consultant Guide* for experts in your area. If your council doesn't keep these lists, you'll have to present an expert for the council's consideration. Some things to keep in mind:

- **Does the person have documented training and experience?** She or he should have documented experience for the activity in question, such as course completion certificates or cards, records of previous training to instruct the activity, and letters of reference.
- **What does she or he need to be able to do?** This person should have the knowledge and experience to make appropriate judgments concerning participants, equipment, facilities, safety considerations, supervision, and procedures for the activity. At the very least, he or she should be able to give clear instructions to girls and adults, troubleshoot unexpected scenarios, and respond appropriately in an emergency.

Providing Emergency Care

As you know, emergencies can happen. Girls need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting to adults any accidents, illnesses, or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities. To this end, you can help girls:

- **Know what to report.** See the "Procedures for Accidents" section later in this chapter.
- **Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.** Certain extreme-weather conditions may occur in your area. Please consult with your council for the most relevant information for you to share with girls.
- **Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons, and building-security responses.** Every girl and adult must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and the girls, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.
- **Assemble a well-stocked first-aid kit that is always accessible.** First-aid administered in the first few minutes can mean the difference between life and death. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911.

First-Aid/CPR

Emergencies require prompt action and quick judgment. For many activities, Girl Scouts recommends that at least one adult volunteer be first-aid/CPR-certified. For that reason, if you have the opportunity to get trained in council-approved first-aid/CPR, do it! You can take advantage of first-aid/CPR training offered by chapters of the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, American Heart Association, or other sponsoring organizations approved by your council. Try to take age-specific CPR training, too—that is, take child CPR if you're working with younger girls and adult CPR when working with older girls and adults.

Caution: First-aid/CPR training that is available entirely online does not satisfy Girl Scouts' requirements. Such courses do not offer enough opportunities to practice and receive feedback on your technique. If you're taking a course not offered by one of the organizations listed in the previous paragraph, or any course that has online components, get approval from your support team or council.

First-Aider

A first-aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout-approved first-aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for child CPR. If, through the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or American Heart Association, you have a chance to be fully trained in first-aid and CPR, doing so may make your activity-planning go a little more smoothly. The Safety Activity Checkpoints always tell you when a first-aider needs to be present.

Activities can take place in a variety of locations, which is why first-aid requirements are based on the remoteness of the activity—as noted in the Safety Activity Checkpoints for that activity. For example, it's possible to do a two-mile hike that has cell phone reception and service along the entire route and EMS (Emergency Medical System) is, at maximum, 30 minutes away at all times. It is also possible to hike more remotely with no cell phone service at a place where EMS would take more than 30 minutes to arrive. It's important that you or another volunteer with your group has the necessary medical experience (including knowledge of evacuation techniques) to ensure group safety.

The levels of first aid required for any activity take into account both how much danger is involved and how remote the area is from emergency medical services. See below:

Access to EMS	Minimum Level of First Aid Required
Less than 30 minutes	First Aid
More than 30 minutes	Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR)*

**Although a WFR is not required, it is strongly recommended when traveling with groups in areas that are greater than 30 minutes from EMS.*

It is important to understand the differences between a first-aid course, and a wilderness-rated course. Although standard first-aid training provides basic incident response, wilderness-rated courses include training on remote-assessment skills, as well as the emergency first-aid response, including evacuation techniques, to use when EMS is not readily available.

Note: The presence of a first-aider is required at resident camp. For large events—200 people or more—there should be one first-aider for every 200 participants. The following healthcare providers may also serve as first-aiders: physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, paramedic, military medic, and emergency medical technician.

First-Aid Kit

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a Girl Scout first-aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the girls can assemble a kit yourselves. The Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its [Anatomy of a First Aid Kit](#). (Note that the Red Cross's suggested list includes aspirin, which you will not be at liberty to give to girls without direct parent/guardian permission.) You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs, including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites, and the like.

In addition to standard materials, all kits should contain your council and emergency telephone numbers (which you can get from your council contact). Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms, and health histories may be included, as well.

Procedures for Accidents

Although you hope the worst never happens, you must observe council procedures for handling accidents and fatalities. At the scene of an accident, first provide all possible care for the sick or injured person. Follow established council procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency. To do this, you must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of council staff, parents/guardians, and emergency services such as the police, fire department, or hospital emergency technicians. Check with your council for emergency contact information.

When an accident occurs during a Girl Scout event or on council property, a Girl Scouts of Western New York Accident Report Form must be submitted to the council office. This includes accidents involving non-registered girls, boys and adults.

- Provide all possible care to injured person(s).
- Secure doctor, ambulance and police, as appropriate. Call 911.
- See that no disturbance of victim or surroundings is permitted until police have assumed authority.
- Retain a responsible adult at the scene of the accident or emergency.
- Give requested information only to the officials responding to your call.
- As soon as possible, contact the Girl Scout office at 1-888-837-6410. After office hours please call 1-800-882-9268.
- Refer all media inquiries to the GSWNY Emergency Response Team at 1-888-837-6410. When traveling, remember to contact your emergency designated parent.
- **Within 24 hours, you must submit an [Accident/Incident Report](#) to the council.**

After receiving a report of an accident, council staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance at the scene, if needed, and will notify parents/guardians, as appropriate. If a child needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services, and then follow council procedures for accidents and incidents. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with regard to notifying parents or guardians. If the media is involved, let council-designated staff discuss the incident with these representatives.

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, notify the police. A responsible adult must remain at the scene at all times. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings. Follow police instructions. Do not share information about the accident with anyone but the police, your council, and, if applicable, insurance representatives or legal counsel.

Child Abuse Reporting Procedures

If a leader receives a report of suspected child abuse by an adult (**including an adult in Girl Scouting**), they are instructed to take immediate action to protect the girls in their care and must, without delay, report the fact to the CEO of the council or his/her designated person. See the [appendix](#) for further details on Girl Scouts of Western New York policy on Child Abuse.

While we believe that a person is innocent until proven otherwise, if the suspected adult is within the Girl Scout membership, we do require that the adult involved suspend all Girl Scout activities until the matter is resolved. We cooperate fully with investigating authorities and provide all possible supports to the affected girls and their families.

If the suspected abuse is reported by a girl, here is what you can do:

- Believe what she has told you
- Tell her it's not her fault

- Tell her you are sorry about what happened
- Tell her you will do your best to support her

It is important that you react with sensitivity. In most cases this is a very frightening thing to tell an adult.

Do not give any written or verbal statements or information to news media or others. Refer them to the council's spokesperson, Senior Vice President of Communications. If not available, contact Chief Executive Officer.

Chapter 5: Managing Group Finances

Helping girls decide what they want to do, and coaching them as they earn and manage money to pursue their goals, is an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). Your Girl Scout group plans and finances its own activities, with your guidance. At the same time, the girls learn many valuable skills that serve them throughout their lives.

Girl Scout groups are funded by a share of money earned through council-sponsored product sale activities (such as Girl Scout cookie activities), group money-earning activities (council-approved, of course), and any dues your group may charge. (This is in addition to the \$15 annual membership dues that go to the national organization.) This chapter gives you the ins and outs of establishing a group account and helping girls manage their group's finances, practice successful product-sales techniques, review the safety requirements around product sales, and understand how to collaborate with sponsors and causes.

Helping Girls Reach Their Financial Goals

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is so well known in communities, it's likely that your girls will already know a bit about it and want to get out there to start selling as soon as possible. But it's important that the girls have a clear plan and purpose for their product-sale activities. One of your opportunities as a volunteer is to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for the girls:

1. **Set goals for money-earning activities.** What do girls hope to accomplish through this activity? In addition to earning money, what skills do they hope to build? What leadership opportunities present themselves?
2. **Create a budget.** Use a budget worksheet that includes both expenses (the cost of supplies, admission to events, travel, and so on) and available income (the group's account balance, projected cookie proceeds, and so on).
3. **Determine how much the group needs to earn.** Subtract expenses from available income to determine how much money your group needs to earn.
4. **Make a plan.** The group can brainstorm and make decisions about its financial plans. Will cookie and other product sales—if approached proactively and energetically—earn enough money to meet the group's goals? If not, which group money-earning activities might offset the difference in anticipated expense and anticipated income? Will more than one group money-earning activity be necessary to achieve the group's financial goals? In this planning stage, engage the girls through the Girl Scout processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) and consider the value of any potential activity. Have them weigh feasibility, implementation, and safety factors.
5. **Write it out.** Once the group has decided on its financial plan, describe it in writing. If the plan involves a group money-earning activity, fill out an application for approval from your council and submit it along with the budget worksheet the girls created.

Remember: It's great for girls to have opportunities, like the Girl Scout Cookie Program, to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals as part of the GSLE. As a volunteer, try to help girls balance the money-earning they do with opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on earning and spending money. Take Action projects, for example, may not always require girls to spend a lot of money!

Establishing an Account

If your group is earning and spending money, the group needs to set up a bank account. If you're taking over an existing group, you may inherit a checking account, but with a new group, you'll want to open a new account. This usually happens when there is money to deposit, such as group dues or money from product sales or group money-earning activities. Consider these tips when working with a group account:

- Keep group funds in the bank before an activity or trip, paying for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.
- Use debit cards during the activity or trip.
- Make one person responsible for group funds and for keeping a daily account of expenditures.
- Have one or more back-up people who also have debit cards, in case the main card is lost.

Most council-sponsored product sale activities have specific banking and tracking procedures.

