

My First Year Guide

A complete guide for
your first year leading
a Girl Scout troop

girl scouts 
of western new york

Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Troop Co-Leaders

On average, troop co-leaders spend 6-11 hours per month (+ 8 during cookie season) volunteering. We want to help you enjoy as much of that time as possible! This guide takes the guesswork out of leading a troop.

What do troop leaders do?

- **Help** Girl Scouts reach their potential as creative, courageous leaders
- **Create** a space where Girl Scouts try new things without worrying about failing
- **Teach** lessons Girl Scouts will use for decades to come
- **Try** new things along with their Girl Scouts
- **Develop** your own organizational and leadership skills
- **Join** a global community of sisterhood

Thank you!

Welcome to the great adventure that is Girl Scouting! Thanks to volunteers like you, generations of girls have learned to be leaders in their own lives and in the world. Have no doubt: you, and nearly one million other volunteers like you, are helping girls make a lasting impact on the world.

Girl Scout Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:
To serve God* and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,
and to
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place,
and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.



What is the Girl Scout Difference?

Girl Scouting is the preeminent leadership development organization for girls. When you see the trefoil throughout the book, it is used to highlight what makes our organization different and why it is so valuable to your girl.

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Getting Started

New leaders often spend the first few weeks getting started and setting up their troop.

New Co-Leader Start-up Checklist

Have you...

- ☐ Registered as a Girl Scout?
- ☐ Completed a criminal background check?
- ☐ Completed Volunteer Basic Training series?
- ☐ Reviewed Grade-Level resources?
- ☐ Received a Congratulations email?
- ☐ Met with your co-leader(s)?
- ☐ Signed up for a New Leader Welcome Event near you?
- ☐ Checked gswny.org for up-to-date council guidelines and support?

Need help with anything? GSWNY is here for you!

Give us a call at
1-888-837-6410 or email
customer care@gswny.org

... Great! You're ready to get started!

Setting Up Your Troop

1 Grow your Troop

We recommend having 8-12 Girl Scouts in your troop—small enough to encourage individual development and large enough to provide an interactive and cooperative learning environment. **Need help growing your troop? GSWNY is here for you!**

2 Determine Troop Meeting Times and Location

Set meeting times that work within your schedule! We recommend meeting 2 times per month in a public, accessible space like a school, library, or community center, or meet virtually! Troops are not allowed to meet at private residences. **Need help finding a troop meeting location? We can help with that, too!**

3 Schedule a Parent/Caregiver Intro meeting

Kick off the year by meeting with the families and caregivers of your troop.
See more on page 6.

4 Open a Troop Bank Account

Open a troop bank account as soon as possible. Learn more about funding your fun starting on page 8.

Your Troop's Support System

Girl Scouts is all about sisterhood. As the leader of a Girl Scout troop, you are not alone!

Your Troop Team

A strong leader-family partnership is a key component to a successful Girl Scout troop experience.

1. Get to know your co-leader and determine the best division of troop tasks.
2. Host a troop parent/caregiver meeting to build your volunteer team.

Check out page Working with Parents/Caregivers on page 6 for more!



Your Service Unit (Neighborhood)

The Service Unit (SU) is the bridge between your troop and the GSWNY council support staff and often your first stop for information!

Where: Our GSWNY council is divided into Service Units based on neighborhood, school district, geographic area, or county. Each Service Unit is supported by a Service Unit team.

Who: Service Unit teams are made up of skilled volunteers with years of Girl Scout experience. Service Unit Managers (SUMs) coordinate the Service Unit. Other important Service Unit roles include: Finance Consultant, Product Program Managers, Troop Manager, and Welcome Specialist.

What: Service Unit teams support you by holding regular leader meetings and planning fun activities throughout the year like Cookie Kickoff, camping, or a STEM event.

Learn more about your Service Unit in your co-leader welcome and approval email

Service Unit Meetings

Attending regular Service Unit meetings is required for at least one troop leader or troop representative. There you'll:

- Meet and network with fellow volunteers
- Learn about upcoming events and trainings
- Receive important resources and materials, like your Cookie Program materials

Learn more from your Service Unit Manager or Welcome Specialist

Your GSWNY Council Staff

We are here for you! If you have a private matter, a conflict to discuss, issues with registration, or any other needs, GSWNY can help! Contact Customer Care for assistance at customercare@gswny.org or 1-888-837-6410.

Your Service Unit Information

Remember, the Service Unit should be your first stop when you need help! The Service Unit team is made up of local, super skilled Girl Scout volunteers.

