Gold Award Manual
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Getting Started

Where to Begin?

First, complete your Gold Award prerequisites:
- *Complete two Journeys at the Girl Scout Senior and/or Ambassador level, or
- *Earn the Girl Scout Silver Award as a Cadette, and complete one Senior or Ambassador Journey

Next, read through the Girl Scout Gold Award Guidelines. (Go ahead. Set this down. It'll be here when you get back.)

Now, flip through this booklet.

Then, create your GoGoldOnline account by visiting: www.girlscouts.org/gogoldonline

Don't forget to register for a Gold Award Workshop.

Why Read This?

samples paperwork tips guidelines dos don’ts

What’s My Timeline?

Each girl sets her own timeline, but here are some helpful dates:

Any day of any month: proposals are due

March 1: your final paperwork is due in order to be recognized in that year’s Gold Award ceremony.

April 1: if you’re a graduating Senior, your proposal is due today.

September 30: of the year you graduate is when your final paperwork is due.
## Steps & Standards of Excellence

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| **1. Choose an Issue:** Use your values and skills to identify a community issue you care about. | •Live the Girl Scout Promise and Law.  
•Demonstrate civic responsibility. |
| **2. Investigate:** Research everything you can about the issue. | •Use a variety of sources: interview people, read books and articles, find professional organizations online. (Remember to evaluate each source’s reliability and accuracy.)  
•Demonstrate courage as you investigate your issue, knowing that what you learn may challenge your own and others’ beliefs.  
•Identify nations and/or global links to your community issue. |
| **3. Get Help:** Invite others to support and take action with you. | •Seek out and recognize the value of the skills and strengths of others.  
•Respect different points of view and ways of working.  
•Build a team and recruit a project advisor who’ll bring special skills to your Take Action project. |
| **4. Create a Plan:** Create a project plan that achieves sustainable and measurable impact. | •Lead the planning your Take Action project.  
•Work collaboratively to develop a plan for your project that creates lasting change. |
| **5. Present Your Plan and Get Feedback:** Sum up your project plan for your Girl Scout Council. | •Submit a project proposal to your council that’s concise, comprehensive and clear.  
•Describe your plan including the Girl Scout Leadership Outcomes you want to achieve and the impact you plan to make on yourself and the community.  
•Articulate your issue clearly and explain why it matters to you.  
•Accept constructive suggestions that’ll help refine your project. |
| **6. Take Action:** Take the lead to carry out your plan. | •Take action to address the root cause of an issue so your solution has measurable and sustainable impact.  
•Actively seek partnerships to achieve greater community participation and impact for your Take Action Project.  
•Use resources wisely.  
•Speak out and act on behalf of yourself and others. |
| **7. Educate and Inspire:** Share what you have experienced with others. | •Reflect on what you’ve learned when you present your Girl Scout Gold Award Final Report to your council.  
•Summarize the effectiveness of your project and the impact it had on you and your community.  
•Share the project beyond your local community and inspire others to take action in their own communities. |
Being a Leader

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.

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

Your Team
- adults
- friends
- volunteers
- troop mates

these people go in the chart in your proposal

Your Target Audience
people you’re educating organizations you’re working with groups you’re advocating for
these people and groups go in Question E in your proposal

Your Wider Audience
everyone you’ll share your story with once you complete your Gold Award Take Action Project
(This audience and your means of reaching them go in Question I in your proposal.)

It’s About Heart

Being a Gold Award Girl Scout is about **more than a project**. Your **conduct** toward everyone you’re working with, whether they’re part of your team or your audience, is what will **determine** whether you are a **successful** Gold Award Girl Scout. So use your **head** and your **heart**, follow these **tips**, and you’ll be **unstoppable**!

Write thank you notes. Call or email people yourself.
Be okay with making mistakes. Keep a friendly smile.
Don't be afraid to say “I’m sorry.” Be a sister to every Girl Scout.
Assume that people are trying to help, even if they mess up.
Take Action!

A Gold Award Take Action Project ...

has national and/or global links.

is sustainable.

takes approximately 80 hours.

addresses an issue that’s important to you.

And that means what?

National and/or global links.

Your issue may be as local as saving the ash trees in the town park. Now, step back and look around. Forests across the country are being devastated by borer beetles, which are spread when people transport firewood. Linked!

