



# Volunteer Essentials

## 2010

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# Quick-Start Guide

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

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

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

Ready to get started? Then read the following handy tips, and you'll be well on your way!

# Why Girl Scouts?

When Juliette “Daisy” Gordon Low assembled 18 girls from Savannah, Georgia, for a local Girl Scout meeting on March 12, 1912, her goal was to bring all girls out of isolated home environments and into community service and the open air. Girl Scouts hiked, played basketball, went on camping trips, learned how to tell time by the stars, and studied first-aid. (Click [here](#) for more information on Juliette Gordon Low.)

Today, Girl Scouts has a membership of more than 3.3 million girls and adults, and over 50 million women in the United States are Girl Scout alumnae. You belong to this powerful network!

Girls and women have made remarkable progress since Juliette Low founded the first Girl Scout troop, but inequalities persist:

- Women earn 77 cents for every dollar their male counterparts earn; for every dollar a white man earns, African American women earn 67 cents and Hispanic women earn approximately 58 cents.
- Women represent more than 50 percent of the workforce, but only 10% are CEOs of *Fortune* 500 companies.
- Women are granted fewer than 27 percent of Ph.D.s in physics, 20 percent in computer science, and 17 percent in engineering.
- Women only hold 87 of the 535 seats (16.3%) in the U.S. Congress and 75 of the 315 elected executive offices (24 percent) across the country.
- Since the end of World War II, a woman has served as president or prime minister only 42 times throughout the world.

Why Girl Scouts? Precisely because these inequalities persist. Girl Scouts understands that girls have unique needs that are best met in a program designed specifically for them and delivered in an all-girl setting. Research tells us that a girl’s leadership blooms when she’s among other girls, away from school pressures, social cliques, and boys. In a place where she can be herself and take on new challenges. Where activities are girl-led. Where each girl learns by doing, and the learning is cooperative, not competitive. Where adults mentor girls and model skills, behaviors, relationships, and careers that girls can emulate.

Girl Scouts has developed an exciting model that meets every one of these needs—it’s called the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). Everything girls do in Girl Scouting is infused with the GSLE, which shows girls how to discover who they are and what they stand for, connect with vibrant and diverse peers in their own neighborhoods and around the globe, and together take action to make a difference in the world. Even better, they inspire and advocate for others along the way! The GSLE identifies 15 exciting outcomes/benefits for girls, all of which propel girls toward becoming the exceptional women they were born to be.

In order for your community—indeed, for the world—to be at peace and work cooperatively, you recognize that tomorrow’s leaders require mentoring. Girl Scouts, and the powerful model that is the GSLE, offers girls the tools they need to be successful leaders now and throughout their lives. And you’re the critical link, as you learn about, understand, and deliver the GSLE to the girls in your group.

# Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law

You belong to this powerful organization of—and *for*—girls. The Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law speak to the vision we all share for girls and inspire each of us to work on behalf of tomorrow's leaders.

## Girl Scout Mission

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

Every opportunity in Girl Scouting—from every group meeting to field trips to earning badges—encourages girls to become courageous, self-confident, and people of character who take action to make a difference in the world. Just think of what can happen when:

- Girl Scout Ambassadors advocate for girls around the world to have the opportunity to learn to read?
- Seniors launch a region-wide art show or online exhibit to display artwork that depicts what GIRLtopia looks like to them?
- Cadettes *amaze* every middle school in the county—or in the country—with Peace Kits?
- Juniors use storytelling to share the Power of One, Team, and Community with everyone in their classrooms?
- Brownies spread the news about the three leadership keys they learned about on their Quest?
- Daisies introduce everyone in town to their flower friends—and what they stand for?

## Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:

To serve God\* and my country,

To help people at all times,

And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

(\*Girl Scouts makes no attempt to define or interpret the word "God" in the Girl Scout Promise. We look to individual members to establish for themselves the nature of their spiritual beliefs. When making the Girl Scout Promise, individuals may substitute wording appropriate to their own spiritual beliefs for the word "God.")

## 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.



# Girl Scouts' Organizational Structure

Girl Scouts is the world's largest organization of and for girls, currently encompassing 2.4 million girl members and nearly one million volunteers! Three core structures support all these members: the national headquarters, your council, and your local support team.

## National Organization and Worldwide Sisterhood

The national office of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA), located in New York City, employs roughly 400 employees. (Visit [GSUSA online](#), where you'll find a wealth of resources for both girls and volunteers.) This 98-year-old organization is now affiliated with a worldwide family of 10 million girls and adults in 145 countries through the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

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

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

## Your Local Council

Local Girl Scout councils are chartered by the national office to establish local responsibility for leadership, administration, and supervision of Girl Scout program, and to develop, manage, and maintain Girl Scouting in a geographic area. Through your council, the national office provides support materials, to ensure that what is delivered through the councils is nationally consistent for all volunteers across the country.

## Your Support Team

Your geographically based team of volunteers and staff provides you with local support. As a volunteer, you will have the most contact with your Girl Scout support team, which may be called a service unit or go by some other name. This support team is the one you can look to as your experts in all things Girl Scouting. If you have questions about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, using journey books, selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products, go to this team of volunteers for the answers and ongoing support you need.

# Getting Started with Journey Books

The core component of the Girl Scout program is the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), in which girls discover themselves, connect with others, and take action to make the world a better place. The most efficient—and fun—way to deliver the GSLE is to use journey books, which are a coordinated series of activities grouped around a theme, each with a clear starting point (an invitation to explore and take action) and an ending point (an opportunity to reflect, reward, and celebrate). Each journey includes exciting, challenging, and purposeful experiences spread over a series of sessions (which you can expand over a longer period, if you wish), and each is tied to the GSLE. In other words, the GSLE is sewn right into the journey books for you!

To get started, all you need is a sense of adventure to guide girls on a great journey. Check out these five simple tips:

- 1. Take a 10-minute walk through the bilingual Girl Scout Leadership Experience online resource** at [www.girlscouts.org/gsle](http://www.girlscouts.org/gsle). A guide talks you through each component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and provides clear definitions, illustrating how each piece is part of a well-researched, powerful, and change-making experience for girls. Note, too, the summaries of each journey that pop up when you click on “Journeys.”
- 2. Choose a journey.** Pick up one of the girl journey books for the grade level of the girls you’ll be working with. Read for the pleasure of it, just to get an overview of the journey’s theme.
- 3. Review the sample sessions in the adult guide.** These samples show you how to bring the journeys to life.
- 4. Now that you know what’s possible, invite the girls (and their parents/guardians) to use their imaginations** for how to make the journeys real in ways that excite them. You don’t have to do everything exactly as laid out in the books. The books are a great resource with lots of room for creativity and customization.
- 5. Step back and watch** how the girls, with your knowledge, support, and guidance, have enormous fun and a rewarding experience. Celebrate with them as they earn their leadership journey awards, too!

Throughout your own journey—and even before—volunteer and staff members of your local Girl Scout council are there to offer support, learning opportunities, and advice. Never hesitate to contact them.

# Planning in a Girl-Led Environment

To start planning your time with girls, first draw up a simple calendar:

January	February	March
April	May	June
July	August	September
October	November	December

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

- How many meetings will you have each month? When do you plan to break for holidays?
- How many weeks do you need to allocate for the Girl Scout Cookie Program?
- Will you have time in your schedule for guest speakers and other visitors?
- If you've worked with this group before, what are their preferences? Badge work? Field trips? Other activities? Can these also be tied to the journey theme? For more ideas, see the online [journey maps](#), and then choose the grade level of the girls you're working with.

Make sure to include all of these in your calendar as a starting point. Girls will fill in the details as they guide their own journey.

Once you've drafted a loose framework, it's time to ask the girls what they think. Remember: You want girls to lead, but younger girls will need more guidance, while older girls will require far less. Seniors and Ambassadors may not want you to draft any sort of calendar in advance, so if they balk at the work you've done, simply put it away and let them take the reins. Daisies and Brownies, on the other hand, may only be able to fill in a few ideas here and there, as you uncover their personalities and interests.

Before your group even opens a journey book, ask the girls what the journey and related theme mean to them. Maybe the theme ignites a discussion (or even debate!) that helps the girls chart their course for the year. In your discussions, probe to find out what the girls are most interested in accomplishing during their time together, and then help them connect those interests to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

# Meeting with Girls for the First Time

When you first get together with girls (and this may also be a meeting with parents/guardians, or you may decide to hold a separate meeting for the adults), you'll likely want to accomplish some or all of the following, depending on how much time you have and on the grade level (read that: attention span) of the girls:

- **Get to know the girls, and give them a chance to get to know each other.** Ice-breaker games—in which girls share simple details about each other, or are charged with finding out about another girl with whom they are paired—are a simple way to start off your first meeting. Check your council resources or search the Internet on “ice-breakers for kids,” and a wide variety of options will open for you.
- **Introduce the journey books and the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.** You can start with something as simple as asking the girls to raise hands or shout out what “leadership” means to them, and then compiling a list that you tie to the GSLE—especially the three keys (discover, connect, and take action). Or you can do something more complex, like having the girls create masks of the characters in their journey book, and each choosing a character to play for the evening. The journey adult guide gives you additional ideas for having conversations about the GSLE and journey books with girls and their parents/guardians. See the appendices to this guidebook for ideas on opportunities to kick off and use the journey books.
- **Talk about the three processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) in a grade-level-appropriate way.** Consider dividing the girls into small groups or two-person teams to recall the activities they've led in the past, the times when they've learned by doing, and the ways in which they've learned cooperatively in groups. What was beneficial about those experiences? What was difficult about them?
- **Find out what interests the group, including other adult volunteers.** Do they want to dig deeper about the journey or a related theme? Without promising anything (yet!), ask the girls to talk about what they're passionate about, what they've always wanted to do, and how they would spend their time if money or other barriers were no object. Build off the ideas shared, but also ask direct questions of the girls who seem shy or unsure about answering, so that no one is left out.
- **Talk about how they want to schedule their time together, starting with the draft schedule you bring.** Can they organize and plan a field trip or longer travel opportunity that will allow them to learn more about a particular topic or theme? Is there an event that meshes with this topic or area of interest? Can the girls locate and communicate with an expert in the field via e-mail or social media? Can they invite a local guest speaker to answer specific questions or demonstrate particular skills? Which badges can the group choose to work on that will deepen their skills in this particular area? Are they interested in pursuing their Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, or Gold Awards?

# Using Safety Activity Checkpoints

When preparing for any activity with girls, always begin with the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints written about that particular activity, which you can find on your council's Web site and/or you will receive in some other electronic or printed form from your council.

