

girl scouts
of silver sage



My First Year **Brownie**

A complete guide for your first
year of leading a Girl Scout troop

Checklist for New Troop Leaders

Starting a New Girl Scout Troop

Week 1

- ☐ Register as a Girl Scout troop leader.
- ☐ Complete a background check.
You will receive an email invite from theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.
- ☐ **Meet your Membership Manager and ask when and where your Service Unit meets (local area volunteers).**
- ☐ Find a co-leader and invite girls to join your troop.
- ☐ **Register for required new leader training:**
In-Person or Virtual:
New Leader Orientation
Online:
Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention
Volunteer Toolkit Tutorial
Girl Scouts in the Outdoors
- ☐ **Set up your troop profile.**

Week 2

- ☐ Complete new leader training (complete within first 30 days).
- ☐ Discover the ins and outs of the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK).
- ☐ Find a bank for your troop account and submit the form to open a bank account
If your troop is new, submit the Request for New Troop Start-up Funds form
- ☐ Meet with your co-leader and plan a parent meeting.
- ☐ Find your troop roster in VTK or MyGS. Email or call all new troop parents to introduce yourself.
- ☐ Hold the parent meeting (don't forget to use your parent meeting agenda).

Week 3

- ☐ Complete your bank account setup. Apply for your \$25 New Troop start-up funds.
- ☐ **Connect with your Service Unit and meet your Service Unit Mentor.**
- ☐ Plan and hold your first troop meeting with the girls. Use your New Leader Handbook and the Volunteer Toolkit.

Week 4

- ☐ Check out the GSSSC calendar for events and consult Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- ☐ Reach out to your Membership Manager to get help planning your year in Girl Scouts!
- ☐ Find out about the GSSSC Product Program



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Welcome to Girl Scouts of Silver Sage (GSSSC)!

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.

“The work of today is the history of tomorrow, and we are its makers.

You wear the badge to let people know that you are prepared and willing to be called on because you are a Girl Scout. Girl Scouting is not just knowing but doing. Not just doing but being!

”

*Juliette Gordon Low,
Founder of Girl Scouts*

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 page 2 of this handbook!



Setting up your Troop

Your placement specialist 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 10-12 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, GSSSC 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 participation catalog for new members to register at will, and you can also share a direct link for new families to register directly in your troop through your MY GS account. Adults and girls alike can join your troop this way. If you would like help growing your troop, contact your Membership Manager 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. The troop can meet anywhere that follows the GS safety guidelines. Email Customer Care if a Certificate of Liability is requested by your meeting place. You will also need to decide what day of the week and how often the troop will meet. Most of our troops meet twice a month. So, think about what day, which weeks of the month and the timeframe (1, 1-1/2 or 2 hours) - right after school, weekday evening, or weekend. If your location requires liability insurance, request a Certificate by completing the [Request for Liability Insurance](#) form.

Troop Interests/Goals/Personality

Also, 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! 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 In-Person and Virtual (gsLearn – Located in your MyGS Account).

Plan to complete all four within 2 months.

1. **New Leader Orientation – In-Person**
2. **Girl Scouts Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention (GS Learn)**
3. **GSUSA Volunteer Toolkit Tutorial (GS Learn)**
4. **GSUSA Girl Scouts in the Outdoors (GS Learn)**

Additional Training you need to know about (All GS training can be paid for with troop funds)
Check the GSSSC calendar for dates/times.

- **CPR/First Aid Training (valid for 2 years)**- 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 become certified (Required for field trips & camping) – Fee – Register via [gsEvents](#).
- **Youth Mental Health First Aid Certification (YMHFA)(valid for 3 years)** – Training program that teaches adults how to help youth and adolescents who are experiencing mental health or substance use challenges - Fee. Register via [gsEvents](#).
- **Program Level Training** – Explore the Girl Scout program for your troop's grade level – No Fee. Register via [gsEvents](#).
- **401 Planning Overnight Trips with Girls** – Home-study course reviews essentials of planning and safety relating to taking trips with girls – No Fee – Home Study Course.
- **402 Outdoor Basics** – Home-study course required when you are planning a troop camping trip with your girls (Pre-requisite for course 403) – No Fee – Home-Study course.
- **403 Troop Camping & Camp Skills** – Required by at least one (1) adult in your troop prior to taking a troop camping trip – Fee – Register via [gsEvents](#).



