

Troop Leader Start-Up Guide



Checklist for New Troop Leaders

Starting a New Girl Scout Troop

Welcome to Girl Scouts and thank you for volunteering! This is a suggested timeline to help you get started during your first few weeks as a new Troop Leader. These steps might not happen exactly in this order, and that is ok! We are here to help you along on this journey.

Week 1

- ☐ [Register](#) as a Girl Scout troop leader
- ☐ Complete a background check. You will receive an email invite from theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.
- ☐ Meet your Community Manager and set up your troop profile. Ask about getting signed up for the free New Leader Box subscription.
- ☐ Find a co-leader and invite girls to join your troop.
- ☐ Log in to gsLearn and in the Content Library find “320 New Learning Path.” Click the heart to “favorite” it so that it will be easier to come back to later.

Week 2

- ☐ Start your new leader training in gsLearn (Complete within first 60 days).
- ☐ Discover the ins and outs of the [Volunteer Toolkit \(VTK\)](#).
- ☐ Meet with your co-leader and plan a parent meeting. See pages 8-9 for planning and parent meeting ideas.
- ☐ Find your troop roster in VTK or MyGS. Email or call all new troop parents to introduce yourself.
- ☐ Find out when the local Troop Leader meeting occurs each month and put it on your calendar.
- ☐ Join the private social media group for your local Girl Scout area (service unit).

Week 3

- ☐ Meet with your Service Unit Manager (SUM) and SU Accounting Coordinator (AC). Work with your AC to open a Girl Scout bank account for your troop.
- ☐ Plan and hold your first troop meeting with the girls. Use the meeting plans provided in your New Leader Drop Box or the Volunteer Toolkit.

Over the next few weeks

- ☐ Start attending your monthly leader meetings.
- ☐ Continue to use this check list and to take your Troop Leader training in gsLearn.
- ☐ Ask questions! Staff and local volunteers are here to help.

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Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Our Mission

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

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.

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.

Welcome to Girl Scouts
and a great new adventure!
Thanks to volunteers like you,
a new generation of girls will
get the courage, confidence
and character they need to
lead their lives and our world
in the future. The Girl Scout
team is here to support
you, but YOU are
enough – we couldn't do
this without YOU!

Thank you!



Troop Leaders

Help girls reach their potential as creative, courageous leaders

Create a space where girls try new things without worrying about failing

Teach lessons girls will use for decades to come

Try new things along with their girls

Develop leaders' own organizational and leadership skills

Join a global community of sisterhood

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

Getting Started

New leaders often spend the first few weeks getting started and setting up their troop. Be sure to use your **CHECKLIST** on the inside of this handbook!



Setting up your Troop

Your Community Manager will reach out to you to set up this information in the membership system.

The number of girls to expect in your troop

As a new troop, you can expect to have 12 girls. Research has found this is the ‘sweet spot’ – small enough to encourage individual development and large enough to provide an interactive and cooperative learning environment. If your troop doesn’t have enough girls assigned or you would like a larger group, GSWCF is here to help you!

Looking to grow your troop more?

As a troop leader, you can make sure your troop is available in the opportunity catalog for new members to register at will. You can also share a direct link for new families to register directly in your troop through your MyGS log-in. Adult volunteers and girls alike can join your troop this way. If you would like help growing your troop, contact your Community Manager at any time throughout the year.

Meeting Location and Times

Remember, set meeting times that work with your schedule. You will need to choose a location for regular meetings – a local park, library, school, private homes – the troop can meet anywhere that follows the GS safety guidelines. You will also need to decide what day of the week and how often the troop will meet. Most troops meet twice a month. Think about what day, which weeks, and the meeting length (1 to 2 hours). If possible, avoid scheduling troop meetings at the same time as the monthly troop leader meetings.

Troop Interests/Goals/Personality

Think about what your troop will want to accomplish this year. What are some goals? Will the troop focus on one theme for the year? We want to know what type of activities you will plan to do throughout your first year. Every troop has a unique ‘personality.’ Let us know anything that is special about your troop! Will the girls speak a different language? Include girls with disabilities or learning differences? Do all the girls enjoy a specific sport or activity?

Building an Inclusive Troop

Establishing an inclusive environment that welcomes every girl, fosters a sense of belonging and provides a safe space for everyone should be a top priority. Girls have a better experience when they are warmly welcomed into a troop.

New Leader Training

Required Training is Virtual & Free in gsLearn! Plan to complete within your first 60 days.

