



2021-2022  
Girl Scouts of Maine

# Volunteer Handbook



**girl scouts**   
of maine



# Terms and Conditions

**By selecting a Girl Scouts of Maine volunteer role and/or initiating the volunteer on-boarding process, you agree to comply with the following Terms and Conditions:**

- I agree to abide by the Council's Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct.
- I agree to a background check in order to help ensure the safety of the girls served through Girl Scouting. I understand that volunteering with GSME is a privilege, and not a right.
- I understand that I may not hold a volunteer position if I have any debt with GSME (whether related to cookie sales or otherwise), have committed a felony, or reside with a registered sex offender.
- I agree to make the necessary time commitment and take the necessary training to fulfill my volunteer role.
- I agree to respect and maintain the confidentiality of information that I am exposed to while serving as a volunteer. I will treat all such information as confidential. Examples of privileged information include intellectual property, products and services (including software), personal contact information on members and staff, financial information and health/medical information.
- I agree to comply with the policies and operational procedures outlined in Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints in addition to any specific procedures applicable to any role which I may accept.

# Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct

Girl Scouts of Maine (GSME) supports adults who prepare girls to seek and meet the challenges of an ever-changing society. GSME agrees to treat volunteers with respect and dignity and to protect confidential information, and further agrees to provide a position description, learning opportunities, and support necessary for the volunteer position.

## 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.

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

## 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.

## High Ethical Standards

GSME is committed to high ethical standards and we expect all volunteers to act in the best interest of the organization and its mission. This mission demands that we act in an ethical manner to uphold the public trust and the values of responsibility, integrity, openness, honesty, accountability, and respect in all that we do in the name of Girl Scouts.

## In my capacity as a GSME Volunteer I agree to uphold these values and I will:

1. Affirm the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
  2. Take all required trainings and comply with all Girl Scout policies, procedures, and safety guidelines.
  3. Welcome girls and adults from a variety of backgrounds and include them in my group activities.
  4. Behave in a manner that models the ideals and values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law and ensure that all verbal or written communications (including telephone conversations, emails, texts, newsletters, and electronic and social media) do not contain profanity or condescending remarks. I will refrain from inappropriate displays of anger, aggression, or berating of individuals.
  5. Honor the leadership of the girls and support their decisions.
  6. Act responsibly when overseeing Girl Scout funds, maintain accurate records, and file required reports. Girl Scout funds are only to be used in direct support of Girl Scout programs and to pay for appropriate Girl Scout expenses.
  7. Not use any volunteer position for personal, political, or monetary gain.
- I understand that if I do not comply with the above standards or if I otherwise act in a way that negatively impacts the image or goals of GSME, I may be released from any volunteer role with GSME.

# Girl Scouts of Maine 2020-2021 Volunteer Handbook

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# Girl Scouts of Maine 2020-2021 Volunteer Handbook

## New Leader's Guide to Success



# Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Thank you for becoming a Girl Scout leader! We're so excited to have you join the Girl Scout Movement.

Girl Scouts helps girls empower themselves to stand up and make a difference. By cultivating girls' leadership skills, we prepare them to overcome challenges and advocate for their ideas now and in the future. With an emphasis on self-discovery, character building, and community impact, Girl Scouts helps girls become a powerful force for good in the world.

No matter where or how you volunteer, you'll make a difference in girls' lives—and this go-to guide will prepare you to effectively lead during your first year as a Girl Scout volunteer. Need help along the way? Let us know! We have various tools, training resources, and people to support you through each step.

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

## WELCOME LETTER FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

As Chief Executive Officer of the Girl Scouts of Maine, I want to welcome you to the important job of making a difference in girls' lives.

You are essential to the Girl Scouts mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. Talk about a beautiful goal—and you are the key to making this a reality for girls in Maine!

Girl Scouts of Maine knows that to volunteer is a supremely selfless act—you have busy lives with busy schedules, many responsibilities and pressures. Therefore, to volunteer is to bestow a wonderful gift: the gift of your precious time.

We appreciate all that you will do for girls; know that your leadership will enhance a girl's learning, experiences, and most of all, her belief in herself. You will have a direct impact on a young person who has her whole life ahead; with your guidance and her Girl Scouts experience, she will make choices that will be positive, fruitful, and healthy for herself and her world.

On behalf of the Girl Scouts of Maine and the girls you are about to guide, thank you for your gift of volunteerism.

Joanne Crepeau  
Girl Scouts of Maine





# You—A Girl Scout Leader!

Being a Girl Scout leader is an incredible journey along which you'll shape the future by working with girls today. With your guidance, encouragement, and go-getting spirit, your Girl Scouts will be ready to embark on a lifetime of leadership, success, and adventure. And 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 is about more than “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 and 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:

- Guides and instructs, not as a teacher providing rote lessons and activities
- Advises and discusses
- Ensures each girl can carry out her responsibilities within the troop
- Encourages girls to build their skills and their ethics
- Assigns more responsibilities to the girls as they grow and develop

## It's important to remember that:

- You can't expect to know everything the girls 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 your background check is completed and you're approved to serve as a volunteer, 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.

On the troop Tab in My Account, troop leaders can see & do the following:

1. Review their troop roster for the current or next year.
2. See which adult volunteers have approved background checks on file.
3. Renew troop members using their troop debit card as the payment method.
4. Invite a friend: if you would like to invite new members to join your troop scroll to the bottom of your troop roster and click "invite friends to join your troop" You will need to have an email address for the caregiver of the girl you are inviting.
5. View/Edit troop Information: in the troop tab in My Account you will see the option to Edit Meeting Details, click on this option to update troop meeting information.

If you have questions about the participation catalog, about how best to add a member, or need help updating your troop meeting information please send an email to [customercare@gsmaine.org](mailto:customercare@gsmaine.org) or call 888-922-4763 and we are happy to help.

## Next Steps

Look out for a welcome email with details on required trainings and how to connect with your service unit and GSME.

## Congratulations! You're a troop leader!

After you have registered as a member and successfully completed your background check...

1. Complete [\*Troop Volunteers, part 1: the Adventure Begins!\*](#)
2. Complete your welcome zoom meeting
3. Attend a face to face [\*Troop Volunteers, part 2: the Adventure Continues\*](#) session.
4. Continue meeting with your girls—when two of you have gotten here, you can plan troop field trips!
5. Attend local Service Unit Leaders Meetings, #Resources!!
6. If your girls want to go camping, sign up for [\*Troop Camp Training, part 1: Preparation\*](#)
7. Start preparing your girls for outdoor adventures!
8. Attend [\*Troop Camp Training, part 2: Overnight!\*](#) Fun times!
9. Continue your troop's progression with Girl Scouts

Additional Opportunities With Learning for you:

- Transforming Leadership Conference—first Saturday of November
- Leader Workshops at Service Unit Leader Meetings
- Camp Adventures for Grown Ups: Chilling Out!
- Camp Adventures for Grown Ups (Summer)



## Troop Leader Training 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. Get started by logging into *Troop Volunteers, part 1: the Adventure Begins!* It's an online course found in gsLearn that takes about an hour to complete. When at least two leaders have completed the online course, you can meet with your troop! After you have completed *Troop Volunteers, part 1: the Adventure Begins*, please follow the steps in your welcome email to schedule your welcome zoom. As soon as you schedule those first two troop meetings, will you please go online to register for *Troop Volunteers, part 2: the Adventure Continues!* This is our face-to-face class offered virtually and in person, designed specifically to answer those unexpected questions that come up in the first few meetings.

You must have at least two registered, unrelated adults who have successfully completed their background checks and Troop Volunteers, parts 1 & 2 for you to be fully trained and to take field trips.

## Volunteer Resources

### The Volunteer Toolkit

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is your official source for delivering easy, fun troop meetings year-round! This fully customizable digital planning tool provides you with Girl Scout program content, award requirements, and other resources, so you can keep your Girl Scout year running smoothly. Accessible on 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 list
- Manage girl attendance and track achievements
- Manage Activities: add custom, or council activities to your year plan. Please use the keyword search for council activities.
- Edit the troop roster and update contact information
- Track and share financial information
- Message and share meeting activities with troop families

### Safety Activity Checkpoints

This guide has everything you need to know to be prepared and keep your girls safe during a range of activities outside the normal Girl Scout troop meeting. It can be found on our website at:

[http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscouts-girlscoutsofmaine/documents/Safety\\_Activity\\_Checkpoints.pdf](http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscouts-girlscoutsofmaine/documents/Safety_Activity_Checkpoints.pdf)



## 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 items outlined in this resource. Volunteer Essentials is updated annually, and the newest version can always be found on our website. Find it at <http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscouts-girlscoutsofmaine/documents/Volunteer-Essentials.pdf>

## 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).

# The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

What makes Girl Scouts truly unique? Everything is designed especially for, and is tested by, girls! Our program centers around 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 “learn by doing” in a cooperative-learning environment.

In Girl Scouts, girls will:

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





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

**Take Action:** As girls connect with and show care for others, 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 her community, and establish healthy relationships. These aren't just good qualities—they're leadership skills that will last a lifetime!

# What is the Girl Scout Program?

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

 <b>STEM</b> Computer science, engineering, robotics, and more.	 <b>Life Skills</b> Civic engagement, healthy living, global citizenship, and communication skills.	 <b>Outdoors</b> Adventure and skill building, including camping experiences for all age levels; from the backyard to the backcountry.	 <b>Entrepreneurship</b> Goal setting, decision making, money management, business ethics, and people skills.
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Whether they complete Girl Scout Leadership Journeys, earn badges, unleash their inner entrepreneur through the Girl Scout Cookie Program, 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 pillars 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 [https://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/badges/badge\\_explorer.html](https://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/badges/badge_explorer.html).

## 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?

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

**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!

**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.

**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.

**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 their Gold Award to change the world in a tangible, lasting way.

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

All of the skills and experiences girls gain throughout their time in Girl Scouts set them up for special recognition through the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. Through their award projects, your girls will tackle issues close to their hearts and make a real difference—and if they decide to pursue their Gold Award, they’ll also be eligible for unique college scholarships and open doors to promising career opportunities. The longer your girls are in Girl Scouts, the brighter their futures will be—and they’ll have you to thank for it!





# What Makes a Successful Troop Experience?

No matter where your girls live, a universal Girl Scout experience connects them to their Girl Scout sisters around the country. And there are so many ways to make sure your girls get the full Girl Scout experience in a way that excites and inspires them!



## 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 co-leader or leadership team, 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 and caregivers.

### 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 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 have 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 [www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/uniforms.html](http://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/uniforms.html)).

## Your Troop Leadership Team

It takes a village to lift up the next generation of leaders; you don't have to embark on your troop leader journey alone! Set the stage for a successful troop year by tapping into the people resources already at your fingertips: caregivers and other family members, friends, and members of the community! They 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 leadership team!

Some members of your leadership 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. Some roles, especially those that involve handling troop funds and supervising girls, require additional registration and approval. 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 are doing!

## Kick the Year Off Right With a Family Meeting

A family meeting should be the first meeting you hold to start each troop year—it sets up both new and returning troops for success! It gives you a chance to invite other family members to help!

### Why? Because it helps:



- Families understand what Girl Scouting can do for their girl
- Families and leaders identify ways they will work as a team to support the troop
- Families and leaders agree about what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually
- You fill key troop positions—you never know which parent will make an awesome leader or troop cookie manager
- Families know how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events or schedule changes
- Families learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics

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. (Remember, you can access the Volunteer Toolkit via MyGS!) 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 they hold parent meetings. You'll also want to hold an additional family meeting ahead of cookie season to introduce parents and caregivers to the program and how they can pitch in.

And remember to make family part of the formula! While 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 a whole crew to celebrate her accomplishments in Girl Scouting—whether at a holiday open house, a bridging ceremony, or a fun “reverse meeting” where girls guide the adults, including caregivers, through an activity—will help parents better understand the value of Girl Scouts and be more likely to invest their time and talents with the troop.

That said, there's no need to wait for one of these special events to engage parents in their Girl Scouts' troop lives. 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 daughters “be the expert” at home, for example, by explaining or teaching a new skill she's learned to the rest of the family.



# Let's Go—You're 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! Just remember that:

It doesn't need to be perfect. Did an activity run over time? Or maybe a field trip didn't go according to plan? 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

The only requirement for your meeting? That your girls are engaged, feel welcome, and are happy to keep coming back! That being said, many troop leaders use this basic structure for their meetings:

- 1. Start 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.** Collect dues and make announcements, or discuss an upcoming event or trip while families are present. (5 minutes)
- 4. Activities.** 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. Closing.** Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close—with a song, a game, a friendship circle, a 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 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, uniform order forms, and troop dues.
3. Know the agenda. Refer to our “Six Elements of a Troop Meeting” list 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. 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

From camping weekends to cookie booths, adult volunteers must always be present to ensure their girls have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level.

Not sure just how many adults you'll need for your activity? The helpful chart below breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of girls.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel and Camping	
	Two approved, registered, trained, unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional approved, registered and trained adult for each additional number of this many girls:	Two approved, registered, trained, unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional approved, registered adult for each additional number of this many girls:
GS Daisies (grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
GS Brownies (grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
GS Juniors (grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8
GS Cadettes (grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
GS Seniors (grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
GS Ambassadors (grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12

## Planning Safe Activities

When preparing for any activity with girls, check Girl Scouts' Safety Activity Checkpoints at [http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscouts-girlscoutsofmaine/documents/Safety\\_Activity\\_Checkpoints.pdf](http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscouts-girlscoutsofmaine/documents/Safety_Activity_Checkpoints.pdf) for required guidelines on where to do the activity, how to include girls with disabilities, where to find both basic and specialized gear for the activity, and the specific steps to follow on the day of the activity. Safety Activity Checkpoints will also note if a first-aider is required.

If a safety activity checkpoint doesn't exist for an activity you and your girls are interested in, contact Customer Care at [customer care@gsmaine.org](mailto:customer care@gsmaine.org) or 207-772-1177 before making any definite plans.

## What to Do in an Emergency

Although we all hope the worst never happens, you should know and follow GSME'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 report the emergency to 888-922-4763.

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 numbers of our council office, parents/caregivers of your girls, and emergency services such as the police, fire department, and hospital.





## 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 dollar or two per meeting to a lump sum for the entire school year. It’s up to each troop to decide what works best for them to support the activities they want to do. Be sensitive to family limitations.

**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 in Volunteer Essentials and bring your questions to Troop Volunteers, part 2 for the details you’ll need to keep troop business running smoothly.

## 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.

**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.

**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.



# Organizational Structure

## World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS):

Is an international organization that is the largest voluntary movement dedicated to girls and young women in the world.

## 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 of Maine (GSME):

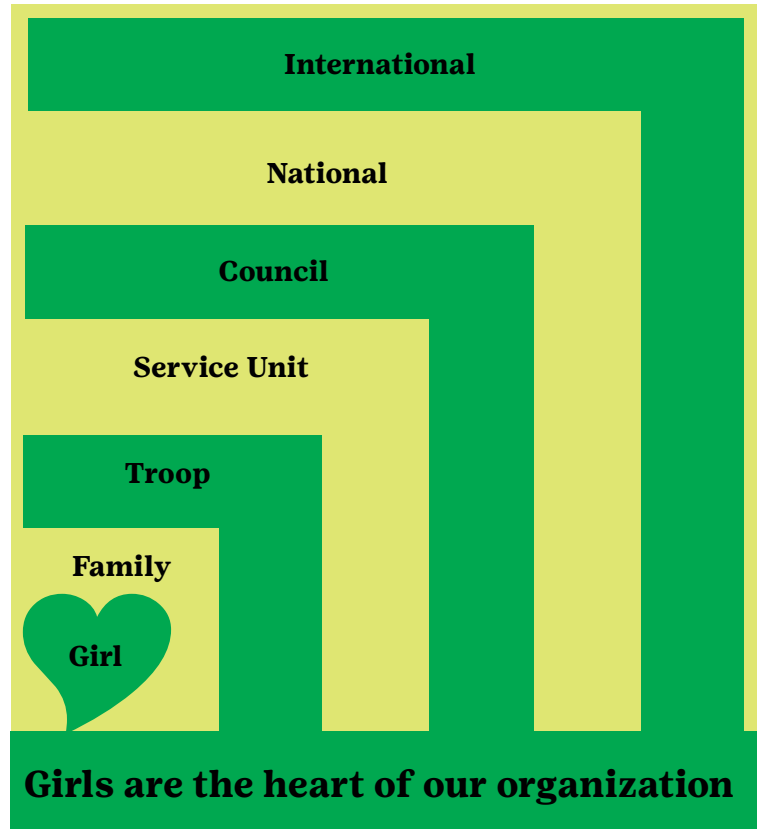
Independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit chartered by GSUSA, operating under the direction of a local board of directors, and overseeing all service units and troops within a specific geographic area.

## Your Local Service Unit:

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

## Troops:

Volunteer-supervised groups of girls. This is where your girls will have their Girl Scout Experience.



## Quick Reference

For questions about: Finance | Trips/Travel | Safety | Product Program

Or anything else please contact:

Customer Care at [CustomerCare@gsmaine.org](mailto:CustomerCare@gsmaine.org) or 888-922-4763

### **IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:**

Call the Council office at (207) 772-1177. The 24-hour answering service will put you in touch with the staff on call.

## Council Contact Information

*Where we are located and how to connect*

### **SERVICE CENTERS**

#### **South Portland Service Center and Shop**

138 Gannett Drive  
South Portland, ME 04106  
888-922-4763 or 207-772-1177  
Fax: 207-874-2646

#### **Bangor Service Center and Shop**

359 Perry Rd Ste B  
Bangor, ME 04401  
888-922-4763 or 207-989-7474  
Fax: 207-989-7478

### **SHOP HOURS:**

Monday, Wednesday and Thursday,  
8:30 am – 5:30 pm (closed Tuesdays)

For up-to-date shop hours and closures, visit our website

Or shop online 24/7 at: <http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/en/our-council/shop-info.html>



[HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/GIRLSCOUTSOFME](https://twitter.com/GIRLSCOUTSOFME)



[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GIRLSCOUTSOFMAINE/](https://www.facebook.com/GIRLSCOUTSOFMAINE/)



[HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/GIRLSCOUTSOFMAINE/](https://www.instagram.com/GIRLSCOUTSOFMAINE/)



[HTTPS://WWW.PINTEREST.COM/GIRLSCOUTSOFME/](https://www.pinterest.com/GIRLSCOUTSOFME/)

[www.girlscoutsofmaine.org](http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org) | 888-922-4763  
[customercare@gsmaine.org](mailto:customercare@gsmaine.org)







# Girl Scouts of Maine 2020-2021 Volunteer Handbook

## Volunteer Essentials





# Adventure Ahead!

Girl Scout volunteers are community-builders, champions of fun, and role models for what it means to lead with your heart. And because of your support, Girl Scouts of all ages are emboldened to chase their dreams and make a positive impact in their communities and across the globe. Your mentorship and encouragement are powerful and make a difference—and your girls will carry that support throughout their lives. Thank you for all you do.

This guide is designed to support busy troop volunteers on the go. You can easily find what you need to get started on your Girl Scout journey and search for answers throughout the troop year.

## Get started by browsing through these sections:

All About Girl Scouts

Engaging Girls and Families

Troop Management

Product Program

Troop Finances

Safety

Coming soon: Post-COVID Guidance

New troop leader? We've got you covered. Check out the New Leader's Guide to Success, a resource designed especially for you. Plus, GSME staff and volunteer coaches are ready to help throughout your first year and beyond!

Check out our website for great resources and links to MyGS, gsLearn, and the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK). You'll also find a connection to our council shop for all of your Girl Scout uniform, programs, and cool Girl Scout merch needs!

If you have questions, please call Customer Care at 888-922-4763 or email at [CustomerCare@gsmaine.org](mailto:CustomerCare@gsmaine.org)



<https://www.facebook.com/GirlScoutsofMaine/>



<https://www.instagram.com/girlscoutsofmaine/>



<https://twitter.com/GirlScoutsofME>



<https://www.pinterest.com/girlscoutsofme/>



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# All About Girl Scouts

Girls' dreams are our dreams, and Girl Scouts is where they'll see the limitless possibilities ahead of them and aim for the stars—and reach them. Whether she's making a new friend on the playground, raising her hand in class, starting her own nonprofit, or advocating for climate justice, a Girl Scout builds a better world—just as Girl Scouts have been doing for over a century. And with programs in every zip code from coast to coast and across the globe, every girl can find her place in Girl Scouts and start creating the world she wants to see.

## Who Can Join Girl Scouts—and How?

If you believe in the inherent power of girls to change the world and you're ready to be their champion, you belong with Girl Scouts.

Girl Scout volunteers are a dynamic and diverse group, and there's no one "type" of volunteer. Whether you're a recent college grad, a parent, a retiree, or really, anyone with a sense of curiosity and adventure (of any gender, who is 18 years or older and has passed GSME's screening process), your unique skills and experiences and your mentorship can open your Girl Scouts' eyes to all the possibilities ahead of them.

All members are united by the values in the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#), as well as by our extraordinary strengths as go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders. Each member also agrees to follow safety guidelines and pay the annual membership dues of \$40 for girls or \$25 for adults. Adults also have the option to purchase a [lifetime membership](#) for \$400.

