Chapter 3: Troop Management

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you’ll have the opportunity to guide girls of all backgrounds, behaviors, skills, and abilities. You’ll help her develop leadership skills she can use now and as she grows—all in a safe and accepting environment. This chapter gives you tips for doing just that.

Arranging a Time and Place for Girl-Led Meetings

When and how often to meet is up to you, your co-volunteers, parents, and girls: It may just be one time for this particular group of girls. Or, if you meet regularly, what day and time work best for the girls, for you, for your co-volunteers, and for other adults who will be presenting or mentoring? Once per week, twice a month, once a month? Is after-school best? Can your co-volunteers meet at that time, or will meetings work better in the evenings or on the weekends?

Where to meet can be a bit trickier: A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all girls. You might consider using meeting rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places girls enjoy spending time.

Here are a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations:

➢ Cost: The space should be free to use.
➢ Size: Make sure the space is large enough to accommodate 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: Determine what types of furnishings (table? chairs?) come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby of some sort, where you can store supplies.
➢ Safety: Ensure that the space is safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and has at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure first aid equipment is on hand.
➢ Facilities: Sanitary and accessible toilets are critical.
➢ Communication-friendly: Be sure your cell phone works in the meeting space.
➢ Allergen-free: Ensure that pet dander and other common allergens won’t bother susceptible girls during meetings.
➢ Accessibility: Be sure the space can accommodate girls with disabilities, as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.

If this is your first time asking for a Girl Scout meeting place, here are a few speaking points to get you started:

“I’m a Girl Scout volunteer, with a group of ______ girls. We’re doing lots of great things for girls and for the community, like _____ and _______. We’re all about leadership—the kind that girls use in their daily lives and the kind that makes our community better. We’d love to hold our meetings here because ______.”

Girl Scout Group Size

Girl Scout groups are large enough to provide a cooperative learning environment and small enough to allow for development of individual girls. It is recommended that group sizes, when possible, are as follows:

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

A Girl Scout troop/group must have at minimum, five girls and two approved adult volunteers. Adults and girls registering in groups of less than five girls and /or two approved, unrelated adult volunteers at least one of whom is female, will be registered as individual Girl Scouts to more accurately reflect their status and experience. Individual girls are still welcome to participate in Girl Scout activities and events.

Securing a Site

In looking for a troop meeting space, leaders may be required, by the site, to fill out school permits or facility use agreements and to provide proof of GSGLA insurance or obtain proof of insurance coverage from the venue. Please contact the support specialist at your nearest service center or email COI@girlscoutsla.org for assistance with this process. Please allow a minimum of 10 business days for processing.
Understanding Healthy Development in Girls

Just being attentive to what girls are experiencing as they mature is a big help to girls. So take some time to understand the likes, needs, and abilities of girls at different ages. As you listen and learn along with girls, you may find it useful to review the highlights of their development. What follows are the developmental abilities and needs of girls at various grade levels. You’ll also find these listed in the adult guide of each leadership Journey. Plus, the activities in the Journeys are set up with the following guidelines in mind! Of course, each girl is an individual, so these are only guidelines that help you get to know the girls.

### Girl Scout Daisies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the Girl Scout Daisy level (grades K–1), girls . . .</th>
<th>This means . . .</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.</td>
<td>They’ll enjoy going on nature walks and outdoor scavenger hunts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are great builders and budding artists, though they are still developing their fine motor skills.</td>
<td>Encouraging them to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need assistance holding scissors, cutting in a straight line, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love to move and dance.</td>
<td>They might especially enjoy marching like a penguin, dancing like a dolphin, or acting out how they might care for animals in the jungle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.</td>
<td>Showing instead of telling, for example, about how animals are cared for. Plan visits to animal shelters, farms, or zoos; meet care providers; or make a creative bird feeder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are only beginning to learn about basic number concepts, time, and money.</td>
<td>You’ll want to take opportunities to count out supplies together—and, perhaps, the legs on a caterpillar!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are just beginning to write and spell, and they don’t always have the words for what they’re thinking or feeling.</td>
<td>That having girls draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate is easier and more meaningful for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to follow simple directions and respond well to recognition for doing so.</td>
<td>Being specific and offering only one direction at a time. Acknowledge when girls have followed directions well to increase their motivation to listen and follow again.</td>
</tr>
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### Girl Scout Brownies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the Girl Scout Brownie level (grades 2–3), girls . . .</th>
<th>This means . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have lots of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.</td>
<td>Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are social and enjoy working in groups.</td>
<td>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.</td>
<td>Letting girls lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow girls as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.</td>
<td>Doing more than just reading to girls about the Brownie Elf’s adventures. Ask girls questions to gauge their understanding and allow them to role play their own pretend visit to a new country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need clear directions and structure, and like knowing what to expect.</td>
<td>Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share it at the start.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.</td>
<td>Offering support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, etc.</td>
<td>Encouraging girls to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need some assistance, however, holding scissors, threading needles, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.</td>
<td>Girls might like to create a play about welcoming a new girl to their school, or tell a story through dance or creative movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job done well.</td>
<td>Acknowledging when the girls have listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the Girl Scout Junior level (grades 4–5), girls . . . | This means . . .
---|---
Want to make decisions and express their opinions. | 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.
Are social and enjoy doing things in groups. | Allowing girls to team-up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities.
Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others. | 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.
Are concerned about equity and fairness. | Not shying away from discussing why rules are in place, and having girls develop their own rules for their group.
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. | Asking girls to explain why they made a decision, share their visions of their roles in the future, and challenge their own and others’ perspectives.
Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination. | Engaging girls in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow girls to express themselves through written word, choreography, and so on.
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance. | Girls might like to tell a story through playwriting, playing an instrument, or choreographing a dance.
May be starting puberty, which means beginning breast development, skin changes, and weight changes. Some may be getting their periods. | 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.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>At the Girl Scout Cadette level (grades 6–8), girls . . .</th>
<th>This means . . .</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are going through puberty, including changes in their skin, body-shape, and weight. They’re also starting their menstrual cycles and have occasional shifts in mood.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be very self-conscious—wanting to be like everyone else, but fearing they are unique in their thoughts and feelings.</td>
<td>Encouraging girls to share, but only when they are comfortable. At this age, they may be more comfortable sharing a piece of artwork or a fictional story than their own words. Throughout the activities, highlight and discuss differences as positive, interesting, and beautiful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home.</td>
<td>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience what’s known as “fun failure:” girls learn from trying something new and making mistakes.</td>
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## Girl Scout Seniors