All troops, service units and or geographic areas are required to establish a bank account when the balance of funds exceeds \$100. Accounts shall bear the name of the Girl Scouts of Western New York, and must include the troop/group number or service unit name. To open a bank account, obtain a Troop Bank Account Reporting Form (#2015) and an authorization letter from your service unit finance consultant. The form will give you the council's Federal Tax ID number to supply to the bank. The letter will authenticate your identity as a GSWNY volunteer. Follow the printed instructions on the form (#2015), open your account and return the completed form to your service unit finance consultant. Please note that the three people on the bank signature card cannot be related to each other; one of the signers must be a member of the service unit team.

A minimum of two signers is required for withdrawals and troops are prohibited from using internet banking (except viewing the account online). Debit Cards are allowed, but credit cards are not permitted to be issued or used with the bank account. All receipts/disbursements should be processed through the bank accounts, and a financial activity report detailing the activity will be submitted twice a year. See "Finance Reporting" section for more information. The designated signers are not authorized to conduct any other business on behalf of the council or to access any accounts the council may maintain at the bank except for those specific to the their subordinate unit.

Please keep the following with troop records for seven years:

Bank statements

Cancelled checks

Deposit slips

Sales receipts

Cookie and nut/candy product sale records

Previous troop annual report

NYS Tax Exempt Certificate

A tax-exempt certificate will allow you to make purchases for the troop without paying New York State or local sales tax. To obtain a tax-exempt certificate or to replace a certificate, contact your service unit finance consultant or membership manager.

- On the tax exempt form, the leader will write her name and signature in the space provided as an officer of the organization. In the space for title, write troop leader and troop number.

- Make copies of your tax-exempt certificate. You will need to give the seller a copy with each purchase. This is his/her proof of the exempt sale.
- Exemption **does not** apply to personal purchases.

Troop Audits

The Membership Director, or designee, can audit a troop account at any time. Misappropriation of troop funds may result in prosecution of the adult in question and will result in dismissal from a volunteer position.

Finance Reporting

Service Unit Managers and/ or Service Unit Finance Consultants must obtain/review all troop financial activity reports bi-annually, along with the most recent bank statement. The reports are due:

- In January - should include a copy of the bank statement in which proceeds from the fall product sale were deposited and recorded.
- In June - a detailed end of year accounting for all troop financial activity including a copy of the closing bank statement

The troop budgeting model should be utilized throughout the year. Service unit managers and/or service unit finance consultants serving as troop leaders cannot sign off on their own forms. They must submit their troop financial reports directly to the Membership Manager. Troops not meeting the requirements shall be reported to the Membership Manager for follow up. If a service unit maintains a bank account, the service unit Finance Consultant should prepare a bi-annual service unit financial activity report, and turn it into the membership manager. Troop leaders or service unit managers who do not turn in activity reports will be subject to removal.

Disbanding Troops

When a troop disbands, the bank account and any equipment (flags, tents etc.) shall become property of the council or service unit. If the troop does not re-register within one year, the funds will remain to benefit girls within the service unit. If one troop merges with another, troop funds go with the remaining girls and become the property of the new troop. As when closing a personal account, be sure all checks and other debits have cleared the account before you close it, and realize that you may have to close the account in person. Turn remaining funds over to the service unit Finance Consultant.

Money-Earning Basics

Girls earn money in two distinct ways:

- **The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other sales** of Girl Scout–authorized products (such as Girl Scout cookies, calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy), organized by your council and open to all Girl Scouts. Girls can participate in two council-sponsored product sale activities each year: the cookie sale and one other council-authorized product sale. All girl members who take part in any way of Girl Scouting (troop, camp, travel, etc.), including Daisies, are eligible to participate in council-sponsored product-sale activities, with volunteer supervision. Please remember: volunteers and Girl Scout council staff don't sell cookies and other products—girls do.

- **“Group money-earning”** refers to activities organized by the group (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with adults) and that earn money for the group.

Girls’ participation in both council-sponsored product sale activities and group money-earning projects is based upon the following:

- Voluntary participation
- Written permission of each girl’s parent or guardian
- An understanding of (and ability to explain clearly to others) why the money is needed
- An understanding that money-earning should not exceed what the group needs to support its activities
- Observance of local ordinances related to involvement of children in money-earning activities, as well as health and safety laws
- Vigilance in protecting the personal safety of each girl
- Arrangements for safeguarding the money

There are a few specific guidelines—some required by the Internal Revenue Service—that ensure that sales are conducted with legal and financial integrity. To that end, consider the following reminders and cautions:

- All rewards earned by girls through the product-sale activities must support Girl Scout program experiences (such as camp, travel, and program events, but not scholarships or financial credits toward outside organizations).
- Rewards are based on sales ranges set by councils and may not be based on a dollar-per-dollar calculation.
- Groups should participate in council product sales as their primary money-earning activity; any group money-earning can’t compete with the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council product sales.
- Obtain written approval from your council before a group money-earning event; see p. 68 for specific instructions on the application process.
- Girl Scouts forbids use of games of chance, the direct solicitation of cash, and product-demonstration parties.
- Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the age and abilities of the girls and consistent with the principles of the GSLE.
- Money earned is for Girl Scout activities and is not to be retained by individuals. Girls can, however, be awarded incentives and/or may earn credits from their Girl Scout product sales. Funds acquired through group money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the group, while following council procedures.

The best way to earn money for your group is to start with Girl Scout cookie activities and other council-sponsored product sales. From there, your group may decide to earn additional funds on its own.

Council-Sponsored Money-Earning Projects

The council only sponsors money-earning projects that are approved by the board of directors (i.e., cookie program, QSP, special events, annual giving.) All registered girls shall be offered the opportunity to participate in the council-sponsored sales.

Adult members in their Girl Scout capacities may not solicit financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting. Adults may engage in combined fundraising efforts authorized by the council and in which the local council is a beneficiary. GIRL MEMBERS MAY NOT ENGAGE IN ANY DIRECT SOLICITATION FOR MONEY, as per GSUSA policy found in the *Blue Book of Basic Documents* under “Solicitations of Funds.”

Service Unit Money-Earning Projects

Service units are required to have approval for all money-earning activities outside council-approved sales. Information on how appropriate money-earning activities and the application process can be found on page 67-68. Money-earning applications must be submitted to membership manager for approval AT LEAST THIRTY (30) DAYS prior to project. Service unit fundraising projects may be denied during the months of the respective United Way appeals and council-sponsored sales programs.

Troop Money-Earning Projects

Money-earning activities are activities carried out by girls where a service or council-sponsored product is exchanged for money. Troops are encouraged to participate in the most recent council product sale before they can hold any other money-earning projects. Daisy and Brownie Girl Scouts may participate in council-sponsored product sales only.

Troops are required to have council approval for all money-earning activities outside council-approved sales. Information on how appropriate money-earning activities and the application process can be found on page 68. Troop fundraising projects may be denied during the months of the respective United Way appeal and council-sponsored product sales.

Understanding the Girl Scout Cookie Program

Did you know that the Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led business in the country, with sales of more than \$700 million per year for girls and their communities nationwide?

That's right. The Girl Scout Cookie program is the leading entrepreneurial program for girls: no university has produced as many female business owners as the Girl Scout Cookie Program has.

If you have a moment, watch the latest Girl Scout [What Can a Cookie Do?](#) video for an inspiring look into just how powerful those treats—and the girls who sell them—can be.

Council-sponsored product sales are really the best way for girls to earn money to pursue their goals: the sales are beloved by the community and come with program, sales, and marketing materials and support that help girls run a great business. And they're an integral part of the GSLE. With every season of cookies, another generation of girls learns five important skills:

- Goal setting
- Decision making
- Money management
- People skills
- Business ethics

And most of all, girls gain a tremendous amount of confidence. It's not easy to ask people to buy something—you have to speak up, look them in the eye, and believe in what you're doing—all skills that help a girl succeed now and throughout the rest of her life.

A Sweet Tradition



It has been more than 90 years since Girl Scouts began selling home-baked cookies to raise money. The idea was so popular that, in 1936, Girl Scouts enlisted bakers to handle the growing demand.

Two commercial bakers are currently licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies—Little

Brownie Bakers and ABC/Interbake Foods—and each council selects the baker of its choice. Each baker gets to name its own cookies (which is why some cookies have two names) and gets to decide which flavors it will offer in a given year, besides the three mandatory flavors (Thin Mints, Do-Si-Dos®/Peanut Butter Sandwich, and Trefoils/Shortbread). For additional information on cookie varieties, including nutritional details, visit www.girlscoutcookies.org.

Your Council's Role

Each year, your council provides learning opportunities on the procedures to follow during each sale. Your council also establishes guidelines and procedures for conducting the sale and determines how the proceeds and recognition system will be managed.

Knowing Where Proceeds Go

Your council will provide a breakdown of “how the cookie crumbles” in your council. Please share this information with girls and their parents/guardians so everyone's clear on how revenue raised through product sales makes it possible for your Girl Scout council to serve girls. Proceeds resulting from product sales support program activities—in fact, council-sponsored product sales are a primary way in which your council raises funds to support Girl Scouting. The percentage of money to be allocated to participating groups (like yours) is determined by your council and explained to girls and adults as part of the product sale activity orientation.

The income from product sales does not become the property of individual girl members. Girls, however, may be eligible for incentives and credits that they put toward Girl Scout activities, such as camp, travel, Take Action projects, and Girl Scout membership dues for the next year.

Girls may earn official Girl Scout grade-appropriate rewards and recognitions related to product sale activities, and each council may choose to provide items such as participation patches, incentives, and council credit for event fees, camp fees, grants for travel and Take Action projects, as well as materials and supplies for program activities. The council plan for recognition applies equally to all girls participating in the product sale activity. Whenever possible, councils try to involve girls in the selection of awards and administration of money given to girls from product sales.