## Girls at Every Grade Level

Girls can join in the fun at any grade level:

[Girl Scout Daisy \(grades K-1\)](#)

[Girl Scout Brownie \(grades 2-3\)](#)

[Girl Scout Junior \(grades 4-5\)](#)

[Girl Scout Cadette \(grades 6-8\)](#)

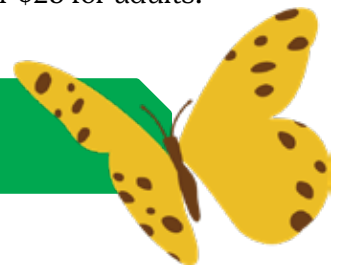
[Girl Scout Senior \(grades 9-10\)](#)

[Girl Scout Ambassador \(grades 11-12\)](#)

## The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

Everything centers around the girl in Girl Scouts: Activities are girl-led, which gives girls the opportunity to take on leadership roles and learn by doing in a cooperative learning environment. [It's what makes Girl Scouts truly unique](#)—our program is designed by, with, and for girls.

Although girls may start building their leadership skills in school and on sports teams, [research shows](#) that the courage, confidence, and character they develop as Girl Scouts stay with them throughout their lives. Our program and outcomes are based in research, and our studies show that Girl Scouting has a measurable impact on girls. [Check out our studies and in-depth research.](#)



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

- When Girl Scouts do exciting [badge activities](#), earn a [Girl Scout Journey award](#), attend an amazing program or event, or go camping, you are helping them discover who they are, what excites them, and what their talents are.
- Girl Scouts connect when they collaborate with others—their troop, leaders, or community experts—and expand their horizons. This helps them care about, support, inspire, and team with others locally and globally.
- With your guidance, your Girl Scouts will deepen their relationship with the world around them, and they'll be eager to take action to make the world a better place.

As for how they do it? The Girl Scout Leadership Experience draws on three unique processes that help girls unlock their inner leader.

- Girl-led means Girl Scouts of every age take an active and age-appropriate role in figuring out the what, where, when, why, and how of all the exciting activities they'll do. The girl-led process is critically important to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience—when girls actively lead and shape their experiences, they know their voices matter, they feel empowered to make decisions, and they stay engaged in their activities.
- Girl Scouts enjoy hands-on activities and learn by doing. Then, after reflecting on their activities, girls gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and skills the activities require.
- Through cooperative learning, Girl Scouts share knowledge and skills in an atmosphere of respect, teamwork, and collaboration as they work toward a common goal.

As a volunteer, you'll draw on these Girl Scout processes as you lead girls of any age. Girl-led at the Daisy level will look very different from the Ambassador level, of course. What's most important is that your Girl Scouts make decisions about the activities they do together and that they also make choices within that activity. As they learn from their successes and failures and gain a major confidence boost, all girls have the opportunity to lead within their peer groups. By the time girls are Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, they'll be using the leadership skills they've developed to take more ownership of their activities, mentor younger Girl Scouts, and take action to make the world a better place.

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





## Reflection

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

Reflection is the necessary debrief that reinforces what the girls learned. As your Girl Scouts explore the “whats” and “whys,” they'll make meaningful connections between the activity at hand and future challenges that come their way. In other words, reflection gives girls the confidence boost they need to pick themselves up, try again, and succeed.

Reflection doesn't need to be a formal process, but you can kick-start the conversation with three simple questions: What?, So what?, and Now what?



- Go over the what of the activity. For example, ask, “What did we do today? What part was your favorite? If we did it again, what would you want to do differently and what would you repeat?”
- Then move to the so what elements. You might ask, “So what did you learn by doing this activity? So, what did you learn about yourself? So, what did you learn about your community (or environment, school, or others) that you didn't know before?”
- Lastly, review the now what. Say something like, “Now that we've done this, what would you like to do next? Now that you know this about yourselves, what would you like to try next? Now that we did this Take Action™ project, what do you think we should do next to make sure it continues on?”

What?, So what?, and Now what? —or whatever style of reflection you choose to use with your girls—are powerful elements of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, and they'll carry these lessons with them for the rest of their lives.

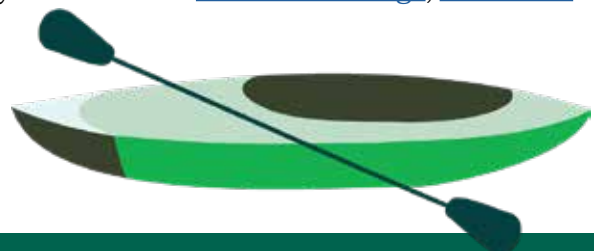


## Progression

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

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

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





## Inclusion

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

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

**Equal Treatment:** Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, cognitive or physical abilities, family structure, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

## The National Program Pillars

Girl Scouts lead their own adventures and team up with their fellow troop members to choose the hands-on activities that excite them most. Our program focuses on [four areas \(pillars\) that form the foundation](#) of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience:



- **Outdoors:** When Girl Scouts embark on outdoor adventures, they learn to confidently meet challenges while developing a lifelong appreciation of nature.



- **Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM):** Whether they're building a robot, developing a video game, or studying the stars, Girl Scouts become better problem-solvers and critical thinkers through STEM activities and learn how they can use STEM to help others. and learn how they can use STEM to help others.



- **Life skills:** Girl Scouts discover they have what it takes to become outspoken community advocates, make smart decisions about their finances, and form strong, healthy relationships—skills that inspire them to accept challenges and overcome obstacles, now and always.



- **Entrepreneurship:** By participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program or fall product program or by earning one of the entrepreneurship badges, girls spark their curiosity, confidence, and innovation as they learn the essentials of running their own businesses and how to think like entrepreneurs.

As you help girls plan their activities, give them opportunities to explore and up their game in each of the pillar areas. We find girls in troops with a balance of activities are happier and more excited about their Girl Scout Experience!

The Volunteer Toolkit provides inspiring ideas so you can engage your troop in a mix of activities all year long. For example, if you want to take your troop outside when doing a badge activity, look for the evergreen icon, which tells you that activity can be taken outdoors, or the globe icon, which lets you know you can bring a global perspective to the activity.



## The Important Difference Between Journeys and Badges

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



- **Journeys** are multi-session leadership experiences through which girls explore topics such as bullying, media literacy, design thinking, or environmental stewardship. They'll do hands-on activities, connect with experts, and take the reins on age-appropriate Take Action projects. Because of their leadership focus, Journeys are also a prerequisite for the highest awards in Girl Scouting: the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards.
- **Badges** are all about skill building. When a Girl Scout earns a badge, she shows that she's learned a new skill, such as how to make a healthy snack, build and test a toy race car, or take great digital photos. It may even spark an interest at school or plant the seed for a future career. And remember: you can have fun and learn-by-doing right alongside your troop!

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

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

## The Difference Between Community Service and Take Action Projects

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



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

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



## Traditions, Ceremonies, and Special Girl Scout Days

Time-honored traditions and ceremonies unite Girl Scout sisters—and the millions of Girl Scout alums who came before them—around the country and around the globe and remind girls how far their fellow trailblazers have come and just how far they'll go.

A few of those extra special days, when you'll want to crank up the celebrations, include:



- Juliette Gordon Low's birthday or Founder's Day, October 31, marks the birth in 1860 of [Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low](#) in Savannah, Georgia. in Savannah, Georgia.
- [World Thinking Day](#), February 22, celebrates international friendship. It's an opportunity for Girl Scouts and Girl Guides to connect with each other and explore a common theme around the world.
- Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12, commemorates the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first 18 girl members in Savannah, Georgia.

Whether they're making cool SWAPS to share with new friends or closing meetings with a friendship circle, your troop won't want to miss out on these [traditions, ceremonies, and special Girl Scout days](#).

## Highest Awards

As your Girl Scouts discover the power of their voices, they'll want to take on an issue that's close to their hearts and is meaningful to them. Encourage them to turn their vision into reality by taking on the ultimate Take Action projects in order to earn Girl Scouts' highest awards.

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



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

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



Girl Scouts are eligible to earn any recognition at the grade level in which they are registered. Any Girl Scout is eligible to earn the Gold Award even if she joined Girl Scouts for the first time in high school. Ask GSME about the Gold Award Girl Scouts in your community and how they're doing their part to make the world a better place. For some major inspiration, consider inviting a local Gold Award Girl Scout to speak to your troop about how she took the lead and made a difference. You'll be inspired when you see and hear what girls can accomplish as leaders—and by the confidence, grit, problem-solving, time and project management, and team-building expertise they gain while doing so!

## Girl Scout Travel and Destinations



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

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

Girl Scout travel is built on a [progression of activities](#), so girls are set up for success. Daisies and Brownies start with field trips and progress to day trips, overnights, and weekend trips. Juniors can take adventures farther with a longer regional trip. And Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors can travel the United States and then the world. There are even opportunities for older girls to travel independently by joining trips GSME organizes or participating in our travel program, [Destinations](#), which resumes in 2022.

### Planning Ahead for Adventure

Get in touch with GSME as you start thinking about planning a trip to find out more about the approval process for overnight and extended travel. We also have training programs on gsLearn that will raise your confidence as a chaperone.

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

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





## Safety First

If you're planning any kind of trip—from a short field trip to an overseas expedition—the “Trips and Travel” section of [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) is your go-to resource for safety. GSME has additional resources and an [approval processes](#). Be sure to follow all the basic safety guidelines, like the buddy system and first-aid requirements, in addition to the specific guidelines for travel. You'll also want to refer to the COVID-19 guidelines in Safety Activity Checkpoints as well as any COVID-19 guidelines for [GSME](#) and your destination.

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

## Girl Scout Program Connections

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

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

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

And if your troop is looking to stay closer to home this year? Ask GSME about [council-owned camps](#) and other facilities that can be rented out.

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





# Engaging Girls

Creating the kind of environment in which girls are unafraid to try new things and to be who they want to be starts with you! By meeting your girls where they are, you'll help them develop the leadership skills they'll use now and as they grow.

## Understanding Healthy Development in Girls

It sounds simple, but just being attentive to what girls are experiencing as they mature is a big help to them—and to you, as you guide and mentor them!

You'll experience different joys and challenges with each Girl Scout level, but here are some guidelines for meeting girls' needs and abilities at different grade levels; you'll also find these listed in the adult guide of each leadership Journey.



# Girl Scout Daisies

At the Girl Scout Daisy level (kindergarten and first grade), girls . . .	This means . . .
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	They'll enjoy going on nature walks and outdoor scavenger hunts.
Are great builders and budding artists, though they are still developing their fine motor skills.	Encouraging them to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need assistance holding scissors, cutting in a straight line, and so on.
Love to move and dance.	They might especially enjoy marching like a penguin, dancing like a dolphin, or acting out how they might care for animals in the jungle.
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	Showing instead of telling, for example, about how animals are cared for. Plan visits to animal shelters, farms, or zoos; meet care providers; or make a creative bird feeder.
Are only beginning to learn about basic number concepts, time, and money.	You'll want to take opportunities to count out supplies together—and, perhaps, the legs on a caterpillar!
Are just beginning to write and spell, and they don't always have the words for what they're thinking or feeling.	That having girls draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate is easier and more meaningful for them.
Know how to follow simple directions and respond well to recognition for doing so.	Being specific and offering only one direction at a time. Acknowledge when girls have followed directions well to increase their motivation to listen and follow again.





# Girl Scout Brownies

At the Girl Scout Brownie level (second and third grade), girls . . .	This means . . .
Have lots of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances.
Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.	Letting girls lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow girls as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	Doing more than just reading to girls about the Brownie Elf's adventures. Ask girls questions to gauge their understanding and allow them to role play their own pretend visit to a new country.
Need clear directions and structure and like knowing what to expect.	Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share those at the start.
Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.	Offering support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.
Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, and the like.	Encouraging girls to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need some assistance, however, holding scissors, threading needles, and so on.
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	Girls might like to create a play about welcoming a new girl to their school or to tell a story through dance or creative movement.
Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job done well.	Acknowledging when the girls have listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again!



# Girl Scout Juniors

At the Girl Scout Junior level (fourth and fifth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Want to make decisions and express their opinions.	Whenever possible, allowing girls to make decisions and express their opinions through guided discussion and active reflection activities. Also, have girls set rules for listening to others' opinions and offering assistance in decision making.
Are social and enjoy doing things in groups.	Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities.
Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others.	Although it's okay to have expectations, the expectation is not perfection! Share your own mistakes and what you learned from them, and be sure to create an environment where girls can be comfortable sharing theirs.
Are concerned about equity and fairness.	Not shying away from discussing why rules are in place and having girls develop their own rules for their group.
Are beginning to think abstractly and critically and are capable of flexible thought. Juniors can consider more than one perspective as well as the feelings and attitudes of another.	Asking girls to explain why they made a decision, to share their visions of their roles in the future, and to challenge their own and others' perspectives.
Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination.	Engaging girls in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow girls to express themselves through the written word, choreography, and so on.
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	Girls might like to tell a story through playwriting, playing an instrument, or choreographing a dance.
May be starting puberty, which means beginning breast development, skin changes, and weight changes. Some may be getting their periods.	Being sensitive to girls' changing bodies, possible discomfort over these changes, and their desire for more information. Create an environment that acknowledges and celebrates this transition as healthy and normal for girls.







# Girl Scout Cadettes

<p>At the Girl Scout Cadette level (sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), girls . . .</p>	<p>This means . . .</p>
<p>Are going through puberty, including changes in their skin, body shape, and weight. They're also starting their menstrual cycles and have occasional shifts in mood.</p>	<p>Being sensitive to the many changes Cadettes are undergoing and acknowledging that these changes are as normal as growing taller! Girls need time to adapt to their changing bodies, and their feelings about their bodies may not keep up. Reinforce that, as with everything else, people go through puberty in different ways and at different times.</p>
<p>Are starting to spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.</p>	<p>That girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities as well as tackling relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects.</p>
<p>Can be very self-conscious—wanting to be like everyone else but fearing they are unique in their thoughts and feelings.</p>	<p>Encouraging girls to share, but only when they are ready. At this age, they may be more comfortable sharing a piece of artwork or a fictional story than their own words. Throughout the activities, highlight and discuss differences as positive, interesting, and beautiful.</p>
<p>Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.</p>	<p>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions and allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</p>





# Girl Scout Seniors

At the Girl Scout Senior level (ninth and tenth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Are beginning to clarify their own values, consider alternative points of view on controversial issues, and see multiple aspects of a situation.	Asking girls to explain the reasoning behind their decisions. Engage girls in role-play and performances, where others can watch and offer alternative solutions.
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills and are able to plan and reflect on their own learning experiences.	Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.
Spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	That girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	Acknowledging girls' pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.	Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience "fun failure," which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.







# Girl Scout Ambassadors

At the Girl Scout Ambassador level (eleventh and twelfth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Can see the complexity of situations and controversial issues—they understand that problems often have no clear solution and that varying points of view may each have merit.	Inviting girls to develop stories as a group and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills and can adapt logical thinking to real-life situations. Ambassadors recognize and incorporate practical limitations to solutions.	Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.
Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	Girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	Acknowledging girls' pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home—and are looking to their futures.	Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.



## Creating a Safe Space for Girls

A safe space is where girls feel they can be themselves, without explanation or judgment. As a volunteer, the environment you create is just as important as the activities girls do; it's the key to developing the sort of group that girls want to be part of! Cultivate a space where confidentiality is respected and girls can express their true selves.

### Recognizing and Supporting Each Girl

You're a role model and a mentor to your girls. Since you play an important role in their lives, they need to know that you consider each of them an important person too. They can weather a poor meeting place or an activity that flops, but they cannot endure being ignored or rejected.

- Give a shout-out when you see girls trying their best, not just when they've had a clear success.
- Emphasize the positive qualities that make each girl worthy and unique.
- Be generous with praise and stingy with rebuke.
- Help your girls find ways to show acceptance of and support for one another.

### Promoting Fairness

Girls are sensitive to injustice. They forgive mistakes if they are sure you are trying to be fair. They look for fairness in how responsibilities are shared, in handling of disagreements, and in your responses to performance and accomplishment.

- When possible, ask the girls what they think is fair before decisions are made.
- Explain your reasoning and show why you did something.
- Be willing to apologize if needed.
- Try to see that responsibilities as well as the chances for feeling important are equally divided.
- Help girls explore and decide for themselves the fair ways of solving problems, carrying out activities, and responding to behavior and accomplishments.

### Building Trust

Girls need your belief in them and your support when they try new things. You'll also need to show them that you won't betray their confidence.

- Show girls you trust them to think for themselves and use their own judgment.
- Encourage them to make the important decisions in the group.
- Give them assistance in correcting their own mistakes.
- Support girls in trusting one another—let them see firsthand how trust can be built, lost, regained, and strengthened.

### Inspiring Open Communication

Girls want someone who will listen to what they think, feel, and want to do. They like having someone they can talk to about the important things happening in their lives.

- Listen to the girls. Respond with words and actions.
- Speak your mind openly when you are happy or concerned about something, and encourage girls to do this too.
- Leave the door open for girls to seek advice, share ideas and feelings, and propose plans or improvements.
- Help girls see how open communication can result in action, discovery, better understanding of self and others, and a more comfortable climate for fun and accomplishment.



## Managing Conflict

Conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, but if handled constructively, they show girls that they can overcome their differences, exercise diplomacy, and improve their communication and relationships. Respecting others and being a sister to every Girl Scout means that shouting, verbal abuse, or physical confrontations are never warranted and cannot be tolerated in the Girl Scout environment.

Using tools in your troop like group generated Expectations and Agreements will help to set a positive tone to begin with, and they will give you tools to use when conflict arises. Conflict is not bad, but how we handle it can make or break the experience. Having an agreement that “we will work through our conflicts in a way to improve our relationships” can open a discussion about what that means to your troop.

When a conflict arises between girls or a girl and a volunteer, get those involved to sit down together and [talk calmly in a nonjudgmental manner](#), keeping in mind that each party may need some time—a few days or a week—to calm down before being able to do this. Talking in this way might feel uncomfortable and difficult now, but it lays the groundwork for working well together in the future. Whatever you do, do not spread your complaint around to others—that won’t help the situation and causes only embarrassment and anger. If you need help, talk to your Service Unit Manager or to your Volunteer Support Specialist to find an uninvolved facilitator for the conversation.

You’ll also find conflict transformation activities in some of the Journeys, such as the Amaze Journey for Cadettes or the Mission Sisterhood Journey for Seniors.

If a conflict persists, be sure you explain the matter to your volunteer support team. If the supervisor cannot resolve the issues satisfactorily (or if the problem involves the supervisor), the issue can be taken to the next level of supervision and, ultimately, to GSME if you need extra help.





## Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age

Make sure your words and intentions create connection with the girls. Keep in mind how important the following attitudes are:



### **Listen**

Listening to girls, as opposed to telling them what to think, feel, or do (no “you shoulds”) is the first step in building a trusting relationship and helping them take ownership of their Girl Scout experience.

### **Be Honest**

If you’re not comfortable with a topic or activity, it’s OK to say so! No one expects you to be an expert on every topic. Ask for alternatives or seek out volunteers with the required expertise. Owning up to mistakes—and apologizing for them—goes a long way with girls.

### **Be Open to Real Issues**

Outside of Girl Scouts, girls may be dealing with issues like relationships, peer pressure, school, money, drugs, and other serious topics. When you don’t know, listen. Also seek help from GSME if you need assistance or more information than you currently have.

### **Show Respect**

Girls often say that their best experiences were the ones where adults treated them as equal partners. Being spoken to as young adults reinforces that their opinions matter and that they deserve respect.

### **Offer Options**

Girls’ needs and interests change and being flexible shows them that you respect them and their busy lives. Be ready with age-appropriate guidance and parameters no matter what the girls choose to do.

### **Stay Current**

Show your girls that you’re interested in their world by asking them about the TV shows and movies they like; the books, magazines, or blogs they read; the social media influencers they follow; and the music they listen to.

### **Remember to LUTE: Listen, Understand, Tolerate, and Empathize**

Try using the LUTE method to thoughtfully respond when a girl is upset, angry, or confused.

**Listen:** *Hear her out, ask for details, and reflect back what you hear; try “What happened next?” or “What did she say?”*

**Understand:** *Show that you understand where she’s coming from with comments such as, “So what I hear you saying is . . .” or “I understand why you’re unhappy,” or “Your feelings are hurt; mine would be, too.”*

**Tolerate:** *You can tolerate the feelings that she just can’t handle right now on her own. Let her know that you’re there to listen and accept how she is feeling about the situation. Say something like: “Try talking to me about it. I’ll listen,” or “I know you’re mad—talking it out helps,” or “I can handle it—say whatever you want to.”*

**Empathize:** *Let her know you can imagine feeling what she’s feeling with comments such as, “I’m sure that really hurts” or “I can imagine how painful this is for you.”*



## Addressing the Needs of Older Girls

Let these simple tips guide you in working with teenage girls:

- Think of yourself as a “guide on the side”— a partner, a coach, or a mentor, rather than the “leader.”
- Ask girls what rules they need for safety and what group agreements they need to be a good team. When girls take the lead in establishing group rules, they’re more likely to stick to them!
- Understand that girls need time to talk, unwind, and have fun together.
- Ask what they think and what they want to do.
- Encourage girls to speak their minds.
- Provide structure, but don’t micromanage.
- Give everyone a voice in the group—understanding that “speaking up” may look different for each girl. For some girls, it might mean sharing their ideas in front of the entire group; for others that could mean submitting a written response or contributing as part of a group.
- Treat girls like partners.
- Don’t repeat what’s said in the group to anyone outside of it (unless necessary for a girl’s safety). See the “report concerns” section below to understand the guard rails.