Each Safety Activity Checkpoint includes the same format:

- Title of the checkpoint, a photo, and introductory text
- Information on where to do this activity and how to include girls with disabilities
- Basic and specialized gear required for the activity
- How you and the girls need to prepare yourselves in advance of the activity
- What specific steps to follow on the day of the activity
- Web links to help you and the girls learn more, plus ways to increase your know-how
- Activity-specific jargon

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

In keeping with the three processes of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, be sure that all activities are girl-led, taking into account the age and abilities of the girls. Older girls can take the bulk of the responsibility for carefully planning and executing activities, while younger girls will require more of your guidance but should still be deeply involved in making decisions about their activities.

Also give the girls the chance to learn cooperatively, by having girls teach each other new skills they may need for activities, rather than hearing all that from you. And let girls learn by doing: If research or special equipment is needed, they'll learn better doing that research themselves than by having you do the legwork and report back to them. Even Daisies can do basic research and give reports or do show-and-tell for each other. And Ambassadors may need you only for moral support as they research, teach each other, and plan every detail of their excursions.

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

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

# Chapter 1: Sharing Your Unique Gifts

No matter why and how you choose to spend your time with Girl Scouts, your investment in time and energy will pay back tenfold. Little can compare to the satisfaction you'll feel as you help girls grow in self-confidence, discover their genuine selves, connect with the people and community around them, and take action to make a difference in the world.

The comprehensive Girl Scout volunteer management system ensures that you are matched with the right opportunities, are provided efficient and effective learning and support, and are recognized for the valuable service you provide on behalf of girls. The first few steps of the process include background screening, interviewing, and placement, which you've already experienced. Now, you're in a position to assess the skills and competencies Girl Scouts has identified as most important—the ones that will lead to the best results for girls. You surely already possess many of these skills and behaviors and will develop more in the coming year, as you work more closely with girls and with your volunteer support team. After you've evaluated your skills and identified opportunities for growth, you can utilize the learning opportunities offered by your council. You'll have the chance to learn and grow, right along with the girls!

## Understanding Your Role as a Girl Scout Volunteer

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

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you serve as a partner and role model to girls. You'll also work closely with a co-volunteer, because two adults must be present at all times when working with girls, and at least one of those volunteers must be female and *not* related to the other adult. This is an important distinction that bears repeating: Men can serve as troop volunteers, but an adult female who is not related to the other volunteer must be present at all times, and at no time is a girl to be alone with only one volunteer. Remember to also check the adult-to-girl ratios in the “Safety-Wise” chapter.

## Your Responsibilities

Your other responsibilities as a Girl Scout volunteer include:

- Sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills with a positive and flexible approach
- Working in a partnership with girls so that their activities are girl-led, allow them to learn by doing, and allow for cooperative (group) learning; you'll also partner with other volunteers and council staff for support and guidance
- Organizing fun, interactive, girl-led activities that address relevant issues and match girls' interests and needs
- Providing guidance and information regarding Girl Scout group meetings with girls' parents or guardians on a regular and ongoing basis through a variety of tools, including e-mail, phone calls, newsletters, blogs, or 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 troop
- Overseeing any funds the girls raise with honesty, integrity, and careful record-keeping
- Maintaining a close connection to your volunteer support team
- Facilitating a safe experience for every girl

## Your Support Team

In your role as a Girl Scout volunteer, you may team up with co-volunteer(s), parents/guardians, members of the community, council staff members, and others who have expressed interest in working alongside you.

Your support team may help by:

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

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

- When important milestones will happen (when Girl Scout Cookie sales will happen, when a troop will take field trips, when a travel group will make its trip, when an event will happen, what the starting and ending dates for a series or for camp will be) and how long the planning process will take
- When and where to meet as a group, if necessary
- Whether, when, where, and how often to hold parent/guardian meetings
- Whether an advance trip to a destination, event site, or camp needs to happen

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

## Evaluating Your Skills

Use the following checklist to determine your strengths and areas for growth, and then work with your volunteer support team to boost the areas in which you can do some additional learning and skill-building.

### Focusing on Girls

- I create a fun, interactive, girl-led series of activities.
- I help girls set realistic and clearly defined goals and objectives.
- I am respectful of and empathetic to girls.

- I create a friendly environment for girls and adults.
- I foster girl-adult partnerships that provide opportunities for girls to lead their own activities.

## Demonstrating Flexibility

- I adjust, modify behavior, and remain flexible and tolerate in response to changes, obstacles, and divergent opinions.
- I maintain a sense of humor and emotional composure, even when under pressure or opposition.

## Communicating Well

- I express ideas and facts clearly, concisely, and accurately.
- I communicate in a manner that's appropriate for each individual and group.
- I use appropriate nonverbal communication.
- I actively listen to others and incorporate their ideas and perspectives.
- I facilitate group discussion, clarify the points of others, and encourage group responses and actions.
- I present information that is clear, organized, and vibrant.

## Fostering Diversity

- I understand that each individual brings a unique—and important—experience to Girl Scouting, and I embrace those differences.
- I value, develop, nurture, use, and celebrate both group and individual diversity.
- I strive for inclusiveness in all activities, removing barriers to participation for both girls and their parents/guardians.
- I challenge the biases of others.
- I treat others fairly.

## Living with Personal Integrity

- I demonstrate dependability, honesty, and credibility.
- I accept responsibility for my own actions.
- I maintain confidentiality.
- I uphold ethical standards.

## Taking Advantage of Volunteer Learning Opportunities

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

Currently, through your council, you'll find online learning modules that you can complete on your own schedule and at your own pace, as well as face-to-face training opportunities that allow for immediate feedback on the skills learned and knowledge gained. You also have resources—like this resource and the journey adult guides, for example—to use as a reference during the next year. Read what you need now, and come back to it when you're ready for more. At this point, you have probably already completed the online Volunteer Orientation and will soon be scheduled for Leadership Essentials, which will provide in-depth focus on delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience—the outcomes/benefits we're striving to achieve for girls, the processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning), and the three leadership keys (discover, connect, and take action). Your council may also offer additional courses.

Learning opportunities ensure that you have the support you need in Girl Scouting. The Volunteer Learning or Adult Learning department at your council will provide you with the instruction and guidance necessary to fulfill your role successfully as a Girl Scout volunteer—learning that will not only help you work more effectively with Girl Scouts but also may introduce new skills and behaviors into your work life, relationships, and personal development. In the end, your service will be recognized and evident to all the girls you help become confident, courageous, and character-driven young women. And that's the greatest reward of all!

## Getting Feedback on a Job Well Done

Serving as a Girl Scout volunteer affords you exceptional opportunities, both in the skills you'll gain and in the difference you'll make in the lives of girls. Everyone involved with Girl Scouts wants to ensure that you're effectively mentoring girls to become world-changing leaders, and your council staff helps you do that by measuring outcomes, evaluating your performance, continuing to give you opportunities to build new skills, and recognizing you for the tremendous work you do.

We want you to have such an incredible time working with girls that you want to stay in Girl Scouting! So, after you complete your current role, your council staff will go through a reappointment process, in which you'll talk about the positive parts of your experience as well as the challenges you faced, and discuss whether you want to return in this position or try something new. During this process, council staff will also (of course!) want to lavish you with praise, rewards, recognition, and thanks for all the hard work you do!

### Volunteer Appreciation Weeks

Volunteer Appreciation Week—the third week in April—is set aside especially for you. Girl Scouts pay tribute to the volunteers who help girls make the world a better place. The week centers on the long-standing National Girl Scout Leaders' Day (April 22), but expands the definition of volunteers beyond troop leaders, to include all the volunteers who work in so many ways on behalf of girls in Girl Scouting.

Girl Scouts also celebrates Volunteers Make a Difference Week, in conjunction with Make a Difference Day, which is the weekend we set our clocks back in the fall.

# Chapter 2: Program—What Girls Do!

The Girl Scout program—that is, what girls do in Girl Scouting—offers incredible opportunities for girls to grow in their leadership skills, develop lifelong friendships, and earn awards along each step of their leadership journeys, no matter what their grade levels, experiences with Girl Scouting, or background.

The Girl Scout program is centered around the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), and the best way to deliver the GSLE to girls is through journeys—powerful, fun, and exciting books and awards that are the core of the Girl Scout program. Each journey offers opportunities to earn prestigious awards, and at the Junior grade level and above, girls then have an opportunity to earn the highest awards in Girl Scouting: the Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. Of course, earning and collecting a variety of badges, patches, and pins is also an important Girl Scout tradition that lives on, because doing so encourages girls to learn and demonstrate important skills. A variety of badge activities allow girls to focus on particular interest areas, like financial literacy, healthy living, science and technology, and outdoors and the environment. And Girl Scout ceremonies and songs continue to link girls with not only with their Girl Scout peers today but also with the many Girl Scouts who came before them. This chapter shares details on each of these exciting elements of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

## The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

Today’s effective leaders stress collaboration, inclusion, and a commitment to improving the world around them. Girls themselves tell us that a leader is defined not only by the qualities and skills she hones but also by how she uses those skills and qualities to make a difference in the world—to achieve transformational change! For this reason, the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)—the framework for defining *what* girls do in Girl Scouting, *how* they do it, and *who* will benefit that was borne out of years of research and development—engages girls in three key activities: discovering who they are and what they value; connecting with others; and taking action to make the world a better place.

### Three Keys to Leadership: The Activities Girls Do

In Girl Scouting, girls discover, connect, and take action as they become leaders. The entire Girl Scout program, regardless of the exact topic, is designed to lead to leadership outcomes (or benefits) that stem from these three keys.

#### Discover Key

Girls understand themselves and their values and use their knowledge and skills to explore the world. The benefits intended for girls from the discover key include:

- Developing a strong sense of self
- Developing positive values
- Gaining practical life skills and practicing healthy living
- Seeking challenges in the world
- Developing critical thinking skills

## Connect Key

Girls care about, inspire, and team with others locally and globally. Benefits for girls include:

- Developing healthy relationships
- Promoting cooperation and team-building
- Resolving conflicts
- Advancing diversity in a multicultural world
- Feeling connected to their local and global communities

## Take Action Key

Girls act to make the world a better place. Benefits intended for girls include:

- Identifying community needs
- Working as resourceful problem-solvers
- Educating and inspiring others to act
- Advocating for themselves and others, at home and around the world
- Feeling empowered to make a difference

The most powerful component of the take action key is, not only do Girl Scouts themselves benefit as they grow in their leadership skills, but communities, the nation, and the world benefit as well. Taking action translates to making the world a better place.

**Remember:** In order for that project to have maximum impact, girls will need to share their take-action story within your community: they may decide to use the local media, blogs, or a Web site; create a high-quality photo exhibit; arrange for school visits or presentations at younger-girl Girl Scout gatherings; or create a community-awareness event. Whatever way(s) they choose, be sure the group brainstorms ways to share their take-action experience with the community, and then follows through by sharing their story.

The journey books, as well as the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Award guidelines, give you more information on take-action projects.

