girl scouts
greater los angeles

Promoting Your Gold Award Project

WHY PROMOTE**:**

Positive media coverage—which you can earn or create yourself—is one of the best ways to promote the accomplishments of Girl Scouts like you to the larger community. When we share our Girl Scout stories and projects, we:

• Increase our visibility among those who are not involved in Girl Scouts
• Educate the community about the value of the Girl Scout Gold Award
• Boost willingness to participate in Gold Award projects
• Increase financial support

By working toward earning your Gold Award, you are doing something BIG—you are *taking action* to make your community (and beyond) a better place all while demonstrating outstanding leadership skills. People in your community want to know about this!

WHEN TO PROMOTE:

• **During your project:** Creating a press release or a social media post with time-sensitive information, such as an invite for the media (or public) to attend an upcoming workshop, service day, or city council meeting related to your project is a great idea! This can drum up support for your project if you need volunteers.
Creating a video diary or a social media account dedicated to your project can also help you tell the story of your project. If you document the project from start to finish, you'll not only gain followers and support within the community, but you'll also have a record to add to a resume or college application!

• **Upon completion of your project:** You've worked hard to improve your community—now is the time to let them know! Create a video, a social media post, a photo essay, or a press release to explain your project's impact.

HOW TO PROMOTE:

1) **Create an elevator pitch**: An elevator pitch is a short description of your idea. Imagine your Gold Award project becomes a nonprofit, and you are in an elevator with someone who can provide funding—you only have the time it takes to get to the next floor to tell them your idea and why they should invest in it. Elevator pitches should be:
   a) Short
   b) Interesting
   c) Memorable

What makes your project unique? What inspired your project? Who benefits from your project, and why should we care about them?

Once you develop an elevator pitch, you'll be surprised how often you use it! Not only is it helpful for face-to-face situations, but you can also use it to create an intro page for your website, or a bio for your social media accounts.

2) **Create video content:** This is by far the most dynamic way to talk about your project, and the best way to draw attention to it. Use a smartphone throughout your project to record the "action"—collecting/handing out donations, gardening, renovating, cleaning, rehearsing a play, teaching a class, painting, or whatever your project calls for. You can also record personal testimony about why you chose a specific project, progress updates, and interviews with volunteers, beneficiaries, or people who support you. Post the videos on social media or create an account and upload them to YouTube or Vimeo—both of which allow you to keep the videos private until you're ready to share.

   a) **Here are some quick tips for creating good video content:**
      i) Shoot horizontal (unless you're shooting an Instagram Story)
      ii) Use a microphone or make sure you're recording in a quiet area
      iii) Make sure there's lots of light, and no strong light sources coming from behind you.

3) **Create a social media account dedicated to your project.** This is not a personal account—it is dedicated solely to promoting your project. Use it to keep a timeline of photos, updates, events related to your project, and smaller achievements toward your larger goal. For safety, do not include full names or contact information on this page.

   a) **Message any GSGLA social media account and ask us to share your page to boost your following!**
      i) GSGLA Facebook
      ii) GSGLA Instagram
      iii) GSGLA Twitter
      iv) GSGLA LinkedIn

4) **Write a press release.** Here's how:

   a) **Contact your service unit manager** to let them know about your plans and to see if you can combine your efforts with any other planned press releases.
   b) **Make a list of your community newspapers, blogs, and media** (e.g., Glendale News-Press, Santa Monica Patch, etc.)
   c) **Write your press release using the template** provided by GSGLA communications staff. (Note: This template is suggested. It does not have to be exactly word-for-word!)
   d) **Email your list, press release, and photos/videos of your project to communications@girlscoutsla.org** (allow 5-10 business days for a response).
   e) **Sit back.** A staff person will edit your press release and share it with you before distributing it to local media. Staff may also use the information you've provided for inclusion in wider-spread regional story pitches or in council social media and newsletters—cool, huh?