One critical task for each group, is to keep excellent records and establish a clear accounting system for all money earned and spent. As the group's volunteer, you're in charge of making sure money is spent wisely, excellent records are kept (keeping copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and all income is tracked, too. For older girls, your job is to oversee their work, as **they** learn to keep impeccable records.

Safely Selling Girl Scout Cookies and Other Products

A few other considerations will help keep girls safe:

- Parents and guardians must grant permission for girls to participate and must be informed about the girls' whereabouts when they are engaged in product sale activities. Specific permission must be obtained when a girl intends to use the Internet for product marketing. A parent, guardian, or other adult must know each girl's whereabouts when she is engaged in product sales, and if and when she is online.
- Girls should be identifiable as Girl Scouts by wearing a Membership Pin, official uniform, tunic, sash, vest, or other Girl Scout clothing.
- Adult volunteers must monitor, supervise, and guide the sale activities of all girls at age levels.
- Girl Scout Daisies (in kindergarten and first grade) may be involved in council-sponsored product sale activities, but **they cannot collect money** in any other way except through group dues or parental contributions.

- Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors who participate in door-to-door sales must be supervised by (but do not need to be directly accompanied by) an adult. Girls of all grade levels must **always** use the buddy system.
- Money due for sold products is collected when the products are delivered to the customer (or as directed by your council). Girls will need to know whether they can accept checks and to whom customers should write checks—find out from your council staff.
- Personal customer information should remain private. Customer credit card information should not be collected by girls and should not be asked for on any form collected by girls.
- A girl’s physical address, social media page address, IM name, Skype name or number, email address, or cell number should **never** be revealed to anyone outside her immediate circle of family and friends. You’ve heard it before, but it bears repeating.
- Girls can market cookies and other products by posting on social media sites like Facebook or Twitter or sending emails to friends, family members, and former customers, as long as they use a group email address, the account or address of a parent/guardian or adult volunteer, a blind email address (in which the recipients cannot see the sender’s email address), or the online email tools provided by cookie vendors. Girls 13 and older can also use their social media sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, or Pinterest) to do the same to her immediate circle of family and friends. Be sure each girl’s account uses the tightest privacy settings and doesn’t reveal information about her or her location to anyone outside her circle.
- Sales may **not** be transacted on the Internet (for example, through a site that has an electronic shopping cart), except for magazine sales. Girls can, however, receive order commitments for cookies sales via email or the Internet. In other words, potential customers can relay (via email or a Facebook post, for example) that, “Yes! I’d like four boxes of Thin Mints and three boxes of Shortbread cookies.”

Please also keep in mind:

- Volunteers and Girl Scout council staff do not sell cookies and other products; girls sell them.
- Girls can participate in no more than two council-sponsored product sale activities each year, and only one of these may be a cookie sale.

Before beginning any cookies or other product sales with your group, refer to the cookies section of [Girl Scout Central](#) and www.girlscoutcookies.org.

Selling at Girl Scout Cookie Booths

Cookie booths, or temporary sales set-ups in areas with lots of foot traffic, are a popular way for girls to sell cookies as a team. Your council may have established cookie booth locations; contact the council before planning a cookie booth of your own.

Once you’ve gotten council approval, check out the booth site before the day of the sale. Talk to business owners in the area so they’ll know what to expect. Find out what security measures are in place—these may include lights for evening sales and whether a security camera watches the booth area—and where the nearest bathrooms are located. In addition, review the Girl Scout Cookie/Council-Sponsored Product Sale Safety Activity Checkpoints to make sure you and the girls are as prepared as possible.

On the day of the sale, these tips will help keep everyone safe:

- Ensure that you have adequate space at the booth (table, products, and girls) to allow safe passage by pedestrians, bikes, and cars.

- Plan to have at least two adults and one girl at the booth at all times. From time to time, volunteers might want to take breaks or will have to accompany young girls to the bathroom, so make sure to have a few extra adults on hand.
- Girls make **all** sales, except in cases where adults are helping Daisies handle money.
- Respect the surrounding businesses by making sure your booth isn't blocking a store entrance or exit.
- Attract customers with colorful signs. Remind girls to be polite and to have their sales pitch ready for interested shoppers.
- Be especially careful with the money box; make sure it's under adult supervision and out of public sight. Arrange for cash to be removed from the site periodically. When you do travel with money, have someone accompany you to your vehicle and/or the bank.
- Report any suspicious people in the area to local security.

If someone takes money or cookies from your booth, **do not** attempt to physically recover the stolen items and **do not** allow the girls to do so. Instead, get a good description of the offender(s), call 911, and alert local security (if applicable). Make sure girls know what to do in case of theft. Report any incidents to your local council according to its guidelines.

Product Sales – Delinquent Accounts

- A registered individual will not be eligible for appointed or elected offices if monies are owed to the council, and he/she will be ineligible to vote at meetings.
- A person owing a debt to the council for more than four (4) months will immediately be removed from any adult volunteer position (elected or appointed).
- Any person incurring a second debt to the council will be removed immediately and not reinstated to any position.
- Registered individuals owing a debt to the council may be prohibited from participating in future product sales.

Please contact your product sale manager or service team to confirm current finance procedures related to the cookie program and other product sales.

Using Online Resources to Market Cookies and Other Products

Girls are texting, calling, emailing, Tweeting, and Facebooking—and those are all effective ways that girls 13 and older can promote cookie and other product sales. The following sections detail how girls can use electronic marketing, social media, and group websites to gather sale commitments from family, friends, and previous customers. But first, please keep in mind that girls:

- **Can market to and collect indications of interest from customers within their councils' zip codes.** Refer prospects that come from outside council jurisdiction to the council finder at www.girlscoutcookies.org. Family members are the exception to this rule.
- **Cannot have customers pay online** (such as through a shopping cart function on a website the girls create). Girl Scout magazine sales are the exception to this rule.
- **Must sign the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge** (available at http://www.girlscouts.org/help/internet_safety_pledge.asp) before doing any online activities, and all online activities must be under the supervision of adults.
- **Cannot expose their own or any other girl's email address, physical address, or phone number to the public.** When writing e-mail messages or online announcements, girls should sign with their first name only, along with their group number or name and their council name.

For girls in fifth grade and above, have your group visit [Let Me Know](#), a site addressing Internet safety for teens and tweens. Girls can even earn an online award for completing activities on this site.

Contacting Prospects Electronically

Girls may use Facebook, Twitter, text messages, IMs, and emails as online marketing tools to let family, friends, and former customers know about the sale and collect indications of interest. Product-related email is not intended to be spam (unwanted texts or emails), however, so remind girls to be sure that their messages will be welcomed by the receiver.

When girls are marketing cookies online, remind them to always use a group email address (such as troop457@yahoo.com), an adult's personal email address, or a blind address (one that does not reveal the address to the recipient). In addition, be sure to discuss with girls the need to treat customer e-mail addresses from current and past years—as well as phone numbers, IM addresses, Facebook accounts, Twitter handles, and mail addresses—with respect; they are private and must be kept so.

Using Social Media

A girl (or group of girls) over the age of 13 may work in partnership with an adult to market cookies and other products online, using the social media account (such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, or LinkedIn) of the adult. Social media is a fun, fast way to get out an urgent message, such as, "It's Girl Scout cookie time!" Posting, tweeting, or pinning such a message will get the attention of friends and family.

Before girls use social media as a marketing tool, keep the following in mind:

- Girls must have parental permission to use social media.
- Girls must meet age limits set by the provider, which is 13 and above in most cases, as per the United States Child Online Privacy and Protection Act and the Child Online Protection Act.
- Any use of photos requires a photo-release form signed by parents/guardians of the girls pictured and the signature of any adults pictured.
- Any use of online video sharing sites (such as YouTube), where the video is representing Girl Scouts or Girl Scout products, must follow specific requirements for that site, as well as council guidelines. Girl Scout photo release forms must also be signed by parents/guardians and any adults pictured. (In other words, this is not an easy venture, but if you and the girls are willing, it's worth the investment.)

Setting Up a Group Website

Groups whose girls meet age criteria (13 years or older) and have parental permission may set up a group Facebook page or website. This site must be approved by the council. A website can be a fantastic way for girls to share information, market Girl Scout products, and talk about their Take Action projects.

Before you and the girls design a website, remember that the web is an open forum for anyone, including potential predators. Documented instances of cyberstalkers make it imperative that any information that could jeopardize the safety and security of girls and adults is not disclosed on a website. Please adhere to these guidelines to ensure the girls' safety:

- Use girls' first names only.
- Never post girls' addresses, phone numbers, or email addresses.
- Never, ever, ever post addresses of group meeting places or dates and times of meetings, events, or trips. (An adult volunteer who wishes to communicate upcoming events with families of girls should

use email instead of posting details on a website, unless that site is password protected or is a closed/secret Facebook group.)

- Always have a parent's or guardian's signature on a photo release form before using pictures of girls on a website.
- Make yours a site that does not allow outsiders to post messages to the site, or make sure all postings (such as message boards or guest books) have adult oversight and are screened prior to posting live.
- Don't violate copyright law by using designs, text from magazines or books, poetry, music, lyrics, videos, graphics, or trademarked symbols without specific permission from the copyright or trademark holder (and, generally, this permission is pretty tough to get!). Girl Scout trademarks (such as the trefoil shape, Girl Scout pins, and badges and patches) can be used only in accordance with guidelines for their use. (The Girl Scout trefoil, for example, may not be animated or used as wallpaper for a website.) Check with your council's website for complete graphics guidelines and approvals.



Daisies: Stay Especially Safe!

Girl Scout Daisies are too young to be marketing online through their group, parent or guardian websites, or social media sites. For this reason, Girl Scout Daisies are allowed to send out emails only when working directly with an adult. Daisies and their adult volunteers must use only blind emails or the online marketing tools provided by GSUSA product vendors on their websites.