## Girl Scout Processes: How Girls Go About Doing Those Activities

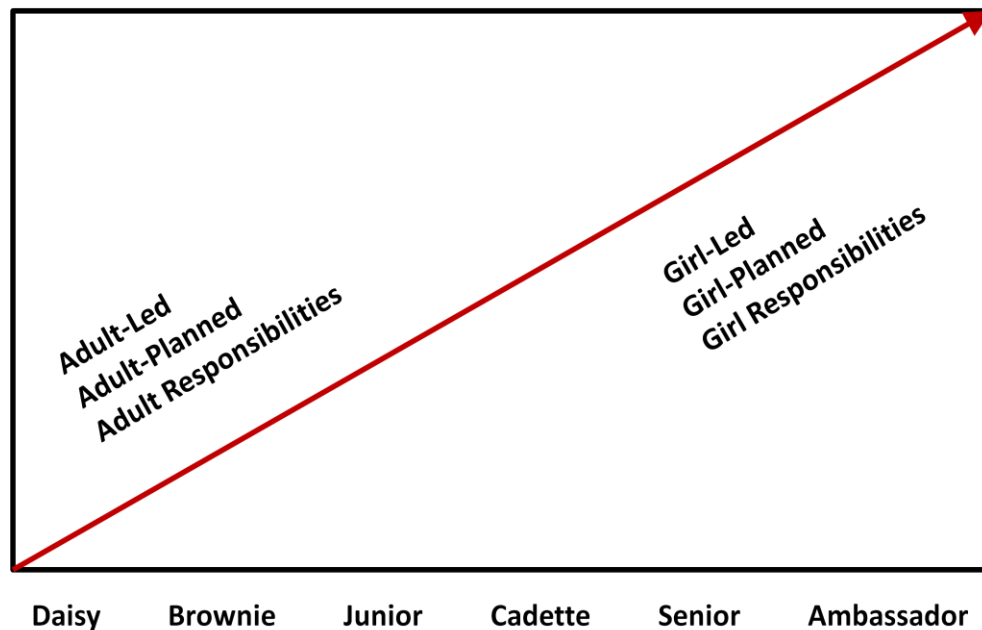
It's not just what girls do, but how they are engaged that creates a high-quality experience. All Girl Scout activities are designed to use three processes that make Girl Scouting unique from school and other extracurricular activities. When used together, these processes (girl-led, learning-by-doing, and cooperative-learning) ensure the quality and promote the fun and friendship that's so integral to Girl Scouting.

### Activities Are Girl-Led

Girls of every grade level take an active role in determining what, where, when, why, and how they'll structure activities. As part of the adult-girl partnership fostered by Girl Scouts, you use this process to strengthen and support girls' empowerment and decision-making roles in activities. Your role is to provide grade-level-appropriate guidance while ensuring that girls lead as much as possible in the planning,

organization, set-up, and evaluation of their activities. The older the girl, the more you step back and serve as a resource and support.

### Transitioning from Adult-Led to Girl-Led



### Girls Learn by Doing

Girls use hands-on learning to engage in an ongoing cycle of action and reflection, deepening their understanding of concepts and mastering practical skills. As girls take part in meaningful activities—instead of simply watching them—and then later evaluate what they have learned, learning is far more meaningful, memorable, and long-lasting. You assist girls in this process by facilitating grade-level-appropriate experiences through which girls can learn, and also by leading discussions that reflect on those experiences. When girls learn by doing, they can better connect their experiences to their own lives, both in and out of Girl Scouting.

### Girls Engage in Cooperative Learning

Girls share knowledge, skills, and experiences in an atmosphere of respect and cooperation, working together on a common goal that engages each individual girl's diverse talents. In cooperative learning environments, people learn faster, process information more efficiently, and are better able to retain the information learned. This idea, also known as "positive interdependence," engages girls in meaningful ways, encourages and appreciates differences in outlook and skills, and creates a sense of belonging. In your role as a volunteer, you want to structure cooperative-learning activities that will nurture healthy, diverse relationships, and also give continuous feedback to girls on those learning experiences.

These three processes promote the fun and friendship that, for nearly 100 years, have been integral to Girl Scouting. But they do even more: When girls lead, when they learn by doing, and when they engage in cooperative learning, the 15 leadership outcomes (or benefits) discussed in the preceding section are far more likely to be understood and achieved.

# The Journey Books!

The core component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience is the leadership journeys—a coordinated series of activities grouped around a theme, each with a clear starting point (an invitation to explore and take action) and an ending point (an opportunity to reflect, reward, and celebrate). Each journey includes fun, challenging, and purposeful experiences spread over a series of sessions (which you can expand over several group meetings), and each is tied to some or all of the 15 national outcomes/benefits for girls. In other words, the GSLE is sewn right into the journeys for you!

The journey books immerse Girl Scouts in specific topics, while the adult guides feature enriching activities for a group of girls, coaching tips, and sample session outlines that you can customize to fit the needs of your group, whether you facilitate a troop, volunteer at a Girl Scout camp, mentor girls on a travel adventure, or engage with girls in a series or at an event. Together, the girls' books and adult guides ensure that every Girl Scout in every pathway receives a consistent, high-quality experience that ties to the GSLE and engages girls in realizing specific leadership outcomes/benefits.

Not sure the journey books will work for you? Consider taking a second look, because how you and girls use the journey books is up to you—here are a few tips:

- **You and the girls are encouraged to customize the sample sessions.** The journey adult guides provide you with ideas, examples, and encouragement, along with ideas about sequencing experiences, facilitating discussions, and assisting as girls earn awards. But neither the girls' books nor the adult guides is meant to provide hard-and-fast, unchangeable, lockstep sessions. Have fun creating new activities surrounding each topic. The journey will be much more fun and relevant as girls make it their own!
- **Take your time or speed things up.** Sample sessions in the journeys have been created to show how it is possible to have a Girl Scout Leadership Experience in six to eight gatherings. Many girls and adults quickly find there is more they want to do, which is why the journey books are filled with tips for you to customize the experience. As their imaginations take hold, girls will have many more ideas about how to extend the journey with guidance from volunteers. Conversely, you may decide you want to use the journey books in only two or three planning sessions—whatever works for you.
- **Capture girls' imagination and motivate them to take action by sharing stories.** The journey series engage girls in stories—real and fictional—of girls and women taking action in the world. Make use of these stories and expand upon them whenever you can—in any way that you and girls will enjoy. Stories, after all, capture the imagination and motivate. Ultimately, girls will create their own stories on the journey, meeting new people and taking action in the world. What other stories are going on in the region, and how can girls connect to them? What can girls find in stories—in art or life—that add to the feelings and ideas during this adventure?
- **Connect to the three keys.** As a volunteer in Girl Scouts, your experiences—and your view of leadership—will influence and inspire girls. Use the reflection exercises in the adult guide to think about the three keys to leadership (discover, connect, and take action) and how you can best apply them as you team up with Girl Scouts on their leadership journey.

As you work through a grade-level-specific journey book, you'll have your own learning-by-doing experience, as you come to understand the GSLE even more deeply. As girls work toward and earn the awards that accompany each journey, you'll be sure the girls are receiving the benefits Girl Scouts promises—and you'll be able to apply your understanding of the GSLE to everything else girls go on to do in Girl Scouting.

## It's Your World—Change It!

One series of journey books invites girls to develop a deep understanding of themselves, understand how powerfully they can act when they team up with others who share a vision, and make a difference in their

communities by inspiring, educating, and advocating. Books in the first series of journey books include the following:

- ***Welcome to the Daisy Flower Garden***: When flowers talk, what do they say? Something wonderful? Something wise? Listen closely, and then plant a seed—maybe even two or three. In this garden, as in all of Girl Scouts, good things are bound to sprout.
- ***Brownie Quest***: Pack a bag and join the quest! You'll find trails with friends and fun and all sorts of...well, we can't say what! After all, there's a mystery to solve! And did we mention that special something Girl Scouts have always loved—a bright and shining Brownie Elf?
- ***Agent of Change (for Juniors)***: Power. Everyone's got it—individual power, team power, community power. There's a whole spiral of power waiting, just for you. Toss in some power stories (and a chatty, power-loving spider), and you've got yourself one powerful adventure. Power on!
- ***aMAZE! (for Cadettes)***: Life is a maze. Navigate its twists and turns and you'll find true friendships, meaningful relationships, and lots of confidence to boot. So go ahead, enter the maze. The goal is peace—for you, your world, and the planet, too.
- ***GIRLtopia (for Seniors)***: Imagine a perfect world for girls. Imagining is the first step to creating. Make your vision a reality. That's what leadership is all about.
- ***Your Voice Your World—The Power of Advocacy (for Ambassadors)***: How often have you seen something that really needed to be changed and wondered, "Why isn't someone doing something about that?" Guess what? You can be that someone! All it takes is your voice joining with other voices and pretty soon, you'll see just how powerful advocacy can really be. So go ahead, start the winds of change with your own little flutter—be a Girl Scout Ambassador and an advocate.

## It's Your Planet—Love It!

A second series of journey books issues a call for action for the environment, inviting Girl Scouts of every grade level to explore the natural wonders of the world, become stewards of our fragile planet, and investigate the science that keeps our Earth spinning. Books in the second exciting series include:

- ***Between Earth and Sky (for Daisies)***: Sunshine, fresh air, new places to see. When flower friends travel, they enjoy all of these. So come along for the trip. Meet new friends and old. You'll taste, touch, and smell what fun travel can hold!
- ***WOW! Wonders of Water (for Brownies)***: Water does so much for you! Can you return the favor? On this Wonders of Water journey, you will love water, save water, and share water! That's a really big WOW!
- ***GET MOVING! (for Juniors)***: Energy puts the sparkle in fireworks, the giddyup in a pony, and the oomph in the everyday. So get moving! Energize, investigate, innovate. Get all the energy in your life flowing in the wisest ways.
- ***Breathe (for Cadettes)***: Take a deep breath. How do you feel? What do you see? Hear? Smell? Get set to focus all your senses on air. This is one airy journey, and it's full of flair!
- ***Sow What? (for Seniors)***: So, what do you hope for from your food? Great taste? Pleasing smell? Good looks, too? As you dig into *Sow What?* and get down to the roots, you'll crave a whole lot more. You'll see how your food network can serve up what's best for Earth—and best for you!
- ***Justice (for Ambassadors)***: We all know what it is. Why is it so hard to achieve? Maybe it needs a brand-new equation—your equation. On this journey, doing the math + some very sage ways = real hope for inspiring justice—for all of Earth and her inhabitants.

## It's Your Story—Tell It!

In the 2010–2011 membership year, Girl Scouts will introduce a third series of journey books, titled *It's Your Story—Tell It!*, focusing on girls' self-expression and creativity.

## Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards

The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards are Girl Scouting's highest awards. As a Girl Scout volunteer, encourage girls to “go for it” by earning these awards at the Junior through Ambassador levels.

