

Welcome to Girl Scouts!

A guide for new leaders



girl scouts 
western pennsylvania

Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Are you ready for the ride of a lifetime? That's what you'll get as a Girl Scout leader! In this role, you'll guide your own troop (a group of Girl Scouts from your local area) and help members build confidence, leadership skills, and friendships. In the process, you'll create lifelong memories for your troop and yourself.

Use this guide to note who can help you as you get started with your troop, questions to ask during the Explore Your Year training, or to take note on activities your troop wants to do this year.

We're here to support you every step of the way. Our goal is to partner with you as we deliver experience after experience that builds girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. Let's get started, and remember—your Girl Scout adventure starts today, but the best is yet to come.



Scan here to view this guide online for interactive links.

Meet Our Council

Our council is Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania. We're your local connection to the larger Girl Scout organization. We support local troops, organize events, and provide resources and training for leaders like you, ensuring you have everything you need to help youth members have an unforgettable Girl Scout experience.

Our locations:

Pittsburgh Office and Shop
503 Martindale St. Suite 500
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Greensburg Office and Shop
126 East Otterman St.
Greensburg, PA 15601

Edinboro Office and Shop
5681 Route 6N
Edinboro, PA 16412

Johnstown Office
612 Locust St.
Johnstown, PA 15901

Office & Shop Hours:

Offices:
Mon.-Thurs., 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

Shops:
Mon.-Thurs., 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Closed Fridays
Open some Saturdays September-May
See schedule at shop.gswpa.org.
Or shop online 24/7 at shop.gswpa.org

Key contacts (Use this space for any staff or volunteers in the service unit.):

Council Connections:



customercare@gswpa.org
facebook.com/gswpa
[girlscoutswpa](https://www.instagram.com/girlscoutswpa)
GirlScoutsWPA
800-248-3355

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.

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 Western Pennsylvania

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.

