



New Leader Launch

March Questions

Topic 1 – Early Bird Membership Renewal and Troop Finance Reports

1. With our audience of New Leaders in mind, can you tell us what " Early Bird " is?

The Early Bird renewal season will run from April 1-30, 2026. It's your chance to renew your Girl Scout membership, as well as your girls' memberships, for the upcoming 2027 Girl Scout year. Remember, Girl Scout year is October 1 to September 30th.

2. What are the benefits of renewing memberships early?

Early renewal keeps your troop organized and ready for another unforgettable year. When participating in Early Bird renewal:

- Every girl and adult who renews during April 2026 will receive an Early Bird patch.
- Every girl membership that is renewed in April can receive a 25% discount
- Troops have a chance to win an exciting incentive, like a Build A Bear experience or a sleepover at the Girl Scout Leadership Center
- Troop leaders are better prepared to plan for the upcoming year's budget and activities.

3. You said that troops could have a chance to win an incentive. What are the requirements for earning that chance?

To unlock entry to weekly drawings for incentives, a troop would need to renew 80% of the current girls registered in the troop and TWO troop leaders. There will be 4 weekly drawings starting on Monday, April 13, 2026. Winners will be shared on social media and contacted by staff to make their selection of a prize

4. So how much do membership renewals cost?

Annual membership dues are \$65.00 for girls and \$30.00 for adults. The adult membership has not changed from 2026 membership year. If you renew any girl in April, you can enjoy a 25% off with the promo code GSWCF2027

5. How would a troop leader renew the girls in their troop?

- They would start by going to our council website, gswcf.org, and logging into MyGS at the top of the page. On a mobile device, you would find this by clicking on the three horizontal lines to open a menu.
- Once logged in, click on My Account at the top of the page. On a mobile device, you will automatically land on the MyAccount page after logging in.
- Towards the top of the page, you will see a section called My Household, and under that, you will see My Troops. In the top right corner of your troop, there will be a green “Renew Now” button. Click the Renew Now button, and all adults and girls in your troop will be added to your cart.
- From there, you will have the option to edit or remove from your cart each individual membership before moving on to the payment page.

If you experience any trouble with renewing, please go to gswcf.org/renew and look for the Troop Renewal Instructions and Troubleshooting Guides. You will also find the Early Bird Renewal Guide on this page, which lists all of the incentives for the weekly drawings. For additional support, contact Customer Care at info@gswcf.org

6. Where do the funds for renewing a troop come from?

Every troop can decide how they want to pay for their renewals.

- Some troops use their cookie profits to pay for each girl, no matter how many cookies each individual girl sells during the cookie program. This is the most common.
- Some girls have selected to have their membership paid for by selecting it as a reward during the Sweets and Treats (Fall Program) or the 2026 Cookie Program
- Some troops have the parents or guardian pay for the renewals. In this case, each family can either log in to MyGS to process their own renewals or give the funds to the leader for the leader to renew the girl.
- It’s all up to the girls and their leaders to decide.

7. Should troop funds be used to pay for the leaders’ membership renewals?

Yes. Co-leaders can certainly pay for their annual membership from troop funds. Some troops even decide to pay for significant helper roles, such as the Fall and Cookie manager, for the troop.

8. Will all girls and adults who renew receive a patch?

Yes, every girl and adult that renews their membership from April 1st through April 30th will be given an Early Bird Patch to wear proudly on the back of their uniform. The patches will be distributed to the leaders at the April and May service unit/leader meeting by their Community Manager or Service Unit Manager.

Topic 2: Troop Finance Reports

1. What is a Troop Finance Report?

At the end of each school year, every troop is required to submit a Troop Finance Report to its service unit. This report gives a clear summary of how troop funds were earned and spent throughout the year. It's an important step that helps maintain transparency and good record-keeping across all troops in our council.

2. Where can leaders find the Troop Finance Report?

- The Troop Finance Report can be found on our website, gswcf.org. Click on the Forms and Documents icon at the top right of the page, which looks like a piece of paper.
- Then click on the Troop Leader Resources dropdown menu.
- A list of resources will appear, and leaders will want to look for the Troop Finance Report on that list. We have two versions of it available, a fillable PDF version as well as an Excel version that will do the calculations.

3. When are troop finance reports due?

Each service unit will set its own due date, but it is often the last leader meeting of the school year.

Topic 3 – Girl Scout Camp and Event Reservations

1. Question: How can new leaders begin introducing girls to camp and outdoor experiences?

New leaders can begin by thinking of camp and outdoor experiences as something girls grow into over time. The first step does not have to be a full camping trip. It can be as simple as getting girls outside, helping them explore nature, and giving them small opportunities to build comfort in the outdoors. From there, leaders can introduce more experiences as girls are ready. The goal is to help girls feel successful, safe, and excited, so camp becomes something they look forward to instead of something that feels overwhelming.

