

2024-2026  
Girl Scouts of Maine

# Volunteer Handbook



**girl scouts**   
of maine



# Terms and Conditions

**By selecting a Girl Scouts of Maine volunteer role and/or initiating the volunteer on-boarding process, you agree to comply with the following Terms and Conditions:**

- I agree to abide by the Council's Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct.
- I agree to a background check in order to help ensure the safety of the girls served through Girl Scouting. I understand that volunteering with GSME is a privilege, and not a right.
- I understand that I may not hold a volunteer position if I have any debt with GSME (whether related to cookie sales or otherwise), have committed a felony, or reside with a registered sex offender.
- I agree to make the necessary time commitment and take the necessary training to fulfill my volunteer role.
- I agree to respect and maintain the confidentiality of information that I am exposed to while serving as a volunteer. I will treat all such information as confidential. Examples of privileged information include intellectual property, products and services (including software), personal contact information on members and staff, financial information and health/medical information.
- I agree to comply with the policies and operational procedures outlined in Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints in addition to any specific procedures applicable to any role which I may accept.

# Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct

Girl Scouts of Maine (GSME) supports adults who prepare girls to seek and meet the challenges of an ever-changing society. GSME agrees to treat volunteers with respect and dignity and to protect confidential information, and further agrees to provide a position description, learning opportunities, and support necessary for the volunteer position.

## The 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.

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

## High Ethical Standards

GSME is committed to high ethical standards and we expect all volunteers to act in the best interest of the organization and its mission. This mission demands that we act in an ethical manner to uphold the public trust and the values of responsibility, integrity, openness, honesty, accountability, and respect in all that we do in the name of Girl Scouts.

## The 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.

## In my capacity as a GSME Volunteer I agree to uphold these values and I will:

1. Affirm the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
  2. Take all required trainings and comply with all Girl Scout policies, procedures, and safety guidelines.
  3. Welcome girls and adults from a variety of backgrounds and include them in my group activities.
  4. Behave in a manner that models the ideals and values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law and ensure that all verbal or written communications (including telephone conversations, emails, texts, newsletters, and electronic and social media) do not contain profanity or condescending remarks. I will refrain from inappropriate displays of anger, aggression, or berating of individuals.
  5. Honor the leadership of the girls and support their decisions.
  6. Act responsibly when overseeing Girl Scout funds, maintain accurate records, and file required reports. Girl Scout funds are only to be used in direct support of Girl Scout programs and to pay for appropriate Girl Scout expenses.
  7. Not use any volunteer position for personal, political, or monetary gain.
- I understand that if I do not comply with the above standards or if I otherwise act in a way that negatively impacts the image or goals of GSME, I may be released from any volunteer role with GSME.

# Girl Scouts of Maine 2024-2026 Volunteer Handbook

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# 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](mailto: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](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](http://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:

 <b>STEM</b> Computer science, engineering, robotics, and more.	 <b>Life Skills</b> Civic engagement, healthy living, global citizenship, and communication skills.	 <b>Outdoors</b> Adventure and skill building, including camping experiences for all age levels; from the backyard to the backcountry.	 <b>Entrepreneurship</b> 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](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](http://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](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](mailto: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):**

