

girl scouts   
heart of the south



# New Leader's Guide to Success





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Welcome to Girl Scouts .....               | 3  |
| You—A Girl Scout Leader .....              | 4  |
| Let’s Get Started.....                     | 5  |
| Volunteer Resources .....                  | 6  |
| The Girl Scout Leadership Experience.....  | 7  |
| Where Girl Scouts Can Take Your Girls..... | 8  |
| Girl Scout Program.....                    | 9  |
| Guiding Your Troop Experience .....        | 10 |
| Family Connections .....                   | 11 |
| Keeping Girls Safe .....                   | 13 |
| Your First Troop Meeting .....             | 14 |
| Funding the Fun .....                      | 15 |
| Product Program. ....                      | 16 |
| The Volunteer Toolkit.....                 | 17 |
| Badge Placement.....                       | 18 |
| Tips for New Troop Leaders .....           | 19 |
| Supply Lists to Get Started .....          | 20 |
| Multi-Level Troop Tips.....                | 21 |
| Girl Scout Traditions .....                | 22 |
| Girl Scout Songs.....                      | 23 |
| Your Year in Girl Scouts .....             | 24 |

## The Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:  
 To serve God\* and my country,  
 To help people at all times,  
 And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

## The Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be  
 honest and fair,  
 friendly and helpful,  
 considerate and caring,  
 courageous and strong, and  
 responsible for what I say and do,  
 and to  
 respect myself and others,  
 respect authority,  
 use resources wisely,  
 make the world a better place,  
 and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

## Our Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage,  
 confidence, and character, who make  
 the world a better place.



@girlscoutshs



facebook.com/girlscoutshs



@girlscoutshs



@girlscoutshs

Visit us online anytime at  
[www.girlscoutshs.org](http://www.girlscoutshs.org)

\*Members may substitute for the word God in accordance with their own spiritual beliefs.



# WELCOME TO GIRL SCOUTS!

Thank you for becoming a Girl Scout troop leader! We're thrilled you joined the Girl Scout Movement.

Girl Scouts is so much more than a fun activity—it's a movement. It's how girls become forces for good and make a difference in their schools and communities, across the country, and around the world. And though your troop experience might look a little different this year, the fun, discovery, and power of sisterhood is the same. Girls—as well as the caring volunteers who support them—grow the values and leadership skills they need to power a lifetime of success and adventure, whatever that looks like for them.

This guide will prepare you to effectively lead during your first year as a Girl Scout troop leader. Need help along the way? Let us know! We have many tools, training resources, and people to support you through every step.

You're now a part of our team. We can't wait to see the impact you'll make this year!

## Council Contact Information

Where we're located and how to connect

### Offices

**Council Headquarters -**

**Memphis Leadership Center and Shop**

825 Valleybrook Drive, Memphis, TN 38120

**Jackson, TN Leadership Center and Shop**

1007 Old Humboldt Rd., Jackson, TN 38305

**Tupelo, MS Leadership Center and Shop**

1140 West Main Street, Tupelo, MS 38801

**For current office and shop location**

**hours, please see our website at**

[www.girlscoutshs.org/visitus](http://www.girlscoutshs.org/visitus)

**Toll-free to all locations:**

**800-624-4185**



Shop online 24/7 at

[www.girlscoutshop.com/HEART-OF-THE-SOUTH-COUNCIL](http://www.girlscoutshop.com/HEART-OF-THE-SOUTH-COUNCIL)



# YOU - A GIRL SCOUT LEADER

## Your Role

Being a Girl Scout troop leader is an incredible journey for you and your girls. And together you'll shape the future through all you do today! Along the way, you'll hone your own leadership style and discover that you'll achieve more than you thought possible.

In Girl Scouting, leadership isn't about 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.



### Leadership is teaching girls:

- That they can do and be anything!
- That they are decision-makers who 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 and cheers on your troop, not as a teacher with a planned lesson or activity
- Ensures each girl can carry out her responsibilities within the troop
- Encourages girls to build their skills and their ethics
- Gives more responsibility to the girls as they grow and develop

### It's important to remember that:

- You can't expect to know everything the girls might 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

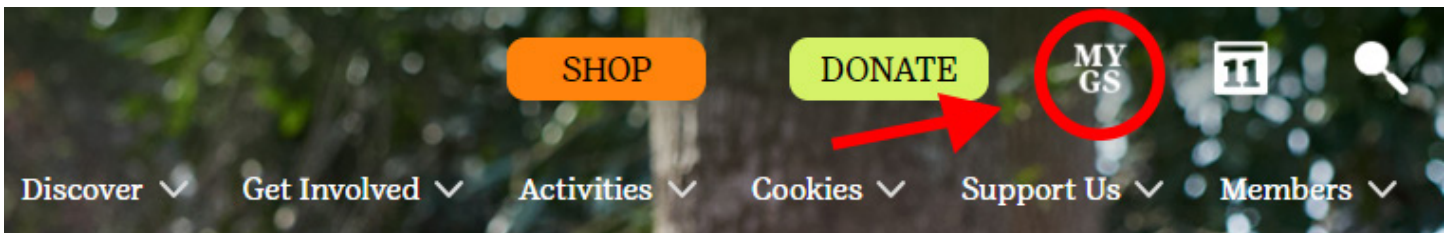


# LET'S GET STARTED!

## Managing Your Member Experience Online

After you have completed your volunteer registration steps, you'll receive an email prompting you to log into MyGS, your Girl Scout member community. MyGS allows you to manage your member experience online. You can also access MyGS via the council's website [www.girlscoutshs.org](http://www.girlscoutshs.org).