Core Leader Training (required)

- ☐ What Girl Scouts Do
- ☐ Your First Troop Meeting
- ☐ Troop Safety
- ☐ Family Engagement: The Key to Success
- ☐ The Girl Scout Leadership Experience
- ☐ The Girl Scout Cookie Program
- ☐ Funding The Fun: Troop Finances
- ☐ GSUSA Girl Scouts Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Course
- ☐ Traveling Troops Webinar (required before any activity away from the regular troop meeting location)

To access your new leader training:

- Go to gswcf.org and log in to MyGS
- Click on MyAccount
- Select gsLearn from the menu
- In the Content Library search for: 320 New Leader Learning Path (New as of October 1, 2024)

Training for Online Resources (recommended)

- ☐ 320 Introduction to gsLearn
- ☐ GSUSA Volunteer Toolkit - Troop Leader View
- ☐ GSUSA Managing My Troops from My Account

Feel free to explore any additional trainings you see in gsLearn!

Looking to the Future

These courses include a fee.

Register at gswcf.org/events

- When your troop is ready to go on outings/field trips outside the regular meeting place, at least one registered/background checked adult will need to take a qualifying **CPR/First Aid Training**.
- Once your troop is ready for an overnight cabin camping trip, you will need to have a registered/background checked adult take **Basic Outdoor Leadership Training (BOLT)**. This training is required for cabin camping and activities involving fire.
- When your troop is ready to explore the outdoors even further there is additional training to take in gsLearn depending on what activities your girls want to do. A good place to start is **GSUSA Girl Scouts in the Outdoors**.



A New Leader's Support System

Your Support System

Girl Scouts is all about sisterhood. As a leader, you are not alone! Your troop co-leader(s) and parents are your primary team. Get to know them and allow them to help!

Your Service Unit

What is a [service unit](#)? It is a geographically defined area that consists of Girl Scout troops that are in the same local area. These troops are supported by a service unit team.

Service unit teams consist of experienced Girl Scout volunteers who are there to support troop volunteers throughout the Girl Scout year. The team includes a manager, treasurer, product coordinator, and more.

These volunteers work together to support you by providing local activity and event opportunities and hosting a monthly troop leader meeting. Most service units also have a private social media group to communicate throughout the year. Ask your Service Unit Manager how to join!

Troop Leader Meetings

These meetings are usually held monthly by the service unit. It is expected that a representative from each troop attend.

- Meet and network with fellow volunteers
- Learn about upcoming events and trainings, etc
- Share resources and materials

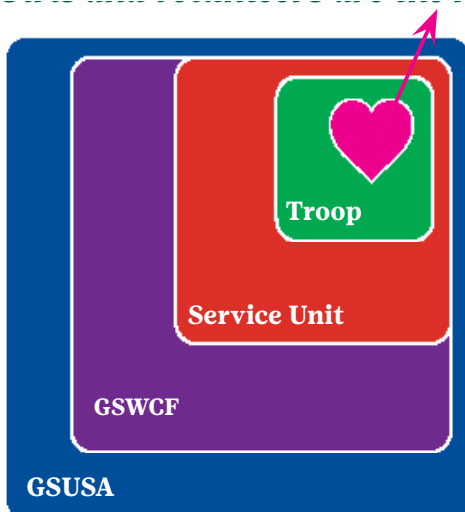
Your Community Manager can get you connected to the volunteers in your service unit.

Your GSWCF Council Staff

We are here for you! Your Community Manager will be here to get you started, connect you with your service unit volunteer team, and to support you throughout the year. If you have a private matter, a conflict to discuss, issues with registration or any other needs, GSWCF can help! Contact your Community Manager or Customer Care at **813-281-GIRL** or **info@gswcf.org**.

Governing Structure Organization Breakdown

Girls and volunteers are the heart of Girl Scouts!



Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA)

The national organization supporting the work of more than 100 councils across the U.S. for more than 100 years.

Girl Scouts of West Central Florida (GSWCF)

Independent 501(c)3 nonprofit chartered by GSUSA and overseeing all service units and troops within our eight county footprint.

Service Units

Comprised of volunteers who support the work of local troops within each county.

Troops

Volunteer-supervised groups of girls who participate in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Co-Leaders – Leading Together

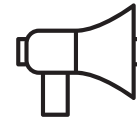
Each troop needs two unrelated adults who are Girl Scout members and have completed a background check to be able to meet. A friend, neighbor, co-worker, another parent are all great people to lead a troop with. If you need assistance recruiting a co-leader, talk to your Community Manager or troop support coordinator.

Before meeting with parents or the girls, you will want to get together and make some decisions about your troop.