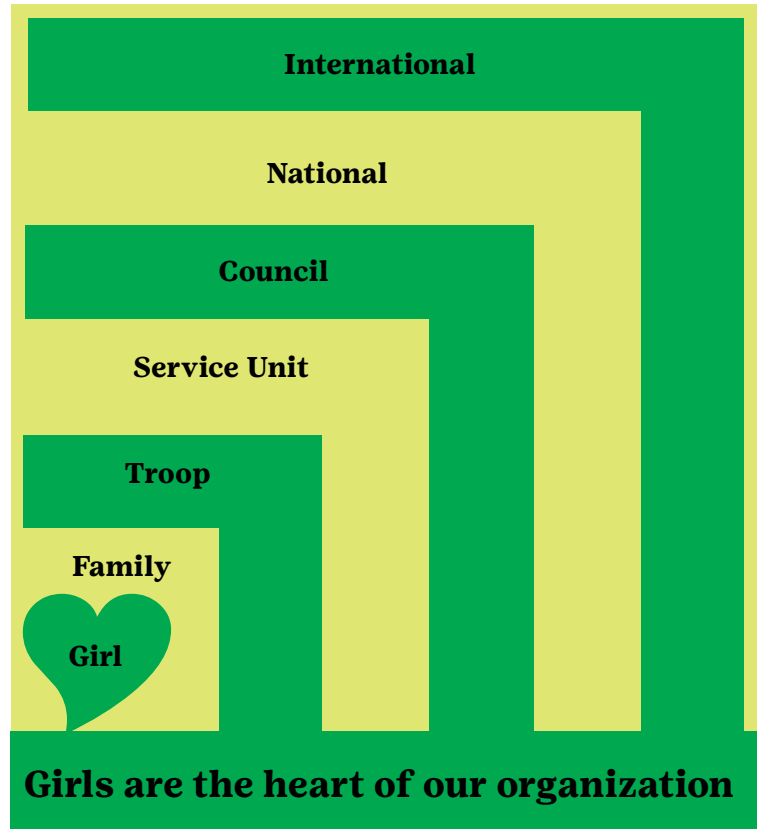
Independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit chartered by GSUSA, operating under the direction of a local board of directors, and overseeing all service units and troops within a specific geographic area.

## **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](mailto: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)



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GIRLSCOUTSOFMAINE/](HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GIRLSCOUTSOFMAINE/)



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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>

[www.girlscoutsofmaine.org](http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org) | 888-922-4763  
[customercare@gsmaine.org](mailto:customercare@gsmaine.org)





# Girl Scouts of Maine 2024-2026 Volunteer Handbook

## Volunteer Essentials



# Adventure Ahead!

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you are a community-builder, mentor, champion of fun, and a role model for what it means to lead with your heart. And because of you and other volunteers like you, Girl Scouts of all ages have the opportunity to discover that a little imagination can go a long way as they chase their dreams, explore the world around them, take action to improve their communities, and make the world a better place.

Thank you and welcome! We're glad you're here!

## What's Inside?

This guide is designed to support you as a Girl Scout volunteer. Inside you will discover essential information that is easy to access and even easier to come back to. We recommend that you begin by browsing the sections below and come back throughout the year to find answers to your questions as they arise. Each title links to its own section, and you will also find links to additional resources throughout this document.

- All About Girl Scouts
- Troop Management
- Troop Finances
- Engaging Girl Scouts by Level
- Creating a Safe Space for Girl Scouts
- Engaging Families
- Girl Scout Product Programs
- Additional Resources and Support

Are you a new troop leader? We have resources designed especially for you. Plus, council staff and volunteer coaches are ready to help throughout your first year and beyond! The New Leader Guide to Success is at the beginning of this Volunteer Handbook and you can find even more on the New Leader Resources page of our website!

Check out our website in general for great resources, links to MyGS/VTK (the Volunteer Toolkit!), and gsLearn. You'll also find a link to our council shop for all of your Girl Scout uniform, programs, and cool Girl Scout merch needs!

If you have questions, please call Customer Care at 207-772-1177 or email at [CustomerCare@gsmaine.org](mailto:CustomerCare@gsmaine.org)



<https://www.facebook.com/GirlScoutsofMaine/>



<https://www.instagram.com/girlscoutsofmaine/>



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/girl-scouts-of-maine>



<https://www.pinterest.com/girlscoutsofme/>





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# All About Girl Scouts

Girl Scouts' dreams are our dreams. A Girl Scout builds a better world—just as Girl Scouts have been doing for over a century. With programs in every zip code, coast-to-coast and around the globe, everyone can find their place in Girl Scouts and start creating the world they want to see.