The steps toward achieving Girl Scouting's most prestigious leadership awards offer girls wonderful learning and growth opportunities. Check out some of the award projects girls are doing at your council. Better yet, talk to a few past recipients of the Girl Scout Gold Award. You'll quickly be inspired when you see and hear what girls can accomplish right now as leaders—and by the confidence, values, and team-building expertise that girls gain as a result of going after Girl Scouting's top awards. And imagine the impact girls have on their communities, country, and even the world as they identify problems they care about, team with others, and act to make change happen!

Like everything girls do in Girl Scouting, the steps to earning the awards are rooted in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and its three keys to leadership: girls discover themselves and their values and explore the world, connect with others locally and globally, and take action to make the world a better place. This is why, to earn each of these awards, girls first complete a grade-level journey (two journeys for the Gold Award). With journeys, girls experience all three keys to leadership and are prepared to identify community needs, work in partnership with their communities, and create take-action projects that make a lasting difference.

After completing journeys, girls apply their insights and skills to plan and carry out action projects based on their unique visions. The Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards offer girls relevant, grade-level-appropriate challenges related to teamwork, goal setting, and opportunities to build community networks.

The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards offer girls incredible opportunities for personal development and community leadership. These awards also engage girls in building networks that will not only support them in their award projects, but also lead them to new educational and career opportunities. All this, of course, starts with you—a Girl Scout volunteer! Encourage girls to go after the highest awards—information is available [here](#). Adult guidelines for you to use when helping girls earn their awards are also available [online](#).

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

### A Tradition of Honoring Girls

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

# Badges, Try-Its, Pins, and More!

Emblems, awards, and patches refer to items that girls wear on their vests or sashes, each of which records a girl's adventures and accomplishments as a Girl Scout. The following list describes the differences among them:

- **Emblems** show membership in Girl Scouts, a particular council, a particular troop, or in some other Girl Scout group.
- **Awards** are earned by completing requirements or by demonstrating understanding of a concept. The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold awards, as well as the journey awards, are two prestigious ways girls can earn awards. But girls also earn Daisy Petals, Brownie Try-Its, Junior badges, and Interest Project awards (as Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors). Some awards take the shape of pins. Additional awards are earned through Girl Scouts requirements or are determined by partner organizations. Examples include religious awards and the President's Award for Community Service. **Note:** Over the next several years, Girl Scouts will be updating the skill-building badge activities for girls, in order to tie them to the GSLE. Stay tuned for updates! Until then, continue to dip into the existing offering to supplement the journey experience—remember, once you've done a journey, you can apply the GSLE to everything else you and the girls choose to do!
- **Participation patches** are developed at the national or council level with a focus on participation. Some come with companion activity booklets, while others are given out at events. Some examples include uniquely ME! patches and World Thinking Day patch.

Purchase emblems, patches, pins, and earned awards at your council's Girl Scout shop or by visiting the [www.gsewni.org](http://www.gsewni.org). Also check out the array of [Girl Scout emblems, earned awards, patches, and pins](#). There, you not only find a cool list of the earned awards for each grade level but also can click on a link that shows you exactly *where* girls can place all their emblems, awards, pins, and patches on vests and sashes!

In addition to journey books, you have other resources at your disposal, including the *Daisy Girl Scout Activity Book*, *Try-Its for Brownie Girl Scouts*, *Junior Girl Scout Badge Book*, and *Interest Projects for Girls 11–17*. These resources provide topic-specific skills-building activities as girls earn the associated badges.

In addition, you'll find a wealth of Girl Scout resources centered on four core areas: STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), financial literacy, the environment and outdoor education, and healthy living. Contact your local council or your support team for guidance on where to find these resources and how to infuse them into your group activities.

## Other Initiatives and Opportunities

Other exciting initiatives and opportunities exist to support the GSLE. A few examples are listed here, and you can find out how to engage your group in opportunities like these by contacting your local council or by visiting [www.girlscouts.org/program/program\\_opportunities](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/program_opportunities). Note that councils may offer different experiences, based on availability of resources and partners in your area.

- **uniquely ME!** A joint venture between Girl Scouts and Dove/Unilever, this is the Girl Scout/Dove Self-Esteem Program, which helps girls discover the importance of challenging themselves, develop healthy coping skills, evaluate media influences, know what to look for in a friend, and find ways to make a difference in the lives of others.
- **Elliott Wildlife Values Project (EWVP):** Launched more than 10 years ago, the EWVP provides girls with resources, collaborations, and opportunities that enable girls to explore nature, protect the environment, and develop a lifelong commitment to wildlife conservation.

- **First LEGO League (FLL):** FLL introduces girls to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) using LEGO MINDSTORMS, programmable robotics that test girls’ technical skills and expose them to leadership skills.
- **NASA collaboration:** Girl Scouts and NASA first collaborated more than 15 years ago, with a shared goal of exposing girls to science careers, creating summer internships for girls, hosting field trips relating to Earth and solar exploration, creating community outreach programs, and providing adult volunteers with training opportunities. To date, more than 100,000 girls have engaged in this program.

## Girl Scout Traditions: Pass it On!

Throughout the long history of Girl Scouts, certain traditions remain meaningful and important, and are still practiced today. This section describes annual celebrations in the Girl Scout year, as well as other revered Girl Scout traditions.

### Girl Scout Calendar

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

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

#### World Thinking Day

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

Today, girls show their appreciation and friendship on World Thinking Day not only by extending warm wishes but also by offering a voluntary contribution to the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund, which helps offer Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting to more girls and young women worldwide.

### Time-Honored Ceremonies

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

Girls use ceremonies for all sorts of reasons: to open or close meetings, give out awards, welcome new members, renew memberships, and honor special Girl Scout accomplishments. A brief list, in alphabetical order, follows, so that you can become familiar with the most common Girl Scout ceremonies:

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

For more about ceremonies, visit [www.girlscouts.org/program/gs\\_central/ceremonies](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/ceremonies).

## Signs, Songs, Handshake, and More!

Over the course of 98 years, any organization is going to develop a few common signals that everyone understands. Such is the case with Girl Scouts which has developed a few unique ways to greet, acknowledge, and communicate. Examples are listed in the following sections.

### Girl Scout Sign

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

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

## **Girl Scout Handshake**

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

## **Quiet Sign**

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

## **Girl Scout Slogan and Motto**

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

## **Songs**

Whether singing around a campfire or lifting a chorus of voices on the Mall in Washington, D.C., Girl Scouts have always enjoyed the fun and fellowship that music creates. In fact, the first *Girl Scout Song Book*, a collection of songs put together by girl members, was published in 1925. Since then, the organization’s love of music has grown along with the girls it has empowered.

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

# Chapter 3: Engaging Girls at All Grade Levels

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you'll be working with girls of all backgrounds, behaviors, skills, and abilities. No matter what a girl's grade level or background, however, it's your job to engage her in meaningful ways, help her grow in maturity and skills, and encourage her to feel safe and accepted. This chapter gives you tips for doing just that.

## Arranging a Time and Space for Girl-Led Meetings

Important decisions include both when and where to meet.

*When* to meet is at you and your co-volunteers' discretion: It may just be one time for this particular group of girls. Or, if you meet regularly, what day and times work best for the girls, for you, for your co-volunteer(s), and for other adults who will be presenting or mentoring? Once per week, twice a month, or once a month? Is after-school best? Can your co-volunteers meet at that time, or will meetings work better in the evenings or on the weekends? If so, which day of the week? At what time?

*Where* to meet can be a bit trickier: A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all girls. You might consider using meeting rooms at

- Schools
- Libraries
- Houses of worship
- Community buildings
- Childcare facilities
- Local businesses

For teens, you can also rotate meetings at local coffee shops, bookstores, and other places girls enjoy spending time.

When choosing a space, consider the following:

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

- **Accessibility:** Be sure the space can accommodate girls with disabilities, as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.

If this is your first time asking for a Girl Scout meeting place, here are a few speaking points to get you started: “I’m a Girl Scout volunteer, with a group of \_\_\_\_\_ girls. We’re doing lots of great things for girls and for the community, like \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. We’re all about leadership—the kind that girls use in their daily lives and the kind that makes our community better. We’d love to hold our meetings here because \_\_\_\_\_.”

## Understanding Healthy Development in Girls

Just being attentive to what girls are experiencing, feeling pressured by, and enjoying as they mature is a big help to girls. So take some time to understand the likes and needs of girls, then consider how you can dip into the “what and how” of creating quality Girl Scout experiences together.

As you listen and learn along with girls, you may find it useful to review the highlights of their development. Here are some developmental characteristics of girls at different grade levels. Of course, each girl is an individual, so these descriptions are only guidelines that help you address each girl as the wonderful, complex person she is.

### Girl-Adult Partnership

Since the group meets for the enjoyment and benefit of the girls, meetings are built around the girls’ ideas. When you put the girl first, you’re helping develop a team relationship, making space for the development of leadership skills, and allowing girls to benefit from the guidance, mentoring, and coaching of caring adults.

The three leadership processes of girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning are key to the foundation of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and integral to the girl-adult partnership. Take time to read over the description of these processes and think about how to incorporate them into your group’s experiences.

## Girl Scout Daisy Development

At the Daisy level (kindergarten and 1st grade), girls:

- Develop coordinated large motor skills (such as skipping, running, and climbing) and fine motor skills (such as tying shoelaces, buttoning shirts, using scissors, and drawing recognizable figures).
- Interact with and learn about the world through play activities.
- Experience the world through exploration; feel inquisitive about self and surroundings.
- Feel curiosity about bodies; may play games like doctor.
- Understand what is good and bad (although she may not understand why) and follow rules.
- Express emotions physically and seek hugs and kisses.
- Develop relationships with peers and learn to recognize some as friends and others as people they don’t like.

## Girl Scout Brownie Development

At the Brownie level (2nd and 3rd grades), girls:

- Think in concrete terms, but are beginning to process more abstract concepts/complex ideas.
- Spend more time with their peer group and turn to peers for information.
- Develop an increased attention span; are able to focus on the past, future, and present.
- Improve in self-control, can conform to adult ideas of what is “proper” behavior, and recognize appropriateness in behavior.
- Become more modest and want more privacy; want more emotional freedom/space from parents/guardians.
- Prefer to be with other girls (rather than boys); have a stronger self-concept in terms of sex and body image.
- Understand more complex emotions such as confusion and excitement; become better at controlling and concealing feelings.

## **Girl Scout Junior Development**

At the Junior level (4th and 5th grades), girls:

- Think in concrete ways but are beginning to think logically and symbolically.
- Move toward understanding abstract ideas; things are often “right or wrong” or “all or nothing,” with little middle ground.
- Have a strong need to feel accepted and worthwhile.
- Begin to take responsibility for own actions.
- Develop decision-making skills.
- Prefer to be with other girls (rather than boys).