On the Troop tab in MyGS, you can see any girls and adults who have signed up for your troop and add new girls to your troop—and the Troop Opportunity Catalog allows you as the troop leader to display available openings in your troop for girls and/or volunteers. You can add your troop to the opportunity catalog by contacting a member of our Customer Care Team at [info@girlscoutshs.org](mailto:info@girlscoutshs.org) or 800-624-4185.



## Next Steps

Look out for a welcome email from our New Member Manager with details on any required trainings and how to connect with your Service Unit and council.

## Troop Leader Learning Path

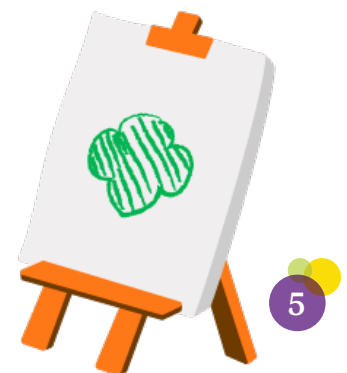
When you're set up for success, you'll be empowered to set up your troop for success! To help you become the best leader you can be, we offer in-person workshops, online training courses, and other great resources.

## Ongoing Support

You will also find other courses in the gsLearn course library such as: "What is Diversity and Inclusion," and "How to Tie Knots." Our course catalog continues to grow and will be the primary place for volunteers to go for training.

Our staff and local service team volunteers are all here to help guide our new leaders throughout the year. Please do not ever hesitate to reach out to our Customer Care Team, our New Member Manager, or your service team volunteers with any questions or concerns.

The council will host New Leader Training Workshops at various times throughout the year. These workshops are a great time for new troop leaders to check in with each other and to seek support from our New Member Manager. New troop leaders will receive email communications inviting them to participate when the workshops are being scheduled.





# VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

## The Volunteer Toolkit

This fully customizable digital planning tool provides you with Girl Scout program content, award requirements, and other resources, so that you can keep your Girl Scout year running smoothly. Accessible from any computer, tablet, or mobile device, the Volunteer Toolkit lets troop leaders:

- Explore meeting topics and program activities with their girls
- Print step-by-step activity guides and shopping lists
- Manage girl attendance and track achievements
- Add local events
- Track and share financial information
- Message and share meeting activities with troop families

...plus so much more! Learn more and access the Volunteer Toolkit by logging into myGS at [www.girlscoutshs.org](http://www.girlscoutshs.org).

## Safety Activity Checkpoints

This guide has everything you need to prepare for and keep your girls safe during a range of activities outside the normal Girl Scout troop meeting. It can be found under the Safety Activity Checkpoints dropdown menu on the [Volunteer Resources](#) page on our website.

## Volunteer Essentials

With key information, policies, and procedures that support the safe and consistent delivery of Girl Scout programming to girls across the council, [Volunteer Essentials](#) is just that—essential. By agreeing to be a Girl Scout volunteer, you agree to follow the guidance outlined in this resource.

[Volunteer Essentials](#) is updated annually, and the latest version can always be found on our website.

## 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 the tips you need for a successful troop year. Find it at [girlscouts.org/tipsfortroopleaders](http://girlscouts.org/tipsfortroopleaders).

## Troop Year Plans

Our age-appropriate [Troop Year Plans](#) are the best tool for first year troop leaders to get started with Girl Scouts without getting overwhelmed. The entire year is mapped out—just follow along to help your Girl Scouts complete badge activities, improve their communities, and explore the world around them. These can be found on our website on the [Troop Year Planner](#) page.



# THE GIRL SCOUT LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

What makes Girl Scouts truly unique? Everything is designed especially for, and is tested by, girls! Our program centers on our research-backed Girl Scout Leadership Experience—that is, what girls do and how they do it. Activities are girl-led, which gives girls opportunities to explore leadership roles and to learn by doing in a cooperative-learning environment.

At Girl Scouts, girls will:

**Discover:** Every activity girls tackle through Girl Scouts helps them discover who they are, what excites them, and what their talents are.

**Connect:** Girls collaborate with and learn from other people as they expand their horizons. This helps them care about and inspire others.

**Take action:** As girls deepen their relationship with the world around them, they become eager to take action to make the world a better place.

So what does this mean for your troop? Through Girl Scouting, your girls will develop a strong sense of self, demonstrate positive values, seek challenges, solve significant problems in the community, and establish healthy relationships. These aren't just good qualities—they're leadership skills that will last a lifetime!