A New Leader's Support System

Getting Connected, Socially

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!

Check out page 10, the 4Her resources for more ideas!

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 community or School District.

These troops are supported by a service unit team.

Service unit teams consist of experienced Girl Scout volunteers who are there to support one another through the Girl Scout year. The team includes a manager, recruiter, mentor, troop organizer, treasurer, event coordinator, fall product and cookie manager, and a recognitions chair.

These volunteers work together to support you by providing activities and event opportunities in your area throughout the year. They also hold monthly meetings for leaders.

Connect with your Service Unit Manager and/or your Service Unit Mentor as soon as possible.

Service Unit Meetings

These meetings are usually held monthly and are usually in person. Service Units in more remote areas may offer a virtual option.

Attending these monthly meetings is a requirement. If you as a leader are not able to attend, appoint one of your parents in your troop to attend these monthly meetings.

- Meet and network with fellow volunteers
- Learn about upcoming events your troop can attend, training, etc.
- Share resources and materials
- Enrichment opportunities

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

GSSSC Council Staff

We are here for you! Your Membership Manager will be reaching out to you throughout your first year as a troop leader and be by your side every step of the way. You will receive multiple follow-up communication to help guide you through your first 90 days and during the important times in the year. If you have a private matter, a conflict to discuss, issues with registration, or any other needs, we can help! Contact your Membership Manager or Customer Care at (208) 377-2011 or customer care@girlscouts-ssc.org

Check out our social platforms

Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/GirlScoutsofSilverSage?ref=share>

Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Twitter <https://twitter.com/gsssc>

Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/gsssc/>

Girl Scouts of Silver Sage <https://www.pinterest.com/gsssc/>

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, or another parent are all great people to lead a troop with. If you need assistance recruiting a co-leader, talk to your Membership Manager.

Before meeting with parents or the girls, you will want to get together and make some decisions about your troop. Once you have your parent/caregiver meeting you will include them in these decisions.

- Meeting logistics: When, where, how frequently, and how long will the troop meet?
- The troop: Will the troop have girls in one grade or different grades?
- What kind of help will the troop need from parents?
- How will you handle your own daughter during troop activities?
- What type of communication will you use with the troop families? "Band" or an alternative communication platform is great.
- Troop finances: Will you have troop dues? Who will be on the troop bank account?
- Will your troop choose a vest or a sash? Will the leaders purchase for everyone and be reimbursed or will each parent purchase the required uniform items?
- Plan out the parent/caregiver meeting.



For more information, check for the Co-Leader Discussion Questions on our Volunteer Resources Page (Forms & Documents – Troop Management)

Working with Parents/Caregivers

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

Parent/Caregiver Meeting Agenda

- Welcome everyone and have girls and adults introduce themselves. Ask about each girl and get to know her a little.
- Share the importance of family involvement.
- Discuss meeting location, day and times, uniforms, and troop dues (you may want to collect troop dues at the parent meeting).
- Set expectations for communication and response times and how parents can get involved to help the troop.
- Have parents complete the Annual Parent/Caregiver Permission & Girl/Adult Health History form and Permission for Special Activities form, if applicable. Share contact info for all troop members.
- Discuss the types of activities the troop will participate in this year (regular meetings, field trips, events, camping trips).
- Answer any questions the parents may have.

Helpful Tips!

- Don't try to do this alone! Ask parents directly to help with the troop and list out specific needs (4HER program).
- Invite your Membership Manager or a member of your service unit team to attend if you need help with this meeting.
- Have a "Get to Know my Girl" info sheet so that parents can share helpful info for working with their daughter.
- If girls will attend this meeting, offer a craft or simple activity to keep them engaged.



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 explains a number of roles your troop can use throughout the year.

Make a commitment to volunteer 4 hours 4 her this year!