- Meeting logistics: When, where, how frequently and how long will the troop meet?
- The troop: Will the troop have girls in one grade or many?
- Talk about tasks and responsibilities for managing your troop. How will you divide up tasks between leaders and parents/caregivers? Focus on each person's strengths and interests.
- Troop finances: Will you have regular troop dues, a troop start-up fee? Who will be on the troop bank account?
- How will you communicate with troop parents/care givers? Email? A private Facebook group? A group texting app like GroupMe? Who will manage troop communications?
- See page 9 for a sample agenda.

WHAT:

Girl Scouts do activities in Four Pillars



Traditions | Troop Meetings | Field Trips
Badges | Patches | Journeys | Camp
Cookie Business | Take Action Projects

HOW:

Girl Scouts learn through the three processes in our unique environment.

Environment = all-girl safe space with supportive adult mentors (you!)

Three processes = girl-led, learn by doing, cooperative learning

WHY:

Girl Scouts become people of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

Outcomes and benefits of the Girl Scout experience include:

- Sense of Self
- Positive Values
- Healthy Relationships
- Challenge Seeking
- Community Problem Solving

Working with Parents/Caregivers

Unlike many other activities, a Girl Scout troop needs parent and caregiver support to thrive!

Parent/Caregiver Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and introductions to one another and to the Girl Scouts. Ask about each girl and get to know her a little.
- Share how important each family will be to the troop.
- Discuss meeting location, day and times, uniforms and troop dues.
- Set expectations for communication and response times and how parents can get involved to help the troop.
- Have parents complete health history forms and annual girl permission forms. Adults who are members should also fill out a health history form for themselves.
- Discuss the types of activities the girls might be interested in participating in this year (regular meetings, field trips, events, camping trips, etc.).
- Answer any questions the parents may have. If you don't know the answer, make note of it and reach out to your service unit or Community Manager for help.

Helpful Tips!

- Don't try to do this alone! Ask parents directly to help with the troop – list out specific needs.
- Invite a member of your service unit team to attend if you need help with this meeting.
- Have an “all about me” info sheet so that parents can share helpful info for working with their girl.
- If girls will attend this meeting, have a craft or simple activity to keep them engaged.
- Let the other parents know that you are new to this too and that you will be learning together this year.



Parents and other family members can take an active role in supporting your Girl Scout's experience. Use this chart to engage parents at your parent meeting.

The list below gives examples of ways parents can help your troop throughout the year.

Help Needed	Description
Co-Leader	Partner with leader to provide regular support for all troop activities. Must be a member, background checked and training required.
Meeting Helper/ Drivers	Assist leaders at meetings with activities. Drivers help drive girls to meetings and activities. Membership and background check required.
Troop Treasurer	Help leaders with all money matters, budgets, deposits, etc. Membership and background check required.
Camping Adult	Coordinate and attend troop campouts. Membership, background check, and camp training required.
CPR/First Aider	Attend outings outside regular meeting place. Membership, background check, and approved CPR/ First-Aid certification required.
Troop Cookie and/or Fall Product Manager	Promote and run the cookie and/or fall product program for troop members. Membership, background check, and training required.
Supplies or Snack Coordinator	Assist by coordinating a schedule for supplies and/or snacks with caregivers for troop meetings as needed.
Communications Support	Be the go to person to communicate troop news, upcoming activities, etc. for the troop leaders.

If you have a talent not represented on this list, speak up and offer to share with the troop. From song and skit leaders to photographers, hobby experts, firewood suppliers and more, there is a place for you to volunteer with your Girl Scout troop. The help and engagement of every parent is important to the growth of the troop!

How Many Volunteers Do You Need?

Troop leaders are responsible for arranging and maintaining proper adult supervision for meetings and activities. Each troop meeting or Girl Scout group must have at least two unrelated, registered and background checked, adult volunteers present at all times, plus additional adult volunteers as necessary. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old and at least one adult in every group must be female.

