



## ABOUT GIRL SCOUTS

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

### Girl Scout Volunteers

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

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

### Girl Scout Grade Levels

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

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

### The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

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

Although girls may start building their leadership skills in school and on sports teams, [research shows](#) that the courage, confidence, and character girls develop as Girl Scouts stay with them throughout their lives. Our program and outcomes are based in research and our studies show that Girl Scouting has a measurable positive impact on girls. In fact, we can proudly say Girl Scouts are almost 10% more likely than non-Girl Scouts, to have positive expectations about their future based on our studies. We encourage you to learn more about our program and outcomes as you [check out our studies and in-depth research](#) for insights and information.

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

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

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

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

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

As a volunteer, you'll draw on these three processes as you lead girls of any age. And naturally, girl-led at the Daisy level will look very different from girl-led at the Ambassador level. What is most important is that your Girl Scouts make decisions about the activities they will do together and make choices as they're doing the activities together.

As girls learn from their successful, and not so successful tries, they gain confidence. All girls should have the opportunity to lead within their peer group. By the time girls are Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, they will be using the leadership skills they've developed to take on more ownership of their activities, mentor younger Girl Scouts, and take action to make the world a better place.

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

## Reflection

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

Reflection is the necessary debrief that reinforces what girls learned. As your Girl Scouts explore the what's and why's, they'll make meaningful connections between the activity at hand and future challenges that come their way. In other words, reflection gives girls the confidence boost they need to pick themselves up, try again, and succeed. Keep in mind that reflection does not need to be a formal process, but you can kick-start the conversation with three simple questions: What? So what? and Now what?

What? Go over the "what" of the activity. For example, ask:

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

So what? Next, move to the "so what." You might ask:

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

Last, review the now what. Say something like:

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

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

## Progression

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

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

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

## Inclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Life Skills.** Girl Scouts life skills programming includes a mix of practical skills, tools, and activities that foster positive values in girls like financial literacy, civic engagement, and community service. Skills that help them discover that they have what it takes to raise their voices as community advocates, make smart decisions about their finances, and form strong, healthy relationships—skills that inspire them to accept challenges and overcome obstacles, now and always.

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

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

### Important Differences: Journeys and Badges

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

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

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

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

## Important Differences: Community Service and Take Action Projects

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

When a Girl Scout performs community service, she is responding to an immediate need in a one-off, "doing for" capacity. In other words, she is making an impact right now. Through Take Action/service learning, girls explore the root causes of a community need and address it in a lasting way; they truly make the world—or their part of it—a better place.

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

## Traditions, Ceremonies, and Special Girl Scout Days

Time-honored traditions and ceremonies unite Girl Scout sisters, and the millions of Girl Scout alums who came before them—around the country and around the globe—and remind girls how far their fellow trailblazers have come and just how far they'll go. A few of those extra special days, when you will want to turn up the celebrations, include:

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

- Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12, commemorates the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first eighteen girl members in Savannah, Georgia.

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

## Highest Awards

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Girl Scout Travel and Destinations

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

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

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

### **Planning Troop Adventures**

At the beginning stages of planning a trip, visit the [volunteer training page](#) to find out more about their approval process for overnight and extended travel. They will also likely have training programs that will raise your confidence as a chaperone.

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

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

### **Safety First**

If you're planning any kind of trip—from a short field trip to an overseas expedition—the “Trip and Travel” section of Safety Activity Checkpoints is your go-to resource for safety. Our [Volunteer Training](#) page is a good place to explore the steps to getting out and about!

Be sure to follow all the basic safety guidelines, like the buddy system and first aid requirements, in addition to the specific guidelines for travel. You'll also want to refer to the COVID-19 guidelines in Safety Activity Checkpoints as well as any COVID-19 guidelines for your destination. You will learn more about how to use and follow Girl Scouts Safety Activity Checkpoints in the next section.



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

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

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

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

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

And if your troop is looking to stay closer to home this year? Check out all the [properties](#) GSGLA has that can be rented out.

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