Additional Group Money-Earning Activities

Product sales are a great way to earn the funds necessary for girls to travel or carry out Take Action projects. If income from the product sale isn't enough, however, girls have more options available to them. Although you cannot resell products, you can offer services, such as the following:

Collections/Drives:

- Recycling bottles or papers
- Cell phones for refurbishment
- Used ink cartridges turned in for money
- Christmas tree recycling

Food/M meal Events:

- Lunch box auction (prepared lunch or meal auctioned off)
- Themed meals, like high tea, Indian meal, Mexican dinner (if girls are earning money for travel, tie the meal to their destination)
- Spaghetti dinner
- Pancake breakfast

Service(s):

- Babysitting for holiday (New Year's Eve), service unit or council events
- Car wash
- Yard work
- Shoveling snow
- Walking pets
- Gift wrapping
- Cooking class or other specialty class

- Service-a-thon (people sponsor a girl doing service; funds go to support trip)
- Puppet or talent show

Examples of inappropriate money-earning activities:

- Bingo
- Games of chance
- Direct solicitation of cash
- Raffles
- Reselling non-council products, which includes everything with a brand name and everything not made by the girls. Examples include: any candy, Home Interiors, Krispy Kreme or other doughnuts, Tupperware, Avon, coupon books, etc. If in doubt, please contact your Membership Manager.

How to apply for an Additional Money-Earning Activity

1. To participate in an additional Money-earning Activity, complete form #2040 (Supplemental Money-Earning Project Application Troop/Group & Service Unit) and submit the form to your membership manager at least one month prior to the activity.
2. Forms will be reviewed at the council office, and leaders and service unit managers will be notified of approval or denial.
3. Within one month after the activity, the troop will write a brief evaluation (form #2045). This, along with the bank statement showing the deposit of money, will be submitted to the membership manager. A copy will be forwarded to the finance consultant.

Collaborating with Sponsors and Other Organizations

Sponsors help Girl Scout councils ensure that all girls in the community have an opportunity to participate in Girl Scouting. Community organizations, businesses, religious organizations, and individuals may be sponsors and may provide group meeting places, volunteer their time, offer in-kind donations, provide activity materials, or loan equipment. The sponsor’s contribution can then be recognized by arranging for the girls to send thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take Action project.

For information on working with a sponsor, consult your council; it can give you guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting responsibility, and any council policies or practices that must be followed. Your council may already have relationships with certain organizations, or may know of some reasons **not** to collaborate with certain organizations.

Girl Scouts of Western New York, Inc. would like to ensure that the benefits derived from these opportunities help the greatest number of girls, and support the Girl Scout organization as a whole. However, it is also understood that funds are required to carry out programmatic initiatives within each troop and service unit.

If you are considering asking community organizations for in-kind donations, equipment, volunteers, activity materials or space for meeting, please adhere to the following:

- The **Chief Development Officer** must be made aware that a gift of this nature is being pursued.
- Verification of volunteer service hours must be provided by a qualified staff member, the *service unit manager* or troop leader in which the employee provides the service hours. However, company application forms must be forwarded to the **Chief Development Officer** for approval.

- In the event that the company requires the gift be applied to a specific project or program, it is imperative that the funding be used in the manner that it was originally intended.
- For gifts that are received through volunteer recognition programs: they should be given solely to the Girl Scouts of Western New York, Inc. If not, they must be divided equally between GSWNY and the service unit or troop in which the volunteer provides service hours.
- All monies must be processed through Girl Scouts of Western New York, Inc., 3332 Walden Ave Suite 106 Depew, NY 14043. Attention: Fund Development.

Company-sponsored volunteer recognition programs are becoming an increasingly popular benefit offered to employees by their employers today. Typically, these programs offer a monetary contribution to a 501(c)(3) organization if a company employee provides a specific number of volunteer service hours to the non-profit organization and completes the necessary application. For additional guidance, contact the Fund Development Department.

When collaborating with any other organization, keep these additional guidelines in mind:

- **Avoiding fundraising for other organizations:** Girl Scouts are not allowed, when identifying ourselves as Girl Scouts (such as wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, and so on), to solicit money on behalf of another organization. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. You and your group can, however, support another organization through take-action projects or by making a donation from your group's account. And Girl Scouts as individuals are able to participate in whatever events they choose, as long as they're not wearing anything that officially identifies them as "Girl Scouts."
- **Steering clear of political fundraisers:** When in an official Girl Scout capacity or in any way identifying yourselves as Girl Scouts, your group may not participate (directly or indirectly) in any political campaign or work on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. Letter-writing campaigns are not allowed, nor is participating in a political rally, circulating a petition, or carrying a political banner.
- **Being respectful when collaborating with religious organizations:** Girl Scout groups must respect the opinions and practices of religious partners, but no girl should be required to take part in any religious observance or practice of the sponsoring group.
- **Avoiding selling or endorsing commercial products:** "Commercial products" is any product sold at retail. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products.

Financial Assistance

There are two levels of financial assistance available to girls:

- Level 1: *Troop funds.* Troops/groups participating in product sales should be budgeting for expenses as well as for potential financial assistance needs for members of their troop.
- Level 2: *Council Opportunity Funds.* Council assistance can be utilized if funds are not available at the troop level. **For financial assistance questions and forms, contact your membership manager.**

Council Opportunity Fund

The Council Opportunity Fund is maintained by the council office to help finance Girl Scout program opportunities for girls and educational opportunities for adults.

Girls may receive financial assistance for:

- GSUSA registration fees
- Troop dues
- Sashes, vests or uniform insignia
- Handbooks
- Camping fees for GSWNY-sponsored camp programs (girls may apply once a year)
- Program fees for GSWNY-sponsored program events (girls may apply once a year)
- Girl Scout Destinations (formerly known as Wider Opportunities) up to 50% of program registration fee.

Registered adults may apply for financial assistance to attend one Girl Scout training opportunity a year that will benefit the troop, group or service unit but only if the training is not available through GSWNY. This includes training, conferences and educational workshops. Council Opportunity Funds may not be used to defray the cost of an adult accompanying a troop trip.

Financial assistance is granted according to need. Each application is considered until the funds are exhausted. Council Opportunity Fund applications are available on the GSWNY web site, www.gswny.org, in the Forms Library or at the council's service centers.

Financial assistance is made possible by the generosity of individuals, organizations and businesses who understand the importance of making Girl Scouting available to girls. The amount of funding available is determined by donations to Girl Scouts of Western New York.

Reviewing Financial and Sales Abilities by Grade Level

As with other activities, girls progress in their financial and sales abilities as they get older. This section gives you some examples of the abilities of girls at each grade level.

Girl Scout Daisies



The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.

Parents/guardians may decide they will contribute to the cost of activities.

Girls can participate in Girl Scout cookie activities and other council-sponsored product sales.

Daisies are always paired with an adult when selling anything. Girls do the asking and deliver the product, but adults handle the money and keep the girls secure.



Girl Scout Brownies

The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and shares some of the group-budgeting responsibilities.

Girls discuss the cost of activities (supplies, fees, transportation, rentals, and so on).

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls may decide to pay dues.



Girl Scout Juniors

The group volunteer retains overall responsibility for long-term budgeting and record-keeping, but shares or delegates all other financial responsibilities.

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls decide on group dues, if any. Dues are collected by girls and recorded by a group treasurer (selected by the girls).

Girls budget for the short-term needs of the group, on the basis of plans and income from the group dues.

Girls budget for more long-term activities, such as overnight trips, group camping, and special events.

Girls budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Bronze Award, if they are pursuing it.



Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

Girls estimate costs based on plans.

Girls determine the amount of group dues (if any) and the scope of money-earning projects.

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning projects.

Girls budget for extended travel, Take Action projects, and leadership projects.

Girls may be involved in seeking donations for Take Action projects, with council approval.

Girls keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.

Girls budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Silver or Gold Awards, if they are pursuing them.

Appendix: For Troop Volunteers

Girls and adults participating in troops can meet once a week, once a month, or twice a month for several months—how often is up to you and the girls. Troops can meet just about anywhere, as long as the location is safe, easily accessible to girls and adults, and within a reasonable commute (“reasonable” having different definitions in different areas: In rural areas, a two-hour drive may be acceptable; in an urban area, a 30-minute subway ride may be too long). In each meeting, girls participate in fun activities that engage them in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE).

Troops provide a flexible way for girls to meet. Some ideas include:

- Fourteen Girl Scout Brownies who meet twice a month from November through March at a local community center
- Seven girls who are homeschooled and meet weekly as a Girl Scout Cadette troop
- Girls who meet together once a week at their juvenile detention center to participate in Girl Scout activities

Forming a Troop Committee

You’ll want to involve other adults in the troop—there’s no need to go it alone or depend on too few adults! Many hands make light work, and the role is more fun when it’s shared. Think about the people you know whom you admire, who can connect with girls, who are dependable and responsible, and who realistically have time to spend volunteering. (Remember that these adults will need to register as Girl Scout members, fill out volunteer application forms, take online learning sessions, and review written resources.) Consider business associates, neighbors, former classmates, friends, and so on. If you have trouble finding reliable, quality volunteers to assist, talk to your volunteer support team for advice and support. And feel free to use the sample welcome letter and friends/family checklist in the Girl Scout Daisy, Brownie, and Junior Leadership Journeys to assist you in expanding your troop’s adult network.

Remember: Be sure every volunteer reviews and follows the 12 Girl Scout Safety Guidelines, available both in the Quick-Start Guide to this handbook and in the “Safety-Wise” chapter.