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Talking to Journalists: How Media Interviews Work

Before the Interview:

1. **Do some prep work**. Before your interview, make a written list of the key talking points you want to make sure you mention. This is where your elevator pitch comes in handy! It's okay to have notes on you during an interview.
2. **Rehearse.** Make sure you've rehearsed and can confidently respond to basic questions like: Why did you choose to do this Gold Award project? What impact did your project have? How has Girl Scouts prepared you to make an impact in your community?
3. **Get to know the reporter.** Do a quick Google to get to know the journalist you're speaking with – what kind of stories have they written before? Who is their audience? This will give you a sense of what kind of questions they might ask you. A reporter's job is to answer the question 'So what?' for their particular audience. Knowing that, figure out what you want to say and practice, practice, practice.
4. **Confirm the format, time, and if applicable, place of the interview.** Make sure you've double-checked that you've got the right date and time, your Zoom account is set up if you're doing an interview over Zoom, etc. Send a quick email to the reporter the day before your interview (if there's time) to confirm the details. Also, make sure you confirm the ***format*** of the interview: Is this just a phone conversation? A video call over Zoom? A "live shot" where you'll be speaking on camera? A live radio interview, or "pre-taped" to broadcast later?

During the Interview:

1. **Be on time**. Journalists are very busy and stretched thin – be respectful of their time by honoring your start time that you agreed upon. If you need to cancel or reschedule, try do so with at least 24-48 hours in advance; they may end up not being able to go forward with the story if you reschedule with less notice.
2. **Take a deep breath.** You may feel a bit awkward or nervous speaking to a reporter for the first time – that's normal and okay! Try to stay calm, speak clearly, pause to collect your thoughts if you need to, and you'll do great. Most journalists are not trying to "gotcha" – they want to help you successfully tell your story, too.
3. **Stick to your talking points.** Remember what you want to get across: what are the key things that someone reading this article should know about your project? It's okay to have notes on you during an interview as long as you aren't reading directly from them; glancing or checking back is okay.
4. **For on-camera interviews, consider your body language**. Sit or stand up as straight as you're able, smile, and lean forward very slightly. Feel free to talk with your hands if that makes you feel more comfortable, but try not to fidget.
5. **Mention Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles.** This helps GSGLA raise our profile, recruit more girls to become Girl Scouts, and inspires current Girl Scouts to go for their Gold Award, too!
6. **Remember your Do's and Don'ts (see below).**

After the Interview:

1. **Send a thank you note.** This doesn't have to be anything fancy – an email or a text is fine – but if you do have a creative way of saying thank you for helping you tell your story, it's appreciated.
2. **Share the article when it's published**. This helps drive web traffic, which journalists *really* appreciate, and spreads the word about your project. Don't forget to share it with GSGLA, too!
3. **If something is incorrect, ask for a correction.** If a factual error or spelling mistake was made – something that is *objectively* wrong – send an email to the journalist kindly asking for a correction. They can't always do it (and they won't make corrections for things that aren't *factually* incorrect) but it's worth an ask, if you do it politely.

Interview Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- **Feel free to make small talk at the beginning** but remember that anything you say before the interview officially starts can be used in a story.
- **Remember that you're in control.** Ask for what you need to be successful, whether that's a glass of water or a moment to collect your thoughts.
- **Lead with the most important bit of information** in your response and then follow up with any supplementary details.
- **Smile and show enthusiasm.**
- **Thank the journalist for the opportunity and their time.**

Don't:

- **Try to go "off the record."** Going off the record is a two-way street – the journalist must agree to it, so you can't say, "Off the record..." and then share information. It's easier to just assume that *nothing* is off the record, meaning anything you say will be used in a story.
- **Say "no comment."** If you don't feel comfortable with a question, you can use a **pivot**. A pivot is when you say something like, "I can't answer that, but what I can tell you is..." or "I don't know about that, but what I do know is..." and change the topic. You can always stay in control and re-direct the question with pivots.
- **Speculate or try answer a question that you're not sure about.** If you don't know the answer to a question, that's okay! Use a pivot to re-direct the conversation to what you do know and want to talk about.

For questions or additional information, please contact:
communications@girlscoutsla.org