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the Girl Scout Senior level (grades 9–10), girls . . .</th>
<th>This means . . .</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are beginning to clarify their own values, consider alternative points of view on controversial issues, and see multiple aspects of a situation.</td>
<td>Asking girls to explain the reasoning behind their decisions. Engage girls in role-play and performances, where others can watch and offer alternative solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and are able to plan and reflect on their own learning experiences.</td>
<td>Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.</td>
<td>Girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They’ll also want to tackle relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.</td>
<td>Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn’t just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and so on.</td>
<td>Acknowledging girls’ pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home.</td>
<td>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience what’s known as “fun failure:” girls learn from trying something new and making mistakes.</td>
</tr>
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## Girl Scout Ambassadors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the Girl Scout Ambassador level (grades 11–12), girls . . .</th>
<th>This means . . .</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can see the complexity of situations and controversial issues—they understand that problems often have no clear solution and that varying points of view may each have merit.</td>
<td>Inviting girls to develop stories as a group, and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have strong problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, and can adapt logical thinking to real-life situations. Ambassadors recognize and incorporate practical limitations to solutions.</td>
<td>Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.</td>
<td>Girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They’ll also want to tackle relationship issues through artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.</td>
<td>Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn’t just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, etc.</td>
<td>Acknowledging girls’ pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home—and are looking to their futures.</td>
<td>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience what’s known as “fun failure.” Girls learn from trying something new and making mistakes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creating a Safe Space for Girls

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

The environment you create is as important—maybe more—than the activities girls do; it’s the key to developing the sort of group that girls want to be part of. The following sections share some tips on creating a warm, safe environment for girls.

Girl-Adult Partnership

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

The three Girl Scout processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) are integral to the girl-adult partnership. Take time to read about the processes and think about how to incorporate them into your group’s experiences. (See the “Girl Scouting as a National Experience” chapter of this handbook for more about using the Journey adult guides.)

Recognizing and Supporting Each Girl

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

➢ Regular “circle times” (sharing circles) at your meetings to give girls a chance to talk about and role-play ways of showing acceptance and support.
➢ Team-building games and activities, including the processing or reflection (very important!).
➢ Turn self-esteem activities around so they focus on the other person. Look for resource materials in the Resource section of the GSGLA website.
➢ Activities from the It’s Your Story-Tell It! Journey series.

Promoting Fairness

Girls are sensitive to injustice. They forgive mistakes if they are sure you are trying to be fair. They look for fairness in the ways responsibilities are shared, in handling of disagreements, and in responses to performance and accomplishment. When possible, consult girls as to what they think is fair before decisions are made. Explain your reasoning and show why you did something. Be willing to apologize if needed. Try to see that the 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.

Inclusion Statement

Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles strives to provide resources to volunteers working with girls with developmental disabilities, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, or multiple disabilities. Adhere to the following inclusion statement, “As a Girl Scout of Greater Los Angeles member, I will do my best to think, speak, and act in ways that ensure everyone across GSGLA feels they belong and can meaningfully participate in all aspects of Girl Scouting regardless of ability, age, culture, education, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.” For more information on how to handle sensitive issues, please visit the website here http://www.girlscouts.org/en/faq/faq/social-issues.html.
**Building Trust**

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

**Managing Conflict**

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

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

If a conflict persists, be sure you explain the matter to your service unit manager. If the service unit manager cannot help you resolve the issues satisfactorily (or if the problem involves the SUM), contact your support specialist.

** Inspiring Open Communication**

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

**Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age**

When communicating with girls, consider the following tips:

- **Listen**: Listening to girls, as opposed to telling them what to think, feel, or do (no “you should”) is the first step in helping them take ownership of their program.
- **Be honest**: If you’re not comfortable with a topic or activity, say so. No one expects you to be an expert on every topic. Ask for alternatives or seek out volunteers with the required expertise. (Owning up to mistakes—and apologizing for them—goes a long way with girls.)
- **Be open to real issues**: For girls, important topics are things like relationships, peer pressure, school, money, drugs, and other serious issues. (You’ll also have plenty of time to discuss less weighty subjects.) When you don’t know, listen. Also seek help from GSGLA staff if you need assistance or more information than you currently have.
- **Show respect**: Girls often say that their best experiences were the ones where adults treated them as equal partners. Being spoken to as a young adult helps them grow.
- **Offer options**: Providing flexibility in changing needs and interests shows that you respect the girls and their busy lives. But whatever option is chosen, girls at every grade level also want guidance and parameters.
- **Stay current**: Be aware of the TV shows girls watch, movies they like, books and magazines they read, and music they listen to—not to pretend you have the same interests, but to show you’re interested in their world.
One way to communicate with girls is through the LUTE method—listen, understand, tolerate, and empathize. Here is a breakdown of the acronym LUTE to remind you of how to respond when a girl is upset, angry, or confused.

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

### Addressing the Needs of Older Girls

Consider the following tips when working with teenage girls:

- Think of yourself as a partner, and as a coach or mentor, as needed (not a “leader”).
- Ask girls what rules they need for safety and what group agreements they need to be a good team.
- Understand that girls need time to talk, unwind, and have fun together.
- Ask what they think and what they want to do.
- Encourage girls to speak their minds.
- Provide structure, but don’t micromanage.
- Give everyone a voice in the group.
- Treat girls like partners.
- Don’t repeat what’s said in the group to anyone outside of it (unless necessary for a girl’s safety).