## **Girl Scout Cadette Development**

At the Cadette level (Grades 6, 7, and 8), girls:

- Feel unique, as though no one else has ever felt the way they do.
- Display excellent planning skills, long attention spans, and total absorption in their passions (though they may discover a new passion frequently).
- Are extremely concerned with and put a lot of energy and interest into their friends and peer relationships (they may develop self-consciousness in front of peers).
- Are interested in boys and crushes.
- Are into “what’s hot” and “what’s not” in fashion, music, celebrities, and style.
- Are committed to communicating with and getting along with parents/guardians.
- Feel a lot of pressure from the social scene at school, and think that adults don’t understand how complicated and stressful their social lives are.
- Typically have good communication skills and, with guidance, can present issues effectively in public forums.
- Like to be with and serve people directly—it’s their social nature!

## Girl Scout Senior Development

At the Senior level (9th and 10th grades), girls:

- Like to be included in setting rules.
- Are beginning to clarify their own values.
- Are beginning to promote individuality; thrive with acknowledgment of strengths, skills, and talents.
- Can sometimes be in a “know-it-all phase.”
- Are developing stronger logic and problem-solving skills.

## Girl Scout Ambassador Development

At the Ambassador level (11th and 12th grades), girls:

- Are striving for a strong sense of self as they move out into the world.
- Are working toward independence and freedom, seeking to make their own decisions.
- Crave friends to turn to and trust; eager to belong to trusted groups of friends where they feel emotionally safe and connected.
- Are exploring risk taking as a rite of passage and managing the responsibilities of new privileges (such as driving).
- Are juggling life decisions and pressures (college, job, intimate relationships).

### Advocating For Girls

The Girl Scouts Public Policy and Advocacy Office in Washington, D.C., builds relationships with members of Congress, officials at the White House, and other federal departments and agencies, continuously informing and educating them about issues important to girls and Girl Scouting. These advocacy efforts help demonstrate to lawmakers that Girl Scouts is a resource and an authority on issues affecting girls. Visit the Advocacy office at [http://www.girlscouts.org/who\\_we\\_are/advocacy](http://www.girlscouts.org/who_we_are/advocacy).

## Creating a Safe Space for Girls

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

The environment you create, therefore, is key to developing the sort of group that girls want to be part of. The following sections share some tips on creating a warm, safe environment for girls.

## Recognizing and Supporting Each Girl

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

## Promoting Fairness

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

## Building Trust

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

## Managing Conflict

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

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

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

## Inspiring Open Communication

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

## Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age

When communicating with girls, consider the following tips:

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

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

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

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

## Addressing the Needs of Older Girls

Consider the following tips when working specifically with teenage girls:

- Think of yourself as a coach or 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 the girl's safety).

### The Girl Scout Research Institute

The Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI), a world-class center for research and public information on the healthy development of girls, ensures that the complex and ever-changing needs of girls will continue to be addressed. The GSRI supplies cutting-edge information to educational, not-for-profit, and public policy organizations; to parents/guardians seeking ways to support their daughters; and to girls themselves. For more about the work of the GSRI, visit [www.girlscouts.org/research](http://www.girlscouts.org/research).

### Discussing Sensitive Topics

According to *Feeling Safe: What Girls Say* (2003), a Girl Scout Research Institute study, girls are looking for groups that allow connection and a sense of intimacy and closeness. They want volunteers who are teen savvy and can help them with issues they face, such as bullying and other conflicts (online and offline), peer pressure, dating, sexual harassment (online and offline), academic or athletic performance, eating disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, and more. When Girl Scout activities involve sensitive issues, your role is that of caring adult who can help girls acquire their own skills and knowledge in a supportive atmosphere, not someone who advocates any particular position. Check with your council about which sensitive issues may require additional council support to present and discuss, as well as whether parent/guardian permission is required.

**Listen and Ask:** As the preceding sections suggest, you can help most just by being an empathetic listener. That's right: Just by listening, you're helping! Sometimes, you may also find that by asking questions, you can help girls figure out how to get more information and guidance at school or at home. You don't have to solve their issues, but you can put them on the trail toward solving them.

**Arrange for Education:** If you observe that girls need or want more information on a topic that concerns them, check with your Girl Scout council about opportunities for arranging topical discussions with experts, on areas such as healthy eating, coping with bullies and cliques, and sex education. Every region of the country differs in terms of what families feel is okay for girls to discuss at various grade levels. So do be sure to check in with your Girl Scout council—many councils advise getting parental permission *before* any planned discussions!

Don't feel that you have to solve everything! Your role is helping girls get information from those trained people who provide it. And if you're unsure who to ask to fill this role, count on your council, which has built up relationships with community experts who can help.

**Report Concerns:** There may be times when you worry about the health and well-being of girls in your group. Alcohol, drugs, sex, bullying, abuse, depression, and eating disorders are some of the issues girls may encounter. If you believe a girl is at risk of hurting herself or others, your role is to get her the expert assistance she needs:

- Contact staff members at your Girl Scout council and find out how to refer girls and their parents/guardians to experts at school or in the community.
- Share your concern with the girl's family, if this is feasible.

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

- Marked changes in behavior or personality (for example, unusual moodiness, aggressiveness, or sensitivity)

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

## Working with Parents and Guardians

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

### Using “I” Statements

As you know, however, families today are terribly busy—parents and guardians may want to be involved but may sometimes need a reminder or specific guidelines. Perhaps the most important tip for communicating with parents/guardians is for you to use “I” statements instead of “you” statements. “I” statements tell a parent what you need from her or him, while “you” statements may make a parent/guardian feel defensive.

Here are some examples of “you” statements:

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

Now look at “I” statements:

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

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

If a Parent or Guardian...	You Can Say...
Is uninvolved and asks how she can help but seems to have no idea of how to follow through or take leadership of even the	“I do need your help. Here are some written guidelines on how to prepare for our camping trip.”

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

### Arranging Meetings with Parents/Guardians

A parent/guardian meeting is a chance for you to get to know the families of the girls in your group. Before the meeting, be sure you and/or your co-volunteers have done the following:

- For younger girls, arranged for a parent, another volunteer, or a group of older girls to do activities with the girls in your group while you talk with their parents/guardians (if girls will attend the meeting, too).
- Practiced a discussion on the following: Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law; benefits of Girl Scouting for their daughters, including how the GSLE is a world-class system for developing girl leaders; all the fun the girls are going to have; expectations for girls and their parents/guardians; and ideas of how parents and other guardians can participate in and enrich their daughters’ Girl Scout experiences.
- Determined when product sales (including Girl Scout Cookie sales) will happen in your council; parents/guardians will absolutely want to know!
- Determined what information parents should bring to the meeting.
- Created a one-page information sheet (your contact information, contact information of co-volunteers and helpers, the day and time of each meeting, location of and directions to the meeting place, what to bring with them, and information on how to get journey books and other merchandise like sashes, vests, T-shirts, and so on).
- Gathered or created supplies, including a sign-in sheet, an information sheet, permission forms for parents/guardians (also available from your council), health history forms (as required by your council), and GSUSA registration forms.
- Prepared yourself to ask parents and guardians for help, being as specific as you can about the kind of help you will need!

### Registering the Girls in Girl Scouting

Every participant (girl or adult) in Girl Scouting must register and become a member of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). GSUSA membership dues are valid for one year. Membership dues (currently \$12) are sent by the council to GSUSA; no portion of the dues stays with the council. Membership dues may not be transferred to another member and are not refundable.

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

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

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

- As the girls and adults arrive, ask them to sign in. Hand out registration forms and any other paperwork, including a one-page information sheet.
- Open the meeting by welcoming the girls and adults. Introduce yourself and other co-volunteers or helpers. Have adults and girls introduce themselves, discuss whether anyone in their families has been a Girl Scout, and talk about what Girl Scouting means to them. Welcome everyone, regardless of experience, and let them know they will be learning about Girl Scouts today. (If you’re new to Girl Scouting, don’t worry—just let everyone know you’ll be learning about Girl Scouting together!)
- Ask the girls to go with the adult or teen in charge of their activity and begin the discussion.
- Discuss the information you prepared for this meeting:
  - All the fun girls are going to have!
  - When and where the group will meet and some examples of activities the girls might choose to do
  - That a parent/guardian permission form is used for activities outside the group’s usual meeting place and the importance of completing and returning it as indicated
  - How you plan to keep in touch with parents/guardians (e-mail, text messaging, a phone tree, fliers the girls take home, posting on an invitation-only group you create on Facebook are just some ideas)
  - The Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law
  - The Girl Scout program, especially what the GSLE is and what the program does for their daughters
  - When Girl Scout Cookies (and other products) will go on sale and how participation in product sales teaches life skills and helps fund group activities
  - The cost of membership, which includes annual GSUSA dues, any group payments (ask your local council), optional uniforms, and any resources parents/guardians will need to buy (such as a journey book)
  - The availability of financial assistance and how the Girl Scout Cookie Program and other product sales generate funds for the group treasury
  - That families can also make donations to the council—and why they might want to do that!

- That you may be looking for additional volunteers, and in which areas you are looking (be as specific as possible!)
- Collect the completed registration forms.
- Remind the group of the next meeting (if you'll have one) and thank everyone for attending. Hold the next meeting when it makes sense for you and your co-volunteers—that may be in two months if face-to-face meetings are best, or not at all if you're diligent about keeping in touch with parents/guardians via e-mail, phone calls, or some other form of communication.
- After the meeting, follow up with any parents/guardians who did not attend, to connect them with the group, inform them of decisions, and discuss how they can best help the girls.

## Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

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

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

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

What a wonderful opportunity such an approach will offer to the girls you mentor!

### A Variety of Formats for Publications

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

As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, you will find yourself considering the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. As you do this, include the special needs of any members who have disabilities, or whose parents or guardians have disabilities. But please don't rely on visual cues to inform you of a disability: Approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population has a disability—that's one in five people, of every socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and religion.

As a volunteer, your interactions with girls present an opportunity to improve the way society views girls (and their parents/guardians) with disabilities. Historically, disabilities have been looked at from a deficit

viewpoint with a focus on how people with disabilities could be fixed. Today, the focus is on a person’s abilities—on what she *can* do rather than on what she cannot.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- When talking to a girl with a disability, speak directly to her, not through a parent or friend.
- It is 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 her interpreter.
- When speaking for more than a few minutes to a girl who uses a wheelchair, place yourself at eye level.
- When greeting a girl with a visual disability, always identify yourself and others. You might say, “Hi, it’s Sheryl. Tara is on my right, and Chris is on my left.”