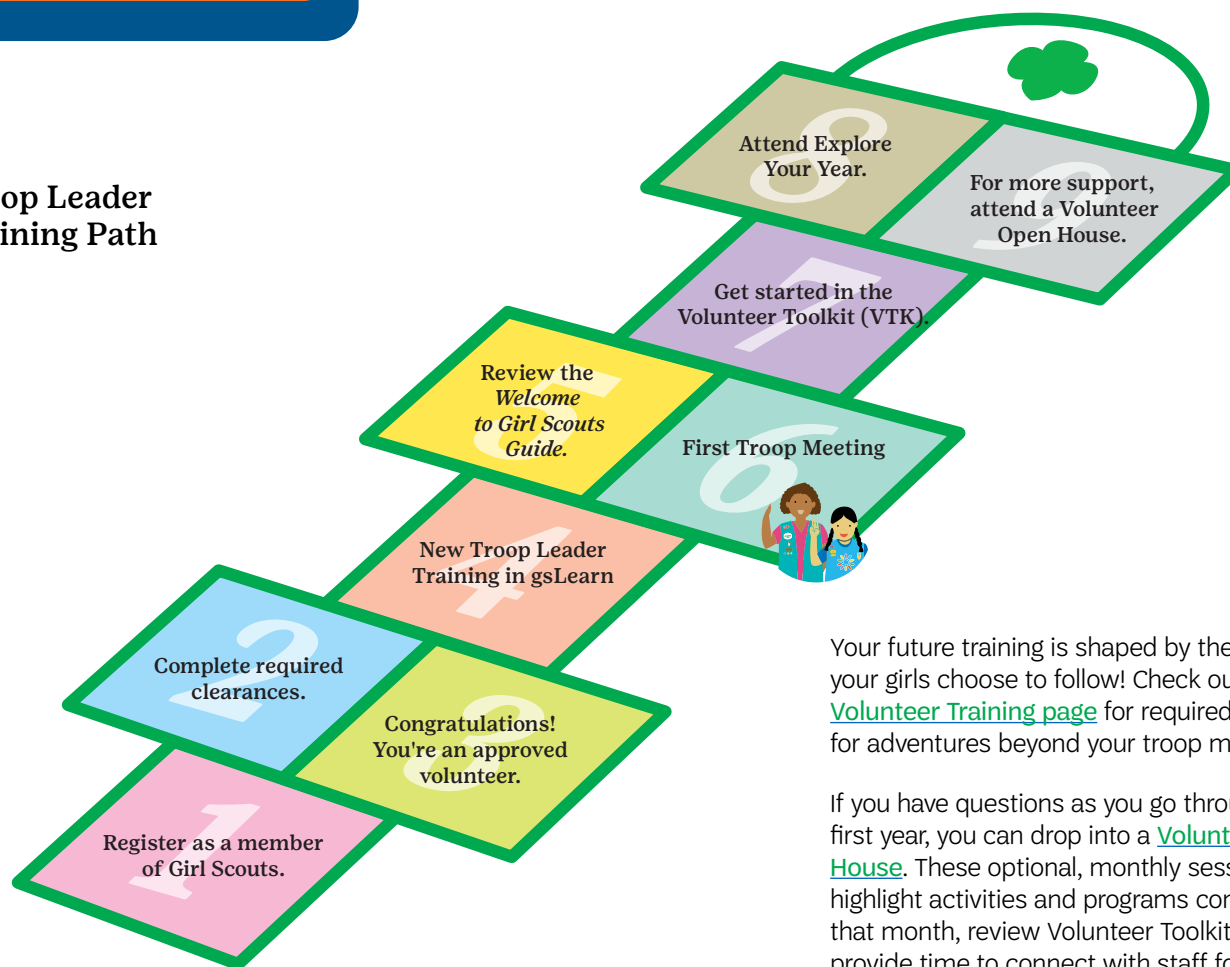
Service Units

Made up of volunteers who support the work of troop volunteers within a given geographic area.

Troops

Volunteer-supervised groups of girls.

Troop Leader Training Path



Your future training is shaped by the path your girls choose to follow! Check out the [Volunteer Training page](#) for required trainings for adventures beyond your troop meeting.

If you have questions as you go through your first year, you can drop into a [Volunteer Open House](#). These optional, monthly sessions will highlight activities and programs coming up that month, review Volunteer Toolkit tips, and provide time to connect with staff for support.

Notes

The Girl Scout Program

As Girl Scouts, youth members discover the fun, friendship, and power of working together. They grow courageous and strong through a wide variety of enriching experiences, such as field trips, skill-building sports clinics, community service projects, cultural exchanges, and environmental stewardship.



Patches

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



Badges

Girls can follow their interests and learn new things while earning Girl Scout badges. Badges are worn on the front of the vest or sash.

The Volunteer Toolkit and Girl's Guide to Scouting are your resources for the requirements to earning badges.



Leadership Awards

These awards give Girl Scouts the chance to grow as leaders—whether they're stepping outside of their comfort zone, guiding a team, or making a difference in their community. Along the way, they develop practical skills like confidence, critical thinking, teamwork, communication, project planning, and advocacy.



Highest Awards Bronze. Silver. Gold.

These awards represent the highest honors a Girl Scout can earn. They give girls the chance to do big things while working on issues they care about. Whether they plant a community garden, advocate for animal rights, or build a career network that encourages girls to pursue STEM careers, they'll inspire others (and you!).

Badges are a key part of the Girl Scout program. Girl Scouts earn badges by learning new skills and doing activities that demonstrate their accomplishments and understanding.

In earning badges, Girl Scouts...

- **Build skills.** As they earn badges, Girl Scouts develop new skills and explore their interests.
- **Show their accomplishments.** When worn, badges show the world what a Girl Scout can do.
- **Make a difference.** Badge work helps Girl Scouts discover ways to make a difference in their community.