### Girl Scout Research Institute

It’s amazing what you can learn when you listen to girls. Since its founding in 2000, the Girl Scout Research Institute has become an internationally recognized center for research and public policy information on the development and well-being of girls. Not just Girl Scouts, but all girls. In addition to research staff, the GSRI draws on experts in child development, education, business, government, and the not-for-profit sector. We provide the youth development field with definitive research reviews that consolidate existing studies. And, by most measures, we are now the leading source of original research on the issues that girls face and the social trends that affect their lives. Visit [www.girlscouts.org/research](http://www.girlscouts.org/research).

In *More than ‘Smores: Success and Surprises in Girl Scouts Outdoor Experiences*, the Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) has described the role of adult volunteers: “Because everything girls do outdoors in Girl Scouts must be supported by an adult, these results speak indirectly to adult volunteers and their preparation. To get girls outdoors more regularly, Girl Scouts need adult volunteers who encourage and promote outdoor experiences. Communicating to volunteers and parents that casual outdoor experiences are effective ways of giving girls opportunities to build competencies and try new things may be the key to opening the gateway for all Girl Scouts to participate in the outdoors on a more regular basis.” [http://www.girlscouts.org/content/dam/girlscouts-gsusa/forms-and-documents/about-girl-scouts/research/GSRI_More_than_Smores-Outdoor_Experiences.pdf](http://www.girlscouts.org/content/dam/girlscouts-gsusa/forms-and-documents/about-girl-scouts/research/GSRI_More_than_Smores-Outdoor_Experiences.pdf)
When Sensitive Topics Come Up

We often think sensitive topics are unique to tweens and teens, but leaders of third-grade Brownies often have to deal with “periods,” growing up, cliques, bullies, and gossip. Any age group may have questions about racial and ethnic differences, disabilities, size/weight, climate change/global warming, and death or dying. In some communities, any or all of these may be sensitive topics. According to Feeling Safe: What Girls Say, a 2003 Girl Scout Research Institute study, girls are looking for groups that allow connection and a sense of close friendship. They want volunteers who are teen savvy and can help them with issues they face, such as bullying, peer pressure, dating, athletic and academic performance, and more. Some of these issues may be considered “sensitive” by parents, and they may have opinions or input about how, and whether, Girl Scouts should cover these topics with their daughters.

Girl Scouts welcomes and serves girls and families from a wide spectrum of faiths and cultures. When girls wish to participate in discussions or activities that could be considered sensitive—even for some—put the topic on hold until you have spoken with parents and received guidance from GSGLA staff. Follow this link to access the Parent Permission for Sensitive Topics Form. http://www.girlscouts.org/en/faq/faq/social-issues.html

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

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

Parents/caregivers 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 our GSGLA’s guidelines for obtaining written permission.

What to do if you have concerns:

Volunteers are not mandated reporters, but if a child is in immediate danger, call 911 or the local police. Keep the child in your care until appropriate assistance arrives.

When a Girl Scout volunteer observes physical injuries of a suspicious nature, receives a report or accusation of sexual abuse, learns that a child is fearful of returning home, and/or has been abandoned by the parents or caregivers, the volunteer must call GSGLA immediately on GSGLA’s 24 Hour Emergency Line: (877) ICE-GSLA (877-423-4752). Within 72 hours of the calling the emergency line, an accident/incident Report should be completed either via eform (https://www.gsglavolunteerapps.org/gsglaaccidentincidentreport/) or paper form (http://www.girlscouts-la.org/content/dam/girlscouts-girlscouts-la/documents/membership/Accident_and_Incident_Report_Form.pdf) sent to RiskManagement@girlscouts-la.org. This information is considered confidential. Therefore, after it is reported to law enforcement and the appropriate person at GSGLA, it should be discussed on a need to know basis only, to protect the privacy of the child.

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, and you are in a unique position to identify a situation in which a girl may need help. If you believe a girl is at risk of hurting herself or others, your role is to promptly bring that information to her parent/caregiver or support specialist so she can get the expert assistance she needs. Your concern about a girl’s well-being and safety is taken seriously, and GSGLA will guide you in addressing these concerns.

- Contact your support specialist and find out how to refer the girl and her parent/caregiver to experts at school or in the community.
- Share your concern with the girl’s family, if this is feasible.
Here are a few signs that could indicate a girl needs expert help:

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

Working with Parents and Caregivers

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

Advocating for Girls

The Girl Scouts Public Policy and Advocacy Office in Washington, D.C., builds relationships with members of Congress, White House officials, and other federal departments and agencies, continuously informing and educating them about issues important to girls and Girl Scouting. The office also supports Girl Scout councils at the state and local levels, as they build capacity to be the voice for girls. These advocacy efforts help demonstrate to lawmakers that Girl Scouts is a resource and an authority on issues affecting girls. Visit the Advocacy office at www.girlscouts.org/who_we_are/advocacy.

Using “I” Statements

Perhaps the most important tip for communicating with parents/caregivers is for you to use “I” statements instead of “you” statements. “I” statements, which are detailed in the oMAZE Journey for Girl Scout Cadettes, tell someone what you need from her or him, while “you” statements may make the person feel defensive.

Here are some examples of “you” statements:

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

Now look at “I” statements:

➢ “I’d like to help your daughter learn to take more responsibility.”
➢ “I’d really appreciate your help with registration.”
If you need help with specific scenarios involving parents/caregivers, try the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If a Parent or Caregiver . . .</th>
<th>You Can Say . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is uninvolved and asks how she can help but seems to have no idea of how to follow through or take leadership of even the smallest activity,</td>
<td>“I do need your help. Here are some written guidelines on how to prepare for our camping trip.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantly talks about all the ways you could make the group better,</td>
<td>“I need your leadership. Your project ideas you’d like to develop and lead can fit well in our plans. Let’s put your ideas in writing, and perhaps I can help you carry them out.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tells you things like, “Denise’s mother is on welfare, and Denise really doesn’t belong in this group,”</td>
<td>“I need your sensitivity. Girl Scouting is for all girls, and by teaching your daughter to be sensitive to others’ feelings you help teach the whole group sensitivity.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifts parental responsibilities to you and is so busy with her own life that she allows no time to help,</td>
<td>“I love volunteering for Girl Scouts and want to make a difference. If you could take a few moments from your busy schedule to let me know what you value about what we’re doing, I’d appreciate it. It would keep me going for another year.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

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

Inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. Inclusion is about belonging, about all girls being offered the same opportunities, about respect and dignity, and about honoring the uniqueness of and differences among us all. You’re 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.