2. What is Outdoor Progression, and why is it helpful for new leaders?

Outdoor Progression is a step-by-step guide that helps girls grow their confidence, skills, and independence in the outdoors over time. Instead of starting with a big camping trip right away, girls begin with simple experiences like going outside, exploring nature, taking short walks, and learning basic outdoor skills. As they build comfort and confidence, they can move into bigger experiences like outdoor cooking, overnight stays, camping, and eventually more advanced adventures. This is especially helpful for new leaders because it shows that outdoor experiences do not have to start with the biggest step. It gives leaders a clear path for introducing girls to the outdoors in a way that feels

manageable, age-appropriate, and fun. Outdoor Progression helps take away the pressure of feeling like a leader needs to know everything at once. Instead, it reminds leaders that success comes from starting small and helping girls build confidence one step at a time.

3. How can council camp events help new leaders get started with outdoor experiences?

Outdoor Progression helps leaders see that girls do not need to start with the biggest adventure first. Camp events are one example of a simple, supported first step that can help girls begin building comfort and confidence outdoors.

4. How can camp events help new leaders get started with outdoor experiences?

Camp events are a wonderful first step for new leaders because they make outdoor experiences feel much more approachable. Girl Scouts of West Central Florida hosts camp events throughout the year at all four camp properties, so troops have opportunities to visit camp and participate in activities in a fun, welcoming setting. Since these events are led by camp staff, leaders do not have to feel like they need to know how to run everything themselves. Girls get to try camp in a supported way, and leaders get the chance to learn alongside them. It is a simple way to start building comfort, confidence, and excitement for future camp experiences.

5. How can camp events help new leaders get started with outdoor experiences?

Girl Scouts of West Central Florida hosts council camp events throughout the year at all four camp properties. Those include Camp Wildwood in Wildwood, Camp Dorothy Thomas in Riverview, Camp Wai Lani in Palm Harbor, and Camp Indian Echo in Hudson.

6. How can leaders find and register for camp events?

Here are just a few examples of the camp events available throughout the year. Our events give troops the chance to try a wide range of camp activities, such as equestrian, archery, challenge course, kayaking or canoeing, crafts, and more! As leaders browse the calendar and event listings, they can also check which Girl Scout level each event is intended for. In many cases, that will be included right in the event title or event description. Leaders can also review the grade details in the event description, which helps quickly narrow down which events work best for their girls and makes registration much easier.

7. How can a troop request a camp reservation for a more exclusive program or activity space?

For troops that are ready for the next step, a camp program reservation offers a more exclusive camp experience. Instead of attending a larger event with other participants, a leader can request a space or activity at camp just for their troop.

This gives the leader a little more flexibility and allows girls to enjoy camp in a way that feels more personal to their troop.

8. How can a troop request a camp reservation for a more exclusive program or activity space?

Our website is a helpful starting point because it gives leaders an overview of each camp property and what is available at each location. That allows them to explore their options and get a better sense of what would work best for their troop before they enter the reservation system. Once they are ready, they can click “reserve now” to go to ActiveNet, which is the platform we use for all camp reservations, including day use, activities, program areas, meeting spaces, and camping. New leaders will need to create an account the first time they use ActiveNet, and then they can begin the reservation process.

9. If a new leader still has questions, where can they go for more assistance?

Leaders are always welcome to contact Danielle D’Elia, Director of Camp Programs at dkdelia@gswcf.org or info@gswcf.org

Questions from Leaders on the Call

1. What if they won a free membership?

When the leader goes to renew the girls, the free membership will automatically be credited in the cart for those who earned it.

2. Is camp free? Or covered by fall product and cookie sales?

Camp is not free, but camp events can be paid for with troop funds. Many troops plan a camp or outdoor event as a goal to use the funds earned. We do have financial assistance for those who need it.

3. Is the camp reservation program open at all times of the year? And is there typically a long waitlist?

The camp reservation system is typically open year-round. However, our camp properties are generally closed to troop reservations during June through August while summer camp is in session. Reservations usually reopen in the fall for troops and other group camping opportunities. Waitlists are typically very short, if there is one at all.

4. Are we able to do a bridging ceremony at one of the camps?

Yes, absolutely. Two of the camps, Camp Dorothy Thomas and Camp Wai Lani, have actual bridges. Our camp staff can assist you in suggesting the perfect location for your celebration at any of our camps.

Flags are available at some camps, but the council has flags and a portable bridge that can be checked out. To reserve these and other items, visit the Branded Item Request form; <https://gswcf.jotform.com/241754311512043> . Items are available on a first-come, first-served basis and have a limited time to keep, but they can be reserved for free.

5. For a first-year troop with no funds yet, are parents allowed to pay?

Yes, parents may pay for whatever the troop needs, especially in the first year when funds are low. The goal is to make the troop as self-sustaining as possible, with girls participating in the two major money-earning activities: Fall Sweets and Treats and the iconic Girl Scout Cookie program.

There will be times when the girls decide on an activity, and either parent can pay to subsidize what the account cannot pay for, or additional money-earning activities can be planned.