Service Unit Name:_____ **Service Unit #:**_____

Key Service Unit Team Members	Name	Phone	Email
Service Unit Manager(s) (SUMs)			
Finance Consultant (SUFC)			
Troop Manager			
Product Program Manager(s) (SUPPMs)			
Welcome Specialist			

Service Unit Leader Meetings

Location:_____ **Address:**_____

Day of the Week:_____ **Time:** _____

Special Instructions (parking, entrance, room number, etc.)

Virtual Meeting Information:_____

Meeting Dates

Sept:	Oct:	Nov:	Dec:	Jan:
Feb:	March:	April:	May:	June:

Working with Parents/Caregivers



Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for Girl Scouts when families play an active part in the troop. Without meaningful support from parents and caregivers, it's difficult for a troop to be all it can be. Plus, Girl Scouts feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing!

Kick off
the year
with a
Parent/Caregiver
Meeting!

Parent/Caregiver Intro Meeting

The first meeting of every Girl Scout year is a Parent/Caregiver intro meeting. This meeting ensures everyone is on the same page and ready for the year ahead.

Meeting Agenda

Welcome (10 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome and introduce one another to Girl Scouts• Go over dates/times/locations of meetings
Girl Scouts and Family (20 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share the mission of Girl Scouts and how Girl Scouts helps girls take risks, dream bigger, and gain important skills—all while having fun and making friends• Share overview of your year plan, including badges, trips, and outdoor adventures the troop may participate in• Discuss how families would like to be kept in the loop (text, email, other?)
Build your Troop Team (10 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using the troop team chart on page 7, ask family members and caregivers what roles they can take on• Be direct and clear in your ask: “Jessica, will you be our First Aider?”• In addition to the roles on page 7, some smaller, concrete tasks caregivers can help with include: organizing troop calendar for snacks, managing troop communications or social media, taking photos or videos (ensure all Girl Scouts have a signed photo release), lending a hand during the cookie sale
Money Matters (10 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss how the troop will fund their fun through troop dues and the fall and cookie product programs (see page 8-10)
Wrap Up (10-15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect permission slips and health forms (download from safety page on gswny.org)• Allow time for questions and for families to mingle and get to know one another

Helpful Tips!

If Girl Scouts will be present at the meeting, have a small craft or activity to keep them busy and engaged.

Follow up with a thank you, then keep the conversation going all year via email, in-person chats, and/or social media. Updating caregivers on troop activities helps them feel more invested and gives them a chance to build on their Girl Scout's experience at home.

Your Troop Team

Volunteer Role	Description	Contact Information
Product Program Manager	Manages Fall Product Program and Cookie Program for the troop: helps build a troop product team to support Girl Scout/caregiver Product Program training, direct sale coordination and activities, product inventory and reward distribution, and payments. The Troop Product Program Manager will work closely with the Service Unit Product Program Manager.	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____ Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
Troop Treasurer	Eases the task of maintaining your troop's financial records. Troop Treasurers must be a registered member and pass our background check because they are dealing with money.	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
First Aider	At least one registered volunteer in all troops must be first aid certified before leaving the troop meeting place for field trips or outings. Visit gswny.org/safety for more information on getting FA/CPR certified.	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
Subject-Matter Experts	Ask the parents/caregivers in your troop to share their talents! For example, if a caregiver is a veterinarian, she might lead a field trip to her office to teach the Girl Scouts about anatomy on the family dog.	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____ Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
Troop Drivers/Chaperones/Helpers	We encourage troop parents/caregivers to register as volunteers in the role if they intend to participate in Girl Scout meetings, events, carpooling, field trips, overnights, or camping trips. This way they will be background checked and covered by our Girl Scout insurance should an accident occur. This helps keep everyone safe!	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____ Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Troop Finances

You're probably wondering how you will fund your first year full of Girl Scout experiences. We are here to help you get started!

Open a Bank Account

Open a troop bank account as soon as you are able.

1. Connect with your SUFC

All troops must open bank accounts with the help of their Service Unit Finance Consultant, SUFC. Your SUFC contact information is provided to you in your co-leader welcome and approval email.

2. Visit the bank with your SUFC

Set a time to meet with the SUFC and go to the recommended bank for your Service Unit; bring any required paperwork or ID with you. All Girl Scout bank accounts must have three signers: the two co-leaders and the SUFC.

Keep Financial Records

Save all of your receipts and bank statements. You can use the Finance tab of the Volunteer Tool Kit to keep an ongoing ledger of your troop's income and expenses, or download an Excel file from the Troop Finances page on gswny.org which does the math for you! You'll submit the annual Troop Finance Activity Report (TFAR), which is due via the Volunteer Tool Kit (VTK) beginning in June. GSWNY will reach out to you as the deadline nears.