## Girl Scout Volunteers

Girl Scout volunteers are a dynamic and diverse group. Whether you're a recent college graduate, parent, retiree, or really, anyone with a sense of curiosity and adventure (of any gender, who is 18 years or older and has passed their council's screening process), your unique skills and experiences have the power to change lives. With you as their mentor, Girl Scouts will grow and thrive.

All Girl Scout members are united by the values in the Girl Scout Promise and Law and their shared commitment to embrace leadership in all forms. Each member agrees to follow Girl Scouts safety guidelines and pay annual membership dues. Adult members also have the option to purchase a Lifetime membership.

## Girls at Every Grade Level

You can join Girl Scouts at any point from kindergarten through twelfth grade:

- Girl Scout Daisy (grades K-1)
- Girl Scout Brownie (grades 2-3)
- Girl Scout Junior (grades 4-5)
- Girl Scout Cadette (grades 6-8)
- Girl Scout Senior (grades 9-10)
- Girl Scout Ambassador (grades 11-12)



## Inclusion

Girl Scouts has a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion, and we welcome and embrace individuals of all abilities and backgrounds into our wonderful sisterhood.

Inclusion is at the core of who we are; it's about being a sister to every Girl Scout and celebrating our unique strengths. To create an inclusive environment, the most important thing is that all Girl Scouts feel seen for who they are and what they bring to the group. Through treating all Girl Scouts with kindness and respect, you can nurture an inclusive troop environment. Part of the important work you will do includes modeling friendship and kindness for your Girl Scouts and showing them what it means to practice empathy.

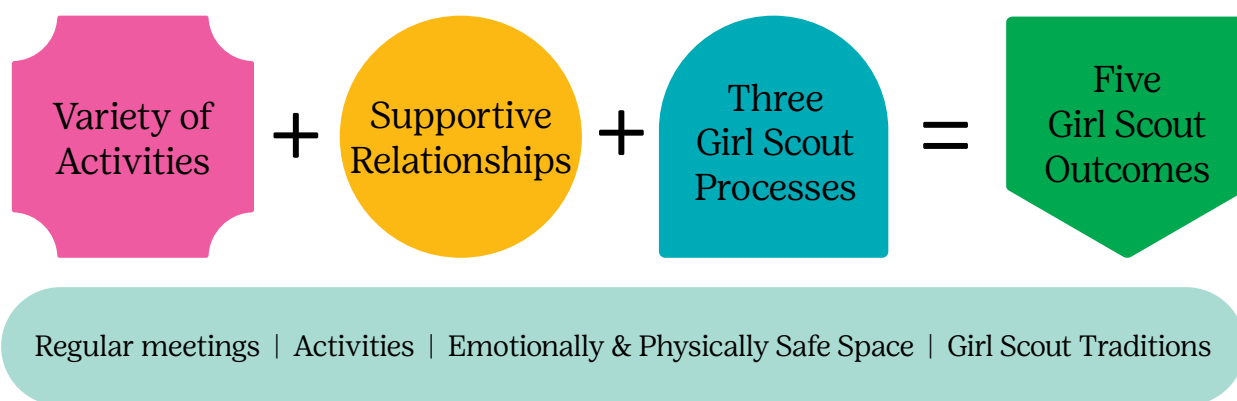
A critical component of inclusion is that everyone is able to participate. When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of everyone involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, dietary requirements, religious observances, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

For more information on GSME's stance and commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, please see this page of our website. <https://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/en/discover/about/diversity-equity-and-inclusion.html>



## The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

# The Girl Scout Leadership Experience



In Girl Scouts, everything centers around the Girl Scout. Our program is designed by, with, and for Girl Scouts. The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) is our research-based impact model that describes what members do in Girl Scouts, who they do it with, how they do it, and how they benefit. This framework should be a blueprint for every activity that your Girl Scouts participate in. When planning your year, make sure that you're implementing all parts of the GSLE regularly.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience has been purposefully designed to include a variety of fun and challenging activities to help Girl Scouts learn, grow, and thrive. Girl Scouts have the opportunity to take on leadership roles and learn-by-doing in a safe, fun, and cooperative environment. When we say variety of activities, we mean that each year Girl Scouts participate in at least four out of five of the following:

