



FROM GIRL SCOUT CAMP TO REAL-WORLD CHAMP!

How Girl Scouting in the Great Outdoors Builds Female Leaders

For more than 100 years, Girl Scout camp has brought girls unmatched outdoor adventure full of learning (key skills! life lessons!), challenge (ropes courses! rapids!), and, of course, a whole lot of friendship and fun. At camp, Girl Scouts' leadership takes center stage as they dive into age-appropriate activities they love—enabling them, at every turn, to discover their values and their passions, connect with others from a range of backgrounds, and take action to make a meaningful difference in their world.

In summer 2018, the Girl Scout Research Institute collaborated with the American Camp Association (ACA) to explore whether the skills, behaviors, and attitudes youth learn at camp carry over to other parts of their lives. Survey responses from over 700 adults who attended camp as kids—424 alums of Girl Scout camp and 286 alums of non-Girl Scout camps—provide compelling evidence that Girl Scout camp sets girls up for success!

Key Findings

1. Girl Scout camp helps girls develop important life skills and positive characteristics.

As expected, girls who attend Girl Scout camp learn to appreciate nature and become environmental stewards. But as the research also uncovered, Girl Scout camp provides additional benefits, helping campers build important socioemotional and leadership skills they need to become successful adults. The majority of Girl Scout camp alums say their camp experience was central to the development of their sense of self, positive values, challenge seeking skills, healthy relationships, and leadership skills!

2. Overall, Girl Scout camp alums are more likely than non-Girl Scout camp alums to say that camp helped them develop the above skills and attributes.

The most significant differences between Girl Scout and non-Girl Scout camp alums? The development of a strong sense of self and leadership skills—essential components of Girl Scout programming!

Role of Camp in Development of Life Skills and Positive Characteristics



Data represent the percentage of respondents who rated the life skill/attribute an 8 or higher (max=10/Very True). Bolded data indicate a significant difference ($p < .05$). *Item was not included in the non-Girl Scout camp alum survey.

83% of Girl Scout camp alums say their first camp experience was at a Girl Scout camp

3. What girls learn at Girl Scout camp lasts far beyond their camp experience. Responsibility, an appreciation for diversity, the ability to persevere, and willingness to try new things were rated by camp alums as most important to their daily lives today and learned *primarily* at camp. This finding suggests camp experiences are distinct from other learning environments, such as home and school, and can help youth build important skills that serve them in many areas of their lives. Notably, Girl Scout camp alums are more likely than non-Girl Scout camp alums to attribute the learning of these life skills and characteristics to camp.

97% of Girl Scout camp alums say camp helped them improve their outdoor skills.

4. Overall time spent at, and specific program features of, Girl Scout camp determine the degree to which girls benefit from their camp experience.

- **The more time spent at Girl Scout camp, the greater the benefits.** Those who attend Girl Scout camp for a total of ten weeks or more over the course of their youth report greater development of all skills and characteristics measured than do those who attended for nine weeks or less.
- **Girl Scouts who participate in counselor-in-training programs or who work as seasonal camp staff for one or more years also report greater benefits.** These individuals are more likely to say that camp helped them learn leadership, teamwork, confidence, and perseverance.
- **Girl Scout camp alums describe three elements of Girl Scout camp as crucial to their development of valuable life skills:**
 1. Supportive relationships with leaders and peers, which are vital sources of security and encouragement.
 2. Direct, hands-on experiences that let them practice to improve their skills.
 3. Novelty! Because Girl Scout camp can be a truly unique experience that allows girls to move out of their comfort zone to try new things.

Whether they attend for a day, a week, or longer, and for one summer or several, at Girl Scout camp so many girls are given first-rate opportunities to learn and explore, expand their horizons, and have unforgettable fun with friends old and new—all under the guidance of caring, trained adults committed to helping them unleash their remarkable leadership potential. And as *From Girl Scout Camp to Real-World Champ!* confirms, these memorable experiences provide girls with benefits that serve them long after the campfires of their youth are behind them.

ABOUT GIRL SCOUTS OF THE USA Founded in 1912, Girl Scouts of the USA is the preeminent leadership development organization for girls, with 2.5 million members—more than 1.7 million girls and 750,000 adults. Girl Scouts is the leading authority on girls’ healthy development and builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. To volunteer, reconnect, donate, or join, visit www.girlscouts.org.

Methodology: This research was part of a broader national camp impact study conducted by the American Camp Association and researchers at the University of Utah. It consisted of an online survey of adults who formerly attended camp for at least three weeks and who worked as camp staff at an ACA-accredited camp at the time of the study. This sampling strategy was chosen because camp staff are individuals who likely had an impactful camp experience as a child, which is why they work at a camp, and could articulate what they got out of their camp experience. Girl Scout respondents (N=424) were adults aged 18–67 who attended Girl Scout camp as a child. Comparison data (N=286) came from adults aged 18–25 who attended a non-Girl Scout camp as a child. Comparison analyses were conducted on a Girl Scout subsample (N=114) consisting of only first-year camp staff aged 18–25, to align with the non-Girl Scout camp alum sample. However, data for the full Girl Scout sample are reported as results are consistent across the two groups.