## What Girl Scouts Do

No matter what excites your girls, they'll find engaging and fun activities in the four areas that make up the core of the Girl Scout program:



### STEM

Computer science, engineering, robotics, outdoor STEM, and more



### OUTDOORS

Adventure and skill building, from the backyard to the backcountry, including through camping experiences for all ages



### LIFE SKILLS

Civic engagement, healthy living, global citizenship, communication skills—to name a few



### ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Girl Scout Cookie Program—the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world—teaches goal setting, decision making, money management, business ethics, and people skills

Whether they complete Girl Scout Leadership Journeys, earn badges, run their own cookie business, pack for their first hike, change the world through Take Action projects, or any combination of these activities, at Girl Scouts, every girl has countless ways to explore our four program areas and hone the skills they'll need to power a lifetime of success—whatever that looks like for them.

Explore the many exciting possibilities with the Award and Badge Explorer at [girlscouts.org/badges](https://www.girlscouts.org/badges).



# WHERE GIRL SCOUTS CAN TAKE YOUR GIRLS

As your girls progress through Girl Scouts, they'll learn to take the reins and make their Girl Scout experiences their own—it's what being girl-led is all about! And as a leader, you'll encourage them to dream big and challenge themselves as they take their newfound passions to the next level.

While program elements—like outdoor expeditions and entrepreneurial ventures—align across all grade levels, Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies won't be doing the same activities as seasoned Seniors and Ambassadors. But by building on the knowledge and skills they gain year after year, your girls' confidence will grow exponentially and they'll be eager to take those next steps.

So what can you expect as they grow through each level of Girl Scouting?



DAISIES  
K & 1ST

**Girl Scout Daisies** sparkle with that first-time newness in everything they do. They go on trips, learn about nature and science, and explore the arts and their communities—and so much more. Daisies can also earn learning petals.



BROWNIES  
2ND & 3RD

**Girl Scout Brownies** work together as they earn badges and explore their communities. Friendship, fun, and age-appropriate activities begin at the Girl Scout Brownie meeting and move out to the community and the wider world. While earning badges, Brownies build skills, learn hobbies, and have fun!



JUNIORS  
4TH & 5TH

**Girl Scout Juniors** are big-idea thinkers. They're explorers at camp and product designers when they earn their Innovation and Storytelling badges, or even their Bronze Award. Every day, they wake up ready to play a new role.



CADETTES  
6TH - 8TH

**Girl Scout Cadettes** chart their own courses and let their curiosity and imagination lead the way. They learn about the power of being a good friend, gain confidence by mentoring younger girls, and can earn their Silver Award.



SENIORS  
9TH & 10TH

**Girl Scout Seniors** are ready to take the world by storm, and Girl Scouts gives them countless ways to do it. Their experiences shape their world, while giving them a safe space to be themselves and explore their interests. Seniors can earn the prestigious Gold Award.



AMBASSADORS  
11TH & 12TH

**Girl Scout Ambassadors** know that small acts produce big change. While they get ready for life beyond high school, Girl Scouts helps them take flight. They can also earn their Gold Award and drive lasting impact in their communities.

Throughout their time as Girl Scouts, girls grow into forces for good who transform the world through the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. By earning these awards, your girls will tackle issues close to their hearts and make a real difference—and the Gold Award qualifies them for exclusive college scholarships and opens doors to promising career opportunities. The longer your girls are in Girl Scouts, the brighter their futures will be!





# GIRL SCOUT PROGRAM

As your girls progress through Girl Scouts, they'll learn to take the reins and make their Girl Scout experiences their own—it's what being girl-led is all about! And as a leader, you'll encourage them to dream big and challenge themselves as they take their newfound passions to the next level. Whether they complete Journeys, learn new skills through badges, solve global problems with Highest Awards, or create lifelong memories with fun patches, at Girl Scouts, every girl has countless ways to explore our Girl Scout Leadership Experience and hone the skills they'll need to power a lifetime of success—whatever that looks like for them.

## Programs and Events

Girl Scouts Heart of the South offers a wide range of programming — everything from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) to life skills activities to exploring the outdoors. Events are open to attend as a troop, or individually, depending on interest. GSHS is committed to pursuing its mission through its programming, offering an astounding array of innovative, fun, and memorable activities. Council-sponsored activities are designed to enhance the Girl Scout experience and are developed for specific grade levels. We offer so many ways for you to explore your current interests, and help you discover more!

Visit our online our [Events Calendar](#) for details about all the cool programs and events available to you this year. Programs are added continually throughout the year.

## Field Trips, Travel & Outdoors

Troops are encouraged to go places! This could include a visit to the fire station as a Daisy, staying overnight at Camporee as a Junior, or global adventures as an Ambassador! And we offer camp opportunities for girls of all ages each year! Our annual summer camp brochure is made available at the first of each calendar year and girls may pick their favorite themed sessions to attend!

Girl Scouts Heart of the South's camp properties are also available for troop or service unit rental. Visit our online [Site Reservation Request Form](#) for more information.

### **Journeys**

Identify a problem, come up with a creative solution, create a team plan to make the solution a reality, put a plan into action and talk about what they have learned. As girls go on Journeys, they'll earn awards to put on their uniforms. The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is your resource for the requirements.

### **Badges**

What have your girls always wanted to do? Make their own movie, go geocaching, plant a garden? Great news! They can learn to do all these things and more while earning Girl Scout badges. Badges are worn on the front of the vest or sash and indicate an increase in knowledge or skill in a subject area. The VTK and printed badge guides are your resources for the requirements.

