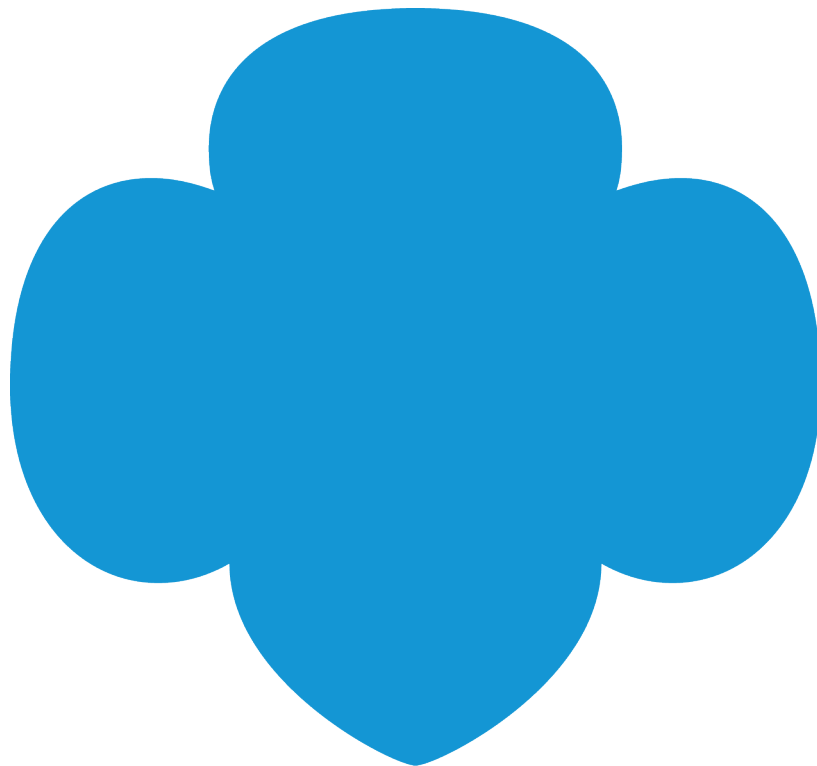




# Volunteer Essentials

## 2023-2024 Edition



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## Welcome! Adventures Ahead!

You're her hero—and ours too! Thanks to you, girls will learn to listen to their hearts, think on their feet, and raise their voices for what they believe in. From all of us at Girl Scouts, thank you for sharing your time and talents as a Girl Scout volunteer!

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you are a community-builder, mentor, champion of fun, and a role model for what it means to lead with your heart. And because of you, Girl Scouts of all ages will have the opportunity to discover that a little imagination can go a long way as they chase their dreams, explore the world around them, take action to improve their communities, and make the world a better place.

Whether you're supporting them through their Girl Scout experience, guiding them as they choose the way they will run their Girl Scout Cookie business, or encouraging them as they raise their voices on issues, they care about most, you'll be their cheerleader, guide, and mentor as they develop essential life skills and gain the confidence they will rely on throughout their lives. The best part of this experience is while you're teaching them important life lessons and setting them up for happy, successful lives, you'll grow too! Because when you embrace leadership in all forms and show girls what it means to be resilient and strong, they learn, grow, and thrive. Before you know it, you'll be trying to keep up with your unstoppable troop. Imagine the excitement, the impact, and the memories that will be made—those are the moments you'll enjoy as a Girl Scout volunteer.

Thank you and welcome, we're glad you're here!

### What's Inside?

This guide is designed to support busy, on-the-go troop volunteers. Inside you will find details and information to help you get started on your newest adventure—being an awesome leader for girls. We recommend that you begin by browsing the sections below and come back throughout the year to find answers to your questions as they arise. Ready to get started? Let's go!

- [All About Girl Scouts](#)
- [Troop Management](#)
- [Troop Finances](#)
- [Engaging Girls](#)
- [Creating a Safe Space for Girls](#)
- [Engaging Families](#)
- [Girl Scout Product Programs](#)
- [Additional Resources and Support](#)

New troop leader? We've got you covered. Check out the [New Leader Guide](#), a resource designed especially for you. Plus, council staff and volunteer coaches are ready to help throughout your first year and beyond! **Stay connected! Make sure to visit us online and follow us on social media for the latest and greatest information on Council news and events.**

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## All About Girl Scouts

At Girl Scouts, girls' dreams are our dreams and Girl Scouts is where girls see the limitless possibilities ahead, because they are encouraged to aim for the stars and reach them! Whether she's making a new friend on the playground, raising her hand in class, starting her own nonprofit, or advocating for climate change or social justice, a Girl Scout builds a better world—just as Girl Scouts have been doing for over a century. With programs in every zip code, coast-to-coast and around the globe, every girl can find her place in Girl Scouts and start creating the world she wants to see.

### Girl Scout Volunteers

Girl Scout volunteers are a dynamic and diverse group. Whether you're a recent college graduate, parent, retiree, or really, anyone with a sense of curiosity and adventure (of any gender, who is 18 years or older and has passed their council's screening process), your unique skills and experiences have the power to change girls' lives. With you as their mentor, girls will grow and thrive.

Girl Scout members and volunteers are united by the values in the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#) and their shared commitment to embrace leadership in all forms. Each member agrees to follow Girl Scouts safety guidelines and pay annual membership dues of \$25. Volunteers and adults also have the option to purchase a [Lifetime membership](#).

Girl Scout volunteers agree to complete the required training for their assigned role and to stay informed of changes in policies and guidelines.

### Girl Scout Grade Levels

Girls can join the fun at any point from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Girl Scouts six grade levels are:

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

### The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience provides the foundation for all we do. It is the core of our program and encompasses everything from our Promise and Law to our badges, activities, and Journeys. And at the center of it all are the girls. At Girl Scouts, everything centers around the girl, [it's what makes Girl Scouts truly unique](#). Our program is designed by, with, and for girls. With a focus on girl-led programming and activities, girls have the opportunity to take on leadership roles and learn-by-doing in a safe, fun, and cooperative environment.

Although girls may start building their leadership skills in school and on sports teams, [research shows](#) that the courage, confidence, and character girls develop as Girl Scouts stay with them

throughout their lives. Our program and outcomes are based in research and our studies show that Girl Scouting has a measurable positive impact on girls. In fact, we can proudly say Girl Scouts are almost 10% more likely, than non-Girl Scouts, to have positive expectations about their future based on our studies. We encourage you to learn more about our program and outcomes as you [check out our studies and in-depth research](#) for insights and information.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience has been purposefully designed to include a variety of fun and challenging activities to help girls learn, grow, and thrive. And at the base of it all are three keys and three processes.

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

- **Discover.** When Girl Scouts take part in fun and exciting badge activities, earn a Girl Scout Journey award, go camping, or attend an amazing Girl Scout program or event, you are helping them *discover* who they are, what they care about, and where their talents lie.
- **Connect.** When Girl Scouts collaborate with others—including the members and leaders of their troop, Girl Scouts from their local community, or community partners and experts—they *connect* and expand their horizons. This helps them care about, support, inspire, and team up with others both locally and globally.
- **Take Action.** When girls deepen their relationship with the world around them, they're eager to *take action* to improve the local community and the greater global community and make the world a better place.

So how do we *do* it? The Girl Scout Leadership Experience draws on three unique processes—**Girl-led**, **Learning by Doing**, and **Cooperative Learning**—that encourage girls to try new things, write their own stories, and develop the skills and confidence to say, “I know I can do this!”

- **Girl-led.** Girl Scouts take the lead, no matter their age. From selecting the badges they'll pursue to how they'll organize an activity; Girl Scouts have the chance to follow their dreams and grow their skills—and gain the confidence that comes with that.
- **Learning- by- Doing.** Hands-on activities are fun for Girl Scouts of any age, but they also help them feel empowered to shape their own experience. Girl Scouts unlock their “I got this” attitude as they discover they can always dust themselves off and try again when things don't go according to plan.
- **Cooperative Learning.** There's power in having a tight-knit group of friends who will learn with you, grow with you, and always cheer you on. Girl Scouts see firsthand that teamwork, respect, and collaboration can fuel them through any challenge that comes their way.

As a volunteer, you'll draw on these **three processes** as you lead girls of any age. And naturally, girl-led at the Daisy level will look very different from girl-led at the Ambassador level. What is most important is that your Girl Scouts make decisions about the activities they will do *together* and make choices as they're doing the activities *together*. As girls learn from their successful, and not so successful tries, they gain confidence. All girls should have the opportunity to lead within their peer group. By the time girls are Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, they will be using the

leadership skills they've developed to take on more ownership of their activities, mentor younger Girl Scouts, and take action to make the world a better place.

One last tip about following these processes. Girl Scouting **isn't** a to-do list, so please don't feel that checking activities off a list is more important than tuning in to what interests girls and sparks their imaginations. Projects don't have to come out perfectly—in fact, it's a valuable learning experience when they don't—Girl Scouts don't have to fill their vests and sashes with badges. What matters most is the fun and learning that takes place as they make experiences their own, so don't be afraid to [step back and let your girls take the lead](#).

## **Reflection**

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

Reflection is the necessary debrief that reinforces what girls learned. As your Girl Scouts explore the what's and why's, they'll make meaningful connections between the activity at hand and future challenges that come their way. In other words, reflection gives girls the confidence boost they need to pick themselves up, try again, and succeed.

Keep in mind that reflection does not need to be a formal process, but you can kick-start the conversation with three simple questions: What? So what? and Now what?

### **What? Go over the “what” of the activity. For example, ask:**

- What did we do today?
- What part was your favorite?
- If we did it again, what would you want to do differently and what would you want to repeat?

### **So what? Next, move to the “so what.” You might ask:**

- So, what did you learn by doing this activity?
- So, what did you learn about yourself?
- So, what did you learn about your community (or environment, school, or others) that you didn't know before?

### **Last, review the now what. Say something like:**

- Now that we've done this, what would you like to do next?
- Now that you know this about yourselves, what would you like to try next?
- Now that we've completed this Take Action™ project, what do you think we should do next to make sure it continues?

This form of reflection, or whatever style of reflection you choose to use with your girls, is a powerful component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience that helps girls to carry these lessons with them for the rest of their lives.