The Council Opportunity Fund

This is a resource available to all registered members of GSWNY to cover the cost of uniforms, registration, GSWNY programs, and adult trainings. Access financial assistance documents by visiting the Troop Finances page on our website, gswny.org. Share this information with all families; it's better not to make assumptions about which families may need it. All Girl Scouts are welcome and no one is ever turned away for financial reasons.

Volunteer Essentials

For full information about financial guidelines, you may consult Volunteer Essentials, our comprehensive policies document. Volunteer Essentials is updated annually and is the primary GSUSA & GSWNY reference document to be consulted for general safety and planning guidelines. Volunteer Essentials can be accessed by visiting the Volunteer Basics page of gswny.org.

Visit gswny.org/volunteerbasics for more Troop Finance information!

Troop Finances

How to fund your fun!

1. Troop Dues

Start-up funds to cover the cost of supplies and activities come from **troop dues**. Troop co-leaders can decide how much dues will be and how to collect them at the beginning of the year. Ask families what they feel most comfortable with during your first parent/caregiver meeting. Each Girl Scout or family can pay \$1-\$2 per meeting, or you can ask for one-time dues of \$20-\$50 at the beginning of the year. At your parent/caregiver meeting, you can also ask for families to donate supplies to the troop like markers or scissors.

Note: For field trips, we recommend asking families provide a small contribution—this helps ensure buy-in and good attendance. We also have financial aid and the Council Opportunity Fund (page 8) because at GSWNY, we never want cost to be a barrier.

2. Product Program Sales (Financial Literacy Program)

The Girl Scouts of Western New York holds two Product Program opportunities for girls to participate in throughout the year. While selling delightful nuts, candy, and magazine subscriptions to delicious Girl Scout Cookies, troops earn funds to do amazing things.

Troop Funds can be used for a variety of activities such as council-sponsored programs, field trips, camping adventures, travel and so much more! Troop Funds enable Girl Scouts to try new experiences, get outdoors, and unleash their potential to do amazing things and keep their communities at the center of everything they do.

Fall Product Program	Girl Scout Cookie Program
Mid-October - Mid-November	January - March
Girls sell nuts, candy and magazine subscriptions to friends and family both Online and through in-person order taking.	Girls sell cookies to her customers through Online, in-person, door to door and booth sales.
Vendor: Ashdon Farms and M2	Vendor: ABC Smart Cookies

Are there other ways my troop can earn money?



Troop dues and Product Program money-earning opportunities are the best way to fund your Girl Scout Fun. Older Girl Scouts (Juniors and above) may participate in other council approved money earning activities such as a car wash, or bake sale.

Fall and Cookie Program Entrepreneurial Experiences

Girl Scouts Product Program is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world, aiming to empower girls through the development of five essentials skills: Goal Setting, Decision Making, Money Management, People Skills and Business Ethics. Girl Scouts will explore entrepreneurship as they participate in money earning activities that spark curiosity, confidence and innovation. Troop Proceeds can help fund your troop's entire year, including programs, experiences, trips, and more amazing opportunities.

Fall and Cookie Program Participation Information

Your Service Unit Product Program Manager (SUPPM) will share troop training dates and important participation information. Your SUPPM will be with you every step of the way and will provide program and troop support to ensure the program is fun, easy, and engaging! Head to gswny.org to visit our Cookies and Fall Products tab to find council resources, Smart Cookie training, and marketing resources.

Fall Product Program

Mid-October - Mid-November

One month, quick and easy program, starting mid-October. This is a great program to earn troop start-up funds to kick off your Girl Scout year!

Girl Scouts sell a variety of delicious nuts, candy, and magazine subscriptions to friends and family online and through in-person order taking.

Cookie Program

January - March

Girl Scouts use their in-person order card and online store front to sell cookies and reach her goals. The Cookie Program runs February – April, focusing on goal setting, skill building, and entrepreneurship. The Cookie Program funds amazing troop experiences!

With the support of your Service Unit Manager and Product Program Manager, each troop is encouraged to build a Cookie Team to ensure the program is fun, engaging, and successful. After attending a Troop Leader Cookie Training, as well as working with your Service Unit Product Program Manager throughout the cookie program, you'll feel confident, eager and ready for your girls to crush their cookie goals.

How is the Cookie Program Managed?

Using the Smart Cookie Digital Cookie platform, girls and volunteers are able to seamlessly manage every phase of the cookie program, from online, to in-person, Keep Goaling, and Direct Sales! Girl Scouts are able to set goals, manage her cookie orders, and even communicate with her customers. For the volunteer, the platform allows you to set and monitor the troop's cookie goals, track girl/troop finances, view your troop recognitions and achievements and more!