## When Sensitive Topics Come Up

It’s an amazing feeling when your Girl Scouts put their trust in you—and when they do, they may come to you with some of the issues they face, such as bullying, peer pressure, dating, athletic and academic performance, and more. Some of these issues may be considered sensitive by families, and they may have opinions or input about how, and whether, Girl Scouts should cover these topics with their girls.

Girl Scouts welcomes and serves girls and families from a wide spectrum of faiths and cultures. When girls wish to participate in discussions or activities that could be considered sensitive—even for some—put the topic on hold until you have spoken with parents and received guidance from GSME.

When Girl Scout activities involve sensitive issues, your role is that of a caring adult volunteer who can help girls acquire skills and knowledge in a supportive atmosphere, not someone who advocates a particular position.

Girl Scouts of the USA does not take a position or develop materials on issues relating to human sexuality, birth control, or abortion. We feel our role is to help girls develop self-confidence and good decision-making skills that will help them make wise choices in all areas of their lives. We believe parents and caregivers, along with schools and faith communities, are the primary sources of information on these topics.

We at Girl Scouts of Maine encourage troops to discuss with parents the possibility of sensitive issues coming up in troop over the course of the year. You might include the [Parent Permission for Sensitive Issues form](#) with the [Health History](#) and [Annual Permission forms](#) at the parent meeting you hold at the beginning of each year. This will invite parents to have a conversation with you and your leadership team about issues they will want to be alerted to. This is an opportunity for your leadership team and all of the parents to have a conversation with your girls’ best interests in mind.





Parents/caregivers make all decisions regarding their girl's participation in Girl Scout program that may be of a sensitive nature. As a volunteer leader, you must get written parental permission for any locally planned program offering that could be considered sensitive. Included on the permission form should be the topic of the activity, any specific content that might create controversy, and any action steps the girls will take when the activity is complete. Be sure to have a form for each girl, and keep the forms on hand in case a problem arises. For activities not sponsored by Girl Scouts, find out in advance (from organizers or other volunteers who may be familiar with the content) what will be presented, and follow GSME's guidelines for obtaining written permission.

### **Consider Taking Care**

In response to the added stresses of the COVID-19 times, GSME developed an activity pack called [GSME Taking Care](#). This activity pack includes self-care activities as well as interpersonal and community care activities to help girls, troops, and groups feel confident and capable in response to the stresses of our day to day lives.

### **Report Concerns**

There may be times when you worry about the health and well-being of girls in your group. Alcohol, drugs, sex, bullying, abuse, depression, and eating disorders are some of the issues girls may encounter. You are on the frontlines of girls' lives, and you are in a unique position to identify a situation in which a girl may need help. If you believe a girl is at risk of hurting herself or others, your role is to promptly bring that information to her parent/caregiver or GSME, so she can get the expert assistance she needs. Your concern about a girl's well-being and safety is taken seriously, and GSME will guide you in addressing these concerns.

Here are a few signs that could indicate a girl needs expert help:

- Marked changes in behavior or personality (for example, unusual moodiness, aggressiveness, or sensitivity)
- Declining academic performance and/or inability to concentrate
- Withdrawal from school, family activities, or friendships
- Fatigue, apathy, or loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Sleep disturbances
- Increased secretiveness
- Deterioration in appearance and personal hygiene
- Eating extremes, unexplained weight loss, distorted body image
- Tendency toward perfectionism
- Giving away prized possessions;
- Preoccupation with the subject of death
- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, or fractures
- Avoidance of eye contact or physical contact
- Excessive fearfulness or distrust of adults
- Abusive behavior toward other children, especially younger ones

Share your concern with the girl's family if this is feasible.

Contact a GSME staff member to find out how to refer the girl and her parent/guardian to experts at school or in the community. Please remember you are a mandated reporter if you suspect abuse or neglect. You can contact the Maine Office of Child and Family Services at 1-800-452-1999. You can file your report anonymously, but if a girl discloses or you have reason to suspect abuse or neglect in the household, you must file a report.



# Engaging Families

You want your Girl Scouts to have fun, be inspired, take risks, and learn about themselves and the world—that’s why you’re a Girl Scout troop leader or troop volunteer! Parents and caregivers want the same thing for their girls but getting families to pitch in and play an active role in the troop while also enhancing the experience for their own girl and themselves can be tricky for many volunteers. It doesn’t have to be this way!

## Kick the Year Off Right by Engaging Parents and Other Caregivers

When families step up and play an active part in troop life, your troop can shine its brightest! Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing.

### What Is a Parent and Caregiver Meeting?

It’s the first meeting you have to start each troop year—whether you are a new or returning troop. It is valuable for all troops.

### Why Hold a Meeting?

[Kicking off each year with a parent and caregiver meeting](#) sets the troop up for success. Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging parents in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When parents are involved, leaders have support, the troop has a plan, and girls benefit! The meeting helps:

- Families understand what Girl Scouting can do for their girl.
- Families and leaders identify ways they will work as a team to support the troop.
- Families and leaders agree about what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually.
- You fill key troop positions—you never know which parent will make an awesome assistant leader or troop cookie manager.
- Families know how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events or schedule changes.
- Families learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics.

Check out our step-by-step guide and “Parents & Caregivers Meeting Outline” on the Volunteer Toolkit. This 60- to 90-minute meeting will make all the difference in the year ahead.

Another meeting you don’t want to miss is the **Cookie Program Girl & Family Meeting** in the Volunteer Toolkit. Just like the parent and caregiver meeting at the beginning of the year, this meeting is your chance to share what girls gain through the cookie program, outline expectations, and find the support you need for a successful cookie season. The cookie program is a team effort, and you’ll want to get families on board!

For even more tips on working with troop families, check out Girl Scouts’ [Tips for Troop Leaders hub](#).

## How to Keep Parents and Other Caregivers On Board

### **Make the Ask(s)**

The main reason people don't take action is because they were never asked to in the first place. That's why hearing one out of three Girl Scout parents say no one had communicated expectations around involvement with their girl's troop is so troubling. Parents may have many talents, but they're certainly not mind readers! Consider using the [GSME Family Shining Star patch program](#) when you ask.

If you're nervous about getting turned down, don't be. Sure, a few parents might be unable to lend a hand, but the helpers you do get will be worth their weight in gold. And just because someone wasn't available a month or two ago doesn't mean they won't be free to help now. Loop back, follow up, and ask again!

### **Make Sense of “Why”**

Explain that not only does the whole troop benefit with extra help from parents and other caregivers, but also that girls feel a special sense of pride in seeing their own family member step up and take a leadership role. Getting involved can strengthen the caregiver/girl bond and is a meaningful way to show daughters that they are a priority in their parents' lives.

### **Make It Quick and Easy**

Everybody's got a full plate these days, so instead of starting conversations with a list of tasks or responsibilities that parents and other caregivers could take on (which can be intimidating!), ask how much time each week they might be able to dedicate to the troop, then go from there. For instance, if a troop mom or dad has 15 minutes each week to spare, they could organize and manage the calendar for troop snacks and carpools. If a grandparent has one to two hours, they could assist with leading the troop through a specific badge on a topic they're already comfortable with. For more ways parents and other caregivers can help out when faced with a tricky schedule, check out the **Family Hub tile on the Resources tab in the Volunteer Toolkit**.

### **Make Family Part of the Formula**

While Girl Scout programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it's important and helpful to open up a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting the whole crew to celebrate her accomplishments in Girl Scouting—whether at a court of awards, a holiday open house, a bridging ceremony, or a fun “reverse meeting” where girls take the role of leaders and guide the adults, including caregivers, through an activity—will help parents better understand the value of Girl Scouts and they'll be more likely to invest their time and talents to the troop. Understand that families and parents will do what they can, which may not seem like a lot sometimes. If it doesn't make sense to you, ask them about it. You're all on the same side.

That said, there's no need to wait for one of these special events to engage families in their girls' Girl Scout lives! 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 daughters “be the experts” at home, explaining or teaching the new skills they've learned. You can get everyone in on the fun and keep Girl Scouts strong at home by sharing the family badge guides on the Volunteer Toolkit.



# Troop Management

Leadership is more than “being in charge” or having a title; it’s recognizing that you are part of a team and understanding that team’s needs and interests. Here’s how you’ll do that with your troop!

## Your Role as a Volunteer

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience is based on three keys—discover, connect, and take action—but it’s not just for your troop! As a Girl Scout leader, you’ll embark on your own leadership journey as you help girls develop the vital leadership skills they’ll use to make the world a better place. Here are a few basic concepts that outline what leadership means in Girl Scouting.

### Leadership is teaching your Girl Scouts:

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

### It’s important to remember that:

- You cannot know everything that your Girl Scouts might ever 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.

## Your Responsibilities as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Your responsibilities as a Girl Scout volunteer include:

- Accepting the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#).
- Understanding and coaching the three keys to leadership that are the basis of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience: discover, connect, and take action.
- Sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills with a positive and flexible approach.
- Working in a partnership with your Girl Scouts so that their activities are girl-led and that they learn by doing, individually and as a group. You’ll also partner with other volunteers and GSME staff for support and guidance.
- Organizing fun, interactive, girl-led activities that address relevant issues and match girls’ interests and needs.
- Providing guidance and information regarding Girl Scout group meetings with troop families on a regular and ongoing basis through a variety of tools, including email, phone calls, newsletters, blogs, other forms of social media, and any other method you choose.





- Processing and completing registration forms and other paperwork, such as permission slips.
- Communicating effectively and delivering clear, organized, and vibrant presentations or information to an individual or the group.
- Overseeing with honesty, integrity, and careful record-keeping the funds that girls raise.
- Maintaining a close connection to your volunteer support team as well as GSME staff.
- Facilitating a safe experience for every Girl Scout.

## Planning for Your First Troop Meeting

Depending on the ages of your girls, you might take the lead in guiding the structure and experiences of your troop—from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, 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 and caregivers.

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

- When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?
- Where will we meet? Your meeting space should be somewhere safe, clean, and secure that allows all girls to participate. Some great meeting space ideas include schools, places of worship, libraries, and community centers. If working with teens, consider meeting at coffee shops, bookstores, or another place they enjoy.
- Which components of the uniform will families need to purchase? Which uniform components will the troop provide for each girl?
- Will our troop be a single-grade level or [facilitated as a multi-level troop](#) with girls of many grade levels combined into one troop? If multi-level, how will we make sure they each get an age-appropriate experience?
- How will we keep troop activities and decisions girl-led? Use the Volunteer Toolkit to help you through this process by exploring options for activities and reviewing the meeting plans and resources lists.
- How often are we going to communicate to troop families? Which channels will we use to keep families in the loop? Effective communication [will help set expectations](#) and clarify parent/ caregiver responsibilities.
- Will our troop charge dues, use product program proceeds, and/or charge per activity? How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? What should our financial plan look like?

### Choosing a Meeting Place

What makes a great meeting space? It depends on your troop, but here are a few considerations as you visit potential spaces:

**Cost:** The space should be free to use.

**Size:** Make sure the space is large enough for the whole group and all planned activities.

**Availability:** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.

**Resources:** Ask if tables and chairs come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby of some sort where you could store supplies or a safe outdoor space for activities.



**Safety:** Potential spaces must be safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and have at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure first-aid equipment is on hand.

**Facilities:** It goes without saying, but make sure that toilets are sanitary and accessible. Communication-friendly: Check for cell reception in the potential space and whether Wi-Fi is available.

**Allergen-free:** Ensure that pet dander and other common allergens won't bother susceptible girls during meetings.

**Accessibility:** Your space should accommodate girls with disabilities as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.

### Need a few talking points to get started? Try:

*"I'm a Girl Scout volunteer with a group of [number of girls] girls. We're doing lots of great things for girls and for the community, like [something your group is doing] and [something else your troop is doing]. We're all about leadership—the kind that girls use in their daily lives and the kind that makes our community better. We'd love to hold our meetings here because [reason why you'd like to meet there]."*

Stuck and need additional support? Contact GSME or your service unit support team for help with a troop meeting place.

### Virtual Meetings

If your group or troop can't meet in person or hold a traditional meeting, there are so many ways to bring the power of Girl Scouting home! Meeting virtually can be a fun, engaging option for your troop.

#### Before setting up a virtual meeting, you'll want to:

- Partner with troop families to make sure the girls are safe online.
- Select a meeting platform that allows families who may not have internet access to call in.
- [Think about logistics](#): work with the girls to set up ground rules; consider how you'll incorporate in-person meeting traditions in your virtual space and how you'll keep the meeting on track.
- Talk with families on [how to keep activities girl-led](#) if your girls will be completing them from home.

And don't worry if your girls want to use a web or social platform you're not as familiar with, because you'll learn alongside them! For more tips on successful virtual meetings, check out the [For Troop Leaders section of Girl Scouts at Home](#).

### Girl Scout Troop Size

The troop size "sweet spot" is large enough to provide an interactive and cooperative learning environment and small enough to encourage individual development. Though the ideal troop size is 12 girls, we recommend that groups be no fewer and no larger than:

- Girl Scout Daisies: 5–12 girls
- Girl Scout Brownies: 10–20 girls
- Girl Scout Juniors 10–25 girls
- Girl Scout Cadettes: 5–25 girls
- Girl Scout Seniors: 5–30 girls
- Girl Scout Ambassadors: 5–30 girls



A Girl Scout troop/group must have at minimum five girls and two approved adult volunteers. (Double-check the volunteer-to-girl ratio chart to make sure you've got the right amount of coverage for your troop!) Adults and girls registering in groups of fewer than five girls and/or two approved, unrelated adult volunteers, at least one of whom is female, will be registered as individual Girl Scouts to more accurately reflect their status and program experience. Individual girls are always welcome to participate in Girl Scout activities and events.

### **Registering Girls and Adults in Girl Scouting**

Every participant (girl or adult) in Girl Scouting must register and become a member of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). GSUSA membership dues are valid for one year. Membership dues cannot be transferred to another member and are not refundable.

Preregistration for the upcoming membership year occurs in the spring. Girls are encouraged to register early to avoid the fall rush. Early registration allows for uninterrupted receipt of forms and materials from the council, helps girls and councils plan ahead, and gets girls excited about all the great stuff they want to do as Girl Scouts next year. Girl Scout grade level is determined by the current membership year beginning October 1.

[Lifetime membership](#) is available to anyone who accepts the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, pays the one-time lifetime membership fee, and is at least 18 years old (or a high school graduate or equivalent). Volunteers with ten or more years of service can become lifetime members at the discounted young alum rate.

### **Adding New Girls to Your Troop**

Growing your troop is a great way to share the power of the Girl Scout experience and [there are many ways to get the word out](#), like hanging posters at your girl's school, using social media to reach families in your community, or including your troop in GSME's Opportunity Catalog or Troop Catalog.

**For more information about adding girls to your troop, please talk to your local Community Engagement Champion or contact Customer Care at [customer care@gsmaine.org](mailto:customer care@gsmaine.org)**



## Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

Girl Scouts is for every girl, and that's why we embrace girls of all abilities and backgrounds with a specific and positive philosophy of inclusion that benefits everyone. Each girl—regardless of her socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, physical or cognitive ability, sexual orientation, primary language, or religion—is an equal and valued member of the group, and groups reflect the diversity of the community.

We believe inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. Inclusion is about belonging, all girls being offered the same opportunities with respect, dignity, and celebration of their unique strengths. It's about being a sister to every Girl Scout! You're accepting and inclusive when you:

- Welcome every girl and focus on building community.
- Emphasize cooperation instead of competition.
- Provide a safe and socially comfortable environment for girls.
- Teach respect for, understanding of, and dignity toward all girls and their families.
- Actively reach out to girls and families who are traditionally excluded or marginalized.
- Foster a sense of belonging to community as a respected and valued peer.
- Honor the intrinsic value of each person's life.

If you have questions about accommodating an individual girl, please reach out to Customer Care at [customercare@gsmaine.org](mailto:customercare@gsmaine.org).

As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, consider the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. Include the special needs of any members who have disabilities or whose parents or caregivers have disabilities. But, please, don't rely on visual cues to inform you of a disability: Approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population has a disability—that's one in five people of every socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and religion.

If you want to find out what a girl with a disability needs to make her Girl Scout experience successful, simply ask her or her parent or caregiver. If you are open and honest, they'll likely respond in kind, [creating an atmosphere that enriches everyone](#).

It's important for all girls to be rewarded based on their best efforts—not on the completion of a task. Give any girl the opportunity to do her best and she will! Sometimes that means changing a few rules or approaching an activity in a more creative way. Here are some examples of ways to modify activities:

- Invite a girl to complete an activity after she has observed others doing it.
- If you are visiting a museum to view sculpture, find out if a girl who is blind might be given permission to touch the pieces.
- If an activity requires running, a girl who is unable to run could be asked to walk or do another physical movement.

Focus on a person's abilities—on what she can do rather than on what she cannot. In that spirit, use people-first language that puts the person before the disability.





# Say...

She has a learning disability.

She has a developmental delay.

She uses a wheelchair.

# instead of...

She is learning disabled.

She is mentally retarded; she is slow.

She is wheelchair-bound.

## When interacting with a girl (or parent/caregiver) with a disability, consider these tips:

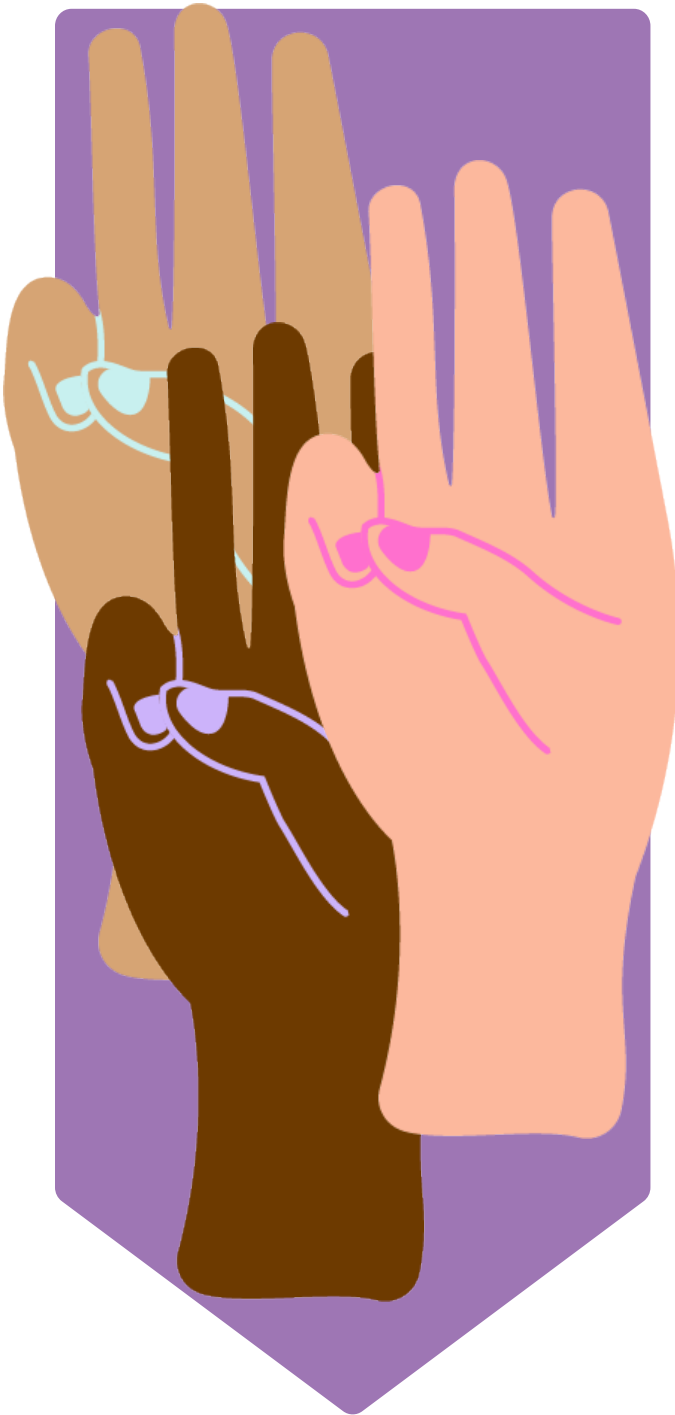
- When talking to a girl with a disability, speak directly to her, not through a family member or friend.
- It's okay to offer assistance to a girl with a disability, but wait until your offer is accepted before you begin to help. Listen closely to any instructions the person may have.
- Leaning on a girl's wheelchair is invading her space and is considered annoying and rude.
- When speaking to a girl who is deaf and using an interpreter, speak to the girl, not to the interpreter.
- When speaking for more than a few minutes to a girl who uses a wheelchair, place yourself at eye level.
- When greeting a girl with a visual disability, always identify yourself and others. You might say, "Hi, it's Sheryl. Tara is on my right, and Chris is on my left."

## Registering Girls with Cognitive Disabilities

Girls with cognitive disabilities can be registered as closely as possible to their chronological ages. They wear the uniform of that grade level. Make any adaptations for the girl to ongoing activities of the grade level to which the group belongs. Young women with cognitive disorders may choose to retain their girl membership through their twenty-first year, and then move into an adult membership category.