### **Registering Girls with Cognitive Disabilities**

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

# Chapter 4: Safety-Wise

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

## Knowing Your Responsibilities

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

### Responsibilities of the Volunteer

One of your responsibilities as a volunteer is to safeguard the health of the girls in your group and instill in them a sense of safety. This responsibility may take the form of:

- Working to prevent injury or illness to girls and other volunteers
- Demonstrating a concern for the health and safety of the individuals for whom you are responsible
- Honoring pluralism and diversity so that girls feel emotionally safe—that is, accepted by and connected with you and other girls in your group

Girl Scouts requires you to:

- Observe all safety guidelines and Safety Activity Checkpoints, as well as procedures outlined by your council, including those that supplement or augment Girl Scouts standards. Also be sure to follow local, state, and federal laws and ordinances.
- Stay cognizant of the locale, weather, and other conditions before, during, and after an activity.
- Involve girls in safety planning (events should be girl-led, but girls will require guidance from you on staying safe).
- Be a positive role model for girls, adhering to the following guidelines at all times:
  - Don't use illegal drugs!
  - Don't smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol in the presence of girls.
  - Don't engage in child abuse of any kind. Abuse includes neglect, physical injury, emotional maltreatment including verbal abuse of a child, and sexual abuse. Sexual advances, improper touching, and sexual activity of any kind with girl members are strictly prohibited.
- Don't carry firearms or ammunition in the presence of girls. If you're facilitating a marksmanship activity, you must get council permission for this activity, and then transport weapons separately. The minimum age for girls using firearms in highly supervised activities is 12 years old.
- Take advantage of the learning opportunities offered by your council.

### Responsibilities of Parents and Guardians

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

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

## Responsibilities of Girls

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

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

## Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

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

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

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

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

## Transporting Girls

Transportation decisions are an important aspect to any off-site Girl Scout activity, and your greatest concern is *always* safety. If you or the girls are arranging group transportation, whether for a day trip or for a much longer travel event, consider the basics of both private and public transit (which is preferred).

### Public Transportation

Public transportation includes trains, subways, buses, ferries, and airlines. Public transportation is regulated, which makes it preferable to chartered vehicles, but this mode of transportation is not without challenges. The biggest challenge with any public transportation is staying together as a group, so be sure everyone has directions and a map, and always designate a meet-up area if anyone gets separated. Girls also need to be vigilant for criminals, both those who might do them bodily harm and those who are interested in stealing their money, jewelry, and electronic devices. As long as you prepare them for their exciting journeys on public transportation, they'll have an adventure they'll remember for years!

## Private Transportation

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

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

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

## Checklist for Drivers

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

- Ensure all drivers are adults—girls should not be transporting other girls.
- Never transport girls in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper-trailer.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first-aid kit and a flashlight.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns, and fluid levels before each trip and check them periodically on long trips.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date, such as your driver's license, vehicle registration, any state or local inspections, insurance coverage, and the like.
- Wear your seat belt at all times, and insist that all passengers do the same; keep girls under 12 in the back seats.

- Follow all the established rules of the road in your state (following the speed limit, keeping a two-car-length between you and the car ahead of you, not talking or texting on a cell phone or other personal electronic device, not using earbuds or headphones, driving with your headlights on, and so on).
- Avoid driving for extended periods at night, when tired, or taking medication that makes you drowsy.
- Plan rest stops every few hours; if driving with others, prearrange stopping places along the way. When planning longer trips, arrange for relief drivers. Check with your council for specific guidelines.

Remember that every time a group meets at a time and location different from the regular group meeting, you must use a permission form—even if the girls are responsible for getting to that location on their own. Permission forms give parents the “who, what, when, where, and why,” so that they can decide whether their daughter can participate in an event or go on a trip. A signed permission form permits you to include the girl in the activity and also provides you with up-to-date emergency contact information.

### Checklist for Girls

Girls need to adhere to the following checklist when being transported. You may decide to create a contract listing the following items, which girls sign before leaving on any trip. Girls will:

- Follow all rules and instructions for this trip.
- Assist with reading signs and maps, when asked.
- Keep seat belts fastened at all times.
- Refrain from arguing, yelling, and throwing things.
- Play games or listen to music *quietly* with other passengers, being considerate of the driver and other passengers.
- Stay with the group during stops.
- Alert the driver and an adult volunteer to a missing buddy, an obstacle, or an open door or trunk.

## Hosting a Girl-Led Event

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

- What sort of event do we have in mind?
- Who is our intended audience?
- Does the audience have to be invited, or can anyone come?
- What’s our main topic or focus?
- What’s our objective—what do we hope to accomplish at the end of the day?
- Will one or more speakers need to be invited? If so, who? How do we find speakers?
- Where will the event take place?
- Is there a charge for this venue?
- Is the venue large enough to accommodate the audience?
- Do we have to obtain permission to use this venue? If so, from whom?

- Are there adequate facilities for the audience? If not, how much will extra portable toilets cost, and how many do we need?
- Is there adequate parking or a drop-off point for girls?
- Do we need tables? Chairs? Podiums? Microphones? Speakers?
- What sort of entertainment will we provide?
- Will we provide or sell refreshments? If so, what kinds?
- How many chaperones will we need? Who will we ask?
- What emergency care do we need to plan for? Is the event large enough that local police and fire departments need to be notified?
- Do we need to purchase additional insurance for non-Girl Scouts?
- How will we advertise the event?
- What decorations will we use?
- Will we give away any keepsakes?
- Will we charge for the event?
- Who will set up the event?
- Who will clean up after the event?
- How will we determine whether the event was a success?

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

## Approaching Activities

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

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

## Health Histories (Including Examinations and Immunizations)

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

people who must know this information (such as the girl herself, her parent/guardian, and a health practitioner).

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

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

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

## Girl Scout Activity Insurance

A portion of the individual annual membership dues pays for supplementary insurance for the member only. This insurance provides up to a specified maximum for medical expenses incurred as a result of an accident while a member is participating in an approved, supervised Girl Scout activity, after the individual's primary insurance pays out. Non-registered parents, tagalongs (brothers, sisters, friends), and other persons are not covered by basic coverage. This is one reason all adults and girls should be registered members.

This insurance coverage is *not* intended to diminish the need for or replace family health insurance. And it does not duplicate medical-expense benefits collected under other programs, so after approximately \$100 in benefits have been paid under this plan, the family's medical insurance takes over. If there is no family insurance or healthcare program, a specified maximum of medical benefits is available.

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

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

## Providing Emergency Care

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

- **Know what to report.** See the "Procedures for Accidents" section later in this chapter.
- **Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.** Certain extreme-weather conditions may occur in your area. Please consult with your council for the most relevant information for you to share with girls.
- **Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons, and building-security responses.** Every girl and adult must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and

the girls, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.

- **Assemble a well-stocked first-aid kit that is always accessible.** First-aid administered in the first few minutes can mean the difference between life and death. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911.

## First-Aid/CPR

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

### First-Aider

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

There are two categories of first-aiders:

- **First-aider (level 1):** The presence of a first-aider (level 1) is required many group activities. The course required to be a first-aider (level 1) is one that offers standard first-aid and CPR, preferably with a focus on children. The Safety Activity Checkpoints state clearly when a first-aider (level 1) is needed.
- **First-aider (level 2):** The presence of a first-aider (level 2) is required at resident camp, and at any camp activity with more than 200 participants. In addition, some activities require a first-aider (level 2); the Safety Activity Checkpoints state clearly whether a first-aider (level 2) is needed. First-aiders (level 2) pass the same course as first-aiders (level 1), and also have emergency response/first response, sports safety, wilderness first-aid, and/or advanced first-aid and CPR training. Each organization has a different name for its training, so be sure to ask whether a training course fulfills the level-2 requirements.

### First-Aid Kit

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a Girl Scout first-aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the girls can assemble a kit yourselves. The Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its [Anatomy of a First Aid Kit](#). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs, including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites, and the like.

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

## Procedures for Accidents

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

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

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

# Chapter 5: Managing Group Finances

Helping girls earn and manage money is an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. Your Girl Scout group is responsible for planning and financing its own activities, with your guidance. This puts girls in charge, giving them the opportunity (with your oversight) to cooperatively set goals, manage a budget, spend responsibly, maintain records, earn social skills, and develop good marketing, entrepreneurial, math, and financial skills.

Girl Scout groups are funded by a share of money earned through council-sponsored product sale activities (such as Girl Scout Cookie sales), group money-earning activities (council-approved, of course!), and any dues your group may charge. (This is in addition to the \$12 annual membership dues that goes to the national organization.) This chapter gives you the ins and outs of establishing a group account, helping girls manage their group finances, practice successful product-sales techniques, review the safety requirements around product sales, and understand how to collaborate with sponsors and causes.

## Establishing an Account

If your group is earning and spending money, they need 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 from group dues, product sales, or group money-earning activities. Consider these tips when working with a group account:

- Keep group funds in the bank before an activity or trip, paying for as many items 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.

Follow your council's financial policies and procedures for setting up an account. Most council-sponsored product sale activities have specific banking and tracking procedures.

### Closing a Bank Account

Unused Girl Scout money left in accounts when groups disband becomes the property of the council. Prior to disbanding, the group may decide to donate any unused funds to a worthwhile organization, to another group, or for girl activities. 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 a council staff member.

## Money-Earning Basics

Girls earn money in two distinct ways:

- "Council-sponsored product sales" are council-wide sales of Girl Scout-authorized products (such as Girl Scout Cookies, calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy), in which members participate as part of the Girl Scout program.

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

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

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

In addition, consider the following reminders or cautions:

- Girl Scout Daisies (in kindergarten and first grade) may be involved in council-sponsored product sale activities, but they cannot collect money in any other way except through group dues or parental contributions.
- Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the age and abilities of the girls and consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- Money raised 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.
- Girl Scouts forbids use of games of chance, the direct solicitation of cash, and product-demonstration parties.
- Obtain written approval from your council before a group money-earning event; most councils ask that you submit a request for approval of a group money-earning event form.
- Girls can *market* cookies and other products by sending e-mails to friends, family members, and former customers, as long as they use a group e-mail address, the address of a parent/guardian or adult volunteer, a blind e-mail address (in which the recipients cannot see the sender’s e-mail address), or the online e-mail tools provided by cookie vendors. Girls 13 and older can also use a parent’s/guardian’s or adult volunteer’s social networking site (such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn) to do the same.
- Sales may not be *transacted* on the Internet (for example, through a site that has an electronic shopping cart), except for magazine sales. Girls can, however, receive order commitments for cookies sales via e-mail or the Internet. In other words, potential customers can relay (via e-mail or a Facebook post, for example) that, “Yes! I’d like four boxes of Thin Mints and three boxes of Shortbread cookies.”
- Groups 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.
- Funds acquired through group money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the group, while following council procedures.

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

## Helping Girls Reach Their Financial Goals

One of your opportunities as a volunteer is to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for the girls:

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

**Remember:** It's great for girls to have opportunities, like the Girl Scout Cookie sale, to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals as part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. 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!