Your troop committee members might help by:

- Filling in for you
- Arranging meeting places
- Locating adults with expertise on a topic of special interest to girls
- Assisting with trips and chaperoning
- Managing troop records

A troop committee may be made up of general members or may include specific positions, such as:

- **Cookie Manager:** A volunteer who would manage all aspects of Girl Scout cookie activities
- **Transportation Coordinator:** The volunteer you’d look to whenever you need to transport girls for any reason; this person would have volunteers available to drive and chaperone
- **Record Keeper:** A treasurer/secretary rolled into one person—someone to keep track of the money and keep the books

Set up roles that work for you, and draw on other volunteers who possess skill sets that you may lack. When you’re ready to invite parents, neighbors, friends, colleagues, and other respected adults to partner with you, send them a letter and invite them to their first troop committee meeting.

Holding Troop Meetings

The sample sessions in the Leadership Journey adult guides will give you ideas about how to plan and hold successful troop meetings that allow girls to Discover, Connect, and Take Action as they have fun with a purpose. (See the “Girl Scouting as a National Experience” chapter of this handbook for more on the three processes.) Many volunteers find it helpful to think of meetings having six parts, as outlined below, but feel free to structure the meeting in a way that makes sense for you and the girls.

As Girls Arrive	Start-up activities are planned so that when girls arrive at the meeting they have something to do until the meeting begins. For younger girls, it could be coloring pages; teen girls might jot down a journal entry or just enjoy a little time to talk.
Opening	The opening focuses the meeting and allows girls to start the meeting. Each troop decides how to open their own meeting—most begin with the Girl Scout Promise and Law, and then add a simple flag ceremony, song, game, story, or other ceremony designed by the girls. Girl Scout Brownies, for example, might create a new tradition by skipping in a circle while singing a song. Ceremonies, even when brief or humorous, make Girl Scout time special. The Journey adult guides contain ideas about openings that correspond to Journey themes.
Business	Troop business may include taking attendance, collecting dues, making announcements, and planning an upcoming event or trip. This is a good time for girls to take turns leading, especially as they grow up! (Some troops may move the business portion of the meeting to an earlier or later slot.)
Activities	<p>Activities will depend on what the girls want to do in their troop and how they want to spend their collective time. Outdoor time is important, so encourage the girls to do an activity in a park or forest. If girls are interested in animals, encourage the girls to plan a visit to a zoo or animal shelter. As you engage in one of the three National Leadership Journeys, review the “Sample Sessions at a Glance” in the adult guide for Journey activity ideas.</p> <p>Treats are an option some troops decide to include in their meetings and range from a bottle of soap bubbles or a jump rope to a food snack. If girls choose to include snacks, guide them to consider the health of a potential snack, as well as possible food allergies. Enlist the help of parents or guardians by asking them to sign up and bring a treat. You’ll also find plenty of snack ideas and signup forms in the adult guide of most Leadership Journeys.</p>
Clean-up	Clean-up is a great habit for girls to get their meeting space back to the way it was when they arrived—maybe even cleaner! Girls can also take leadership of the cleaning themselves, deciding who does what. They might even enjoy the tradition of a kaper chart (a chore chart that lists all the chores and assigns girls’ names to each), so that everyone takes turns at each responsibility.
Closing	The closing lets the girls know that the troop meeting is ending. Many girls close with the friendship circle, in which each girl stands in a circle, puts her right arm over her left, and holds the hand of the girl standing next to her. The friendship squeeze is started by one girl, and then passed around the circle until it comes back to the girl who started it. When the squeeze is finished, girls twist clockwise out of the circle lifting their arms and turning around and out of the circle. In addition, you may find some helpful, Journey-related closing ceremony ideas in the Journey’s adult guide.

You help each troop member do her part to ensure the meeting and activities are enriching and fun. Based on their grade levels and abilities, girls may decide and plan opening and closing activities, bring and prepare

treats, teach songs or games, and clean up. As girls grow, they can show and teach younger members about Girl Scouting. They can also assist you in preparing materials for activities. For trips, campouts, parent meetings, and multi-troop events, girls may be responsible for shopping, packing equipment, handing out programs, cleaning up, gathering wood, and so on. As long as you pay attention to grade level and maturity, what girls can do is endless!

Letting Girls Lead

Many troops employ a democratic system of governance so that all members have the opportunity to express their interests and feelings and share in the planning and coordination of activities. Girls partner with you and other adults, and you facilitate, act as a sounding board, and ask and answer questions. Girls from Daisies through Ambassadors will gain confidence and leadership skills when given the opportunity to lead their activities, learn cooperatively as a group, and learn by doing instead of by observing.

The following are some traditions troops have used for girl-led governance, but these are just examples. National Leadership Journeys offer examples of team decision-making, too.

- **Daisy/Brownie Circle:** While sitting in a circle (sometimes called a ring), girls create a formal group decision-making body. The circle is an organized time for girls to express their ideas and talk about activities they enjoy, and you play an active role in facilitating discussion and helping them plan. Girls often vote to finalize decisions. If girls are talking over each other, consider passing an object, such as a talking stick, that entitles one girl to speak at a time.
- **Junior/Cadette/Senior/Ambassador Patrol or Team System:** In this system, large troops divide into small groups, with every member playing a role. Teams of four to six girls are recommended so that each girl gets a chance to participate and express her opinions. Patrols may be organized by interests or activities that feed into a Take Action project, with each team taking responsibility for some part of the total project; girls may even enjoy coming up with names for their teams.
- **Junior/Cadette/Senior/Ambassador Executive Board:** In the executive board system (also called a steering committee), one leadership team makes decisions for the entire troop. The board's responsibility is to plan activities and assign jobs based on interests and needs, and the rest of the troop decides how to pass their ideas and suggestions to the executive board throughout the year. The executive board usually has a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer and holds its own meetings to discuss troop matters. Limit the length of time each girl serves on the executive board so all troop members can participate during the year.
- **Junior/Cadette/Senior/Ambassador Town Meeting:** Under the town meeting system, business is discussed and decisions are made at meetings attended by all the girls in the troop. As in the patrol and executive board systems, everyone gets the chance to participate in decision-making and leadership. Your role is to act as a moderator, who makes sure everyone gets a chance to talk and that all ideas are considered.



Transporting Girls

How parents decide to transport girls between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent's decision and responsibility.

For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities—outside the normal time and place—in which a group will be transported in private vehicles:

- Every driver must be an approved adult* volunteer and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle.
- Girls never drive other girls.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers in the vehicle, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in *Volunteer Essentials* must be followed.
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in *Volunteer Essentials* must be followed. Care should be taken so that a single car (with a single adult driver) is not separated from the group for an extended length of time.

*“Adult” is defined by the age of majority in each state.

For more about driving, see the [“Transporting Girls”](#) section of the [“Safety-Wise”](#) chapter of this handbook.

Looking at a Sample Troop Year

Here is just one example of how you and the girls could set up your troop year.

- Hold a parent/guardian meeting.
- Open a checking account, if needed.
- Register all the girls in the troop.
- Meet together for the first time, allowing the girls to decide how they can learn each others' names and find out more about each other.
- Kick off a Leadership Journey with the opening ceremony recommended in the first sample session, or a trip or special event that fits the theme. Have the girls brainstorm and plan any trip or event.
- Enjoy the full Journey, including its Take Action project.
- Along the way, add in related badge activities that girls will enjoy and that will give them a well-rounded year.
- Have the girls plan, budget for, and “earn and learn” in the Girl Scout Cookie Program.
- Help girls plan a field trip or other travel opportunity.
- Encourage girls to plan a culminating ceremony for the Journey, including awards presentations, using ideas in the Journey girls' book and/or adult guide.
- Pre-register girls for next year.
- Camp out!
- Participate in a council-wide event with girls from around your region.
- Have the girls plan and hold a bridging ceremony for girls continuing on to the next Girl Scout grade level.

Reengaging Girls

The end of the troop year doesn't have to be the end of a girls' time with Girl Scouting, or the end of your time with girls. Some girls may no longer have time for a full-year commitment and will be unsure what's next for them. Others won't be able to imagine their lives without this same group of girls. Here's how you can best reengage your troop:

- Some girls may want other options besides troops. That's okay—Girl Scouts offers many ways to participate. Talk to girls about day and residence camp, travel opportunities, series offerings, and events your council may offer. Older girls, especially, enjoy these shorter-term, flexible ways to be Girl Scouts.
- Some girls will be excited to bridge to the next grade level in Girl Scouting, and will look to you for guidance on how to hold a bridging ceremony. Even if you're not sure of your continued participation with Girl Scouts (and we hope you will find lots of exciting ways to be involved, even if leading a troop no longer fits your life), be sure to capture their excitement and work with them to plan a meaningful bridging ceremony.
- If you plan to stay with this troop, but some girls are bridging to the next grade level, talk to your council about helping them decide how they'd like to continue in Girl Scouting—perhaps in series, events, or travel!
- Talk to girls about earning their Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, or Gold Awards, which are opportunities for them to make a dramatic difference in their communities—and to have plenty to brag about with college admissions officers, too.

And what about you? If you want to stay with this troop, start working with them to plan their group activities next year. And if you're a little worn out but are interested in staying with Girl Scouts in other, flexible ways, be sure to let your council know how you'd like to be a part of girls' lives in the future. Are you ready to volunteer at camp? help organize a series or event? take a trip? The possibilities are endless.

Appendix: For Travel Volunteers

Not only do some of the most memorable moments in a Girl Scout's life happen while taking trips, but travel also offers a wealth of opportunities for girls to develop leadership skills. This appendix helps you prepare girls for local, regional, or international travel of any scope and duration.