Troop Roles	Description
Co-Leader	Partner with the leader to provide regular support for all troop activities. Must be a member, background check and training required. Select "Troop Leader" when registering.
Meeting Helper/ Driver/Volunteer	Assist leaders at meetings with activities. Drivers help drive girls to meetings and activities. Membership and background check are required. Select "Troop Volunteer" when registering.
Troop Treasurer	Help leaders with all money matters, budgets, deposits, etc. Membership and background check are required. Select "Troop Treasurer" when registering.
Camping Adult	Coordinate and attend troop campouts. Membership, background check, and training are required. Select "Troop Volunteer".
CPR/First Aider	Attend outings outside the regular meeting place. Membership, background check, and certified training are required. Select "Troop Volunteer".
Troop Cookie Manager (TCM)and Troop Fall Product Manager (TFPM)	Promote and run the cookie and fall product program for troop members. Membership, background check, and training are required. Select "Troop Volunteer" when registering and complete the "Troop Cookie Manager and Troop Fall Product Manager" contract after registering. Ask your Membership Manager.
Supplies or Snack Coordinator	Coordinate/purchase snacks or supplies for troop meetings. Membership and background check are required. Select "Troop Volunteer".
Communications Support	Share troop news, and take troop pictures. Membership and background check are required. Select "Troop Volunteer".

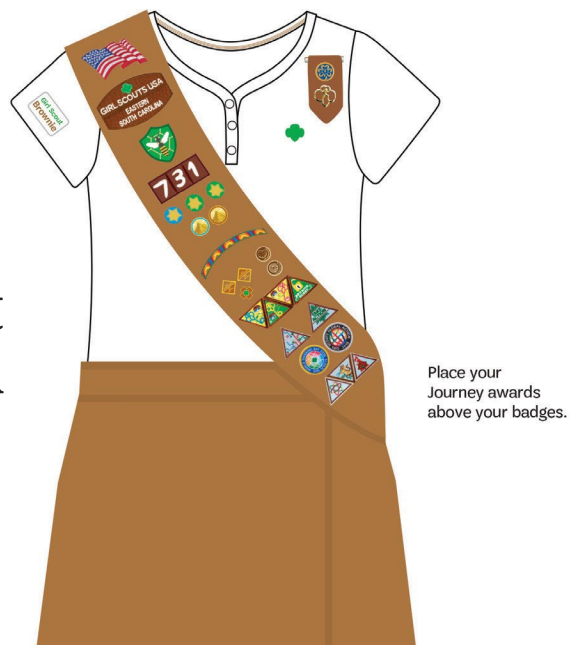
If you have a talent not represented on this list, speak up and offer to share with the troop. From song and skit leaders to photographers, hobby, or outdoor experts and more, there is a place for you to volunteer with your Girl Scout troop. The help and engagement of every parent is important to the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

Pin and Badge Placement for Brownie Uniforms

Girl Scout Brownie Vest



Girl Scout Brownie Sash



Girl Scout Troop Finances

Bank Accounts

Each troop must open a troop account at any approved bank to avoid unnecessary bank fees. At least two non-related volunteers must be signers on the bank account. Steps to establishing a bank account and registering your troop account for ACH withdrawal, are clearly outlined in [GSSSC's Bank Account Process](#)

Banks that welcome Girl Scouts

US Bank	Idaho First Bank
Idaho Central Credit Union	First Interstate Bank
D.L Evans Bank	

Troop Budgets – Keeping good financial records is a must! Keep receipts and track troop activity costs. Troops' financial information should always be able to be shared with parents and girls when requested. When planning, make sure to keep the troop budget in mind and to save money to help fund next year's activities, too. Annually, troops are required to submit a financial annual report along with bank statements signed by both signers and detailed descriptions for each deposit and expense. Receipts exceeding \$150 are also submitted along with the report.

Troop Dues – Most troops have troop dues, Make sure to be flexible with families when collecting troop dues. Troop dues should be just enough to cover the cost of supplies, activity fees, and badges/patches – between \$25-\$50 depending on the troop's need, until the troop earns money with the annual Fall Product and Cookie Program sales.



Fund Raising – A troop's primary money earning should come from the GSSSC Fall Product sale and Cookie Program. Once a troop has participated in the annual fall product or cookie program, they are able to participate in other troop money-earning activities such as garage sales or car washes. See [Troop Fundraising Procedures](#) for additional information. Troops interested in raising funds need to apply by completing the [Application for Money Earning Projects](#).