Badge Levels

Ex.: Badge Line for Cookie Business I



Daisy

(Grades K–1)



Brownie

(Grades 2–3)



Junior

(Grades 4–5)



Cadette

(Grades 6–8)



Senior

(Grades 9–10)



Ambassador

(Grades 11–12)

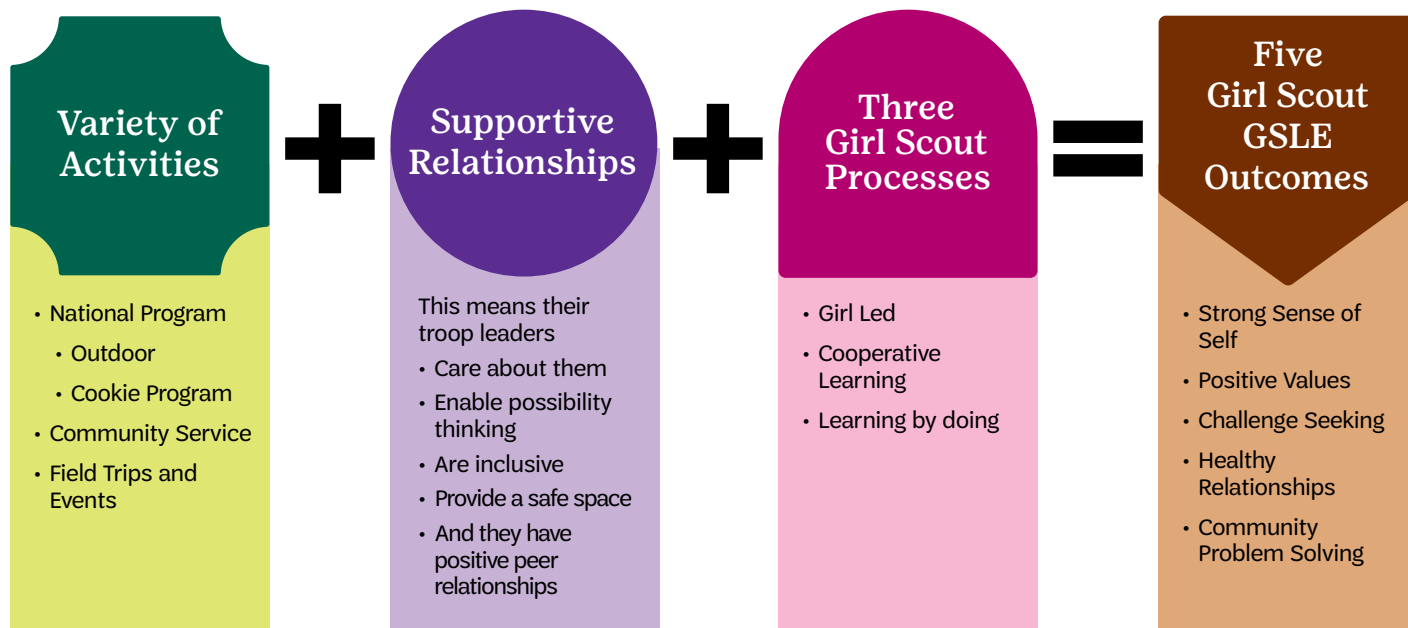
Girl Scouts typically complete activities as part of a troop. A troop is a group of Girl Scouts and volunteers who meet regularly to have fun, learn new skills, and improve their community. Troop involvement allows Girl Scout members to grow their confidence, explore new interests, and find their voice. Troops can either be single-level or multi-level.

- A **single-level troop** is made up of Girl Scouts from a single program level, such as Daisies. This structure allows activities and experiences to be tailored to the group's age and developmental stage.
- A **multi-level troop** includes Girl Scouts from more than one program level—such as Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors—together in the same troop. This setup lets older Girl Scouts mentor younger ones, supports diverse learning, and balances shared activities with age-specific needs.

Both troop types offer unique benefits! The choice depends on leader preferences, community needs, and available resources.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

Girl Scouts look at the world and take action to change it for the better. They make friends, challenge themselves with new experiences, write their own stories, and develop the skills and confidence to say, “I know I can do this!” As a troop leader, you support this process—and the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) is the tool that helps you to do it.