## Progression

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

Girl Scout programming is designed to be progressive and it's what makes Girl Scouting fun and effective! By building on the knowledge and skills they gain year after year, your girls' confidence will grow exponentially, and they'll be eager to try new things and take on new challenges. As a volunteer, you will cultivate a [supportive, nonjudgmental space](#) where your Girl Scouts can test their skills and be unafraid to fail.

Keep in mind that progression drives success for your troop. In the following links, we've outlined some suggestions that will help you determine when your girls are ready for their next [outdoor challenge](#), their [next troop trip](#), or their next cookie-selling challenge.

## Inclusion

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

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

When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging module of Volunteer Basics is available for your use and review in the gsLearn platform.

## The Girl Scout Program: National Program Pillars & More

[Girl Scouts four Program Pillars](#)—STEM, Life Skills, Outdoors, and Entrepreneurship—form the foundation of the Girl Scout program and work together to build girls' curiosity, kindness, and can-do spirit. In fact, every aspect of our program, and every Girl Scout adventure, can be traced back to one of our four program pillars.

[STEM](#) (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Girls are naturally curious and have a strong desire to help others. Whether they're building a robot, developing a video game, or studying the stars, Girl Scouts become better problem-solvers and critical thinkers through STEM and gain the confidence to turn their ideas into breakthrough inventions to help others.

[Life Skills](#). Girl Scouts life skills programming includes a mix of practical skills, tools, and activities that foster positive values in girls like financial literacy, civic engagement, and community service. Skills that help them discover that they have what it takes to raise their voices as community advocates, make smart decisions about their finances, and form strong,



healthy relationships—skills that inspire them to accept challenges and overcome obstacles, now and always.

**Outdoors.** Girl Scouts has been building girls’ outdoor confidence and skills for over one hundred years through a variety of outdoor adventures like camping and nature focused badges that inspire them to spend time outdoors and develop a lifelong appreciation of nature. An appreciation that sparks girls’ desire to take action as environmental stewards in their community and across the globe.

**Entrepreneurship.** Starting with Girl Scouts iconic Girl Scout Cookie Program and growing to include the fall product program and a series of entrepreneurship badges, this pillar instills and nurtures an entrepreneurial mindset and fuels girls’ curiosity and confidence as they learn the essentials of running their own businesses and how to think like entrepreneurs.

### **Important Differences: Journeys and Badges**

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

- **Journeys** are multi-session leadership experiences through which girls explore topics such as bullying, media literacy, or environmental stewardship. They’ll do hands-on activities, connect with experts, and take the reins on age-appropriate Take Action projects. Because of their leadership focus, Journeys are also a prerequisite for Girl Scouts highest awards, the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards.
- **Badges** are about skill building. When a Girl Scout earns a badge, it shows that she’s learned a new skill, such as how to make a healthy snack, build and test a toy race car, or take great digital photos. Badges may even spark an interest at school or plant the seed for a future career.

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

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

### **Important Differences: Community Service and Take Action Projects**

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

- When a Girl Scout performs **community service**, she is responding to an immediate need in a one-off, “doing for” capacity. In other words, she is making an impact right now.

- Through **Take Action/service learning**, girls explore the root causes of a community need and address it in a lasting way; they truly make the world—or their part of it—a better place.

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

## **Traditions, Ceremonies, and Special Girl Scout Days**

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

A few of those extra special days, when you will want to turn up the celebrations, include:

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

So, whether they're working on a new badge, making new friends, or closing meetings with a friendship circle, your troop won't want to miss out on Girl Scouts' treasured [traditions, ceremonies, and special Girl Scout days](#).

## **Highest Awards**

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

As your Girl Scouts discover the power of their voices, they'll want to take on an issue that is close to their hearts and meaningful to them. Encourage them to turn their ideas into reality by pursuing Girl Scouts' highest awards.

- [The Girl Scout Bronze Award](#) can be earned by Juniors. The prerequisite is completion of one Junior Journey and the associated Take Action project. The Bronze Award is earned by the group.
- [The Girl Scout Silver Award](#) can be earned by Cadettes. The prerequisite is completion of one Cadette Journey and the associated Take Action project. The Silver Award can be earned by an individual girl or by a small group.
- [The Girl Scout Gold Award](#) can be earned by Seniors and Ambassadors who have completed either two Girl Scout Senior/Ambassador level Journeys and the associated Take Action project or earned the Silver Award and completed one Senior/Ambassador level Journey.

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

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

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

## **Girl Scout Travel and Destinations**

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

Traveling as a Girl Scout is a more engaging experience than traveling with family, school, or other groups because [girls take the lead](#). They'll make important decisions about where to go, what to do, and take increasing responsibility for the planning of their trips. During this process, they will also build their organizational and management skills—skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Girl Scout travel is built on a [progression of activities](#), so girls are set up for success. Daisies and Brownies start with field trips and progress to day trips, overnights, and weekend trips. Juniors can take their adventures farther with longer regional trips. And Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors can travel the United States and then the world. There are even opportunities for older girls to travel independently by joining trips their council organizes or participating in GSUSA's travel program, [Destinations](#).

## **Planning Troop Adventures**

Contact your council as soon as you start thinking about planning a trip to find out more about their approval process for overnight and extended travel. They will also likely have training programs that will raise your confidence as a chaperone.

For more travel information, please email [travel@sjgs.org](mailto:travel@sjgs.org).

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

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

## **Safety First**

If you're planning any kind of trip—from a short field trip to an overseas expedition—the “Trip and Travel” section of *Safety Activity Checkpoints* is your go-to resource for safety. Our council's additional resources and approval process can be found here [GSSJC Travel-Quick Reference Guide](#). Be sure to follow all safety guidelines, like the buddy system and first-aid requirements, in addition to the specific guidelines for travel. You will [learn more about how to use and follow Girl Scouts Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) in the next section.

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

## **Travel and Girl Scout Program Connections**

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

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

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

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

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

## Troop Management

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

### Your Role as a Girl Scout Volunteer

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

#### Leadership is teaching your Girl Scouts:

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

#### As a leader, see yourself as a coach who:

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

#### It is important to remember that:

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

### Your Responsibilities as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Your responsibilities as a Girl Scout volunteer include:

- Accepting the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#).
- Accepting the Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, [and Belonging statement](#).
- Completing required training for your volunteer role.
- Understanding and coaching Girl Scouts Three Keys to Leadership—discover, connect, and take action—that are the basis of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- Sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills with a positive and flexible approach.
- Working in a partnership with your Girl Scouts so that their activities are girl-led and that they learn by doing, individually and as a group. You’ll also partner with other volunteers and council staff for support and guidance.

- Organizing fun, interactive, girl-led activities that address relevant issues and match girls' interests and needs.
- Providing guidance and information regarding Girl Scout group meetings with troop families on a regular and ongoing basis through a variety of tools, including email, phone calls, newsletters, blogs, other forms of social media, and any other method you choose.
- Processing and completing registration forms and other paperwork, such as permission slips.
- Communicating effectively and delivering clear, organized, and vibrant presentations or information to an individual or the group.
- Overseeing with honesty, integrity, and careful record-keeping the funds that girls raise.
- Maintaining a close connection to your volunteer support team as well as your council.
- Facilitating a safe experience for every Girl Scout.

## Planning for Your First Troop Meeting

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

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

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



## Choosing a Meeting Place

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

- **Cost.** The space should be free to use.
- **Size.** Make sure the space is large enough for the whole group and all planned activities.
- **Availability.** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.
- **Resources.** Ask if tables and chairs come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby of some sort where you could store supplies or a safe outdoor space for activities.
- **Safety.** Potential spaces must be safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and have at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure first-aid equipment is on hand.
- **Facilities.** It goes without saying, but make sure that toilets are sanitary and accessible.
- **Communication-Friendly.** Check for cell reception in the potential space and whether Wi-Fi is available.
- **Allergen-Free.** Ensure that pet dander and other common allergens won't bother susceptible girls during meetings.
- **Accessibility.** Your space should accommodate girls with disabilities as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.

Need a few talking points to get the conversation started? Try...

"I'm a Girl Scout volunteer with a group of [number of girls] girls. We're doing lots of great things for girls and for the community, like [something your group is doing] and [something else your troop is doing]. We're all about leadership—the kind that girls use in their daily lives and the kind that makes our community better. We'd love to hold our meetings here because [reason why you'd like to meet there]."

Stuck and need additional support? Contact your council or your service unit support team for help with a troop meeting place.

## Virtual Meetings

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

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

- Partner with troop families to make sure the girls are safe online.
- Select a meeting platform that allows families who may not have internet access to call in.

- [Think about logistics.](#) Work with the girls to set up ground rules; consider how you will incorporate in-person meeting traditions in your virtual space and how you'll keep meetings on track.
- Talk with families on [how to keep activities girl-led](#) if your girls will be completing them from home.

And don't worry if your girls want to use a web or social platform you're not as familiar with, because you'll learn alongside them! For more tips on successful virtual meetings, check out [Tips, Tools, and Ideas for Planning a Great Virtual Meeting](#).

## **Girl Scout Troop Size**

The troop size “sweet spot” is large enough to provide an interactive and cooperative learning environment and small enough to encourage individual development. Though the ideal troop size is 12 girls, we recommend that groups be no fewer and no larger than:

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

A Girl Scout troop/group must have a minimum of five girls and two approved adult volunteers. Be sure to double-check the [volunteer-to-girl ratio table](#) below to make sure you have the right number of adults present for group meetings, events, travel, and camping. Adults and girls registering in groups of fewer than five girls and two approved, unrelated adult volunteers, at least one of whom is female, will be registered as individual Girl Scouts to accurately reflect their status and program experience. Individual girls are always welcome to participate in Girl Scout activities and events.

## **Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need**

From troop meetings to camping weekends and cookie booths, adult volunteers must always be present to ensure Girl Scouts have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level. If you are not sure about the number of adults you will need for your activity, the chart below breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of Girl Scouts; your council may also establish maximums due to size or cost restrictions, so be sure to check with them as you plan your activity.