Use the table to identify how many adults you need based on the number of girls participating. For a mixed age group, go by the ratios required for the youngest girl(s) present:

	TROOP MEETING		FIELD TRIP	
	The adult-to-girl ratio is two unrelated volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:	There should be one extra adult for every additional:	The adult-to-girl ratio is two unrelated volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:	There should be one extra adult for every additional:
Daisies K-grade 1	12 Girl Scouts	1-6 Girl Scouts	6 Girl Scouts	1-4 Girl Scouts
Brownies grades 2-3	20 Girl Scouts	1-8 Girl Scouts	12 Girl Scouts	1-6 Girl Scouts
Juniors grades 4-5	25 Girl Scouts	1-10 Girl Scouts	16 Girl Scouts	1-8 Girl Scouts
Cadettes grades 6-8	25 Girl Scouts	1-12 Girl Scouts	20 Girl Scouts	1-10 Girl Scouts
Seniors grades 9-10	30 Girl Scouts	1-15 Girl Scouts	24 Girl Scouts	1-12 Girl Scouts
Ambassadors grades 11-12	30 Girl Scouts	1-15 Girl Scouts	24 Girl Scouts	1-12 Girl Scouts

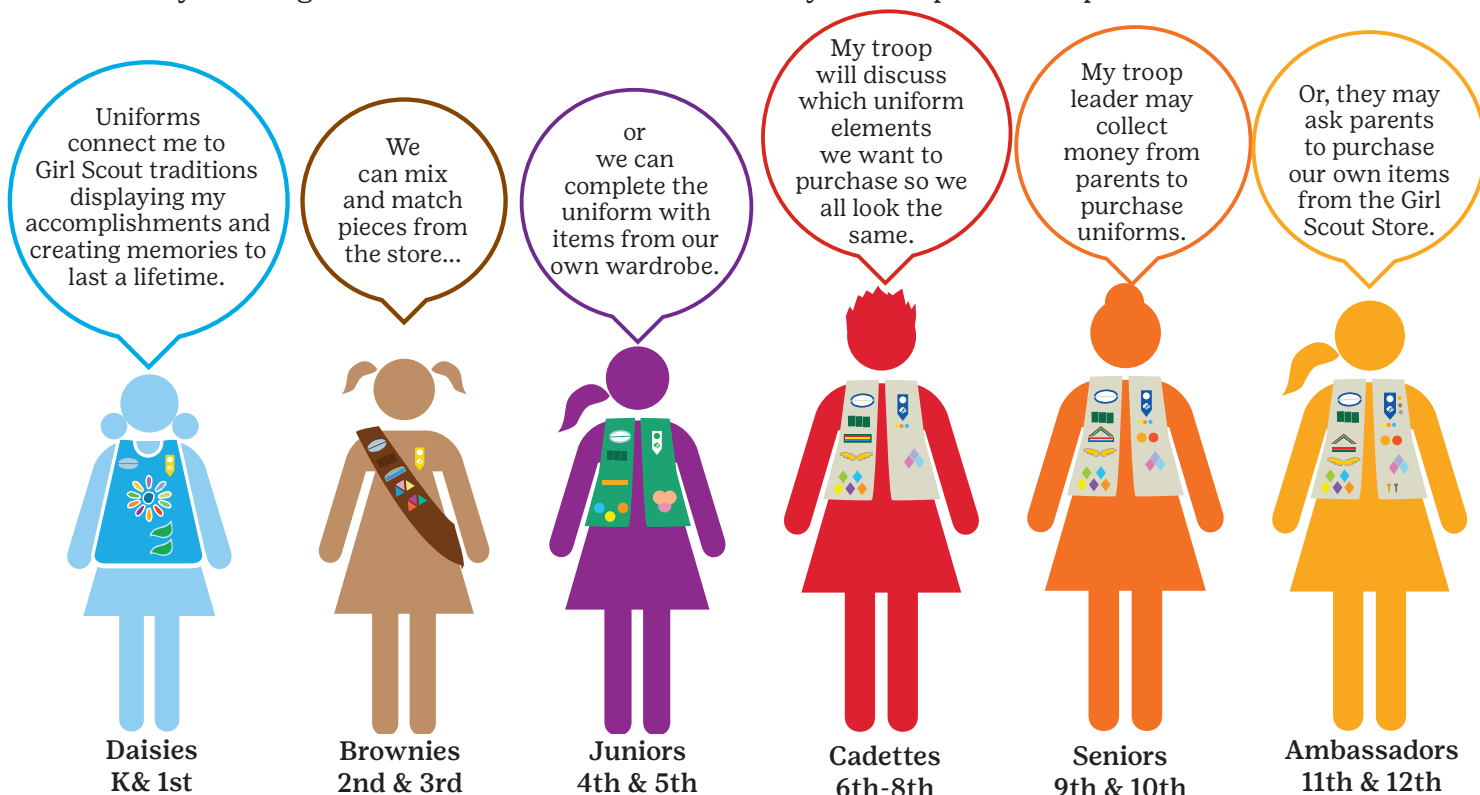
Safety Responsibilities for Girls

Girls who learn about and practice safe and healthy behaviors are likely to establish lifelong habits of safety consciousness. For that reason, each Girl Scout is expected to:

- Assist you and other volunteers in safety planning. Listen to and follow your safety instructions and suggestions.
- Learn and practice safety skills.
- Learn to “think safety” at all times and to be prepared.
- Identify and evaluate an unsafe situation.
- Know how, when, and where to get help when needed.
- Practice the buddy method when participating in troop activities.
- Review Safety Activity Checkpoints when planning any Girl scout activity.