Putting the GSLE into Practice

It's time to put the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (our secret sauce) to work! Implementing it is simple. Just remember these three steps, and you're good to go:

- 1. Plan a variety of activities**, both in and out of the meeting space. Explore Girl Scout badges in STEM, life skills, the outdoors, and entrepreneurship. Get out and experience the world through field trips, council-run events, community service, cookie sales, and more. Check out the Volunteer Toolkit ([girlscouts.org/forvolunteers](https://www.girlscouts.org/forvolunteers)) for all sorts of ideas.
- 2. Create a supportive environment.** Support your Girl Scouts' physical, mental, and emotional well-being, and make sure other adult helpers provide positive support as well. Inspire and guide your Girl Scouts to value, respect, and encourage each other, too! As the troop leader, you'll want to make sure ALL Girl Scouts feel they are welcome, included, and all-around supported within the troop. Take the lead in creating safer spaces where Girl Scouts can thrive! Check out the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* resource for more on this topic.

Tip: Encourage them to explore a variety of activities in the Outdoors, STEM, Life Skills, Entrepreneurship, and even field trips, allowing them to discover new interests and passions.

Tip: The main ways you can support girls in your troop are to make them feel welcomed and included, acknowledging their ideas and feelings, keeping them safe, and encouraging respect and teamwork among them.

An Experience for the Whole Family

Participation in Girl Scouts isn't just for youth members. Everyone in the family can have fun and benefit—Girl Scouts, their adults, and troop leaders, too! There are lots of ways for families to get involved, both big and small.

As a troop leader, you can engage families by:

- Communicating with them about what their Girl Scouts are doing
- Including them in Girl Scout celebrations
- Encouraging their participation in Girl Scout activities
- Enlisting their help with specific group support roles (outlined below)

When families feel engaged, they're more likely to help out. And their involvement results in the best possible experience for troop members. Family support also helps your troop members stay connected over time.

Multi-level tip: Facilitating a multi-level troop is a great way to include the whole family in the Girl Scout experience, since siblings of different program levels can attend the same troop meetings.

Building Your Troop Leadership and Support System

Although managing the Girl Scout experience for your troop is rewarding, it can be time-consuming. Luckily, there are many ways that parents/caregivers and other family members can engage to support your efforts. No matter how much or little time someone has, there's always a way for them to volunteer.

Troop leadership and support roles

- **Troop leader:** As troop leader, you guide and mentor Girl Scouts in your troop. You support their personal growth, leadership skill development, and community involvement through engaging activities and learning experiences.
- **Treasurer:** This volunteer manages the troop's finances. They oversee budgeting, track expenses, and clearly communicate financial information to support the troop's activities and goals.
- **Cookie manager/Fall product manager:** When product program seasons come, you'll want one volunteer who will commit to supporting your troop's efforts throughout the process. This person manages sale logistics, including troop orders, delivery, and other key functions.
- **Troop Committee Volunteer:** Every troop leader needs a little extra help. This can be a volunteer dedicated to supporting your troop's outdoor experiences, providing support during meetings to make sure everything runs smoothly, or ensure the safety and well-being of Girl Scouts during outings. Ask family members to serve as Troop Committee Volunteers.

Multi-level tip: Parents/caregivers with multiple Girl Scouts in a troop may especially enjoy volunteering. Getting involved lets them embrace the Girl Scout experience together as a family.

Guiding Your Troop 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 parents/caregivers.

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

Meeting logistics:

- When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?
- Where/how will we meet? In person, virtually, or a blend of the two? (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 with girls of many grade levels?

Troop communication:

- How often will we communicate with troop families?
- How will we keep families in the loop? The Volunteer Toolkit? Emails? Group texts?

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—the tunic, sash, or vest—will troop families need to purchase? (Troop leader pro tip: Get the full rundown on uniforms and insignia at [girlscouts.org](https://www.girlscouts.org).)

Family/Caregiver Meeting Checklist

Communication with families is key and it all starts at your Family/Caregiver Meeting. Here's a meeting checklist you can follow to make sure to cover the most important points with your families/caregivers.

