Adventure Ahead!

Girl Scout volunteers are community-builders, champions of fun, and role models for what it means to lead with your heart. And because of your support, Girl Scouts of all ages are emboldened to chase their dreams and make a positive impact in their communities and across the globe. Your mentorship and encouragement are powerful and make a difference—and your girls will carry that support throughout their lives. Thank you for all you do.

This guide is designed to support busy troop volunteers on the go. You can easily find what you need to get started on your Girl Scout journey and search for answers throughout the troop year.

Get started by browsing through these sections:

- All About Girl Scouts
- Engaging Girls and Families
- Troop Management
- Product Program
- Troop Finances
- Safety
- Coming soon: Post-COVID Guidance

New troop leader? We’ve got you covered. Check out our New Leader webpage, where you’ll find everything you need to have a great first year. Plus, council staff and volunteer coaches are ready to help throughout your first year and beyond!

Questions? Call 1-888-837-6410 or email customercare@gswny.org

www.gswny.org
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All About Girl Scouts

Since 1912, when we were founded by trailblazer Juliette Gordon Low, Girl Scouts has given girls the tools to lead, break barriers, and create positive change. We are the largest girl-led leadership development organization for girls in the world and a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, a sisterhood of nearly 10 million girls and adults in 150 countries. With programs from coast to coast and across the globe, Girl Scouts offers every girl the chance to practice a lifetime of leadership, adventure, and success.

Who Can Join Girl Scouts—and How?

If you believe in the inherent power of girls to change the world and you’re ready to be their champion, you belong with Girl Scouts.

Girl Scout volunteers are a dynamic and diverse group, and there’s no one “type” of volunteer. Whether you’re a recent college grad, a parent, a retiree, or really, anyone with a sense of curiosity and adventure (any adult, who is 18 years or older and has passed their council’s screening process), your unique skills and experiences and your mentorship can open your Girl Scouts’ eyes to all the possibilities ahead of them.

All members are united by the values in the Girl Scout Promise and Law, as well as by our extraordinary strengths as go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders. Each member also agrees to follow safety guidelines and pay the annual membership dues of $25. Adults have the option to purchase a lifetime membership for $400.

Girls at Every Grade Level

Girls can join in the fun at any grade level:

- 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)

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

Everything centers around the girl in Girl Scouts: Activities are girl-led, which gives girls the opportunity to take on leadership roles and learn by doing in a cooperative learning environment. It’s what makes Girl Scouts truly unique—our program is designed by, with, and for girls.

Although girls may start building their leadership skills in school and on sports teams, research shows] that the courage, confidence, and character they develop as Girl Scouts stay with them throughout their lives.

What girls do in Girl Scouting all fits within three keys: Discover, Connect, and Take Action.

- When Girl Scouts do exciting badge activities, earn a Girl Scout Journey award, attend an amazing program or event, or go camping, you are helping them discover who they are, what excites them, and what their talents are.
- Girl Scouts connect when they collaborate with others—their troop, leaders, or community experts—and expand their horizons. This helps them care about, support, inspire, and team with others locally and globally.
• With your guidance, your Girl Scouts will deepen their relationship with the world around them, and they’ll be eager to take action to make the world a better place.

As for how they do it? The Girl Scout Leadership Experience draws on three unique processes that help girls unlock their inner leader.

• **Girl-led** means Girl Scouts of every age take an active and age-appropriate role in figuring out the what, where, when, why, and how of all the exciting activities they’ll do. The girl-led process is critically important to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience—when girls actively lead and shape their experiences, they know their voices matters, they feel empowered to make decisions, and they stay engaged in their activities.

• Girl Scouts enjoy hands-on activities and learn by doing. Then, after reflecting on their activities, girls gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and skills the activities require.

• Through cooperative learning, Girl Scouts share knowledge and skills in an atmosphere of respect, teamwork, and collaboration as they work toward a common goal.

As a volunteer, you’ll draw on these Girl Scout processes as you lead girls of any age. Girl-led at the Daisy level will look very different from the Ambassador level, of course. What’s most important is that your Girl Scouts make decisions about the activities they do together and that they also make choices within that activity. As they learn from their successes and failures and gain a major confidence boost, all girls have the opportunity to lead within their peer groups. By the time girls are Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, they’ll be using the leadership skills they’ve developed to take more ownership of their activities, mentor younger Girl Scouts, and take action to make the world a better place.

One last tip about following these processes: 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 girls and sparks their imaginations. Projects don’t have to come out perfectly—in fact, it’s a valuable learning experience when they don’t—and Girl Scouts don’t have to fill their vests and sashes with badges. What matters most is the fun and learning that happens as they make experiences their own, so don’t be afraid to step back and let your girls take the lead.

**Reflection**

Was a badge-earning activity a resounding success? Or was it derailed by something the girls hadn’t factored in? No matter an activity’s outcome, you can amplify its impact by encouraging your girls to reflect on their latest endeavor.

Reflection is the necessary debrief that reinforces what the girls learned. As they explore the “whats” and “whys,” girls make meaningful connections between the activity at hand and future challenges that come their way. In other words, reflection gives girls the confidence boost they need to pick themselves up, try again, and succeed.

Reflection doesn’t need to be a formal process, but you can kick-start the conversation with three simple questions: What?, So what?, and Now what?

• Go over the what of the activity with girls. For example, ask, “What did we do today? What part was your favorite? If we did it again, what would you want to do differently and what would you repeat?”
• Then move to the so what elements. You might ask, “So what did you learn by doing this activity? So what did you learn about yourself? So what did you learn about your community (or environment, school, or others) that you didn’t know before?”

• Lastly, review the now what with the girls. Say something like, “Now that we’ve done this, what would you like to do next? Now that you know this about yourselves, what would you like to try next? Now that we did this Take Action project, what do you think we should do next to make sure it continues on?”

What?, So what?, and Now what?—or whatever style of reflection you choose to use with your girls—are powerful elements of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, and they’ll carry these lessons with them for the rest of their lives.

Progression

Although program elements—like outdoor expeditions or entrepreneurial ventures—align across all grade levels, Girl Scout Brownies and Juniors won’t be doing the same activities as seasoned Seniors and Ambassadors. But with your support, they will get there!

Girl Scout programming is designed to be progressive, and it’s what makes Girl Scouting fun and effective! By building on the knowledge and skills they gain year after year, your girls’ confidence will grow exponentially, and they’ll be eager to take the next steps. As a volunteer, you will cultivate a supportive, nonjudgmental space where girls can test their skills and be unafraid to fail.

Keep in mind that good progression drives success for girls. We’ve outlined some suggestions that will help you determine when your girls are ready for their next outdoor challenge, troop trip, or entrepreneurial venture.

Inclusion

Girl Scouts has a strong commitment to inclusion, equity, and diversity, and we embrace girls of all abilities and backgrounds into our wonderful sisterhood.

Inclusion is at the core of who we are; it’s about being a sister to every Girl Scout and celebrating our unique strengths. Part of the important work you do includes modeling friendship and kindness for your girls and showing them what it means to practice empathy. Here’s how you can nurture an inclusive troop environment.

Equal Treatment: Girl Scouts welcomes all girls and adult members, regardless of race, ethnicity, cognitive or physical abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, or background including: family structure, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all Girl Scouts involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

The National Program Pillars

Girl Scouts lead their own adventures and team up with their fellow troop members to choose the hands-on activities that excite them most. Our program focuses on four areas (pillars) that form the foundation of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience:

• Outdoors: When Girl Scouts embark on outdoor adventures, they learn to confidently meet challenges while developing a lifelong appreciation of nature.
• **Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM):** Whether they’re building a robot, developing a video game, or studying the stars, Girl Scouts become better problem-solvers and critical thinkers through STEM activities and learn how they can use STEM to help others.

• **Life skills:** Girl Scouts discover they have what it takes to become outspoken community advocates, make smart decisions about their finances, and form strong, healthy relationships—skills that inspire them to accept challenges and overcome obstacles, now and always.

• **Entrepreneurship:** By participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program or fall product program or by earning one of the new entrepreneurship badges, girls spark their curiosity, confidence, and innovation as they learn the essentials of running their own businesses and how to think like entrepreneurs.

The Volunteer Toolkit provides inspiring ideas so you can engage your troop in a mix of activities all year long. For example, if you want to take your troop outside when doing a badge activity, look for the evergreen icon, which tells you that activity can be taken outdoors, or the globe icon, which lets you know you can bring a global perspective to the activity.

**The Important Difference Between Journeys and Badges**

Journeys and badges are designed to give girls different leadership-building experiences, all while having fun!

• **Journeys** are multi-session leadership experiences through which girls explore topics such as bullying, media literacy, design thinking, or environmental stewardship. They’ll do hands-on activities, connect with experts, and take the reins on age-appropriate Take Action projects. Because of their leadership focus, Journeys are also a prerequisite for the highest awards in Girl Scouting: the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards.

• **Badges** are all about skill building. When a Girl Scout earns a badge, it shows that she’s learned a new skill, such as how to make a healthy snack, build and test a toy race car, or take great digital photos. It may even spark an interest at school or plant the seed for a future career. And remember: you’ll have fun and learn by doing right alongside your troop!

If they choose, your Girl Scouts can pursue badges and Journey awards in the same year; encourage them to find the connections between the two to magnify their Girl Scout experience! While you’re having fun, keep in mind that the quality of a girl’s experience and the skills and pride she gains from earning Journey awards and skill-building badges far outweigh the quantity of badges she earns.

As a volunteer, you don’t have to be the expert in any badge or Journey work. In fact, when you show that you’re not afraid to fail and willing to try something new, you are modeling what is it is to be a Girl Scout. Our badge and Journey requirements are structured so your girls can learn new skills without you having to be an expert in all the topics, including STEM.
The Difference Between Community Service and Take Action Projects

As your Girl Scouts look for meaningful ways to give back to their community, you can help sharpen their problem-solving skills and expand their definition of doing good by discussing community service and Take Action projects. Both projects serve essential needs, but at different levels.

- When a Girl Scout performs **community service**, she’s responding to an immediate need in a one-off, “doing for” capacity. In other words? She’s making an impact right now!
- Through **Take Action/service learning**, girls explore the root causes of a community need and address it in a lasting way; they truly make the world—or their part of it—a better place.

If your troop members want to pursue their Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award, they’ll develop a Take Action project on an issue that’s close to their hearts. To make Take Action projects even more impactful for your Girl Scouts set time for them to reflect on their projects. When they make time to internalize the lessons they’ve learned, they’re more likely to find success in their future projects—or anything else they put their minds to.