Financial Scholarships

Financial Assistance for membership is possible thanks to the generosity of families who pay it forward so a girl can experience Girl Scouts. If someone is in need of financial assistance, please have them complete the [Membership Assistance for Girl Members form](#). The troop may also budget to provide financial assistance.

For more information about finances check out [Volunteer Essentials](#) at www.girlscouts-ssc.org

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.

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. Great way to end a meeting.

Promise & Law - Start each meeting by reciting the Promise & Law.

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”.

Kaper Charts – A chart dividing up troop responsibilities. Indicates all the jobs available and who is responsible 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, buy a commercial kit, or you and the girls can assemble a kit.



Girl Scout Special Activity Permission forms, Annual Parent/Caregiver Permission & Girl/Adult Health History forms may be included as well. Check the kit regularly and make sure the flashlight batteries work. Check expiration dates and replace any used or out-of-date contents.

Items to include:

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

Always keep your kit and your CPR/First Aid card with the troop at all times.

Troop Communication

Good communication is essential to a well-run troop. It's a great idea to discuss how troop communications will be handled. Not everyone has Facebook. Would "Band" or a similar communication platform be better? Will you make phone calls to remind your families or send a text? Be sure to include response expectations in this conversation. A good idea is to always provide a deadline for communication responses. Do you have a parent who will be the designated communications person?

It's also important to keep an open and honest communication line with parents regarding behavior and/or special needs of girls and the troop.



Forms, All Kinds of Forms

Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Forms

As a troop leader, you will find that forms are a necessity! Some useful forms you will need include:

Annual Parent or Caregiver Permission & Girl/Adult Health Form – To be completed annually by parent or caregiver.

Parent Permission for Special Activities– Permission for high-risk activities as outlined in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Money Earning Activity – This form is required for any money-earning activity beyond the Girl Scout cookie program or fall product sales .

Opening or changing a Girl Scout bank account and ACH registration – See finances section on page 12.

Intent to Travel – To be completed when staying overnight or planning a camping or travel trip.

Program Credit Reimbursement –To be completed when seeking reimbursement for Program Credits earned through the Cookie Product Program and used for online Girl Membership Registration.

Your Year in Girl Scouts

AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
 10-National S'more Day  Recruit New Girls to Your Troop Plan Your Year	Hispanic Heritage Month Rededication & Investiture Ceremonies Fall Product Begins Recruit New Girls to Your Troop GSSSC Back to Troop Celebration	Girl Scout Membership Year Begins  31-Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday	Thanksgiving GSSSC Super Saturday (Volunteer Training)
DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
Winter Camps	1-Happy New Year!  Cookie Rally	Black History Month  22-World Thinking Day Engineering Week	Women's History Month  Girl Scout Week Girl Scouts Celebrate Faith
APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
22-Earth Day National Volunteer Month  22-Girl Scout Leader Day	Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month  National Bridging Week Mental Health Awareness Month 30-Annual Report Due Early Bird Membership Renewal	11-National Get Outdoors Day Day Camps Resident Camps GSSSC Adult & Highest Awards Recognition	4-Independence Day Day Camps Resident Camps

Visit girlscouts-ssc.org to learn more about our events and find the most up-to-date information. All events are subject to change without notice.

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 | September – October

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 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 shipped directly to the troop in November for distribution to girls and families.
- **Why:** Troops earn approximately 15% of the total sales by December.

Cookie Program | December – February

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 support their favorite 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.

Ready, Set, Take Action

Community Service and Take Action Projects

Make the world a better place. For over 100 years, Girl Scouts have been encouraged to do anything they set their sights on and as a result, Girl Scouts continue to make an impact locally and globally.

Community Service Projects

Community service projects address an immediate need in the community and are appropriate for every Girl Scout – Junior through Ambassador! A great definition of community service is, “Community service makes the world a better place for some people right now.”

Take Action Projects

Take Action projects transform a community service project into a long-term, lasting impact for the community. With Take Action projects, girls are challenged and encouraged to research, plan, and lead projects that tackle the root of a local, national, or global problem. Girls think bigger and are encouraged to solve and address the problem in a way that will prohibit the problem from reoccurring. Take Action projects aim for long-term benefits that change the world in a meaningful, measurable, and sustainable way!

What is Take Action?

Girls create and carry out a Take Action project with every Journey they complete. The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards all require the completion of a Take Action project.