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

## Safety in Girl Scouting

The emotional and physical safety and well-being of Girl Scouts is our top priority. *Safety Activity Checkpoints* outlines the Safety Standards and Guidelines used in Girl Scouting, which apply to all Girl Scout activities. All volunteers should review the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* manual when planning activities with girls in order to manage safety and risk in Girl Scout-sanctioned activities.

For current COVID-19 guidelines, check your local council's version of *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

### [GSSJC Safety Activity Checkpoints](#)

In *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, you will find:

- Girl Scouts Safety Standards and Guidelines, which apply to all Girl Scout activities, including requirements for adult supervision, permission slips, preparation, field trips and overnight trips, and other vital information.
- Activities that are not permitted by Girl Scouts of the USA and actions that girls and volunteers should not take.

- Policies surrounding chartered aircraft trips and aviation.
- First aid and overall health information.
- Standards for well-being and inclusivity along with ways to include Girl Scouts with disabilities and ways to ensure girls' emotional safety.
- Individual safety activity checkpoints for specific activities—such as camping, internet use, and water sports that provide activity-specific safety information.

The document is laid out in three primary sections, Safety Standards and Guidelines, Activities at a Glance, and individual safety activity checkpoint pages.

- **Girl Scouts' Activities at a Glance** table provides a quick look at the safety standards for that activity with a focus on two critical points to keep in mind when considering and planning activities for your troop:
  - age-appropriate activities and participation by grade level, and
  - whether prior approval from your council is required before girls participate in a specific activity.
- **Individual Safety Activity Checkpoint** pages provide activity-specific safety measures and guidance on the individual activities that troops, and girls may choose to participate in.

## Registering Girls and Adults 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 cannot be transferred to another member and are not refundable.

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

[Lifetime membership](#) is available to anyone who accepts the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, pays the one-time lifetime membership fee, and is at least 18 years old (or a high school graduate or equivalent). Volunteers with ten or more years of service can become lifetime members at the discounted young alum rate.

## Adding New Girls to Your Troop

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

Community Engagement Managers (CEMs) are the council representatives who can give you information about marketing and recruitment materials for adding new girls to your troop.

If you wish to list your troop in the troop opportunity catalog so new girls and adults to join, please send an email to our Placement team at [placement@sjgs.org](mailto:placement@sjgs.org) and include your troop number and how many girl and adult spots you would like to make available in the troop opportunity catalog. Our Placement team can help with displaying and un-displaying your troop in the troop opportunity catalog and can also let you know how many girl and adult spots you have available for new members at any given time.

## **Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion**

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

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

- Welcome 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.

If you have questions about accommodating an individual girl, please reach out to your council.

You may contact us at [customerservice@sjgs.org](mailto:customerservice@sjgs.org) or 713-292-0300.

As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, consider the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. Include the special needs of any members who have disabilities or whose parents or caregivers have disabilities. But please, do not rely on visual cues to inform you of a disability; approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population has a disability—that's one in five people of every socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and religion.

If you want to find out what a girl with a disability needs to make her Girl Scout experience successful, simply ask her or her parent or caregiver. If you are open and honest, they'll likely respond in kind, [creating an atmosphere that enriches everyone](#).

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Registering Girls with Cognitive Disabilities

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

## Getting Support for Your Troop

Just as your Girl Scouts rally around each other for support, you will also have a dedicated Girl Scout support team, consisting of council staff and passionate volunteers like you. Your support team, which may be called a service unit at your council, is ready to offer local learning

opportunities and advice as well as [answer your questions](#) about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, product sales, and much more.

Before you hold your first troop meeting with girls, consider the support and people resources you'll need to cultivate an energizing troop experience. Parents, friends, family, and other members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide time, experience, and ideas to a troop, so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your volunteer troop team. This team is made up of troop leaders (like you) and troop committee volunteers.

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

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

## Troop Management Tools and Resources

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

### The Volunteer Toolkit



#### Girl Scouts Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

The Volunteer Toolkit is a customizable planning tool where you can find suggested meeting plans for most badges, access activity guides and badge requirements, track your Girl Scouts' achievements, and so much more. With inspiring ideas so you can engage your troop in a mix of activities all year long, it's the digital planning assistant that will help you power a fun-filled—and organized—Girl Scout year. Be sure to look for helpful icons to identify activity focus areas like the evergreen icon which tells you the activity can be taken outside or the globe icon which lets you know you can bring a global perspective to the activity. You'll find the Volunteer Toolkit in the left menu bar under My GS / My Account. VTK is accessible on any desktop, tablet, or mobile device.

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

#### Troop Leaders can:

- Plan the troop's calendar year and meeting schedule.
- Email parents/caregivers with one click.
- View the troop roster, renew girls' memberships, and update girls' contact information.

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

### **Parents and Caregivers can:**

- View the troop’s meeting schedule and individual meeting plans to stay up to date on the badges and Journeys the troop is working on.
- Renew their memberships and update their contact information.
- View their Girl Scout’s attendance and achievements.
- See upcoming events the troop is planning or attending.
- Easily locate both national and local council resources.
- View the troop’s finance report (depending on the council’s process).

Get started by visiting: [www.gssjc.org](http://www.gssjc.org)

### **Additional Tools and Resources**

**The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting.** What does it mean to be a Girl Scout? You’ll find it all in *The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting*. These grade level-specific binders will break it down for your girls. It’s part handbook, part badge book, and 100 percent fun!

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

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

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

**Customer Care Contacts.** Questions? Need help resolving an issue? We’ve got you! Reach out anytime by either clicking on the “Contact Us” form at [www.gssjc.org](http://www.gssjc.org) or email [customerservice@sjgs.org](mailto:customerservice@sjgs.org). During business hours 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. you can reach a customer service specialist by calling 713-292-0300.



**Newsletters/Communication.** Keep your eye out for ongoing council communications via email, social media and print publications!

GSSJC sends out monthly newsletters via email to keep our volunteers and members up to date on the latest council information. Check your inbox on the 10<sup>th</sup> of every month for the latest Golden Scoop, a council communication sent to all members and volunteers. Troop Leaders will receive an additional newsletter on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month called the Troop Scoop.

In addition to our digital content, our printed magazine, The Golden Link, will arrive at your doorstep each quarter with council news, upcoming event information and more!

Have a big project your troop is working on that you'd like to see featured? Send any troop news to [communications@sjgs.org](mailto:communications@sjgs.org) to be featured in our communications!

### **Take Advantage of Learning Opportunities**

We know that when you have the knowledge and skills you need to manage your girls, both you and your troop will thrive. Contact your council to ask about ongoing learning opportunities that will help you grow your skills and confidence.

#### **Required volunteer training.**

Volunteers working with girls are required to complete two training courses available online in gsLearn through your MYGS account. Volunteer roles requiring these trainings is not limited to troop leaders. This includes first aiders, troop fall product managers, troop cookie managers, outdoor certified volunteers, and friends and family.

591 Volunteer Basics is a four -video series, that includes Safety Basics, Troop Basics, Finance Basics Diversity Equity Inclusion, and Belonging modules, and PDF guides for printing and downloading. 592 Volunteer Basics is available in your MYGS account through gsLearn. Complete the entire training including all the questions and quizzes. You may want to screenshot your completion certificate at the conclusion of the online course.

591 Youth Protection Training Level 1 is available in your MYGS account through gsLearn too. You may want to screenshot your completion certificate at the conclusion of the online course.

Completing both 591 Volunteer Basics and 591 Youth Protection Training Level 1 is required prior to receiving a troop leader appointment letter. A troop leader appointment letter is needed to open a troop bank account.

591 Camping and Overnight Basics available in gsLearn is required prior to taking members adventuring beyond their regular meeting place such as taking a field trip or overnight experience. 591 Youth Protection Training Level 2 is also required.

The four courses described above are free and available 24/7 through your MYGS account in gsLearn.

Additional volunteer training is available for registration in [Events at our website](#) or your MYGS account. Topics include Volunteer Camper Certification, Red Cross First Aid CPR/AED skills, program level training, administrative volunteer training, Girl Scout songs and games, and many other subjects. Optional online training on a variety of topics is available in gsLearn. Explore

more information on badges, girl age level characteristics and development, mental health and well-being, and creating a welcoming Girl Scout environment for all of our families.

### **Know How Much You are Appreciated**

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

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

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

## **Volunteer Appreciation**



Without our passionate and dedicated volunteers, there would be no Girl Scouting. That's why we celebrate National Volunteer Month every April and turn up the party as we ring in National Girl Scout Leader's Day on April 22.

Girl Scouts also celebrates National Volunteer Week, which falls during the third day of April. What can we say, we love our volunteers!

Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council supports an annual recognition event and a nomination process both Council and GSUSA awards. More detailed information is available in the [Volunteer Hub](#), [Volunteer Award Nomination form](#).



## **Girl Scout Participation in Activities with Other Scouting Organizations**

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

### **Marketplace Confusion**

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

### **Protecting Use of Girl Scout Materials**

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

## Troop Finances

With your guidance, your Girl Scouts will learn money skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Your Girl Scout troop will plan and finance its own activities, and you'll coach your girls as they earn and manage troop funds. Troop activities are powered by proceeds earned through council-sponsored product program activities (such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program), group money-earning activities (council approved, of course), and any dues your troop may charge.

Remember that all funds collected, raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting belong to the troop and must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. Funds are administered through the troop and do not belong to individuals.

Who pays for Girl Scouting?