### **Patches**

Think of patches like collecting memories in Girl Scouts. They're often a part of the fun activities girls can do in Girl Scouts without the requirements of badges. Patches are always worn on the back of the vest or sash.



# GUIDING YOUR GIRL SCOUT EXPERIENCE

In leading a new troop, you'll want to guide the structure and experiences of your troop—from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, and 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 families.

Use these questions to guide your conversation with troop volunteers or co-leader before discussing the topics with families.

## Meeting logistics:

- When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?
- Where will we meet? (Troop leader pro tip: great meeting spaces include schools, places of worship, libraries, and community centers. If working with teens, consider meeting at coffee shops, bookstores, or another place they enjoy.)

## Your Troop:

- Will our troop consist of girls in a single grade level or facilitated as a multi-level

## Troop communication:

- How often will we communicate with troop families?
- How will we keep families in the loop? The Volunteer Toolkit? Emails? Group texts? Consider communication platforms such as Cheddar Up, Band, GroupMe, etc.

## Money matters:

- Will our troop charge dues?
- How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? What should our financial plan look like?
- Which components of the uniform—tunic, sash, vest—will troop families need to purchase? (Troop leader pro tip: get the full rundown on uniforms and insignia at [girlscouts.org/uniforms](https://www.girlscouts.org/uniforms).)

## Your Troop Volunteer Team

You and your Co-Leader are never alone on your troop leader journey! Set the stage for a successful troop year by tapping into the people resources already at your fingertips: families, friends, and members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide troops with time, experience, and ideas—so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your troop volunteer team!

Some members of your volunteer team might play more active roles than others—and that's OK! One caregiver in your troop might step up as a dedicated troop treasurer, while others might volunteer to chaperone a field trip. All roles, especially those that involve handling troop funds and supervising girls, require registration and background check completion. Be sure those volunteers get signed up before they jump into the fun!



# FAMILY CONNECTIONS

THE KEY INGREDIENT TO SUCCESSFUL GIRL SCOUT TROOPS!

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls when families step up and play an active part in the troop. Without meaningful support from parents, it's difficult for a troop to be all it can be. Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they're doing!

A parent/caregiver meeting should be the first meeting you hold each troop year—it sets up both new and returning troops for success!



## Parent/Caregiver Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and introductions. Introduce everyone to one another and to the Girl Scouts. Ask about each girl and get to know her a little.
- The Girl Scout Difference. Talk about the Girl Scout Promise and Law and how the troop will be girl-led, hands-on and cooperative.
- Family Involvement. Share how important each family will be to the troop. Set expectations for communication and response times and how parents/caregivers can get involved to help the troop.
- Troop Meeting Logistics.
- Discuss meeting location, day and times, uniforms and troop dues (you may want to collect at the meeting).
- Discuss the types of activities the troop will participate in this year (regular meetings, outings, events, camping trips).
- Have parents/caregivers complete health history forms and annual permission forms.
- Share contact info for all troop members.
- Answer any questions the parents/caregivers may have.

Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging families in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When families are involved, leaders have support, and when the troop has a plan, girls benefit!

Check out our step-by-step guide and family meeting outline in the Volunteer Toolkit. This hour-long meeting will make all the difference in the year ahead: **100% of troops with the most satisfied parents and troop leaders report that they hold parent meetings.** You'll also want to hold an additional family meeting ahead of cookie season to introduce families to the program and how they can pitch in.

Although Girl Scout programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it's important and helpful to open a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting the whole crew—helps families better understand the value of Girl Scouts and makes them more likely to invest their time and talents in the troop.

That said, there's no need to wait for one of these special events to engage families in their Girl Scout's troop. Keep communication lines open throughout the year—whether it's through your troop's social media page, personal emails, or in-person chats—to keep parents in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting, and encourage them to let their girl “be the expert” at home, by, for example, explaining or teaching a new skill she's learned to the rest of the family.



# FAMILY CONNECTIONS

THE KEY INGREDIENT TO SUCCESSFUL GIRL SCOUT TROOPS!

## Parent/Caregiver Troop Involvement Form

Parent/Caregiver's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Send troop messages to this email. \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Caregiver's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Send troop messages to this email. \_\_\_\_\_

Girl's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Send troop messages to this email. \_\_\_\_\_

What hobbies or skills would you like to share with the troop? : \_\_\_\_\_

Providing a great Girl Scout experience for all girls requires involvement of ALL parents. Please check how you and/or other adults in your family will support your girl's troop. If you have a talent not represented on this list, speak up and offer to share with the troop. The help and engagement of every parent/caregiver is important to the growth of the troop!