Troop Meetings

Troop meetings are when Girl Scouts gather to earn petals, badges, and journey awards; complete service projects; go on field trips; participate in programs and events; or sell cookies. Throughout, Girl Scouts have fun, enjoy sisterhood, and build courage, confidence, and character while they make the world a better place.

When and Where

Meet with your co-leader to determine what days and times work best for you. We recommend meeting twice per month with one meeting dedicated to badge/journey work and another reserved for a field trip or sisterhood.

Troops should meet in a public, accessible spaces like library, school, community center, church, or park in nice weather. Meetings or activities that involve Girl Scouts are **not allowed** in private homes, including yards or private outdoor spaces.

Parts of a Troop Meeting

- 1 Ramp up**
Plan activities for the Girl Scouts so they have something to do until the meeting begins.
(5 minutes)
- 2 Opening**
Each troop decides how to open its meetings—most begin with the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
(5–10 minutes)
- 3 Troop business**
Collect dues and make announcements or plan an upcoming event or trip while families are present.
(5 minutes)
- 4 Let the fun begin!**
Use the meeting plans found in the Volunteer Toolkit or gswny.org. Activities are designed to fit easily into this part of your meeting. (30–45 minutes)
- 5 Clean up**
Because Girl Scouts should always leave a place cleaner than they found it!
(5 minutes)
- 6 Closing**
Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close.
(5–10 minutes)

Safety First

Co-leaders keep their troop safe during regular troop meetings and when you head out on adventures like field trips and the outdoors.

Co-Leaders

Before meeting, each troop must have at least two approved, unrelated volunteers (married couples are considered related), one of whom is female, in place as co-leaders. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old and pass a criminal background check before volunteering.

Meeting Locations

Troops meet in public, accessible spaces like schools, library, or community center. Troops are **not** allowed to meet in private residences.

Permission Slips and Health Forms

At the beginning of each Girl Scout year, collect a permission slip and health form for each Girl Scout in your troop. Keep these with you for any activity outside your troop's normal meeting location. Find these forms on gswny.org/safety.

Safety Ratios

To ensure everyone's safety, each troop is required to have two approved, non-related co-leaders, at least one of whom is female, present at all times. Follow these Volunteer-to-Girl Scout Ratios.

Girl Scouts Volunteer-to-Girl Ratios	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of girls:	One additional volunteer to each additional:	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of girls:	One additional volunteer to each additional:
Girl Scout Daisies (Grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
Girl Scout Brownies (Grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
Girl Scout Juniors (Grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8
Girl Scout Cadettes (Grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
Girl Scout Seniors (Grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (Grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12

First Aid

A first-aid kit and at least one registered volunteer who is first aid certified must be present any time you leave the regular troop meeting location.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

The Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC) are detailed rules and policies for higher-risk activities. Prior to an activity, reference the SAC on the Safety page of our website, gswny.org/safety.

Emergencies

First, call 911 if an emergency occurs, during a Girl Scout meeting or activity, then inform GSWNY as soon as you are able. Please call our emergency answering service if the emergency occurs after business hours: 1-800-882-9268.

Girl Scout Ceremonies

Investiture



An investiture ceremony is a ceremony that honors Girl Scouts of all ages officially into the Girl Scout and Girl Guide family. The investiture part is where Girl Scouts say the Girl Scout Promise and are invested into Girl Scouts receiving their membership and world trefoil pins. There is no “right way” for Girl Scouts to be invested, as long as each Girl Scout has a chance to make her Promise and receive both of her pins. Typical Girl Scout investiture ceremonies are made up of three parts:

Opening: begins the ceremony

Main: the reason for holding the ceremony

Closing: ends the ceremony

Bridging



Bridging from one level of Girl Scouting to another are important transitions in the life of a Girl Scout. This is the opportunity for Girl Scouts to look back at their accomplishments and to look forward toward the new adventures and challenges that lie ahead. Girl Scouts who bridge to the next grade level wear special insignia on their uniform.

More information on holding a troop bridging ceremony is available on the GSWNY website. One important component of bridging is talking to an older troop to learn and get excited about the next level of Girl Scouts. Contact sister troops within your Service Unit to get started!

Girl Scout Traditions

Girl Scout Motto: Be prepared

Quip: “Girl Scouts leave a place better than they found it.”

Girl Scout Slogan: Do a good turn daily

Quip: “Once a Girl Scout, always a Girl Scout!”