A Variety of Formats for Publications

The Hispanic population is the largest-growing in the United States, which is why Girls Scouts has translated many of its publications into Spanish. Over time, Girl Scouts will continue to identify members’ needs and produce resources to support those needs, including translating publications into additional languages and formats. See the GSUSA website for more details www.girlscouts.org/espanol/.

Supporting Girls with Special Needs

Girl Scouts welcomes those who’s learning or physical disabilities may limit their activities but not their hopes and achievements. The Girl Scout Leadership Experience is flexible enough that most girls and adults of any ability can participate.
As a volunteer, your interactions with girls present an opportunity to improve the way society views girls (and their parents/caregivers) with disabilities. Historically, disabilities have been looked at from a deficit viewpoint with a focus on how people with disabilities could be fixed. Today, the focus is on a person’s abilities—on what she can do rather than on what she cannot.

Girl Scouts can increase socialization skills that help them to interact with others appropriately. It can help build gross and fine motor skills, and it can increase tolerance to different textures, noises, and lights. It can be beneficial for typical girls as well as they can learn to accept differences and develop patience. They can learn how to understand others and move past first impressions and get to know someone as an individual.

Please respect the privacy of the medical diagnosis of the child unless the parent has given permission to discuss/inform others. Prior to sharing any information about the girl’s needs or diagnoses, it is critical to attain the parent’s written permission. A form is included in the AbilityGS Guide for Leaders.

Initially, communicating with the parents is important to discuss any necessary accommodations the girl may require. In some cases, it will be advisable to ask the parent to be present for the meetings initially. The eventual goal is for the girl to be independent. The gradual process can involve the parent being in the back of the room, then the room next door, and then in their car. If necessary, please develop a plan with the girl’s parents about how to support her.

When talking to a girl with a disability, please speak directly to her, not through a parent/caregiver and treat her as you would any other girl in the troop to the extent it is possible. There may be an exception, however with girls with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Speaking directly to a girl with ASD might be uncomfortable for her when delegating duties, especially in front of the other girls. It may be helpful to email the parents ahead of time to let them know what will be taking place at the meeting. Children with ASD prefer structure so it’s a good idea to structure every meeting and activity. They prefer to know what they’re going to be doing and what is expected of them. They don’t like last-minute changes and might get upset with changes that couldn’t be helped e.g. a co-leader not being there because she is sick. It’s helpful to announce shifts e.g. ‘in five minutes, we’ll be switching to another activity’.

Please be aware it is offensive to call anyone a "retard". It is a hurtful and rude word, even when used about yourself. In addition, note that people-first language puts the person before the disability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say . . .</th>
<th>Instead of . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She has Autism Spectrum Disorder.</td>
<td>She is an Autistic girl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She has an intellectual disability.</td>
<td>She is a mentally retarded girl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is a girl with a physical disability.</td>
<td>She is a physically-handicapped girl.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is correct to refer to a person who cannot hear as Deaf or Hard of Hearing (HH). "Hearing Impaired" is considered by many to be politically incorrect because they are not disabled or impaired and are completely capable of doing anything except hear. When speaking to a girl who is deaf and using an interpreter, speak to the girl, not the interpreter.

If you have girls with mobility challenges, please call or check the website of the location prior to any meeting/event to make sure they can accommodate any needs your girls might have. Leaning on a girl's wheelchair is invading her space and is considered annoying and rude. When speaking for more than a few minutes to a girl who uses a wheelchair, place yourself at her eye level. It’s okay to offer assistance to a girl with a disability but wait until your offer is accepted before you begin to help.

When greeting a girl with a visual impairment, always identify yourself and others. You might say, "Hi, it's Sheryl. Tara is on my right and Chris is on my left." If they would like you to guide them, touch your arm to their arm. This will allow them to find your elbow. Do not pet a seeing-eye dog or make eye contact with them. While they are working, their main responsibility is the safety of their owner.

If you have girls with food intolerances/allergies, please make sure there is an option they can select. Accommodations can be made e.g. if a girl has an intolerance/allergy to chocolate, s'mores can be served but hers will be with graham crackers and marshmallows only. The goal is to make her feel included without depriving the other girls.
Leaders are entitled to determine when a girl has completed the requirements for badges. Earning badges is very flexible and adaptive. The girl and her parents should be the leader’s guides when adapting a badge.

Girls with intellectual 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 intellectual disabilities may choose to retain their girl membership through their 21st year, and then move into an adult membership category.

If a child is recognized by the family and school/community as a girl, and lives culturally as a girl, the Girl Scouts can serve her in a setting that is both emotionally and physically safe. The welfare and best interests of the child are the top priority. External experts have shared that troops will be most successful if they invite the family of the transgender girl to work with them as a team to ensure that she has a safe and supported experience as a Girl Scout.

There is a manual AbilityGS Guide for Leaders available upon request. Please email support@girlscoutsla.org if you are interested or for any issues regarding Girl Scouts with special needs.