- Troop Leadership Team** Plans/assists in leading activities, communicates with parents
- Treasurer:** Reconciles bank statements
- Cookie Parent:** Organizes cookie sales
- Camp Parent:** Completes camping training. Assists in planning/leading camp out activities
- First-Aid Parent:** Certified in First Aid and CPR. Must be able to attend activities the troop participates in
- Field Trip Coordinator:** Calls about, organizes, and plans troop field trips
- Service Project Coordinator:** Organizes and plans service projects
- Badge Coordinator:** Takes a specific badge or Journey and plans activities to fulfill its requirements
- Troop Photographer:** Takes photos and posts to online site or memory book
- Meeting Helper:** Helps at each meeting with already planned activities
- Cookie Booth Chaperone:** Serves as adult coordinator and cookie booth supervisor
- Activity Chaperone:** Drives, serves as adult helper at activities and trips
- Snack Coordinator:** Organizes and schedules snack rotation for meetings
- Fall Product Program Parent:** Organizes Fall Product Program Candy/Nut/Magazine sale
- Phone Tree Chair:** Makes calls in case of last minute meeting/activity changes or emergency
- Service Unit Meeting Sub:** Attend a Service Unit meeting to pick up troop information if troop leader is unable to attend



# KEEPING GIRLS SAFE

The adult supervision rule at Girl Scouts is a strict standard that requires whenever girls meet, whether in person or virtually, there must be at least two registered, approved adult volunteers who are unrelated (for example: not a sibling, spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, or anyone who would be considered a family member) and who do not live in the same residence, with a minimum of one who is female. This applies to every Girl Scout gathering. There are no exceptions to this rule.

| 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 Daisies (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   |

A volunteer should never be alone with a girl (besides their own child) at any time. If you have additional children (like siblings) they should be counted in the figuring for girl/adult ratio. You should calculate the number of required volunteers for the youngest child in attendance. Learn more about safety in [Volunteer Essentials](#) and [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

## What to Do in an Emergency

Although we all hope the worst never happens, you should know and follow our council's procedures for handling [emergency incidents](#). Remember, at the scene of an incident, safety is your first priority. Provide care for the injured person and/or obtain medical assistance, then immediately submit an [Accident/Incident Report](#) and inform your assigned Membership Manager.

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity. You may need to provide the kit if one is not already available at your meeting location. You must always have your girls' [health forms](#) on hand along with the names and telephone numbers of our council office, parents/caregivers of your girls, and emergency services such as the police, fire department, and hospital.



# YOUR FIRST TROOP MEETING

Your first troop meeting is a great chance to get to know the girls and brainstorm the exciting things they want to do in the year to come. If you're feeling a little nervous about leading troop meetings and experiences with your girls, that's OK! Just remember that:

**It doesn't need to be perfect.** Take a deep breath, roll with the changes, and have fun! The girls aren't expecting perfection from you: your time, attention, and guidance are the best part of your leadership.

Learn with your girls. Keeping activities girl-led also means that at some point the girls will want to earn a badge or complete a project in a subject unfamiliar to you. But don't let that hold you back! Be open with the girls when you don't know something and become their partner in learning more. You'll show them that learning is a lifelong process and that, with an open mind, they can overcome any challenges that come their way.

## Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

1. Ramp up. Plan activities for the girls on arrival so that they have something to do until the meeting begins. This could be as simple as providing coloring pages, journaling, or talking with one another.  
(5 minutes)
2. Open. Each troop decides how to open its meetings—most begin with the Girl Scout Promise and Law, a simple flag ceremony, song, game, story, or other activity designed by the girls. (5–10 minutes)
3. Conduct troop business. Collect dues and make announcements, or plan an upcoming event or trip while families are present. (5 minutes)
4. Let the fun begin. Use the meeting plans found in the Volunteer Toolkit! Activities are already designed to fit easily into this part of your meeting as you help your troop earn badges and complete Journeys. (30–45 minutes)
5. Clean up. Because Girl Scouts should always leave a place cleaner than they found it! (5 minutes)
6. Close. Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close—with a friendship circle, song, game, story, or pretty much anything else!  
(5–10 minutes)

## First meeting checklist:

1. **Cover the basics.** Review the details about when and where the meeting will take place and make sure families are aware.
2. **Get ready.** Use the Volunteer Toolkit to verify your troop roster and email parents. This might be a great time to ask parents to provide you with any needed items, such as health history forms, uniform order forms, and troop dues.
3. **Know the agenda.** Refer to our “Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting” and the Volunteer Toolkit sample meeting agenda.
4. **Review and practice your agenda.** You'll feel calmer during the actual meeting and ready to make adjustments as needed.
5. **Be prepared...for fun!** When the girls and parents see that you're prepared for the meeting and ready to have a great time, they'll follow your lead!





# FUNDING THE FUN

Your girls probably have some big ideas about what they want to do in Girl Scouts—and that's awesome! As a troop leader, you'll coach them as they learn to earn and manage troop funds. But where do you start? Troop activities are powered in two main ways:

**Troop dues.** Many troops decide to collect troop dues to help provide startup funds for troop activities and supplies. These could range from a few dollars per meeting to a lump sum for the entire school year. It's completely up to each troop to decide what works best for them to support the activities they want to do.

**Money-earning activities.** The fall product and cookie programs are the primary money-earning activities for a troop—and they're a hands-on way for girls to learn money management skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives. You'll learn the ins-and-outs of these programs in a separate training.

We know you have more questions about troop finances, and we've got answers! Check out the troop finances portion of the Successful Leader Learning Series on gsLearn and in Volunteer Essentials for the details you'll need to keep troop business running smoothly.

## Organizational Structure

**Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA):** A national organization supporting the work of more than 100 councils across the U.S. for more than 100 years. Headquartered in New York City.