### **The GIRL pays for:**

- her yearly national membership dues to GSUSA
- her weekly or monthly troop/group dues or fees
- her uniform, and possibly pins and badges
- her transportation
- her fees for troop, day, and resident camp

### **The PARENT pays for:**

- Annual Giving contribution
- Cookie Program and Fall Product Program support

### **The TROOP/GROUP pays for:**

- materials needed for a Girl Scout program
- supplies and equipment needed for basic operation
- required trainings for troop adults, such as leadership training, camp training, or first aid
- pins, patches, and insignia awarded by the troop/group
- some expenses related to outings and trips

### **The ADULT VOLUNTEER pays for:**

- her/his yearly national membership dues to GSUSA
- her/his uniforms and maintenance
- her/his transportation (mileage)
- her/his parking and road tolls
- her/his training fees where applicable such as training or workshops which benefit the volunteer personally

### **The COMMUNITY provides:**

- meeting place, facilities
- financial support

**The COUNCIL provides:**

- screening, appointment, training and recognition for adults
- Council-wide activities and special interest groups
- camp properties and equipment
- communication tools: The Golden Link, Council web site, recruitment materials
- professional staff to provide advice and support
- financial assistance\* for registered girls and adults
- targeted programs in underserved areas
- liability insurance for volunteers in their official capacity

**The NATIONAL ORGANIZATION (GSUSA) provides:**

- focus and framework for the Girl Scout Leadership Experience
- GSUSA website
- basic accident insurance for girls, leaders, and other registered adults while involved in and while traveling to and from Girl Scout activities
- the development of films, publications, and training materials
- Girl Scout Research Institute

**\*Financial assistance is available for girls or adults for membership, training, and/or program activities as well as Camperships. For more information concerning eligibility requirements and application procedures refer to the [Financial Assistance Guidelines \(F-132\)](#) and use the online Financial Assistance Request [webform](#).**

***“All money and other assets, including property, that are earned or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting must be held and authorized by a Girl Scout Council or GSUSA. Such money and other assets must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. They are the property of and are administered by the Girl Scout council or GSUSA and shall not be sold, given, transferred, or conveyed to a third party for less than fair market value. Such assets are not the property of individuals, troops, geographic units, subordinate units, or communities with a Girl Scout council.”***  
***Taken from the Blue Book of Basic Documents 2017, a GSUSA publication.***

**How Funds are collected or earned by the Troop**

**Money in general:** Girl Scout groups are financed by dues, money-earning activities, and a share of money earned through Council sponsored product sale activities. Girl Scout Daisies may be involved in Council-sponsored product sales activities only, and not collect money in any other way except through dues or parental contributions. Girl Scout Brownies are not allowed to participate in any additional money-earning activities outside of the GSSJC sponsored product sales.

**Troop dues:** Dues are collected at each meeting from troop members. The amount of dues is decided upon by girls, with the help of their leaders. The amount should be acceptable to parents/guardians, be fair to all members, and cover most troop expenses.

**Assessments:** Troops may decide to collect additional funds from members beyond the meeting dues to cover a particular activity (such as a field trip or camping expenses). Some communities may impose an annual assessment on troops in its jurisdiction to cover activities and materials used in the support of girls and troops. The community assessment is usually based upon the number of girls in each troop.

**Money-earning activities:** Approved, girl-adult planned activities to earn money for the troop/group. These are coordinated efforts to provide a product or service in exchange for money. To be eligible to undertake a money-earning activity, a Girl Scout Junior, Cadette, Senior or Ambassador troop or individual must have actively participated in the two most recent Council product sales. A troop formed after either sale still may be eligible to undertake a money-earning activity if they meet the remaining criteria. Use form [F-32 Money Earning Activity Guidelines and Application](#)

**Donations/Contributions** are monetary, or non-monetary (“in-kind”) support given to a troop, group, community or region from a community organization, business, or individual. Only Senior and Ambassador Girl Scouts working on their Gold Award projects may solicit financial donations (with proper approval). In-kind donations are acceptable and must be in accordance with guidelines on form [F-30A, Contributions/Solicitation Request and Report](#).

**Volunteer Involvement grants** guidelines, form and reporting are covered on [Form F-112A Request for Employer Volunteer Involvement Grant](#). No troop or group may receive more than \$50 per registered girl up to \$1000 per troop/group during the membership year in volunteer involvement grants.

## **Establishing a Troop Account**

No matter how much your troop plans to save or spend, you’ll need a safe place to deposit your troop dues, product program proceeds, and other funds. If you’ve stepped up to lead an existing troop, you may inherit a checking account, but with a new troop, you’ll want to open a new bank account. If your group/troop is participating in one of GSSJC’s product sales programs, or if our troop plans to accept either eChecks or credit card payments from parents/caregivers, the troop/group must set up a bank account.

Here are a few helpful tips you can take to the bank:

- Be sure to find a bank that has free checking and low fees. GSSJC's Customer Care has a list of banks that provide free checking.
- Designate a "troop treasurer," that is, one person who is responsible for troop funds and for keeping a daily account of expenditures.
- Ensure your account comes with a debit card that you can use during activities or trips. These transactions are easier to track at the end of the year.
- Handle a lost troop debit card the same way you would a personal debit card: cancel it immediately.
- Keep troop funds in the bank before an activity or trip and pay for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.

Troops must have a bank account with the Registration of Bank Account and ACH Debit/Credit Acknowledgment (F-36) on file to participate in either product program activities.

### **Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council (GSSJC)– Procedures for Setting up a Girl Scout Bank Account**

Troop Leadership Team members will receive a Leader Appointment letter automatically after completing the following: register as a member of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA); complete the volunteer screening process for GSSJC; and review the online Volunteer Basics Series (training) and submit the knowledge check.

Community and Region Treasurers will receive an appointment letter after completing the following: register as a member of GSUSA, complete the volunteer screening process for GSSJC and receive confirmation by the Financial Management Coordinator that all requirements have been met.

Take your appointment letter along with the Procedures for Opening a Bank Account (GSSJC F-34) and W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification to your local bank. The Community Financial Specialist in your Community can help you identify banks that will allow you to maintain an account with minimal or no fees.

Each bank account must have a minimum of two signers, both being registered members in good standing. One signer should keep the debit card and/or checkbook and the other should have on-line access to review bank activity and/or receive monthly statements. Note: Only one signature is required on a check.

Complete the Registration of Bank Account and ACH Debit/Credit Acknowledgement form (GSSJC F-36) within 5 days of opening a bank account. A copy of a voided check, signature card, or bank letter with routing and account information must accompany the GSSJC F-36 form submission.

Online submission (preferred method) - link to form on Council website is <https://community.gssjc.org/bankinfo>.

Manual submission (paper form obtained from Council website, two copies required as instructed on the form. Recipients include a Council staff-member and the Community

Financial Specialist if a Troop Bank Account or a Council staff member and the Financial Management Coordinator if a Community or Region bank account.

All forms can be found at [www.gssjc.org](http://www.gssjc.org).

### **Accepting eCheck and/or Credit/Debit Cards from Parents/Caregivers**

GSSJC has partnered with Cheddar Up as the only Council-sponsored platform for troops/groups to manage electronic payments from parents/caregivers. Cheddar Up is a digital payment and tracking tool that allows troops/groups to collect payments for expenses such as uniforms, supplies, badges, activities, outings, camp, or payments from parents/caregivers by eCheck [or credit/debit card](#). The cost of the service is free to both troops/groups and the Council. Payors will incur a service fee at the time of payment. If a payment is received by regular check or cash, the troop/group can record the payment directly into the application to allow for complete tracking of troop/group activities and collections. For more information, see [www.GSSJC.org](http://www.GSSJC.org) and search “Cheddar Up”.

Cheddar Up will require one troop/group leader to be an account owner on the troop/group account, however other leaders can and should also be set up as managers of the account. Account owners and managers must meet the same requirements set forth for opening or being a signatory on a troop bank account.

Non-council sponsored or advocated electronic platforms such as Venmo, PayPal, etc. are not permitted to avoid troublesome tax reporting and financial transparency concerns for troop/group leaders. Payments from customers for council-sponsored product sales should only be processed through the ABC SmartCookies or M2 product sale applications and may not be processed through other GSSJC sponsored platforms such as CheddarUp. Troop/group's may however accept a parent's/caregiver's payment for the amount owed to the troop/group for their girl's cookies or fall product proceeds.

If there is a change in troop/group leadership, the Cheddar Up application must be updated immediately. Additionally, if a troop/group disbands, the account must be closed as soon as the last withdrawal is made from the Cheddar Up account.

Troop/group leaders must never collect or retain parent/caregiver personal bank account or credit/debit card numbers and related information.

### **Disbanding Troops and Unused Troop Funds**

When a troop disbands, any unused Girl Scout money left in the account becomes the property of the council. Troop funds are not the property of any individual member. Before disbanding, ask your girls how they want to pay it forward. They may decide to donate any unused funds to their service unit, to another troop, or to pay for Girl Scout activities. Activities can also include purchasing materials to support another organization through Take Action projects.

## **Closing the Troop Account**

When closing a troop account, be sure all checks and other debits have cleared the account before you close it. Remember, you may have to close the account in person. Turn remaining funds over to staff volunteer experience manager or other designated council staff member.

## **Troop Money – Managing and Reporting**

Remember! Troop funds should be used only for troop activities and are not the property of individual members.

1. When Girl Scout troops purchase materials or supplies that will be used in their program, these supplies are exempt from state sales tax. The tax exemption does not apply to meals, lodging, or rental vehicles. Use the form Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certificate (GSSJC F-144). Note that items purchased for individual use (i.e. uniforms) are subject to sales tax.
2. Keep accurate and dated records of all money transactions (income and expenses, including checks written or received, and cash expended or received). Detailed records include canceled checks, invoices, receipts for cash, credit card or debit card purchases, and other supporting documentation, as appropriate.
3. Accurate records will be helpful in the completion of the Troop/Group Annual Financial Report (GSSJC F-31). This report is available in hard copy and electronic formats and is available on the GSSJC Web site. A completed financial report, along with a copy of the most recent troop bank statement, must be delivered to Council no later than May 31st of each year. The report can be submitted electronically via the Volunteer Toolkit Finances Tab or manually (paper) to the Community Financial Specialist.

The [F-31 Troop/Group Annual Financial Report is required from every troop/group](#). Refer to [GSSJC F-31C Troop/Group Annual Financial Report Process](#) for detailed instructions.

4. A copy of the completed report, supporting worksheets, receipts for purchases, and bank account statements should be retained in troop records for three years. The GSSJC Accounting Department will retain a copy of each troop's financial record and bank statement.
5. At the end of the school year in May, a balance should be left in the bank account to cover expenses that will be incurred during the summer and at the beginning of the next membership year.
6. The troop treasurer should communicate openly and often with the girls and parents about how the troop stands financially. Open and honest communication about the troop bank account will prevent misunderstandings. A copy of the troop financial report (GSSJC F-31) or other financial accounting records should be shared with the girls and parents/guardians to be used in the planning of troop activities at the beginning of the new membership year.



