



TROOP MANAGEMENT

Leadership is more than “being in charge” or having a title; it’s recognizing that you’re part of a team and understanding that team’s needs and interests.

Here’s how you’ll do that with your troop!

Girl Scout badges covering topics like civic engagement, healthy living, and communication skills help Girl Scouts grow in confidence as they develop the skills to lead their best life!

Whether by exercising and staying healthy, developing strong relationships with family and peers, advocating on behalf of others, protecting our environment, or exploring careers that can truly change the world for the better, girls:

- Gain the skills and the inspiration to accept challenges and overcome obstacles.
- Develop greater confidence and a stronger sense of self.
- Are happier overall and display more positive values throughout life.

Your Role as a Girl Scout Volunteer

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

Leadership is teaching your Girl Scouts:

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

As a leader, see yourself as a coach who:

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

It is important to remember that:

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

Your Responsibilities as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Your responsibilities as a Girl Scout volunteer include:

- Accepting the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#).
- Understanding and coaching Girl Scouts Three Keys to Leadership—discover, connect, and take action—that are the basis of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- Sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills with a positive and flexible approach.
- Working in a partnership with your Girl Scouts so that their activities are girl-led and that they learn by doing, individually and as a group. You'll also partner with other volunteers and GSGLA staff for support and guidance.
- Organizing fun, interactive, girl-led activities that address relevant issues and match girls' interests and needs.
- Providing guidance and information regarding Girl Scout group meetings with troop families on a regular and ongoing basis through a variety of tools, including email, phone calls, newsletters, blogs, other forms of social media, and any other method you choose.
- Processing and completing registration forms and other paperwork, such as permission slips.
- Communicating effectively and delivering clear, organized, and vibrant presentations or information to an individual or the group.
- Overseeing with honesty, integrity, and careful record-keeping the funds that girls raise.
- Maintaining a close connection to your volunteer support team as well as your council.
- Facilitating a safe experience for every Girl Scout.

Planning for Your First Troop Meeting

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

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

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

Choosing a Meeting Place

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

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

- **Accessibility.** Your space should accommodate girls with disabilities as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.

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

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

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

Virtual Meetings

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

[Before setting up a virtual meeting](#), you’ll want to:

- Partner with troop families to make sure the girls are safe online.
- Select a meeting platform that allows families who may not have internet access to call in.
- [Think about logistics](#). Work with the girls to set up ground rules; consider how you will incorporate in-person meeting traditions in your virtual space and how you’ll keep meetings on track.
- Talk with families on [how to keep activities girl-led](#) if your girls will be completing them from home.

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

Girl Scout Troop Size

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

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

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

Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

From troop meetings to camping weekends and cookie booths, adult volunteers must always be present to ensure Girl Scouts have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level. If you are not sure about the number of adults you will need for your activity, the chart below breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of Girl Scouts.

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

Safety in Girl Scouting

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

In [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), you will find:

- Girl Scouts Safety Standards and Guidelines, which apply to all Girl Scout activities, including requirements for adult supervision, permission slips, preparation, field trips and overnight trips, and other vital information.
- Activities that are not permitted by Girl Scouts of the USA and actions that girls and volunteers should not take.
- Policies surrounding chartered aircraft trips and aviation.
- First aid and overall health information.
- Standards for well-being and inclusivity along with ways to include Girl Scouts with disabilities and ways to ensure girls' emotional safety.
- Individual safety activity checkpoints for specific activities—such as camping, internet use, and water sports provide activity-specific safety information.

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

Girl Scouts' Activities at a Glance table provides a quick look at the safety standards for that activity with a focus on two critical points to keep in mind when considering and planning activities for your troop:

- Age-appropriate activities and participation by grade level.
- Any prior approval(s) that may be required by GSGLA before girls participate in a specific activity.

Individual Safety Activity Checkpoint pages provide activity-specific safety measures and guidance on the individual activities that troops and girls may choose to participate in.

Registering Girls and Adults in Girl Scouting

Every participant (girl or adult) in Girl Scouting must register and become a member of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). GSUSA membership dues are valid for one year. Membership dues cannot be transferred to another member and are not refundable.

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

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

Adding New Girls to Your Troop

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

Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

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

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

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

If you have questions about accommodating an individual girl, please email [customer care](#) or call (213) 213-0123.

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

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

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

Here are some examples of ways to modify activities:

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

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

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

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

Registering Girls with Cognitive Disabilities

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

Getting Support for Your Troop

Just as your Girl Scouts rally around each other for support, you will also have a dedicated Girl Scout support team, consisting of GSGLA staff and passionate volunteers like you. Your support team, which is referred to as a service unit in GSGLA, is ready to offer local learning opportunities and advice as well as [answer your questions](#) about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, product sales, and much more.

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

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

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

Troop Management Tools and Resources

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

The Volunteer Toolkit

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

Using the VTK troop leaders can:

- Plan the troop's calendar year and meeting schedule.
- Email parents/caregivers with one click.
- View the troop roster, renew girls' memberships, and update girls' contact information.
- View meeting plans for Journeys and badges, including suggested tracks for multi-level groups (K-5 and 6-12).
- Customize meeting agendas to fit your troop.
- Explore individual meeting plans that show a breakdown of every step, including a list of materials needed, editable time allotments for each activity within a meeting, and printable meeting aids.
- Record attendance at meetings and their troop's badge and Journey achievements.
- Add GSGLA or custom events to the troop's calendar.
- Easily locate both national and local council resources, such as Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Using the VTK parents and caregivers can:

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

Additional Tools and Resources

- **The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting** — What does it mean to be a Girl Scout? You'll find it all in The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting. These grade level-specific binders will break it down for your girls. It's part handbook, part badge book, and 100 percent fun! Visit [our shops](#) in person or online to purchase yours today!
- **Safety Activity Checkpoints** — Safety is paramount in Girl Scouting. The [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) contain everything you need to know to help keep your girls safe during a variety of exciting activities outside of their regular Girl Scout troop meetings.
- **Tips for Troop Leaders** — When you're looking for real-world advice from fellow troop leaders who've been there, [this volunteer-to-volunteer resource](#) on the Girl Scouts of the USA website has what you need for a successful troop year.
- **Girl Scout Volunteers in Your Community** — Remember that Girl Scout support team we mentioned? You'll find them in your service unit! Troops are organized geographically into service units or communities. You'll find a local network of fellow leaders and administrative volunteers [ready to offer tips and advice](#) to help you succeed in your volunteer role.
- **Customer Care** — Questions? Need help resolving an issue? We've got you! Customer Care can be reached [during business hours](#) at (213)-213-0123. You can also submit a [contact us form](#) or email [Customer Care](#).

Take Advantage of Learning Opportunities

We know that when you have the knowledge and skills you need to manage your girls, both you and your troop will thrive. Our [Volunteer Training](#) page is a great place to learn about ongoing learning opportunities that will help you grow your skills and confidence.

Know How Much You are Appreciated

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

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

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

Volunteer Appreciation

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

Girl Scouts also celebrates National Volunteer Week, which falls during the third day of April. What can we say, we love our volunteers! Visit [our website](#) to learn more about how GSGLA recognizes our volunteers.

Girl Scout Participation in Activities with Other Scouting Organizations

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

Marketplace Confusion

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

Protecting Use of Girl Scout Materials

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