Dressed for Success Girl Scout Uniforms

Uniforms are an important part of the Girl Scout experience. They connect girls to Girl Scout traditions, [display their accomplishments](#), and create memories that last a lifetime. Girl Scouts at each level wear one required element (tunic, sash, or vest) to display official pins, patches, and badges. Use your friends and family meeting to discuss which uniform elements your troop wants to purchase.



The Girl Scout Stores

Visit one of our shop locations to purchase uniforms, starter kits, and more.

For your convenience, we can bring ANYTHING from the Tampa store to the Camp Wai Lani Store. Place an order by emailing GSStore@gswcf.org or by calling 813-262-1793 and your items will be waiting for you at Camp Wai Lani on Saturday.

Girl Scout Store at the Leadership Center, Tampa

4610 Eisenhower Blvd., Tampa, FL 33606

Saturday Shop at Camp Wildwood*

9583 County Rd. 223, Wildwood, FL 34785

Camp Dorothy Thomas Store

16119 Boyette Rd., Riverview, FL 33569

Saturday Shop at Camp Wai Lani*

500 Wai Lani Rd., Palm Harbor, FL 34683

For promotions and the most up to date store hours, visit gswcf.org/store.

Shop online anytime at gswcf.org/shop.

*Saturday Shops are closed during the summer.

Girl Scout Troop Finances

Bank Accounts

- All troops must establish a bank account with two unrelated adult signers from the troop + two signers from the service unit team.
- All troop funds must go through the account including collection of troop dues (optional), payment for troop supplies and activities, and funds related to the cookie and/or fall product programs.
- The Accounting Coordinator in your service unit will work with you on the proper procedures for opening your troop's account.

Troop Budgets—Keeping good financial records is a must! Keep receipts and track troop activity costs. Troops should share financial information with parents 2-3 times a year. When planning make sure to keep the troop budget in mind and to save money to help fund next year's activities, too.

Troop Dues—Many troops decide to collect troop dues to help supply start-up funding for troop activities and supplies. Make sure to be flexible with families when collecting troop monies. Troop dues should be just enough to cover the cost of supplies, activity fees, and badges/patches. Dues average \$1-3 per meeting to \$20 - \$40 for the entire year paid all at one time. It's completely up to each troop to decide what works best for them.

Fund Raising—A troop's primary money earning should come from the GSWCF fall product sale and Cookie Program. Once a troop has participated in the annual cookie program, they are able to request approval for supplemental money earning activities, such as garage sales or car washes.



Financial Assistance—Financial difficulties shouldn't stand in the way of a girl's participation. Any member needing financial assistance for membership can request it as part of the online membership registration process. Other financial assistance is available for books, badges, uniforms, and programs. The form is available at gswcf.org > Forms & Documents.

Troop Finance Report—Use this to track troop finances. A completed Troop Finance Report must be submitted to your Accounting Coordinator each year.

For more information about finances check out Volunteer Essentials
www.gswcf.org > **Forms & Documents** > **Troop Leader Resources**

Girl Scout Traditions

Hand Sign – Raise three fingers of the right hand with the thumb holding down the pinky. The 3 fingers represent the three parts of the Promise.

Handshake – Shaking hands with the left hand and make the GS sign with the right hand. The left hand is nearest to the heart and signifies friendship.

SWAPS – Small tokens of friendship that girls often make and take to events or while traveling to swap with other Girl Scouts – “Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere”.

Friendship circle – The unbroken chain of friendship. Girl Scouts stand in a circle crossing their right arms over their left, and clasping hands with their friends on both sides.

Girl Scout Out – fun way to end a meeting, girls are in the friendship circle, each girl spells a letter until one gets to O, the O is the out. That girl in turn raises her arms still clasping hands, turning to the right and out of the circle. The next girl begins again with the G until the last girl is left as the winner.

Kaper Charts – A chart dividing up troop responsibilities/chores. Indicates all the jobs available and which girl is responsible for each job during a meeting or a camp-out.

Keeping Girls Safe and First Aid Kits

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on any 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. Purchase a Girl Scout first-aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the girls can assemble a kit.