Sustainable.

How will your project stay alive even when you’re done? Will the education you’ve provided live on in people’s memories and habits? Will someone else be able to pick up where you’ve left off?

Takes approximately 80 hours.

Eighty hours of your own time starts with Girl Scout Gold Award Step One, Choosing an Issue, before you even submit your proposal. Projects should be about quality, not quantity, of hours. Eighty hours is simply a recommended guideline. Read more about counting your hours in the Guidelines for Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors.

Addresses an issue that’s important to you.

You care about. Not your mom or grandma, dad, best friend or leader. You. So be brave. Take a stand. Find your passion.
Money and Safety

The Dirt on the Green

Remember that Girl Scout girls cannot ask for donations. Girl Scout adults can do so on your behalf and with your input. You can describe your project to others, write a letter or create a PowerPoint presentation, but an adult has to do the actual “ask” and sign any documents.

Corporate or local business may donate $249 each to your project. Larger donations can be made up to $1,000 but must be pre-approved by council. Your Gold Award Mentor can guide you on the extra paper needed.

Troop money-earning hours, such as product sales and cookie selling, cannot be counted toward your project. This is because troop money-earning hours are intended to support the troop’s goals, whereas the Gold Award is an individual undertaking. The troop may vote to distribute some funds to you, but it must be unanimous.

Remember that Girl Scouts cannot raise money for another organization. All money earned and donated should be managed by you.

Safety First

During your Gold Award Take Action Project, keeping yourself, your team and your participants safe is key! Make sure to ask yourself these questions:

Do I have any volunteers or participants under the age of 18? If so, I definitely need to have permission slips for them. Girl to Adult ratios would be followed as outlined in Volunteer Essentials.

For projects where a video is being made, photo releases must be signed by participants or parents (for minors). This is also important if any pictures will be taken.

Have I thought about having any snacks or meals? Do my participants have any food allergies? This is a great question to ask on permission slips. Once I read my permission slips, what allergens might I need to avoid?

Are the activities I’ll be doing during my project, or activities like them, listed in the online Safety Activity Checkpoints? If so, what do I need to do to ensure the safety of my project participants?

Do ALL Girl Scout meetings and activities need a first aider? No, but a first aider is required for:

- physically demanding activities.
- activities involving potential injury such as, but not limited to, hiking, camping, backpacking, bicycling, caving, climbing, horseback riding, skating, skiing, swimming and boating.
- an activity of 24 hours or more.
- an event of over 200 people (from GSWPA Volunteer Essentials).

Additional insurance may be needed for any non–Girl Scout participants. Instruction to purchase additional insurance can be found in Volunteer Essentials.

All publications should say “Girl Scout Gold Award Project” but should not have personal information about the girl. Consider making an email just for the project or listing your parent’s or Troop Leader’s contact information.
Red Flags

Below, you’ll find a list of projects that just don’t make the cut as Gold Award Take Action Projects.

Why so many rules, you ask?

Because a Girl Scout Gold Award Take Action Project is about creating the greatest impact possible. And avoiding these simple traps will help you do just that!

What NOT to Do

Canned Projects ...
... because a canned project is pre-designed and demands only that you implement someone else’s project (i.e.—a blood drive or annual clean-up). A Gold Award Take Action Project requires you to act in a leadership position from the get-go, designing a sustainable advocacy project on an issue that you have carefully researched.

Collection Projects ...
because collecting items for an organization does not elicit the creativity or leadership required by the Gold Award, nor does it look at the root of the issue.

Fundraising Projects ...
because Girls Scouts, whether girls or adults, are not allowed to raise money for another organization.

Girl Scout Inward-Focused Projects ...
because the Girl Scout Gold Award is about reaching out to the community beyond the boards of the Girl Scouts.

Group Projects ...
because the Gold Award is about taking a stance on an issue that you are passionate about in the way that you think it can best be addressed. This doesn’t mean that you won’t be working with and consulting with other people, just that you’ll be the one calling the shots!
From Good to Gold

Tip: Don’t work alone!
Assessing your community’s needs and approaching a non-profit to ask if you can partner with them to help fill those needs. Creating sustainable programming for that organization and training new volunteers to run the program.