1. Welcome and introductions

- ☐ Leader introductions
- ☐ Family/caregiver introductions
- ☐ Troop meeting logistics

2. Discover the Girl Scout difference

- ☐ Mission; Promise and Law
- ☐ What Girl Scouts do
- ☐ How Girl Scouts do it (GSLE)
- ☐ Troop Year Plan

3. Family as part of the formula

- ☐ Why family engagement?
- ☐ Communication methods

4. Getting families involved

- ☐ Troop leadership opportunities
- ☐ Other ways to help

5. Money matters and more

- ☐ Uniforms, supplies, and other costs
- ☐ How troops pay for things
- ☐ Paperwork

6. Wrap it up

- ☐ Close with intention
- ☐ Q&A

For more family/caregiver meeting content, check out the Family Engagement training on [gsLearn](https://myGS.girlscouts.org) (myGS.girlscouts.org) and *Establishing Family Connections* on the [New Troop Leader page](https://gswpa.org) at gswpa.org.

Note: If Girl Scouts will be attending this meeting, consider starting out by having the families/caregivers and Girl Scouts introduce themselves and discuss their hopes for their Girl Scout experience. Then provide a short craft activity for Girl Scouts to do while the parents/caregivers attend their part of the meeting.

Multi-level tip: Encourage older Girl Scouts to lead a simple activity for younger Girl Scouts while the family/caregiver meeting takes place.

Product Programs = Fun & Funds for Troops

What are product programs?

- Gifts & Goodies in the fall (girls sell nuts, candy, magazines and gift items beginning Oct. 1)
- Girl Scout Cookie program in (everyone has their favorite Girl Scout Cookie!)

Why participate?

This is where girls get to run their own business, learning goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics along the way.



Product programs help troops pay for:

- Adventures like museum trips, movies, kayaking, glass blowing--whatever girls want to do!
- Troop supplies for snacks, crafts and activities
- Camping
- Membership dues
- Badges, patches, and uniforms
- Community service projects
- Leadership awards



What is my role as troop leader during program programs?

Your job is to cheer them on and help them stay safe. Leaders also appoint troop product program managers (approved volunteers) to keep track of orders and money, and coordinate getting the products for girls to deliver to their customers. For the cookie program, booth sales are a fun option to help troops reach their goals.

How can my troop get in on the fun?

We're here to help you get started! You'll receive an invitation to attend an info session before each program that gives you all the details you need for the troop to participate. We know that new troop leaders may need extra support, so our staff is available to answer your questions and help the troop get up and running for each program.



Other volunteers are great resources, too, so be sure to join our private Facebook group just for product program questions and advice.

Let's Go—Your First Troop Meeting

Your first troop meeting is a great chance to get to know the girls and brainstorm all 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!

Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

The only requirement for your meeting? That your girls are laughing, smiling, and having a fun time! That being said, many troop leaders use this basic structure for their meetings:

- 1. Ramp up.** Plan activities for the girls on arrival at the meeting so they have something to do until the meeting begins. This could be as simple as coloring pages, journaling, or talking with one another. (5 minutes)
- 2. Opening.** 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. Troop business.** Make announcements or plan an upcoming event or trip. This is a great time to gather girl input on future troop activities! (5 minutes)
- 4. Main Activity.** 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. Closing.** Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close—with a song, a game, a story, or a friendship circle. (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 parents/caregivers 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 or uniform order forms.
3. Know the agenda. Refer to our “Six Elements of a Troop Meeting” list and the intro meeting in the Volunteer Toolkit.
4. Review and practice your agenda. You'll feel calmer during the actual meeting and ready to make adjustments as needed.
5. Prepare 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!

Keeping Girls Safe

Understanding How Many Volunteers You Need

While working with girls and learning new skills is fun and rewarding, assuming responsibility for other people's children means that some level of risk management and due diligence is involved. There are several resources we use to help you minimize risk and keep girls safe.