Traveling with Girls

Girls love trips. And Girl Scouts is a great place for them to learn how to plan and take exciting trips, because travel is built on a progression of activities—that is, one activity leads to the next. Girl Scout Daisies, for example, can begin with a discovery walk. As girls grow in their travel skills and experience and can better manage the planning process, they progress to longer trips. Your Journey adult guide has a lot of other ideas about trips that bring the Journey to life. Here are some examples of the progression of events and trips in Girl Scouting's [Ladder of Leadership](#):

- **Short trips to points of interest in the neighborhood (Daisies and older):** A walk to the nearby garden or a short ride by car or public transportation to the firehouse or courthouse is a great first step for Daisies.
- **Day trip (Brownies and older):** An all-day visit to a point of historical or natural interest (bringing their own lunch) or a day-long trip to a nearby city (stopping at a restaurant for a meal)—younger girls can select locations and do much of the trip-planning, while never being too far from home.
- **Overnight trips (Brownies and older):** One (or possibly two) nights away to a state or national park, historic city, or nearby city for sightseeing, staying in a hotel, motel, or campground. These short trips are just long enough to whet their appetites, but not long enough to generate homesickness.
- **Extended overnight trips (Juniors and older):** Three or four nights camping or a stay in a hotel, motel, or hostel within the girls' home region (for example, New England, the Upper Midwest, the Southeast, the Pacific Northwest, and so on). Planning a trip to a large museum—and many offer unique opportunities for girls to actually spend the night on museum grounds—makes for an exciting experience for girls.
- **National trips (Cadettes and older):** Travel anywhere in the country, often lasting a week or more. Try to steer clear of trips girls might take with their families and consider those that offer some educational component—this often means no Disney and no cruises, but can incorporate some incredible cities, historic sites, and museums around the country.
- **International trips (Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors):** Travel around the world, often requiring one or two years of preparation; when girls show an interest in traveling abroad, contact your council to get permission to plan the trip and download the [Global Travel Toolkit](#). Visiting one of the four [World Centers](#) is a great place to start, but also consider traveling with worldwide service organizations. Recently, girls have traveled to rural Costa Rica to volunteer at an elementary school, to Mexico to volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, and to India to work with girls living in poverty in urban slums.

Although some girls who are in a group (for example, a troop of Cadettes) may decide to travel together, opportunities exists for girls who are not otherwise involved in Girl Scouts to get together specifically for the purpose of traveling locally, regionally, and even internationally. Girls can travel regardless of how else they are—or aren't—participating in Girl Scouting.

Using Journeys and *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* in their Travels

Girl Scout travel is an ideal way to offer girls leadership opportunities. Encourage girls to choose one of the three series of National Leadership Journeys. The Journey's theme will give girls a way to explore leadership through their travels. Use the adult guide to incorporate activities and discussions that help girls explore the Three Keys to Leadership (Discover, Connect, and Take Action) as they plan their trip and eventually travel.

Tying your trip to the topic of a Leadership Journey is a cinch. For example, if Cadette girls have chosen *MEdia*, before their trip they can read online newspapers from the area to which they're traveling—and evaluate when they arrive how well the media reflects the realities there. If Senior girls are using *SOW WHAT?*, they can plan to observe agricultural practices in other parts of the country or around the world. Ambassadors using *BLISS: Live It! Give It!* can build a trip around dreaming big—and empowering others in their community to dream big, too.

If girls also want to complete skill-building badge requirements as part of their trip, they can. The most obvious example is the Senior Traveler badge, which fits perfectly into planning a trip. In addition, girls can explore other badge topics, depending on the focus of their trip. For examples, Cadettes can explore the food in other regions or countries for their New Cuisines badge, Seniors can find out about international business customs as part of their Business Etiquette badge, and Ambassadors can work on their Photography badge while documenting their trip.

Be sure to visit the “Girl Scouting as a National Experience” chapter in this handbook to find out more about the three exciting series of Journeys and *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*.

To ensure that any travel you do with girls infuses the Girl Scout Leadership Experience at every opportunity, limit your role to facilitating the girls' brainstorming and planning—but never doing the work for them. Allow the girls to lead, learn collaboratively, and learn by doing (and by making mistakes). All the while, however, provide ideas and insight, ask tough questions when you have to, and support all their decisions with enthusiasm and encouragement!

Travel Progression Checklist



If your group is thinking about travel, consider first whether the girls are mature enough to handle the trip. Determine a group's readiness for travel by assessing the girls':

- Ability to be away from their parents and their homes
- Ability to adapt to unfamiliar surroundings and situations
- Ability to make decisions well and easily
- Previous cross-cultural experiences
- Ability to get along with each other and handle challenges
- Ability to work well as a team
- Skills, interests, and language skills (where applicable)

Seeking Council Permission

Girl Scouts of Western New York Council permission is required when the trip is outside of the council boundaries – considered west of Interstate 81 to the Pennsylvania border – and and/or lasts longer than 2 overnights. The council provides a [travel packet](#), which will guide you and your girls through the planning, paperwork, and permissions needed to have a safe, successful trip.

Encourage the girls to submit much of the information themselves, including the following:

- A detailed itinerary, including specific activities involved, mode of travel, and all dates and times
- Location and type of premises to be used
- Numbers of girls who will be participating (parental permissions must be obtained)
- Names and contact information for the adults participating
- Any other groups, organizations, consultants, or resource people who will be involved
- Participants' skill levels, if applicable (language skills, backpacking or camping experience, and so on)
- Any specialized equipment that will be used, if applicable
- Required agreements or contracts (for example, hiring a bus, use of premises)

From the Birth of Girl Scouting to the World Centers



[The Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace](#) in Savannah, Georgia, is a fantastic place for Girl Scout Juniors and older to visit. Reservations and council approval are required to take a group of girls to visit the birthplace, and most educational opportunities are booked at least a year in advance, so book early! Families and individuals, however, do not need to reserve a tour in advance.

In addition, four lodges are available in England, Mexico, Switzerland, and India for use by Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, each with hostel- or dormitory-style accommodations. The [world centers](#) are operated by WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) and offer low-cost accommodations and special programs. They are also a great way to meet Girl Guides and Girl Scouts from around the world.

Closer to home, check with your council to see whether council-owned camps and other facilities can be rented out to the group of girls with which you're working.

Juliette Low World Friendship Fund



To honor Juliette Gordon Low's love of travel, of experiencing different cultures, and of making friends, Girl Scouts created the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund in 1927. Today, this fund supports girls' international travel, participation in adult learning, and attendance at other international events—any event that fosters global friendships that connect Girl Scouts and Girl Guides from 145 nations. Click [here](#) to find out more or to donate to the fund.

Involving Chaperones

To determine how many volunteer chaperones the girls will need with them on the trip, see the [adult-to-girl ratios](#). As you ask for chaperones, be sure to look for ones who are committed to:

- Being a positive role model
- Respecting all girls and adults equally, with no preferential treatment
- Creating a safe space for girls
- Prioritizing the safety of all girls
- Supporting and reinforcing a group agreement
- Handling pressure and stress by modeling flexibility and a sense of humor
- Creating an experience for and with girls

- Getting fit (appropriate to the trip)

Be sure every chaperone reviews and follows the 12 Girl Scout Safety Guidelines, available both in the Quick-Start Guide to this handbook and in the “Safety-Wise” chapter.

Transporting Girls

How parents decide to transport girls between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent’s decision and responsibility.

For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities—outside the normal time and place—in which a group will be transported in private vehicles:

- Every driver must be an approved adult* volunteer and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle.
- Girls never drive other girls.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers in the vehicle, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in *Volunteer Essentials* must be followed.
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in *Volunteer Essentials* must be followed. Care should be taken so that a single car (with a single adult driver) is not separated from the group for an extended length of time.

*“Adult” is defined by the age of majority in each state.

For more about driving, see the [“Transporting Girls”](#) section of the [“Safety-Wise”](#) chapter of this handbook.

Letting Girls Lead

Whether the trip is a day hike or a cross-country trek, the basic steps of trip planning are essentially the same. It’s true that as the locale gets farther away, the itinerary more complex, and the trip of greater duration, the details become richer and more complex, but planning every trip—from a day-long event to an international trek—starts by asking the following:

- What do we hope to experience?
- Who will we want to talk to and meet? What will we ask?
- Where are we interested in going?
- When are we all available to go?
- Will everyone in our group be able to go?
- Are there physical barriers that cannot be accommodated?
- What are visiting hours and the need for advance reservations?
- What are our options for getting there?
- What’s the least and most this trip could cost?
- What can we do now to get ourselves ready?
- How will we earn the money?
- What’s the availability of drinking water, restrooms, and eating places?
- Where is emergency help available?

- What safety factors must we consider?
- What will we do as we travel?
- What will we do when we get there?
- How will we share the Take Action story?

As girls answer these questions, they begin the trip-planning process. In time, girls can make specific arrangements, attend to a myriad of details, create a budget and handle money, and accept responsibility for their personal conduct and safety. Later, after they've returned from an event or trip, girls also have the chance to evaluate their experiences and share them with others.

Tips for Girls Traveling Alone



If a Girl Scout Cadette, Senior, or Ambassador will be traveling alone during any part of a trip, use the opportunity to help her feel comfortable with and capable of being on her own. Always talk first with her parents to assess her maturity and ability to handle herself, and have them complete an emergency form. If she is flying, discuss the possibility of booking a nonstop flight to make her trip less stressful, and ask parents to contact the airline, which will make special arrangements for any unaccompanied minor. With the girl herself, develop a trip plan, discuss hotel security and safety, and talk about avoiding excess communication with strangers, **not** wearing a nametag, and avoiding exposing money or other items (such as smartphones, iPads, and iPods) that are attractive to pickpockets.