Tip: Don’t do a project focused on collection.
Volunteering to collect games and food at the mall for a teen center.
Creating a health access booklet for teens in the community. Arranging a teen health fair with various organizations presenting their services. Admission is canned goods for the teen center.

Tip: Don’t be afraid to advocate!
Writing a formal letter to your senator to ask for better food options in schools.
Starting a Facebook group to advocate for school lunch reform. Working with students to teach them about healthy food decisions. Delivering the letters from these two campaigns in-person to your member of Congress.

Tip: Don’t plan a project just for Girl Scouts!
Working with your troop to host Girl Scout Thinking Day.
Using your troop mates, as well as others in your community, as volunteers for a program promoting tolerance. Videotaping participants’ insights and posting footage to a blog dedicated to building peace through relationships.
Help From Adults

Troop/Group Volunteer
Your Girl Scout Troop Advisor. For Indies, this may be a parent. To show that you’ve been working together, this person’s signature is required on the proposal agreement form.

Project Advisor
An advisor who is neither your troop advisor nor your parent, and who is preferably outside of your Girl Scouting community. This person should have specialized knowledge that relates to your Gold Award Take Action Project. (Signature is required on official paperwork)

Girl Led
The Gold Award process is girl-led. That means that YOU are responsible for writing your proposal, turning in your paperwork, and contacting the Gold Award Mentor with any questions.*

Gold Award Committee
The Gold Award Committee will review your project, and must approve your Take Action Project BEFORE you begin.

Gold Award Mentor
Each candidate receives a Gold Award Mentor. Mentors are your support at the council level. They are all volunteers and a resource when you have questions about your Gold Award after approval. Contact information is in your approval email. You must keep them informed/updated at all times.

Program Performance Coordinator
The GSWPA staff who oversees the Gold Award process. Questions that can’t be answered through this manual can be directed to Customer Care, customercare@gswnpa.org.

*Specific questions related to your project, from approval to implementation, must be asked by you. If an adult has general questions about the process, they may contact the staff liaison.
Gold Award Committee

We are volunteers who love Girl Scouting!
We live throughout the 27 counties that represent GSWPA. We’re here for YOU!

How do we help? We support, communicate, brainstorm, act as a sister Girl Scout, trouble shooter, advocate, mentor, listen — and even give shoulder to lean on. We want to help you succeed and be all you can be!

Gold Award Mentors
You’re chosen by a Gold Award mentor who will help you with:

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<th>restructuring your proposal if necessary</th>
<th>working through the paperwork before submission if you’re stuck</th>
<th>ideas on how to expand your project, if necessary</th>
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<td>troubleshooting during your project</td>
<td>finding your global/national link</td>
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<td>ideas for celebrating your Gold Award</td>
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Proposal Submission

1) Upon completing Girl Scout Gold Award Step Four, move on to Step Five by **turning in your proposal**. You can do this at any time by online submission website, GoGoldOnline.

2) **Proposal**

   *GSWPA will acknowledge receipt of your proposal through an email once you submit it. Then, your proposal will be sent to the Gold Award Committee for review.

   *This process takes approximately six weeks. You can’t proceed with your project during this time until hearing the Gold Award Committee’s response.

3) You will be chosen by a **Gold Award Mentor** who will be with you for the remainder of your project.

4) **You will be emailed a letter** detailing your proposal’s status approximately 6 weeks after submission. Your letter will give you contact information for your Gold Mentor. You must have approval from your Gold Mentor before starting your project.

   This will be your opportunity to clarify your proposal and respond to the committee’s questions and concerns (if any) by speaking with your Gold Award Mentor. Please be honest and make time for them. This is your time to get to know each other.
Proposal Pieces

Proposal Plus+

When submitting your Girl Scout Gold Award Project Proposal, make sure to also include the additional material. These items include:

Gold Award Project Agreement Form
Initial each statement and get signatures from your advisor, and parent/guardian.

Proposed Budget
An addendum to your estimated expenses (Question F in the Project Proposal). This may be a document or spreadsheet and should show your planned expenses and how you intend to pay for them. (See our sample in the additional information download.)

Projected Timeline
Part of the detailed project plan, Question D in the Project Proposal, the timeline should give a step-by-step account of how you plan to spend your time during the Gold Award Take Action Project. This can be your own creation.