7. Troop bank account records must be made available within 30 days as requested by the Community, parents of the girls in the troop or the Council.
8. The Council Finance Committee has requested that random audits of troop accounts be conducted annually by the Council-Wide Auditors. These audits are used to confirm that accounts are styled correctly, expenses are properly documented, and bank accounts agree with financial reports that have been submitted.
9. Having a current financial report (GSSJC F-31) on file at the Council office is a requirement for continuing in the adult leadership role of a troop, for being approved to receive volunteer involvement grants or for the troop to participate in supplemental money-earning activities. Mismanaging troop funds may result in removal as a volunteer with Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council. More serious action may be taken to recover girl funds.

## **Money-Earning Basics for Troops**

Troops flex their financial muscles in two distinct ways:

**The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other product sales of Girl Scouts** (authorized product sales such as calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy) organized by your council. All girl members are eligible to participate in two council-sponsored product program activities each year with volunteer supervision—the Girl Scout Cookie Program and one other council-authorized product program. Please remember, volunteers and Girl Scout council staff don't sell cookies and other products—girls do.

**Group money-earning activities** organized by the troop (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with volunteers) and that earn money for the group.

## **Participation Guidance**

Girls' participation in both council-sponsored product program activities and group money-earning projects is based on the following:

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



Girls whose parent/guardian has an outstanding debt to the Council may not participate in the order-taking or money-collection of any product sales related program. Girls may participate in the program related activities, **direct-shipped orders**, or booth sale activities.

## Additional Guidelines

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

- **All rewards earned by girls through the product program activities must support Girl Scout program experiences** (such as camp, travel, and program events, but not scholarships or financial credits toward outside organizations).
- **Rewards are based on sales ranges** set by councils and may not be based on a dollar-per-dollar calculation.
- **Troops are encouraged to participate in council product programs as their primary money-earning activity**; any group money earning shouldn't compete with the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council product programs.
- **Obtain written approval from your community before a group money-earning event.**
- **GSSJC must prohibit the use of games of chance for the purpose of earning money for troops/groups.** Any activity which could be considered a game of chance (raffles, contests, bingo) is not allowed for the purpose of raising troop/group funds.
- **Girl Scouts' Blue Book policy forbids girls from the direct solicitation of cash.** Girls can collect partial payment toward the purchase of a package of Girl Scout Cookies and other Girl Scout-authorized products through participation in council-approved product program donation programs. Girls working on approved Gold Award projects may seek financial contributions to support their projects. Contact [goldaward@sjgs.org](mailto:goldaward@sjgs.org) for guidance.
- **Girl Scouts forbids product demonstration parties** where the use of the Girl Scout trademark increases revenue for another business, such as in-home product parties. Any business using the Girl Scout trademark or other Girl Scout intellectual property must seek authorization from GSUSA.
- **Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the ages and abilities of the girls** and consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- **Money earned is for Girl Scout activities and is not to be retained by individuals.** Girls can, however, be awarded incentives and/or may earn credits from their Girl Scout product programs. Funds acquired through group money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the group according to council procedures.

## Help Your Troop Reach Its Financial Goals

We get it—there’s something exciting about opening that first case of Girl Scout Cookies. However, before your girls take part in all the cookie program fun, it’s important they have a clear plan and purpose for their product program activities. As a volunteer, you have the opportunity to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for the girls:

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

**Remember:** It’s great for girls to have opportunities like the Girl Scout Cookie Program to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals. As 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!

## STEPS FOR MONEY-EARNING ACTIVITIES

### Step One: Girl Planning.

- Girls should be involved in all aspects of planning activities and determining if additional funds are needed. Once a need has been established, girls should be involved in deciding how to earn that money within GSSJC guidelines. In every money-earning activity, there are great opportunities for girls to learn about and experience strategic planning and goal-setting, budgeting, consumer needs, marketing and advertising, customer service and so much more.

- If the money is being earned for a future trip, the adults in charge should review Council information on trip planning, including required forms and permissions for Girl Scout trips.
- Girl members who plan to earn money to use for the Bronze, Silver or Gold Award or to attend a destination should request guidance and assistance from the GSSJC Girl Experience Department.

### **Step Two: Review Guidelines**

- Review both the Safety chapter in this document, GSSJC Policies and Operational Procedures (GSSJC F-433), and Council ways of work pertaining to money-earning activities.
- Review Safety Activity Checkpoints.

### **Step Three: Apply for Permission**

Complete “ Money Earning Activity Guidelines and Application” (GSSJC F-32A) and submit to community for approval.

### **Step Four: Activity**

- Conduct the approved activity and keep detailed record of income and expenses.

### **Step Five: Reporting Outcome**

- Include earned funds on Annual Troop or Community Financial Report.

### **Examples of Permitted Money-Earning Activities (require Community approval\* only)**

- Recycling
- Garage sale
- Gift-wrapping
- Flower or plant sale (‘Spirit’ mums, mistletoe, etc.)
- Doll, pet, or talent show
- Craft sale (not involving food)
- Troop dramatic production
- Babysitting
- Badge workshop
- Car wash
- Household / community service
- Product proof-of-purchase redemption program for nonprofits (e.g. saving labels, bottle tops, etc. to redeem for cash)
- Sales of commercially produced items including prepackaged food such as chips and sodas
- Troops/groups or communities may hire a certified caterer to provide food at an event as part of a money-making activity. For example, hire a caterer to provide and serve all the

food, then provide additional entertainment and activities and charge an entrance fee.

**Examples of Money-Earning Activities that WILL NOT be approved:**

- Crowd-funding or “Go Fund Me” solicitations
- Games of chance, such as bingo, auctions, raffles, lottery, scratch-offs, catalog sales, etc.
- Any activity that could endorse a particular product or business or political affiliation. Product demonstrations, such as Avon, Mary Kay, Tupperware, Pampered Chef, candle parties, etc.
- Money earning activities involving the handling of food, such as bake sales, barbeques, dinners, etc.
- Sales designed to generate profits for a specific business/company, such as Papa John’s, Double Dave’s, Chick-fil-A, etc.. including Spirit Nights and sale of coupon books.
- Any fundraiser for any other organization unless the fundraising program has been approved by the GSSJC Board of Directors or GSUSA.
- Any activity that uses unauthorized trademarked or copyrighted material, such as Disney characters, song lyrics, etc.
- Money earning activities for individual girls unless designated for GSUSA Destinations or Silver/ Gold projects

**Although you cannot resell products, you can offer services, such as the following:**

- Service-a-thon (people sponsor a girl doing service; funds go to support trip)
- Babysitting for holiday (New Year’s Eve) or council events
- Raking leaves, weeding, cutting grass, shoveling snow, walking pets
- More information can be found in form F-32 Money Earning Activity Guidelines and Application

**Financial Management and Product Program Abilities by Grade Level**

As with other Girl Scout activities, girls build their financial and sales savvy as they get older. Every girl will be different, but here you’ll find some examples of the abilities and opportunities for progression of girls at each grade level.

**Girl Scout Daisies**

- The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.
- Parents/caregivers may decide they will contribute to the cost of activities.
- Girls can participate in Girl Scout Cookie Program activities and other council-sponsored product programs.
- Daisies are always paired with a volunteer when selling anything. Girls do the asking and deliver the product, but volunteers handle the money and keep the girls safe.

- Girls should be given the opportunity to practice identifying money and counting back change with an adult during each transaction.

## **Girl Scout Brownies**

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

## **Girl Scout Juniors**

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

## Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

- Girls estimate costs based on plans.
- Girls determine the amount of group dues, if any, and the scope of money-earning projects.
- Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.
- Girls carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning programs.
- 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 Girl Scout Gold Awards, if they are pursuing them.

### **Financing for Girl Scout groups and individually registered girls**

Girl Scout groups are financed by dues, money-earning activities, and a share of money earned through council-sponsored product sale activities. Specifically, "group money earning" refers to activities following a planned budget and carried out by girls and adults, in partnership, to earn money for the group treasury. It is a subject that has raised some questions. To clarify, here are frequently asked questions and answers about this activity.

#### **Can individually registered girls, fundraise as Girl Scouts?**

Girls are not allowed to earn money for themselves, whether they are in a group or participating as individually registered members. However, any registered Girl Scout can take part in product sales and other council-approved activities. Some Councils help individual girls participate in the Cookie Program as a "group" with a responsible adult overseeing each girl's participation. Girls might sign up to work at a cookie booth or team up with another girl who is selling cookies. Individuals can earn "cookie credits" (Cookie Dough) toward camp fees or events, if the Council has such programs.

#### **Can an individual girl or troop solicit a local club for money for her/their Girl Scout Gold Award project?**

Girl Scouts of any age cannot solicit money. It is the job of the adult to do the "ask," but the girl can give a presentation about the project. If any group or individual is to be approached, it must be cleared with the local Girl Scout council's Development Department to avoid duplication or conflicts. Your council might be going after a much larger donation for a fundraising campaign that helps keep girl program costs low and maintain council resources.

## **Can a troop do money-earning activities beyond the Council product sales?**

Money earning should never be an end unto itself. Council product sales are a program activity for girls to learn specific skills, including goal setting, sales and project management. Additional money-earning projects must be part of a plan for a specific activity. Always get the appropriate approval for any money-earning projects beyond council product sales. Specifics on troop/group money-earning can be found earlier in this chapter.

Answers to other questions about group finances can be found in Girl Scouts of the USA's Blue Book of Basic Documents and the Safety Activity Checkpoints.

## **Working with Sponsors and Other Organizations**

Local sponsors can help councils power innovative programs for Girl Scouts. Community organizations, businesses, religious organizations, and individuals may be sponsors and may provide group meeting places, volunteer their time, offer in-kind donations, provide activity materials, or loan equipment. Encourage your girls to celebrate a sponsor's contribution to the troop by sending thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take Action project.

For information on working with a sponsor, consult your council, which can give you guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting guidelines, 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:

**Avoid fundraising for other organizations.** Girl Scouts are not allowed to solicit money on behalf of another organization when identifying themselves as Girl Scouts by wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, and so on. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. However, you and your group can support another organization through Take Action projects. Girl Scouts as individuals are able to participate in whatever events they choose as long as they are not wearing anything that officially identifies them as Girl Scouts.