- National Program Portfolio (badges, Journeys, awards)
- Outdoor or camping experience
- Community service and/or Take Action projects
- Field trip and/or events beyond the troop meeting place
- Cookie program

Supportive relationships mean that troop leaders care about their troop, encourage their creative thinking, are inclusive, and provide a safe space. As a result, Girl Scouts experience positive relationships with their peers and a feeling of belonging. As a **supportive adult**, you are crucial to the success of the Girl Scout Program. Supportive adult relationships are strongly linked to experiencing the GSLE with a critical link between the **supportive adult** and the three processes. When Girl Scouts feel supported and safe, they are more likely to achieve our outcomes and ultimately our mission.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience draws on three unique processes—**Girl-led, Learning by doing**, and **Cooperative learning**—that encourage Girl Scouts to try new things, write their own



stories, and develop the skills and confidence to say, “I know I can do this!”

- **Girl-Led.** Girl Scouts take the lead, no matter their age. From selecting the badges they’ll pursue to how they’ll organize an activity; Girl Scouts have the opportunity to follow their dreams and grow their skills—and gain the confidence that comes with that.
- **Learning by Doing.** Participatory activities are fun for Girl Scouts of any age, but they also help them feel empowered to shape their own experience. Girl Scouts unlock their “I got this” attitude as they discover they can always dust themselves off and try again when things don’t go according to plan.
- **Cooperative Learning.** There’s power in having a tight-knit group of friends who will learn with you, grow with you, and always cheer you on. Girl Scouts experience firsthand that teamwork, respect, and collaboration can fuel them through any challenge that comes their way.

As a volunteer, you’ll draw on these **three processes** as you lead Girl Scouts of any age. And naturally, girl-led at the Daisy level will look very different from girl-led at the Ambassador level. What is most important is that your Girl Scouts make decisions about the activities they will do *together* and make choices as they’re doing the activities *together*. As they learn from their successful and not so successful tries, they gain confidence. All Girl Scouts should have the opportunity to lead within their peer group. By the time they are Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, they will be using the leadership skills they’ve developed to take on more ownership of their activities, mentor younger Girl Scouts, and take action to make the world a better place.

And finally, when we incorporate a **variety of activities, supportive adults, and the three processes**, Girl Scouts experience the **5 GSLE outcomes**:

- **Strong Sense of Self.** Girl Scouts have confidence in themselves and their abilities and form positive identities.
- **Positive Values.** Girl Scouts act ethically, honestly, and responsibly, and show concern for others, even when no one is watching.
- **Challenge Seeking.** Girl Scouts learn to take appropriate risks, try things even if they might fail, and learn from mistakes.
- **Healthy Relationships.** Girl Scouts develop and maintain healthy relationships by communicating their feelings directly and resolving conflicts constructively.
- **Community Problem Solving.** Girl Scouts desire to contribute to the world in purposeful and meaningful ways, learn how to identify problems in the community, and create “action plans” to solve them.

The outcomes occur as a result of regular meetings and activities including Girl Scout traditions, in an emotionally and physically safe space, with a supportive adult.

Although they may also build their leadership skills in school and on sports teams, research shows that the courage, confidence, and character Girl Scouts specifically develop stays with them throughout their lives. Our program and outcomes are based on research, and our studies show that Girl Scouting has a measurable positive impact on Girl Scouts. In fact, we can proudly say Girl Scouts are almost 10 percent more likely than non-Girl Scouts to have positive expectations about their future based on our studies. We encourage you to learn more about our program and outcomes as you check out our studies and in-depth research for insights and information.

One last tip: Girl Scouting **is not** a to-do list, so please don’t feel that checking activities off a list is more important than tuning in to what interests them and sparks their imaginations. Projects don’t have to come out perfectly—in fact, it’s a valuable learning experience when they don’t and you can talk together about why—and Girl Scouts don’t have to fill their vests and sashes with badges. What matters most is the fun and learning that takes place as they make experiences their own, so don’t be afraid to step back and let your Girl Scouts take the lead. In fact, invite them to.