Traditions, Ceremonies, and Special Girl Scout Days

Time-honored traditions and ceremonies unite Girl Scout sisters—and the millions of Girl Scout alums who came before them—around the country and around the globe and remind girls how far their fellow trailblazers have come and just how far they’ll go.

A few of those extra special days, when you’ll want to crank up the celebrations, include:

- **Juliette Gordon Low's birthday or Founder's Day**, October 31, marks the birth in 1860 of **Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low** in Savannah, Georgia.
- **World Thinking Day**, February 22, celebrates international friendship. It’s an opportunity for Girl Scouts and Girl Guides to connect with each other and explore a common theme around the world.
- **Girl Scouts’ birthday**, March 12, commemorates the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first 18 girl members in Savannah, Georgia.

Whether they’re making cool SWAPS to share with new friends or closing meetings with a friendship circle, your troop won’t want to miss out on these traditions, ceremonies, and special Girl Scout days.

Highest Awards

As your Girl Scouts discover the power of their voices, they'll want to take on an issue that’s close to their hearts and is meaningful to them. Encourage them to turn their vision into reality by taking on the ultimate Take Action projects in order to earn Girl Scouts’ highest awards.

The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards honor girls who become forces for good and create a lasting impact on their communities, nationally and around the world.

- **The Girl Scout Bronze Award** can be earned by Juniors; the prerequisite is one Junior Journey and its associated Take Action project. The Bronze Award is earned by the group.
- **The Girl Scout Silver Award** can be earned by Cadettes; the prerequisite is one Cadette Journey and its associated Take Action project. The Silver Award can be earned by an individual girl or by a small group.

- **The Girl Scout Gold Award** can be earned by Seniors and Ambassadors who have completed either two Girl Scout Senior/Ambassador level Journeys and the associated Take Action project or earned the Silver Award and completed one Senior/Ambassador level Journey.

Did you know that a Gold Award Girl Scout is entitled to enlist at a higher paygrade when she joins the U.S. military? A Gold Award Girl Scout’s achievements also prime her for the fast track when it comes to college admissions and make her an outstanding candidate for academic scholarships and other financial awards.

Girl Scouts are eligible to earn any recognition at the grade level in which they are registered. **Any Girl Scout is eligible to earn the Gold Award even if she joined Girl Scouts for the first time in high school.**

Ask your council about the Gold Award Girl Scouts in your community and how they’re doing their part to make the world a better place. For some major inspiration, consider inviting a local Gold Award Girl Scout to speak to your troop about how she took the lead and made a difference. You’ll be inspired when you see and hear what girls can accomplish as leaders—and by the confidence, grit, problem-solving, time and project management, and team-building expertise they gain while doing so!

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**Girl Scout Travel and Destinations**

Girl Scouts try new things and see the world with new eyes, both inside and outside of their usual troop meetings. As COVID-19-related travel restrictions are lifted across the globe and you and your troop feel safe doing so, you may be excited to explore the world again as a troop.

Traveling as a Girl Scout is a more engaging experience than traveling with family, school, or other groups because **girls take the lead.** They’ll make important decisions about where to go and what to do and take increasing responsibility for the planning of their trips, all while growing their organizational and management skills—skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Girl Scout travel is built on a progression of activities, so girls are set up for success. Daisies and Brownies start with field trips and progress to day trips, overnights, and weekend trips. Juniors can take adventures farther with a longer regional trip. And Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors can travel the United States and then the world. There are even opportunities for older girls to travel independently by joining trips their councils organize or participating in our travel program, **Destinations, which resumes in 2022.**

**Planning Ahead for Adventure**

Consult the most current COVID-19 guidelines for in-person Girl Scout activities. These guidelines will provide information on the types of travel allowed, and how to safely proceed.

The GSWNY Travel Guide can get you set for everything from local field trips to international travel. COVID-19 guidelines always supersede any guidelines provided within the Travel Guide.

Not sure where to begin? Check out the Girl Scout **Guide to U.S. Travel.** This resource is designed for Juniors and older Girl Scouts who want to take extended trips—that is, longer than a
weekend—but also features tips and tools for budding explorers who are just getting started with field trips and overnights.

Once girls have mastered planning trips in the United States, they might be ready for a global travel adventure! Global trips usually take a few years to plan, and the Girl Scout Global Travel Toolkit can walk you through the entire process.

**Safety First**

Again, consult the most current COVID-19 guidelines for in-person Girl Scout activities as your starting point. If you’re planning any kind of trip—from a short field trip to an overseas expedition—the “Trips and Travel” section of Safety Activity Checkpoints is your go-to resource for safety. Check out the GSWNY Travel Guide for additional requirements and paperwork. Be sure to follow all the basic safety guidelines, like the buddy system and first-aid requirements, in addition to the specific guidelines for travel.

Note that extended travel (more than three nights) is not covered under the basic Girl Scout insurance plan and will require additional coverage.

**Girl Scout Connections**

It’s easy to tie eye-opening travel opportunities into the leadership training and skill building your girls are doing in Girl Scouts! When it’s safe to travel together, girls can use their creativity to connect any leadership Journey theme into an idea for travel. For example, girls learn where their food comes from in the Sow What? Journey. That would connect well with a trip focusing on sustainable agriculture and, naturally, sampling tasty food!

There are abundant opportunities to build real skills through earning badges too. The most obvious example is the Senior Traveler badge, but there are plenty more, such as Eco Camper, New Cuisines, Coding for Good, and, of course, all the financial badges that help girls budget and earn money for their trips.

Want to include Girl Scout traditions into your trip? Look no farther than the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace in Savannah, Georgia! Your girls also have the chance to deepen their connections to Girl Scouts around the world by visiting one of the WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) World Centers, which offer low-cost accommodations and special programs in five locations around the world.

And if your troop is looking to stay closer to home this year? Ask your council about council-owned camps and other facilities that can be rented out.

As your Girl Scouts excitedly plan their next trip, remember to limit your role to facilitating the girls’ brainstorming and planning, never doing the work for them. Share your ideas and insight, ask tough questions when you have to, and support all their decisions with enthusiasm and encouragement!
Engaging Girls

Creating the kind of environment in which girls are unafraid to try new things and to be who they want to be starts with you! By meeting your girls where they are, you’ll help them develop the leadership skills they’ll use now and as they grow.

Understanding Healthy Development in Girls

It sounds simple, but just being attentive to what girls are experiencing as they mature is a big help to them—and to you, as you guide and mentor them!

You’ll experience different joys and challenges with each Girl Scout level, but here are some guidelines for meeting girls’ needs and abilities at different grade levels; you’ll also find these listed in the adult guide of each leadership Journey.

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<th>Girl Scout Daisies</th>
<th>At the Girl Scout Daisy level (kindergarten and first grade), girls . . .</th>
<th>This means . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.</td>
<td>They’ll enjoy going on nature walks and outdoor scavenger hunts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are great builders and budding artists, though they are still developing their fine motor skills.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love to move and dance.</td>
<td>They might especially enjoy marching like a penguin, dancing like a dolphin, or acting out how they might care for animals in the jungle.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are only beginning to learn about basic number concepts, time, and money.</td>
<td>You’ll want to take opportunities to count out supplies together—and, perhaps, the legs on a caterpillar!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are just beginning to write and spell, and they don’t always have the words for what they’re thinking or feeling.</td>
<td>That having girls draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate is easier and more meaningful for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know how to follow simple directions and respond well to recognition for doing so.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Girl Scout Brownies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the Girl Scout Brownie level (second and third grade), girls . . .</th>
<th>This means . . .</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have lots of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.</td>
<td>Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are social and enjoy working in groups.</td>
<td>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.</td>
<td>Letting girls lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow girls as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.</td>
<td>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 pretend visit to a new country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need clear directions and structure and like knowing what to expect.</td>
<td>Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share those at the start.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.</td>
<td>Offering support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, and the like.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.</td>
<td>Girls might like to create a play about welcoming a new girl to their school or to tell a story through dance or creative movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job done well.</td>
<td>Acknowledging when the girls have listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Girl Scout Juniors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the Girl Scout Junior level (fourth and fifth grades), girls . . .</th>
<th>This means . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Want to make decisions and express their opinions.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are social and enjoy doing things in groups.</td>
<td>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are concerned about equity and fairness.</td>
<td>Not shying away from discussing why rules are in place and having girls develop their own rules for their group. Girls may also be concerned about equity/fairness in their community and in the world. Let girls know this is a safe space to talk about their observations and feelings about what they are seeing/experiencing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Asking girls to explain why they made a decision, to share their visions of their roles in the future, and to challenge their own and others’ perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination.</td>
<td>Engaging girls in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow girls to express themselves through the written word, choreography, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.</td>
<td>Girls might like to tell a story through playwriting, playing an instrument, or choreographing a dance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be starting puberty, which means beginning breast development, skin changes, and weight changes. Some may be getting their periods.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Girl Scout Cadettes**

**At the Girl Scout Cadette level (sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), girls . . .**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>This means . . .</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are starting to spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### About Girls Aged 11 to 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About friends and relationships with others their age.</th>
<th>Tackling relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can be very self-conscious—wanting to be like everyone else but fearing they are unique in their thoughts and feelings.</td>
<td>Encouraging girls to share, but only when they are ready. 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.</td>
<td>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions and allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Girl Scout Seniors

**At the Girl Scout Senior level (ninth and tenth grades), girls . . .**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This means . . .</th>
<th><strong>Ask girls to explain the reasoning behind their decisions.</strong> Engage girls in role-play and performances, where others can watch and offer alternative solutions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are beginning to clarify their own values, consider alternative points of view on controversial issues, and see multiple aspects of a situation.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills and are able to plan and reflect on their own learning experiences.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.</td>
<td>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Girl Scout Ambassadors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the Girl Scout Ambassador level (eleventh and twelfth grades), girls . . .</th>
<th>This means . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Inviting girls to develop stories as a group and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.</td>
<td>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 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home—and are looking to their futures.</td>
<td>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</td>
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## Creating a Safe Space for Girls

A safe space is where girls feel they can be themselves, without explanation or judgment. As a volunteer, you create an environment that is just as important as the activities girls do; it’s the key to developing the sort of group that girls want to be part of! Cultivate a space where confidentiality is respected and girls can express their true selves.
Recognizing and Supporting Each Girl
You're a role model and a mentor to your girls. Since you play an important role in their lives, they need to know that you consider each of them an important person too. They can weather a poor meeting place or an activity that flops, but they cannot endure being ignored or rejected.