Girl Scout groups are large enough to provide a cooperative learning environment and small enough to allow development of individual girls. Girl Scouts' volunteer-to-girl ratios, as shown in the chart below, were devised to ensure the safety and health of girls. It indicates the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of girls at each grade level. Any adult supervising girls:

- Must be an approved Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania volunteer,
- Must be at least 18 years old,
- Have a current membership, and
- Be screened by council in accordance with PA State Law.

One volunteer in every group must be female and any volunteer driving girls must be at least 21. And don't forget that mixed-grade level troops should use the ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop.

Volunteer-to-Girl Ratio Chart	Troop Meeting		Travel & Camping		Council-Sponsored Events & Product Sales Booths	
	<i>Two unrelated troop leaders (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:</i>	<i>Plus one additional approved volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:</i>	<i>One troop leader and one unrelated approved volunteer (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:</i>	<i>Plus one additional troop leader or approved volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:</i>	<i>Two unrelated approved volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:</i>	<i>Plus one additional approved volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:</i>
Girl Scout Daisies (grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4	12	1-6
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6	20	1-8
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8	25	1-10
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10	25	1-12
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12	30	1-15
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12	30	1-15

Approved volunteers must have membership purchased and appropriate clearances submitted to Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania as required by PA State Law. For mixed-grade level troops, use the ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop. For example, if Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy ratio should be followed.

Planning Safe Activities

When preparing for any activity with girls, start by reading the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints for that particular activity. You can find these at [gswpa.org](https://www.gswpa.org).

What to do in an Emergency

Although we hope the worst never happens, it's important to know and follow our council's procedures for handling emergency incidents.

- At the scene of the incident, safety is your priority.
- Provide care for the injured person or obtain medical assistance.
- Report the emergency to council staff by calling the office at 800-248-3355 or after business hours, call our emergency line at 877-359-7878.



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 on hand the names and telephone number of our council office, parents/guardians, and emergency services such as the police, fire department, or hospital.

Resources to Simplify Your Experience

Girl Scouts provides a selection of useful tools—both in print and online—to support you in preparing for your volunteer role and getting started with troop meetings.

Volunteer Support

New Troop Leaders Webpage (gswpa.org/newtroopleader)

This webpage contains resources for new leaders so you can launch into your first year of Girl Scouting.

Troop Mentor Network

We've assembled a team of seasoned volunteers to provide you with firsthand knowledge, guidance, and support as a Girl Scout volunteer. Get to know them, discover their areas of expertise, and connect directly with them through their request form right from our website. Find a Troop Mentor on our website at gswpa.org/troopmentor.

Volunteer Essentials (gswpa.org/volunteeressentials)

This detailed guide to volunteer policies and procedures is designed to support busy troop volunteers. Inside you'll find everything you need to dive into your newest adventure—being an awesome Girl Scout leader.

gsLearn (girlscouts.org/gslearn)

gsLearn is packed with indispensable volunteer trainings and courses, including new leader onboarding material, program training, and advice for guiding Girl Scouts at every grade level. You can access both national and council-specific courses through gsLearn, which is found on your myGS navigation bar.

Multi-level tip: Be sure to check out Leading a Multi-Level Troop and other training courses designed for multi-level troops.

Volunteer Communications (VolComms) (gswpa.org/volcomms)

This communication portal is your one, central location for volunteer updates that impact your role. It includes content channels for council updates, new leaders, and Product Program newsletters. To better serve you, a subscription feature is available. Enter your email to receive volunteer updates directly in your inbox.

Program Support

Volunteer Toolkit (girlscouts.org/vtk)

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is a digital planning tool that helps troop leaders run a Girl Scout troop or experience. The VTK provides Girl Scout programming at your fingertips, offering fully scripted meeting plans, badge requirements, and Troop Year Plans to help you deliver an engaging and exciting Girl Scout year. This tool is available on any device and can be found at girlscouts.org/vtk or you can also access it on your myGS navigation bar under My Account.