Overview of Take Action

A Take Action project is a chance for girls to partner with others in their community to solve a problem. They learn about getting to the root causes of issues, mobilizing and engaging community members and volunteers and striving toward creating a lasting change in their world. An important component is to understand and address the cause of a problem.

Girls must also make sure each project is sustainable and that the impact is measurable.

- **Sustainable:** Girls must plan to ensure that the project creates lasting change and is not a one-time event. (Collaborate with community leaders and/or organizations; creating relationships with mentors)
- **Measurable:** The success of the project can be determined based on the number of people the project helped, the number of people who were involved, any reduction in the community’s need, and other concrete numbers.

Steps of a Good Take Action Project

1. Girls identify assets and needs in a community.
2. Girls reach out beyond their circle to meet others. They try to meet people affected by their issue and seek people who are trying to solve it.
3. Girls decide what they will take action on.
4. Girls learn the steps needed to carry out an action plan.
5. Girls assist with project logistics.
6. Girls take action alongside community members.
7. Girls reflect on their action and assess what they gained from it. Girls celebrate their community accomplishments.

Girl Scout Camping

When Girl Scouts go outside and connect with nature in a girl-led setting, they grow in self-confidence, develop their leadership skills, and foster a passion for environmental stewardship. Many Girl Scouts will tell you that camping trips and summer camp are some of the best things about their Girl Scout experience.

Our Camp and Outdoor Program

With a troop camp-trained adult along, girls can go troop camping at one of our three beautiful camps throughout the school year. Summer brings day camps, and fun resident camps for our girls to enjoy. Summer opportunities are announced in January each year.

For more information about our camps check our website at www.girlscouts-ssc.org

Camp Properties

Camp Echo – Day Camp Nestled just outside downtown Boise, Camp Echo has so much fun to offer. With foothill walking trails just steps outside our front door, an expansive lawn area to play games, and access to a greenbelt bike trail minutes from camp, the possibilities are endless

Camp Alice Pittenger (CAP) – resident Camp

Located in beautiful McCall, Idaho on the shores of Payette Lake.

Camp Tam – Resident Camp Beautiful rustic camp in Swan Valley.

Property reservations can be requested by troops, service units, and Girl Scout and non-Girl Scout families throughout the year by completing the Property Reservation Request Form

Higher Awards

The Bronze Award - Once your troop becomes a Junior Girl Scout troop, girls are able to complete the first level of our higher awards. Girl Scout Juniors team up to make a difference in their community. They learn important leadership skills, discover new passions, and watch how seemingly small actions make a big difference. At this level, girls usually work together as a troop. Earning the Bronze Award includes completing one Junior Girl Scout Journey and a suggested 20+ hours of project planning, implementation, and promotion.

The Silver Award - Cadette Girl Scouts may earn this second-highest award. Girls will work individually or in small groups. Earning the Silver

Award includes completing one Cadette Girl Scout Journey and a suggested 50+ hours of project planning, implementation, and promotion.

The Gold Award - The highest Girl Scout award is an individual award and can be earned starting in 9th grade. Earning the Gold Award includes completing two Senior or Ambassador journeys or having earned the Silver Award and completing one Senior or Ambassador journey. Gold Awards usually take a minimum of 80 hours of project planning, implementation, and promotion to complete.

Additional information and Highest Award work books can be found at www.girlscouts-ssc.org

The Volunteer Toolkit: Your Digital Troop Assistant

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

This web-based program 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 Scouts experience and adventures, they will be more engaged and will have more fun! The VTK makes it easy for troop co-leaders and girls explore meeting topics and ideas available for their grade level together and select what they want to include in their year. Co-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 will be able to view your troop roster, update contact information, email your troop parents, record attendance at meetings, track girls' badge and Journey achievements, and renew memberships.

One-Click Communication

The VTK is not just for co-leaders, it's for parents, too! With its unique parent-view, parents 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 plan to them with just one click.

Learn more about the VTK

The VTK is accessible by logging into your MyGS. For more information about how to use the VTK, take the Volunteer Toolkit tutorial available via GS Learn.

Easy Navigation at your Fingertips!

Here are just a few of the many features you'll find inside the VTK. We strongly encourage troop co-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.
- Renew memberships.