**Girl Scouts Heart of the South:** Independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit chartered by GSUSA, operating under the direction of a local board of directors, and overseeing all service units and troops within a specific geographic area.

**GSHS Service Units (SUs):** Made up of volunteers who support the work of troop volunteers within a given geographic area.

**Troops:** Volunteer-supervised groups of girls.

## Money FAQs

Our three most frequently asked-about troop finance topics:

**Opening a bank account.** New troops will need to set up a bank account to collect dues, pay for troop supplies and activities, and collect product sales revenue. Volunteer Essentials breaks down the process for you. <https://www.girlscoutshs.org/en/for-volunteers/VolunteerEssentials/TroopFinances.html>

**Financial assistance.** Finances shouldn't stand in the way of a Girl Scout's participation. Any girl needing financial assistance for membership can request it as part of the online member registration process. Other financial assistance is available for uniform components, events, and camps, and can be requested. Contact Customer Care at 800-624-4185 or [info@girlscoutshs.org](mailto:info@girlscoutshs.org) for more information.

**Tax exemption.** Councils are 501(c)(3) nonprofits, so take advantage of your council's tax-exempt form when purchasing supplies and materials for Girl Scout troop use. <http://www.girlscoutshs.org/en/for-volunteers/volunteer-resources/forms---documents.html>





# PRODUCT PROGRAM

Each year, troops have two opportunities to participate in council sponsored money earning activities: the Fall Product Program and the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Each of these programs offer girls and troops the opportunity to earn funds to power their Girl Scout adventures, as well as rewards to keep girls engaged and motivated. Through their participation in product programs, girls are able to launch their very own businesses while learning important life skills along the way:



goal setting



decision-making



money management



people skills



business ethics

With the support of volunteers in your Service Unit and the council Product Program team, you will be connected to training, resources, and support to ensure that you and your troop have everything that you need to have a successful experience.

There are also Cookie Business Badges that help troop volunteers guide girls on this journey to developing their confidence in having a voice to set their goals, decide what they want to do with the money earned and understanding how to successfully run their Cookie Program.

It's important to remember that any funds earned through money earning activities become property of the troop as a whole to further the Girl Scout experience. It must also be a girl-led decision on how these funds should be spent. Troop funds can be used towards meeting supplies, badges, outings and activities, camping, experiences, and more.

## Fall Product Program | September - November

This is a great way to get girls and families comfortable with participating in council sponsored money earning activities.

- **What:** Girls sell nuts, candy, and magazines and other items to family and friends.
- **How:** Customers can select to have their order delivered by the Girl Scout or shipped directly to them. Products to be delivered by girls will arrive in November for distribution to girls and families.
- **Why:** Troops earn money and girls earn rewards for each item sold.



## Cookie Program | December - March

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world!

The bulk of the troop's funds are earned through girls' participation in the Cookie Program and it's where they truly get to put the 5 Skills they have learned into action.

- **What:** Girls sell cookies to customers near and far online, in-person, and at booth sales.
- **How:** Family and friends support their favorite Girl Scout by purchasing cookies to help her reach her goal. With the support of parents/caregivers and troop volunteers, girls can also participate in booth sales at local businesses.
- **Why:** Troops earn proceeds on each package of cookies sold and girls earn rewards based on the number of packages they sell.





# THE VOLUNTEER TOOLKIT

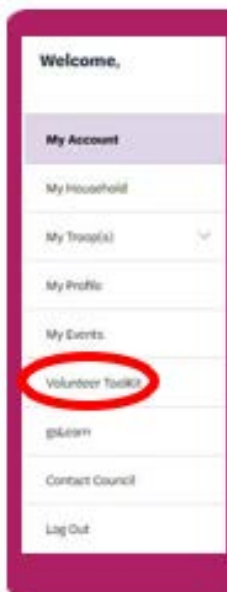
This comprehensive digital tool allows you more time to focus on your girls. It makes managing your troop and planning your meetings smooth and easy all year long. Inside, you'll find meeting overviews, activity plans, badge and Journey outlines, meeting aids, Girl Scout resources, and more!

## Plan and Customize Your Year

At Girl Scouts, we know when girls take part in shaping their Girl Scout experience and adventures, they will be more engaged and will have more fun! The VTK makes it easy for troop leaders and girls to explore meeting topics and ideas available for their grade level together and select what they want to include in their year. Leaders can take this information to plan and customize the troop's year using the VTK's pre-populated meeting plans, agendas, supply lists, and activity instructions.

## Manage Troop Rosters, Attendance, and Accomplishments

With the VTK you will be able to view your troop roster, keep attendance records and post your accomplishments.



To access the Volunteer Toolkit, log into your myGS account on our website at [girlscoutshs.org](https://www.girlscoutshs.org). For more information, visit <https://www.girlscoutshs.org/en/members/for-volunteers/volunteer-resources.html>

## Easy Navigation at your Fingertips!

Here are just a few of the many features you'll find inside the VTK. We strongly

encourage leaders to utilize the VTK to streamline their troop management and planning. GSUSA continues to update and enhance the VTK with additional resources, features and functions.