- Give a shout-out when you see girls trying their best, not just when they've had a clear success.
- Emphasize the positive qualities that make each girl worthy and unique.
- Be generous with praise and stingy with rebuke.
- Help your 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 how responsibilities are shared, in handling of disagreements, and in your responses to performance and accomplishment.

- When possible, ask the girls 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 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. You'll also need to show them that you won’t betray their confidence.

- Show girls you trust them to think for themselves and use their own judgment.
- Encourage them make the important decisions in the group.
- Give them assistance in correcting their own mistakes.
- Support girls in trusting one another—let them see firsthand how trust can be built, lost, regained, and strengthened.

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 the important things happening in their lives.

- 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.

Managing Conflict
Conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, but if handled constructively, they show girls that they can overcome their differences, exercise diplomacy, and improve their communication and relationships. Respecting others and being a sister to every Girl Scout means that 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.) Talking in this way might feel uncomfortable and difficult now, but it lays 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, to your council if you need extra help.

**Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age**

Make sure your words and intentions create connection with the girls. Keep in mind how important the following attitudes are.

**Listen**
Listening to girls, as opposed to telling them what to think, feel, or do (no “you shoulds”) is the first step in building a trusting relationship and helping them take ownership of their Girl Scout experience.

**Be Honest**
If you’re not comfortable with a topic or activity, it’s OK to 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**
Outside of Girl Scouts, girls may be dealing with issues like relationships, peer pressure, school, money, drugs, racism, sexism, homophobia and other serious topics. 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 young adults reinforces that their opinions matter and that they deserve respect.

**Offer Options**
Girls’ needs and interests change and being flexible shows them that you respect them and their busy lives. Be ready with age-appropriate guidance and parameters no matter what the girls choose to do.

**Stay Current**
Show your girls that you’re interested in their world by asking them about the TV shows and movies they like; the books, magazines, or blogs they read; the social media influencers they follow; and the music they listen to.

**Remember to LUTE: Listen, Understand, Tolerate, and Empathize**
Try using the LUTE method to thoughtfully respond when a girl is upset, angry, or confused.

*Listen:* Hear her out, ask for details, and reflect back what you hear; try “What happened next?” or “What did she say?”
**Understand:** Show that you understand where she’s coming from with comments such as, “So what I hear you saying is . . .” or “I understand why you’re unhappy,” or “Your feelings are hurt; mine would be, too.”

**Tolerate:** You can tolerate the feelings that she just can’t handle right now on her own. Let her know that you’re there to listen and accept how she is feeling about the situation. Say something like: “Try talking to me about it. I’ll listen,” or “I know you’re mad—talking it out helps,” or “I can handle it—say whatever you want to.”

**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

Let these simple tips guide you in working with teenage girls:

- Think of yourself as a partner, a coach, or a mentor, 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).

### When Sensitive Topics Come Up

It’s an amazing feeling when your Girl Scouts put their trust in you—and when they do, they may come to you with some of the issues they face, such as bullying, peer pressure, dating, athletic and academic performance, and more. Some of these issues may be considered sensitive by families, and they may have opinions or input about how, and whether, Girl Scouts should cover these topics with their girls.

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 volunteer who can help girls acquire skills and knowledge in a supportive atmosphere, not someone who advocates a particular position.

Girl Scouts of the USA 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 caregivers, 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, discrimination based on identity, 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/caregiver 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 Customer Care at 888-837-6410 during regular business hours and find out how to refer the girl and her parent/guardian to experts at school or in the community. Outside of business hours, please contact the Emergency Response Line at 1-800-882-9268.
- 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

**Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment**

Girl Scouts is committed to creating a respectful, courteous environment free of discrimination and unlawful harassment of any kind.

GSWNY does not tolerate sexual or other unlawful harassment by any employee, Board Member, volunteer, vendor, contractor, consultant, customer, girl or adult member, or visitor. Harassment is a breach of GSWNY policy and may be a violation of state and/or federal law. Harassment can include unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or visual, including intimidation, ridicule, insult, comments or physical conduct that is based on an individual’s protected status including sex, race, religion, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, age, ability, etc.

GSWNY is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent such harassment and discrimination. GSWNY is determined to resolve possible discrimination and harassment situations as quickly and discreetly as possible. Volunteers can contact our Customer Care team
at 888-837-6410 or customercare@gswny.org for any questions or concerns, and our formal process for reporting issues of harassment and discrimination are below:

If a volunteer, girl or caregiver believes another volunteer, Board Member, employee, vendor, contractor, consultant, customer, girl or adult member, visitor, or agent of the organization is harassing or discriminating against them, the volunteer is encouraged to tell the offender clearly that the behaviors and actions are unwelcome. The volunteer should immediately inform the Chief Executive Officer at gs.ceo@gswny.org or by calling Customer Care at 888-837-6410 or customercare@gswny.org. If the complaint involves the Chief Executive Officer, then the complaint should be reported to the Board Chair by calling Customer Care at 888-837-6410.

The GSWNY CEO (or designee) will work with the individual to determine if they are seeking guidance and assistance from GSWNY staff, and/or if they wish to make a formal complaint. The individual should report the facts of the incident, including what happened, how often, and where the incident(s) took place, as well as the names of the individuals and witnesses involved. Any employee who is informed of, witnesses, or receives a complaint must report it directly to the Chief Executive Officer.

All harassment and discrimination claims will be investigated in a timely, fair, and thorough manner, and GSWNY expects all volunteers to cooperate fully in any investigation. All complaints will be investigated as discreetly and confidentially as possible. If the organization finds that discrimination or harassment has occurred, it will take appropriate corrective action up to and including dismissal of the offending volunteer (or other appropriate action if the offender is not a volunteer for the organization). The Chief Executive Officer has the overall responsibility of maintaining effective enforcement of nondiscrimination and harassment policies.

Each volunteer is responsible for following the procedures outlined in this policy to ensure that their complaint is handled promptly and appropriately.

Anti-Retaliation Policy

GSWNY feels very strongly that it is important to provide volunteers, members and caregivers with confidential, nonthreatening alternatives for registering their concerns without fear of retaliation. GSWNY will not tolerate retaliation against anyone for stepping forward with a concern, complaint, or grievance. An employee or volunteer may not retaliate against employees, members or volunteers in any way for registering a concern or complaint in good faith.
Engaging Girls

You want your Girl Scouts to have fun, be inspired, take risks, and learn about themselves and the world—that’s why you’re a Girl Scout troop leader or troop volunteer! Parents and caregivers want the same thing for their girls but getting families to pitch in and play an active role in the troop while also enhancing the experience for their own girl and themselves can be tricky for many volunteers. *It doesn’t have to be this way!*

**Kick the Year Off Right by Engaging Parents and Other Caregivers**

**What Is a Parent and Caregiver Meeting?**
It’s the first meeting you have to start each troop year—whether you are a new or returning troop. It is valuable for all troops.

**Why Hold a Meeting?**
Kicking off each year with a parent and caregiver meeting sets the troop up for success. Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging parents in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When parents are involved, leaders have support, the troop has a plan, and girls benefit! The meeting helps:

- Parents understand what Girl Scouting can do for their girl.
- Parents and leaders identify ways they will work as a team to support the troop.
- Parents and leaders agree about what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually.
- You fill key troop positions—you never know which parent will make an awesome assistant leader or troop cookie manager.
- Parents know how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events or schedule changes.
- Parents learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics.

Check out our step-by-step guide and “Parents & Caregivers Meeting Outline” on the Volunteer Toolkit. This 60–90-minute meeting will make all the difference in the year ahead.

Another meeting you don’t want to miss is the *Cookie Program Girl & Family Meeting* in the Volunteer Toolkit. Just like the parent and caregiver meeting at the beginning of the year, this meeting is your chance to share what girls gain through the cookie program, outline expectations, and find the support you need for a successful cookie season. The cookie program is a team effort and you’ll want to get families on board!

For even more tips on working with troop families, check out [Girl Scouts’ Tips for Troop Leaders hub](#).

**How to Keep Parents and Other Caregivers on Board**

**Make the Ask(s)**
The main reason people don’t take action is because they were never asked to in the first place. That’s why hearing one out of three Girl Scout parents say no one had communicated expectations around involvement with their girl’s troop is so troubling. Parents may have many talents, but they’re certainly not mind readers! If you’re nervous about getting turned down, don’t be. Sure, a few parents might be unable to lend a hand, but the helpers you do get will be
worth their weight in gold. And just because someone wasn’t available a month or two ago doesn’t mean they won’t be free to help now. Loop back, follow up, and ask again!

**Make Sense of “Why”**

Explain that not only does the whole troop benefit with extra help from parents and other caregivers, but also that girls feel a special sense of pride in seeing their own family member step up and take a leadership role. Getting involved can strengthen the caregiver/girl bond and is a meaningful way to show daughters that they are a priority in their parents’ lives.

**Make It Quick and Easy**

Everybody’s got a full plate these days, so instead of starting conversations with a list of tasks or responsibilities that parents and other caregivers could take on (which can be intimidating!), ask how much time each week they might be able to dedicate to the troop, then go from there. For instance, if a troop mom or dad has 15 minutes each week to spare, they could organize and manage the calendar for troop snacks and carpools. If a grandparent has one to two hours, they could assist with leading the troop through a specific badge on a topic they’re already comfortable with. For more ways parents and other caregivers can help out when faced with a tricky schedule, check out the Family Resources tab in the Volunteer Toolkit.

**Make Family Part of the Formula**

While Girl Scout programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it’s important and helpful to open up a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting the whole crew to celebrate her accomplishments in Girl Scouting—whether at a holiday open house, a bridging ceremony, or a fun “reverse meeting” where girls take the role of leaders and guide the adults, including caregivers, through an activity—will help parents better understand the value of Girl Scouts and they’ll be more likely to invest their time and talents to the troop.

That said, there’s no need to wait for one of these special events to engage families in their girls’ Girl Scout lives! Keep communication lines open throughout the year—whether it’s through your troop’s social media page, personal emails, or in-person chats—to keep parents in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting, and encourage them to let their daughters “be the experts” at home, explaining or teaching the new skills they’ve learned.
Troop Management

Leadership is more than “being in charge” or having a title; it’s recognizing that you’re part of a team and understanding that team’s needs and interests. Here’s how you’ll do that with your troop!