Girl Scout Sign: Hold the right hand up at shoulder height with the middle three fingers pointed to the sky and the thumb pressed down over the pinky finger. Make the Girl Scout sign while saying the Girl Scout Promise and the Girl Scout Law, and using the Girl Scout handshake.



Girl Scout Handshake: Shake left hands and make the Girl Scout sign with the right hand.

Quiet sign: The signal to be silent in a group. The person in charge raises their right hand high into the sky. All girls and adults raise their right hands, stop talking, and stay quiet.

The Buddy System: A safety practice to keep girls in pairs when they are outside of the troop meeting space. Trios are sometimes nicknamed a truddy, as in, “Girls, stay with your buddy, or stay with your truddy!”

Visit gswny.org/volunteerbasics for more ceremony resources!

Daisy Grade Level Essentials

(Grades K-1) | Characteristics of a Daisy Girl Scout

At this level, Girl Scouts...	This means...
Have lots of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	Daisies will enjoy going on nature walks and outdoor adventures.
Are great builders and budding artists, though they are still developing their fine motor skills.	Encourage Daisies to express themselves by making things with their hands. Daisies may need help holding scissors, cutting in a straight line, and so on.
Love engaging activities with lots of movement.	They'll enjoy marching like a penguin, dancing like a dolphin, or acting out how they might care for animals in the jungle.
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	Showing is better than telling. For example, show Daisies how animals are cared for by planning a visit to an animal shelter or zoo.
Are beginning to learn basic number concepts, time and money.	Take opportunities to count out supplies together (and maybe even the legs of a caterpillar!)
Are beginning to write and spell and don't always have the words for what they are thinking and feeling.	Drawing a picture of what Daisies are trying to communicate can be easier and more meaningful for them.
Know how to follow simple directions and respond well to recognition for doing so.	Be specific and offer one direction at a time. Acknowledge when Daisies have followed directions well to increase their motivation to do so again.
Are just beginning to write and spell and they don't always have the words for what they're thinking or feeling	Having Daisies draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate is easier and more meaningful for them.

Tips for working with Daisies

- Develop a friendly relationship with each Daisy
- Talk to Daisies at their eye level
- Use simple words and quiet, pleasant tones
- Be flexible – Daisy attention spans are short
- Tasks might take longer than you anticipate
- Encourage Daisies to solve problems
- Keep troop meetings to about an hour long
- Offer a snack -- especially if meeting after school
Daisies will be hungry and will need some time to talk and release some energy
- Show where bathrooms and exits are located
- Keep activities short and varied

Daisy Circle

As the troop leader, your goal is to act increasingly as facilitator, enabling Daisies to take the lead and experience planning, decision-making, problem solving, leadership, and yes, even failure! Our favorite way to help Daisies take the lead is with a Daisy Circle. Aim to include a Daisy Circle in your troop meetings:

1. Have Daisies form a circle and share their ideas
2. Stimulate discussion by asking concrete questions:
“What would you like most: Go on a hike or build a robot?”
3. Allow Daisies to vote on activities they'd like to do for the next month

Brownie Grade Level Essentials

(Grades 2-3) | Characteristics of a Brownie Girl Scout

At this level, Girl Scouts...	This means...
Have lots of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside	Take your troop meetings and activities outside whenever you can.
Are social and enjoy working in groups	Allow Brownies to team up in small or large groups for art projects or performances.
Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task	Let Brownies lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow Brownies as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now	Ask Brownies questions to gauge their understanding and allow them to role play.
Need clear directions and structure in order to know what to expect.	Provide a preview of what the meeting will look like and offer only one direction at a time.
Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money and distance.	Offer support only when needed. Allow Brownies to set schedules for meetings or performances, count money for a trip, and so on.
Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition	Acknowledge when Brownies have listened or followed direction well – this will increase their motivation to do so again!
Are just beginning to write and spell and they don't always have the words for what they're thinking or feeling	Having girls draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate is easier and more meaningful for them.

Tips for working with Brownies

- Let the talents and skills of Brownies shine
- Encourage Brownies to solve their own problems and go to one another for support (where safe)
- Encourage Brownies to try new things, but do not expect everyone to participate in every activity
- Accept each Brownie where they are; offer specific praise and never criticize
- Show support for Brownies' ideas and interests
- Keep directions simple, direct, and positive
- Start projects Brownies can finish and give plenty of warning when transitioning between activities

Brownie Ring

Our favorite way to help Brownies take the lead is with a Brownie Ring.