Safety Activity Checkpoints (gswpa.org)

Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC) is a comprehensive collection of safety guidelines for GSUSA- and council-approved activities. The resource lays out standards that ensure the physical and emotional safety of youth. It also guides leaders in considering equity, diversity, and inclusivity when planning activities, making sure that all Girl Scouts who want to participate are included. Whether you're looking for field trip guidelines or tips for creating an inclusive meeting space, you'll find key information here.

gsEvents (girlscouts.org/gsevents)

gsEvents is a tool that lets you search for Girl Scout-affiliated events by title, date, location, topic, age range, and other criteria. Instructions to access gsEvents can be found at girlscouts.org/gsevents or by clicking My Events on your myGS navigation bar.

Award and Badge Explorer

Explore this resource to see pictures of awards and badges and check out what girls learn while earning each badge! You can filter by program level or topic and create a PDF to share with girls, troop volunteers, and parents/guardians. Find the link under Badges, Journeys, and Awards at girlscouts.org.



**Access Key
Volunteer
Resources
Here**

Program Support continued...

Girl Scout Handbooks (girlscoutshop.com/handbooks)

Handbooks are available for Girl Scouts at each program level, Daisy through Ambassador. These serve as guides for the Girl Scout experience, meeting Girl Scouts where they are and introducing them to the programming and other foundational aspects of being a Girl Scout. Handbooks are not required, but they're a helpful resource. You can ask that each Girl Scout get one, or you can choose to obtain one copy for your troop to share.

Multi-level tip: Consider getting a handbook for each program level represented in your troop.

Patched In (gswpa.org/publications)

Every month, we send parents an email called Patched In. It lets parents know important council information as well as new activities and opportunities for their Girl Scouts.

Adventure Guide

Stay up-to-date on new programs and activities as they're added to our website and get notified of upcoming registration deadlines by subscribing to the Adventure Guide. You'll be notified when new opportunities are available, so your Girl Scouts won't miss a minute of the fun! A quarterly Adventure Guide is emailed to parents promoting upcoming Girl Scout activities, sorted by grade level.

Troop Management

myGS (mygs.girlscouts.org)

The Girl Scout member account management system, [myGS](https://mygs.girlscouts.org), is your go-to portal for managing your troop's Girl Scout experience. Here you'll find membership information and additional troop management tools, including gsEvents, the Volunteer Toolkit, and gsLearn. 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. You can manage your troop's meeting information, location, time, and available opening for girl and/or volunteers by completing the [Troop Catalog Update Form](#) found on the Forms page at gswpa.org. Families also have access to myGS to manage memberships in their household.

Girl Scout Shop (gswpa.org/shop)

Girl Scout uniforms are a great way for Girl Scouts to show their pride and display their achievements! Find uniforms, badges, leader resources, apparel, outdoor gear, gifts, and more—all in one place. Plus, every purchase at GirlScouts.org supports Girl Scouts everywhere and helps power our mission. Shop online or visit a local council store today!

Family Connection (girlscouts.org/familyconnection)

A guide for families as they begin their Girl Scout adventure! Packed with background info, family activities, and places for Girl Scouts to write down their favorite memories from the year, Girl Scout Family Connection is a go-to guide to the year ahead for families.

Notes

Get Ready!

Follow this checklist to kick off a great Girl Scout year.

To get started...

- ☐ Register as a volunteer with the council, if you haven't already.
- ☐ Complete a [background check](#).
- ☐ Invite potential members to join the troop. (Talk to a council representative for recruitment support, if needed.)
- ☐ Visit [myGS](#) to understand where badges and other program resources are hosted in the Volunteer Toolkit and available training courses in gsLearn (girlscouts.org/gslearn).
- ☐ If you haven't already, reach out to your network to find a potential co-leader for your new troop.
- ☐ Meet with your co-leader(s), once established, to plan an initial family/caregiver meeting.

In your first month...