Your Role as a Volunteer

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience is based on three keys—discover, connect, and take action—but it’s not just for your troop! As a Girl Scout leader, you’ll embark on your own leadership journey as you help girls develop the vital leadership skills they’ll use to make the world a better place. Here are a few basic concepts that outline what leadership means in Girl Scouting.

Leadership is teaching your Girl Scouts:

- That they can do and be anything!
- That they are decision makers and should own their decisions.
- How to live the Girl Scout Law by modeling it for them.

As a leader, see yourself as a coach who:

- Advises, discusses, and cheers on your troop, not as a teacher with a planned lesson or activity.
- Ensures each member understands and can carry out their responsibilities within the troop.
- Encourages Girl Scouts to build their skills and their ethics.
- Gives more responsibilities to the girls as they grow and develop.

It’s important to remember that:

- You cannot know everything that your Girl Scouts might ever want to learn.
- You’ll explore and learn alongside your girls and grow your confidence in the process.
- You’re not expected to know everything about Girl Scouting, but you should know where to go for information—and to ask for help when you need it.

Your Responsibilities as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Your responsibilities as a Girl Scout volunteer include:

- Accepting the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
- Understanding and coaching 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 your Girl Scouts so that their activities are girl-led and that they learn by doing, individually and as a group. 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 troop families 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 as well as your council.
• Facilitating a safe experience for every Girl Scout.

Planning Your First Troop Meeting

Depending on the ages of your girls, you might take the lead in guiding the structure and experiences of your troop—from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, from steering girl-led activities to setting financial expectations. You'll make these decisions collaboratively with your volunteer team or co-leader, as well as with input from the girls and their parents and caregivers.

Use these questions to guide your conversation with your troop committee volunteers or co-leader before discussing these topics with parents and caregivers.

• When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?
• Where will we meet? Your meeting space should be somewhere safe, clean, and secure that allows all girls to participate. Some great meeting space ideas include schools, places of worship, libraries, and community centers. If working with teens, consider meeting at coffee shops, bookstores, or other places they enjoy.
• Which components of the uniform will families need to purchase? Which uniform components will the troop provide for each girl?
• Will our troop be a single grade level or facilitated as a multi-level troop with girls of many grade levels combined into one troop? If multi-level, how will we make sure they each get an age-appropriate experience?
• How will we keep troop activities and decisions girl-led? Use the Volunteer Toolkit to help you through this process by exploring options for activities and reviewing the meeting plans and resources lists.
• How often are we going to communicate to troop families? Which channels will we use to keep families in the loop? Effective communication will help set expectations and clarify parent/caregiver responsibilities.
• Will our troop charge dues, use product program proceeds, and/or charge per activity? How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? What should our financial plan look like?

Choosing a meeting place

What makes a great meeting space? It depends on your troop, but here are a few considerations as you visit potential spaces:

Cost: The space should be free to use.
Size: Make sure the space is large enough for 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: Ask if tables and chairs come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby of some sort where you could store supplies or a safe outdoor space for activities.

Safety: Potential spaces must be safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and have at least two exits that are well marked and fully functional. Also be sure first-aid equipment is on hand.

Facilities: It goes without saying, but make sure that toilets are sanitary and accessible.

Communication-friendly: Check for cell reception in the potential space and whether Wi-Fi is available.

Allergen-free: Ensure that pet dander and other common allergens won’t bother susceptible girls during meetings.

Accessibility: Your space should accommodate girls with disabilities as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings. Also consider transportation access – for example, if not all families have access to a car, is the space accessible by public transportation?

Need a few talking points to get started? Try:

“I’m a Girl Scout volunteer with a group of [number of girls] girls. We’re doing lots of great things for girls and for the community, like [something your group is doing] and [something else your troop is doing]. 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 [reason why you’d like to meet there].”

Stuck and need additional support? Contact your council or your service unit support team for help with a troop meeting place. GSWNY properties are also available to book for troop meetings.

Meetings and other events in the home

Meetings are not allowed in private homes, including yards or private outdoor spaces. GSWNY prohibits troops from hosting sleepovers in private homes/backyards for the same reasons. GSWNY encourages troops to take advantage of vendor-run overnight programming at a zoo, aquarium or museum, or to participate in GSWNY-run overnight programming such as Core Camp.

Virtual Meetings

If your group or troop can’t meet in person or hold a traditional meeting, there are so many ways to bring the power of Girl Scouting home! Meeting virtually can be a fun, engaging option for your troop.

Before setting up a virtual meeting, you’ll want to:

- Partner with troop families to make sure the girls are safe online.
- Assess if all troop families have access to internet at home.
- Select a meeting platform that allows families who may not have internet access to call in. GSUSA offers a discounted Zoom license for Girl Scout volunteers through our online store.
- Think about logistics: work with the girls to set up ground rules; consider how you’ll incorporate in-person meeting traditions in your virtual space and how you’ll keep the meeting on track.
- Talk with families on how to keep activities girl-led if your girls will be completing them from home.

And don't worry if your girls want to use a web or social platform you’re not as familiar with, because you'll learn alongside them! You’ll also find lots of inspiring badge activities and tips on the GSWNY GS@Home page. There you will find tutorials on using the Zoom meeting platform and running a virtual meeting, packaged badge activities perfect for the virtual environment, online field trips and more.

**Girl Scout Troop Size**

The troop size “sweet spot” is large enough to provide an interactive and cooperative learning environment and small enough to encourage individual development. Research has shown that the ideal troop size is 12 girls; recommended group sizes, by grade level, are:

- 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

A Girl Scout troop/group must have at minimum five girls and two approved adult volunteers. (Double-check the volunteer-to-girl ratio chart to make sure you’ve got the right amount of coverage for your troop!) Adults and girls registering in groups of fewer than five girls and/or two approved, unrelated adult volunteers, at least one of whom is female, will be registered as individual Girl Scouts to more accurately reflect their status and program experience. Individual girls are always welcome to participate in Girl Scout activities and events.

**Registering girls and adults in Girl Scouts**

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 cannot be transferred to another member and are not refundable.

Preregistration for the upcoming membership year occurs in the spring. Girls are encouraged to register early to avoid the fall rush. Early registration allows for 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 to anyone who accepts the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, pays the one-time lifetime membership fee, and is at least 18 years old (or a high school graduate or equivalent). Volunteers with ten or more years of service can become lifetime members at the discounted young alum rate.
Adding new girls to your troop

Growing your troop is a great way to share the power of the Girl Scout experience and there are many ways to get the word out, like hanging posters at your girl’s school, using social media to reach families in your community, or including your troop in your council's Opportunity Catalog or Troop Catalog.

Here are some quick tips on how you can recruit girls for your new troop:

- Hang posters at your girl's school.
- Send home invitations or flyers with girls from school inviting them to join.
- Ask parents you may know in your girl’s class if they would be interested in joining.

Don’t forget to ensure your troop is listed on the opportunity catalog. This is the listing of all the available troops within a certain zip code. Interested new girls will only be able to find your troop and register for it if it's listed. Contact GSWNY at 1-888-837-6410 or customercare@gswny.org for more information.

Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

Girl Scouts is for every girl, and that’s why we embrace girls of all abilities and backgrounds with a specific and positive philosophy of inclusion that benefits everyone. Each Girl Scout—regardless of her socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, physical or cognitive ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, primary language, political belief, or religion—is an equal and valued member of the group, and groups reflect the diversity of the community.

We believe inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. Inclusion is about belonging, everyone being offered the same opportunities with respect, dignity, and celebration of their unique strengths. It’s about being a sister to every Girl Scout! You’re accepting and inclusive when you:

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

If you have questions about accommodating an individual girl, please reach out to our Customer Care Team.

As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, consider the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. Include the special needs of any members who have disabilities or whose parents or caregivers 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.

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 or caregiver. If you are open and honest, they’ll likely 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.

Focus on a person’s abilities—on what she can do rather than on what she cannot. In that spirit, use people-first language that puts the person before the disability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say . . .</th>
<th>Instead of . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She has a learning disability.</td>
<td>She is learning disabled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She has a developmental delay.</td>
<td>She is mentally retarded; she is slow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She uses a wheelchair.</td>
<td>She is wheelchair-bound.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- When talking to a girl with a disability, speak directly to her, not through a family member 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 twenty-first year, and then move into an adult membership category.

**Getting Support for Your Troop**

Just as your Girl Scouts rally around each other for support, you’ll also have a dedicated Girl Scout support team, consisting of council staff and passionate volunteers just like you. Your support team, which may be called a service unit at your council, is ready to offer local learning opportunities and advice as well as answer your questions about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, product sales, and so much more.
Before you hold your first troop meeting with girls, consider the support and people resources you'll need to cultivate an energizing troop experience. Parents, friends, family, and other members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide time, experience, and ideas to a troop, so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your volunteer troop team. This team is made up of troop leaders (like you) and troop committee volunteers.

Your **troop committee volunteers** are the extra set of eyes, ears, and hands that help the troop safely explore the world around them. Depending on your troop’s needs, they can play a more active role—for instance, someone can step up as a dedicated troop treasurer—or simply provide an occasional helping hand when you need to keep a meeting’s activity on track.

If a parent or caregiver isn’t sure if they can commit to a committee or co-leader role, encourage them to try **volunteering in a smaller capacity** that matches their skill set. Just like your young Girl Scouts, once troop parents and caregivers discover they can succeed in their volunteer role, they’ll feel empowered to volunteer again.

**Troop Management Tools and Resources**

From toolkits and guides to regular contact with experienced people, you’ll have all the support you need to be a Girl Scout volunteer. Here’s a list of some important resources you’ll want to check out.

**The Volunteer Toolkit**

The Volunteer Toolkit is a customizable digital planning tool for troop leaders and co-leaders to easily manage their troop year-round and deliver easy, fun troop meetings. Accessible via desktop and mobile devices, the Volunteer Toolkit saves you time and energy so that you can focus on having fun with your Girl Scouts.