Girl Scout activity insurance forms, girl permission forms, and health histories may be included as well. Check the kit regularly. Make sure the flashlight batteries work, check expiration dates, and replace any used or out-of-date items.

Items to include:

- Adhesive bandages
- Sterile gauze pads
- Antibiotic ointment packets
- Hydrocortisone ointment packets
- Antiseptic wipe packets
- Non latex gloves
- Instant cold compress

Visit [RedCross.org](https://www.redcross.org) for a more comprehensive list.

Keep your kit with the troop at all times.



GSWCF Year At A Glance

For a complete listing of council events, programs and activities, please visit www.gswcf.org/events

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

- Girl Scout Fest
- The Girl Scout year officially begins!
- Fall Product Program begins
- Founder's Day, Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday

TROOP TIP: Recruit girls and adults to join your troop. Make sure your troop is listed on the opportunity catalog.

NOVEMBER

- Spring Troop Camping registration opens
- Fall Product Program ends
- Sister's Retreat

TROOP TIP: Talk to your troop about who might be interested in camp this summer.

DECEMBER

Get ready for the Cookie Program & enjoy the spirit of the holidays!

- Spring program event registration opens
- Summer Camp Registration opens
- Participate in service projects in your community!

TROOP TIP: Hold a troop meeting all about cookies this month and include both girls and families.

JANUARY

Happy New Year! Set some goals.

- Girl Scout Cookie Program begins
- Camp Greenblood (adults only)

TROOP TIP: Consider planning a campout with your troop before the summer heat hits!

FEBRUARY

- Cookie booths start
- World Thinking Day. Have your troop connect with international Girl Scout sisters.

TROOP TIP: Evaluate your training needs & share troop finances with parents/caregivers.

MARCH

- Women of Distinction Event
- Girl Scout Birthday
- Cookie booths end
- Girl Scout Week
- Spring Break!

TROOP TIP: Look for community engagement opportunities this month!

APRIL

- Volunteer Appreciation Month!
- Early Bird Renewal starts
 - Renew your troop's memberships for next year and get in on some awesome perks!
- STEMapalooza
- Annual Meeting

TROOP TIP: Consider getting outdoors with your troop this month to do some badge work.

MAY

- Troop Finance reports due to Service Unit Accounting Coordinator.
- Hold a troop Bridging Ceremony or attend a service unit bridging ceremony
- Early Bird Renewal ends

TROOP TIP: Hold an end-of-year party to celebrate the troop's accomplishments & plan for summer/fall.

JUNE/JULY

- Submit your Troop Information Update
- Summer camp begins! Hooray!
- Gold Award Ceremony
-

TROOP TIP: relax and enjoy your summer!

AUGUST

- VTK Archives and resets for the new year
- Back to school/troop
- Volunteer Leadership Rally & Volunteer Awards Ceremony

TROOP TIP: Send a letter to your girls getting them ready to return to troop meetings with the new school year schedule.

SEPTEMBER

- Fall Product Program training
- Last day for on-time membership renewal!

TROOP TIP: Connect with parents who might be interested in volunteering for the troop cookie coordinator or troop treasurer role.



The Volunteer Toolkit: Your Digital Troop Assistant

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

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

Plan and Customize Your Year

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

Manage Troop Rosters, Attendance, and Accomplishments

With the VTK you can view your troop roster, update contact information, record attendance at meetings, track girls' badge and Journey achievements, and build a calendar that parents/caregivers can view.

One-Click Communication

The VTK is not just for leaders, it's for parents/caregivers, too! With its unique parent-view, parents/caregivers can keep up with troop activities, meeting information, and what badges and Journeys their girls are working on. You can also email upcoming meeting agendas and troop plans to them with just one click.

Easy Navigation at your Fingertips!

Here are just a few of the many features you'll find inside the VTK. We strongly encourage troop leaders to utilize the VTK to streamline their troop management and planning. GSUSA continues to update and enhance the VTK with additional resources, features and functions.

MY TROOP

- View, edit, download and print rosters.
- Edit contact info.
- View achievements and attendance.
- Email families.

YEAR PLANS

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

MEETING PLANS

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

RESOURCES

- Access award logs, badge charts, meeting plans, and more.
- Access council specific resources on troop leadership, safety, training, GS traditions and awards, trips and travel, GS product sales, and more!

Learn more about the VTK

For more information about the Volunteer Toolkit, look for tutorials in gsLearn. Have questions? Send an email to info@gswcf.org.