## Reflection

Was a badge-earning activity a resounding success? Or was it derailed by something your troop hadn't factored in? No matter the activity's outcome, you can amplify its impact by encouraging your Girl Scouts to reflect on their latest endeavor.

Reflection is the necessary debrief that reinforces what is learned. As your Girl Scouts explore the whats and whys, they'll make meaningful connections between the activity at hand and future challenges that come their way. In other words, reflection gives them the confidence boost they need to pick themselves up, try again, and succeed.

Keep in mind that reflection does not need to be a formal process, but you can kick-start the conversation with three simple questions: What? So what? and Now what?

**What? Go over the “what” of the activity. For example, ask:**

- What did we do today?
- What happened?
- What was that like for you?
- What part was your favorite?

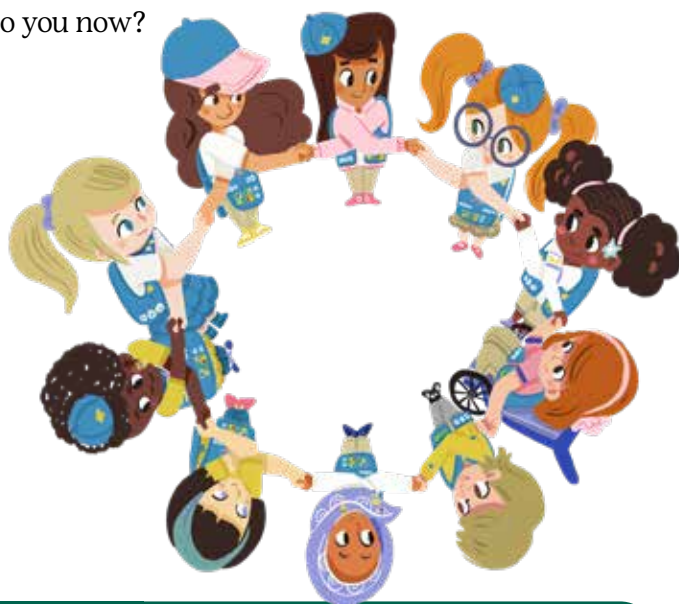
**So what? Next, move to the “so what.” You might ask:**

- So, what did you learn by doing this activity?
- So, what did you learn about yourself?
- So, what did you learn about your community (or environment, school, or others) that you didn't know before?
- Why do you think this activity was important?
- What key learning can we take with us?

**Now what? Then, review the now what. Say something like:**

- Now that we've done this, what would you do differently if you did it again?
- Now that you know this about yourselves, what would you like to try next?
- Now that we've completed this Take Action project, what do you think we should do next to make sure it continues?
- Given this experience, what's more of a priority to you now?
- What are you curious to learn more about?
- Where would you like to go?
- Who would you like to meet?

Reflection is a powerful component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience that helps to carry their experiences and learning with them for the rest of their lives.



## Progression

Although elements of the program—like outdoor expeditions or learning entrepreneurial ventures—are consistent across all grade levels, Girl Scout Brownies and Juniors won't be doing the same activities as Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors. However, with your support, Girl Scouts will be ready for what comes when they get there!

Girl Scout programming is designed based on progression, think stair steps, which makes Girl Scouting fun and effective! By building on the knowledge and skills they gain year after year, your Girl Scouts' confidence will grow exponentially, and they'll be eager to try new things and take on new challenges. As a volunteer, you will cultivate a supportive, nonjudgmental space where your Girl Scouts can test their skills and be unafraid to fail.

Keep in mind that progression drives success for your troop and consider that it is not about grade or age, but experience. Click on the following links for outlined suggestions that will help you determine when your Girl Scouts are ready for their next outdoor challenge, their next troop trip, or their next cookie selling challenge.