## Understanding Financial and Sales Abilities by Grade Level

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

### Girl Scout Daisies

At the Daisy level (kindergarten and 1st grade),

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

- Parents/guardians may decide they will contribute to the cost of activities.
- Girls can participate in Girl Scout Cookie sales and other council-sponsored product sales.
- Daisies are always paired with an adult when selling anything. Girls do the asking and deliver the product, but adults handle the money and keep the girls secure.

### **Girl Scout Brownies**

At the Brownie level (2nd and 3rd grades),

- The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and shares some of the group-budgeting responsibilities.
- Girls discuss the cost of activities (supplies, fees, transportation, rentals, and so on).
- Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.
- Girls may decide to pay dues.

### **Girl Scout Juniors**

At the Junior level (4th and 5th grades),

- The group volunteer retains overall responsibility for long-term budgeting and record-keeping, but shares or delegates all other financial responsibilities.
- Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.
- Girls decide on group dues, if any. Dues are collected by girls and recorded by a group treasurer (selected by the girls).
- Girls budget for the short-term needs of the group, on the basis of plans and income from the group dues.
- Girls budget for more long-term activities, such as overnight trips, group camping, and special events.
- Girls budget for take-action projects, including the Girl Scout Bronze Award, if they are pursuing it.

### **Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors**

At the Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador levels (6th through 12th grades),

- Girls estimate costs based on plans.
- Girls determine the amount of group dues (if any) and the scope of money-earning projects.
- Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.
- Girls carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning projects.
- Girls budget for extended travel, take-action projects, and leadership projects.
- Girls may be involved in seeking donations for take-action projects, with council approval.
- Girls keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.
- Girls budget for take-action projects, including the Girl Scout Silver or Gold Awards, if they are pursuing them.

One critical task for each group, no matter what age, is to keep excellent records and establish a clear accounting system for all money earned and spent. As the group volunteer, you're in charge of making sure money is spent wisely and that excellent records are kept (keeping copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and tracking all income, too. For older girls, your job is to oversee their work, as *they* learn to keep impeccable records.

## Understanding the Girl Scout Cookie Program

Girl Scout cookies and other council-sponsored products are an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, built around financial literacy. In fact, the Girl Scout Cookie sale is the leading entrepreneurial program for girls: No university has produced as many female business owners as has the Girl Scout Cookie Program.

With every season of Girl Scout cookies, another generation of girls learns to set goals, make a plan, and manage money. And most of all, girls gain a tremendous amount of confidence—it's not easy to ask a stranger to buy something. You have to speak up, look them in the eye, and believe in what you're doing.

### A Sweet Tradition

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

Two commercial bakers are currently licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies—Little Brownie Bakers and ABC/Interbake Foods—and each council selects the baker of its choice. Each baker gets to name its own cookies (which is why some cookies have two names) and gets to decide which flavors it will offer in a given year, besides the three mandatory flavors (Thin Mints, Do-Si-Dos®/Peanut Butter Sandwich, and Trefoils/Shortbread).

Up to eight varieties are offered each year, including three mandatory flavors:

- **Thin Mints:** Round dark-chocolate mint-flavored cookies.
- **Do-Si-Dos®/Peanut Butter Sandwich:** Two oatmeal cookies with a layer of peanut butter sandwiched in between
- **Trefoils/Shortbread:** Shortbread cookies shaped like the Girl Scout trefoil

Other varieties have included:

- **Samoas® (Caramel deLites®):** Caramel, coconut, and chocolate doughnut-shaped cookies
- **Tagalongs® (Peanut Butter Patties®):** Round cookies with a layer of peanut butter that's covered in chocolate
- **Dulce de Leche:** Rich cookies with caramel chips and stripes
- **Thanks-A-Lot:** Shortbread cookies with a layer of fudge on the bottom
- **Lemonades:** Shortbread cookies with lemon icing
- **Lemon Chalet Cremes:** A sandwich cookie with a cinnamon-spice flavor
- **Daisy Go Rounds:** Reduced-fat cinnamony cookies
- **Thank U Berry Munch:** Crispy vanilla cookie with cranberries and white chocolate flakes

Note that all cookies are kosher and have zero transfat per serving (at the minimum serving, based on FDA guidelines); several varieties are also nut-free. Complete nutritional information and descriptions of each year's varieties are available online at [www.girlscoutcookies.org](http://www.girlscoutcookies.org) and on your baker's Web site.

In addition, council product sales may include nuts, candies, and magazines. Check with your local council for exact products and sales dates.

## Recognizing that Product Sales Are Part of the GSLE

Selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products gives girls a chance to run a business and practice leadership skills they can use in their lives. Girls will enjoy all the benefits this important component of the GSLE has to offer: They'll engage in planning and goal-setting (aiming to achieve their personal best), teamwork, marketing, money management (including the importance of saving for future needs), and the enduring skill of customer service. As girls grow, they will get to know their product (ingredients and calories, for example) and design innovative and creative marketing strategies and tools. Girls will also be encouraged to share with customers how product sales help their council and their community. Volunteers can help girls develop leadership skills while they engage in Girl Scout Cookie activities by using the Girl Scout processes of girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning. And as they participate in product sales, girls will:

- **Discover** a strong sense of self and gain practical life skills when they create personal goals, deliver presentations, and find ways to customize a marketing plan, for example. A girl can discover a lot about herself and her values as she makes decisions about money-earning, customer-management, and so on.
- **Connect** with their group members as they set group goals and develop a list of positions related to cookie activities such as accounting manager, event planner, public relations specialist, and graphic designer. Girls can learn about their communities as they meet families, mentors, and business owners who have worked in these roles. Girls can also use the Girl Scout Cookie Program as an opportunity to talk to customers about ways to improve the community or to solicit ideas for a local take-action idea bank.
- **Take action** as they learn to map neighborhood business and other resources that can help them consider community service needs. Girls use product sale money to make a difference in their communities, whether through a take-action project or a philanthropic donation. And don't forget: Money that goes to the council from product sales allows councils to take action by serving all Girl Scouts!

## Determining Who Can Participate

All girl members (including Daisies)—taking part in any number of ways (travel, camp, series, events, or troop)—are eligible to participate in council-sponsored product sales activities, under volunteer supervision. Your council provides learning opportunities (through a cascading staff and volunteer effort) on the procedures to follow during each sale. Your council also establishes guidelines and procedures for conducting the sale and determines how the proceeds and recognition system will be managed.

## Knowing Where Proceeds Go

Your council will provide a breakdown of "how the cookie crumbles" in your council. Share this information with girls and their parents/guardians! Proceeds resulting from product sales support program activities—in fact, council-sponsored product sales are a primary way in which your council funds itself. The percentage of money to be allocated to participating groups (like yours) is determined by the council and explained to girls and adults as part of the product sale activity orientation.

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

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

## Using Online Resources to Market Cookies and Other Products

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

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

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

### Daisies: Stay Especially Safe!

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

### Contacting Prospects Electronically

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

When girls are marketing cookies online, remind them to always use a group e-mail address (such as [troop457@yahoo.com](mailto:troop457@yahoo.com)), an adult's personal e-mail address, or a blind address (one that does not reveal the address to the recipient). In addition, be sure to discuss with girls the need to treat customer e-mail

addresses from current and past years—as well as phone numbers, IM addresses, Facebook accounts, and mail addresses—with respect; they are private and must be kept so.

## Utilizing Social Networks

A girl (or group of girls) over the age of 13 may work in partnership with an adult to market cookies and other products online, using the social networking site (such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, or LinkedIn) of the adult. Social networking sites are fun, fast ways to get out an urgent message, such as, “It’s Girl Scout Cookie time!” Posting or tweeting such a message will get the attention of friends and family.

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

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

## Setting Up a Group Web Site

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

Before you and the girls design a Web site, do remember that the Web is an open forum for anyone, including potential predators. Documented instances of cyberstalkers make it imperative that any information that could jeopardize the safety and security of girls and adults is not disclosed on a Web site. To ensure the girls’ safety:

- Use girls’ first names only.
- Never post girls’ addresses, phone numbers, or e-mail addresses.
- Never, ever, ever post addresses of group meeting places or dates and times of meetings, events, or trips! (An adult volunteer who wishes to communicate upcoming events with families of girls should use e-mail instead of posting details on a Web site, unless that site is password protected.)
- Always have a parent’s or guardian’s signature on a photo release form before using pictures of girls on a Web site.
- Make yours a static site that does not allow outsiders to post messages to the site, or make sure all postings (such as message boards or guest books) have adult oversight and are screened prior to posting live.
- Don’t violate copyright law by using designs, text from magazines or books, poetry, music, lyrics, videos, graphics, or trademarked symbols without specific permission from the copyright or trademark holder (and, generally, this permission is pretty tough to get!). Girl Scout trademarks (such as the trefoil shape, Girl Scout pins, and badges and patches) can be used only in accordance with guidelines for their use.

(The Girl Scout trefoil, for example, may not be animated or used as wallpaper for a Web site.) Check with your council's Web site for complete graphics guidelines and approvals.

## Safely Selling Girl Scout Cookies and Other Products

A few other considerations will help keep girls safe:

- Volunteers and Girl Scout council staff do not sell cookies and other products; girls sell them.
- Parents and guardians must grant permission for girls to participate and are informed about the girls' whereabouts when they are engaged in product sale activities. Specific permission must be obtained when a girl intends to use the Internet for product marketing. A parent, guardian, or other adult must know each girl's whereabouts when she is engaged in product sales, and if and when she is involved on the Internet.
- Girl should be identifiable as Girl Scouts by wearing a Membership Pin, official uniform, tunic, sash or vest, or other Girl Scout clothing.
- Adult volunteers must monitor, supervise, and guide the sale activities of all age levels.
- Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors who participate in door-to-door sales must be supervised by (but do not need to be directly accompanied by) an adult. Girls must *always* use the buddy system.
- Money due for sold products is collected when the products are delivered to the customer (or as directed by your council). Girls will need to know whether they can accept checks and to whom customers should write checks—find out from your council staff.
- Personal customer information should remain private. Customer credit-card information should not be collected by girls and should not be asked for on any form collected by girls.
- Girls can participate in no more than two council-sponsored product sale activities each year, and only one of these may be a cookie sale.
- A girl's physical address, social networking page address, IM name, Skype name or number, or cell number should never be revealed to anyone outside her immediate circle of family and friends. You've heard it before, but it bears repeating!
- Before beginning any cookies or other product sales with your group, refer to the cookies section of [Girl Scout Central](#) and [www.girlscoutcookies.org](http://www.girlscoutcookies.org).

## Additional Group Money-Earning

Product sales are a great way to earn the funds necessary for girls to travel. If income from the product sale isn't enough, however, girls have more options available to them. Building upon the following list of ideas, facilitate a group brainstorming session to determine how your group will earn money:

The following examples from councils and overseas committees give girls a way to build public speaking, financial literacy, marketing, and other skills. (Note that not all these ideas will be appropriate in all regions/states or councils.)

