

Girl Scouts of Maine 2024-2026 Volunteer Handbook

New Leader's Guide to Success



Welcome to Girl Scouts!

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

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

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

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

WELCOME LETTER FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

Welcome and thank you for volunteering! As a volunteer, you play an essential role in delivering our mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

We recognize that you have many responsibilities and commitments in your day job, your life, your community, etc. You are choosing to dedicate extra time so that girls across our state can learn, grow, and thrive in a safe and supportive environment. You are ensuring our Girl Scouts feel included, accepted, valued, and appreciated.

The leadership, wisdom, caring, and experiences you share will have an impact on the lives of all you connect with. They will know that they can be unapologetically themselves thanks to you.

We are grateful for all you are doing and will do. On behalf of Girl Scouts of Maine, and all the Girl Scouts you are about to guide, thank you for your gift of volunteering.

Yours in Girl Scouting,
Mara Robinov-Moorhead



You—A Girl Scout Leader!

Being a Girl Scout leader is an incredible journey along which you'll shape the future by working with girls today. With your guidance, encouragement, and go-getting spirit, your Girl Scouts will be ready to embark on a lifetime of leadership, success, and adventure. And along the way, you'll hone your own leadership style and discover that you'll achieve more than you thought possible!

In Girl Scouting, leadership is about more than “being in charge” or having a title; it's recognizing that you're part of a team and understanding that team's needs and interests.



Leadership is teaching girls:

- That they can do and be anything!
- That they are decision-makers and should own their decisions
- How to live the Girl Scout Law by modeling it for them

As a leader, see yourself as a coach who:

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

It's important to remember that:

- You can't expect to know everything the girls want to learn
- You'll explore and learn alongside your girls and grow your confidence in the process
- You're not expected to know everything about Girl Scouting, but you should know where to go for information—and to ask for help when you need it



Let's Get Started!

Managing Your Member Experience Online

After your background check is completed and you're approved to serve as a volunteer, you'll receive an email prompting you to log into MyGS, your Girl Scout member community. MyGS allows you to manage your member experience online.

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

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

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

Next Steps

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

Congratulations! You're a troop leader!

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

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

Additional Opportunities With Learning for you:

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



Troop Leader Training Path

When you're set up for success, you'll be empowered to set up your troop for success! To help you become the best leader you can be, we offer in-person workshops, online training courses, and other great resources. Get started by logging into *Troop Volunteers, part 1: the Adventure Begins!* It's an online course found in gsLearn that takes about an hour to complete. When at least two leaders have completed the online course, you can meet with your troop! After you have completed *Troop Volunteers, part 1: the Adventure Begins*, please follow the steps in your welcome email to schedule your welcome zoom. As soon as you schedule those first two troop meetings, will you please go online to register for *Troop Volunteers, part 2: the Adventure Continues?* This is our face-to-face class offered virtually and in person, designed specifically to answer those unexpected questions that come up in the first few meetings.

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

Volunteer Resources

The Volunteer Toolkit

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is your official source for delivering easy, fun troop meetings year-round! This fully customizable digital planning tool provides you with Girl Scout program content, award requirements, and other resources, so you can keep your Girl Scout year running smoothly. Accessible on any computer, tablet, or mobile device, the Volunteer Toolkit lets troop leaders:

- Explore meeting topics and program activities with their girls
- Print step-by-step activity guides and shopping list
- Manage girl attendance and track achievements
- Manage Activities: add custom, or council activities to your year plan. Please use the keyword search for council activities.
- Edit the troop roster and update contact information
- Track and share financial information
- Message and share meeting activities with troop families

Safety Activity Checkpoints

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

http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscouts-girlscoutsofmaine/documents/Safety_Activity_Checkpoints.pdf



Volunteer Essentials

With key information, policies, and procedures that support the safe and consistent delivery of Girl Scout programming to girls across the council, Volunteer Essentials is just that—essential. By agreeing to be a Girl Scout volunteer, you agree to follow the items outlined in this resource. Volunteer Essentials is updated biannually, and the newest version can always be found on our website. Find it at <http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscouts-girlscoutsofmaine/documents/Volunteer-Essentials.pdf>