1. Use the quiet sign to quiet a noisy group by holding up one hand. Whenever anyone sees this quiet sign they put their own hand up in the air and become quiet.
2. Stand, holding hands, and spread out to form a circle.
3. Now that everyone is together and quiet, use this time to conduct the "business" of the meeting, such as voting on badge to work on next or where to take their next field trip.
4. Use a talking sign (a talking stick, or have Brownies touch the floor with two fingers when they want a turn) during discussions
5. Make sure Brownies speak much more than adults
6. Respect and follow decisions Brownies make – they are quick to catch if their decisions don't count

Junior Grade Level Essentials

(Grades 4-5) | Characteristics of a Junior Girl Scout

At this level, Girl Scouts...	This means...
Are now able to perceive beyond the here and now	Encourage your troop to find ways to benefit their broader communities now and in the future.
Have vivid imaginations, enjoy humor, but can also be critical of themselves	Remind Juniors that everyone makes mistakes, and that's okay! We often learn the most from mistakes
Are able to see the "big picture" and are especially interested in fairness	Discuss how to ensure fairness for all by having Juniors develop their own troop guidelines and rules
Might be entering puberty and might be sensitive to their changing bodies	Create an environment that acknowledges and celebrates these changes as healthy and normal
Are independent and eager to try new things and learn new skills	Encourage your troop to try new things by working on new badges, field trips, and outdoor experiences

Tips for working with Juniors

- At this age, group dynamics become more complex. Forming different groups for various activities is a great way to get Juniors involved and discourage the formation of cliques.
- Let each individual Junior shine by teaching their fellow troop members cool new skills. Get to know each member of your troop and help them reach their potential and feel positively about themselves.
- Ensure an emotionally safe space for your troop, by listening first before talking. This gives Juniors space to express themselves without being told how they are feeling.
- Never quash Juniors' emotions or tell them what they feel isn't a big deal. Rather, help them understand their feelings and work through the issue.

The Bronze Award

The Girl Scout Bronze Award is the highest honor a Girl Scout Junior can achieve. Juniors use their special skills and interest to take action and make a difference in their communities. To earn the Bronze Award, Juniors identify and take action on a community issue that the troop feels passionately about, while the troop leader provides guidance and assistance to the group undertaking the project.

Steps you'll take to earn the Girl Scouts Bronze Award:

1. Go on a Girl Scout Junior Journey
2. Build your Girl Scout Junior team
3. Explore your community
4. Choose your Girl Scout Bronze Award project
5. Make a plan
6. Put your plan into action
7. Spread the word



Learn more about the Bronze Award www.gswny.org/bronze

Cadette Grade Level Essentials

(Grades 6-8) | Characteristics of a Cadette Girl Scout

At this level, Girl Scouts...	This means...
Have strong critical thinking skills	They can become even more active in problem solving and planning – let them take more and more of the lead.
Often busy with other activities	Scheduling can become tricky in middle school. Talk with parents/caregivers not only about the logistics of meetings, but also the value of Girl Scouts to help encourage participation.
Experience physical changes and changing moods	Create an environment that acknowledges and celebrates these changes as healthy and normal without quashing your Cadettes' feelings.
Might be entering puberty and might be sensitive to their changing bodies	Consider having a frank discussion with your troop about how you spend your time together. Decide as a group how you will handle phones – perhaps they are allowed to be out during certain portions of the meeting, or perhaps everyone puts them away.
Are often increasingly interested in group dynamics and might develop cliques	Though clubby behavior is a normal part of growing up, encourage sisterhood in your Cadettes by having them work in groups by counting off or drawings names from a hat. Consider a troop discussion about the issue and allow them to develop solutions.

Tips for working with Cadettes

- Ensure your troop is a positive and safe environment by establishing trust and respect
- Get to know each member of your troop and what makes them unique within the group, then find ways to acknowledge and celebrate them
- As Cadettes take on more and more responsibilities in planning and executing activities, they might fail, and that's okay! Girl Scouts is a safe space to make mistakes and learn from them. Remind your Cadettes that everyone fails or makes mistakes

The Silver Award

The Girl Scout Silver Award is the highest honor a Girl Scout Cadette can achieve. This award gives Cadettes the chance to show they are leaders who are organized, determined, and dedicated to improving their community.