### Entertainment:

- Talent show
- Flock of flamingos traveling yard décor
- Famous mom, dad, or friend puts on a concert

- Partner with sports team, movie theater (movie premiere) or entertainment center to get percentage of profits from ticket sales

#### **Food/Meal Events:**

- Spaghetti dinner
- Pancake breakfast
- Lunch box auction (prepared lunch or meal auctioned off)
- Multicultural meals for younger girls
- Bake sales
- Meals at volunteers' meetings
- Concession stand (racing events, sports events, concerts, dances, festivals, parades, camporee)
- Themed meals, like high tea, Indian meal, Mexican dinner (depending on girls' destination)

#### **Service(s):**

- Service-a-thon (people sponsor a girl doing service; funds go to support trip)
- Car wash
- Babysitting for holiday (New Year's Eve), special or council events
- Holiday activity/supervised crafts so parents can shop
- Shoveling snow
- Raking leaves, weeding, cutting grass
- Pet walking
- Gift-wrapping
- Cold or hot beverages at an event
- Cooking class or other specialty class
- Take photos and/or create greeting cards or calendars
- Council program event or badge workshop focused on a theme (i.e. culture); girls provide the program and benefit from program fees

#### **Collections/Drives:**

- Recycling/newspapers
- Bottle and can recycling
- Cell phones for refurbishment
- Used ink cartridges turned in for money
- Christmas-tree recycling

**Specialty Products** (creating a personalized note, ribbon, or creative packaging customized by girls adds value to a product):

- Christmas trees
- Crafts (crochet, needlepoint, jewelry, ornaments)
- Yard or garage sale
- Books for resale

- Roses for Valentine’s, Mother’s, Grandparent’s Day
- Soap and/or bath salts

**Other:**

- Donated frequent-flyer miles
- Selling shares for the trip, girls return with souvenirs for their investor (\$10/photo or postcard, \$20/souvenir)
- Silent auction (donations from local businesses or Girl Scout families auctioned off)
- Workshop (girls work for the council for a period of time, in return receiving funding for their trip)

## Collaborating with Sponsors and Other Organizations

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

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

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

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

# Appendix: For Troop Volunteers

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

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

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

## Forming a Troop Committee

You need to involve other adults in the troop—please don’t try to go it alone or depend on too few adults! Many hands make light work, and the role is more fun when it’s shared. Think about the people you know whom you admire, who connect with children (especially girls), who are dependable and responsible, and who realistically have time to spend volunteering. (Remember that these adults will need to register as Girl Scout members, fill out volunteer application forms, take online learning sessions, and review written resources.) Consider business associates, neighbors, former classmates, friends, and so on. If you have trouble finding reliable, quality volunteers to assist, talk to your volunteer support team for advice and support.

Your troop committee members might help by:

- Filling in for you
- Arranging meeting places
- Locating adults with special skills to facilitate a specialized troop meeting
- Assisting with trips and chaperoning
- Managing troop records

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

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

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

Scout Daisy, Brownie, and Junior leadership journeys include a sample welcome letter and a friends/family checklist to assist you in expanding your troop's adult network.

## Holding Troop Meetings

To plan and hold successful troop meetings, follow the steps in each of the following sections. You'll feel confident and comfortable in no time!

### Reviewing the Six Elements of a Troop Meeting

Troop meetings usually include six components, and journey book sample sessions are also arranged in a similar way, making the process easy for you!

- **Start-up:** Start-up activities are planned so that when girls arrive at the meeting they have something to do until the meeting starts. For younger girls, it could be coloring pages; teen girls might jot down a journal entry or just enjoy a little time to talk.
- **Opening:** The opening focuses the meeting and allows girls to start the meeting. Each troop decides how to open their own meeting—most begin with the Girl Scout Promise and Law, and then add a simple flag ceremony, song, game, story, or other ceremony designed by the girls. Girl Scout Brownies, for example, might create a new tradition by skipping in a circle while singing a song. Ceremonies, even when brief or humorous, make Girl Scout time special.
- **Business:** Troop business may include taking attendance, collecting dues, making announcements, and planning an upcoming event or trip. This is a good time for girls to lead, especially as they grow up! (Note that some troops move the business portion of the meeting to an earlier slot.)
- **Activities:** Activities will depend on what the girls want to do in their troop and how they want to spend their collective time. Outdoor time is important, so encourage the girls to an activity at a park or forest. If girls are interested in animals, encourage the girls to plan a visit to a zoo or animal shelter. As you engage in one of the two leadership journeys, review the "Sample Sessions at a Glance" in the adult guide for journey activity ideas.
- **Clean-up:** Clean-up is just how it sounds, and it's a great habit for girls to get their meeting space back to the way it was when they arrived—maybe even cleaner than it was! Girls can also take leadership of the cleaning themselves, deciding who does what. They might even enjoy the tradition of a kaper chart (a chore chart that lists all the chores and assigns girls' names to each), so that everyone takes turns at each responsibility.
- **Closing:** The closing lets the girls know that the troop meeting is ending. Many girls close with the friendship circle, in which each girl stands in a circle, puts her right arm over her left, and holds the hand of the girl standing next to her. The friendship squeeze is started by one girl, and then passed around the circle until it comes back to the girl who started it. When the squeeze is finished, girls twist clockwise out of the circle lifting their arms and turning around and out of the circle.

#### Treat Time!

Treats are an option some troops decide to include in their meetings and range from a bottle of soap bubbles, a jump rope, or a food snack. If girls choose to include snacks, guide them to consider the health of a potential snack, as well as possible food allergies. Enlist the help of parents or guardians by asking them to sign up and bring a treat.

You help each troop member do her part to ensure the meeting and activities are enriching and fun. Based on their grade levels and abilities, girls may decide and plan opening and closing activities, bring and prepare treats, teach songs or games, and clean up. As girls grow, they can show and teach younger members about Girl Scouting. They can also assist you in preparing materials for activities. For activities such as trips, campouts, parent meetings, and multi-troop events, girls may be responsible for shopping, packing equipment, handing out programs, cleaning up, gathering wood, and so on. As long as you pay attention to grade level and maturity, the list of girl involvement is endless!

You also have access to samples of the first few troop meetings for [Daisies](#), [Brownies](#), and [Juniors](#).

## Letting Girls Lead

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

The following are some traditions troops have used for girl-led governance, but these are just examples—girl-led and cooperative learning can happen in many ways! Journeys offer other examples of team decision-making, too.

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

## Looking at a Sample Troop Year

Here is just one example of how you could set up your troop year. As long as you're basing your activities on the GSLE (using the three keys—discover, connect, and take action—and realizing the outcomes/benefits

that Girl Scouts promises) and using the three processes (girl-led, learn by doing, and cooperative learning), there is no wrong way!

- Hold a parent/guardian meeting.
- Open a checking account, if needed.
- Register all the girls in the troop.
- Meet together for the first time, allowing the girls to decide how they can learn each others' names and find out more about each other.
- Kick off the journey with a trip or special event that fits the theme. Have the girls brainstorm and plan this trip or event.
- Have the girls work through the journey, which will involve eight to ten gatherings (but can be more or less, depending on whether you combine or stretch out the sample sessions, based on your needs).
- Complete the take-action project.
- Encourage girls to plan a culminating ceremony for the journey, including awards presentations.
- Choose badge-exploration activities that girls will enjoy and that will give them a well-rounded year.
- Have the girls plan, budget for, and work on their Girl Scout Cookie sale.
- Help girls plan a field trip or other travel opportunity.
- Pre-register girls for next year.
- Camp out!
- Participate in a council-wide event with girls from around your region.
- Have the girls plan and hold a bridging ceremony for girls continuing on to the next Girl Scout grade level.

## Reengaging Girls

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

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

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

# Appendix: For Travel Volunteers

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

## Juliette Low World Friendship Fund

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

## Traveling with Girls

Girls love trips. And Girl Scouts is a great place for them to learn how to plan and take trips, because travel is built on a progression of activities—that is, one activity leads to the next. Girl Scout Daisies, for example, can begin with a discovery walk. As girls grow in their travel skills and experience and can better manage the planning process, they progress to longer trips. Here are some examples of the progression of events and trips:

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

Taking trips is an ideal way to offer girls leadership opportunities. The three processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) work beautifully as girls lead their own trip-planning, cooperatively plan

every aspect of the trip, and learn through their travels what works and what doesn't. In the same way, the three leadership keys (discover, connect, and take action) stretch girls as they spend weeks, months, or even years group-planning a trip, which includes an extensive take-action component.

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

### **From the Birth of Girl Scouting to the World Centers**

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

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

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

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

## **Seeking Council Permission**

Before most trips, you and the girls will need to obtain council permission, although your council may not require this information for trips shorter than a day or two. Check with your council for specifics, and also see whether specific forms must be filled out before traveling.

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

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

## **Tips for Girls Traveling Alone**

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

## Involving Chaperones

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

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

## Letting Girls Lead

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

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

- What's the availability of drinking water, restrooms, and eating places?
- Where is emergency help available?
- What safety factors must we consider?
- What will we do as we travel?
- What will we do when we get there?
- How will we share the Take Action story?

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

### **Travel Progression Checklist for You**

If your group is thinking about travel, consider first whether the girls are mature enough to handle the trip. In determining a group's readiness for travel, assess the groups:

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

### **Staying Safe During the Trip**

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

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

### **Travel Security and Safety Tips**

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

- Always lock the door behind you, using the deadbolt and the chain or anchor.
- Do not open the door for strangers; if hotel staff is at the door, call the front desk to confirm.
- Don't shout out or display your room number when in the presence of strangers.
- Never leave jewelry, cameras, electronics, cash, or credit cards in your room.
- Never leave luggage unattended in the hotel lobby (or, for that matter, in an airport or train station).
- When arriving at the hotel, locate emergency exits.
- Keep a small flashlight on your bedside table, along with a small bag with your room key, wallet, passport, and cell phone. Take the flashlight and bag with you if you have to leave the room in an emergency.
- If a fire alarm goes off, get out as quickly as possible without stopping to pack your suitcase.
- Before leaving your room, feel the door: If it is warm, do not open it. Stay in your room and stuff towels around the door. Call the hotel operator immediately. If the door is cool, proceed slowly out the door, looking for flames or smoke. Repeat these instructions for any door you encounter.
- Also contact the front desk to clear out any minibars or refrigerators in girls' rooms, to ensure that inappropriate movies are not accessible through TVs, and to disallow any long-distance calls from being placed from girls' rooms. Alert the hotel management that underage girls are staying in the hotel, and ask them to contact you if any girls are out of their rooms after bedtime.

## Reengaging Girls

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

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

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

# Forms