## Getting Support for Your Troop



Just as your Girl Scouts rally around each other for support, you'll also have a dedicated Girl Scout support team, consisting of GSME staff and passionate volunteers just like you. Your support team, which may be called a service unit at GSME, is ready to offer local learning opportunities and advice as well as [answer your questions](#) about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, product sales, and so much more.

Before you hold your first troop meeting with girls, consider the support and people resources you'll need to cultivate an energizing troop experience. Parents, friends, family, and other members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide time, experience, and ideas to a troop, so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your volunteer troop team. This team is made up of troop leaders (like you) and troop committee volunteers.

Your [troop committee volunteers](#) are the extra set of eyes, ears, and hands that help the troop safely explore the world around them. Depending on your troop's needs, they can play a more active role—for instance, someone can step up as a dedicated troop treasurer—or simply provide an occasional helping hand when you need to keep a meeting's activity on track.

If a parent or caregiver isn't sure if they can commit to a committee or co-leader role, encourage them to try [volunteering in a smaller capacity](#) that matches their skill set. Just like your young Girl Scouts, once troop parents and caregivers discover they can succeed in their volunteer role, they'll feel empowered to volunteer again. Check out the [GSME Family Shining Star patch program](#)! This tool may help you recruit family members to support the troop as they earn a patch for their girl!



## Troop Management Tools and Resources

From toolkits and guides to regular contact with experienced people, you'll have all the support you need to be a Girl Scout volunteer. Here's a list of some important resources you'll want to check out.

### The Volunteer Toolkit

The Volunteer Toolkit is a customizable digital planning tool for troop leaders and co-leaders to easily manage their troop year-round and deliver easy, fun troop meetings. Accessible via desktop and mobile devices, the Volunteer Toolkit saves you time and energy so that you can focus on having fun with your Girl Scouts.

With the Volunteer Toolkit, girls and leaders can explore meeting topics and program activities together and follow the fun as they plan their Girl Scout year. Through the Volunteer Toolkit, troop leaders can:

- Plan the troop's calendar year and meeting schedule.
- Email parents/caregivers with one click.
- View the troop roster, renew girls' membership, and update girls' contact information.
- View meeting plans for Journeys and badges, including suggested tracks for multi-level groups (K-5 and 6-12).
- Customize meeting agendas to fit your unique troop.
- Explore individual meeting plans that show a breakdown of every step, including a list of materials needed, editable time allotments for each activity within a meeting, and printable meeting aids.
- Record attendance at meetings and their troop's badge and Journey achievements.
- Add GSME or custom events to the troop's calendar.
- Submit troop's finance reports.
- Easily locate both national and GSME resources, such as Safety Activity Checkpoints.

### Parents and caregivers can:

- View the troop's meeting schedule and individual meeting plans to stay up to date on the badges and Journeys they are working on.
- Renew their memberships and update their contact information.
- View their Girl Scout's attendance and achievements.
- See upcoming events the troop is planning or attending.
- Easily locate both national and GSME resources, such as the Family Hub.
- View the troop's finance report.
- 

Get started by visiting [www.girlscoutsofmaine.org](http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org)





### **gsLearn**

This online resource contains many learning opportunities for you and other volunteers, from required courses like Troop Volunteers, part 1 and Troop Camp Training, part 1 to short optional how-tos like Let's plan: a field trip!

### **The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting and Handbooks**

What does it mean to be a Girl Scout? These grade level-specific resources will help you break it down for your girls.

### **Safety Activity Checkpoints**

Safety is paramount in Girl Scouting, and this resource—Safety Activity Checkpoints—contains everything you need to know to help keep your girls safe during a variety of exciting activities outside of their regular Girl Scout troop meetings.

### **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 what you need for a successful troop year.

### **Girl Scout Volunteers in Your Community**

Remember that Girl Scout support team we mentioned? You'll find them in your service unit! Troops are organized geographically into service units or communities. You'll find a local network of fellow leaders and administrative volunteers [ready to offer tips and advice](#) to help you succeed in your volunteer role.

### **Customer Care Contacts**

Questions? Need help resolving an issue? We've got you! Reach out anytime by either clicking on the ["Contact Us" form](#) at [www.girlscoutsofmaine.org](http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org) or email [CustomerCare@gsmaine.org](mailto:CustomerCare@gsmaine.org). During business hours, 8:00-5:30 Monday-Thursday, you can reach a Customer Care Specialist by calling 888-922-GSME (4763)

### **Newsletters/Communication**

Throughout the year, Girl Scouts of Maine publishes several [publications](#), including the program guide, Compass. You can also find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#), and [Instagram](#).



## Taking Advantage of Learning Opportunities

We know that when you have the knowledge and skills you need to manage your troop, both you and your girls will thrive. Check out gsLearn or contact GSME to find out about ongoing learning opportunities that will help you grow your skills and confidence.

**To get started:** Log into gsLearn to take *Troop Volunteers, Part 1: the Adventure Begins!* This one-hour course will walk you through the basics of starting a Girl Scout troop in Maine. After two volunteers complete *Troop Volunteers, part 1*, you can start meeting with your girls!

After completing *Troop Volunteers, Part 1*, participate in a Zoom Welcome Call with our Volunteer Engagement Specialist. After you've met with them 2-4 times or for about a month, join a *Troop Volunteers, part 2: the Adventure Continues!* session, where you'll meet with other new volunteers to talk about the questions that have come up in those first few meetings and to share your new discoveries!

**Ongoing:** As you continue to meet with your troop, you will find things you'd like to learn. We have lots of resources, including other courses on gsLearn, Service Unit and statewide Facebook groups, workshops offered through the year, and maybe most valuable, your local Service Unit Leaders Meetings! Find the dates for those and mark your calendar!



## Knowing How Much You're Appreciated

What begins with Girl Scouts speaking up at a troop meeting can go all the way to speaking in front of their city council for a cause they champion—and they'll have your support to thank for that. Your volunteer role makes a powerful difference. Thank you for all you do.

Just as you'll receive support throughout your volunteering experience, when you reach the end of the term you signed up for, you'll talk with your support team about the positive parts of your experience as well as the challenges you faced, and you'll discuss whether you want to return to this position or try something new. The end of your troop year, camp season, overseas trip, or series/event session is just the beginning of your next adventure with Girl Scouts!

If you're ready for more opportunities, be sure to let GSME support team know how you'd like to be a part of girls' lives in the future—whether in the same position or in other, flexible ways. Are you ready to organize a series or event? Take a trip? Work with girls at camp? Work with a troop of girls as a yearlong volunteer? Share your skills at a GSME Service Center, working behind the scenes? The possibilities are endless and can be tailored to fit your skills and interests.



## Volunteer Appreciation Month

Without our passionate and dedicated volunteers, there would be no Girl Scouting. That's why we celebrate National Volunteer Month every April! And get ready to crank up the party as we ring in National Girl Scout Leader's Day on April 22.

Girl Scouts also celebrates National Volunteer Week, which falls during the third week of April. What can we say—we love our volunteers!

## Girl Scout Participation in Activities with Other Scouting Organizations



The decision by Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to open the Boy Scout program to girls has fundamentally altered the nature of the relationship between BSA and Girl Scouts nationally and locally. Local relationships between BSA and Girl Scout councils that have led to partnerships and joint activities in the past may now create certain risks or challenges for Girl Scouts. For this reason, councils are encouraged to avoid joint recruiting and/or joint participation in community events or activities.

### **Marketplace Confusion**

To protect the integrity of the Girl Scout brand and reinforce our programming as unique, girl-only, and best in class, we must ensure that we take care that the activities in which girls participate are exclusive to the Girl Scout program, are safe and girl-led, and are conducted under the appropriate supervision of Girl Scouts.

### **Protecting Use of Girl Scout Materials**

Girl Scout materials are intended for the exclusive use of Girl Scouts and are protected as the intellectual property of Girl Scouts of the USA. Materials include but are not limited to: Girl Scout logo, tag lines, and/or program and badge requirements.

# Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Fall Product Program



Learning to think like an entrepreneur? Developing business smarts? Getting to know customers and building lasting relationships? There's so much more to that box of Thin Mints®.

Whether they participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program or the Girl Scout Fall Product Program, or both, everything your Girl Scouts learn prepares them to take on the world. Plus, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local in your community to power amazing year-round experiences—experiences that broaden their worlds and spark their sense of wonder.

## Five Essential Skills

Girl Scouts as young as five develop five essential skills through the Girl Scout Cookie Program—skills that will help them be successful today and throughout their lives:

- Goal setting: Girls learn to create a plan to reach their goals.
- Decision making: Girls learn to make decisions on their own and as a team.
- Money management: Girls learn to create a budget and handle money.
- People skills: Girls find their voice and up their confidence through customers interactions that build relationships.
- Business ethics: Girls learn to act responsibly and honestly, both in business and in life.

But building their business know-how isn't just tied to the cookies themselves! Girl Scouts at any level can continue honing their entrepreneurial skills by earning the [Cookie Business badges](#), [Cookie Entrepreneur Family pin](#), and the [Financial Literacy badges](#) year over year.

Before your cookie bosses open shop, be sure to check out these [helpful troop leader resources](#) that will empower you to:

- Manage your troop's funds.
- Learn how girls participate in money earning.
- Discover how your troop can reach its financial goals.
- Plan activities to help her earn cookie pins and badges
- Understand just how much your girls are capable of by grade level and [how their entrepreneurial skills progress](#).



## Girl Scout Cookie History

What started with Girl Scouts selling home-baked cookies to raise money grew into enlisting professional bakers in 1936 to handle the growing demand—and the rest is history. Explore [Girl Scout Cookie History](#) to find out how cookies have helped build generations of female entrepreneurs and leaders who make the world a better place.

## Where Cookie Proceeds Go

After paying for the cost of cookies and materials, [Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local](#) and help councils provide Girl Scout programs in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the outdoors, life skills, entrepreneurship, and more—in camps, through leadership training, and multiple other ways. A portion of the proceeds is directly managed by girls, and it's up to them to decide how to invest their troop's share of the earnings.

GSME will provide a breakdown of how cookie program proceeds support Girl Scout activities locally. Please share this information with girls and their families so everyone understands that product program sales make it possible for GSME to serve girls.

Troop members share in the proceeds from a successful product program; proceeds aren't distributed to individual girl members.

Visit the [cookie section](#) of GSME website for more information about troop proceeds locally.

The [Girl Scout Blue Book of Basic Documents](#) specifies that:

***“All money and other assets, including property, that are raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting must be held and authorized by a Girl Scout council or Girl Scouts of the USA. Such money and other assets must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting.”***

— *“Ownership of Assets,” Blue Book of Basic Documents (May 2018), page 22*

Making s'mores under the stars, creating a lasting impact on your community, or ordering supplies for an eye-opening STEM project—there are limitless ways to put troop proceeds toward dynamic Girl Scout experiences! There are a few things, however, that don't qualify for “purposes of Girl Scouting,” for instance, using troop proceeds to purchase memberships in or uniforms for another organization. We encourage all councils to remind their volunteers of this policy in order to protect the all-girl environment and to avoid diversion of Girl Scout funds.





## GSME's Role

When you are set up for success, you are better able to set up your girls for success! That's why every year, GSME provides trainings, guidelines, and procedures for conducting the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program, and determines how the proceeds and product rewards system will be managed. Check the [cookie section](#) of GSME's website to find the answers you need as well as local trainings and resources.

Each council also selects the vendors of its choice to provide the products for their product programs. Two commercial bakers are licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies: [Little Brownie Bakers](#) and ABC Bakers. Girl Scouts of Maine uses [ABC Cookies](#). You can also [Meet the Cookies](#) and find additional info on cookie varieties, including nutritional details.

Councils also work with vendors to offer magazine subscriptions, nut and candy products, and more for the fall product program. These companies are [Ashdon Farms](#), Trophy Nut, and [M2 Media group](#). GSME uses Ashdon Farms and M2 Media group. Each provides online tools and activities for girls to download. Magazine selection and sales may take place online—check with GSME for more details.



## Your Role

You play an exciting role in giving your Girl Scouts opportunities to practice the five skills as they learn how to think like entrepreneurs. Some of the things you'll do include:

- Get girls excited about the opportunities to support the troop (but allowing their participation to be voluntary).
- Support both [competitive and apprehensive cookie bosses](#), helping all your girls set meaningful goals for themselves.
- [Fostering partnerships with each Girl Scout's family](#) to ensure cookie season success, whatever that may look like for her. The [Creating Cookie Success](#) and [Coaching Your Budding Businesswoman](#) resources will help you build a positive partnership with girls and families, and the [Cookie Entrepreneur Family pin](#) is designed to help families support girls' growth at home.

Not only can girls sell individually, both in-person and using the online tools provided by each vendor, they can also participate in group booth sales during product programs. GSME has additional guidance and processes to market and ensure every booth is in a safe and appropriate location.



As your Girl Scouts grow, your role will evolve from a hands-on one to providing oversight and support where needed. No matter their ages, remember that ***volunteers and parents/caregivers do not sell the product***. Your role is to encourage your girls and let their entrepreneurial spirit soar. Learning by doing is exactly how your girls develop the business savvy and communication skills that will [empower them to reach any goals they set for themselves..](#)

Another critical task for each troop is to establish a clear accounting system for all proceeds and product during the programs. It's up to you to make sure that money is spent wisely, that excellent records are kept (remember to keep copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and that all product is tracked. For older girls, your job is to oversee their work as they learn to keep impeccable records. Be sure to attend product program orientation or training so you are aware of the systems and helpful tools available.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Fall Product Program can be exhilarating and busy times during the troop year, but you're never alone in your efforts! You can reach out to your service unit product program manager when you're feeling stuck, or you can [build a cookie team](#) to provide the support your troop needs.

## Product Program Safety

Safety is the top priority while selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products. Volunteers, families, and girls should be familiar with and practice the safety guidelines outlined in local program resources as well as those available in the [troop leader resources](#) section of [girlscoutcookies.org](http://girlscoutcookies.org) and in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

### Selling Cookies Online

Before girls use their Smart Cookie site, they should partner with their families to learn how to safely run their business online.

A few more online safety practices to keep in mind:

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program is a girl-led program and online marketing and sales efforts should always be led by a Girl Scout, with the supervision of her parent or caregiver.
- Girl Scouts engaging in online sales and marketing must review and apply the [Digital Marketing Tips for Cookie Entrepreneurs and Their Families](#).
- Girls, volunteers and parents must review and adhere to the [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#), the [Digital Cookie Pledge](#), the [Supplemental Safety Tips for Online Marketing](#), and Girl Scouts' [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for Computer and Internet Use and Cookie and Product Sales (with the exception that they may share beyond friends and family).
- Girl sales links should never be posted to resale sites (Craigslist, eBay, Facebook Marketplace etc.).
- Girls must adhere to all terms and conditions on Digital Cookie and Smart Cookie platforms. For copies of terms and conditions, please contact GSUSA, ABC, or M2 as needed.
- Girl Scouts of the USA reserves the right to remove or disable the link for any reason including violation of guidance, inventory fulfillment issues, safety issues, or if sales and marketing activity goes viral and otherwise creates unanticipated disruption.

Additionally, families, girls, and volunteers should contact and collaborate with GSME and Girl Scouts of the USA in advance on any national news media opportunities tied to girls online marketing and sales efforts.



## The Buddy System

Using the buddy system, the troop is divided into teams of two. Each Girl Scout is responsible for staying with her buddy at all times, warning her buddy of danger, giving her buddy immediate assistance if safe to do so, and seeking help if needed. Girls are encouraged to stay near the group or buddy with another team of two so that in the event someone is injured, one person cares for the patient while two others seek help.

## Preparing for Your Girl Scout Cookie Booth

Cookie booths—that is, cookie pop-up sales in areas with lots of foot traffic—are a fun way for Girl Scouts to connect with their community and practice their sales pitch with new customers. Booth locations must be approved by GSME, facilitated within council jurisdiction, and participants must follow all GSME guidelines with regard to setting up, running, and taking down a booth.

Please check your local COVID-19 guidelines for any restrictions on booth locations and other safety considerations, or [consider a virtual cookie booth](#) or [virtual cookie rally](#) if it makes sense for your troop.

Create a great cookie booth experience for your Girl Scouts by:

- Using your best judgment in setting up cookie booths in locations that will be open, accessible, and safe for all Girl Scouts and potential customers.
- Choosing a high traffic area—this could be your local supermarket, mall, or park—where you'll maximize the number of visitors to your booth.
- Checking out your booth site ahead of the sale. Talk to business owners in the area so they'll know what to expect. Find out what security measures are in place—these may include lights for evening sales and whether a security camera watches the booth area—and where the nearest bathrooms are located.
- Respecting the surrounding businesses by making sure your booth isn't blocking a store entrance or exit.
- Encouraging your Girl Scouts to unleash their creativity—and work on their advertising skills—to make colorful signs and booth decorations that potential customers can't resist! Remind girls to be polite and to have their sales pitch ready for interested customers.





And keep in mind:

- A minimum of two volunteers (at least one of whom is a registered Girl Scout volunteer with the required background check) and three Girl Scouts should be present at the booth at all times. With two or more volunteers, you'll have adequate booth coverage if the girls need to be accompanied to the restroom.
- If your Daisies are still learning how to make correct change, help them handle money as needed. But remember that girls make all sales at the booth!
- Changing your cookie booth hours or location? Keep your customers in the loop and update your ABC Baker Smart Cookie system with the new details. All scheduled booths are available on the Cookie Finder App ([IOS](#) or [Android](#)).
- Certain locations may be inappropriate for younger Girl Scouts based on the standards of your local community, may negatively impact the cookie program experience for girls, and/or may negatively impact our brand in your community. For additional clarity, girls should not sell in or in front of establishments that they themselves cannot legally patronize.
- Additionally, with respect to marijuana dispensaries, we have been steadfastly combating the unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout trademark by the cannabis community, which has been marketing—without our authorization—certain cannabis products under our youth-appealing brand. We are continuing to aggressively fight these unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout brand and hope that our councils and volunteers will join Girl Scouts of the USA's efforts by discouraging cookie booth locations at such locations.

For more tips to make your booth a success, check out our [Cookie Booth Essentials](#). For additional information about setting up a booth and safety and [security](#) suggestions, consult GSME guidelines.





## Cookie Donation Programs

Cookies also help girls make a big impact in their community! GSME may have an established cookie donation program where customers can purchase cookies that will be donated to an organization by GSME. Cookie donations are not only a great talking point for girls to share with their customers—they're also a thoughtful way to show girls how cookies can help them give back.

With cookie donations, remember that:

- All cookie donation programs must be approved by GSME.
- Donated cookies must stay within the council jurisdiction unless GSME has the approval from other council jurisdictions.
- Donated products cannot be resold and must be used in a responsible and ethical way.
- Donated products are used in a way that does not undermine the work of councils or jeopardize the integrity of the Girl Scout brand.

## Handling Product Complaints

Girl Scout Cookies are well loved and for good reason—it has always been the practice of Girl Scout councils and the bakers to guarantee customer satisfaction with their delicious cookies. If a customer is not satisfied with the quality of their cookies for some reason, they can contact the baker via the phone number printed on the side of the cookie package.

Troops should notify GSME if they are aware of any customer dissatisfaction.

## Recognizing Cookie Sellers in the Media

Focusing on entrepreneurial outcomes has always been the focus of the Girl Scout Cookie Program. The cookie program has never been about and does not focus on individual girls' sales results.

- There are many impressive cookie bosses throughout the United States, and the Girl Scout organization will continue to recognize dynamic cookie entrepreneurs for various achievements tied to the Girl Scout Cookie Program and through their participation in Girl Scouts.
- Girl Scouts of the USA does not currently track the top seller(s) of Girl Scout Cookies on a national level and does not identify a specific Girl Scout as the number one or “record-breaking” national cookie seller.
- Girl Scout councils should not reference such girls as “top sellers” in the media. Doing so detracts from the essence of the Girl Scout Cookie Program, which is based on offering girls important experiences in entrepreneurship, business, and finance from a young age as well as providing girls and local Girl Scout councils with the funds necessary to power amazing experiences and opportunities for Girl Scouts year-round.



## Troop Finances

With your guidance, your Girl Scouts will learn money skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Your Girl Scout troop will plan and finance its own activities, and you'll coach your girls as they earn and manage troop funds. Troop activities are powered by proceeds earned through council-sponsored product program activities (such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program), group money-earning activities (council approved, of course!), and any dues your troop may charge. Remember that all funds collected, raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting belong to the troop and must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. Funds are administered through the troop and do not belong to individuals.



## Who pays for what

Part of financial management is being clear about expectations for who pays for what part of the Girl Scout experience. This is part of learning to live within their means and learning to earn their way to their goals. Girls need to make a plan, set realistic goals, build a budget, and earn the money to realize those goals.