Staying Safe During the Trip

Be sure to discuss the following items with the girls and their parents before you leave on any trip (you may also want to put this information in writing and have girls sign it):

- Who her buddy is—and how the buddy system works
- What to do if she is separated from the group, whether by accident or because of a crime
- What to do if she loses something significant: money, passport, luggage
- How to report a crime
- What to do if emergency help is needed
- How to perform basic first-aid procedures
- How to deal with a large crowd (if applicable)
- What to do in the event of a crime
- What behaviors you expect—and what consequences exist for not living up to those behaviors

Travel Security and Safety Tips



Share these safety tips with girls before you leave on any trip that involves a stay at a hotel, motel, hostel, or dormitory:

- Always lock the door behind you, using the deadbolt and the chain or anchor.
- Do not open the door for strangers; if hotel staff claims to be at the door, call the front desk to confirm.
- Don't mention or display your room number when in the presence of strangers.
- Never leave jewelry, cameras, electronics, cash, or credit cards in your room.

- Never leave luggage unattended in the hotel lobby (or in an airport or train or bus station).
- When arriving at the hotel, locate emergency exits.
- Keep a small flashlight on your bedside table, along with a small bag with your room key, wallet, passport, and cell phone. Take the flashlight and bag with you if you have to leave the room in an emergency.
- If a fire alarm goes off, get out as quickly as possible. Don't stop to pack your suitcase.
- Before leaving your room, feel the door: If it is warm, do not open it. Stay in your room and stuff towels around the door. Call the hotel operator immediately. If the door is cool, proceed slowly out the door, looking for flames or smoke. Repeat these instructions for any door you encounter.
- Contact the front desk to make sure girls' rooms are cleared of any minibars or refrigerators. Also be sure the hotel doesn't provide access to inappropriate movies on TVs and does not allow long-distance calls. Alert the hotel management that underage girls are staying in the hotel, and ask them to contact you if any girls are seen out of their rooms after bedtime.

Reengaging Girls

The end of this trip doesn't have to be the end of a girls' time with Girl Scouting. Some girls participate in Girl Scouting in all sorts of ways; others are excited only about travel. What lies ahead for them—and for you?

- Girls who have never been involved in any other way besides travel may be looking for longer-term opportunities closer at home. Younger Cadettes may want to participate in resident camp, while Seniors and Ambassadors—as well as older Cadettes—will want to hear all about upcoming series and events at your council.
- Girls who have traveled once tend to want to travel again. Be sure girls are aware that other travel opportunities, such as [destinations](#), will exist for them in the years ahead. The great experiences they had on this trip may have prepared them for longer and more global trips in the future.
- Girls may want to hear about the Girl Scout Silver and Gold Awards, which are opportunities for them to make a dramatic difference in their communities—and to have plenty to brag about with college admissions officers, too!

And what about you? If you're ready for more opportunities to work with girls, be sure to let your council know how you'd like to be a part of girls' lives in the future. Are you ready for a year-long volunteer opportunity with a troop? help organize a series or event? take another trip? The possibilities are endless.

Appendix: Girl Scouts of Western New York Volunteer Policies, Standards and Procedures

Our Mission

The Girl Scouts of Western New York, Inc. prepares girls and young women in Western New York to meet the emerging challenges of society and to provide leadership in resolving issues that may be prevalent in their environment.

With the values of diversity and inclusion, we carry out our commitment through the guidance of adult members who serve as role models of responsibility, character and citizenship, providing our girls and young women with skills to enable them to achieve their full potential as both individuals and contributing members of their community.

Introduction

The Girl Scouts of Western New York, Inc. acknowledges that the direction and success of Girl Scouting rests in the voluntary participation of its adult members. These policies will supersede any previous existing policies. Every volunteer in the council should be apprised of GSUSA and council policies and practices that guide and protect her or his status as a Girl Scout volunteer.

The following policies are required for volunteers: affirmative action, membership registration, recruitment/selection, membership, placement, adult leadership, appointment, training, orientation, advantages, performance assessment, reappointment, uniforms, personal conduct, conflict resolutions/disputes, recognition, termination, harassment, sexual harassment, and child abuse.

Affirmative Action for Volunteers

There shall be no discrimination against an otherwise qualified adult volunteer by reason of disability or on the basis of age. Furthermore, there shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, sex, creed, national origin, or socioeconomic status. In addition, to ensure full equality of opportunity in all operations and activities of the organization, affirmative action policies and procedures shall be utilized in the recruitment, selection, training, placement, and recognition of volunteers. Special emphasis shall be placed upon securing underrepresented population groups.

—Blue Book of Basic Documents, page 19

Membership Registration

All girls and adults participating in the Girl Scout Movement shall be registered as members with Girl Scouts of the United States of America and individually pay the \$12 annual membership dues, except those adults who are lifetime members or who are working in a temporary advisory or consultative capacity.

—Blue Book of Basic Documents, page 19

Recruitment

The recruitment process consists of a number of methods to attract qualified volunteers who will be matched to appropriate open or newly created positions. Written position descriptions that define specific responsibilities and clarify expectations will be completed prior to recruitment and used in the search. Each

volunteer will also be required to complete an application, provide references, sign agreements, and undergo a background check, prior to selection.

Selection

Each volunteer is selected on the basis of ability to perform the volunteer position, volunteer and council need, ability and willingness to attend training, and qualifications for membership in the Girl Scout Movement. There shall be no discrimination against an otherwise qualified adult volunteer by reason of disability or on the basis of age. Furthermore, there shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, sex, creed, national origin, religion, citizenship, ancestry, marital status, veteran status, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics protected by federal, state, or local law. Volunteers will receive some type of face-to-face interview prior to selection.

Membership

All volunteers participating in the Girl Scout Movement shall meet GSUSA membership standards, be registered through the council as members of the Girl Scout Movement, and shall agree to abide by the policies and principles of GSUSA and the Girl Scout council.

Placement

Every attempt will be made to place volunteers in positions that meet both their needs and the needs of the council. In instances where this is not possible, the needs of the council will take precedence over the needs of the individual. Individuals not placed in a position for which they applied may be recommended for other positions, and they may request reassignment.

Adult Leadership

Your group must have at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers present at all times, plus additional adult volunteers as necessary, depending on the size of the group and the ages and abilities of girls. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old (or the age of majority defined by the state, if it is older than 18) and must be screened by your council before volunteering. One lead volunteer in every group must be female.

—*Volunteer Essentials*, page 44

Appointment

Operational volunteers shall be appointed for a term not to exceed one year (See Reappointment for additional information).

Training

All volunteers will receive basic training for their position and will also be required to complete additional training that is designated as mandatory for the position within a specified time frame. Training will ensure that each volunteer has the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in her or his work.

Orientation

Each volunteer is provided with an overview of the Girl Scout purpose and organization, local council

information, and the support systems available to help them in their work.

Advantages

Advantages to volunteers include support in their position, training, and other learning opportunities. Volunteers are encouraged to enhance and develop their skills while serving with the council. As appropriate, the council will assist volunteers in broadening their skills through assignment to new volunteer positions involving additional and/or greater responsibilities. Other advantages for volunteers include council publications; tools for recording volunteer experience; references upon request; liability insurance; and supplementary accident insurance, as part of national and/or council membership.

Performance Appraisal

Each volunteer shall be provided with the opportunity for a periodic performance appraisal and evaluation. The performance appraisal should include both a review of the volunteer's performance of position responsibilities and a discussion of any suggestions that the volunteer may have concerning the position or project with which the volunteer is connected. The performance appraisal session should also be utilized as an opportunity to ascertain the mutual interest of the council and volunteer in the volunteer's continued service in her or his position. It shall be the responsibility of each staff person in a supporting relationship with a volunteer to schedule and conduct the performance appraisal.

The position description and standards of performance for a volunteer position should form the basis of the performance appraisal. A confidential written record should be kept of each appraisal session.

Reappointment

Prior to the completion of her or his term, each volunteer who is to be reappointed to the same position or rotated to a different position may receive confirmation of such reappointment or rotation. Reappointment is based on past performance, adherence to council and GSUSA policies and standards, support of the Girl Scout purpose, values, and council goals, as well as positive relationships with the community, parents, other volunteers, and employed staff. There will be mutual acceptance of position accountabilities, expectations, and time commitments.

Uniforms

A uniform is not required for participation in Girl Scouting. Purchase of a uniform is at the volunteer's expense and is encouraged. Volunteers are encouraged to wear the Girl Scout Membership Pin when they are not in uniform.

Personal Conduct

Standards outlining conduct of volunteers are important for the orderly operation of any organization and for the benefit and protection of the rights and safety of all members. Inappropriate conduct may result in immediate suspension or termination. Some examples follow:

- Violation of federal, New York State, and local laws
- Harassment/sexual harassment
- Falsifying or making material omissions in council records
- Unsatisfactory performance in volunteer position
- Theft or inappropriate removal of property that belongs to or is in possession of our council, council employees, girl members or visitors, and/or malicious or willful destruction or damage to such

- Insubordination, including refusal to abide by council and GSUSA policies, do assigned work or refusal to perform work in the manner prescribed without proper justification
- Soliciting or accepting gratuities for personal gain or benefit
- Smoking in areas that are designated as non-smoking areas
- Bringing onto council properties or to Girl Scout activities dangerous or unauthorized materials such as explosives, firearms and other similar items, or while transporting girls to and from any activity
- Possession of alcohol or any controlled substance while on council property or participation in Girl Scout activities under the influence of alcohol or controlled substance, unless prescribed by a personal physician. The exception to this standard is that alcohol is allowed at council sanctioned events, when the premises are closed to girls.
- Child abuse (see page)

Conflict Resolution/Dispute

The conflict resolution process is based on the fundamental values of respect for the individual and fairness. The policy exists so members of the organization can air their grievances and have avenues to solving them. All volunteers may use the conflict resolution procedure. Every volunteer may expect a fair resolution of her or his dispute without fear of jeopardizing her or his volunteer status. Informal counseling by volunteer and staff personnel is the first step in resolving a situation involving a conflict or dispute. The initiation of the conflict resolution procedure, however, will not restrict the council from taking immediate and appropriate action with respect to the volunteer. The procedure is as follows:

Step 1. If an informal resolution is not possible and a further hearing is desired, the person filing the complaint must do so in writing, citing the issue. The signed and dated document must be specifically titled "Conflict Resolution/Dispute Request," identify the person with whom the conflict is registered, and cite the policy or procedure that has allegedly been misapplied. A copy should be sent to the identified person's supervisor. Within ten (10) working days, the supervisor will call a conference of all parties involved in the dispute and attempt to resolve the conflict. A written summary of the conference will be distributed to all parties.