With the Volunteer Toolkit, girls and leaders can explore meeting topics and program activities together and follow the fun as they plan their Girl Scout year. Through the Volunteer Toolkit, troop leaders can:

- Plan the troop’s calendar year and meeting schedule.
- Email parents/caregivers with one click.
- View the troop roster, renew girls’ membership, and update girls’ contact information.
- View meeting plans for Journeys and badges, including suggested tracks for multi-level groups (K–5 and 6–12).
- Customize meeting agendas to fit your unique troop.
- Explore individual meeting plans that show a breakdown of every step, including a list of materials needed, editable time allotments for each activity within a meeting, and printable meeting aids.
- Record attendance at meetings and their troop’s badge and Journey achievements.
- Add council or custom events to the troop’s calendar.
- Submit troop’s finance reports (depending on the council’s process).
- Easily locate both national and local council resources, such as *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

Parents and caregivers can:

- View the troop’s meeting schedule and individual meeting plans to stay up to date on the badges and Journeys they are working on.
- Renew their memberships and update their contact information.
- View their Girl Scout’s attendance and achievements.
- See upcoming events the troop is planning or attending.
• Easily locate both national and local council resources, such as the Family Hub.
• View the troop’s finance report (depending on the council’s process).
Get started by visiting www.gswny.org and clicking on the MYGS tab.

**Girl Scout Shop**
Check out our retail shops for GSUSA program materials such as handbooks and badge booklets, as well as uniform components and apparel. GSWNY has retail shops in all of our service centers; locations and hours can be found on our website. Our retail staff can provide expert advice to new and seasoned leaders. You can even email your order and have it shipped or do curbside pickup! We also offer an online store to shop from the comfort of home.

**Safety Activity Checkpoints**
Safety is paramount in Girl Scouting, and this resource—Safety Activity Checkpoints—contains everything you need to know to help keep your girls safe during a variety of exciting activities outside of their regular Girl Scout troop meetings.

**Tips for Troop Leaders**
When you’re looking for real-world advice from fellow troop leaders who've been there, this volunteer-to-volunteer resource, called Tips for Troop Leaders, on the Girl Scouts of the USA website has what you need for a successful troop year.

**Girl Scout Volunteers in Your Community**
Remember that Girl Scout support team we mentioned? You'll find them in your service unit! Troops are organized geographically into service units or communities. You’ll find a local network of fellow leaders and administrative volunteers ready to offer tips and advice to help you succeed in your volunteer role.

**Customer Care Contacts**
Questions? Need help resolving an issue? We’ve got you! Reach out anytime by either clicking on the “Contact Us” form at (council website) or email customercare@gswny.org. During business hours you can reach a customer service specialist by calling 888-837-6410.

**Newsletters/Communication**
Watch for our weekly Member Essentials newsletter to learn about any updates and upcoming events. You can see past issues on our GSWNY blog. You can also follow us on social media – just check out the links at www.gswny.org.

**Taking Advantage of Learning Opportunities**
We know that when you have the knowledge and skills you need to manage your girls, both you and your troop will thrive. Contact us to ask about ongoing learning opportunities that will help you grow your skills and confidence.

All new leaders are required to complete a series of Volunteer Basics online courses. In addition, specialized training is available for specific positions such as Cookie Parent.

You’ll also find regularly scheduled offerings for required courses such as First Aid & CPR training, but also enrichment classes and webinars to enhance your knowledge. Watch the monthly Training Times for details – and see archived versions on our Volunteer Resources page.
Knowing How Much You’re Appreciated

What begins with Girl Scouts speaking up at a troop meeting can go all the way to speaking in front of their city council for a cause they champion—and they’ll have your support to thank for that. Your volunteer role makes a powerful difference. Thank you for all you do.

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 you’ll 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 Scouts!

If you’re ready for more opportunities, 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 yearlong 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.

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. Learn more on our Recognitions page!

Volunteer Appreciation Month

Without our passionate and dedicated volunteers, there would be no Girl Scouting. That’s why we celebrate Volunteer Appreciation Week in April! And get ready to crank up the party as we ring in national Girl Scout Leader’s Day on April 22.

Girl Scout Participation in Activities with Other Scouting Organizations

The decision by Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to open the Boy Scout program to girls has fundamentally altered the nature of the relationship between BSA and Girl Scouts nationally and locally. Local relationships between BSA and Girl Scout councils that have led to partnerships and joint activities in the past may now create certain risks or challenges for Girl Scouts. For this reason, councils are encouraged to avoid joint recruiting and/or joint participation in community events or activities.

Marketplace Confusion

To protect the integrity of the Girl Scout brand and reinforce our programming as unique, girl-only, and best in class, we must ensure that we take care that the activities in which girls participate are exclusive to the Girl Scout program, are safe and girl-led, and are conducted under the appropriate supervision of Girl Scouts.

Protecting Use of Girl Scout Materials

Girl Scout materials are intended for the exclusive use of Girl Scouts and are protected as the intellectual property of Girl Scouts of the USA. Materials include but are not limited to: Girl Scout logo, tag lines, and/or program and badge requirements.
Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Fall Product Program

Learning to think like an entrepreneur? Developing business smarts? Getting to know customers and building lasting relationships? There’s so much more to that box of Thin Mints®.

Whether they participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program or the Girl Scout Fall Product Program (or both!), everything your Girl Scouts learn prepares them to take on the world. Plus, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local in your community to power amazing year-round experiences—experiences that broaden their worlds and spark their sense of wonder.

Five Essential Skills
Girl Scouts as young as five develop five essential skills through the Girl Scout Cookie Program—skills that will help them be successful today and throughout their lives:

- **Goal setting:** Girls learn to create a plan to reach their goals.
- **Decision making:** Girls learn to make decisions on their own and as a team.
- **Money management:** Girls learn to create a budget and handle money.
- **People skills:** Girls find their voice and up their confidence through customer interactions that build relationships.
- **Business ethics:** Girls learn to act responsibly and honestly, both in business and in life.

But building their business know-how isn’t just tied to the cookies themselves! Girl Scouts at any level can continue honing their entrepreneurial skills by earning the Cookie Business badges, Cookie Entrepreneur Family pin, and the Financial Literacy badges year over year.

Before your cookie bosses open shop, be sure to check out these helpful troop leader resources that will empower you to:

- Manage your troop’s funds.
- Learn how girls participate in money earning.
- Discover how your troop can reach its financial goals.
- Plan activities to help her earn cookie pins and badges
- Understand just how much your girls are capable of by grade level. Teach the girls how to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset. Review the Entrepreneurship Progression Chart.

Girl Scout Cookie History
What started with Girl Scouts selling home-baked cookies to raise money grew into enlisting professional bakers in 1936 to handle the growing demand—and the rest is history. Explore Girl Scout Cookie History to find out how cookies have helped build generations of female entrepreneurs and leaders who make the world a better place.

Where Cookie Proceeds Go
After paying for the cost of cookies and materials, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local and help councils provide Girl Scout programs in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the outdoors, life skills, entrepreneurship, and more—in camps, through leadership training, and multiple other ways. A portion of the proceeds is directly managed by girls, and it’s up to them to decide how to invest their troop’s share of the earnings. Check out the “Where the Cookie Money Goes” handout to learn more.
Your council will provide a breakdown of how cookie program proceeds support Girl Scout activities locally. Please share this information with girls and their families so everyone understands that product program sales make it possible for your Girl Scout council to serve girls.

Troop members share in the proceeds from a successful product program; proceeds aren’t distributed to individual girl members. Girls, however, may be eligible for rewards and credits that they put toward council-sponsored camps, programs, and Girl Scout swag. The council plan for rewards applies equally to all girls participating in the product program activity.

The Girl Scout *Blue Book of Basic Documents* specifies that:

“All money and other assets, including property, that are raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting must be held and authorized by a Girl Scout council or Girl Scouts of the USA. Such money and other assets must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting.”

—“Ownership of Assets,” *Blue Book of Basic Documents* (March 2001), page 20

Making s’mores under the stars, creating a lasting impact on your community, or ordering supplies for an eye-opening STEM project—there are limitless ways to put troop proceeds toward dynamic Girl Scout experiences! There are a few things, however, that don’t qualify for “purposes of Girl Scouting,” for instance, using troop proceeds to purchase memberships in or uniforms for another organization. We encourage all councils to remind their volunteers of this policy in order to protect the all-girl environment and to avoid diversion of Girl Scout funds.

**Independent Girl Scouts Participating in the Product Programs:**

1. An Independent Girl Scout (IRM) is a registered Girl Scout who is not affiliated with a troop.
2. Finances of an Independent Girl Scout must be managed and maintained by an adult that is not affiliated with the girl. They are managed by a member of the service team such as the service unit finance consultant.

**Independent Girl Scout Sellers:**

1. Service Unit Fund for Independent Girl Scout Sellers:
   a. **Income from product sales does not become property of individual girl members.**
   b. The service unit will manage the proceeds raised from the product program activity.
   c. An Independent Girl Scout may request funds from the Service Unit to participate in a *Girl Scout program, camp, event, trip, Take Action project, or for membership dues, Girl Scout uniforms, badges or books. Funds will not be disbursed for non-Girl Scout programs or activities.* Funds should be requested using the following form:
      o Program Selection Request Form: Independent Girl Scout Sellers (Service Unit) - available at gswny.org/forms.
   d. The service team will review each request and allocate the amount accordingly from the Service Unit Fund for Independent Girl Scout. The funds should be pooled; not tracked by individual girl.

One critical task for each troop/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.

**Your Council’s Role**
When you are set up for success, you are better able to set up your girls for success! That’s why every year, your council provides trainings, guidelines, and procedures for conducting the Girl Scout Cookie Program and fall product program and determines how the proceeds and product rewards system will be managed. Check the cookie section of our website to find the answers you need as well as local trainings and resources.

Each council also selects the vendors of its choice to provide the products for their product programs. Two commercial bakers are licensed by GSUSA to produce Girl Scout Cookies: Little Brownie Bakers and ABC Bakers. For additional information on cookie varieties, including nutritional details, visit the Meet the Cookies section on girlscoutcookies.org.

Councils also work with vendors to offer magazine subscriptions, nut and candy products, and more for the fall product program. These companies are Ashdon Farms, Trophy Nut, OSP/GAO and M2 Media group. Each provides online tools and activities for girls to download. Magazine selection and sales may take place online—check with your council for more details.

**Your Role**
You play an exciting role in giving your girls opportunities to practice the five skills in a girl-led, cooperative setting. Some of the things you’ll do include:

- Get girls excited about the opportunities to support her troop (but allowing her participation to be voluntary).
- Support both competitive and apprehensive cookie bosses, helping all your girls set meaningful goals for themselves.
- Fostering partnerships with each girl’s family to ensure cookie season success, whatever that may look like for her. Check out the Creating Cookie Success and Coaching Your Budding Businesswoman resources that will help you build a positive partnership with girls and families.