Money should never stand between a girl and Girl Scouts. Financial assistance is available for some things and girls are able to earn their way for others. Parents can also help by helping her pay her dues, paying her \$40 membership fee, helping with transportation, sharing a skill or talent, donating supplies, or helping when asked by the troop leaders. This table also breaks down the traditional financial responsibilities:

Who...	Pays for What...	and How.
<b>The Girls</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniforms (optional)</li> <li>• Journey books and The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting</li> <li>• Troop dues</li> <li>• Annual \$40 membership fee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/guardians</li> <li>• Personal allowance</li> <li>• Troop funds</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Membership fees may be paid by the troop for all girls. Financial assistance is available for the membership fee.</p>
<b>The Troop/ Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program supplies</li> <li>• Equipment</li> <li>• Earned awards and activity patches</li> <li>• Event/trip/camping fees</li> <li>• Service project expenses</li> </ul>	<p>Start-up money for new troops is available from your service unit and GSME. Do not use your personal money.</p> <p>Use money girls earn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product Sales (fall and cookie sales)</li> <li>• troop dues</li> <li>• additional money-earning activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> All funds received should be deposited to the troop account. All funds spent must have a receipt for documentation.</p>
<b>The Adult Volunteer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual \$25 membership fee</li> <li>• Uniform and insignia (optional)</li> <li>• Personal copy of Facilitator Guide books that correspond with girl journey books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal funds</li> <li>• Troop funds</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Membership fees may be paid by the troop for adult volunteers. Financial assistance is available for the membership fee.</p>
<b>Girl Scouts of Maine</b>	<p>Set-up and administration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• council-wide events and programs</li> <li>• outdoor program activities</li> <li>• council properties</li> <li>• adult development – training courses and adult recognitions</li> <li>• GSME Website and publications</li> <li>• product sales</li> <li>• on-going support to service units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Giving Campaign</li> <li>• Grants</li> <li>• Donor gifts</li> <li>• Product Sales (fall and cookie sales)</li> <li>• United Way</li> <li>• GSME shops</li> <li>• Annual Women of Distinction Dinner</li> </ul>
<b>Girl Scouts of the USA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program research and development</li> <li>• Supplemental basic insurance coverage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership fees</li> <li>• Equipment agencies</li> </ul>



## Establishing a Troop Account

No matter how much your troop plans on saving or spending, you'll need a safe place to deposit your troop dues, product program proceeds, and other funds. If you've stepped up to lead an existing troop, you may inherit a checking account, but with a new troop, you'll want to open a new bank account.

Here are a few helpful tips you can take to the bank:

- Be sure to find a bank that has free checking and low fees.
- Designate a "troop treasurer," that is, one person who is responsible for troop funds and for keeping a daily account of expenditures.
- Ensure your account comes with a debit card that you can use during activities or trips. These transactions are easier to track at the end of the year.
- Be prepared like a Girl Scout, and make sure another troop volunteer has accessible a debit card for the troop account in case the main card is lost.
- Handle a lost troop debit card the same way you would a personal debit card: cancel it immediately.
- Keep troop funds in the bank before an activity or trip and pay for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.

Follow GSME's financial policies and procedures for setting up an account. Most council-sponsored product program activities have specific banking and tracking procedures.

## Troop Disbanding and Unused Troop Funds

When a troop disbands, any unused Girl Scout money left in the account becomes the property of GSME. Troop funds are not the property of any individual member. Before disbanding, ask your girls how they want to pay it forward: they may decide to donate any unused funds to their service unit, to another troop, or to pay for Girl Scout activities. Activities can also include purchasing materials to support another organization through Take Action projects.

## Closing the Troop Account

When closing a troop account, be sure all checks and other debits have cleared the account before you close it. Remember, you may have to close the account in person. Turn remaining funds over to a GSME staff member.





## Money-Earning Basics for Troops

Troops flex their financial muscles in two distinct ways:

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other sales of Girl Scout–authorized products (such as calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy) organized by GSME. All girl members are eligible to participate in two council-sponsored product program activities each year with volunteer supervision: the cookie program and one other council-authorized product program. Please remember, volunteers and Girl Scout council staff don't sell cookies and other products—girls do.
- Group money-earning activities organized by the troop (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with volunteers) and that earn money for the group.

### Participation Guidance

Girls' participation in both council-sponsored product program activities and group money-earning projects is based upon the following:

- Voluntary participation
- Written permission of each girl's parent or guardian
- An understanding of (and ability to explain clearly to others) why the money is needed
- An understanding that money earning should not exceed what the group needs to support its program activities
- Observance of local ordinances related to involvement of children in money-earning activities as well as health and safety laws
- Vigilance in protecting the personal safety of each girl
- Arrangements for safeguarding the money

### Additional Guidelines

Keep these specific guidelines—some of which are required by the Internal Revenue Service—in mind to ensure that sales are conducted with legal and financial integrity.

- All rewards earned by girls through the product program activities must support Girl Scout program experiences (such as camp, travel, and program events, but not scholarships or financial credits toward outside organizations).
- Rewards are based on sales ranges set by councils and may not be based on a dollar-per-dollar calculation.
- Troops are encouraged to participate in council product programs as their primary money-earning activity; any group money earning shouldn't compete with the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council product programs.
- Obtain written approval from GSME before a group money-earning event; most councils ask that you submit a request for approval.
- Girl Scouts discourages the use of games of chance. Any activity which could be considered a game of chance (raffles, contests, bingo) must be approved by the local GSME and be conducted in compliance with all local and state laws.
- Girl Scouts' Blue Book policy forbids girls from the direct solicitation of cash. Girls can collect partial payment toward the purchase of a package of Girl Scout Cookies and other Girl Scout–authorized products through participation in council-approved product program donation programs.



- Girl Scouts forbids product demonstration parties where the use of the Girl Scout trademark increases revenue for another business, such as in-home product parties. Any business using the Girl Scout trademark or other Girl Scout intellectual property must seek authorization from GSUSA.
- Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the ages and abilities of the girls and consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- Money earned is for Girl Scout activities and is not to be retained by individuals. Girls can, however, be awarded incentives and/or may earn credits from their Girl Scout product programs. Funds acquired through group money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the group according to council procedures.

### **Additional Money-Earning Activities**

Girl Scouts may find they need to do additional money-earning activities to meet their goals. These additional money-earning activities must be approved using the [Troop Activity Form](#) and must meet GSME guidelines. Troops can only participate in additional money-earning activities if they have participated in both the Fall Product Program and the Girl Scout Cookie Program.

### **Collections/Drives**

- Cell phones for refurbishment
- Used ink cartridges turned in for money
- Christmas tree recycling

### **Food/Meal Events**

- Lunch box auction (prepared lunch or meal auctioned off)
- Themed meals, like a high tea or a build-your-own-taco bar, related to activities girls are planning (For instance, if girls are earning money for travel, they could tie the meal to their destination).

### **Service(s)**

- Service-oree (people sponsor a girl doing service and funds go to support a trip or other activity)
- Babysitting for holiday (New Year's Eve) or GSME events
- Raking leaves, weeding, cutting grass, shoveling snow, walking pets
- Cooking class or other specialty class
- The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other council-sponsored product programs are designed to unleash the entrepreneurial potential in your girls. From there, your troop may decide to earn additional funds on its own.



## Help Your Troop Reach Its Financial Goals

We get it—there’s something exciting about opening that first case of Girl Scout Cookies. However, before your girls take part in all the cookie program fun, it’s important they have a clear plan and purpose for their product program activities. As a volunteer, you have the opportunity to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for the girls:

- 1. Set goals for money-earning activities.** What do girls hope to accomplish through this activity? In addition to earning money, what skills do they hope to build? What leadership opportunities present themselves?
- 2. Create a budget.** Use a budget worksheet that includes both expenses (the cost of supplies, admission to events, travel, and so on) and available income (the group’s account balance, projected cookie proceeds, and so on).
- 3. Determine how much the group needs to earn.** Subtract expenses from available income to determine how much money your group needs to earn.
- 4. Make a plan.** The group can brainstorm and make decisions about its financial plans. Will cookie and other product programs—if approached proactively and energetically—earn enough money to meet the group’s goals? If not, which group money-earning activities might offset the difference? Will more than one group money-earning activity be necessary to achieve the group’s financial goals? In this planning stage, engage the girls through the Girl Scout processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) and consider the value of any potential activity. Have them weigh feasibility, implementation, and safety factors.
- 5. Write it out.** Once the group has decided on its financial plan, describe it in writing. If the plan involves a group money-earning activity, fill out an application for approval from GSME and submit it along with the budget worksheet the girls created.

**Remember:** It’s great for girls to have opportunities like the Girl Scout Cookie Program to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals. As a volunteer, try to help girls balance the money earning they do with opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on earning and spending money. Take Action projects, for example, may not always require girls to spend a lot of money!



## Financial Management and Product Program Abilities by Grade Level

As with other Girl Scout activities, girls build their financial and sales savvy as they get older. Every girl will be different, but here you'll find some examples of the abilities and opportunities for progression of girls at each grade level.

### Girl Scout Daisies

The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.

Parents/guardians may decide they will contribute to the cost of activities.

Girls can participate in Girl Scout Cookie activities and other council-sponsored product sales.

Daisies are always paired with a volunteer when selling anything. Girls do the asking and deliver the product, but volunteers handle the money and keep the girls secure.

Girls should be given the opportunity to practice identifying money and counting back change with an adult during each transaction.

### Girl Scout Brownies

The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and shares some of the group-budgeting responsibilities.

Girls discuss the cost of activities (supplies, fees, transportation, rentals, and so on) with guidance from their volunteer(s).

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls may decide to pay dues to contribute to the cost of activities.

### Girl Scout Juniors

The group volunteer retains overall responsibility for long-term budgeting and record keeping, but shares or delegates all other financial responsibilities.

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls decide on group dues, if any. Dues are collected by girls and recorded by a group treasurer selected by the girls.

Girls budget for the short-term needs of the group based on their plans and income from the group dues.

Girls budget for more long-term activities, such as overnight trips, group camping, and special events.

Girls budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Bronze Award, if they are pursuing it.





## Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

Girls estimate costs based on plans.

Girls determine the amount of group dues, if any, and the scope of money-earning projects.

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning projects.

Girls budget for extended travel, Take Action projects, and leadership projects.

Girls may be involved in seeking donations for Take Action projects with council approval.

Girls keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.

Girls budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Silver or Gold Awards, if they are pursuing them.

### Working with Sponsors and Other Organizations

Local sponsors can help councils power innovative programs for Girl Scouts. Community organizations, businesses, religious organizations, and individuals may be sponsors and may provide group meeting places, volunteer their time, offer in-kind donations, provide activity materials, or loan equipment. Encourage your girls to celebrate a sponsor's contribution to the troop by sending thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take Action project.

For information on working with a sponsor, consult GSME, which can give you guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting guidelines, and any council policies or practices that must be followed. GSME may already have relationships with certain organizations or may know of some reasons not to collaborate with certain organizations.



## When collaborating with any other organization, keep these additional guidelines in mind:

### **Avoid Fundraising for Other Organizations**

Girl Scouts are not allowed to solicit money on behalf of another organization when identifying themselves as Girl Scouts by wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, and so on. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. However, you and your group can support another organization through Take Action projects. Girl Scouts as individuals are able to participate in whatever events they choose as long as they're not wearing anything that officially identifies them as "Girl Scouts."

### **Steer Clear of Political Fundraisers**

When in an official Girl Scout capacity or in any way identifying yourselves as Girl Scouts, your group may not participate, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign or work on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. Letter-writing campaigns are not allowed, nor is participating in a political rally, circulating a petition, or carrying a political banner.

### **Be Respectful When Collaborating with Religious Organizations**

Girl Scout groups must respect the opinions and practices of religious partners, but no girl should be required to take part in any religious observance or practice of the sponsoring group.

### **Avoid Selling or Endorsing Commercial Products**

A commercial product is any product sold at a retail location. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products.



# Safety in Girl Scouting

The emotional and physical safety and well-being of Girl Scouts is our top priority. [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) outlines the Safety Standards and Guidelines used in Girl Scouting, which apply to all Girl Scout activities.

For current COVID-19 guidelines, check GSME's version of [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#). All volunteers should review the Safety Activity Checkpoints manual when planning activities with girls in order to manage safety and risk in Girl Scout-sanctioned activities.

In [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), you'll find:

- Girl Scout Activity Safety Standards and Guidelines with requirements for adult supervision, permission slips, preparation, field trips and overnight trips, and other vital information
- Activities that are not permitted by Girl Scouts of the USA and actions that girls and volunteers should not take
- Policies surrounding chartered aircraft trips and aviation
- First-aid and overall health information you'll need from the girls
- Standards for well-being and inclusivity, including working with Girl Scouts with disabilities and ensuring emotional safety
- A breakdown of specific activities—such as camping, internet use, and water sports—and their individual safety checkpoints


Following the Safety Standards and Guidelines is an Activity-at-a-Glance chart which details two critical points to keep in mind:

- Age-appropriate activities and participation by grade level
- Whether prior approval from GSME is required before girls participate in a specific activity

## Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

From camping weekends to cookie booths, adult volunteers must always be present to ensure their Girl Scouts have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level.

Not sure just how many adults you'll need for your activity? The following chart breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of Girl Scouts; so be sure to check with them as you plan your activity.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel and Camping	
	Two approved, registered, trained, unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional approved, registered and trained adult for each additional number of this many girls:	Two approved, registered, trained, unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional approved, registered adult for each additional number of this many girls:
GS Daisies (grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
GS Brownies (grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
GS Juniors (grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8
GS Cadettes (grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
GS Seniors (grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
GS Ambassadors (grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12





# Girl Scouts of Maine 2020-2021 Volunteer Handbook

## Safety Activity Checkpoints





# 2021 GSME SAFETY ACTIVITY CHECKPOINTS

2021 GSME EDITION REVISED @ 6/1/2021

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# Introduction

Safety Activity Checkpoints is a resource that provides safety standards and guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) approved activities.

GSUSA, local councils, and other units holding a credential – including USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO) – shall be responsible for seeing that all activities are planned and carried out in a manner that considers the health, safety, and general well-being of all participants in accordance with these guidelines.

This section provides general safety standards & guidelines by topic that will apply to all activities. Please read and become familiar with all topics in this section. These standards and guidelines are to be used together with the specific safety checkpoints for an individual activity.

Throughout Safety Activity Checkpoints, several individual activities, such as Paddling and Rowing, Climbing and Adventure, and Target Sports, are categorized under related sections to provide continuity as well as the grade level and skill progression.


## Standard Safety Guidelines

This section provides GSUSA's standard safety guidelines, by topic, that apply to all Girl Scout activities. Please read and become familiar with all topics in this section. These standard safety guidelines are to be used together with the specific safety checkpoints for an individual activity along with reasonable common-sense adjustments to ensure a safe positive experience for girls. The intent of providing these standard safety guidelines is to establish a checklist for success and to foster confident leadership.

Note that throughout Safety Activity Checkpoints, several individual activities, such as Paddling and Rowing, Climbing and Adventure, and Target Sports, are categorized under related sections to provide continuity as well as the grade level and skill progression.

**Adult Supervision.** 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 including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep away travel, events, activities, and projects. There are no exceptions to this rule.



	Group Meetings		Events, Travel and Camping	
	Two approved, registered, trained, unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional approved, registered and trained adult for each additional number of this many girls:	Two approved, registered, trained, unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional approved, registered adult for each additional number of this many girls:
GS Daisies (grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
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GS Ambassadors (grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12

Some high-adventure activities may require more adult-to-girl supervision than stated above. For those activities, the safety checkpoints will provide specific adult-to-girl supervision ratios. Remember, some activities are less safe for younger girls, particularly Daisies and Brownies. Younger girls may not be permitted to participate based on their age, as appropriate, and this will be specified on the individual activity. In cases where younger-girl participation is an option but only under certain conditions, this is indicated toward the top (on some occasions, with an asterisk that's followed by explanation further into the write-up).

**Note: For mixed-grade level troops, use the ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop.** For example, if the troop consists of Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy ratio should be followed.

**Council Approval Requirement.** At the top of each activity page, you will see a field indicating whether GSME's prior approval is required to perform the activity.

- **Required.** You must check in with GSME for prior approval before taking girls.
- **Not Required.** You do not need to check in with GSME for prior approval, as long as you have the completed Annual Permission Forms for each girl.

**Activities Not Listed in Safety Activity Checkpoints.** In a challenging, learn-by-doing environment like Girl Scouts, it is only natural that girls will sometimes want to take part in activities that are not specifically addressed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. If a specific activity is not provided in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* the first step is always to contact your council to make sure your council approves of the activity.

Remember to have a plan or process in place for addressing and handling requests for activities that that are not specifically listed in Safety Activity Checkpoints:

Consult GSME for clarification and approval **before taking girls**. GSME may or may not permit the activity. If GSME does approve the activity, we may direct you to a specific vendor or facility or advise you to stay away from others.

- Investigate whether the activity is similar to another activity and if the safety checkpoints can easily translate and apply to a covered activity, then follow those checkpoints.
- Consider whether the proposed activity requires any additional expert supervision or special certification for the instructor.
- As with approved activities, think about the quality of the experience in terms of how participation ties back to long- and short-term outcomes girls receive in Girl Scouting.



## Selecting an Activity to do with Girls.

When considering what type of activities to do with girls, whether specifically listed in Safety Activity Checkpoints or not, be thoughtful and intentional with selecting the activity. Be mindful about the long-term positive outcomes that girls receive through Girl Scouting and think about how participating in the activity ties into at least one of these outcomes. Girl Scouts has proven to help girls thrive in 5 ways:

### **Strong Sense of Self**

Girls have confidence in themselves and their abilities and form positive identities.

### **Positive Values**

Girls act ethically, honestly, and responsibly and show concern for others.

### **Challenge Seeking**

Girls take appropriate risks, try things even though they might fail and learn from their mistakes.

### **Healthy Relationships**

Girls develop and maintain healthy relationships by communicating their feelings directly and resolving conflict constructively.

### **Community Problem Solving**

Girls contribute to the world in purposeful and meaningful ways, learn how to identify problems in the community, and create “action plans” to solve them.

Activities chosen should work towards intentionally helping girls be successful in these key areas. As part of the planning process, consider how and why the activity selected connects to the Girl Scout outcomes. Make it girl led by sharing these goals with girls and engaging them in the activity selection process.

## Coronavirus Safety in Girl Scouts

The health and safety of girls are always the highest priority in Girl Scouts. Returning to in-person activities, especially after a long time of shelter in place for most communities, is a long-awaited development that everyone in Girl Scouts will need to continue to manage carefully. Recognize that COVID-19 health and safety guidance will continue to adjust as the coronavirus transmission risk changes over time.

Girl Scouts has provided COVID-19 guidance specific to the topics that touch our lives in Girl Scouts such as troop meetings, activities, and day trips. GSME’s COVID-19 guidance is the first place to go for health and safety practices in Girl Scouting. You can access that guidance here on the [Resources page](#) of our website. Meetings, Troop Travel, and Service Unit Event Guidelines are [found at https://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscouts-girlscoutsofmaine/documents/GSME-Meeting-Guidelines.pdf](https://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscouts-girlscoutsofmaine/documents/GSME-Meeting-Guidelines.pdf).

Remember, always make sure that your planned activity is also in compliance with the federal and state governmental health authorities where the activity will take place. This means the [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC) and the Maine State Department of Health (DOH) as well as local or county health directives. For example, if your county or region has a governmental directive that requires no large in-person gatherings, then that rule must be complied with. Girl Scouts are always obligated to comply with our governmental health authorities.

On the other hand, for a variety of reasons, there may be situations where GSME’s guidance is more strict than state or local guidance. If that is the case, either choose the rules that are most strict or





contact GSME for clarification.

Recognize that state and local rules concerning coronavirus safety can vary from place to place. Safety regulations will also change as the transmission risk changes. Be sure to stay current on what is required in your region, but also consider that girls in your troop may reside in a different area with a different set of safety parameters to abide by. A good way to ensure you are following the proper governmental guidance is to follow the practices as established in local public schools.

Some basic safety standards that have been issued by the Center of Disease Control (CDC) for integrating back into in person gatherings are:

- Wear a mask (and make sure that girls wear a mask).
- Practice good hygiene by washing or disinfecting hands frequently.
- Remind girls and adults about social distancing when in public and with each other.
- Focus on scheduling activities outdoors instead of indoors whenever possible.
- Pre-screen for any symptoms, fever, or sustained contact with a COVID-19 positive person
- Request that a girl or adult who is exhibiting symptoms of being sick not participate and return when she is no longer sick.
- Remember: If a girl or adult knows that they have been in close and sustained contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, make sure that they comply with the appropriate quarantine period pursuant to the CDC before attending Girl Scout meetings or activities.

The CDC provides regular updates on their website which can be accessed here:

[Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) | CDC](#)

Some excellent guidance for mask wearing and the effectiveness of double masking can be accessed here:

[Use Masks to Help Slow Spread | CDC](#)

[Improve How Your Mask Protects You | CDC](#)



# Have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

The Girl Scout motto is "Be prepared." Proper preparation is the key to success. An important thing to consider ahead of time, before taking girls out on a trip or to an activity, is an **Emergency Action Plan**. Volunteers can review their troop's Emergency Action Plan with girls as a learning experience for them, to the extent it makes sense according to their age and maturity.