YEAR PLANS

- Specify meeting dates and locations.
- Preview and choose pre-populated year plans.
- 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 nametags, 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 sale, and camp and outdoor programs.

FINANCES

- Submit the annual troop finance report and Bank statements.

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 approved volunteers (adults with current membership and non-expired background check on file), plus additional adult volunteers as necessary. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old and 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:

	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 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.

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 and when you don't know something and 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.

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 a snack, creating a thank you card, coloring a page to donate, etc.
- 2. Opening** – Each troop decides what they will do regularly. Begin with reciting the Girl Scout Promise & Law. Add a flag ceremony, 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.
- 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.

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 adjust 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!

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!

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! In the rest of your handbook, we have provided a simple set of meeting plans for you to use. More information on leading these badges can be found in your **Volunteer Toolkit**.

This is a great starting place for a troop to get started, but a troop isn't just about earning badges or Journeys, it really is 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. Girls will enjoy getting outdoors, performing community service, going on field trips and just hanging out together having fun and having new experiences. Two pieces of advice: keep it girl-led and keep it fun!

To help you create a well-rounded year in Girl Scouting, set up your troop calendar in your **Volunteer Toolkit**. **For help finding just the right balance, contact your Service Unit Mentor or your Membership Manager to set up a time to plan out your year together.**

Resources For Planning Meetings

In Person Meetings

Nothing replaces the need for girls' social interaction when they meet and plan together. Young girls thrive in a more structured environment. Having meetings twice a month is perfect and replacing troop meetings sometimes with pre-planned field trips is desired. It's a great idea to discuss this with your co-leader(s) and your troop families.

Safety Activity Checkpoints - Make sure to check [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) when planning activities or field trips. to ensure all safety requirements are met and have every parent complete the [Permission for Special Activities](#) form.

Troop Year Plan - Find even more badges, journeys, and activities broken down to help you! Located on our website, you can find info on how to work with girls and their families, great ideas for icebreakers and games, meeting virtually and in person, and more.

Council and Program Partner Programs - Take a break as a troop leader and sign your troop up for a Council program. Council educators and program partners offer many programs throughout the year, from badges to outdoor fun activities that your brownies will love. Check out our website's [event calendar](#) for available programs.



Planning your Girl Scout year

- Choose your dates – be sure to consider holidays and schedules.
- Decide how many Girl Scout meetings/activities a month the troop will do.
- We recommend you start with the badges included in this guide.
- Decide how the troop will choose meeting topics and activities. Remember to keep it girl-led.
- Have a list of ideas for the girls to vote on and when to do each, or have the girls bring ideas to your meeting for a vote.
- Alternate regular meetings with fun outings, field trips or events.
- Include a wide variety of activities for the girls to participate in throughout the year.
- Keep it age appropriate.
- Consider what the troop will do during inclement weather, illness, etc. Is virtual an option for your troop?
- Will the troop do one activity each month during the summer or be on a break?
- Remember to be flexible – be prepared for a meeting plan to run askew and adjust – keep it fun! If girls miss a meeting, it's okay. Making up a badge is voluntary.
- Take time to get to know the girls and their interests – make sure at least one meeting meets each girl's individual interests.
- As you plan your year, engage the parents with the girls – have each girl sign up to lead a meeting with her caregiver, she chooses the badge/activity and you serve as their mentor.

4 Girl Scout Pillars and The Girl Scout Promise & Law

- STEM
- Outdoors
- Life Skills
- Entrepreneurship

Other ideas to include

- Field Trips
- Service Unit Events
- Community Service
- Council-led Events
- GSSSC Patch Programs

Resources to help you plan

- Volunteer Toolkit
- GSSSC Volunteer Resources Page
- GSSSC Events Calendar
- Service Unit leader meetings
- Get ideas from experienced Troop Leaders
- GSUSA Badge booklets & Journeys

Example of how to plan your calendar

For meeting 1 & 2 each month – rotate badges/activities based on the 4 pillars

Month 1 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 2 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 3 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 4 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 5 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 6 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?
Month 7 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 8 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 9 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 10 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 11 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 12 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?

*GSSSC – Girl Scouts of Silver Sage

*GSUSA – Girl Scouts of the United States of America

Your Brownie Year-at-a-Glance

The Brownie Smile Song

I've got something in my pocket, it belongs across my face.