## The Girl Scout Program: National Program Pillars & More

Girl Scouts four Program Pillars—STEM, Life Skills, Outdoors, and Entrepreneurship—form the foundation of the Girl Scout program and work together to build Girl Scouts' curiosity, kindness, and can-do spirit. In fact, every aspect of our program, and every Girl Scout adventure, can be traced back to one of our four program pillars.



**STEM.** (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Girl Scouts are naturally curious and have a strong desire to help others. Whether they're building a robot, developing a video game, or studying the stars, Girl Scouts become better problem-solvers and critical thinkers through STEM and gain the confidence to turn their ideas into breakthrough inventions to help others.



**Life Skills.** Girl Scouts life skills programming includes a mix of practical skills, tools, and activities that foster positive values like financial literacy, civic engagement, and community service. Skills that help them discover that they have what it takes to raise their voices as community advocates, make smart decisions about their finances, and form strong, healthy relationships—skills that inspire them to accept challenges and overcome obstacles, now and always.



**Outdoors.** Girl Scouts has been building their outdoor confidence and skills for over 100 years through a variety of outdoor adventures like camping and nature focused badges that inspire them to spend time outdoors and develop a lifelong appreciation of nature. An appreciation that sparks Girl Scouts' desire to take action as environmental stewards in their community and across the globe.



**Entrepreneurship.** Starting with Girl Scouts iconic Girl Scout Cookie Program and growing to include the fall product program and a series of entrepreneurship badges, this pillar instills and nurtures an entrepreneurial mindset and fuels curiosity and confidence as they learn the essentials of running their own businesses and how to think like entrepreneurs.



## Important Differences: Journeys, Badges, and Patches

Journeys, badges, and patches are designed to give Girl Scouts different leadership-building experiences, all while having fun!



- **Journeys** are multi-session leadership experiences through which Girl Scouts explore topics such as bullying, media literacy, or environmental stewardship. They'll do highly participatory activities, connect with experts, and take the lead on age-appropriate Take Action projects. Because of their leadership focus, Journeys are also a prerequisite for Girl Scouts highest awards, the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. You can find Journey content in the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK).
- **Badges** are about skill building. When Girl Scouts earn a badge, it shows that they learned a new skill, such as how to make a first aid kit, build and test a toy race car, or take great digital photos. Badges may even spark an interest at school or plant the seed for a future career.
- **Patches** are supplementary insignia that Girl Scouts receive for participating in a special event or activity. Often called fun patches or participation patches, they are worn on the back of their uniform. These can include anything from Council-sponsored programs, troop activities...even a trip to the zoo can get them a patch.

If they choose, your Girl Scouts can pursue badges, patches, and Journey awards in the same year. There is no requirement as to how many they can earn in a single year. While they're having fun, keep in mind that the quality of a Girl Scout's experience and the skills and pride gained from earning Journey awards, skill-building badges, and special patches far outweigh the quantity of badges, patches, and awards they earn.

As a volunteer, you don't have to be the expert in any badge, patch, or Journey topic. In fact, when you show that you're open to learning and willing to try something new, you are modeling what it is to be a Girl Scout. Our badge, patch, and Journey requirements are structured so your Girl Scouts can learn new skills without you having to be an expert in any of the assorted topics.



## Important Differences: Community Service and Take Action Projects

As your Girl Scouts look for meaningful ways to give back to their community, you can help sharpen their problem-solving skills and expand their definition of doing good by discussing community service and Take Action projects. Both projects serve essential needs, but at different levels.

- When Girl Scouts perform **community service**, they are responding to an immediate need in a one-off, “doing for” capacity. In other words, they are making an impact right now.
- Through **Take Action/service learning**, Girl Scouts explore the root causes of a community need and address it in a lasting or sustainable way; they truly make the world—or their part of it—a better place.

If your troop members want to pursue their Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award, they’ll develop a Take Action project on an issue that’s close to their hearts. To make Take Action projects even more impactful for your Girl Scouts, set time aside for them to reflect on their projects. When they take time to internalize the lessons they’ve learned, they’re more likely to find success in their future projects—or anything else they put their minds to.