Girls with Cognitive Disabilities

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

Keeping Girls Engaged with Girl Scouts

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

➢ Some girls may want other options besides troops. That’s okay—Girl Scouts offers many ways to participate. Talk to girls about day and resident camp, travel opportunities, series offerings, and events GSGLA may offer. Older girls, especially, enjoy these shorter-term, flexible ways to be Girl Scouts.
➢ If big changes are happening in the troop (older girls bridging, leaders “retiring” or moving away) try to prepare the girls as far in advance as possible. Arrange for bridging girls to visit and do activities with their “new” troop*, and help them plan a special ceremony to celebrate advancing to the new level. Involve new troop volunteers (or potential volunteers) in troop meetings and activities so the girls get to know them and feel comfortable with them. If girls or adults are moving away, help the troop plan ways to stay in touch.
➢ If the whole troop is bridging, but you’re not planning to continue as their leader, we hope you will find lots of exciting ways to be involved in Girl Scouts, even if leading a troop no longer fits your life! Be sure to capture the girls’ excitement and work with them as they plan a meaningful bridging ceremony. Let your service unit manager know as soon as possible that you won’t be continuing, and offer to help find or recommend a replacement.
➢ Talk to girls about earning their Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, or Gold Awards, which are opportunities for them to make a dramatic difference in their communities—and to have plenty to brag about with college admissions officers, too.
➢ And what about you? If you want to stay with this troop, start working with them to plan their group activities next year. Are you ready to volunteer at camp? Help organize a series or event? Take a trip? The possibilities are endless.

*Talk to your service unit manager; find out if there are troops that will welcome bridging members, or if there is a plan to organize a new troop. If you find that a troop isn’t available for these girls, work with your staff support specialist to find other options—camp, series, event, and travel pathways for example!
Getting Started with the National Leadership Program through Journeys

The Girl Scout program is based on the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), in which girls Discover themselves, Connect with others, and Take Action to make the world a better place—all within the safety of an all-girl environment where girls take the lead, learn by doing, and learn cooperatively.

At the core of the GSLE are national leadership Journeys, fun and challenging experiences grouped around a theme and spread over a series of sessions. Each Journey has all the important components of the GSLE sewn right in. So, to guide girls on a great Journey, all you need is enthusiasm and a sense of adventure. Before you dive in, try these five simple tips:

1. **Choose a Journey.** Because Girl Scouting is girl-led, it’s important to give girls the chance to pick the Journey they want to do. Talk to them about what each Journey for their grade level is about and let them choose one. [http://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/journeys.html](http://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/journeys.html)

2. **Invite girls (and their parents/caregivers) to use their imaginations** to make the Journey come to life in ways that excite them. Remember that you and the girls don’t have to do everything exactly as laid out in the sample sessions.

3. **Step back and watch** how the girls, with your knowledge, support, and guidance, have enormous fun and a rewarding experience. Celebrate with them as they earn their national leadership Journey awards—and perhaps some Girl Scout badges, too!

Badges and Journeys

The Girl Scout Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is a great tool to access the newest Girl Scout Program content and is accessible on multiple devices. GSUSA has rolled out several new Journey Year Plans and badges for your girls to choose from, with some of the new content only being accessible through the VTK. To access the most complete and up-to-date information on the VTK and new badges and journeys, click here: [https://www.girlscouts.org/en/for-volunteers/online-support-for-volunteers.html](https://www.girlscouts.org/en/for-volunteers/online-support-for-volunteers.html)

Please note that this national tool is updated frequently. We encourage you to not print this resource but rather access it digitally. We will keep it up-to-date with material changes as needed.

The criteria to earn these awards can be accessed through the VTK or can be purchased in the council or online store.

Each Journey Year Plan is pre-populated with 15 meetings (6 for Multi-Level). A Journey isn’t complete until girls have completed the requirements for both the Journey and a Take Action Project. Each Journey Plan also comes pre-populated with supplemental badges that complement the Journey. This information is for Journeys only available through the VTK. For information on additional Journeys available, visit the online store.

How to Access the New Badges and Journeys

When you first log in to the VTK, you will need to choose a Year Plan. You can choose any of the pre-populated year plans, or you can choose to Create Your Own Year Plan. View our Navigating the Member Community User Manual for more detailed information.

Log in to the VTK

1. Login to the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)
2. You can access the VTK through the MyGS link at the top corner of our website.
3. Login using your GS Member Community login. If you do not have a login, please contact Customer Care at (213) 213-0123.
Choose a Year Plan
Daisy, Brownie, Junior, & Multi-Level troops:

- Select a year plan (Badge Year Plan, Journey Year Plan, or Create Your Own)
- Journey Year Plans will show you the new Journeys available. Look for this new icon.

To access the new Badges:

1. Go to the “YEAR PLAN” tab.
2. Search by Badge Name or use “Apply Filters” to select Grade Level from the Meeting Library.
3. Choose “Build Your Own”.
4. Search for a Journey, a Badge, or select options.
5. Make your selection.

TIP – If you find out your girls do not want to earn a particular badge, you can delete or replace the meeting. Meeting plans can also be combined for multiple levels in one meeting. See the Navigating the Member Community User Manual for guidance.

The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting and National Proficiency Badges

In addition to the Leadership Journeys, girls at each Girl Scout grade level have their own edition of The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting—a binder full of information about being a Girl Scout and how to earn certain badges, including ones about financial literacy and the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Girls who want to earn more badges can add them from a Skill Building Badge Set tied to the theme of the Journey they’ve chosen.

When a Girl Scout earns a badge, it shows that she’s learned a new skill, such as how to make a healthy snack or take great digital photos. It may even spark an interest at school or plant the seed for a future career. Please remember that we don’t expect you to be an expert in the badge topics; just have fun learning by doing with the girls! Check out the interactive Badge Explorer here: http://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/badges/badge_explorer.html
While you’re having fun, keep in mind: Badges are for educating girls, not for decorating their sashes and vests. The quality of a girl’s experience—and the skills and pride she gains from earning leadership awards and skill-building badges—far outweigh the quantity of badges she earns. If you’re working with Girl Scout Daisies, please note that they earn Petals and Leaves (which form a flower) instead of badges. There are several ways to supplement the National Program Portfolio and enhance girls’ time as Girl Scouts—and have fun while you’re doing it!