### MY TROOP

- View, edit, download and print rosters.
- Edit contact info.
- View achievements and attendance.
- Renew memberships.

### YEAR PLANS

- Specify meeting dates and locations.
- Preview & choose pre-populated year plans.
- Add and/or combine meeting plans to customize your year.
- Add custom troop activities like celebrations, outings, camping trips, etc.

### MEETING PLANS

- View, download, or print individual meeting summaries, activity plans and supply lists.
- Track attendance and achievements.
- Search and print meeting aids such as name tags, handouts, and more.

### RESOURCES

- Access award logs, badge charts, meeting plans, and more.
- Access GSCO specific resources on troop leadership, safety, training, GS traditions and awards, trips and travel, Girl Scout Product Programs, and camp and outdoor programs.



# BADGE PLACEMENT

**Badge:** Earned by completing skill-building activities. Badges are placed on the front of the uniform.

**Patch:** Given for participating in fun events, activities, or other programs. Patches are placed on the back of the uniform.



**Girl Scout Daisy Tunic**



**Girl Scout Brownie Vest**



**Girl Scout Junior Vest**



**Girl Scout Cadette Vest**



# TIPS FOR NEW TROOP LEADERS

## ***Helpful Tip #1: Schedule troop meetings***

To keep your troop engaged, meet one to two times per month for 60-90 minutes. Every troop meeting should have the girls recite the Girl Scout Promise and Law and then jump right into the learning and fun! Serving as a Troop Leader is a commitment to helping girls grow in courage, confidence, and character! Your role is to connect girls with opportunities to develop their skills and challenge them to think creatively about how they can make the world a better place. Our research shows that girls need to shape their own paths to develop confidence and leadership skills. Because of this, we highly recommend using the Volunteer Toolkit as a guideline on how to accomplish different badges and journeys at troop meetings.

## ***Helpful Tip #2: Ask for help***

Don't try to do it all alone. Ask parents and other family members to help out with specific tasks (people are more likely to agree to something if they know what they are agreeing to!). You can also always ask your Service Unit and Membership Manager for ideas, but remember the girls in your troop are creative and will have ideas for fun activities!

## ***Helpful Tip #3: Talk to the girls***

Girl Scouts is designed to be girl-led. With your guidance, we want girls to take the lead in determining what they want to do as a troop - from what badges and journeys they want to earn, to what food they make at their first camp out, to making decisions on how they want to spend their hard-earned money from the Cookie Program. When girls have a chance to make decisions, you're teaching them to collaborate, work as a team, and advocate for their ideas.

## ***Helpful Tip #4: Role model lifelong learning***

As you use the girl-led process in the development of your troop meetings, the girls will, at some point, want to earn a badge or complete a journey that includes unfamiliar program material to you. Be open with the girls when you don't know something, but don't use that as a reason to keep them from exploring the topic or completing the project. Instead, become their partner in figuring out how to learn more. When they see you learning alongside them, their confidence in their current knowledge and skills, as well as their ability to problem-solve, will develop. It will also help them understand that learning is a lifelong process.

## ***Helpful Tip #5: Attend Girl Scout events***

We have program experts and partners who develop programs and work with volunteers to provide unique event experiences for girls. Not only will girls learn new skills, but they will also meet girls from across the region! Visit the [Events Calendar](#) on the Girl Scouts Heart of the South website to find things to do with your troop!

## ***Helpful Tip #6: Take your next training steps***

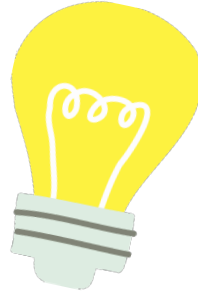
After your first few troop meetings, you and your troop will feel more comfortable and want to try new experiences! From sleepovers to camping to traveling, there are many fun opportunities in Girl Scouts. When you're ready, reach out about your next training steps. Explore options for further training on our website and on gsLearn.



# SUPPLY LISTS TO GET STARTED

You will need some basic supplies to get started and complete most of the badge work. Most of these items can be found at the Dollar Store.

- Color Construction Paper
- Plain White Computer Paper
- Markers/Crayons/Color Pencils
- Glue Sticks
- Scissors
- Tape
- Paint/Paint Brushes
- String



*Tip:* Look for stores, community centers, or organizations in your area that offer second-hand craft and household items. You can also ask your Service Unit members if they have leftover supplies or material you can use.





# MULTI-LEVEL TROOP TIPS



A Multi-level troop is a troop with a combination of Girl Scouts of different grade-levels. Multi-level troops form possibly because the troop leader has one daughter who is a Brownie and another that is a Daisy; or perhaps the community/school is so small that it will not support two troops. Many older girls (Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors) choose to form a single troop because their individual troops would be very small.