Product Sales Program

5 Skills + Financial Literacy

Each year, troops have two opportunities to participate in council sponsored money earning activities: the Fall Product Program and the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Each of these programs offer girls and troops the opportunity to earn funds to power their Girl Scout adventures, as well as rewards to keep girls engaged and motivated.

Through their participation in product sales programs, girls are able to launch their very own businesses while learning important life skills along the way:

Goal Setting

Decision Making

Money Management

People Skills

Business Ethics

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

- With the support of a volunteer in your Service Unit and the council Product Sales team, you will be connected to resources and support to ensure that you and your troop have everything that you need to have a successful experience.
- It's important to remember that any funds earned through money earning activities become property of the troop as a whole to further the Girl Scout experience.
- It must also be a girl-led decision on how these funds should be spent. Troop funds can be used towards meeting supplies, badges, field trips and activities, camping, experiences and more.

Fall Product Program | October– November

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

- **What:** Girls sell nuts, candy, and magazines online and/or in-person to family and friends.
- **How:** Customers can select to have their order delivered by the Girl Scout or shipped directly to them. Products to be delivered by girls will be picked up by the troop in November for distribution to girls and families.
- **Why:** Troops earn a portion of total sales that will be deposited into their troop bank account.

Cookie Program | January–March

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world! The bulk of the troop's funds are earned through girls' participation in the Cookie Program and it's where they truly get to put the 5 Skills they have learned into action.

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

Meeting as a Troop

Your Troop Year at a Glance

We have found that troops who meet twice a month have the best experience! Make sure you mix it up and that meetings and outings capture the interests of the girls in your troop!

Earning badges is a great starting place for a new troop, but a great troop experience isn't just about earning badges or Journeys, it's really about making sure that the girls are making age appropriate decisions and having fun. To that end, you will want to weave a variety of activities into your Girl Scout year. **Two pieces of advice:** keep it girl-led and keep it fun!

Girls will enjoy:

- Getting outdoors
- Performing community service
- Going on field trips
- Attending service unit and council events
- And just spending time together

To help you create a well-rounded year in Girl Scouting, set up your troop calendar in your **Volunteer Toolkit**.

Resources For Planning Meetings

GSUSA Badge Explorer—Find a full list of the badges and Journey awards that Girl Scouts can earn. Filter your results by grade level and topic. You can also select awards and badges to customize your PDF download. gsusa.org/badgeexplorer.

GSUSA Troop Year Plans—[Ready-to-go Troop Year Plan](#) are a great tool for first year troop leaders to get started with Girl Scouts without getting overwhelmed. The entire year is mapped out—just follow along to help your Girl Scouts complete badge activities, improve their communities, and explore the world around them.

Girl Scout Songs

Girl Scout songs are a long standing tradition that girls love! Don't know any Girl Scout songs yet? YouTube is a great resource for learning songs and in some cases the movements that go with them!

You may also consider inviting some older Girl Scouts to your troop meeting to teach your girls their favorite songs.



Let's Go!

Your First Troop Meeting

Your first troop meeting is a great chance to get to know the girls and brainstorm all the exciting things they want to do in the year to come. If you're feeling a little nervous about leading troop meetings and experiences with your girls, that's OK! 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. Don't let that hold you back. Be open with the girls when you don't know something and tell them that you will be learning together. You'll show them that learning is a lifelong process and that with an open mind, they can overcome any challenge that comes their way.

First Meeting Checklist

- ☐ Cover the basics. Review the details about when and where the meeting will take place and make sure parents/caregivers are aware.
- ☐ Get ready. Use the VTK to verify your troop roster and email parents. This might be a great time to remind parents to send health history forms, uniform orders, and troop dues to the meeting.
- ☐ Know the agenda. Refer to the Six Elements of a Troop Meeting list and your meeting agenda/plans.
- ☐ Review and practice your agenda. You'll feel calmer during the actual meeting and ready to make adjustments as needed.

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!

Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

The only requirement for your troop meetings is that your girls are engaged and having fun! Many leaders use this basic structure for troop meetings:

1. Ramp Up—plan an opening activity for girls upon arrival at the meeting so that have something to do before the meeting begins. Plan about five minutes for this, it could be snack, or creating a thank you card, coloring a page to donate, etc.

2. Opening—Each troop decides what they will do regularly. Most begin with the reciting the Girl Scout Promise & Law, the Pledge of Allegiance, a song, game, story, or other activity designed by the girls. Plan 5-10 minutes for this.

3. Troop Business—Collect dues, take attendance, make announcements or plan upcoming activities while parents may be present.