## Traditions, Ceremonies, and Special Girl Scout Days

Time-honored traditions and ceremonies unite Girl Scout sisters and the millions of Girl Scout alums who came before them—around the country and around the globe—and remind them how far their fellow trailblazers have come and just how far they’ll go.

A few of those extra special days, when you will want to turn up the celebrations, include:

- **Juliette Gordon Low's birthday or Founder's Day**, October 31, marks the birth in 1860 of Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low in Savannah, Georgia.
- **World Thinking Day**, February 22, celebrates international friendship. It is an opportunity for Girl Scouts and Girl Guides to connect with each other and explore a common theme around the world.
- **Girl Scouts' birthday**, March 12, commemorates the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first 18 girl members in Savannah, Georgia.

Whether they’re working on a new badge, making new friends, or closing meetings with a friendship circle, your troop won’t want to miss out on Girl Scouts’ treasured traditions, ceremonies, and special Girl Scout days. We embrace fresh perspectives and innovation from our rich cultural legacy. We continuously review norms and traditions evolving over time to ensure they are relevant and equitable. Sometimes that may involve modifying or sunseting traditions to make way for new ones. Here is a link to the GSME Traditions and Ceremonies handbook.





## Highest Awards

The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards honor Girl Scouts who become forces for good and create a lasting impact in their communities, nationally and around the world.

As your Girl Scouts discover the power of their voices, they'll want to take on an issue that is close to their hearts and meaningful to them. Encourage them to turn their ideas into reality by pursuing Girl Scouts' highest awards.



- **The Girl Scout Bronze Award** can be earned by Juniors. The prerequisite is completion of one Junior Journey and the associated Take Action project. The Bronze Award is earned by the group.
- **The Girl Scout Silver Award** can be earned by Cadettes. The prerequisite is completion of one Cadette Journey and the associated Take Action project. The Silver Award can be earned by an individual Girl Scout or by a small group.
- **The Girl Scout Gold Award** can be earned by Seniors and Ambassadors who have completed either two Girl Scout Senior/Ambassador level Journeys and the associated Take Action projects or earned the Silver Award and completed one Senior/Ambassador level Journey. The Gold Award is earned by an individual.

Did you know that a Gold Award Girl Scout is entitled to enlist at a higher paygrade when they join the U.S. military? Gold Award Girl Scouts' achievements also make them stand out in the college admissions process and may make them a top candidate for academic scholarships and other financial merit awards.

Girl Scouts are eligible to earn any recognition at the grade level in which they are registered. All Girl Scouts are eligible to earn the Girl Scout Gold Award even if they joined Girl Scouts for the first time in high school.

Ask Girl Scouts of Maine about Gold Award Girl Scouts in your community and how they're doing their part to make the world a better place. For inspiration, consider inviting local Gold Award Girl Scouts to speak to your troop about how they took the lead and made a difference. You'll be inspired when you see and hear what they can accomplish when they take the lead—and by the confidence, perseverance, problem-solving, time and project management, and team-building expertise they gain while doing so!



## Girl Scout Travel



Girl Scouts encourages members to try new things and explore the world, both inside and outside of their usual troop meetings. Traveling as a Girl Scout can be a more engaging experience than traveling with family, school, or other groups because Girl Scouts take the lead. They'll make important decisions about where to go, what to do, and take increasing responsibility for the planning of their trips. During this process, they will also build their organizational and management skills—skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Girl Scout travel is built on a progression of activities, so members are set up for success. Daisies and Brownies start with field trips and progress to day trips, overnights, and short trips. Juniors can take their adventures farther with extended trips—longer and further. And Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors can travel the U.S. and then, the world. There are even opportunities for older Girl Scouts to travel independently by joining trips their council organizes or participating in GSUSA's travel program, Destinations. Learn more about GSME group travel online!

## Travel and Girl Scout Program Connections

It's easy to connect eye-opening travel opportunities to the leadership training and skill building your troop is doing! Girl Scouts can use their creativity to connect any badge skill into an idea for travel. For example, they learn about foods from a variety of regions and countries in the New Cuisines badge, which would connect well with a trip focusing on agriculture, culture, and sampling tasty foods! There are plenty more examples, such as the Senior Traveler badge, Eco Camper, Photographer and, of course, all the financial badges that help Girl Scouts budget and earn money for their trips.