Tips for Troop Leaders

When you're looking for real-world advice from fellow troop leaders who've been there, this volunteer-to-volunteer resource on the Girl Scouts of the USA website has the tips you need for a successful troop year. Find it at girlscouts.org/tipsfortroopleaders.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

What makes Girl Scouts truly unique? Everything is designed especially for, and is tested by, girls! Our program centers around our research-backed Girl Scout Leadership Experience—that is, what girls do and how they do it. Activities are girl-led, which gives them opportunities to explore leadership roles and “learn by doing” in a cooperative-learning environment.

In Girl Scouts, girls will:

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

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

Take Action: As girls connect with and show care for others, they become eager to take action to make the world a better place.

So what does this mean for your troop? Through Girl Scouting, your girls will develop a strong sense of self, demonstrate positive values, seek challenges, solve significant problems in their community, and establish healthy relationships. These aren't just good qualities—they're leadership skills that will last a lifetime!

What is the Girl Scout Program?

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

 STEM Computer science, engineering, robotics, and more.	 Life Skills Civic engagement, healthy living, global citizenship, and communication skills.	 Outdoors Adventure and skill building, including camping experiences for all age levels; from the backyard to the backcountry.	 Entrepreneurship Goal setting, decision making, money management, business ethics, and people skills.
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Whether they complete Girl Scout Leadership Journeys, earn badges, unleash their inner entrepreneur through the Girl Scout Cookie Program, pack for their first hike, change the world through “Take Action” projects, or any combination of these activities, at Girl Scouts, all girls have countless ways to explore our four program pillars and hone the skills they’ll need to power a lifetime of success—whatever that looks like for them.

Explore the many exciting possibilities with the Award and Badge Explorer at https://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/badges/badge_explorer.html.

Where Girl Scouts Can Take Your Girls

As your girls progress through Girl Scouts, they’ll learn to take the reins and make their Girl Scout experiences their own—it’s what being girl-led is all about! And as a leader, you’ll encourage them to dream big and challenge themselves as they take their newfound passions to the next level.

While program elements—like outdoor expeditions and entrepreneurial ventures—align across all grade levels, Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies won’t be doing the same activities as seasoned Seniors and Ambassadors. But by building on the knowledge and skills they gain year after year, your girls’ confidence will grow exponentially, and they’ll be eager to take those next steps.

So what can you expect as they grow through each level of Girl Scouting?

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

Girl Scout Brownies work together as they earn badges and explore their communities. Friendship, fun, and age-appropriate activities begin at the Girl Scout Brownie meeting and move out to the community and the wider world. While earning badges, Brownies build skills, learn hobbies, and have fun!

Girl Scout Juniors are big-idea thinkers. They’re explorers at camp and product designers when they earn their Innovation and Storytelling badges, or even their Bronze Award. Every day, they wake up ready to play a new role.

Girl Scout Cadettes chart their own courses and let their curiosity and imagination lead the way. They learn about the power of being a good friend, gain confidence by mentoring younger girls, and can earn their Silver Award.

Girl Scout Seniors are ready to take the world by storm, and Girl Scouts gives them countless ways to do it. Their experiences shape their world, while giving them a safe space to be themselves and explore their interests. Seniors can earn their Gold Award to change the world in a tangible, lasting way.

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

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



What Makes a Successful Troop Experience?

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



Guiding Your Troop Experience

In leading a new troop, you'll want to guide the structure and experiences of your troop—from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, and from steering girl-led activities to setting financial expectations. You'll make these decisions collaboratively with your co-leader or leadership team, as well as with input from the girls and their parents/caregivers.

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

Meeting logistics:

- When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?
- Where will we meet? (Troop leader pro tip: great meeting spaces include schools, places of worship, libraries, and community centers. If working with teens, consider meeting at coffee shops, bookstores, or another place they enjoy.)