The Girl Scout Cookie Program

In addition to giving girls an opportunity to earn money to fund their Girl Scouting goals, taking part in the Girl Scout Cookie Program teaches girls five important skills that serve them throughout their lives: goal setting, money management, people skills, decision making, and business ethics. For more on everything involved in the Girl Scout Cookie Program, flip to “Managing Group Finances” in Chapter 5 of this handbook. Visit GSUSA at girlscouts.org and search Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin, to find this year’s requirements to earn the pin.

Outdoor Adventures

Being outside is a great way for girls to explore leadership, build skills, and develop a deep appreciation for nature. Whether they spend an afternoon exploring a local hiking trail or a week at camp, being outside gives girls an opportunity to grow, explore, and have fun in a whole new environment. For more information, visit www.girlscouts.org/program/basics/camping.
DAISY BADGES & JOURNEYS

**Petals & Leaves**
- Daisy Petals
- Making Choices
- Money Counts
- Count It Up
- Talk It Up

**Skill-Building Badges**
- Board Game Design Challenge
- Buddy Camper
- Daisy Show & CLimb Adventures
- Daisy Trail Adventure
- Eco Learner
- Good Neighbor
- Woodland Friends Challenge
- Outdoor Art Specialist
- Roller Coaster Design Challenge
- Space Science Explorer

**Progressive Badges**
- Cybersecurity
- Coding For Good
- Robotics

**Journeys**
- It's Your World—Change It!
- It's Your Planet—Love It!
- It's Your Story—Tell It!
  - Welcome to the Daisy Flower Garden
  - Between Earth and Sky
  - 5 Flowers, 4 Stories, 3 Chairs for Everyone

**Engineering Journey**
- Think Like an Engineer
- Take Action

**Computer Science Journey**
- Think Like a Programmer
- Take Action

**Outdoor Journey**
- Outdoor Art Specialist
- Buddy Camper
- Take Action

**Outdoor STEM Journey**
- Think Like a Citizen Scientist
- Take Action
BROWNIE BADGES & JOURNEYS

Skill-Building Badges

- Brownie First Aid
- Brownie Girl Scout Way
- Brownie Snow Traveler
- Brownie Trailblazer
- Brownie Space Traveler
- Brownie Water Traveler
- Brownie Forest Traveler
- Brownie Ocean Traveler
- Brownie Air Traveler
- Brownie Fire Safety
- Brownie Financial Wizard
- Brownie Customer Service
- Brownie Money Manager
- Brownie Self-Reliant
- Brownie Family Hero
- Brownie Great Day
- Brownie Outdoor Adventurer
- Brownie Outdoor Art Creator
- Brownie Painting
- Brownie Photography
- Brownie Philanthropy
- Brownie Peace
- Brownie Creative Challenge
- Brownie Science Challenge
- Brownie Social Skills
- Brownie Science Adventurer

Journeys

- It's Your World—Change it!
- It's Your Planet—Love it!
- It's Your Story—Tell it!

- Brownie Quest
- Brownie Wonders of Water
- A World of Girls

Engineering Journey

- Think like an Engineer
- Take Action

Computer Science Journey

- Think like a Programmer
- Take Action

Outdoor Journey

- Brownie Knit Club
- Hiker
- Cabin Camper
- Take Action

Outdoor STEM Journey

- Think like a Citizen Scientist
- Take Action
CADETTE BADGES & JOURNEYS

Skill-Building Badges

- Animal Helper
- Archery
- Babysitter
- Book Artist
- Budgeting
- Business Plan
- Cadette First Aid
- Cadette Give & Go Way
- Cadette Snow or Fishing Adventure
- Cadette Trail Adventure
- Comic Artist
- Companion Shopping
- Digital Movie Maker
- Fishing For You
- Food Tracker
- Entrepreneur
- Field Trip
- Financing My Dreams
- Finding Common Ground
- Good Sportsmanship
- Horticulture
- How Curious
- Night Owl
- Outdoor Art Apprentice
- Primitive Camper
- Public Speaker
- Science of Happiness
- Screenwriter
- Space Science Researcher
- Special Agent
- Thinking
- Trailblazing
- Trees
- Woodworker

Journeys

- It's Your World—Change It!
- It's Your Planet—Love It!
- It's Your Story—Tell It!

Progressive Badges

- Cybersecurity
- Coding For Good
- Robotics

Cybersecurity Basics
Cybersecurity Safeguards
Cybersecurity Investigator
Coding Basics
Digital Game Design
App Development
Programming Robots
Engineering Robots
Showcasing Robots

Engineering Journey
Computer Science Journey

- Think Like an Engineer
- Take Action
- Leader in Action
- Think Like a Programmer
- Take Action
- Leader in Action
- Think Like a Scientist
- Take Action
- Leader in Action
- Think Like a Scientist
- Take Action
- Leader in Action

Outdoor Journey
Outdoor STEM Journey

- Night Owl
- Trailblazing
- Primitive Camper
- Take Action
- Leader in Action
- Think Like a Scientist
- Take Action
- Leader in Action
SENIOR BADGES & JOURNEYS

Skill-Building Badges

- Adventure Camper
- Adventurer
- Behind the Scenes
- Business Etiquette
- Buying Power
- Car Care
- College Artist
- Crossword
- Customer Loyalty
- Fire Explorer
- First Aid
- Garden Virtuoso
- Leadership
- My Portfolio
- Novelty
- Outdoor Art Expert
- Pandemic
- Room Makeover
- Science of Style
- Senior First Aid
- Senior Girl Scout Way
- Senior Snowboarding Adventure
- Senior Trail Adventure
- Sky
- Social Innovator
- Space Science Expert
- Tactile Artist
- Teacher
- Triumphant Performer
- Truth Teller
- Veterinary
- Website Designer
- Women’s Health
- Zombie

Journeys

- It’s Your World—Change It!
- It’s Your Planet—Love It!
- It’s Your Story—Tell It!