4. Let the fun begin! This is your activity for the meeting, work on a badge, journey, or complete other activities during this time plan 30 minutes to 1 hour according to your meeting time.

5. Clean Up – Girls clean up all supplies and always leave a place cleaner than they found it. Plan about five minutes. Use a kaper chart to assign jobs to girls.

6. Closing – As a troop, girls decide how they will end each meeting – a song, a game, a Girl Scout tradition. Plan 5-10 minutes for this.

Got Snacks?

Snacks are optional, but if your troop has chosen to include snacks, guide families to consider healthy snacks and always share any food allergies the girls in your troop may have. Include snack time as part of your troop meeting.

Working with Daisies

As the leader of a Daisy troop, your goal should be to act as facilitator, enabling girls to experience planning, decision-making, leadership, and yes, even failure!



Girl Scouts is girl-led!

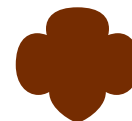
Daisies (K-1st-Grade Girls)	This means
Can make simple choices and enjoy sharing their opinion.	When making troop decisions, offer the girls limited choices, such as choosing between two field trips. Allow girls to share their thoughts and take a vote to choose.
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	They'll enjoy going on nature walks and outdoor scavenger hunts.
Are great builders and budding artists.	Encourage 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 are 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 of a caterpillar! The Product Sales Program reinforces counting and math skills!
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 through.
Are just beginning to write and spell and they don't always have the words for what they're thinking or feeling.	Having girls draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate is easier and more meaningful for them.

Helpful Tips!

- Build on the strengths of each girl.
- Praise desirable behavior.
- Use simple words.
- Use quiet, pleasant tones.
- Be flexible. Attention spans can be short.
- Utilize the Girl Scout Promise & Law.
- Try to be at the girl's eye level.
- Encourage girls to solve problems.
- Develop a friendly relationship with each girl.
- Keep activities short and varied.

Working with Brownies

Girls at this age have a variety of skills at different levels. Reading abilities, attention spans, and small motor coordination are still developing. As you get to know your troop, you'll better help them plan activities and adjust your own expectation levels. Be sensitive to their feelings about their differences and remember that each girl is an individual.



*Girl Scouts
is girl-led!*

Brownies (2nd/3rd 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.	Allow 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.	Let girls lead, direct, and help out whenever possible. Allow group decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	Do more than just reading to girls about the Brownie Elf's adventures. Ask questions to gauge understanding and allow them to role-play a pretend visit to a new country.
Need clear directions and structure, and like knowing what to expect.	Offer one direction at a time, and have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share it at the start.
Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.	Offer support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings, count out money for a trip, etc.
Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and tie shoes, use basic tools, beginning to sew, etc.	Encourage girls' creative expression by making things with their hands. They may still need some assistance with things like holding scissors or threading needles.
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	Girls might like to create a play about welcoming a new girls to their school or telling a story through dance or creative movement.
Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job done well.	Acknowledge when the girls have listened or followed directions well, which will boost their motivation to listen and follow directions again.

Letting Brownies take the lead:

- Encourage girls to be creative and add their own flair to projects and activities.
- Let the girls try new things and make mistakes in the attempt.
- Let the girls do the talking with meeting guests, their troop mates, other troops, or the service units.
- Ask thoughtful questions instead of just providing answers.
- Let girls make decisions between multiple options.
- Use the buddy system with Brownies at each meeting or outing.
- Brownies can lead meetings with a caregiver or as a small group with adult guidance!

For Working With Juniors – Ambassadors, please see Volunteer Essentials





We are here for you!

Contact us at 800-881-GIRL (4475) or info@gswcf.org

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Our Council

About Us

Girl Scouts of West Central Florida serves more than 28,000 girl and adult members in eight counties. The Girl Scout Leadership Center in Tampa features an expanded Girl Scout Store and the Girl Zones. The Girl Zones are activity areas themed around key Girl Scout initiatives—healthy living, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), financial literacy, community, and the environment.

Resource Center

The Leadership Center features a Resource Center dedicated to supporting council volunteers. Our lending library has resources such as The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting for each grade level, Journeys and other books, CDs, flags, cookie costumes, ceremony kits, program materials, and game equipment. For information and/or assistance with Resource Center items contact Customer Care at info@gswcf.org or 813-281-GIRL (4475).

Our Camps

GSWCF owns and operates four camp facilities for day and overnight summer camps, programs, and encampments. Whether girls are looking to spend some time in the water or take a trail ride on horseback, we've got a camp for you! Visit gswcf.org/camps for more information on our camps.