**Steer clear of political fundraisers.** When in an official Girl Scout capacity or in any way identifying yourselves as Girl Scouts, your group may not participate, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign or work on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. Letter-writing campaigns are not allowed, nor is participating in a political rally, circulating a petition, or carrying a political banner.

**Be respectful when collaborating with religious organizations.** Girl Scout groups must respect the opinions and practices of religious partners, but no girl should be required to take part in any religious observance or practice of the sponsoring group.

**Avoid selling or endorsing commercial products.** A commercial product is any product sold at a retail location. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products.



**If monetary sponsorships are sought**, prior permission must be obtained by Council. Guidelines are provided on [form F-30A Contribution/Solicitation Request Form](#) in the Council Resource Site.

## Other Important Facts about Troop / Group Financials

All troops must submit the **Annual Troop/Group Financial Report (F-31)** through the VTK Finances Tab (electronic submission) or by submitting paper F-31 forms to their Community Financial Specialist in May of each year. This ensures that the girls' money is being properly accounted for and allocated in accordance with GSSJC Policies and Procedures. We recommend that you use the online Excel version of the F-31A (found on <http://www.gssjc.org>) to maintain records of income and expenditures throughout the year. Other groups should follow guidance from their staff advisor.

**Financial Assistance** - No girl should be denied involvement in Girl Scouting due to financial need. GSSJC grants financial assistance for girls for items such as membership registration, troop dues, handbooks, and some uniform components. Financial assistance should be requested **before** troop funds are spent. Financial assistance can be requested by completing the Financial Assistance Request form (F-134) found on the GSSJC website.

**Debt List** – The GSSJC Accounting Department maintains a list of individuals who owe money to the Council. Individuals with an outstanding debt to GSSJC may not participate in product sales, may not handle Girl Scout money, and may not hold any appointed or elected position, including service on a committee, and may not receive adult recognitions. Contact the Accounting Department with any questions or concerns regarding the debt list.

**Liability Insurance and Hold Harmless Agreements** – GSSJC will make available proof of liability insurance and hold harmless agreements to organizations so Girl Scout troops and groups may use their facilities. Contact the Finance department for more information.

**Sales Tax** - Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council has 501c(3) status and thus is exempt from paying sales taxes on items bought for use in approved Girl Scout activities. Before heading to your favorite store to purchase items as troop supplies, download the Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certification (F-144) from the GSSJC website and complete the requested information to receive this exemption.

## Contracts and Written Agreements

- **Written Agreements:** When using the services or site of an outside organization or firm, it is important that a written agreement be used. All agreements must be in writing. The use of a written agreement serves two purposes. It provides an opportunity for both parties to clarify their needs and expectations. Remember, any verbal agreements are not binding. Before signing any agreement, read it thoroughly. If there are portions that you don't want to agree to, you may cross out those portions (if initialed by both parties) or develop your own agreement. (Example: Usage of a school for a bridging ceremony or recruitment event)
- **Contracts:** Do NOT sign any contracts! Contracts include any written agreements that specifically states information associated with payment of money for service; insurance requirements (Hold Harmless Agreements); and/or criteria related to liability issues. The GSSJC CEO has been authorized by the Board to sign contracts. No one else has that authority; troop leaders, Community/Region Leadership Teams, event directors have NOT been authorized to enter into contracts for Girl Scouts. When in doubt as to whether or not you are signing a contract – the best practice is to have the Accounting Department at the



Girl Scout Council office review it. Contact the Executive Assistant to the Chief Financial Officer at 713-292-0320:

### **Other Miscellaneous Finance Matters**

Tax Deductible Expenses for Volunteers. Volunteers may be able to deduct unreimbursed expenses incurred as a volunteer for a charitable organization on their personal tax return, in accordance with Internal Revenue Service regulations. Please consult a tax advisor regarding any questions about the deductibility of expenses. Some deductible expenses may include:

- Documented cash or property gifts
- Public transportation fares
- Automobile mileage (current IRS rate for volunteers is \$.14 per mile)
- Parking fees and tolls
- Purchase and upkeep of uniforms
- Telephone, postage and photocopy charges
- Annual membership dues
- Training fees

### **Fundraising**

Fundraising is a technique used by adults to appeal to the public to contribute money to support the Council program and activities. Fundraising is the sole domain of the Board of Directors and the GSSJC Development Department. This department ensures that adequate resources are available to provide the best programs and facilities for all girls in the Council. A committee of volunteers works with the Development staff on all fund-raising appeals and events.

### **1912 Club/Annual Giving Campaign**

The annual giving campaign invites donors to help meet the financial needs of Girl Scouts through a yearly contribution. Parents, families, the board of directors, staff, community sponsors and friends of Girl Scouts are asked to make a financial commitment to Girl Scouting.

Family support is essential to the success of our fundraising efforts and to continuing support from our local United Way agencies. This appeal offers families the chance to demonstrate their belief that Girl Scouting is a critically important program, providing girls with opportunities for growth, leadership development, and new experiences. Who better to understand the benefits of Girl Scouting than parents? Without support from those families, our abilities to continue improving the Girl Scout experience are hampered.

Please note that the membership registration fee does not go to support Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council – this fee is sent directly to Girl Scouts of the USA to support national programs, training, and insurance costs. Donations from families made to GSSJC stay within our Council and directly help our girls. Leadership for a Lifetime offers benefits to donors at various giving levels. For more information, refer to the Leadership for a Lifetime FAQ's (frequently asked questions) in this chapter.

## **Promise Society**

This multi-year giving society was founded in 2001 to provide Girl Scout supporters the opportunity to make a five-year commitment supporting the programs of Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council. Levels begin at \$1,000.

## **Women's Leadership Network**

The Women's Leadership Network (WLN) designed to bring together strong, connected women and men who are passionate about supporting our future female leaders through the best female leadership program available – today's Girl Scouts.

WLN will offer its members opportunities to expand their own personal and professional networks through exclusive events, as well as the opportunity to mentor future leaders. Membership in WLN starts with a personal gift of \$1,000 (\$300 for young professionals under the age of 30). For more information on how to join WLN contact any development director or the chief external affairs officer.

## **General Donations**

These donations are used to respond to the most immediate Council needs. General donations provide financial assistance for girls, all Council publications, staffing, facility maintenance, training and much more.

## **The Emerald Circle**

The Emerald Circle's mission is to provide scholarships and support, inspiring girls to aim for excellence while becoming the leaders of tomorrow. The Emerald Circle is dedicated to providing college merit scholarships to Gold Award recipients, enhancing and supporting special Council funding needs and lending financial support to achieve their mission.

## **Restricted Donations**

Donors have the option to restrict their donation to a specific program and/or fund. Restricted Funds

include:

- Campership
- Capital Needs
- Claire Schlumberger (financial aid for girls)
- Community Outreach Programs
- Corinne Fonde (destinations)
- Gold Award Scholarships Endowment
- Library
- Museum

Donations may be made to these funds at any time during the year. Many individuals and troops make donations to these funds ‘in honor’ or ‘in memory’ of family and friends. Another way to remember family and friends is by purchasing a brick on the Promise Path at Camp Agnes Arnold or a plaque for the sailboat at Casa Mare.

Donations may be mailed to the Development Department at the Girl Scout Center, with an explanation of how the funds are to be designated, and if it is ‘in memory of’ or ‘in honor of’ someone. To make a donation in person, use the Leadership for a Lifetime brochures located at all Girl Scout shops and the Girl Scout Center. Donations may also be made online at <http://www.gssjc.org/donate>.

For more information about Council fundraising activities, contact the Development Department at 713-292-0300 or 1-800-392-4340.

### **Solicitations, Donations and Volunteer Involvement Grants**

Only adults may solicit donations/contributions. Cash and non-cash (also known as ‘in kind’) contributions to troops, communities, and regions require the following procedures. These procedures have been put into place to ensure that the Council and the donors ***are in compliance with the current Internal Revenue Service tax code.***

- ***Monetary donations cannot be received by*** a San Jacinto Council troop, group, community or region, or individual member with the exception of a Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador who is approved to conduct a Girl Scout Gold Award Project. Approval must be received through the Gold Award committee.
- Any “in-kind” donations received from a foundation, corporation (including corporate volunteer involvement grants), government entity, or individual AND designated to a troop, group, community or region, or individual member must be approved and accepted by Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council.
- ***Any donation of money given in conjunction with a council-sponsored product sale is not allowed. Funds received at a Cookie Booth must be converted to either Virtual Cookie Share or the traditional Cookie Share.***
- Donations which do not meet the requirements or are in excess of the annual limit will be deposited into the Council financial assistance fund with notification to the donor.
- No monies shall be forwarded to a troop, group, community or region, or individual member if the requirements outlined below are not met. Troops, groups, communities or regions, or an individual member within GSSJC jurisdiction are considered part of Council, not independent entities.
- NOTE: Council will not submit requests for donations on behalf of a troop, group, community or region, or an individual member’s donation requests.

### ***Requirements:***

- Designated donations must be used for Girl Scout program and must benefit the entire troop, group, community or region.
- Individual troops or groups may receive up to \$50 per registered girl up to a total of \$1000 per membership year, only in volunteer involvement grants. Any donations that exceed the \$1000 limit will be deposited into the Council financial assistance fund, unless specifically approved by the Development Department in advance.
- Troops must have a minimum of five girls from two different families.
- Participation in the two most recent product sales, for which the troop is eligible.
- The **Request for Employer Volunteer Involvement Grant “VIG” form** (GSSJC F-112A, revised 4/17) must be submitted to the Council at least 30 days prior to the grantor company’s deadline.
  - VIG applications will be processed in the order received.
- **A Contribution/Solicitation Request Form** (GSSJC F-30A, revised 4/17) must be submitted to the Council and approved prior to requesting or receiving “in-kind” donations.
- In the case of the VIGs, the employee requesting the grant must be a registered member of GSUSA.
- A copy of the previous year’s troop, group, community or region financial report, most recent bank statement, and a detailed explanation of the intended use of the donation must be attached to the request.
- Product Sales and Community Engagement and Member Experience Departments must certify that these requirements have been met prior to distributing monies to the troop, group, community or region. As the appropriate forms are received by the Development Department, they will be forwarded to the appropriate departments for approval.
- Solicited and/or donated funds are to be used for the specific purpose for which they were intended. Any deviation or revision in use of funds must first be cleared with the donor. If the donor does not approve of the deviation or revision, funds should be returned to the donor

### ***Rationale:***

Girl Scout groups are financed by dues, money-earning activities, and a share of money earned through Council-sponsored product sale activities. Group or troop monies must be earned.

