

A great way to practice leadership—plus, it opens the path to earn the Silver Award



Volunteer's Guide to the Program Aide Award*

Find tips and ideas to help guide Girl Scouts through this award program.

Facilitator Overview: This guide will help you support Cadette Girl Scouts in earning the Program Aide award. Note that many Girl Scout councils have procedures (classes, coaching, introductions, etc.) to support the Program Aide award. This guide is intended primarily for leaders who do NOT have access to (or choose not to use) such support.

Much of the work of this award will take place outside of your direct supervision, but you still play an essential role! You'll assist by:

- Helping Girl Scouts find a younger troop or other youth group to work with; facilitating introductions; working with caregivers or guiding Girl Scouts to do so, to arrange logistics such as transportation, supplies, etc.
- Preparing Girl Scouts to perform activities on their own, without your active participation
- Setting up the award framework and making sure Girl Scouts have the information and tools they need. This may include:
 - Facilitating an initial review of each step alongside the **Program Aide Plan** so Girl Scouts have an idea of what to expect; asking whether Girl Scouts have any questions or need clarification
 - Reminding Girl Scouts to review the **Program Aide Plan** for helpful guidance and prompts prior to each step, while emphasizing that you're always available for guidance and/or other support
 - Asking Girl Scouts to identify how they'll be stretching (trying new things, taking on a new role?) through this award. Where do they feel confident? Where do they feel uncomfortable? Are there any areas where they feel they need or would like help?
 - Checking in after each step to see how things are going and to provide any needed support, and reminding Girl Scouts to fill out the relevant parts of the **Program Aide Plan**
 - Guiding Girl Scouts to reflect on their experience, their personal growth, and their thoughts on leadership once all steps are complete

Overall, prioritize making yourself available throughout the process for mentoring and advising. Some Girl Scouts will be able to manage most of the award steps independently, but others may need more support. Meet Girl Scouts where they are and provide assistance as needed, but encourage them to take the lead whenever possible.

Before any award work begins, talk with the younger group's leader to make sure they understand the purpose of the Program Aide award. Consider giving them a copy of the award overview so they know what to expect.

Next, guide a discussion with Girl Scouts about the importance of leading others. Have them think about the leaders in their lives, like teachers, coaches, or yourself. Ask questions such as:

- What do you notice or admire about these leaders?
- What differences in leadership styles do you see?
- What methods would you like to adopt, and what would you do differently?
- How do you think leaders make a difference?

Tell your Girl Scouts that anyone can be a leader—they can be, too! Leadership is a learned skill, and it's never too early to start learning.

Below you'll find high-level summaries of each step's purpose, followed by ways for the facilitator to support each activity. (See the Girl Scout-facing award overview for activity details.) This guidance isn't meant to be comprehensive—you may find that other help is needed—but it addresses some of the most common issues you may encounter. Use these suggestions as needed to help Girl Scouts understand and prepare for their role, every step of the way.

Step 1: Get to know your group

Girl Scouts get to know the group they'll be working with, think about meeting organization techniques, and consider what kind of leader they want to be.

To Do (and how you might help):

*Detailed choice activities, meeting tools, and additional resources and materials can be found within the Volunteer Toolkit on my.girlscouts.org.

1. **Learn about the group members.** In advance, discuss and practice key skills, such as learning names, engaging younger Girl Scouts in conversation, and noticing individual personality traits.
2. **Observe how the meeting is organized.** Help Girl Scouts brainstorm what they should look for in terms of group dynamics and function.
3. **Explore what type of leader you want to be.** Remind Girl Scouts to observe the group's leader, and guide them to think about what qualities they should look for. Consider encouraging Girl Scouts to observe and think about *your* personal leadership style.

Step 2: Prepare to lead

Girl Scouts prepare to help with a meeting, then follow the framework of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) as they assist in a support role.

To Do (and how you might help):

1. **Talk to the group's leader before the meeting.** Guide Girl Scouts in setting up this conversation, if needed (it may have happened naturally at the end of the first meeting).
2. **Prepare for the meeting.** Help Girl Scouts think through anything they need to prepare or provide. Remind them to review the GSLE material in the step introduction to inform their approach.
3. **Assist with the meeting.** Discuss the upcoming meeting one last time. Make sure Girl Scouts feel comfortable and ready to help out in a support role.

Step 3: Plan and lead one activity

Girl Scouts choose an activity they think will be fun for the younger group, make the needed preparations, and then use their leadership skills to facilitate it.

To Do (and how you might help):

1. **Choose what activity to lead.** Help Girl Scouts brainstorm activities, if needed. Remind them to review their ideas with the younger group's leader before proceeding with any planning. Help set up this conversation, if needed.
2. **Prepare for the meeting.** Girl Scouts may vary in their planning experience and abilities. Help as needed, but encourage Girl Scouts to take as much initiative as possible. Offer the opportunity to practice the activity, if possible and practical. Remind Girl Scouts to review the GSLE and consider how to apply it when leading their activity.
3. **Lead the activity.** Discuss the upcoming meeting one last time and make sure Girl Scouts feel comfortable and confident. If not, talk it through with them.

Remind them that success isn't about being perfect; it's about helping everyone feel like they belong. They've got this!

Step 4: Reflect and prepare

Girl Scouts draw on their experience from the last three meetings as they prepare to lead their own full meeting.

To Do (and how you might help):

1. **Reflect on your experience.** Have Girl Scouts reflect on what they learned leading the activity—what went well? How did they handle challenges? Ask them to think about how they can use what they learned to plan their own full meeting. Encourage them to journal or practice other forms of active reflection.
2. **Choose a focus and goal(s) for the meeting.** Help Girl Scouts brainstorm, if needed.
3. **Create your meeting agenda.** Encourage Girl Scouts to use the template in the **Program Aide Plan** to plan their meeting agenda, including incorporating the GSLE and identifying success strategies. Help only if needed.

Step 5: Lead a full meeting

Girl Scouts put their newfound confidence and skills to work by leading a full meeting, using everything they know about the group and themselves as leaders.

To Do (and how you might help):

1. **Share your agenda.** Remind Girl Scouts to review their plans with the younger group's leader and to be open to the leader's suggestions.
2. **Lead the meeting.** Have Girl Scouts refer to the **Program Aide Plan** for their meeting plan and helpful tips for leading a meeting. Encourage them to turn to you if they need help or support.
3. **Reflect as a group.** Help Girl Scouts brainstorm ways to moderate a group discussion and research techniques, if needed. Prepare them to accept feedback gracefully and with an open mind. Remind them to end the session on a positive note—EVERYONE did great work!

Award Overview: Reflect and grow

After all steps are complete, guide Girl Scouts to think about their Program Aide experience as a whole and ask themselves how they've grown as a leader. Use the questions in the award guide to facilitate this conversation. Girl Scouts receive the Program Aide award once the award overview process is complete.