

Product Sales Program for Independent Girls

Overview

Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles' (GSGLA) Product Sales Program for Independent Girls creates an opportunity for Girl Scouts who are not part of a troop to participate in the Annual Girl Scout Cookie Program. Girls experience the program, gain new skills, and earn funds to achieve their goals.



As the Cookie Program is largely designed to be implemented through the Troop Pathway, the Product Sales Program for Independent Girls creates an alternative structure to experience the program. Other pathways include a Series, Event, Travel or Camp pathway. The program is designed to be as simple as possible and meets all GSGLA and GSUSA requirements.

To participate, a girl must be registered as a Girl Scout and can be a Juliette, in a community-based group, a Journey Girl Program or waiting to be placed into an existing troop. Please note that a Girl Scout cannot withdraw from a troop to participate in the Product Sales Program for Independent Girls.

The Business of Cookies

Launched in 1917, the Girl Scout Cookie Program has grown into the leading business and economic education opportunity by and for girls. The Girl Scout Cookie Program has helped make Girl Scouting America's premier leadership development experience for girls. Girls learn the "**5 Skills for Girls**" that are the foundation of the Girl Scout Cookie Program:

1. **Goal Setting** - helps girls set and meet deadlines of all kinds
2. **Decision Making** - girls learn critical thinking and how to prioritize to reach objectives
3. **Money Management** - girls learn the practical side of how to live within a budget
4. **People Skills** - girls learn real world examples of customer service
5. **Business Ethics** - girls develop positive values of being honest, reliable and trustworthy

Program Basics

- Each girl has a volunteer mentor who functions as the girl's cookie chair and reports to their Product Sales Manager (PSM). The PSM functions as the service unit chair.
- Mentors are volunteers, usually with extensive experience in product sales. The mentor works with the girl to teach her about the cookie program, guides her in developing her personal goals, coaches her progress, and celebrates her successes.
- Parents or guardians must give written permission for their girl to participate and to assume financial responsibility for their girl's product.
- In addition to the skills learned, girls who participate in the program can experience aspects such as attending Cookie Kick-Off and Cookie University and earning recognitions. They are eligible for troop proceeds (see Troop Proceeds section) and can place initial orders and host booth sites. Community-based groups are invited to sign up for corporate and special sporting event booths as well.



Program Delivery

- Mentors will meet with their girls and parents on a regular basis during the program to provide important information, collect orders, deliver product, receipt payments, etc.
- Mentors are encouraged to utilize the age-specific program curriculum, provided through the Troop Activity Kits produced by Little Brownie Bakers, in addition to GSGLA program specifics and her personal knowledge as part of the cookie program experience.
- Girls may choose to earn the *Money Counts*, *Meet My Customers*, *Customer Insights* patch programs as well as the annual *Cookie Activity Pin*.

Order Taking

- Independent girls are provided a cookie order card to take orders from family, friends and neighbors.
- Mentors will collect the cookie orders from their girls and submit them as part of the initial order, which is the first phase of the cookie program.
- Mentors should also register their girl/group with the Cookie Club, available during cookie season at www.girlscoutsla.org. This is a GSUSA-approved and safe email marketing system for girls to reach their potential customers online.

Emails are sent to friends and families through the system, announcing the girl's participation in the cookie program. In response, customers make 'E-Promises' to purchase cookies. The girl then submits these as part of her initial order.

- Initial orders are submitted online through eBudde, GSGLA's web-based product sales software. Initial order cookies are distributed to troops and Independent Girls about 10 days later, for further distribution to their customers who placed an order.
- Girls collect payment in full as cookies are delivered. All payments are given to the mentor, who will complete the receipting process. Girls or parents should never hold onto or deposit sale proceeds. All Independent Girl monies are managed by GSGLA at all times.
- Mentors keep track of sales and collections for each Independent Girl using eBudde.
- At any given time, an Independent Girl can have only a maximum of 50 cookie boxes for orders whose payments will be made upon delivery (a maximum 'credit limit' of \$200). Mentors may place lower credit limits if warranted. Independent Girls must remit collections to the mentor immediately to facilitate a pay as you go structure. Boothing works a bit different. Mentors will sign out a logical quantity to have a successful booth without running out (in excess of 50 boxes), but all monies and leftover boxes must be remitted immediately after the booth back to the mentor (also see Boothing Opportunities and Cupboard sections).