How do I do this on GoGoldOnline?

That’s a great question! During Step 5, you should download the additional information (find at the top of the screen). All of these forms are included in your download, plus other forms you will need while you work on your project—like the In-kind donation form, as well as supplemental info you will need to submit with your Final paperwork. Complete the forms listed above, and upload them before you submit to council for review.

The Gold Award Project Proposal should be submitted approximately six weeks before you intend to begin your project. This sample calendar gives you an idea of the realistic timing of the proposal process.

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Go Gold  | 13
Gold Award Project Proposal

This is your chance to make an impression and tell the Gold Award Committee about your Take Action Project idea. Your Project Proposal allows the committee to form their questions for you. The following is a guide to what type of information the committee will be looking for in your proposal.

A: Describe the issue your project will address and your target audience.
   What will you actually be doing? What issue concerns you, who are you aiming to involve in addressing this issue, and how will you go about doing this? How is this project uniquely yours, and how will you be a leader throughout? Be thorough — this is the first thing the Gold Award committee will read about your project!

B: Discuss your reasons for selecting the project.
   Why is this particular project of interest to you? How does it relate to your skills, interests, other community involvement or future plans? What makes this project personal?

C: Outline the strengths, talents, and skills that you plan to put into action.
   What skills do you hope to develop?
   What comes naturally to you that you plan to put into action? What’s a bit harder for you that you plan to make stronger by stretching yourself during your Gold Award Take Action Project?

D: Describe the steps involved in putting your plan into action, including resources, facilities, equipment, and approvals needed. (Attach a detailed project plan.)
   What tasks do you need to complete? What are all of the resources you will need during your project? If you need transportation, how will you get there? If you need to transport others, how will you make that happen? Do you need to have any special training or to have others with special skills participate in your project? All equipment, supplies and approvals need to be planned out in advance. Don’t make assumptions that others will help you—ask in advance or have a backup plan. Include a review of the relevant safety guidelines from Volunteer Essentials and the Safety Activity Checkpoints. Remember to attach your timeline!
E: Enter the names of people or organizations you plan to inform and involve.

Beyond the team you put together, what’s the name of each person or organization benefiting from and collaborating with your project? Who’ll you inform of what you are doing? (Example: I’ll contact the local Elks club to request help with my project.) This is your target audience—see p. 2.

F: Estimate overall project expenses and how you plan to meet these costs.

How much money will you need to make your project a reality? How do you plan to earn money to cover the costs of your project? Even if you hope to have items donated, how will you come up with the money to cover the costs of items that are unexpectedly not covered by donations? What is your backup plan to cover all costs? Remember to attach your budget.

G: What methods or tools will you use to evaluate the impact of your project?

Your evaluation needs to be something tangible. Will you have a participant survey? Will you interview participants/volunteers? Will you measure success by number of participants, by number of people benefited? Will your follow-up be immediately after the event, or later?

H: How will your project be sustained beyond your involvement?

How will your project continue to have an impact in the future? How will your project stay alive even when you’re done? Will the education you’ve provided live on in people’s memories and habits? Will another person or group be able to pick up where you’ve left off?

I: Describe how you plan to tell others about your project, the project’s impact, and what you have learned. (Web site, blog, presentations, posters, videos, articles, and so on.)

How will you spread the word about your project to people in the community? If you make a display, where will you put it? If you make a video, where and when will it be viewed? If you create a website, how will people find out about it? This is your wider audience—see p. 2.
Where to End?

**First**, once you’ve finished your Gold Award Take Action Project, take time to reflect on your experiences and share what you’ve learned.

**Next**, head back to GoGoldOnline and start on Step 7: Educate and Inspire. (Remember those supplemental forms you downloaded when you submitted your proposal? It’s time to submit them!)

**Don’t Forget:** Upload the completed Press Release and Informational form. You should also include a high-quality headshot. **Keep several copies!**

**Finally**, once everyone has read your Final Report, submit it through GoGoldOnline. It’s probably a good idea to give your mentor a heads up that your final paperwork is on its way as well!