Progressive Badges

- Cybersecurity
- Coding For Good
- Robotics

Outdoor STEM Journey

- Think Like a Citizen Scientist
- Take Action

Outdoor Journey

- Adventurer
- First Aid
- Adventure Camper
- Take Action

Engineering Journey

- Think Like an Engineer
- Take Action

Computer Science Journey

- Think Like a Programmer
- Take Action
AMBASSADOR BADGES & JOURNEYS

Skill-Building Badges

- Ambassador Advise
- Ambassador Girl Scout Way
- Ambassador Snow or Climbing Adventure
- Ambassador Trail Adventure
- Coaching
- College Knowledge
- Dinner Party
- Eco Advocate
- Good Citizen
- On My Own
- Outdoor Art Market
- Photographer
- P&L
- Public Policy
- Research & Development
- Space Science Master
- Survival Camper
- Ultimate Innovation Challenge
- Water

Progressive Badges

- Cybersecurity
  - Basics
  - Safeguards
  - Investigator
- Coding For Good
  - Basics
  - Game Design
  - App Development

Robotics

- Programming Robots
- Designing Robots
- Showcasing Robots

Journeys

- It's Your World—Change it!
  - Power of Advocacy
- It's Your Planet—Love it!
  - Justice
- It's Your Story—Tell it!
  - Black History Month

Engineering Journey

- Think Like an Engineer
- Take Action

Computer Science Journey

- Think Like a Programmer
- Take Action

Outdoor Journey

- Outdoor Art Market
- Water
- Survival Camper
- Take Action

Outdoor STEM Journey

- Think Like a Citizen Scientist
- Take Action
Emblems and Patches

In addition to the leadership awards tied to the Journeys and the National Proficiency badges, girls can show they belong by adding emblems to the front of their vests or sashes and participation patches on the back.

➢ **Emblems** show membership in Girl Scouts, a particular council, a particular troop, or in some other Girl Scout group. These can be worn on the front of a sash or vest. See the diagram in the handbook section of *The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting* to see where these are placed.

➢ **Participation patches** represent activities girls have tried and are fun ways for girls to remember special events they’ve attended. Since these patches and pins aren’t tied to skill-building activities, they are worn on the back of a girl’s sash or vest.

You can purchase emblems and patches—along with badges and leadership awards—at GSGLA’s Girl Scout shop or by visiting the online store. There, you’ll find a cool list of the earned awards for each grade level and a link that shows you exactly where girls can place their emblems, awards, badges, pins, and patches on their vests and sashes.

Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards

The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards are Girl Scouting’s highest awards. These awards offer girls relevant, grade-level-appropriate challenges related to teamwork, goal setting, and community networking and leadership. They also engage girls in building networks that not only support them in their award projects, but in new educational and career opportunities.

Like everything girls do in Girl Scouting, the steps to earning these awards are rooted in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). This is why, to earn each of these awards, girls first complete a grade-level Journey (two Journeys for the Gold Award or a Silver Award and one Journey). With Journeys, girls experience the keys to leadership and learn to identify community needs, work in partnership with their communities, and carry out Take Action projects that make a lasting difference. They can then use the skills they developed during a Journey to develop and execute projects for their Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. Girl Scouts has just introduced a web application that takes girls step-by-step through the Gold Award requirements. Visit [http://www.girlscouts.org/program/highest_awards/gold_award.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/highest_awards/gold_award.asp) to take a peek. Be sure to reference our website for the prerequisites, and workshop schedule as well as proposal and final report additional forms for each of the awards as they are specific to GSGLA. For more information visit the highest awards page of the GSGLA website [http://www.girlscoutsla.org/en/about-girl-scouts/our-program/highest-awards.html](http://www.girlscoutsla.org/en/about-girl-scouts/our-program/highest-awards.html).

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

As a Girl Scout volunteer, encourage girls to go for it by earning these awards at the Junior through Ambassador levels. You’ll be inspired when you see and hear what girls can accomplish as leaders—and by the confidence, values, and team-building expertise they gain while doing so. And imagine the impact girls have on their communities, country, and even the world as they identify problems they care about, team with others, and act to make change happen!

All this, of course, starts with you—a Girl Scout volunteer! Encourage girls to go after Girl Scouting’s highest awards—information on the awards and guidelines for you to use when helping girls earn their awards are also available in the Girl Guide and on our GSGLA website.
**Girl Scouting’s Highest Award**

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

**Other Initiatives and Opportunities**

Other exciting initiatives and opportunities exist to support the GSLE. In the past, these have covered topics like the environment, robotics, and space exploration. You can find out how to engage your group in opportunities like these by visiting the [GSGLA Older Girl Opportunities Page](#) and the [GSGLA Program Calendar](#).

**Girl Scout Traditions and Celebrations**

Throughout the long history of Girl Scouts, certain traditions remain meaningful and important and are still practiced today. This section gives you an overview of annual celebrations in the Girl Scout year, as well as other revered Girl Scout traditions. Be sure to look in *The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting* and leadership Journeys for more information on songs, outdoor activities, historical anecdotes, traditions, and ceremonies.

**Girl Scout Calendar**

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

- **Feb. 22:** World Thinking Day (the birthday of both Lord Baden-Powell and Lady Olave Baden-Powell, the originators of Boy Scouts and the Scouting Movement worldwide).
- **March 12:** The birthday of Girl Scouting in the USA. The first troop meeting was held in Savannah, Georgia, on this date in 1912. Note that Girl Scout Week begins the Sunday before March 12 (a day known as “Girl Scout Sunday”) and extends through the Saturday following March 12 (a day known as “Girl Scout Sabbath”).
- **April 25, 2020:** GSGLA Annual Meeting/Volunteer Recognition (AMVR)
- **April:** Volunteer Appreciation Week centers on the long-standing National Girl Scout Leaders’ Day (April 22), but expands the definition of volunteers beyond troop leaders to include all the volunteers who work in so many ways on behalf of girls in Girl Scouting.
- **TBD, 2020:** GSGLA Silver Award Ceremonies- dates and locations will be posted on the program calendar in the Spring.
- **June 7, 2020:** GSGLA Gold Award Ceremony
- **TBD, 2020:** GSGLA Family Fit Fair
- **Oct. 21-25:** 2020 National Council Session – Orlando, FL
- **Oct. 31:** Founder’s Day (Juliette Gordon Low’s birthday)
World Thinking Day: February 22