I keep it very close at hand, in a most convenient place.

I'm sure you couldn't guess it if you guessed a long, long while.

So I'll take it out and put it on, it's a Great Big Brownie Smile!

Here's to a great year in Girl Scouting!

The rest of this handbook feature badge suggestions for Year 1 and Year 2 of Brownies, These badge suggestions are meant to be used in conjunction with the Volunteer Toolkit. We hope this helps you gain confidence as you embark on your own Girl Scout journey.

For more information about taking your troop camping or going on a trip, see our website or contact your Membership Manager.

The Girl Scout's Leadership Experience

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 experience our unique environment and three processes

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

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

The "**Leadership Experience**" is the vehicle that distinguishes Girl Scouts from other youth organizations and the driver of amazing leadership outcomes!

WHY:

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












Outcomes, or benefits, of the Girl Scout experience include:

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

**BROWNIE
Year Plan**
1
**Try and
Explore**

Your Awesome Year as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Brownies are excited to discover all they can do and be. Whether they're learning to make their favorite snack or exploring a neighborhood vegetable garden, Brownies are figuring out who they are and how being their authentic selves makes them an important part of their community. As their leader, you get a front-row seat to all this action! You will guide your Girl Scouts through activities focused on exploration, confidence, and practical skills that will help them become their best selves. When you use this plan to map out your 90-minute meetings and activities, you'll see just how simple it can be to make a huge difference in your Girl Scouts' lives. Get ready for a year of adventure and excitement as you help them grow.

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family welcome party 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings plus field trip: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Art Creator (parts one and two) • Field trip 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings plus service project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanical Engineering: Race Car (parts one and two) • Service Project 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin
JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Cookie Customers (parts one and two) 	  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings plus outing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snacks (parts one and two) • World Thinking Day event 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings plus field trip: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girl Scout Way (parts one and two) • Field trip 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bugs (parts one and two)
COOKIE TIME The cookie program helps troops pay for things like field trips, badges, supplies, and celebrations. Reach out to your council to learn more about how to participate and when your local cookie season starts. You may need to adjust the recommended order of earning the cookie badges in your year plan.			
My council cookie sale dates:			
MAY	SUMMER	Choose a way to get started... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1: Access online instructions to plan your activities through the free Volunteer Toolkit (myGS.girlscouts.org). Simply log in, choose "Explore," then "Pre-Selected Tracks." Once you're there, you'll find "TRY AND EXPLORE". Select that you're set! • Option 2: Shop our printed activities at girlscouts-of-silver-sage.shoplightspeed.com. 	
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One meeting plus field trip: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End-of-year celebration • Field trip 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge 		

Tips and Resources

- When you have the opportunity to get outside, go for a small trip, or simply meet in a new space, do it! Shaking things up once in a while keeps things exciting.
- Check with your council to see if they're offering events or activities that your troop could attend. Those events make life easier for you and allow your troop to connect with other Girl Scouts from their area.
- Discover more possibilities for your troop at Girl Scout Badge Explorer (girlscouts.org/badgeexplorer).
- Stay up to date with the latest in Girl Scout activities (girlscouts.org/newactivities).
- Find fun videos, how-to's, and more at Girl Scout Activity Zone (girlscouts.org/activityzone).
- Shop year plan printed resources at girl-scouts-of-silver-sage.shoplightspeed.com.



Girl Scouts Choose

If one of the recommended badges is not the right fit, or if you want to give your Girl Scouts the chance to shape their own experience, have them vote to choose a different badge within the same focus area.

STEM



or

- Fling Flyer Design
- Brownie Inventor
- Brownie Letterbox
- Digital Leadership

Outdoors



or

- Hiker
- Senses
- Cabin Camper
- Brownie Trail Adventure

Life Skills



or

- Resilient. Ready. Strong. (patch)
- First Aid
- Painting
- Pets

Entrepreneurship




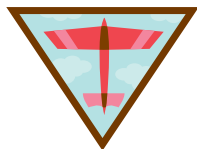








or

- Cookie Decision Maker
- Budget Builder
- My Own Budget
- Budding Entrepreneur

BROWNIE
Year Plan
2
Try and Explore

Your Awesome Year as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Third grade Brownies are proud of their abilities and excited to show the world what they're made of. Whether they're flexing their business skills at a cookie booth or learning how to help in emergency situations, they're taking pride in who they are and what they have to offer their community. As their leader, you'll be amazed at your Brownies' capabilities and bravery in trying new things. This guide will help you as your Girl Scouts explore activities focused on discovery, confidence, and practical skills that will help them become their best selves. When you use this plan to map out your 90-minute meetings and activities, you'll see just how simple it can be to make a huge difference in your Girl Scouts' lives. Get ready for a year of adventure and excitement as you help them grow.