Steps you'll take to earn the Girl Scouts Silver Award:

1. Find an issue you care about
2. Build your Girl Scout Silver Award team or decide to go solo
3. Explore your community and think of how that issue affects your community
4. Choose a Silver Award project that can lead to lasting change
5. Develop your project
6. Make a plan and put it into motion
7. Reflect, share your story, and celebrate



Learn more about the Silver Award here - www.gswny.org/silver

Senior and Ambassador Grade Level Essentials

(Grades 9-12) | Characteristics of Senior and Ambassador Girl Scouts

At this level, Girl Scouts...	This means...
Are beginning to understand what it is to be a teenager and may be dealing with existing pressure that society places on those socialized as girls, starting high school, and going through rites of passage like quinceañera or bat mitzvah	Support your Seniors by allowing them to personalize their Girl Scout experience, express themselves freely, and encourage them to explore the things important to them.
Might find lots of value in unstructured time to chat and relax together	Some Senior troops might need a few meetings to relax between Girl Scout activities, and that's okay! There is great value in the sisterhood that Girl Scouts provides.
Might feel overwhelmed and appear unmotivated	As a leader, it's okay to jump in and help plan activities to get Seniors re-motivated. Ensure that Seniors take the lead once their motivation begins to return.
Are at an age where independence is huge for them. They're starting to take on more adult roles and consider their hopes for after high school.	Leaders can act as support person as they navigate these tricky times by helping to identify activities or programs that will help them reach their goals.

Tips for working with Seniors and Ambassadors:

- Your role as a leader is to serve as an advisor and provide help when needed
- Encourage troop members to rotate leadership tasks, planning, budgeting, and goal setting
- Help your troop set specific, measurable attainable, relevant, time-based (S.M.A.R.T.) goals.
- Let each Girl Scout work at their own pace – everyone works on things differently, and that's a good thing!

The Gold Award

Seniors and Ambassadors who earn the Gold Award tackle issues that are dear to them and drive lasting change in their communities and beyond. Think of the Gold Award as a key that can open doors to scholarships, preferred admission tracks for college, and amazing career opportunities.

Steps you'll take to earn the Girl Scouts Gold Award:

1. First complete two journeys (Seniors and Ambassadors) OR earn the Silver Award and complete one Senior or Ambassador journey and complete the Gold Award Training
2. Girl Scouts must work individually
3. Identify and take action on a community issue they feel passionately about
4. The Project Advisor provides guidance and assistance to the Girl Scout undertaking the project
5. Council Approval is needed for any money earning activities

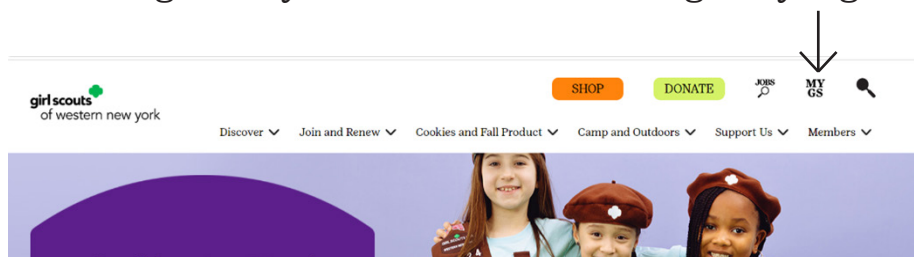


Learn more about the Gold Award here - www.gswny.org/gold

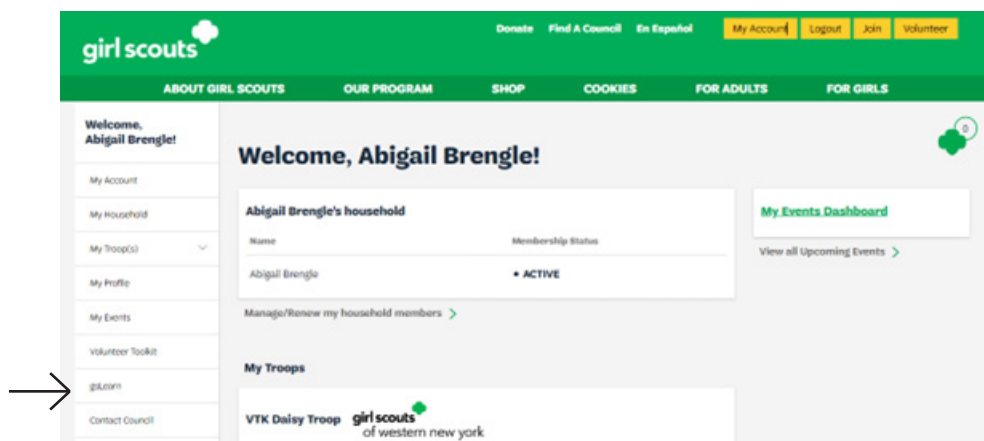
gsLearn

Ready to learn even more about Girl Scouts? We have a ton of short, fun, and informative online courses you can take through our Girl Scouts platform, gsLearn.