Boothing Opportunities

Independent Girls can participate in the extensive boothing opportunities that exist for the cookie program. Mentors can sign up their girls for open booths available through the eBudde Booth Scheduler.

Independent Girls can anticipate sharing a booth site with another Independent Girl. Together, they can set up the booth and share in customer interactions.

Also, girls may have specific opportunities at locations such as their church, school, local sporting event, etc. These must be approved by their mentor and a Service Unit Boothing Chair.

The mentor should review the relevant boothing-related Safety Activity Checkpoints in the *Volunteer Essentials* handbook (available at www.girlscoutsla.org) with her girl and her parents. One such safety guideline is that there must always be two adults (one of which must be female) at every booth location.

All girls and adults participating in a boothing opportunity are encouraged to be familiar with boothing etiquette, learned through the cookie program, and represent herself and Girl Scouts with honor (also see Order Taking and Cupboard sections).



Troop Proceeds (without the troop)

Troop proceed sharing is set up differently for the Product Sales Program for Independent Girls. In a troop setting, troops receive \$0.75 per box as troop proceeds and use the monies earned for troop activities throughout the year, including service projects and larger plans such as travel and camping excursions. This structure allows for the troops to earn funds for each box sold.

Proceed sharing is different for the Product Sales Program for Independent Girls because from a legal standpoint, the IRS views an individual girl as a commissioned salesperson if she receives proceeds on a per box basis. As such, GSGLA will provide \$15.00 in proceeds per 20 box increments. Proceeds are NOT on a per box basis.

Troop proceeds are remitted to Independent Girls via a GSGLA Gift Card. The funds can only be spent within GSGLA, including in the Council Shop, for membership registration, or program and camp events. Girls can also apply their proceeds to an approved "Destination" program. Journey Girls' proceeds are held by GSGLA and disbursed in response to that group's collective needs or directives.

Gift of Caring Program

Independent Girls are strongly encouraged to consider the council-wide Gift of Caring (GOC) program as an important component of their overall sales strategy.

GSGLA sets a goal of 6 GOC boxes per girl. Girls will learn from their mentor how the GOC Program works and how easily it can be marketed to customers.



The GSGLA cookie program advocates that every customer be asked to purchase at least one GOC box.

Girls will quickly discover that the public has a great appreciation for GSGLA's Gift of Caring partners and gladly supports their needs. Subsequently, this reinforces the girl's concept of public support for community and Girl Scouts.



Recognitions

Each year, GSGLA expends considerable time and effort to develop a comprehensive selection of girl recognitions that are designed to inspire and motivate girls. Independent Girls participate fully in the recognition plan, which includes all patches, Initial Order incentives and the Club 500 and Elite 1000 council-wide events. By definition, Independent Girls are not part of a troop and are not eligible for troop level or service unit level recognitions. Mentors will be notified when the recognitions are available and will arrange for delivery to their girls as soon as practical.

Money Matters & Record Keeping

Each Independent Girl must have a signed *Parent/Guardian Permission & Responsibility Agreement* on file prior to receiving an order card. eBudde is used to record and track all sales, monies collected and remitted by girls, and any balances due for sales made.

Parents should remit funds promptly and frequently and never deposit into a personal account. Doing so violates IRS regulations surrounding GSGLA's non-profit status. Parents should also be aware that product cannot be returned and exchanges are allowed only during specific dates, and within defined circumstances. All transactions should be receipted for the complete documentation of product and money.

Cupboards

Mentors should place pending orders in eBudde for additional orders that a girl needs. These orders are at the girl level and indicate financial responsibility lies with the girl's parent/guardian. Product is issued to the mentor or other GSGLA staff member who in turn relays the product to the girl's parent/guardian. Parents may pick up directly from a cupboard if the mentor has approved and entered the parent into eBudde.

Mentors must be aware of the girl's outstanding balance due to GSGLA prior to placing a reservation. Girls must never have more than 50 boxes (\$200) owed to GSGLA at any given time (also see Order Taking, last bullet point, and Boothing Opportunities sections).



**Every Cookie Has a Mission:
so Independent Girls Can Fulfill
Their Dreams!**