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back to troop 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings plus service project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flying Flyer (parts one and two) • Hunger Service Project 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate Community (parts one and two) 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin
JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cookie Decision Maker (Parts one and two) 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings plus event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making Friends (parts one and two) • World Thinking Day event 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings plus field trip: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senses (parts one and two) • Field trip 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings plus field trip: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid (part one) • Service project • Field trip
COOKIE TIME The cookie program helps troops pay for things like field trips, badges, supplies, and celebrations. Reach out to your council to learn more about how to participate and when your local cookie season starts. You may need to adjust the recommended order of earning the cookie badges in your year plan.		My council cookie sale dates:	
MAY	SUMMER	Choose a way to get started...	
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One meeting plus celebration and overnight: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid (part two) • End-of-year bridging celebration • Overnight 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flag Ceremony • Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1: Access online instructions to plan your activities through the free Volunteer Toolkit (myGS.girlscouts.org). Simply log in, choose "Explore," then "Pre-Selected Tracks." Once you're there, you'll find "TRY AND EXPLORE". Select that you're set! • Option 2: Shop our printed activities at girl-scouts-of-silver-sage.shoplightspeed.com. 	

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Girl Scouts Choose

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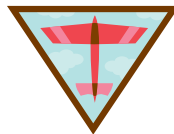
STEM



or

- Fling Flyer Design
- Brownie Inventor
- Brownie Letterbox
- Digital Leadership

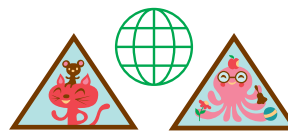
Outdoors



or

- Hiker
- Senses
- Cabin Camper
- Brownie Trail Adventure

Life Skills



or

- Resilient. Ready. Strong. (patch)
- First Aid
- Painting
- Pets

Entrepreneurship



or

- Cookie Decision Maker
- Budget Builder
- My Own Budget
- Budding Entrepreneur



Travel Progression

Individual Travel

Individual Girl Scouts can sign up for independent travel and meet new Girl Scout friends through council-offered travel opportunities or GSUSA's Destinations program.

Recommended for: Senior, Ambassador

Minimum age: Cadette (with Extended Trip experience in Girl Scouting)

International Trip

Travel the world! These life-changing trips usually take two to three years to save for, plan, and prepare.

Recommended for: Senior, Ambassador

Minimum age: Cadette (with Extended Trip experience in Girl Scouting)

Extended Trip

Travel the country! Extended trips last four or more nights OR take place more than a six-hour drive from home.

Recommended for: Cadette, Senior, Ambassador

Minimum age: Junior (with Short Trip experience in Girl Scouting)

Short Trip

Spend two to three nights in your region, up to a six-hour drive away from home. Girl Scouts plan budget and schedule.

Recommended for: Junior, Cadette

Minimum age: Brownie (with Overnight experience in Girl Scouting)

Overnight

Help Girl Scouts plan their first single overnight—maybe at a council event, camp, or nearby attraction.

Recommended for: Brownie, Junior

Minimum age: Daisy (with Day Trip experience in Girl Scouting)

Day Trip

Plan an all-day trip. Try a council event or local attraction.

Recommended for: Daisy, Brownie, Junior

Minimum age: Daisy

Local Field Trip

Visit a nearby spot, possibly during your regular meeting time.

Recommended for: Daisy, Brownie

Minimum age: Daisy

When moving up to the next step, consider each Girl Scout's independence, ability to work well in groups, flexibility, and experience with cultures other than their own.

Through progression, Girl Scouts build skills to become lifelong travelers and global citizens. Girl Scouts take the lead in planning a new adventure at every level.