Not only can girls sell individually, both in-person and using the online tools provided by each vendor, they can also participate in group booth sales during product programs. Your local council has additional guidance and processes to market and ensure every booth is in a safe and appropriate location for girls

As your Girl Scouts grow, your role will evolve from a hands-on one to providing oversight and support where needed. No matter their ages, remember that volunteers and parents/caregivers do not sell the product. Your role is to encourage your girls and let their entrepreneurial spirit soar. Learning by doing is exactly how your girls develop the business savvy and communication skills which empower them to reach their goals.

Another critical task for each troop is to establish a clear accounting system for all proceeds and product during the programs. It’s up to you to make sure that money is spent wisely, that excellent records are kept (remember to keep copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and that all product is tracked. For older girls, your job is to oversee their work as they learn to keep impeccable records. Be sure to attend product program orientation or training so you are aware of the systems and helpful tools available.
The Girl Scout Cookie Program and the fall product program can be exhilarating and busy times during the troop year, but you’re never alone in your efforts! You can reach out to your service unit product program manager when you're feeling stuck, or you can build a cookie team to provide the support your troop needs.

**Product Program Safety**
Safety is the top priority while selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products. Volunteers, families, and girls should be familiar with and practice the safety guidelines outlined in local program resources as well as those available in the troop leader resources section of girlscoutcookies.org and in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Regardless of the type of activity, you need to be prepared for emergencies involving girls or other volunteers. This should include having a first aid kit always available and making sure that if someone is injured and needs help, that one volunteer cares for the injured person while another volunteer seeks help. Be prepared to follow the guidelines for reporting an accident/incident as needed by filling out the council’s Accident/Incident Report Form.

**Selling Cookies Online**
Your Troop will use the Digital Cookie® platform to manage its cookie business? Check the specific guidelines provided by each cookie vendor before participating. Before girls use their Digital Cookie or Smart Cookie site, they should partner with their families to learn how to safely run their business online.

A few more online safety practices to keep in mind:

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program is a girl-led program, so online marketing and sales efforts should always be led by a Girl Scout, with the supervision of her parent or caregiver.
- Girl Scouts engaging in online sales and marketing must review and apply the Digital Marketing Tips for Cookie Entrepreneurs and Their Families.
- Girls, volunteers and parents must review and adhere to the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge, the Digital Cookie Pledge, the Supplemental Safety Tips for Online Marketing, and Girl Scouts’ Safety Activity Checkpoints for Computer and Internet Use and Cookie and Product Sales (with the exception that they may share beyond friends and family).
- Sales links should never be posted to resale sites (Craigslist, eBay, Facebook Marketplace etc.).
- Girls must adhere to all terms and conditions on Digital Cookie and Smart Cookie platforms. For copies of terms and conditions, please contact GSUSA, ABC, or M2 as needed.
- Girl Scouts of the USA reserves the right to remove or disable the link for any reason including violation of guidance, inventory fulfillment issues, safety issues, or if sales and marketing activity goes viral and otherwise creates unanticipated disruption.

Additionally, families, girls, and volunteers should contact and collaborate with their councils and Girl Scouts of the USA in advance on any national news media opportunities tied to girls online marketing and sales efforts.

**The Buddy System**
Using the buddy system, girls are divided into teams of two. Each girl is responsible for staying with her buddy at all times, warning her buddy of danger, giving her buddy immediate
assistance if safe to do so, and seeking help if needed. Girls are encouraged to stay near the group or buddy with another team of two so that in the event someone is injured, one person cares for the patient while two others seek help.

Preparing for Your Girl Scout Cookie Booth
Cookie booths—that is, cookie pop-up sales in areas with lots of foot traffic—are a fun way for girls to connect with their community and practice their sales pitch with new customers. Booth locations must be approved by councils, facilitated within council jurisdiction, and participants must follow all council guidelines with regard to setting up, running, and taking down a booth.

Scheduling Cookie Booths: Cookie Booths locations are scheduled by the Troop Cookie Coordinator. There are two types of booths; a troop secure and a council secure booth.

The Troop Secure Booth This booth is scheduled by the Troop Cookie Coordinator which she will schedule into the “Booth Scheduler” on the Smart Cookie Website. The Cookie Booth will be approved by council. Troops are NOT permitted to set up a booth in an approved location when they notice that no one is there. All booths have to be submitted in the booth scheduler.

Where You Can Sell: Troops are allowed to set up their scheduled booths at the store entrances/exits, per the store management agreement.

Booth hours: Council recommendations for booth hours are
- Monday-Friday 10am-8:00pm
- Saturday: 8am-8:00pm
- Sunday: 11am-6:00pm

Council Secured booths are available through the Smart Cookie lottery. Council secured booths are locations that have been contract-secured by GSUSA or Council. These locations cannot be secured by a troop.

Booth Staffing: Each booth requires a minimum of:
- Two non-related/not living in the same household/not in a significant relationship registered volunteers with valid background checks, at least one of whom must be female. This means that co-leaders who are related/live in the same household/have a significant relationship (e.g. married couples, sisters, etc.) must at minimum have a third registered volunteer with a valid background check present. Booth volunteers may be troop leaders, troop drivers, chaperone/helpers, or product program volunteers – these are positions with required background checks.
- At least one girl must be present at the booth at all times. Booths may not be run by adults only.

Parents may be asked to help support booth sales and attend as chaperones. If an adult is attending a cookie booth, they must be registered with a valid background check since they will be supervising girls, working with money and managing inventory. When registering, indicate secondary role: Chaperone/Helper. We do this to ensure the utmost safety to all of our Girl Scouts and members.

Here are some notes about locations for a cookie booth:
- Using your best judgment in setting up cookie booths in locations that will be open, accessible, and safe for all girls and potential customers.
- Choosing a high traffic area—this could be your local supermarket, mall, or park—where you’ll maximize the number of visitors to your booth.
• Checking out your booth site ahead 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.
• Respecting the surrounding businesses by making sure your booth isn't blocking a store entrance or exit.
• Encouraging your girls to unleash their creativity—and work on their advertising skills—to make colorful signs and booth decorations that potential customers can't resist! Remind girls to be polite and to have their sales pitch ready for interested customers.

And keep in mind:
• If your Daisies are still learning how to make correct change, help them handle money as needed. But remember that girls make all sales at the booth!
• Changing your cookie booth hours or location? Keep your customers in the loop and update your baker's Digital Cookie system with the new details. All scheduled booths are available on the Cookie Finder App (iOS or Android).
• Certain locations may be inappropriate for young girls based on the standards of your local community, may negatively impact the cookie program experience for girls, and/or may negatively impact our brand in your community. For additional clarity, girls should not sell in or in front of establishments that they themselves cannot legally patronize.
• Additionally, with respect to marijuana dispensaries, we have been steadfastly combating the unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout trademark by the cannabis community, which has been marketing—without our authorization—certain cannabis products under our youth-appealing brand. We are continuing to aggressively fight these unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout brand and hope that our councils and volunteers will join Girl Scouts of the USA's efforts by discouraging cookie booth locations at such locations.

For more tips to make your booth a success, check out our Cookie Booth Essentials. For additional information about setting up a booth and safety and security suggestions, consult your council guidelines

Cookie Donation Programs
Cookies also help girls make a big impact in their community! Your council may have an established cookie donation program where customers can purchase cookies that will be donated to an organization by your council. Cookie donations are not only a great talking point for girls to share with their customers—they’re also a thoughtful way to show girls how cookies can help them give back.

With cookie donations, remember that:
• All cookie donation programs must be approved by your council.
• Donated cookies must stay within the council jurisdiction unless your council has the approval from other council jurisdictions.
• Donated products cannot be resold and must be used in a responsible and ethical way.
• Donated products are used in a way that does not undermine the work of councils or jeopardize the integrity of the Girl Scout brand.

Handling Product Complaints
Girl Scout Cookies are well loved and for good reason—it has always been the practice of Girl Scout councils and the bakers to guarantee customer satisfaction with their delicious cookies. If
a customer is not satisfied with the quality of their cookies for some reason, they can contact the baker via the phone number printed on the side of the cookie package.

Troops should notify their council if they are aware of any customer dissatisfaction.

Recognizing Cookie Sellers in the Media
Focusing on entrepreneurial outcomes has always been the focus of the Girl Scout Cookie Program. The cookie program has never been about and does not focus on individual girls’ sales results.

- There are many impressive cookie bosses throughout the United States, and the Girl Scout organization will continue to recognize dynamic cookie entrepreneurs for various achievements tied to the Girl Scout Cookie Program and through their participation in Girl Scouts.
- Girl Scouts of the USA does not currently track the top seller(s) of Girl Scout Cookies on a national level and does not identify a specific Girl Scout as the number one or “record-breaking” national cookie seller.
- Girl Scout councils should not reference such girls as “top sellers” in the media. Doing so detracts from the essence of the Girl Scout Cookie Program, which is based on offering girls important experiences in entrepreneurship, business, and finance from a young age as well as providing girls and local Girl Scout councils with the funds necessary to power amazing experiences and opportunities for Girl Scouts year-round.

Product programs – 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 will immediately be suspended from any adult volunteer position (elected or appointed).
- If the debt to the council is not resolved in accordance with stated deadlines, a person may be deemed permanently ineligible to serve in any volunteer position.
- Registered individuals owing a debt to the council may be prohibited from participating in future sales.

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

How do girls become financially empowered women? Through the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), that’s how! Your Girl Scout troop should plan and finance its own activities, and you’ll coach your girls as they earn and manage troop funds. Troop activities are powered by proceeds earned through council-sponsored product program activities (such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program), group money-earning activities (council approved, of course!), and any dues your troop may charge.

With your guidance, girls will learn key money skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

Establishing a Troop 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 program or group money-earning activities. The following procedures apply to all troop/group accounts:

- All money collected, or earned in the name of Girl Scouts must be deposited in the established bank account and thereafter used for the purpose of providing the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to the girls.
- All signers are responsible for safeguarding and maintaining sufficient funds to cover payments drawn on the account. As with any banking account, signers are legally responsible for all account transactions.
- Security of troop funds is necessary to safeguard troop assets. The bank account should be reconciled monthly.
- Volunteers who misuse funds may be released from all Girl Scout positions. The Council may file criminal and/or civil charges if deemed appropriate.

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.
- Handle a lost group debit card the same way you would a personal debit card: cancel it immediately.

All troops and service units 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. You will receive an authorization letter to open a bank account when you are approved as a volunteer. The letter will give you the council’s Federal Tax ID number to supply to the bank, and will authenticate your identity as a GSWNY volunteer. After you open your account, you will share the account information with GSWNY via a survey link provided when approved. Troops with existing bank accounts who need to change signers or accounts should contact their 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.