**Map It!** Share your achievements with other Girl Scout Gold Award earners.

Recommendation Letter Tips:

- Ask for letters from organizations and people with which you’ve worked closely.
- Give your recommender a copy of your final report, relevant materials, and resume if you have one; and give them plenty of time to write the letter.
- Ask for letters from more than one person, as these will be a great resource when you’re applying to college or for a job.

Why Finish?

**privilege**

**honor**

**applications**

**job**

**self-esteem**

**college pride**

**prestige**

What’s my Timeline?

**March 1:** Meet this final paperwork deadline in order to be included in that year’s GSWPA Gold Award ceremony.

**September 30:** Your final paperwork is due to the GSWPA office the year you graduate. You must have your Gold Award Mentor sign off first.
Gold Award Ceremonies are the official GSWPA celebration recognizing our newest Gold Award Girl Scouts.

GSWPA holds two events each spring to recognize girls who earned their award during the past 12 months from March to March. Every Gold Award Girl Scout who turns in her completed Final Report by March 1 is recognized at these events.

Young Women of Distinction is the designation given by GSUSA to the top 10 Gold Award Girl Scouts in the country each year. Girls self-select to apply to GSWPA for this honor and GSWPA chooses which applications to send to GSUSA. The nationally recognized Young Women of Distinction are then honored at a ceremony held in Washington, DC or at the GSUSA National Council Session.

Scholarship Opportunities may be available from local colleges. These average about $1,000 and may be awarded annually directly from potential colleges you may choose to attend. Apply for all leadership or service based scholarships or grants the college has available. These may or may not be related to the Gold Award.
Gold Award Project Agreement Form

Please read and initial each statement, then include this form with your Gold Award proposal form.

I understand that my project proposal, when submitted for approval, will include a proposal form (GSWPA form downloadable from gswpa.org) or completion on GoGoldOnline submission (www.girlscouts.org/gogoldonline/), a realistic budget and timeline (which includes approximately 6 weeks for the approval process) and this form.

I agree to follow all council guidelines, policies and procedures for money earning and procuring donations. I cannot charge admission to my Gold Award project unless it is a minimal direct fee to cover costs that are directly related to my project. I understand that I cannot raise money for another organization.

I’m in 9-12 grade and have completed all the prerequisites BEFORE submitting my proposal.

I’ve attended a Gold Award Workshop (mandatory) and read the policies and procedure packet completely, and understand the content, which I obtained online from gswpa.org.

I understand that my Gold Award project is an individual project.

I understand: My Gold Award Project is to be based on a community need (outside of Girl Scouts). I have gone out into my community in which I live and found a need. My project will address the root cause of the need/issue and my project will go beyond community service and demonstrate a minimum 15 hours of leadership. I understand the difference between service and leadership. My project will not be solely collection based.

I’ve discussed my project with my leader (parent/advisor for Independently Registered Girl Scout), they have signed (not initialed) my proposal and I’ve identified a community advisor (not leader or parent/relative) to help me with my project.

-continued-
I understand if I am a graduating high school senior, the deadline for submitting my project plan to council is April 1 the year I graduate, in order to give me time to complete my project. I understand that I have until September 30th of the year I graduate to complete my Gold Award project and submit my Final Report form, hour log and final budget, Press Release, Promotional Form, Informational Form, and a headshot (jpeg or actual photograph) to my Volunteer Gold Award Mentor and I will not receive my letter of congratulations of completion until all these forms are received by the staff liaison.

I understand it’s my responsibility to contact the assigned volunteer Gold Award mentor every two weeks with updates on my project, once it has been approved by the committee. Failure to do this can result in the Gold Award Mentor delaying approval of the completed project.

I have kept a copy of my proposal for my records.

I have read, initialed and agree to the above statements:

_________________________________________ Date
Gold Award Candidate Signature

_________________________________________ Email Address
_________________________________________ Date
Phone Number

_________________________________________ Email Address
_________________________________________ Date
Project Advisor Signature

_________________________________________ Email Address
_________________________________________ Date
Phone Number

_________________________________________ Email Address
_________________________________________ Date
Leader Signature

_________________________________________ Email Address
_________________________________________ Date
Phone Number

_________________________________________ Email Address
_________________________________________ Date
Parent/Guardian Signature

_________________________________________ Email Address
_________________________________________ Date
Phone Number