1. Log on to your MYGS account on gswny.org



2. Once logged in, click on the gsLearn Tab



3. Browse the great courses available to you



Girl Scout Resources



Girl Scout Shops

Our council has four shops for your shopping needs of official uniforms, apparel, badges, program materials, and so much more. Visit our website for current locations and hours.



Girl Scout Ceremonies & Traditions

Learn all about Girl Scout traditions like friendship circles, flag ceremonies, bridging, the Girl Scout uniform and more!



Badges & Journey Awards

On the Award and Badge Explorer, find a list of the badges and Journey awards Girl Scouts can earn.



Safety, Guidelines, & Procedures

You'll find Volunteer Essentials, Safety Activity Checkpoints, info on First Aid training, and more on the Members Page on our website.



Service Projects & Activities

Explore ideas for your troop's next adventure in the Girl Scout Activity Zone full of Girl Scout tested and approved activities and service projects.



Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

The VTK is a digital planning tool that includes troop contact info as well as detailed troop meeting plans as you work on petals, badges, and more. Access the VTK through your myGS account on our website.



Field trips & the Outdoors

Check out our GSWNY website for more information on getting outdoors or attending Council Programs and Events.



GS Learn

Take short, fun, and informative online courses through gsLearn. Access gsLearn through your myGS account on our website.



Cookies & Money Earning

On the Cookies+ tab, you'll find helpful information for both Product Programs -- Fall Nuts and Candy and Cookie Program -- as well as forms, resources, training videos, and more! This is your one-stop shop for volunteers, girls and families, giving you all the tools needed for a great product program year.



Stay Connected!

Join our GSWNY Members Facebook Group to read our monthly Volunteer Resources email, full of timely information for Troop Leaders. Be sure you've opted in to email via your myGS account on our website.

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We're here to help!

If you have a private matter, a conflict to discuss, issues with registration, or any other needs, your GSWNY council can help!

The best way to connect with us is through our Council Customer Care team:

Call: 1.888.837.6410

Email: customercare@gswny.org

Website: gswny.org

Our Council Map

Visit gswny.org for hours by location or call for more information.

★ Girl Scout Office

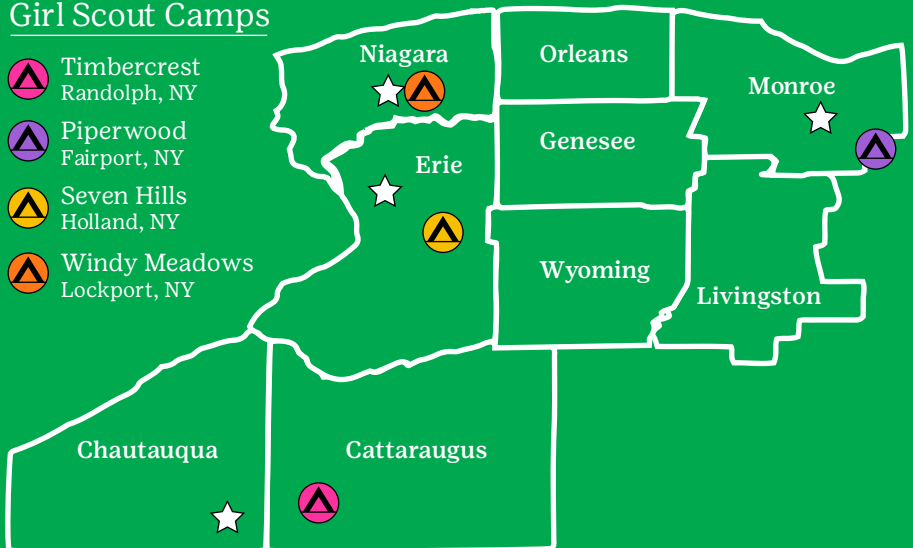
Girl Scout Camps

▲ Timbercrest
Randolph, NY

▲ Piperwood
Fairport, NY

▲ Seven Hills
Holland, NY

▲ Windy Meadows
Lockport, NY



Buffalo Service Center

4433 Genesee St., Suite 101
Buffalo, NY 14225
716.935.6035

Jamestown Service Center

2661 Horton Rd.
Jamestown, NY 14701
716.935.6040

Lockport Service Center

5000 Cambria Rd.
Lockport, NY 14094
716.935.6080

Niagara Falls Service Center (Satellite Office)

1522 Main St., Suite 307
Niagara Falls, NY 14305
716.935.6082

Rochester Service Center

1000 Elmwood Ave., Door 9
Rochester, NY 14620
585.292.5160