For the adult volunteer, however, it is important to think about and document an emergency action plan in the event of an emergency or injury. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as physical injury to a girl, severe weather, fire, intruder, missing girl, or sudden illness. This simple step is invaluable. The key elements included in an effective risk management plan are:

- **Identify** – the type of emergency
  - ◆ Medical: a member becomes suddenly ill
  - ◆ Accidental injury: a member is hurt during an activity
  - ◆ Weather related crisis or challenging environment as with backpacking
    - Pay attention to weather so that the activity can be rescheduled if there is a severe storm or weather-related risk
  - ◆ Fire: become aware of all entrances and exits, and alternative routes out
  - ◆ Missing or lost member
- **Mitigate** – minimize the damage, injury, or time element in seeking help. Make sure to know how far the activity is from the closest Emergency Medical Service (EMS).
  - ◆ If EMS is more than 30 minutes away, an Advanced First Aider should always be present with girls, preferably with Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR) credentials.
  - ◆ If EMS is less than 30 minutes away, a General First Aider should be present with girls.
  - ◆ If more than 200 people at an event, an Advanced First Aider should be added to the General First Aider for every 200 girls, for triage experience.
  - ◆ Make sure that emergency response vehicles can access the area where you are practicing an activity with girls. If an emergency vehicle cannot access the site, notify either local EMS, parks services, or other authorities ahead of time of where you will be, what you will be doing, and how many members are with you.
- **Respond** – having confirmed the properly trained first aiders are present:
  - ◆ Immediately engage the first aider to the accident scene involving an illness or injury
  - ◆ Notify and coordinate the arrival of emergency medical services or law enforcement.
  - ◆ Contact all relevant parties:
    - Parents or legal guardians
    - GSME staff
    - Law enforcement
    - Property owner or facility manager
    -

## Key components of an effective Emergency Action Plan include:

- **Contact List.** A chart, table, or simple list for all participants, including adults, with parent and legal guardian contact phone #s as well as key emergency phone #s, in addition to 911, such as the nearest hospital, medical center, law enforcement or emergency transportation.



- **Roles and Responsibilities.** A pre-determined and established emergency role assignment, who does what. For example, the leader stays with girls or the injured girl(s) while the co-leader calls for help and coordinates the arrival of emergency help and notifies the parents, or vice versa. Agree on this ahead of time so that you are calm and prepared if the worst occurs. Also think through what you will do if the injured person is one of the adults.
- **Exit Strategy.** Become aware of all emergency exits and/or evacuate plans, ahead of time. Identify and communicate alternative exit routes.
- **Evacuation Meeting Place.** Determine and communicate a pre-agreed meeting place should the group become separated or a girl should become lost.
- **Communication Method.** Have a method of emergency communication that works. If camping or backpacking, consider a whistle or horn as an emergency call out. Make sure to inform girls that this is the sound of an emergency. When girls hear this sound, they know to gather to designated spot. If there is cell service at the activity site, save all contact names and numbers, including those for the appropriate authorities, in your mobile phones ahead of time before the activity takes place.

**Activity Preparation.** Communicate with GSME and girls' parents/guardians about the activity, including details about safety precautions and any appropriate clothing or supplies that may be necessary. Follow GSME procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and guidelines about girls' general health examinations. Girls are key to activity planning. Keeping their grade level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.

**Review Safety Checkpoints with Instructors.** These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, camp, or GSME as appropriate to determine if the safety checkpoints can be complied with. Take any questions or issues with safety compliance to GSME for guidance and next steps.

**Itinerary and Key Contacts.** Give an itinerary to a contact person at home. Call the contact person upon departure and return. Create a list that includes girls' parent/guardian contact information, GSME contacts, and emergency services contacts. Keep this list on hand or post in an easily accessible location. Emergency and parent contact information should be saved to an adult's mobile phone on the trip and be provided to the contact person at home.

**Safety Gear.** Safety gear includes clothing and equipment girls will need to safely take part in the activity. These items are necessary to ensure safety. Always opt to take the safety equipment offered by an organization or facility, even if it is not specifically listed here. For example, if the facility offers helmets, always accept the use of helmets for girls.

**Required Gear.** Required gear simply means the activity-specific gear that girls must have to participate in the activity. For example, skiing – a girl will need to bring or rent skis and poles.

**Additional Gear.** Additional gear may include items that support a safe and healthy outdoor learning experience. These are items that often make the experience with girls more comfortable. Recommended items, based on Girl Scout experience, include:

- Layers of clothing for wintertime or for activities on or by the water or mountains, where temperatures or wind can change dramatically within a short period of time
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, sun visor, lip balm
- Change of clothes for water-related activities or those involving dirt or mud, such as spelunking
- Comfortable shoes and socks if hiking or spending long days outside, in order to prevent ticks and blisters
- Watch, compass, maps
- Insect repellent
- Towels for waterfront, pool, and paddling activities
- Bottle of drinking water, healthy snacks
- Backpacks—girls carry their own gear and supplies!



Always take additional gear into consideration when planning an outdoor activity or trip in addition to the safety gear required for the specific activity.

**Instructor Credibility.** Verify instructor knowledge, experience, and maturity. Ensure the volunteers or on-site instructors possess the proper skill set, knowledge, training, and certification, or documented experience required to meet GSME's guidelines and as outlined in the specific approved activity.

With respect to instructing and safeguarding children, maturity level, and years of experience can positively impact the support needed for volunteers to safeguard girls. For example, while the legal definition of an adult lifeguard is 18, qualified lifeguards of 21 years of age are preferred whenever possible.

**General Insurance.** Commercial general liability insurance protects the Girl Scout organization. The facility or vendor that hosts your troop event (for example, a riding stable, a hotel, or a bus company) should carry general liability insurance and auto liability when motor vehicles are involved. A facility that carries valid general liability insurance has almost always been examined for risk by its insurance carrier. If a place does not carry general liability insurance, it's a red flag. It may not be safe, so it would be best to select another place.

When GSME requires you to provide documented evidence of insurance, ask the facility for a certificate of insurance for your records. But be aware that some places do not provide documented evidence of insurance to all customers, or only provide a certificate of insurance when a group is large or if the group plans to pay a certain amount.

If you plan to enter into a written contract with a facility or are considering a new vendor, remember to consult GSME for the proper insurance requirements and see if they use an approved vendor list. Check to be sure the certificate of insurance you will be obtaining validates the insurance limits outlined in your contract or agreement.

**Activity Accident Insurance.** Activity accident insurance is a supplemental health insurance that protects registered Girl Scout members. Registered members are automatically covered under activity accident insurance when participating in all Girl Scout events and activities including trips that involve up to two overnight stays. The Basic Plan does not cover trips of more than two overnight stays.

*Important!* Trips that are three overnights or more are not covered under automatic activity accident insurance. Also, non-members are not automatically covered, and international trips are not automatically covered. Activity accident insurance must be individually purchased for coverage under these scenarios.

So, you will need to purchase extra activity accident insurance for outings and events that:

- Involve three or more overnight stays, or
- Take place outside U.S. territory, or
- Include non-members, such as siblings and friends

When planning trips, always consult GSME to see if extra activity accident insurance is needed.

**Leave No Trace.** Search the web for tips on environmental responsibility, and remember our principle of [Leave no trace](#) (scroll down to the "How to Leave No Trace Outdoors" video)—and, in fact, Girl Scouts have a long tradition of leaving an area better than we found it. Doing so will teach girls responsibility and also safeguard your troop and GSME from complications or issues involving the use of public property.

**Emergency Preparation.** Familiarize yourself with basic first aid, emergency response requirements, and other precautions. Know how far away and where emergency medical and law





enforcement services are located. Understand your surroundings in relation to the closest medical facility or hospital. Also, familiarize yourself with the forms of emergency communication and emergency transportation options that are available.

**Weather Conditions.** Always monitor the weather in the days preceding an activity or trip. Check the local weather report on the day of the trip. For circumstances in which forecasted weather could be a risk to safety, consider scheduling alternatives. In the case of severe wind, lightning, hail, ice, snowstorm, flood warnings due to heavy rain, or a hurricane or tropical storm, make contingency plans for itineraries and transportation. Reschedule the event if the weather report is severe. Adhere to public safety announcements concerning staying indoors or evacuating the area. In extremely hot weather, girls should do outdoor activities in the morning and late afternoon hours, and during the hottest time of day stay in a shaded area or inside with air conditioning. It is important on extremely hot days to plan for easy access to plenty of drinking water to prevent heat exhaustion or dehydration.

If extreme weather or temperature conditions prevent a trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

**Buddy System.** Always use the buddy system with all ages of girls, which means pairing girls up as partners. Each girl is responsible for staying with her buddy throughout a trip or activity. A buddy can warn her partner of danger, give a helping hand, or get immediate assistance when the situation warrants it. All girls are encouraged to stay near the group so that if someone is injured or not feeling well, there are others, including an adult, close by to seek help.

**Permission Slips.** It is imperative to secure a signed Annual Permission Form from a girl's parent or guardian for the year. Any overnight, out-of-state trip or high-risk activity outside the troop meeting space will require an additional [Troop Activity Form](#) and [Parent Permission Form](#). In each high-risk checkpoint, the word "required" is a hyperlink to the form on our website.

This applies to all girls under the age of 18. In most cases, one parental consent is legally acceptable. However, there may be circumstances regarding a custody situation or a particular standard in GSME where dual parental consent is required. For international trips, both parents / guardians written consent is generally required. If there is a question about single versus dual parental consent, please consult GSME.

**Overnight Trips.** Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in the planning so they know what to expect. On trips where male volunteers are part of the group, it is not appropriate for them to sleep in the same space as girl members. Always support and maintain an all-girl atmosphere for sleeping quarters. Men may participate only when separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms are available for their use. Men should not be in situation to walk through girls' sleeping quarters for entrance, exit, or to access restrooms. In some circumstances, such as a museum or mall overnight with hundreds of girls, this type of accommodation may not be possible. If this is the case, men do not supervise girls in the sleeping area of the event, and the adult volunteer-to-girl ratio is adjusted accordingly.

An exception is made for family members during events such as parent-daughter or family overnights where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. Also please make note of the following:

- Each participant has her own bed.
- Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls are to share a bed.
- Girls and adults do not share a bed.
- It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area (tent, cabin, or designated area) with the girls, but if an adult female does share the sleeping area, there should always be two unrelated adult females present.



**Airbnb, VRBO, and HomeAway.** See the Travel/Trip chapter for specific safety checkpoints when utilizing Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway. There are specific steps that must be followed when utilizing these privately owned property rentals, steps that are not necessarily taken with every traditional commercially owned and operated property such as hotels.

**Modeling the Right Behavior.** Adult volunteers should adhere to the Girl Scout Promise and Law. When spending time with girls or representing Girl Scouts do not consume alcohol, smoke, vape or use foul language. Always obey the law, for example, by not talking on a phone or texting while driving.

**Drugs and alcohol.** Volunteers and adults may not purchase, consume, possess or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs/substances, or prescription or over-the-counter medications which impair performance or judgment while participating in Girl Scout sanctioned activities, in the presence of girls, while conducting Girl Scout business, or in Girl Scout branded clothing. Alcohol or any substance which may impair one's judgment must never be used by volunteers, adult members, or any other adult in the presence of a girl member, immediately prior to, or during a girl member activity. Alcoholic beverages may be served to/consumed by adults of legal age at Girl Scout events when girls are not present only when previously approved by GSME Board of Directors or Chief Executive Officer.

**Firearms.** Firearms and/or weapons are prohibited at any Girl Scout activity and on Girl Scout-owned or leased property except when in the possession of a sworn officer of the law, council-authorized property staff, a certified instructor, licensed wildlife control personnel, and/or trained adult while conducting a GSME-approved Girl Scout program activity. Volunteers and adults do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls, unless given special permission by GSME for target sport activities.

**Online Safety.** Instruct girls never to put their full names, location, or contact information online, engage in virtual conversation with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group websites, publish girls' first names only and never divulge their location or contact information. Teach girls the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge, and ask them to read, understand, discuss and commit to following it.

**Money-Earning Activities.** Safety is an important consideration throughout money-earning activities, including Girl Scout Cookie sales and other council-sponsored product sales. During Girl Scout product sales, you are responsible for the safety of girls, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to serve as their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, girls cannot raise money for other organizations, participate in money-earning activities that represent partisan politics, or are not Girl Scout-approved product sales and efforts. It is imperative that Girl Scouts do not partake in anything that can be construed as unrelated business income, in order to protect our organization's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. If there is a questionable circumstance, consult GSME.

**Volunteer Essentials.** A key resource for Volunteers in Girl Scouting is Volunteer Essentials. While Safety Activity Checkpoints focuses on safety guidance and parameters, Volunteer Essentials will address an array of topics such as Engaging Girls and Families, Troop Management, Product Program, Troop Finances, and Leader's Guide to Success. All Girl Scout Volunteers must review, understand, and practice the principles and standards in both Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.

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## Understanding Which Activities Are Not Permitted

After being thoroughly investigated, some activities are clearly classified as “not permitted.” Each sport or activity on the “not permitted” list is evaluated annually with respect to safety factors, GSME staff feedback, insurability, and accident history. These activities pose a high risk of bodily injury, require extensive prior experience to safely participate, or may require a driver’s license such as with ATVs. Activities with a poor accident history based on loss data gathered from various industries are not approved and therefore “not permitted.” The purpose of prohibiting certain activities is first and foremost to protect girls, but also to safeguard the financial and reputational well-being of GSME and the Girl Scout organization.

GSUSA does not approve, endorse, or provide safety checkpoints for “not permitted” activities. The following activities are in the not permitted category:

- Bungee jumping
- Flying in privately owned planes, helicopters, or blimps
- Hang gliding
- Untethered hot-air ballooning
- Hunting
- Snowmobiling
- Riding a motorbike
- Riding electric Scooters
- Using outdoor trampolines
- Parachuting or skydiving
- Parasailing
- Paintball tagging
- Riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs)
- Stunt skiing
- Zorbing

**Bungee Jumping.** Bungee jumping is not highly regulated for safety or consistent in terms of facilitation from one place to the next. It is an activity that carries a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance companies that have access to the accident history of bungee jumping have deemed this activity high risk and dangerous.

**Hang Gliding, Parasailing, Zorbing, Parachuting/Skydiving, and Untethered Hot-Air Ballooning** are activities similar to bungee jumping in terms of safety regulations, consistency of facilitation, and insurance implications. These are activities that carry a significant risk of bodily injury. Insurance carriers with knowledge of these activities from a claims perspective view them as a high safety risk, meaning they see frequent and/or severe accidents associated with these sports.

**Privately Owned Aircraft.** Flying in privately owned aircraft is a very clear exclusion under GSUSA and GSME’s commercial general liability insurance policies. In the event of an incident involving an aircraft accident, GSME would be financially liable for potential liability and resulting lawsuits. Even with a specific non-owned aviation liability policy (if GSME purchases this type of policy, which it may not), a private plane is a separate and distinct insurable interest (compared to a professional chartered aircraft tour). In other words, even under non-owned aviation insurance, privately owned and/or operated planes are often excluded.

**Outdoor Trampolines.** Outdoor trampolines, particularly those with stilted metal frames, pose a high risk of injury. The activity can result in sprains and fractures in the arms or legs—as well



as potentially serious head and neck injuries. The risk of injury is high in the case of children that the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly discourages the use of trampolines at home. Outdoor trampoline park injuries also are an area of emerging concern. Indoor trampolines in a confined padded indoor facility with higher supervision are far safer, but still not recommend for children under six years old. See for reference: AAOS

**Paintball Tag.** Paintball tag is offered in specialized parks where participants shoot pellets of paint at each other throughout an obstacle course, woods, or maze. The pressure used in a paintball gun is quite strong. When hit by a paintball pellet, a girl is certain to experience some pain, swelling, and perhaps a bruise or welt for a couple of days. Shooting a girl with a paintball pellet is likely to cause a minor injury and has the potential to cause a more serious injury to eyes, mouth, ears, and throat. For these reasons, paintball tag is prohibited Target paintball shooting is permitted.

**Hunting.** Hunting is a sport that requires handling firearms in the wilderness, high maturity levels, and the availability of expert guides. Shooting accidents are not uncommon during hunting trips. This is also a sport which rarely, if ever, comes up as a requested activity.

**Jet Skis, Motor Bikes, ATVs, Snow Mobiles and Electric Scooters.** Jet skiing, motor biking, and riding snow mobiles, ATVs, and electronic scooters are prohibited due to the extremely high incidence of serious injury involved. Most insurance carriers are not comfortable with these activities due to poor accident history. Insurance companies require that an operator hold a valid driver's license. Adults and children riding on the back of motor bikes and jet skis as passengers are exposed to a high risk of serious injury with no active opportunity to actually learn the skill.

## Chartered Aircraft Trips and Aviation

**Small, chartered aircraft trips** require prior GSME approval for each and every trip. This activity is permitted *only with trip-specific GSME prior approval*. The safety factors involving chartered aircraft, equipment, and pilots are transparent and readily verifiable, unlike private aircraft. Confirm with GSME ahead of time that chartered aviation participation is covered under GSME's general liability policy or non-owned aviation liability insurance policy. Again, these policies will almost always exclude privately owned aircraft.

GSME will confirm that the aviation company has evidenced proper insurance showing at least \$1 million aviation liability insurance and \$5 million umbrella. It is strongly recommended that GSME consult with their insurance broker and/or GSUSA Risk & Insurance via [LShimborski@girlscouts.org](mailto:LShimborski@girlscouts.org) for assistance with vetting insurance issues and implications.

**Tethered Hot-Air Ballooning.** Some outdoor parks may offer the opportunity to learn the skill of hot-air ballooning in a relatively safe and controlled environment utilizing a tethered hot-air balloon. Consult GSME so they can check their general liability insurance or non-owned aviation liability policy to determine if this activity is covered. A hot-air balloon is an aircraft and viewed the same as small planes or helicopters from an aviation risk perspective. Therefore the same standard applies—professionally chartered and tethered hot air balloon rides will be considered, but private hot air balloons will not – private hot air balloons are not permitted.





## Other Actions Girls and Volunteers Should Not Take

For legal reasons, other activities are not permitted for girls and volunteers to participate in while representing Girl Scouts, in order to preserve the integrity of our organization. These include:

- Endorsement of commercial products or services
- Solicitation of financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting
- Participation in political campaigns or legislative activities, unless the legislative activity has been GSME-approved

## First Aid

### What to Do If There Is an Accident

Although you hope the worst never happens, you must observe GSME procedures for handling accidents and fatalities. At the scene of an accident, first provide all possible care for the injured person. Follow established GSME procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency. To do this, you must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of GSME staff, parents/guardians and emergency services such as the police, fire department or hospital. **After calling 911, in an emergency contact GSME at 207-722-1177 immediately.**

**For GSME specific emergency contact information,** please contact GSME directly for assistance. After receiving a report of an accident, GSME staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance at the scene, if needed, and will notify parents/guardians, as appropriate. If a Girl Scout needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services at 911 in the US or the local number if you are out of country, and then follow GSME procedures for accidents and incidents. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with regard to notifying parents or guardians. If the media is involved, let GSME-designated staff discuss the incident with media representatives.

**In the event of a fatality or other serious accident,** the police must be notified and a responsible volunteer must remain at the scene at all times. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings and do follow police instructions. Do not share information about the accident with anyone but the police, GSME, and, if applicable, insurance representatives or legal counsel.

### When Someone Needs Emergency Care

Girls need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting to volunteers any accidents, illnesses, or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities. You can help girls by keeping in mind the following:

- Know what to report.
- Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.
- Know the type of extreme weather to expect in your area (e.g. tornadoes, hurricanes and lightning). Please consult with GSME for the most relevant information for you to share with girls.
- Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons, and building-security issues. Every girl and adult volunteer must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and the girls, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.



- Assemble a well-stocked first-aid kit that is always accessible. First-aid administered in the first few minutes can make a significant difference in the severity of an injury. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911, and then administer first aid, if appropriately trained.

## First-Aid/CPR

For many activities, Girl Scouts recommends that at least one adult volunteer be first-aid/CPR-certified. For that reason, if you have the opportunity to get trained in GSME-approved first-aid/CPR, do it! You can take advantage of first-aid/CPR training offered by organizations such as:

- American Red Cross
- National Safety Council
- EMP America
- American Heart Association
- American Safety and Health Institute (ASHI)
- Medic
- Other sponsoring organizations approved by GSME.

As a partner of Girl Scouts, American Red Cross offers discounts on certification courses.

**Caution:** Internet first aid/CPR training that is offered online may be necessary due to COVID-19 restrictions. The skills check, at least, should be live and one instructor to one participant. Whenever in-person training is safely authorized in your jurisdiction, opt for in-person training for in-person opportunities to practice and receive feedback on life saving technique. If taking a course not offered by one of the organizations listed in the previous paragraph, or any course that has online components, get approval from GSME prior to enrolling in the course.

## First-Aider

**General First Aider.** A general first-aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout-approved first-aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for child CPR, as well as AED (Automated External Defibrillator) training. If, through the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or American Heart Association, you have a chance to be fully trained in first-aid and CPR, doing so may make your activity planning go a little more smoothly.

**Advanced First Aider.** An advanced first aider is an adult with general first aid certification with additional health, safety or emergency response expertise such as, for example, a physician; physician's assistant; nurse practitioner; registered nurse; licensed practical nurse; paramedic; military medic; wilderness training, certified lifeguard or emergency medical technician (EMT).

The Safety Activity Checkpoints always tell you when a first-aider needs to be present. Since activities can take place in a variety of locations, the presence of a first-aider and the qualifications they need to have are based on the remoteness and scope of the activity. For example, if you take a two-mile hike in an area that has cell phone reception and service along the entire route and EMS (Emergency Medical Services) is no more than 30 minutes away at all times the first-aider will not need to have knowledge of wilderness first aid. If, on the other hand, you take the same two-mile hike in a more remote area with no cell phone service and where EMS is more than 30 minutes away, the first-aider must have knowledge of wilderness first aid (see the chart below).