- The ability of some troops to obtain funds either through donations or volunteer involvement grants penalizes troops or groups who do not have access to these resources and who are earning their funds.
- Girl Scout programs are designed to help the girls learn and practice goal setting, budgeting money, management and more. Girl Scouting is for all girls.

Volunteer Involvement Grants and troop or group donations are adult-generated funds. Generally, all adult-generated funds are to be directed to the Council. Councils are the only distinct legal entity and the only entity with tax exemption. Therefore, gifts made to GSSJC subordinate units must be approved by the tax-exempt entity (the Council) and must comply with the tax law requirements on gifts for the donor to receive a charitable deduction.

- Some donors require the Council to certify proper use of funds, and, in some cases, volunteer hours worked. The GSSJC F-112A form provides the checks and balances related to safeguarding the Council's name, tax exemption status and resources.

**A note about in-kind donations:** The Council does not assess values for in-kind donations. Troops, groups, communities or regions should exercise caution when accepting in-kind donations to ensure that the donation is reasonable and acceptable. When in doubt, contact the Development Department for guidance. If the perceived or estimated value of an in-kind donation is \$250 or greater, submit the [Contribution/Solicitation Request Form \(GSSJC F-30A\)](#) for permission to proceed.

- Products or discounts on products may be accepted by any Girl Scout group only if this type of "contribution" is offered as a normal store procedure, i.e. as a non-profit discount.

## Engaging Girls

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

### Understanding Healthy Development in Girls

It sounds simple, but just being attentive to what girls are experiencing as they mature is a big help to them—and to you, as you guide and mentor them! You'll experience different joys and challenges with each Girl Scout level, but here are some guidelines for meeting girls' needs and abilities at different grade levels, you'll also find these listed in the adult guide of each leadership Journey.

## Girl Scout Daisies

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

## Girl Scout Brownies

<b>At the Girl Scout Brownie level (second and third grades), girls...</b>	<b><i>This means...</i></b>
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	<i>Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.</i>
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	<i>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances.</i>
Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.	<i>Letting girls lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow girls as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.</i>
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	<i>Doing more than just reading to girls about the Brownie Elf's adventures. Ask girls questions to gauge their understanding and allow them to role play their own pretend visit to a new country.</i>
Need clear directions and structure and like knowing what to expect.	<i>Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share those at the start.</i>
Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.	<i>Offering support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.</i>
Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, and the like.	<i>Encouraging girls to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need some assistance, however, holding scissors, threading needs, and so on.</i>
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	<i>Girls might like to create a play about welcoming a new girl to their school or to tell a story through dance or creative movement.</i>
Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job well done.	<i>Acknowledging when the girls have listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again.</i>



## Girl Scout Juniors

<b>At the Girl Scout Junior level (fourth and fifth grades), girls...</b>	<b><i>This means...</i></b>
Want to make decisions and express their opinions.	<i>Whenever possible, allowing girls to make decisions and express their opinions through guided discussion and active reflection activities. Also, have girls set rules for listening to others' opinions and offering assistance in decision making.</i>
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	<i>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities.</i>
Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others.	<i>Although it's okay to have expectations, the expectation is not perfection! Share your own mistakes and what you learned from them and be sure to create an environment where girls can be comfortable sharing theirs.</i>
Are concerned about equity and fairness.	<i>Not shying away from discussing why rules are in place and having girls develop their own rules for their group.</i>
Are beginning to think abstractly and critically and are capable of flexible thought. Juniors can consider more than one perspective as well as the feelings and attitudes of another.	<i>Asking girls to explain why they made a decision, to share their visions of their roles in the future, and to challenge their own and others' perspectives.</i>
Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination.	<i>Engaging girls in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow girls to express themselves through the written word, choreography, and so on.</i>
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	<i>Girls might like to tell a story through playwriting, playing an instrument, or choreographing a dance.</i>
May be starting puberty, which means beginning breast development, skin changes, and weight changes. Some may be getting their periods.	<i>Being sensitive to girls' changing bodies, possible discomfort over these changes, and their desire for more information. Create an environment that acknowledges and celebrates this transition as healthy and normal for girls.</i>

## Girl Scout Cadettes

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

## Girl Scout Seniors

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

## Girl Scout Ambassadors

<b>At the Girl Scout Ambassador level (eleventh and twelfth grades), girls...</b>	<b><i>This means...</i></b>
Can see the complexity of situations and controversial issues—they understand that problems often have no clear solution and that varying points of view may each have merit.	<i>Inviting girls to develop stories as a group and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.</i>
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills and can adapt logical thinking to real-life situations. Ambassadors recognize and incorporate practical limitations to solutions.	<i>Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.</i>
Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>Girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.</i>
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	<i>Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.</i>
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	<i>Acknowledging girls' pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.</i>
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home—and are looking to their futures.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

## Creating a Safe Space for Girls

A safe space is where girls feel that they can be themselves, without explanation or judgment. As a volunteer, the environment you create is just as important as the activities girls do—it's the key to developing the sort of group that girls want to be part of! Cultivate a space where confidentiality is respected, and girls can express their true selves.

### Recognize and Support Each Girl

You're a role model and a mentor to your girls. Since you play an important role in their lives, they need to know that you consider each of them an important person too. They can weather a poor meeting place or an activity that flops, but they cannot endure being ignored or rejected.

- Give a shout-out when you see girls trying their best, not just when they've had a clear success.
- Emphasize the positive qualities that make each girl worthy and unique.
- Be generous with praise and stingy with rebuke.
- Help your girls find ways to show acceptance of and support for one another.

### Promote Fairness

Girls are sensitive to injustice. They forgive mistakes if they are sure you are trying to be fair. They look for fairness in how responsibilities are shared, in handling of disagreements, and in your responses to performance and accomplishment.

- When possible, ask the girls what they think is fair before decisions are made.
- Explain your reasoning and show why you did something.
- Be willing to apologize if needed.
- Try to see that responsibilities as well as the chances for feeling important are equally divided.
- Help girls explore and decide for themselves the fair ways of solving problems, carrying out activities, and responding to behavior and accomplishments.

### Build Trust

Girls need your belief in them and your support when they try new things. You'll also need to show them that you won't betray their confidence.

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

### Inspire Open Communication

Girls want someone who will listen to what they think, feel, and want to do. They like having someone they can talk to about the important things happening in their lives.

- Listen to the girls. Respond with words and actions.
- Speak your mind openly when you are happy or concerned about something and encourage girls to do the same.
- Leave the door open for girls to seek advice, share ideas and feelings, and propose plans or improvements.
- Help girls see how open communication can result in action, discovery, better understanding of self and others, and a more comfortable climate for fun and accomplishment.

## Managing Conflict

Conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, but if handled constructively, they show girls that they can overcome their differences, exercise diplomacy, and improve their communication and relationships. Respecting others and being a sister to every Girl Scout means that shouting, verbal abuse, or physical confrontations are never warranted and cannot be tolerated in the Girl Scout environment.

When a conflict arises between girls or a girl and a volunteer, get those involved to sit down together and [talk calmly in a nonjudgmental manner](#), keeping in mind that each party may need some time—a few days or a week—to calm down before being able to do this. Talking in this way might feel uncomfortable and difficult now, but it lays the groundwork for working well together in the future. Whatever you do, do not spread your complaint around to others—that won't help the situation and causes only embarrassment and anger.

You'll also find conflict resolution activities in some of the Journeys, such as the Amaze Journey for Cadettes or the Mission Sisterhood Journey for Seniors.

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

## Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age

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

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

**Be Honest.** If you're not comfortable with a topic or activity, it's OK to say so. No one expects you to be an expert on every topic. Ask for alternatives or seek out volunteers with the required expertise. Owning up to mistakes—and apologizing for them—goes a long way with girls.

**Be Open to Real Issues.** Outside of Girl Scouts, girls may be dealing with issues like relationships, peer pressure, school, money, drugs, and other serious topics. When you don't

know, listen. Also seek help from your council if you need assistance or more information than you currently have.

**Show Respect.** Girls often say that their best experiences were the ones where adults treated them as equal partners. Being spoken to as young adults reinforces that their opinions matter and that they deserve respect.

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

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

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

**Listen.** Hear her out, ask for details, and reflect back what you hear; try “What happened next?” or “What did she say?”

**Understand.** Show that you understand where she's coming from with comments such as, “So what I hear you saying is...” or “I understand why you're unhappy,” or “Your feelings are hurt; mine would be, too.”

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

**Empathize.** Let her know you can imagine feeling what she's feeling with comments such as, “I'm sure that really hurts” or “I can imagine how painful this is for you.”

## Addressing the Needs of Older Girls

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

- Think of yourself as a “guide on the side”—a partner, a coach, or a mentor, not a “leader.”
- Ask girls what rules they need for safety and what group agreements they need to be a good team. When girls take the lead in establishing group rules, they're more likely to stick to them.
- 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—understanding that “speaking up” may look different for each girl. For some girls, it might mean sharing their ideas in front of the entire group; for others it could mean submitting a written response or contributing as part of a group.
- Treat girls like partners.
- Don’t repeat what’s said in the group to anyone outside of it (unless necessary for a girl’s safety). See “Report Concerns” below to understand the guard rails.

## **When Sensitive Topics Come Up**

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

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

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

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

Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council requires that each girl who will be engaging in a presentation/discussion on sensitive issues have a signed Parent Approval for Sensitive Issues form (F-611) on file with the troop leader before the scheduled presentation date. Guidelines as to when and if a signed parental consent form is needed can be found in the Sensitive Issues Guidelines form (F-610).

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

## Report Concerns

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

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.