Your troop:

- Will our troop consist of girls in a single grade level or facilitated as a multi-level troop with girls of many grade levels?

Troop communication:

- How often will we communicate with troop families?
- How will we keep families in the loop? The Volunteer Toolkit? Emails? Group texts?

Money matters:

- Will our troop have dues?
- How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? What should our financial plan look like?
- Which components of the uniform—the tunic, sash, or vest—will troop families need to purchase? (Troop leader pro tip: get the full rundown on uniforms and insignia at www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/uniforms.html).

Your Troop Leadership Team

It takes a village to lift up the next generation of leaders; you don't have to embark on your troop leader journey alone! Set the stage for a successful troop year by tapping into the people resources already at your fingertips: caregivers and other family members, friends, and members of the community! They have their own unique strengths and can provide troops with time, experience, and ideas—so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your troop leadership team!

Some members of your leadership team might play more active roles than others—and that's OK! One caregiver in your troop might step up as a dedicated troop treasurer, while others might volunteer to chaperone a field trip. Some roles, especially those that involve handling troop funds and supervising girls, require additional registration and approval. Be sure those volunteers get signed up before they jump into the fun!



Family Connections: The Key Ingredient to Successful Girl Scout Troops!

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls when families step up and play an active part in the troop. Without meaningful support from parents, it's difficult for a troop to be all it can be. Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing!

Kick the Year Off Right With a Family Meeting

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

Why? Because it helps:



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

Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging families in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When families are involved, leaders have support, and when the troop has a plan, girls benefit!

Check out our step-by-step guide and family meeting outline in the Volunteer Toolkit. (Remember, you can access the Volunteer Toolkit via MyGS!) This hour-long meeting will make all the difference in the year ahead: 100% of troops with the most satisfied parents and troop leaders report they hold parent meetings. You'll also want to hold an additional family meeting ahead of cookie season to introduce parents and caregivers to the program and how they can pitch in.

And remember to make family part of the formula! While Girl Scout programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it's important and helpful to open a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting a whole crew to celebrate her accomplishments in Girl Scouting—whether at a holiday open house, a bridging ceremony, or a fun “reverse meeting” where girls guide the adults, including caregivers, through an activity—will help parents better understand the value of Girl Scouts and be more likely to invest their time and talents with the troop.

That said, there's no need to wait for one of these special events to engage parents in their Girl Scouts' troop lives. Keep communication lines open throughout the year—whether it's through your troop's social media page, personal emails, or in-person chats—to keep parents in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting, and encourage them to let their daughters “be the expert” at home, for example, by explaining or teaching a new skill she's learned to the rest of the family.



Let's Go—You're First Troop Meeting!

Your first troop meeting is a great chance to get to know the girls and brainstorm all the exciting things they want to do in the year to come. If you're feeling a little nervous about leading troop meetings and experiences with your girls, that's OK! Just remember that:

It doesn't need to be perfect. Did an activity run over time? Or maybe a field trip didn't go according to plan? Take a deep breath, roll with the changes, and have fun! The girls aren't expecting perfection from you: your time, attention, and guidance are the best part of your leadership.

Learn with your girls. Keeping activities girl-led also means that at some point, the girls will want to earn a badge or complete a project in a subject unfamiliar to you. But don't let that hold you back! Be open with the girls when you don't know something and become their partner in learning more. You'll show them that learning is a lifelong process and that with an open mind, they can overcome any challenges that come their way.

Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

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

- 1. Start up.** Plan activities for the girls on arrival at the meeting so they have something to do until the meeting begins. This could be as simple as coloring pages, journaling, or talking with one another. (5 minutes)
- 2. Opening.** Each troop decides how to open its meetings—most begin with the Girl Scout Promise and Law, a simple flag ceremony, song, game, story, or other activity designed by the girls. (5–10 Minutes)
- 3. Troop business.** Collect dues and make announcements, or discuss an upcoming event or trip while families are present. (5 minutes)
- 4. Activities.** Let the fun begin. Use the meeting plans found in the Volunteer Toolkit! Activities are already designed to fit easily into this part of your meeting as you help your troop earn badges and complete Journeys. (30–45 minutes)
- 5. Clean up.** Because Girl Scouts should always leave a place cleaner than they found it! (5 minutes)
- 6. Closing.** Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close—with a song, a game, a friendship circle, a story, or pretty much anything else! (5–10 minutes)

First meeting checklist:

1. Cover the basics. Review the details about when and where the meeting will take place and make sure parents/caregivers are aware.
2. Get ready. Use the Volunteer Toolkit to verify your troop roster and email parents. This might be a great time to ask parents to provide you with any needed items, such as health history forms, uniform order forms, and troop dues.
3. Know the agenda. Refer to our “Six Elements of a Troop Meeting” list and the Volunteer Toolkit sample meeting agenda.
4. Review and practice your agenda. You'll feel calmer during the actual meeting and ready to make adjustments as needed.
5. Prepare for fun! When the girls and parents see that you're prepared for the meeting and ready to have a great time, they'll follow your lead!



Keeping Girls Safe

Understanding How Many Volunteers You Need

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

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

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

Planning Safe Activities

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

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

What to Do in an Emergency

Although we all hope the worst never happens, you should know and follow GSME's procedures for handling emergency incidents. Remember, at the scene of an incident, safety is your first priority. Provide care for the injured person and/or obtain medical assistance, then immediately report the emergency to 888-922-4763.

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity. You may need to provide the kit if one is not already available at your meeting location. You must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of our council office, parents/caregivers of your girls, and emergency services such as the police, fire department, and hospital.



Funding the Fun

Your girls probably have some big ideas about what they want to do in Girl Scouts—and that’s awesome! As a troop leader, you’ll coach them as they learn to earn and manage troop funds. But where do you start?

Troop activities are powered in two main ways:

Troop dues: Many troops decide to collect troop dues to help provide startup funds for troop activities and supplies. These could range from a dollar or two per meeting to a lump sum for the entire school year. It’s up to each troop to decide what works best for them to support the activities they want to do. Be sensitive to family limitations.

Money-earning activities: The fall product and cookie programs are the primary money-earning activities for a troop—and they’re a hands-on way for girls to learn money management skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives. You’ll learn the ins-and-outs of these programs in a separate training.

We know you have more questions about troop finances, and we’ve got answers! Check out the troop finances portion in Volunteer Essentials and bring your questions to Troop Volunteers, part 2 for the details you’ll need to keep troop business running smoothly.

Money FAQs

Our three most frequently asked about troop finance topics:

Opening a bank account: New troops will need to set up a bank account to collect dues, pay for troop supplies and activities, and collect product sales revenue. Volunteer Essentials and the GSME Troop Banking and Finance Guidelines break down the process for you.

Financial assistance: Finances shouldn’t stand in the way of a Girl Scout’s participation. Any girl needing financial assistance for membership can request it as part of the online member registration process.

Tax exemption: Councils are 501(c)(3) nonprofits, so take advantage of your council’s tax-exempt form when purchasing supplies and materials for Girl Scout troop use.



Organizational Structure

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

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

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA):

A national organization supporting the work of more than 100 councils across the U.S. for more than 100 years, headquartered in New York City.

Girl Scouts of Maine (GSME):

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

Your Local Service Unit:

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

Troops:

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



Quick Reference

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

Or anything else please contact:

Customer Care at CustomerCare@gsmaine.org or 888-922-4763

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:

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

Council Contact Information

Where we are located and how to connect

SERVICE CENTERS

South Portland Service Center and Shop

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

Bangor Service Center

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

SHOP HOURS:

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



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



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



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



[HTTPS://WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/COMPANY/
GIRL-SCOUTS-OF-MAINE](https://www.linkedin.com/company/girl-scouts-of-maine/)

For up-to-date shop hours, mobile shop dates, and closures, visit our website,
or shop online 24/7 at: <http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/en/our-council/shop-info.html>

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customercare@gsmaine.org