## Tips for managing your Multi-Level Troop:

- Always follow the girl/adult ratio based on the youngest girls in your troop. This means if you have a troop of 12 Daisy/Brownie girls, you should meet the required Daisy ratios
- You can only have one bank account per troop number. Therefore, you cannot create a separate account for your older girls who are raising money
- When registering girls for council programs, be mindful of grade level requirements. There may be some programs that are not open to all troop members
- Be prepared. Create a phone tree that parents/guardians can use to reach out to each other. Be sure to let them know the importance of their commitment and encourage parents to contact another person to help if they can't make it to the meeting or activity
- Follow the activity guidelines for the higher level. This means if you are working on the Outdoor Art explorer badge with Daisies and Brownies, use the meeting plan for Brownies. Adjust activities as needed.
- If safety is a concern or there is no way to adapt the activity in an appropriate way, leverage the help of other troop volunteers and ask that they physically separate the group for that portion of the meeting. Remember, there must always be two adults with any group of girls
- Use Pinterest and Google to find fun activities
- Search in Google for National Proficiency Badge Chart to see which badges correlate to the same activity but different level





# GIRL SCOUT TRADITIONS

There are many kinds of traditions in Girl Scouting, ranging from more formal investiture, rededication, and bridging ceremonies, to the way you open and close your regular troop meetings.

What counts in Girl Scout traditions is that they are meaningful to the participants, that the girls are involved in the planning, and that everyone participates in the way they are able.

**Girl Scout Quiet Sign:** A way to ask for silence in a crowd without shouting. Made by holding up the right hand with three fingers extended.

**Friendship Circle:** Girls gather in a circle and cross their right arm over their left, then link hands with the next girl. With everyone silent, the leader starts the “friendship squeeze” by squeezing the hand of the girl to her right. One by one, each girl passes the squeeze until it travels the full circle. A great way to end meetings.

**Girl Scout Motto:** “Be prepared.”

**Girl Scout Slogan:** “Do a good turn daily.”

**SWAPS:** Small, handmade tokens of friendship exchanged with other Girl Scouts. Stands for “Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere.” SWAPS may be exchanged by members at events like troop camp or service unit events.





# GIRL SCOUT SONGS



## Girl Scout Songs

There are so many Girl Scout songs of all sorts: traditional, silly, serious, camp classics, repeat-after-me, and more! Here are just a few to get you started:

Make New Friends



Brownie Smile



Little Green Frog



Boom Chicka Boom



Princess Pat



Great Big Moose



Thunderation



I Am One Voice



On My Honor



The Bear



Watch Me Shine





Linger





# YOUR YEAR IN GIRL SCOUTS

| AUGUST  | SEPTEMBER  | OCTOBER  | NOVEMBER  |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review your roster &amp; troop details</li> <li>Recruit new girls to your troop.</li> <li>Plan your troop year</li> <li>National S'mores Day (8/10)</li> <li>Contact your service unit team for the leader meeting schedule for your service unit</li> <li>Take program level training to prepare for upcoming year</li> <li>Attend VLS</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan first parent meeting and troop meeting</li> <li>Recruit new girls to your troop</li> <li>Investiture &amp; rededication ceremonies</li> <li>Bridging ceremonies</li> <li>Fall Product Program begins</li> <li>Girl Scouts Love State Parks</li> <li>Hispanic History Month (9/15-10/15)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New membership year begins (10/1)</li> <li>International Day of the Girl (10/11)</li> <li>Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday ("Founder's Day") (10/31)</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to attend service unit meetings</li> <li>Sign up for additional training or complete your initial training</li> <li>Attend Cookie Program training</li> <li>Native American Heritage Month</li> <li>Review your troop roster and send any changes to your Membership Manager</li> </ul> |
| DECEMBER  | JANUARY  | FEBRUARY   | MARCH   |
| <p>Happy Holidays!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk with your troop about community service and Take Action projects</li> <li>Continue to check in with your co-leader(s) and reconcile troop finances</li> <li>Hold a family Cookie Program meeting</li> <li>Girl Scout Cookie Program begins</li> </ul>   | <p>Happy New Year!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend a Cookie Rally</li> <li>Initial cookie orders due</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer camp registration opens!</li> <li>Continue to attend your local leader meetings</li> <li>Planning a trip? Be sure to submit Activity and Event Form as required</li> <li>World Thinking Day (2/22)</li> <li>Black History Month</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cookie Program ends</li> <li>Continue to check in with your co-leader(s) and reconcile troop finances</li> <li>Girl Scout Week</li> <li>Girl Scout Birthday (3/12)</li> <li>Women's History Month</li> </ul>   |
| APRIL   | MAY  | JUNE   | JULY  |
| <p>Happy Volunteer Appreciation Month!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early renewal opens</li> <li>Earth Day (4/22)</li> <li>Girl Scout Volunteer Day (4/22)</li> <li>Continue to attend service unit meetings</li> <li>GSHS Annual Meeting (last Saturday in April)</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan an end of year and/or bridging ceremony</li> <li>Continue to check in with your co-leader(s) and reconcile troop finances</li> <li>Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month</li> <li>Mental Health Awareness Month</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual troop finance reports due.</li> <li>Hold an end of year and/or bridging ceremony</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to check in with your co-leader(s) and reconcile troop finances</li> <li>Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge</li> <li>Enjoy your summer!</li> </ul>    |

Council-sponsored programs, events, and trainings are continually introduced and updated throughout the year!

Pay close attention to council emails and text alerts, and visit our [events calendar](https://www.girlscoutshs.org/en/activities/event-calendar.html) regularly (<https://www.girlscoutshs.org/en/activities/event-calendar.html>) to stay informed and get involved!