World Thinking Day, first created in 1926, offers a special day for Girl Scouts and Girl Guides from around the world to “think” of each other and give thanks and appreciation to their sister Girl Scouts. Feb. 22 is the mutual birthday of Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement, and his wife, Olave, who served as World Chief Guide. Today, girls honor World Thinking Day by earning the World Thinking Day award (http://www.girlscouts.org/who_we_are/global/world_thinking_day/), which focuses on an annual theme selected by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. They also show their appreciation and friendship on World Thinking Day not only by extending warm wishes but also by contributing to the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund, (https://donate.girlscouts.org/worldfriendshipfund) which helps offer Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting to more girls and young women worldwide.

Travel to an Epic Girl Event

And there’s no better way to combine travel and Girl Scouting than by attending the epic G.I.R.L. 2020 convention, taking place October 23–25, 2020, in Orlando, Florida! It’s the world’s largest girl-led event for girls, young women, and everyone who supports them. This premier gathering for Girl Scouts happens every three years, and they’ll meet fellow go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders from around the country and the world—it’s an amazing opportunity your girls won’t want to miss!

Are your girls looking to stay closer to home this year? Then ask your council about council-owned camps and other facilities that can be rented out. [NOTE: could include all TROOP TREKS when up and running. This will likely be for next year.]

Lift up the Girl Scout Leadership Experience at every opportunity in your planning but limit your role to facilitating the girls’ brainstorming and planning, never doing the work for them. Share your ideas and insight, ask tough questions when you have to, and support all their decisions with enthusiasm and encouragement!

Time-Honored Ceremonies

Ceremonies play an important part in Girl Scouts and are used not only to celebrate accomplishments, experience time-honored traditions, and reinforce the values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, but also to encourage girls to take a short pause in their busy lives and connect with their fellow Girl Scouts in fun and meaningful ways. Many examples of ceremonies—for awards, meeting openings and closings, and so on—are sewn right into the Journeys, including ideas for new ceremonies girls can create. Girls use ceremonies for all sorts of reasons. Here’s a brief list, in alphabetical order, so that you can become familiar with the most common Girl Scout ceremonies:

- **Bridging** ceremonies mark a girl’s move from one grade level of Girl Scouting to another, such as from Junior to Cadette. (Note that Fly-Up is a special bridging ceremony for Girl Scout Brownies who are bridging to Juniors.) The Girl Scout nationwide progression model and GSUSA regulations state that K-1st grade girls are Daisies, and bridging of Daisies to Brownies is by grade level, after girls complete their first grade year. Girl Scouts is not based on what a girl can accomplish or ability, but reflects grade-based levels that are set so girls share experiences with other girls of the same grade. The idea is that girls of the same grade all have something unique to offer and that girls bond best when they have those shared experiences. The Girl Scout program and experiences grow as the girls do, introducing girls to new age-appropriate experiences along their K-12 continuum. The progression model is designed to be about a girl’s journey with other girls in the same level.

- **Closing** ceremonies finalize the meeting, with expectations for the next. A closing ceremony may be as simple as a hand squeeze while standing in a circle.
Court of Awards is a time to recognize girls who have accomplished something spectacular during the Girl Scout year. This is the perfect time to hand out badges and other awards the girls have earned throughout the year. Many troops invite parents and caregivers to this special event which can be held as often as the troop wants.

Flag ceremonies can be part of any activity that honors the American flag. Flag ceremonies are great for camping events, or to open a city council meeting.

Girl Scout Bronze (or Silver or Gold) Award ceremonies honor Girl Scout Juniors who have earned the Girl Scout Bronze Award (Cadettes who have earned the Silver Award; Seniors or Ambassadors who have earned the Gold Award), and are usually held for a group and combined with council recognition.

Girl Scouts' Own is a girl-led program that allows girls to explore their feelings and beliefs around a topic (such as the importance of friendship or the personal meaning they get from the Girl Scout Promise and Law) using the spoken word, favorite songs, poetry, or other methods of expression. It is never a religious ceremony.

Investiture welcomes new members, girls or adults, into the Girl Scout family for the first time. Girls receive their Girl Scout, Brownie Girl Scout, or Daisy Girl Scout pin at this time.

Opening ceremonies start troop meetings and can also begin other group meetings.

Pinning ceremonies help celebrate when girls receive grade-level Girl Scout pins.

Rededication ceremonies are opportunities for girls and adults to renew their commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
Over time, any organization is going to develop a few common signals that everyone understands. Such is the case with Girl Scouts, which has developed a few unique ways to greet, acknowledge, and communicate, some of which are listed here.

### Girl Scout Sign

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

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

### Girl Scout Handshake

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

### Quiet Sign

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

### Girl Scout Slogan and Motto

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

### Songs

Whether singing around a campfire or joining a chorus of voices on the Mall in Washington, D.C., Girl Scouts have always enjoyed the fun and fellowship of music. In fact, the first *Girl Scout Song Book*, a collection of songs put together by girl members, was published in 1925.

Songs can be used to open or close meetings, enhance ceremonies, lighten a load while hiking, or share a special moment with other Girl Scouts. For song-leading workshops, go to [http://gsuniversity.girlscouts.org/resource/song-leading-workshops/](http://gsuniversity.girlscouts.org/resource/song-leading-workshops/). A variety of songbooks are also available for purchase. Check out the GSGLA online council shop [http://www.girlscoutshop.com/COUNCIL-OWN-MERCHANDISE/GREATER-LOS-ANGELES-COUNCIL](http://www.girlscoutshop.com/COUNCIL-OWN-MERCHANDISE/GREATER-LOS-ANGELES-COUNCIL) or visit the GSUSA online shop [http://www.girlscoutshop.com/](http://www.girlscoutshop.com/).