Ensure that bank accounts do not allow overdrafts of any kind, including debit card transactions. The service unit representative must receive an electronic or hard copy of the monthly statements.
A minimum of two signers is required for withdrawals and troops are prohibited from using internet banking (except viewing the account online). Prohibited online transactions include: transfers between bank accounts and bill pay. Debit Cards are allowed, but credit cards are not permitted to be issued or used with the bank account. If a debit card is used for purchases, the second signer should sign the receipt or next to the transaction on the bank statement, evidencing approval. 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 program records

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

Troop Expenses
Troop funds are for the benefit of all girls in the troop and should be spent in the year the funds are earned, unless the troop has a long range plan for spending the funds. It is important to note that the funds belong to the troop as a whole. Per IRS guidelines for charitable organizations, troops are prohibited from keeping separate individual girl accounts or tracking troop funds by individual girl. Examples of proper uses of troop funds include:

- Program supplies, such as paper, crayons, and craft supplies, as well as copies of GSUSA books for leader and girl use
- Uniform components and badges/patches/pins
- Fees for field trips
- Refreshments and paper products
- Photocopies, paper and printer ink for printing troop paperwork
- Troop organizational needs such as totes, binders, folders
- Leader trainings which enhance troop programming, such as First Aid/CPR, outdoor and GSBNY-sponsored enrichment training
- Registration fees for girls and/or leaders

As with all other elements of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, girls should provide input regarding troop expenses. All troop expenses must be documented with receipts and reflected on the Finance Report using the online Volunteer Toolkit. Use of the toolkit during the year to track income and expenses is encouraged so parents are able to follow troop activities. The toolkit automatically saves and displays updates. Reimbursements or payments to any of the signers on the troop account (including cash withdrawals) must be approved and authorized by a signer other than the payee.

Finance Reporting
Troops will submit a yearly Finance Report using the online Volunteer Toolkit. The Finance Report will be due by June 1. The Finance Report will require submission of the April bank statement. Troops which do not submit a timely Finance Report will be subject to a troop audit.
Troop leaders or service unit managers who do not turn in activity reports will be subject to removal.

Troop Audits
The Volunteer Experience Manager, 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.

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 Volunteer Experience 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.

GSWNY troops who travel may also utilize the council’s tax exempt status in Florida, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Virginia, Texas and Pennsylvania. Contact the gsfinance@gswny.org for additional information.

Closing Troops (Aging out or disbanding)
Leaders of closing troops must complete the Troop Closure Form (available at www.gswny.org), which provides information on the troop finances, bank account, resources, and placement of girls. When a troop closes, the bank account and any equipment (flags, tents etc.) shall become property of the council or service unit. Troop funds are not the property of any individual girl. 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.

Prior to closing, the group may decide to donate any unused funds to their Service Unit, another troop or for girl activities. These activities must be in keeping with the Girl Scout mission and outcomes. Girl activities can include purchasing materials to support another organization through take-action projects.

Money-Earning Basics for Troops
Troops flex their financial muscles in two distinct ways:

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other sales of Girl Scout–authorized products (such as calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy), organized by your council. All girl members are eligible to participate in two council-sponsored product sale activities each year with volunteer supervision: the cookie program and one other council-authorized product sale. Please remember, volunteers and Girl Scout council staff don’t sell cookies and other products—girls do.
- Group money-earning activities organized by the troop (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with volunteers) and that earn money for the group.

**Participation Guidance**

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 program 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

**Additional Guidelines**

Keep these specific guidelines—some of which are required by the Internal Revenue Service—in mind to ensure that sales are conducted with legal and financial integrity.

- 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.
- Troops are encouraged to participate in council product sales as their primary money-earning activity; any group money earning shouldn’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; most councils ask that you submit a request for approval.
- **GSWNY prohibits games of chance. Any activity that could be considered a game of chance (raffles, contests, bingo, etc.) is PROHIBITED.**
- Girl Scouts’ Blue Book policy forbids girls from the direct solicitation of cash. Girls can collect partial payment toward the purchase of a package of Girl Scout Cookies and other Girl Scout–authorized products through participation in council-approved product sale donation programs.
- Girl Scouts forbids product demonstration parties where the use of the Girl Scout trademark increases revenue for another business, such as in-home product parties. Any business using the Girl Scout trademark or other Girl Scout intellectual property must seek authorization from GSUSA.
- Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the ages 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 according to council procedures.

**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. Money-earning applications must be submitted 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. See page 40 for application guidelines.

**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. Money-earning applications must be submitted for approval AT LEAST THIRTY (30) DAYS prior to project. Troop fundraising projects may be denied during the months of the respective United Way appeal and council-sponsored product sales. See guidelines below.

**Sample Money-Earning Activities**

**Collections/Drives**
- Cell phones for refurbishment
- Used ink cartridges turned in for money
- Christmas tree recycling

**Food/Meal Events**
- Lunch box auction (prepared lunch or meal auctioned off)
- Themed meals, like a high tea or a build-your-own-taco bar, related to activities girls are planning (For instance, if girls are earning money for travel, they could tie the meal to their destination.)

**Service(s)**
- Service-a-thon (people sponsor a girl doing service and funds go to support a trip or other activity)
- Babysitting for holiday (New Year’s Eve) or council events
- Raking leaves, weeding, cutting grass, shoveling snow, walking pets
- Cooking class or other specialty class

Money earning projects may be used to support Gold, Silver & Bronze Award projects.

The best way to earn money for your group is to start with Girl Scout cookie activities and other council-sponsored product programs. From there, your group may decide to earn additional funds on its own.
Help Your Troop Reach Its Financial Goals

We get it—there’s something exciting about opening that first case of Girl Scout Cookies. However, before your girls take part in all the cookie program fun, it’s important they have a clear plan and purpose for their product sale activities. As a volunteer, you have the opportunity 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? 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!
Financial Assistance
All girls are welcome to join Girl Scouting, regardless of ability to pay, and there are multiple options for financial assistance. If any member is concerned about a financial barrier, we encourage and welcome you to apply for 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.

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)
- Campership for summer resident and day camp
- 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.

Troops may receive financial assistance for:
- PPE supplies
- Zoom licenses

Registered volunteers 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. Girl and adult members are not eligible for Financial Assistance if money is owed to the council.*

For financial assistance questions and forms, contact the council office at 1-888-837-6410 or customercare@gswny.org.

Fundraising and Working with Sponsors
GSWNY’s Fund Development department is responsible for raising money to support our girls’ council-wide, including monies for programming, camp properties, financial aid and more. The
Fund Development Team works to ensure the benefits derived from this fundraising help the greatest number of girls, and support our Girl Scout organization as a whole.

The team is also happy to assist troops and service units with special fundraising initiatives as needed. Most often these are larger projects/initiatives that require funding over and above typical money-earning activities.

Below are the two most common fundraising opportunities used by Troops and Service Units:

**Volunteer Incentive Program (VIP)**

You can turn your volunteer hours into money! If you work for a company that offers a Volunteer Incentive Program (also called a Community Involvement Program), it is easy to earn dollars for your troop/SU. Parents, aunts, uncles, and even grandparents can sign-up to support a troop too.

How does this work? Typically, an employee provides a specific number of volunteer service hours as a Girl Scout leader or other volunteer and submits the necessary information to their company. GSWNY verifies the volunteer hours and receives the money on behalf of the troop/SU – we do this because companies require donations to be formally acknowledged by the non-profit organization for tax purposes. 100% of the donation received from the company is forwarded to the designated troops/SU.

Volunteer Incentive Program paperwork and payments can be mailed/ emailed to:

Attn: Bev Rhodes  
Girl Scouts of Western New York  
4433 Genesee Street, Suite 101  
Buffalo, NY 14225  
Bev.Rhodes@gswny.org

**Troop/Service Unit Sponsorships:**

Sponsors help Girl Scout councils, service units and troops 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 meeting space, volunteer their time, offer in-kind donations, provide activity materials, loan equipment and, in some cases, provide monetary support. Troops/SUs are encouraged to recognize sponsor contributions 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 Non-monetary Sponsorships (e.g. meeting space, in-kind donations, volunteers, activity materials or equipment), please consult your Volunteer Experience Manager. They can give you guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting responsibility, and any council policies or practices that should be followed. Council may already have relationships with certain organizations, or may know of some reasons not to collaborate with others. Troop Sponsorships of this kind can be formalized via the Troop Sponsorship Form available in the Forms section at www.gswny.org or from your Volunteer Experience Manager.

For Monetary Sponsorships (i.e. cash donations), please contact the Fund Development Team Bev.Rhodes@gswny.org to discuss the company or organization you plan to solicit and any information you have about what should be included in a request. We are happy to assist you in crafting an appropriate solicitation, as well as provide such requests on GSWNY letterhead! A few things to keep in mind as you consider an ask:

- Cash solicitations should be specific to a project or initiative, they cannot be for general troop/SU support. When the gift is received, it is important the funding be used in the manner it was originally intended.
• The Fund Development Department should be made aware of all cash sponsorships/donations being pursued. The team may already have relationships with certain organizations and are eager to guide your proposal to success; we also want to avoid submitting multiple asks to the same organization, which decreases the likelihood anyone will receive funding. We strive to help any troops/SU that requests it, and it is rare that a request is turned down.

• Once received, monetary donations over $250 must be processed through GSWNY via the Troop Sponsorship Form. We ask this for two reasons: (1) companies and organizations typically require donations to be formally acknowledged directly by the non-profit organization for tax purposes; and (2) it provides us with the opportunity to help you steward your donor throughout the year to increase the likelihood they will say yes when you ask again! GSWNY will receive the donation on behalf of the troop/SU and the full amount is then quickly forwarded back to the designated troop/SU. The Troop Sponsorship Form is available in the Forms Section at www.gswny.org or from the Fund Development Team Bev.Rhodes@gswny.org

• Monetary donations from $1-249 can be accepted and acknowledged directly by the troop/SU. If a donor requests formal acknowledgment from council, we are happy to do that for you via the Troop Sponsorship Form following the guidelines above.

Collaborating with Other Organizations

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

Avoid Fundraising for Other Organizations
Girl Scouts are not allowed to solicit money on behalf of another organization when identifying themselves as Girl Scouts by wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, and so on. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. However, you and your group can support another organization through Take Action projects. 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.”

Steer 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.

Be 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.