- ☐ Hold your family/caregiver meeting.
- ☐ Check out [GSUSA's Troop Year Plans](#) as you start planning for your first troop meeting.
- ☐ Confirm your troop roster by logging into myGS (girlscouts.org/forvolunteers).
- ☐ Connect with your service unit for peer-to-peer advice, local event info and coordination, and general support.
- ☐ Determine where you'll hold your meetings and host your first troop meeting. (If you're having trouble finding a location, reach out to a council representative for help.)
- ☐ Open your troop bank account. [The New Troop Leader Financial Guide](#), found on [the New Troop Leader webpage](#) has all the details you need to open an account and manage your troop's finances.
- ☐ Access gsLearn (girlscouts.org/gslearn) and make sure you take the following courses:
 - ☐ New Troop Leader Training
 - ☐ Girl Scouts Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention
- ☐ After completing the New Leader Training in gsLearn, sign up for an [Explore Your Year session](#).

In your first three months...

- ☐ Complete [first aid/CPR/AED training](#). (Connect with a council representative to sign up for a course.)
- ☐ Attend a [Volunteer Open House](#) if you have any additional questions.
- ☐ Host your first one or two troop meetings.

Family/Caregiver Meeting: Holding a family/caregiver meeting is a key part of starting your troop year. It helps set expectations for families and shows them how they can support the troop. You can use the Family/Caregiver Meeting Checklist on page 7 to plan your troop's meeting.

Multi-level tip: Troop Year Plans are available for both single-level and multi-level troops. The multi-level Troop Year Plans are designed with badges that are easy to facilitate simultaneously across levels.

Service Units: Your service unit is an organized network of Girl Scout youth, family members, and volunteers (including all current troop leaders) in your area. It is a source of peer-to-peer advice and support. Service units typically hold regular troop leader meetings to share details on upcoming events, product/cookie sales, and other timely topics.

Prepping for the Product Programs:

Once you've opened your troop's bank account, there are two things to do so your troop's finances are ready for the Gifts & Goodies and Cookie Programs:

1. Submit your troop's bank account information using the online form so council can debit the account for products that your troop has sold. Find the form at gswpa.org/bank.
2. Get a few checks from the bank for your account. You may need checks to pay for products to fulfill late orders that come in after council has debited your account.

Plan Your Girl Scout Year

It's go time! Get started with the ready-to-use Troop Year Plans on myGS. Then use the calendar below to build out a Girl Scout year packed with fun, friendship, learning, and your troop's year traditions. Bring this calendar with you during your Explore Your Year training.

The Girl Scout Membership Year

The Girl Scout membership year runs from October 1 through September 30. Current Girl Scouts can renew their membership for the next year starting on April 1. New Girl Scouts can start at any time.

Fall milestones:

- New membership year starts Oct. 1
- Gifts & Goodies program begins Oct. 1

Winter milestones:

- Prepare for cookie season
- Attend cookie rallies
- Cookie program begins early January

September

December

Happy holidays!

October

Hold an investiture/rededication ceremony.

- 10/1** Gifts & Goodies program begins
- 10/11** International Day of the Girl
- 10/31** Juliette Gordon Low's birthday/Founder's Day

January

Happy New Year!
Girl Scout Cookie Program begins

November

February

2/22 World Thinking Day

Spring milestones:

- Consider planning a trip or service project
- Early Girl Scout registration begins for next membership year
- Celebrate Girl Scout Week

Summer milestones:

- Hold closing/bridging ceremonies
- Provide optional activities for families to complete together over the summer (such as [Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors](#))

March

Celebrate Girl Scout Week!

Girl Scout Sunday

Girl Scout Jummah

Girl Scout Sabbath Shabbat

3/12 Girl Scouts' birthday

Girl Scout Cookie Booths

June

6/15 Finance reports due

April

Happy Volunteer Appreciation Month! (Thank you!)

Early renewal begins

4/22 Earth Day

4/22 Leader Appreciation Day

July

Enjoy your summer!

May

August

You're on a Roll

Now that you have all the tools you need for a strong start, below is easy access to the useful information that will help you soar together with your Girl Scout Troop.



Girl Scout Promise and Law



Make New Friends



What Do Girl Scouts Do?



Uniform Insignia Placement



Troop Year Plans



Tips for Troop Leaders



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