Access to EMS Minimum Level of First Aid Required	Level of First Aid Required
Less than 30 minutes	First Aid
More than 30 minutes	Advanced First Aid, Wilderness First Aid (WFA), or Wilderness First Responder (WFR)

*\*WFR is strongly recommended when traveling with groups in areas greater than 30 minutes from EMS.*



It is important to understand the differences between a first-aid course, and a wilderness rated course. Although standard first-aid training provides basic incident response, wilderness-rated courses include training on remote-assessment skills, as well as emergency first-aid response, including evacuation techniques, to use when EMS is not readily available.

**Note:** The presence of an *advanced first-aider* is required at resident camp. For large events—200 people or more—there should be, additional to regular first aider(s), *one advanced first-aider* for every 200 participants. The following healthcare providers may also serve as advanced first-aiders for large groups: physician; physician’s assistant; nurse practitioner; registered nurse; licensed practical nurse; paramedic; military medic; and emergency medical technician.

## First-Aid Kit

Make sure a [general first-aid kit](#) is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on every activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a commercial kit or you and the girls can assemble a kit yourselves. The Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its [Anatomy of a First Aid Kit](#) (note that the Red Cross’s suggested list includes aspirin, which you will not be at liberty to give to girls without direct parent/guardian permission). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs, including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites and the like.

In addition to standard materials, all kits should contain GSME and troop emergency telephone numbers. Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms, and health histories may also be included.

## Overall Health, Well Being, and Inclusivity

**Health History.** Girl Scout councils require an annual health history form to be completed and signed by one parent/guardian for every Girl Scout and filed with the troop leader.

**Follow GSME guidelines.** The form should reflect any significant medical condition, health issue, or allergy and be updated each year. The form can also reflect any over-the-counter medication that a girl is not permitted to take, if any.

**If parents send medication** on trips or activities, it should be in an original labeled container, and controlled and administered by one designated adult. Health history forms can be shared with the site or camp physician or nurse ahead of time.

### **Keep a current and signed health history form for each girl with you when traveling.**

You may require an updated mid-year health history for overnight trips. For physically demanding activities, such as water sports, horseback riding, or skiing, an additional current health history form may be obtained to make sure all adults are aware of any current medical conditions or special needs. Councils will retain all health history forms in accordance with state record retention requirements and laws.

**Health Exams.** GSME also requires a health exam for any activity that is three overnights or longer, which may include resident camp. Again, follow GSME guidelines with respect to health exams. In most cases, the health exam needs to have been completed within one year of the last date of the trip for a girl to participate. GSME requires a current health exam for adult volunteers who participate in trips of three nights or more. A health exam can be given by a licensed physician, a nurse practitioner, a physician’s assistant, or a registered nurse. The health exam form must be signed by the medical provider.



**For large events or trips longer in duration**, such as resident camp or a weeklong trip to a ranch, the designated health professional at the trip location is responsible for collecting all health exam forms and health history forms for girls and adults. Health exam forms and health history forms are to be shared only with designated health professionals and your local council staff responsible for coordinating them. All health and medical information is private (by law) and must not be shared or publicly available, so keep it safe and secure. Only share information on a need-to-know basis.

**Vaccination and Immunization.** Issues or questions with respect to vaccination exemption periodically arise with activity and trip participation. Vaccine exemption laws vary by state and focus on public and private school attendance more directly than they do for youth organizations. Therefore, it is best to obtain local state legal guidance and proceed in accordance with the state law as it applies to school attendance. A general overview of state laws regarding school immunization exemption is provided and annually updated on the [National Conference of State Legislatures website](#).

If you have any questions about your obligation to communicate a girl's non-immunization with other troop parents, contact GSME [Customer Care](#) for legal guidance as privacy laws may apply. Absent state laws that speak directly to vaccines and communicating non-immunization with parents of youth groups, the guidance is to follow the standard and protocol as it pertains to school attendance.

**The COVID-19 vaccine** is not expected to become available for children until late 2021. GSUSA is strongly encouraging adult volunteers who are able, and who qualify in their home state, to receive the vaccine but it is not a requirement to participate in Girl Scouts.

**Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Lyme Disease Prevention.** Mosquitoes, ticks, and insect bites are an inherent risk to any warm weather outdoor activity. Ensure parents and guardians are aware of the need to have their girls properly covered, with closed shoes and light-colored clothing and socks. It is important to advise parents, guardians, and girls of this risk and the safety precautions they should take. The understanding that your troop or council cannot be held responsible for tick bites can be reinforced with a waiver reference on a permission slip. An excellent resource for learning more is the [Tick and Lyme disease prevention section of Up To Date](#).

To learn more about using insect repellent safely, visit the Environmental Protection Agency website at [EPA Using Repellents Safely](#). To learn more about safely using DEET directly on the skin and on children, check out [EPA DEET](#). And for more on skin-applied and clothing-only repellent education, review [EPA Insect Repellents](#).

**Emotional Safety.** Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouts a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect the emotional safety of girls by creating a team-agreement and by coaching girls to honor this agreement. Team agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting diverse feelings and opinions, resolving conflicts constructively, avoiding physical and verbal bullying or clique behavior, practicing fairness, and showing positive, respectful and helpful communication with others.

**Physical or Sexual Abuse.** Physical, verbal, or sexual abuse of girls is forbidden. Sexual pressure, sexual advances, improper touching, sexual communication such as text messaging and sexual activity of any kind with girl members is not tolerated. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify the appropriate council staff immediately. Volunteers are responsible for following GSME's guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around physical, verbal, or sexual abuse with respect to girls.





**Child Abuse.** All states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have specific laws which identify persons who are required to report suspected child abuse to an appropriate agency. Therefore, if you witness or suspect child abuse or neglect, whether inside or outside of Girl Scouting, always notify GSME immediately and follow GSME's guidelines for reporting your concerns to the proper agency within your state. In Maine, Girl Scout Volunteers are considered mandatory reporters. If you need help making a report, please contact Customer Care to talk to a staff member for support.

For additional information please check the following resources:

- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: [Child Welfare](#)
- How to Report Suspected Child Maltreatment: [Reporting Abuse](#)
- Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect: [Mandatory Reporters](#)
- 

**Mental Health and Safety.** As an adult volunteer overseeing the activities and behaviors of young girls, and similar to child abuse, you may witness other signs of harmful tendencies such as self-harm. Self-harm can take a physical form such as cutting, burning, bruising, excessive scratching, hair pulling, poisoning or drug use. Other tendencies of self-harm are suicidal ideations that can be expressed verbally or with the written word. Another harmful expression involves harm to others which can be detected verbally or with physical aggression. If a situation of this nature is observed or comes to your attention in any form, always notify an appropriate council staff member immediately and follow GSME guidelines with respect to next steps.

**Equity.** Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

In addition to physical and social-emotional disabilities consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the girls in your troop that could affect a girl's ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with girls and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all girls and their families feel comfortable that they have access to whatever is needed to fully participate such as the proper equipment, prior experiences and skills needed to enjoy the activity.

**Including Girls with Disabilities.** Girl Scouts is committed to making reasonable accommodations for any physical or cognitive limitations a girl may have. Communicate with girls of all abilities and/or their caregivers to assess special needs and accommodations. To learn more about the resources available, visit [Disabled World](#). Whenever possible, the individual activity checkpoint will provide resources specific to that sport or activity, so always check when planning to include a girl with a disability. *Our goal is to include all girls with a desire to participate.*



## Troop Meeting Space

**Always choose a safe meeting space.** Careful considerations should be used to find appropriate facilities for the age of the girls to be served and the activities to be conducted. A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all girls. You might consider using meeting rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places girls enjoy spending time.

**Please refer to the COVID-19 guidelines** on our GSME [Resources page](#) for most current guidelines. These will supersede “normal” guidelines.

- Here are a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations:
- **Accessibility:** Be sure the space can accommodate girls with disabilities, as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.
- **Allergen-free:** Ensure that pet dander, smoke, and other common allergens won't bother susceptible girls during meetings.
- **Availability:** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.
- **Communication-friendly:** Be sure your cell phone works in the meeting space or there is a land line for emergencies. Internet accessibility is also helpful.
- **Cost:** The space should be free to use. However, you may wish to develop a partnership to provide service or offer a donation toward maintenance or utilities.
- **Facilities:** Sanitary and accessible toilets are critical.
- **Resources:** Determine what types of furnishings come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby or closet of some sort, where you can store supplies.
- **Safety:** Ensure that the space is safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and has at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure a first-aid equipment, smoke detectors and fire extinguisher are on hand.
- **Size:** Make sure the space is large enough accommodate the whole group and all planned activities.

**Can we meet in a private home?** It is not recommended to hold troop meetings in a private home. If you are considering meeting in a private home, please contact your local Volunteer Support Specialist to discuss. In addition, please remember to ensure these standards:

- The private home must be the home of registered, council approved Volunteer.
- Girls may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender lives.
- Some councils may require membership and background checks for all adults living in the home.
- The troop needs to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members.
- Animals should be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space.
- Weapons must be out of view and in a locked space. Medication, cleaning products, or any poisonous substance must be stored in a secure space out of sight, preferably locked.
- Homeowners should consider any personal insurance implications. The Homeowner should ask their personal Homeowner's insurance carrier if there are any insurance concerns with troop meetings at the home. Also, volunteers should understand that troop meetings in the home **are not covered** by council's liability insurance carrier.



# Transporting Girls

How parents decide to transport girls between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent's individual decision and responsibility.

**For planned Girl Scout field trips** and other activities (outside the normal meeting time and place) in which a group will be transported in private vehicles keep in mind the following:

- Every driver must be an approved volunteer at least 21 years old, and have a good driving record, a valid license and a registered/insured vehicle.
- Girls never drive other girls.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers in the vehicle, one of whom is female. In addition, the girl-volunteer ratios in the "Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need" section must be followed.
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in the "Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need" section must be followed. Care should be taken so that a single car is not separated from the group for an extended length of time.

## **Plan for safe driving:**

Review and implement the standards in the Checklist for Drivers, below.

- Share the Checklist for Drivers with all drivers, in advance.
- Build possible delays into your schedule. Allowing time for traffic or other delays will help prevent urgency and stress, which can be dangerous when driving.
- Provide directions for each vehicle.
- For driving trips of more than a few hours, plan a stop where all cars can gather up. This will avoid having drivers follow too closely or worry about being separated from the group.
- Anticipate stops every couple of hours, for drivers to rest and refresh. Let drivers know they can stop more often, if needed.
- Arrange for relief drivers if trips will last 6 hours or more.
- In each vehicle, there should be a first aid kit, and the permission and health history forms for each person in that car.

**When borrowing or renting vehicles**, drivers may rent cars or minivans in their own names, without council staff signature. Make sure the car is adequately insured; consult the driver's auto insurance company. Know who is responsible for damage to, or loss of, the vehicle. Be sure the vehicle is used only for Girl Scout purposes, as non-related use can compromise coverage. Please complete the [Vehicle Rental Agreement](#) found on the Girl Scouts of Maine website for approval three weeks prior to your trip.

Read rental agreements to be familiar with the terms of the agreement, to be sure you comply with their terms and avoid surprises. For example, in many cases the minimum age of drivers is 25, and the maximum age is often under 70.

**Chartered vehicles**—such as buses—are contracted, usually with the driver or operator, for a group's exclusive use. Volunteers may not sign contracts for charters, even if there is no cost.

**Contact GSME at [customercare@gsmaine.org](mailto:customercare@gsmaine.org) to request approval and signature.**

**Taxis and ride-sharing services**, including Uber and Lyft, may be used with these guidelines:

- An adult ride in each vehicle with girls when multiple vehicles are being used.
- Wait for your ride in a safe place. For taxis, when possible, call (or ask your hotel to call), rather than hailing from the street. Use a taxi stand at airports. Stand away from traffic while waiting.



- For taxis: Check that the taxi is appropriately marked.
- For ride-sharing services:
  - ◆ Check that the vehicle’s license plate, make and model match what is shown in the app.
  - ◆ Compare the app’s photo with the driver. Ask for their name and be sure it matches the app.
  - ◆ Ask, “who are you here to pick up?” They should have your first name, but not other info about you.
- If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, do not get in the vehicle. If you become uncomfortable, end the ride. Report your experience to the taxi service or ride-sharing app.
- Send your in-town contact the name of the driver and your destination. Most apps have a sharing feature for this purpose.
- Don’t share information about the group or where you are staying to any stranger.
- Each passenger must wear a seat belt. Enter and exit curbside.
- In foreign countries, consult a local expert about calling for taxis or rides. Reputable practices vary.

**Recreational vehicles, campers, and trailers**—whether privately-owned or rented--may be used if the driver has the appropriate training and license for the vehicle. Passengers must use seat belts when the vehicle is in motion and may not ride in a trailer or in the bed of a truck.

**Vans up to 12 passengers** may be driven if:

- The van was built in 2013 or later
- Insurance is valid. Check with the auto insurance company to confirm.
- All other safety measures are in place; see the Checklist for Drivers, below.
- No gear is loaded on top or in the back of the van.
- The driver has the appropriate license in the state(s) where the van will be driven. This type of van may need a commercial driver’s license.

**Commercial and common-carrier transportation** is available to the general public. They include buses, trains, airlines, ferries, and similar modes of transportation. In the United States, these are regulated and can be considered safe. Girls can compare fares and schedules and make decisions with adult support.

**When traveling internationally**, consider the transportation options available in the host country and determine safety and accessibility specific to the location.

***Please keep in mind the following non-negotiable points regarding private transportation:***

- Even though written agreements are always required when renting or chartering, you are not authorized to sign an agreement or contract, except for rental car agreements, even if there is no cost associated with the rental. Such agreements must instead be signed by the GSME Program Department.
- Check with GSME to make sure you are following accepted practices when using private transportation. This ensures that both you and GSME are protected by liability insurance in the event of an accident.
- Once you have permission to use a rented car, read all rental agreements to be sure you comply with their terms and avoid surprises. For example, in many cases the minimum age of drivers is 25, and the maximum age is often under 70. In addition, make sure the car is adequately insured and you know who is responsible for damage to, or loss of, the vehicle.
- Obtain parent/guardian permission for any use of transportation outside of the meeting place.
- Finally, ensure you have a good paper trail that shows the vehicle rental is Girl Scout–related.





## Checklist for Drivers

When driving a car, RV, or camper, take the following precautions and ask all other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all drivers are volunteers at least 21 years old
- Girls should not be transporting other girls.
- Never transport girls in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper- trailer.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first-aid kit and a flashlight.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns and fluid levels before each trip, and recheck them periodically on long trips.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date including, but not limited to: your driver's license; vehicle registration; any state or local inspections; and insurance coverage.
- Wear your seat belt at all times, and insist that all passengers do the same. Girls under 12 must ride in the back seats.
- Follow best driving practices and all the established rules of the road in your state, including the speed limit. Some additional guidelines include:
  - keeping a two-car-length distance between you and the car ahead of you;
  - not talking or texting while driving;
  - not using ear buds or headphones while driving; and
  - turning your lights on when your windshield wipers are on
- Plan rest stops every few hours and avoid driving for extended periods at night. If traveling with others, prearrange stopping places along the way. When planning longer trips, arrange for relief drivers.
- Do NOT drive when you are tired or taking medication that makes you drowsy.
- Check with GSME for any other specific guidelines or requirements we have.

**Please print a copy of this list for each driver.**



## Activities at a Glance

Activities in Girl Scouting require consideration by the safe and caring adult who guides the girls through the planning of each activity. Noting the abilities of each girl and considering the progression of skills it takes from the easiest to the most difficult part of the activity is the role of the adult. Making sure the complexity of the activities does not exceed girls' individual skills is the reason why the Safety Activities Checkpoints are based on progressive experience.

Certain Activities have been rated by Girl Scouts' national insurance company as high risk. High risk activities are those that, if practiced unsafely or in an unsafe environment, could cause serious injury or death to a participant, could require crisis communication if an injury occurs, or if not handled appropriately, could negatively impact the Girl Scout reputation or brand. High risk activities require GSME prior approval. GSME can provide approval for an activity in a manner that does not require approval every single time the troop practices an activity. However, a **volunteer must confirm** that the activity is approved by GSME prior to taking girls whenever "Required" is indicated.

As you explore the many options to engage girls in exciting activities, you will notice that there are recommendations for some activities to start at an older grade level. These recommendations have taken into consideration the emotional, physical, and developmental stages of girls and should guide you as you plan activities with the girls. Please reach out to GSME if you have specific questions about the progression. Guidelines may differ from state to state. The ultimate goal is for girls to feel confident and comfortable with each planned activity.

Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	High Risk	Council Approval Required	Required Instructor Certifications; Experience; Verification
Aerial Fitness	*	*	*	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Includes silks, hoops and trapeze. Follow the adult to-girl-ratios listed in the introduction. Verify instructor experience and credentials.
Amusement Parks	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.
Animal Interaction and Adventure	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction
Backpacking	*	*	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Backpacking is not recommended for Daisies and Brownies, due to weight restrictions on their small frames, and the need when backpacking to be able to carry all their supplies needed to camp. *(FOR DAISIES AND BROWNIES-REFER TO HIKING)
Bicycling	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.



Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	High Risk	Council Approval Required	Required Instructor Certifications; Experience; Verification
Camping	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Ensure that at least one adult is trained for camping as required by GSME. In addition, follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.
<b>Climbing and Adventure</b>									
Challenge Courses	*D	*B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Instructor trained and certified by a verified agency who demonstrates competence in equipment maintenance, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training. In addition, follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction. *Daisies and Brownies may participate only in activities that have been designed for their grade levels and that have equipment that suit the size and ability of each girl. Outdoor high ropes and high elements are only permitted for Juniors and older.
Climbing and Rappelling	*D	*B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	A minimum of one facilitator and an additional adult are present, and facilitators are skilled in selecting appropriate activities, teaching and supervising spotting and lowering techniques, and modifying tasks to meet girls' needs. In addition, follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction. *Daisies and Brownies are limited in what is permitted, so please check the master chart. Daisies and Brownies can do slacklining and low challenge elements. Outdoor high ropes, high elements, and rappelling are only permitted for Juniors and older. *Brownies can participate in most indoor climbing activities.
Recreational Tree Climbing			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	A certified instructor with documented experience in leading and teaching tree climbing is required. In addition, follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction. In recreational tree climbing, girls use ropes, harnesses, saddles, and climbing techniques to ascend into the crowns of trees.
Zip Lining		*B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Not permitted for Daisies, except for playground zip lines. *Canopy tours are not permitted for Daisies or Brownies.



Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	High Risk	Council Approval Required	Required Instructor Certifications; Experience; Verification
<b>Needs Title???</b>									
Community Clean-Up	D	B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Check grade permission levels for the individual type of projects outlined in this activity chapter, for example, beachfront, parks, and roadside.
Computer & Internet Use	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	All girls, as well as their parents/guardians, must read, agree to, and abide by the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge when going online.
Internet Safety Pledge	D	B	J	C	S	A		N/A	All girls take the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge.
Virtual Troop Meetings	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Use GSME-approved video conferencing services. Always follow the safety checkpoints for virtual meeting.
Cookie & Product Sales	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Adults must accompany Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors when they are selling, taking orders, and delivering.
Cross-Country Skiing	*D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	First-aider has a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, and is prepared to handle cases of frostbite, cold exposure, hypothermia, sprains, fractures, and altitude sickness. Not recommended for Daisies due to complexity and strength.
Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding	D	B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Instructors are certified by the Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) and the American Association of Snowboard Instructors (AASI) or possess equivalent certification.
Fencing	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult is a certified fencing instructor or has equivalent certification or documented experience according to GSME's guidelines. Ensure that there is a ratio of one instructor for every ten girls. Additional adults must be present to meet the adult-to-girl ratios.
Fishing and Ice Fishing	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Adult or fishing instructor holds American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience (competencies); the ratio of instructor to participant is one to ten. Additional adults must be present to meet the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.
Geocaching	*D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	*Daisies are permitted when working with older girls and adults as part of another outdoor activity.
Go-Karts			*J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Juniors can't operate self-driving go-karts and must participate in activities on a rail system.
Hayrides	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Qualified driver who is licensed to drive a vehicle in the jurisdiction, is at least 21 years of age, and has experience hauling the trailer and driving the vehicle being used. Additional adults must be present to meet the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.





Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	High Risk	Council Approval Required	Required Instructor Certifications; Experience; Verification
Hiking	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Adults must be present to meet the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the Introduction.
Horseback Riding	*D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Riding instructors are adults (at least 18 years old) who have current certification from an accredited horsemanship instructor training organization, such as the Certified Horsemanship Association and American Association for Horsemanship Safety, or documented proof of a minimum of three years' experience successfully instructing in a general horseback riding program. Additional adults must be present to meet the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction. *Daisies are only permitted on pony rides and hand-led horseback walks.
Ice Skating & Roller Skating	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Adults must be present to meet the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction. Council approval required.
Indoor Skydiving			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Instructor holds instructional certification from the International Bodyflight Association or documented experience & skill in teaching and/or supervising indoor skydiving.
Indoor Trampoline		B		C	S	A		Not Required	Adults must be present to meet the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.
<b>Inflatables</b>									
Aquatic Bounces & Slides		B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Aquatic bouncy houses and inflatable bounce bubbles and slides are approved for Brownies and above.
Aquatic Climbing Walls			J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Aquatic climbing walls are not permitted for Daisies and Brownies. Juniors and above may participate in aquatic climbing walls as long as they are strong swimmers and can swim in water deeper than five feet.
Bounce Houses	*D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	*Daisies can only participate in bounce houses specific for their age, height, and/or weight.
Log Rolling		B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Log rolling is not permitted for Daisies.
Bubble Soccer			J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Bubble soccer is not permitted for Daisies and Brownies.



Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	High Risk	Council Approval Required	Required Instructor Certifications; Experience; Verification
<b>Needs Title???</b>									
Land Sports (See Miscellaneous)	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Ensure that adults are well versed in rules and aware of safety concerns for the designated sport.
Laser Tag (See Miscellaneous)	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Verify vendor is licensed and carries insurance.
Offshore Water/Large Passenger Vessels	D	B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Vessels (ferries, cruise ships, whale-watching craft, & airboats) must be licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard. Follow adult-to-girl ratios in the introduction.
Orienteering			J	C	S	A		Not Required	Orienteering is not recommended for Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies, but they may be ready to learn pre-orienteering activities such as map reading, navigation, and map-drawing. Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the Introduction.
Outdoor Cooking	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	<b>Ensure that at least one adult is trained for outdoor cooking as required by GSME.</b> Always adhere to adult-to-girl ratios in the introduction.
<b>Paddle Sports</b>									
Canoeing	*D	B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow Master Paddling Chart for certification by water type. At least one adult instructor or guide is currently certified by the American Canoe Association, the American Red Cross, or other sponsoring organization approved by GSME. <b>Certifications must be appropriate</b> for the activity. Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the Introduction. <i>*Daisies must have an experienced adult in each canoe on flat water.</i>
Corcl Boats		B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Lifeguards have current certification in American Red Cross (ARC) Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module or equivalent and have the proper training, experience, and rescue equipment for the body of water being used. Follow the adult-to girl ratios listed in the introduction.
Kayaking			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow Master Paddling Chart for certification by water type. At least one adult instructor or guide is currently certified by the American Canoe Association, the American Red Cross, or other sponsoring organization approved by GSME. <b>Certifications must be appropriate</b> for the activity. Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.
Row Boating	*D		J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	*Daisies may use basic row boats only if they have an adult in the boat with them. Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.



Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	High Risk	Council Approval Required	Required Instructor Certifications; Experience; Verification
Standup Paddle Boarding			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Lifeguards have current certification in American Red Cross (ARC) Lifeguarding with Waterfront module or equivalent and have the proper training, experience, and rescue equipment for the appropriate body of water. Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the Introduction.
Whitewater Rafting		*B	**J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow Master Paddling Chart for certification by water type. *Brownies (Class I–II rapids only), **Juniors (Class I–III rapids only), Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors (Class I–IV rapids only). No Girl Scout is permitted on Class V or VI rapids. Guides have American Canoe Association (ACA) Rafting Level 4 Instructor or higher certification, and/or International Rafting Federation (IRF) Guide certification. In addition, follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.
<b>Needs Title???</b>									
Parades & Other Large Group Gatherings	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.
Pocket Knife and Jackknife Safety	*D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	See individual activity chapter for all instructor requirements and grade level recommendations. Daisies can learn pocketknife and jackknife safety with cardboard or wood examples.
Rocketry / Model Rocketry			J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Daisies and Brownies are not quite ready to participate in model rocketry as defined in this activity. Daisies and Brownies can participate in simple science experiments like air powered drinking straw rockets, balloon rockets, stomp rockets or water powered bicycle pump rockets. Daisies and Brownies may observe model rocket launches at a safe distance.
Sailing		B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Ensure that the adult or sailing instructor is certified as a sailing instructor or sailing counselor by U.S. Sailing, holds American Red Cross Small Craft Safety Certification, or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience according to GSME's guidelines. The instructor-to-girl ratio is 1 to 4. In addition, follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction. *Ensure Brownie maturity level for sailing.
Scuba Diving				C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Scuba diving teacher holds instructional certification from Scuba Schools International (SSI), PADI, the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), or the YMCA. The instructor-to-girl ratio is one to four. In addition, follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.



Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	High Risk	Council Approval Required	Required Instructor Certifications; Experience; Verification
Segway (See Misc.)				C	S	A		Not Required	Vendor must be licensed and carry insurance. Segways are only allowed to be used in a pedestrian environment, not on public roads.
Skateboarding (See Misc.)		B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Skate parks should only be used by non-beginner skaters. Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.
Sledding, Tobogganing, and Snow Tubing	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction. Girls must go feet-first and helmets are strongly recommended. Girls are not permitted to be towed behind any vehicle, including snowmobiles.
Snorkeling			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Snorkeling instructor holds instructional certification from Scuba Schools International (SSI) or the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) or has equivalent certification. If the scuba instructor is not also a certified lifeguard, you will need a lifeguard present. Lifeguards need current ARC Lifeguarding plus Waterfront Module, or YMCA Waterfront Lifeguarding certification or equivalent. One lifeguard is needed for every 25 girls. In addition, follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the Swimming Checkpoint.
Snowshoeing	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Instruction is given by an adult with experience teaching and/or supervising snowshoeing or has documented experience.
Spelunking/Caving			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	A guide with documented experience in cave exploration accompanies the group into the cave.
STEM, Arts, Crafts (See Misc.)	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.
Surfing			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Instructors should hold a certification from the National Surf Schools and Instructors Association, the International Surfing Association, or similar certification. Ocean lifeguard certifications are required. The instructor-to-girl ratio is one to four. In addition, follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the Swimming Checkpoint.
Swimming	D	B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow the lifeguard certification requirements and ratios listed in the Swimming Checkpoint.
<b>Target Sports</b>									
3-D Archery			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult instructor is certified by the National Field Archery Association, USA Archery, or Easton Foundation. In addition, one adult instructor to every ten Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.





Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	High Risk	Council Approval Required	Required Instructor Certifications; Experience; Verification
Air/BB Guns Water		B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult instructor is a certified National Rifle Association range safety officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor. In addition, one adult to every five Brownies and one adult instructor to every ten Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Archery		B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult instructor has certification from the National Field Archery Association, USA Archery, or Easton Foundation. In addition, one adult instructor to every five Brownies and one to every ten Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Ax/Hatchet Throwing				C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult instructor trained in hatchet/ax throwing safety, form and technique, range rules, and emergency procedures. In addition, one adult to every two Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Knife Throwing				C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult instructor trained in knife throwing safety, form and technique, range rules, and emergency procedures. In addition, 1 adult instructor to every 2 Cadettes/Seniors/Ambassadors is required.
Muzzle Loading				*C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Girls must be 12 years or older to participate. One adult instructor is a certified National Rifle Association range safety officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor. In addition, one adult instructor to every two Cadettes, Seniors, & Ambassadors is required.
Pistol					*S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Girls must be 14 years or older to participate. One adult instructor is a certified National Rifle Association range safety officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor. In addition, one adult instructor to every four Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Rifle				*C		A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Girls must be 12 years or older to participate. One adult instructor is a certified National Rifle Association range safety officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor. In addition, one adult instructor to every eight Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Shotgun— Trap/Skeet Shooting				*C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Girls must be 12 years old or older to participate. One adult instructor is a certified National Rifle Association range safety officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor. In addition, one adult instructor to every eight Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.



Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	High Risk	Council Approval Required	Required Instructor Certifications; Experience; Verification
Slingshot	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult instructor trained in slingshot safety, form, and technique, range rules, and emergency procedures. In addition, one adult to every five Daisies and Brownies and one adult to every ten Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Target Paintball		B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult instructor is trained in paintball safety, range rules, and emergency procedures. In addition, one adult to every five Brownies and one adult to every ten Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Tethered Balloon Rides			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Ensure operators have liability insurance and are licensed through the Federal Aviation Administration. Pilots must be currently licensed. In addition, follow adult-to-girl ratios listed in the intro.
Tools – Hand and Power	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	See the specific activity for grade level permission and progression. Certain power tools are not permitted for any grade levels.
Travel/Trips	D	B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	See Checkpoint for grade-level trip and travel length recommendations. Follow adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.
Tubing			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult must be certified in American Red Cross Small Craft Safety and the Moving Water module from the American Red Cross and have experience teaching and/or supervising tubing activities. If tubing behind a motorboat, make sure the driver is an adult and has a valid license to operate the motorboat. Girls are not permitted to be towed by jet skis or wave runners. Follow the lifeguard certification requirements and ratios listed in the Swimming Checkpoint.
Waterskiing and Wakeboarding			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Ensure that the adult or instructor is certified by USA Water Ski or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience according to GSME's guidelines. Confirm that the boat driver is an adult, has an appropriate license, and is skilled in operating the watercraft. Follow the lifeguard certification requirements and ratios listed in the Swimming Checkpoint.
Windsurfing/Sail Boarding			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	In addition to a lifeguard, at least one adult present should have small craft safety certification or equivalent experience. Follow the lifeguard certification requirements and ratios listed in the Swimming Checkpoint





# Girl Scouts of Maine 2020-2021 Volunteer Handbook

## Troop Banking and Finance Guidelines





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# Financial Policies



The Council abides by the policies and standards of Girl Scouts of the USA and complies with applicable IRS requirements.

**Every Troop is required to have a bank account.** The account must be established under the Council's federal tax ID. All bank accounts require a minimum of two unrelated adult signers who are currently registered members of Girl Scouts and have successfully completed the required background check.

All money collected, or earned, in the name of Girl Scouts must be deposited in the established bank account and thereafter used for the purpose of providing the Girl Scout Experience to girls in the troop.

All signers are responsible for safeguarding and maintaining sufficient funds to cover payments drawn on the account. As with any bank account, signers are legally responsible for all account transactions.

Volunteers who misuse or misappropriate funds will be released from Girl Scout Volunteer positions. The Council may file criminal and/or civil charges.

The Council allows up to two (2) debit cards for each account to be utilized for troop purchases. The Council prohibits troops and service units from applying for credit cards or utilizing PayPal, Venmo, Zelle, Apple Pay, and Google Pay accounts are acceptable.

Security of troop funds is necessary to safeguard troop assets. The bank account should be reconciled regularly, preferably monthly. It is best practice to have one signer use the checkbook and a different signer receive bank statements for review and reconciliation. Both signers should review the bank statement together. Authorized signers must have access to the bank account records. All bank statements, financial records and receipts should be kept for a minimum of three years.

Note: Troops may not solicit cash donations, if your troop receives a donation for more than \$200, send the donation with a note to the resource development department at GSME so that a letter of acknowledgement and tax receipt note can be sent to the donor. If the donation is less than \$200, have the troop send a thank you note to the donor. Please refer to the money earning section of Volunteer Essentials for more information regarding donations.

Annual Troop Finance Reports must be submitted to the Council through the VTK. This report is a summary of the troop's financial activity throughout the year and should be shared with girls and parents/guardians upon completion, please let parents know that they can log into the VTK to see your report.

When a troop disbands, leaders must close the troop account and send any remaining funds to GSME to be distributed back to the service unit or to any girls continuing as Juliettes or in a different troop.



# Opening a Troop Bank Account



## GSME Bank Account Procedures

- All troop funds must be deposited in a bank. Accounts may be either savings or checking.
- Troop funds must never be combined with personal funds. Do not help the girls by lending them money.
- All troop bank accounts must be opened in the name of: Girl Scouts of Maine Troop #\_\_\_\_\_
- The troop bank account must be opened using Girl Scouts of Maine's employer tax identification number: 01-0269802.
- Debit cards are permissible and require the same documentation and receipts as other expenses.
- Two unrelated registered signers are required on the troop bank account.

\*Misuse of troop funds may be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

## GSME Preferred Banks

The unique structure of Girl Scout banking, coupled with a continually changing banking environment have made it necessary for Girl Scouts of Maine to work with preferred banks, our preferred banks are as follows:

Bangor Savings Bank  
Bath Savings Bank  
Camden National Bank  
First National Bank  
Gorham Savings Bank  
Katahdin Trust  
Kennebunk Savings Bank  
Key Bank  
Machias Savings Bank  
Norway Savings Bank  
Peoples United  
Saco and Biddeford Savings Institution

Bank accounts are to be established with the banks listed above. Using preferred banks ensures that troop accounts are set up consistently.



## Start the Process

1. Each signer must be a registered adult volunteer and have a current membership with GSUSA.
2. Staff of the Council are not authorized to be signers on a troop or service unit account.
3. Each signer must have a current approved background check on file with the Council.
4. The troop must reach out to Customer Care to let us know: What bank you will be using, which branch you will be opening your account at, and who your two signers will be.
5. Volunteer Support will review your bank information and send out a troop bank letter to the two signers to bring to the bank when you open your account.
6. When the account has been opened the troop leaders must complete and sign a bank information form and send it to GSME.

NOTE: GSME will fund each new troop account with \$25 which will be direct deposited into the troop account when the bank information form is received and approved by GSME.

## Debit Cards and Statements

The troop may obtain debit cards to be used for deposits and payments. GSME authorizes a maximum of two (2) debit cards per troop. The debit cards will be in the name of two of the signers on the account. Please request that the bank mail copies of monthly statements to one signer monthly. Both signers should review the statement each month to ensure appropriate spending of troop funds. Any concerns about misuse of troop funds should be immediately brought to the attention of Girl Scouts of Maine. Please contact your Volunteer Support Specialist.

## Ordering Checks

While troops are not required to have checks, they may be convenient for conducting troop business, including reimbursing volunteers.

## Fund Management

Troop funds are for the benefit of all girls in the troop and should be spent in the year the funds are earned, unless the troop has a long-range plan for spending the funds. It is important to note that the funds belong to the troop as a whole. Per IRS guidelines for charitable organizations, troops are prohibited from keeping separate individual girl accounts. All funds expended should benefit all girls in the troop.

All money received from parents or cookie customers should be deposited as soon as possible and should never be held in a personal checking account. For security reasons, we do not recommend keeping cash in a house or vehicle. It is critical that all authorized signers are in communication with the other signers before spending funds to prevent overdrafts on the account.

Cash withdrawals should only be made if absolutely necessary – i.e. cookie booth change, tips for taxis or hotel services. Be sure to keep receipts in these instances proving the funds withdrawn were spent for troop purposes. GSME recommends keeping your ATM receipt and purchase receipt together and writing the purpose and amount of the ATM withdrawal on the ATM receipt.

Each account signer should make sure that there are funds in the account to cover the amount of the transaction before writing a check or making a purchase with the troop debit card. All expenses should be paid for by troop check/debit card. Blank checks should never be pre-signed and debit cards should not be used by anyone other than the person they are issued to. If there is an instance where a signer paid out of pocket for troop supplies and needs to be reimbursed using troop funds, those reimbursements should be approved and authorized by a signer other than the payee. Receipts are required for reimbursement. Issue a check to the individual being reimbursed.



## Paying for Product Program

GSME will initiate an electronic transfer from the troop's bank account to pay the Council for product program transactions (i.e. Cookie and Fall programs). It is important that adequate funds are available. The specific dates that GSME will draft the troop accounts are included in product sales calendars and training materials and the troop will receive reminder communications during the sale.

## Accepting Check Payments

A troop can choose to accept checks as a form of payment from customers and parents. If a troop accepts checks as a form of payment, the troop may receive a check that is returned because of insufficient funds. Best practice would be to have a phone number for checks \$20 or more.

### For product sales program

As part of the product sales program, girls in troops receive the majority of payments from their customers by check. Because GSME encourages this practice and asks that troops deposit these funds to their troop account, we will manage collection of any returned checks for the product sales program on your behalf. More specific guidelines are provided in GSME's product program documents received at your product program trainings about what to do if you have a check returned to you for the product programs.

### For national membership dues

As part of the process of registering girls in a troop, you may, from time to time, receive a check payment from a parent for membership dues. In the event that a check for membership dues is returned to the troop, we will manage collection of these returned checks on your behalf. Submit the original information received from your bank about the returned check (copy of the check, statement showing any fees charged, etc) to:

**GSME**  
ATTN: Finance Associate  
138 Gannett Drive  
South Portland, ME 04106

We will send a check payable to your troop for the full amount of the check and the amount charged by your bank so that your troop does not suffer a loss accepting payments on behalf of GSME.

Retain copies of all information sent to GSME in the unfortunate event that your documents get lost in the mail....it can and does happen.

### All other checks

Accepting checks for any other reason than product program or national dues is at the troop's own risk.

### Tips for Collecting NSF Checks

**Step 1:** Immediately notify the payer to request re-payment as quickly as possible. It is sometimes best to request a cash payment or cashier's check.

**Step 2:** If you are redepositing an NSF check, first contact the payor's bank to ensure funds are available to cover the amount of the check.

**Step 3:** If funds are not available, send a letter to the payer requesting payment. A fee can be charged to the payee to cover bank service charges on the troop account. The fee should be the same amount charged on the troop bank statement.





# Budget and Record Keeping



Each troop should collaborate in the preparation of an annual budget at the start of the program year. Girls should be included in this process, in an age appropriate manner, to enhance their financial literacy skills.

## Questions to consider:

- What types of activities will be planned?
- What are the costs associated with these activities?
- How will the troop fund these activities?
- Will money earning activities be required?
- What are your goals for the cookie and fall sale?

Troops may need to create multi-year budget plans for costlier travel trips.

Troops may agree to charge members of the troop a nominal dues amount to support Girl Scout troop activities. This amount should be carefully thought out by the leaders and communicated and agreed upon with the parents and guardians.

All disbursements and deposits should be recorded in a checkbook, electronic spreadsheet or personal banking software. The bank statement should be reconciled to these records monthly. Financial checks and balances should be in place to help prevent misuse of troop funds. A person other than the one preparing the bank reconciliation should also review the reconciliation each month. Best practices provide that separate individuals manage the account and receive the bank statements.

There must be a clear separation of personal and troop funds. No personal expenses should be paid from the troop account and no troop money should be deposited in personal bank accounts. Signers are responsible for any fees or charges for overdrawing the Troop account.

All cash payments should be receipted. A written receipt must be provided to the parents, guardians or other volunteers.

Under no circumstances should a check be written to and signed by the same person.

A file should be maintained with bank statements, all cookie records, and records supporting all financial transactions for at least three (3) years after the end of the program year. Troop financial records should be shared with and made available to girls and guardians throughout the year to maintain transparency.



# Changing Signers



Troops must follow GSME's process for changing troop account signers. The troop leader should notify their Volunteer Support Specialist of changes on troop accounts in order to have a new bank letter issued. When changes are made to troop accounts a new bank information form needs to be submitted to GSME.

Each signer must have a current background check as well as a current Girl Scout membership.

**IMPORTANT** - The leader should collect and destroy debit cards/checks from any person(s) who are no longer involved with the troop or act as signers on the account and/or request that the bank discontinue access to the card.

# Annual Reporting



Troops are required to submit the Annual Troop Finance Report directly to GSME using the Volunteer Toolkit. The report is on the "Finance" tab of the Volunteer Toolkit, and accessible by Troop Leaders. The annual report covers financial transactions which took place throughout the year.. Troops established during the year should report their finances starting in the month organized. These reports will be reviewed by GSME to ensure policies are being appropriately followed and funds are being utilized to benefit girls.

Troop financial records should be shared with and made available to girls and guardians throughout the year to ensure there is transparency in the troop's financial activities.



# Disbanding Your Troop



A troop may disband when there is a leadership change and there are no longer any leaders registered in a troop. If a troop disbands, it is important to make final decisions about the use of the troop's remaining funds after bills have been paid and have cleared the account. Considerations might include:

- Holding a final gathering to celebrate the troop's friendships and accomplishments.
- Donating funds to a charity based on the troop's area of interest. Funds can also be donated to the local Service Unit or the Council. Some common areas of need in Girl Scouting: financial assistance for girls for uniforms, registration fees for membership camp, travel, events, or for day camp, a favorite resident camp or Gold/Silver award projects.
- Transferring funds to another troop for the benefit of the girls continuing their Girl Scout experience.

After determining with the girls the best use for remaining funds. The troop leaders must close the disbanded troop account. Please submit a check with any remaining funds to GSME.

Funds remaining from disbanded troop accounts will be distributed as follows:

- For girls continuing with Girl Scouts in another troop, the funds will be transferred to the new troop(s).
- If no girls are continuing, remaining funds will be transferred to the local Service Unit.

# Fraud



Unfortunately, fraud happens even within Girl Scouts. Please follow the practices outlined in these guidelines to help prevent unauthorized use of troop funds. The Troop funds belong to the girls and should be treated as such. If a leader or parent within the troop suspects that troop funds are being mismanaged, first discuss the matter with the Troop Leader, focusing on the facts and documentation. If there is a possibility that the leader has mismanaged funds, contact GSME. Please make every effort to be proactive and establish good financial procedures and controls. Good financial management allows the troop to focus its energies on the Girl Scout Experience.



# Additional Resources



## Refer Questions to:

### Local Bank

- Not receiving bank statements
- Debit Card Issues
- Reset Debit Card Pin Number
- Errors on Bank Statements
- Check orders

### GSME

- Status of new account/signature changes
- Unresolved issues with local bank
- Suspected fraud on account

### Troop Banking Materials GSME

- M14 Bank Information Form