Avoid Selling or Endorsing Commercial Products
A commercial product is any product sold at a retail location. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products.
As with other Girl Scout activities, girls build their financial and sales savvy as they get older. Every girl will be different, but here you'll find some examples of the abilities and opportunities for progression of girls at each grade level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girl Scout Daisies</th>
<th>The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents/guardians may decide they will contribute to the cost of activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls can participate in Girl Scout Cookie activities and other council-sponsored product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daisies are always paired with a volunteer when selling anything. Girls do the asking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and deliver the product, but volunteers handle the money and keep the girls secure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls should be given the opportunity to practice identifying money and counting back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>change with an adult during each transaction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 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)|
|                     | with guidance from their volunteer(s).                                                 |
|                     | Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.                 |
|                     | Girls may decide to pay dues to contribute to the cost of activities.                   |

<p>| 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 based on their 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.                                                                          |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls estimate costs based on plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls determine the amount of group dues, if any, and the scope of money-earning projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls budget for extended travel, Take Action projects, and leadership projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls may be involved in seeking donations for Take Action projects with council approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Silver or Gold Awards, if they are pursuing them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Safety in Girl Scouting

In addition to the guidance on the following pages, GSWNY volunteers must consult the most current COVID-19 guidelines for in-person meetings and activities and Safety Activity Checkpoints for virtual meetings prior to planning, and review any related webinar recordings. Ensure you are familiar with the most updated guidelines.


You should utilize the Annual Permission Slip with COVID-19 Liability Waiver for any non-meeting activity, which can also be found on our Safety Page.

The emotional and physical safety and well-being of Girl Scouts is our top priority. Safety Activity Checkpoints outlines the Safety Standards and Guidelines used in Girl Scouting, which apply to all Girl Scout activities. Safety Activity Checkpoints can be found on our Safety Page.

All volunteers should review the Safety Activity Checkpoints manual when planning activities with girls in order to manage safety and risk in Girl Scout-sanctioned activities.

In Safety Activity Checkpoints, you’ll find:

- Girl Scout Activity Safety Standards and Guidelines with requirements for adult supervision, permission slips, preparation, field trips and overnight trips, and other vital information
- Activities that are not permitted by Girl Scouts of the USA and actions that girls and volunteers should not take
- Policies surrounding chartered aircraft trips and aviation
- First-aid and overall health information you’ll need from the girls
- Standards for well-being and inclusivity, including working with Girl Scouts with disabilities and ensuring emotional safety
- A breakdown of specific activities—such as camping, internet use, and water sports—and their individual safety checkpoints

Following the Safety Standards and Guidelines is an Activity-at-a-Glance chart which details two critical points to keep in mind:

- Age-appropriate activities and participation by grade level
- Whether prior approval from your council is required before girls participate in a specific activity

Troop Compliance Reviews

GSWNY conducts regular reviews of troops to ensure compliance with our safety requirements. Troops that do not respond to requests for further information or do not move troop into compliance in a timely manner may be disbanded.
Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

From camping weekends to cookie booths, adult volunteers must always be present to ensure their girls have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level.

Not sure just how many adults you’ll need for your activity? The following chart breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of girls; councils may also establish maximums due to size or cost restrictions, so be sure to check with them as you plan your activity.

In the chart on the following page, “Volunteer” refers to a registered, approved adult with a current background check who has completed council-required leader training. **Troops must have a minimum of 2 approved volunteers who are unrelated/not at the same address/not in a significant relationship, at least one of whom is female, who have completed council-required leader training.**

**Troops cannot start meeting until there are at least 2 approved co-leaders per the requirements listed above.** If a co-leader resigns from their position, it is the responsibility of both co-leaders to inform GSWNY Council Staff at customercare@gswny.org so that a new co-leader can be approved. Any troops with less than 2 approved co-leaders cannot meet until the new co-leader is approved and the troop fulfills this safety requirement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group Meetings</th>
<th>Events, Travel, and Camping</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of girls:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Daisies (grades K-1)</td>
<td>12 1-6</td>
<td>6 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2-3)</td>
<td>20 1-8</td>
<td>12 1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4-5)</td>
<td>25 1-10</td>
<td>16 1-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6-8)</td>
<td>25 1-12</td>
<td>20 1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9-10)</td>
<td>30 1-15</td>
<td>24 1-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11-12)</td>
<td>30 1-15</td>
<td>24 1-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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:

- Support the troop leadership. Identify ways that they can help support the troop leaders and troop activities.
- Communicate and respond with the troop leadership in a timely and appropriate manner. If concerns arise, contact the troop leaders or the council office. **Do not use social media to air concerns with the troop or Girl Scouts.**
- 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. This can include such activities as: product program, including Digital Cookie; overnight travel; the use of special equipment; or 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 a parent or guardian will drop off or pick up their 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.
- Understand what appropriate behavior is for 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:

- Follow the Girl Scout Promise and Law, as well as any other troop rules, as a guideline for their behavior.
- Help create a safe space for all girls where bullying, clique behavior and discrimination are not tolerated.
- Treat the leaders and girls with respect.
- Share concerns in a timely and appropriate manner. If concerns arise, contact the troop leaders or the council office. **Do not use social media to air concerns with the troop or Girl Scouts.**
- Assist you and other volunteers in safely 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.
GSWNY Travel Right Requirements

All events that occur outside the normal meeting time and place require **GSWNY Travel Right** requirements:

1. Signed parent permission slips
2. Appropriate girl to adult ratio as indicated in *Volunteer Essentials* for events and trips. Any adult fulfilling the ratio must be an approved, registered volunteer. Among these adults:
   - One has completed Volunteer Basics Training/Successful Leader Learning Series and appropriate grade level training
   - One qualifies as a Troop First Aider
3. If you are arranging transportation, troop drivers are approved, registered volunteers
4. Health forms, permission slips and a first aid kit must be brought along on the trip
5. Leaders must review the Safety Activity Checkpoints for additional requirements
6. Notification of Service Unit Manager

Some trips require additional paperwork and/or permission. All travel paperwork can be found at [www.gswny.org](http://www.gswny.org). Refer to the grid below for details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where am I going?</th>
<th>What do I need?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A day trip in my community</td>
<td>• <strong>GSWNY Travel Right</strong> requirements&lt;br&gt; • Any additional requirements per Safety Activity Checkpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An overnight at an aquarium, museum, zoo or other building where programming will be provided (&lt;250 miles); within US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An overnight at a hotel for two nights or less, &lt;250 miles; within US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An overnight in a lodge structure at a GSWNY camp property</td>
<td>• <strong>GSWNY Travel Right</strong> requirements&lt;br&gt; • Camping Safety Activity Checkpoints&lt;br&gt; Depending on trip activities (such as archery or boating), any additional requirements per Safety Activity Checkpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An overnight in an A-frame or tent at a GSWNY camp property</td>
<td>• <strong>GSWNY Travel Right</strong> requirements&lt;br&gt; • Camping Safety Activity Checkpoints&lt;br&gt; Depending on trip activities (such as archery or boating), any additional requirements per Safety Activity Checkpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An overnight at a camp property not owned by GSWNY, &lt;250 miles</td>
<td>Same as above based on outdoor structure, but must submit Permission for Use of Non-Council Camp Site form 60 days before trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A trip 250+ miles and/or longer than 2 nights; within US</td>
<td>• <strong>GSWNY Travel Right</strong> requirements&lt;br&gt; • Submit Intent to Travel 90 days before trip&lt;br&gt; • Troop Travel Agreement/add’l documents 60 days before trip&lt;br&gt; • Any additional requirements per Safety Activity Checkpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A trip outside of the US</td>
<td>• <strong>GSWNY Travel Right</strong> requirements&lt;br&gt; • Submit Intent to Travel 24 months before trip&lt;br&gt; • International Troop Travel packet/additional documents 18 months before trip&lt;br&gt; • Any additional requirements per Safety Activity Checkpoints</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 meeting time and place) in which a group will be transported in private vehicles keep in mind the following:

- Every driver must be an approved volunteer (completed background check and registered member) at least 21 years old, and have a clean 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. In addition, the girl-volunteer ratios in the “Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need” section 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 the “Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need” section must be followed. Care must be taken so that a single car is not separated from the group to keep to the necessary volunteer-girl safety ratios.

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. In addition, state laws must be followed, even if they are more stringent than the guidelines here.

Anyone who is driving a vehicle with 12 or more passengers must follow all state laws regarding driving these vehicles. Note, you must check with your council to determine specific rules about renting large vehicles. Fifteen passenger vans are not permitted for use to transport girls.

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

- **Review the “Transporting Girls” Safety Activity Checkpoint**
- Even though written agreements are always required when renting or chartering, you are *not* authorized to sign an agreement or contract, except for rental car agreements, even if there is no cost associated with the rental. **Such an agreement must instead be signed by the GSWNY CEO. See Contracts on p. 56.**
- 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. For example, in many cases the minimum age of drivers is 25, and the maximum age is often under 70. In addition, make sure the car is adequately insured and you know who is responsible for damage to, or loss of, the vehicle. Finally, ensure you have a good paper trail that shows the vehicle rental is Girl Scout-related.
- Obtain parent/guardian permission for any use of transportation outside of the meeting place.
Contracts

According to the Girl Scouts of Western New York by-laws, all contracts, leases, hold harmless agreements and other documents requiring a signature must be signed by the GSWNY Chief Executive Officer. Documents which must be reviewed include, but are not limited to:

- bus contracts or car lease agreements
- non-GSWNY campsite contracts
- hold harmless agreements (commonly used by vendors)
- contracts for site rentals, such as for troop or service unit events

Contracts and other documents requiring review should be submitted as follows:
- bus contracts/leases/vendor agreements, etc. related to a trip >250 miles outside the council boundaries should be submitted as part of the required Troop Travel documentation (see GSWNY Travel Right requirements)
- non-GSWNY campsite contracts/hold harmless agreements, etc. related to the use of a non-GSWNY campsite should be submitted as part of the Non-Council Campsite Approval process (see GSWNY Travel Right requirements)
- any other documents requiring review should be submitted directly to girlexperience@gswny.org or Program Manager – Contracts, 4433 Genesee St., Suite 101, Buffalo, NY 14225 no less than one month prior to the proposed usage

What to do if ...

There is an Accident

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 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. Check with your council for emergency contact information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GSWNY EMERGENCY CONTACT PHONE NUMBERS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency First Aid And Rescue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSWNY Emergency Response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Girl Scout 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 media representatives.

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, the police must be notified and a responsible volunteer must remain at the scene at all times. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings and 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.