Step 2. If the volunteer is not satisfied with the disposition of the conflict resolution, the council staff member or the council staff member's supervisor will meet with the volunteer within ten (10) working days following her or his initial conference.

Step 3. If the volunteer is not satisfied with the disposition of the conflict resolution, the Chief Operating Officer will meet with the volunteer within ten (10) working days following Step 2.

Step 4. In the event that the dispute is not resolved in Step 3, the staff member prepares a written report on the situation, including recommendations, and sends a copy to the Chief Executive Officer.

OR

Step 5. The Chief Executive Officer will appoint a dispute/complaint resolution review team. (The review team will be comprised of a management representative, an employee not involved in the conflict resolution process, and a council volunteer selected by the complainant). The dispute review team will review the documentation on file and meet with the individuals involved. The review team may seek additional information, if necessary, to aid it in making a final decision. The team will provide the Chief Executive Officer with a written report of its findings and recommendations within ten (10) working days of the review hearing.

Copies will also be issued to the volunteer and immediate supervisor.

If the recommended resolution is not acceptable to the volunteer or any of the supervisors involved, a request to submit the recommended resolution to the Chief Executive Officer for a final and binding decision will be made. The Chief Executive Officer may exercise the following:

1. Accept the Dispute Resolution Team's recommended solution.
2. Provide an alternative final and binding decision.

This is the council's final decision. It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer to implement the decision.

Alcohol and Drug-Free Environment

GSWNY is committed to providing volunteers with an environment that is free of the problems associated with the use and unlawful possession of controlled substances, illegal drugs or alcohol. "Controlled substances" are defined as those drugs listed in Schedules I through V of section 202 of the federal Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. 812, and include, but are not limited to marijuana, cocaine, (including "crack" and other cocaine derivatives), morphine, codeine, Phenobarbital, heroin, amphetamines, and many barbiturates. Alcohol is not permitted at any event which girls may attend.

Release

Either the council or the volunteer may initiate a release from a position. A volunteer is requested to give as much notice as possible when resigning. A minimum of two weeks is requested.

Situations may arise that make it necessary to release an individual from a position. The council may release an individual because of, among other things, restructuring of positions, elimination of the volunteer position in which the individual serves, the volunteer's inability or failure to complete the requirements of the position, or the refusal to comply with council or Girl Scouts of the USA policies. Release from the position does not cancel membership with Girl Scouts of the USA unless it is determined that she or he is unable to meet the membership requirement.

Harassment

The council is committed to an environment and climate in which relationships are characterized by dignity, respect, courtesy, and equitable treatment. It is the policy of the organization to provide all volunteers with an environment free from all forms of unlawful or unwelcome harassment, including implied or expressed forms of sexual harassment. The council expressly prohibits any form of harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, marital status, citizenship, ancestry, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.

Any volunteer who feels that she or he has been subjected to harassment of any type, whether by another volunteer, council staff member, or any agent of the organization, should promptly report the incident to a supervisor or to the Chief Executive Officer. The supervisor, upon receiving such a complaint, must report the matter to the Chief Executive Officer, who will conduct an investigation and, depending on the findings, take appropriate corrective actions.

Sexual Harassment

It is against the council's policies for any individual, male or female, to sexually harass another volunteer, employee, or Girl Scout member of the same or opposite sex. The council reserves the right to refuse membership endorsement or reappointment, and to dismiss or suspend from affiliation with the council any volunteer who, in conducting Girl Scout program, sexually harasses another volunteer, employee, or Girl Scout member of the same or opposite sex.

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual acts or favors, abusing the dignity of another through insulting or degrading sexual remarks or conduct and threats or suggestions that a volunteer's status is conditioned upon toleration of or acquiescence to sexual advances. Some examples of sexual harassment that could create a hostile work environment include telling of sexual jokes or stories; the presence of sexually explicit photographs or other materials; touching of another person's clothing, hair or body; making sexual comments about another person's body; making sexual comments or innuendoes; asking personal questions about another person's social or sexual life; staring; leering; and making sexual gestures.

Any volunteer who feels that she or he has been sexually harassed should promptly report such behavior to a supervisor or the Chief Executive Officer. Upon receiving a complaint, a supervisor will report the matter to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer will conduct an investigation and, depending on the findings, take appropriate corrective action.

Child Abuse

The council abides by Board approved policies, GSUSA policies, federal, New York State, and local laws.

Council Policy

The council supports and maintains environments that are free of child abuse and neglect. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines child abuse and neglect as “the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse as exploitation, negligent treatment or maltreatment:

- Of a child under the age of 18, or the age specified by the child protection law of the state in question.
- By a person who is responsible for the child’s welfare.
- Under circumstances, which indicate that the child’s health or welfare is harmed or threatened.
- The act defines sexual abuse as the use, persuasion, or coercion of any child to engage in any sexually explicit conduct (or any simulation of such conduct) for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, molestation, prostitution or incest with children.”

Child abuse and neglect are unlawful acts and against GSUSA’s policy for any volunteer or employed staff, male or female, to physically, sexually or mentally abuse or neglect any girl member.

In accordance with this policy, the Girl Scouts of Western New York, Inc. will not condone nor tolerate the following:

- Infliction of physically abusive behavior, bodily injury, upon girl members
- Physical neglect of girl members, including failure to provide adequate safety measures, care, and supervision in relation to Girl Scout activities
- Emotional maltreatment of girl members, including verbal abuse and/or verbal attacks

Child abuse and neglect are forms of behavior that negate the integrity of the adult/girl leadership relationship.

The council supports and maintains an environment that encourages any girl member who believes that she has been a victim of child abuse or neglect as defined in the organization’s policy to report the incident(s) immediately to either her leader, another adult, or to the CEO of the council or his/her designated person.

Employees are required by New York State law to report any known incidence of child abuse to the CEO of the council or his/her designated person and proper authority.

The council reserves the right to refuse membership, to dismiss or exclude from affiliation with the council any volunteer who is found guilty of child abuse and neglect or has been convicted of child abuse and neglect.

The council will consider any of the above-mentioned stipulations as the basis for progressive disciplinary action, which can include dismissal or termination from the organization. Similarly, a volunteer who believes that a girl member is the victim of abuse or neglect must immediately report the fact to the CEO of the council or his/her designated person.

Any report of child abuse will be forwarded to an appropriate governmental agency. Reports are held in strict confidence and you will be informed that the report has been made. The council will protect the rights of the accused, who is considered innocent until proven guilty, by not discussing the situation or releasing specific information. The council will cooperate fully with appropriate law enforcement and social service agencies.

In the event that a Girl Scout volunteer is formally accused of, charged with, or under investigation by authorities for the crime of child abuse, the council has a responsibility to both the girls and adult involved. The following procedure will be followed:

A volunteer so accused must:

- suspend all Girl Scout activities and duties until the matter has been resolved; and
- turn over all monies, materials and records to a designated representative of the council.

If the individual involved is a troop leader, the council will focus its attention on assisting the service unit in helping the troop and parents to continue to function as a Girl Scout unit. A council representative will meet with parents to discuss the change in leadership, and their concerns for the future direction of the troop.

Some examples of child abuse are:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual molestation
- Emotional starvation
- Constant verbal attack or torment
- Deprivation of proper food, clothing, and/or shelter
- Being left alone for long periods of time

Child abuse and neglect are forms of behavior that negate the integrity of the adult/girl leadership relationship. The Girl Scouts of Western New York, Inc. will consider any of the above mentioned stipulations as the basis to refuse appointment/reappointment to any position, and to dismiss or suspend from any position or affiliation with our council, any volunteer who violates the aforementioned council policies, GSUSA policies, federal, New York State, and local laws, or who is found guilty of child abuse or neglect, or has been convicted of child abuse or neglect.

Forms

All forms are available on our website, www.gswny.org.

Some of the more commonly used forms include:

Girl Scout registration forms:

Adult registration form

Girl registration form

Financial forms:

Council Opportunity Fund – Form 2125

(Request for Special Funding for Membership Fees)

Council Opportunity Fund – Form 4210

(For Troops/Groups Requesting Financial Assistance for Troop Dues, Handbook, Uniform Insignia, Vest or Sash)

Detailed Cash Record

Money Earning Application

Money Earning Evaluation

Troop/Group Sponsorship Agreement

Troop/Group Bank Account Reporting

Troop/Service Unit Financial Activity Report

Troop paperwork:

Accident Incident Report Form

Adult Health Form

Girl Health Record

Parent/Guardian Permission – Special Troop/Group Activities

Parents' Meeting

Troop Attendance Dues

Troop Data Sheet

Troop Membership List