**Texas law requires anyone with knowledge of suspected child abuse or neglect to report it to the appropriate authorities.** This mandatory reporting applies to all individuals and is not limited to teachers or health care professionals. In order to provide guidance to volunteers, GSSJC provides youth protection training which is required of all volunteers who work with girls. Level 1 training is required for all roles that work with girls. Additionally, Level 2 is required for roles that may be working with girls from different areas and roles that support overnight programs and activities (on- or off- property).

All incidents involving abuse of a child whether physical, emotional or sexual must be reported to the state. If child is in immediate life-threatening, danger, call 911. If the situation is urgent and needs to be investigated within 24 hours, call the Texas Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400.

In addition to reporting to the state, any incidents of abuse identified within the context of Girl Scouting must be reported immediately to the Council by emailing [incident@sjgs.org](mailto:incident@sjgs.org) using for O-73C or calling 713-292-0300.

**More information on this topic is available in 591 Youth Protection Training Level 1 and 591 Youth Protection Training Level 2. Both trainings are available in gsLearn for your use and review.**

## **Engaging Families**

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

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

When families step up and play an active part in troop life, your troop can shine its brightest! Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing.

### **What Is a Parent and Caregiver Meeting?**

It's the first meeting you have to start each troop year—whether you are a new or returning troop, it's valuable for all troops.

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

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

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

## How to Keep Parents and Caregivers Engaged

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

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

**Make It Quick and Easy.** Everybody's got a full plate these days, so instead of starting conversations with a list of tasks or responsibilities that parents and other caregivers could take on (which can be intimidating), ask how much time each week they might be able to dedicate to the troop, then go from there. For instance, if a troop mom or dad has 15 minutes each week to spare, they could organize and manage the calendar for troop snacks and carpools. If a grandparent has one to two hours, they could assist with leading the troop through a specific badge on a topic they're already comfortable with.

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

That said, there's no need to wait for a special event to engage families in their girls' Girl Scout life. Keep communication lines open throughout the year—whether it's through your troop's social media page, personal emails, or in-person chats—to keep parents in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting and encourage them to let their daughters "be the experts" at home, explaining or teaching the new skills they've learned. You can get everyone in on the fun and keep Girl Scouts strong at home by sharing the family badge guides on the Volunteer Toolkit with parents and caregivers.

## Girl Scout Product Programs

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

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

### Five Essential Skills

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

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

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

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

- Manage your troop's funds.
- Learn how girls participate in money earning.
- Discover how your troop can reach its financial goals.
- Plan activities to help her earn cookie pins and badges
- Understand just how much your girls are capable of by grade level and [how their entrepreneurial skills progress](#).

### Girl Scout Cookie History

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

### Where Cookie Proceeds Go

After paying for the cost of cookies and materials, [Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local](#) and help councils provide Girl Scout programs in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the outdoors, life skills, entrepreneurship, and more—in camps, through leadership training, and

multiple other ways. A portion of the proceeds is directly managed by girls, and it's up to them to decide how to invest their troop's share of the earnings.

Your council will provide a breakdown of how cookie program proceeds support Girl Scout activities locally. Please share this information with girls and their families so everyone understands that product program sales make it possible for your Girl Scout council to serve girls.

Troop members share in the proceeds from a successful product program; proceeds are not distributed to individual girl members. Girls, however, may be eligible for rewards and credits that they put toward council-sponsored camps, programs, and Girl Scout swag. The council plan for rewards applies equally to all girls participating in the product program activity. Visit the cookie section <https://www.gssjc.org/en/cookies/about-girl-scout-cookies.html> of your council website for more information about individual rewards and troop proceeds locally.

The [Girl Scout Blue Book of Basic Documents](#) specifies that:

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

*“Ownership of Assets,” Blue Book of Basic Documents*

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

## **Your Council's Role**

When you are set up for success, you are better able to set up your girls for success! That's why every year, your council provides trainings, guidelines, and procedures for conducting the Girl Scout Cookie Program and fall product program and determines how the proceeds and product rewards system will be managed. Check the cookie section <https://www.gssjc.org/en/cookies/about-girl-scout-cookies.html> of your council's website to find the answers you need as well as local trainings and resources.

Each council also selects the vendors of its choice to provide the products for their product programs. Two commercial bakers are licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies: [Little Brownie Bakers](#) and [ABC Bakers](#). You can also [Meet the Cookies](#) and find additional info on cookie varieties, including nutritional details.

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



## Your Role

You play an exciting role in giving your Girl Scouts opportunities to practice the five skills as they learn how to think like entrepreneurs. Some of the things you'll do include:

- Get girls excited about the opportunities to support the troop (but allowing their participation to be voluntary).
- Support both [competitive and apprehensive cookie bosses](#), helping all your girls set meaningful goals for themselves.
- [Fostering partnerships with each Girl Scout's family](#) to ensure cookie season success, whatever that may look like for her, will help you build a positive partnership with girls and families, and the [Cookie Entrepreneur Family pin](#) is designed to help families support girls' growth at home.

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

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

Another critical task for each troop is to establish a clear accounting system for all proceeds and product during the programs. It's up to you to make sure that money is spent wisely, that excellent records are kept (remember to keep copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and that all product is tracked. For older girls, your job is to oversee their work as they learn to keep impeccable records. Be sure to attend product program orientation or training so you are aware of the systems and helpful tools available.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and the fall product program can be exhilarating and busy times during the troop year, but you're never alone in your efforts! You can reach out to your service unit product program manager when you're feeling stuck, or you can [build a cookie team](#) to provide the support your troop needs.

## Product Program Safety

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

## Selling Cookies Online

GSSJC uses ABC's [SmartCookies](#) digital platform for online cookie sales. Check the specific guidelines provided by ABC before participating. Before girls begin selling online, they should partner with their troop leader and families to learn how to safely run their business online.



A few more online safety practices to keep in mind:

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

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

## **The Buddy System**

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

## **Preparing for Your Girl Scout Cookie Booth**

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

Please check your local COVID-19 guidelines for any restrictions on booth locations and other safety considerations, or [consider a virtual cookie booth](#) or [virtual cookie rally](#) if it makes sense for your troop.

- **All cookie booths held in Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council must be approved by the Product Sales Department prior to holding the booth.**

And keep in mind: As a rule, at least two volunteers (at least one of whom is a registered Girl Scout volunteer with the required background check and training) and two Girl Scouts must always be present at the stand. With two or more volunteers, you'll have adequate booth coverage if the girls need to be accompanied to the restroom. From time to time, parents/guardians and their daughters may host a booth. Watch for guidance from the product sales team when Guardian/Daughter booths are appropriate and available.

Create a great cookie booth experience for your Girl Scouts by:

- Using your best judgment in setting up cookie booths in locations that will be open, accessible, and safe for all Girl Scouts and potential customers.
- Choosing a high traffic area—this could be your local supermarket, mall, or park—where you'll maximize the number of visitors to your booth.
- Checking out your booth site ahead of the sale. Talk to business owners in the area so they'll know what to expect. Find out what security measures are in place—these may include lights for evening sales and whether a security camera watches the booth area—and where the nearest bathrooms are located.
- Respecting the surrounding businesses by making sure your booth isn't blocking a store entrance or exit.

Encouraging your Girl Scouts to unleash their creativity—and work on their advertising skills—to make colorful signs and booth decorations that potential customers can't resist! Remind girls to be polite and to have their sales pitch ready for interested customers.

And keep in mind:

- A minimum of two volunteers (at least one of whom is a registered Girl Scout volunteer with the required background check), and one Girl Scout should be present at the booth at all times. With two or more volunteers, you'll have adequate booth coverage if the girls need to be accompanied to the restroom.
- If your Daisies are still learning how to make correct change, help them handle money as needed. But remember that girls make all sales at the booth!
- Changing your cookie booth hours or location? Keep your customers in the loop and update your baker's Digital Cookie or Smart Cookie system with the new details. All scheduled booths are available on the Cookie Finder App ([iOS](#) or [Android](#)).
- Certain locations may be inappropriate for younger Girl Scouts based on the standards of your local community, may negatively impact the cookie program experience for girls, and/or may negatively impact our brand in your community. For additional clarity, girls should not sell in or in front of establishments that they themselves cannot legally patronize.
- Additionally, with respect to marijuana dispensaries, we have been steadfastly combating the unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout trademark by the cannabis community, which has been marketing—without our authorization—certain cannabis products under our youth-appealing brand. We are continuing to aggressively fight these unauthorized uses of the

Girl Scout brand and hope that our councils and volunteers will join Girl Scouts of the USA's efforts by discouraging cookie booth locations at such locations.

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

**For all accidents or injuries**, please use the GSSJC Incident Report Form O-73C and follow the instructions on the emergency wallet card O-73B. For more information, refer to the GSSJC Emergency Procedures document O-73D.

## Cookie Donation Programs

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

With cookie donations, remember that:

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

## Handling Product Complaints

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

## Recognizing Cookie Sellers in the Media

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

- There are many impressive cookie bosses throughout the United States, and the Girl Scout organization will continue to recognize dynamic cookie entrepreneurs for various achievements tied to the Girl Scout Cookie Program and through their participation in Girl Scouts.

- Girl Scouts of the USA does not currently track the top seller(s) of Girl Scout Cookies on a national level and does not identify a specific Girl Scout as the number one or “record-breaking” national cookie seller.
- Girl Scout councils should not reference such girls as “top sellers” in the media. Doing so detracts from the essence of the Girl Scout Cookie Program, which is based on offering girls important experiences in entrepreneurship, business, and finance from a young age as well as providing girls and local Girl Scout councils with the funds necessary to power amazing experiences and opportunities for Girl Scouts year-round.

## Additional Resources and Support

So how are you feeling? Excited? Anxious? Not quite sure yet? That’s ok, it’s normal. We know that volunteering isn’t always easy, especially when you’re new, so we can’t thank you enough for jumping in to be the mentor and role model she needs! Guiding your Girl Scouts—even if you’re still figuring things out—is nothing short of amazing!

The important thing to remember is, you’re not alone. We are in this with you, ready to help and support you at all times! Thanks again! It’s going to be a great Girl Scout year!

You may contact us at [customerservice@sjgs.org](mailto:customerservice@sjgs.org) or 713-292-0300 for guidance and support.