Want to include Girl Scout traditions in your trip? Look no further than the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace in Savannah, Georgia! Your troop also has the chance to deepen their connections to Girl Scouts around the world by visiting one of the WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) World Centers, which offer low-cost accommodations and special programs in five locations around the world. Many councils across the U.S. also have properties to rent to traveling troops, or programs traveling troops can join—check out this map! And if your troop is looking to stay closer to home this year, ask Girl Scouts of Maine about our council-owned camps and other facilities that can be rented out, or programs they may have planned for troops.

As your Girl Scouts excitedly plan their next trip, remember to limit your role to facilitating their brainstorming and planning, never doing the work for them. Share your ideas and insights, ask tough questions when you have to, and support all their decisions with enthusiasm and encouragement!



## Planning Troop Adventures

Contact Girl Scouts of Maine as soon as you start thinking about planning a trip to find out more about the approval process for overnight and extended travel. We also have adult learning opportunities to raise your confidence as a chaperone. Check out gsLearn to learn more about Girl Scout Travel Progression and find sessions to help you.

You might also check out the Girl Scout Guide to U.S. Travel. This resource is designed for Juniors and older Girl Scouts who want to take extended trips—that is, longer than a weekend—but also features tips and tools for budding explorers who are just getting started with field trips and overnights.



Once Girl Scouts have mastered planning and embarking upon trips in the U.S., they might be ready for a global travel adventure! Global trips usually take a few years to plan, and the Girl Scout Guide to Global Travel can guide you through the entire process.

## Safety First

If you're planning any kind of trip—from a short field trip to an overseas expedition—the “Trip and Travel” section of Safety Activity Checkpoints is your go-to resource for safety. Girl Scouts of Maine has additional resources and approval processes. Field trips that include high-risk activities, go out of state, or last longer than 7 hours require at least two volunteers who have completed the Troop Volunteers, parts 1 & 2 courses and Troop Activity Form submitted to GSME and permission forms for parents to complete.

Be sure to follow all the basic safety guidelines, like the buddy system and first aid requirements, in addition to the specific guidelines for travel. You will learn more about how to use and follow Girl Scouts Safety Activity Checkpoints in the next section.



# Troop Management



A lot of people equate leadership with “being in charge” or having a title, but we know leadership is more than that. Anyone can be a leader. It’s about recognizing that you are part of a team and understanding that team’s needs and interests. Here’s how you’ll do that with your troop!

## Your Role as a Girl Scout Volunteer

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience is based on three keys—discover, connect, and take action—but it’s not just for your troop. As a Girl Scout volunteer, you will embark on your own leadership journey as you help Girl Scouts develop the leadership skills they’ll use to make the world a better place. Here are a few basic concepts that outline what leadership means in Girl Scouting.

### Leadership is teaching your Girl Scouts:

- 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:

- Advises, discusses, and cheers on your troop, not as a teacher with a planned lesson or activity, but as a mentor and coach.
- Ensures each member understands and can carry out their responsibilities within the troop.
- Encourages Girl Scouts to build their skills and their ethics.
- Gives more responsibilities to each Girl Scout as they grow and develop.

### It is important to remember that:

- You cannot know everything that your Girl Scouts might ever want to learn.
- You’ll explore and learn alongside your Girl Scouts 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.

Not sure? Contact Customer Care at [customercare@gsmaine.org](mailto:customercare@gsmaine.org) or (207) 772-1177.



## Your Responsibilities as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Your responsibilities as a Girl Scout volunteer include:

- Accepting and honoring the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
- Understanding and coaching Girl Scouts through the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- Completing required trainings and complying with Girl Scout policies, procedures, and safety guidelines.
- Sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills with a positive and flexible approach.
- Working in a partnership with your Girl Scouts so that their activities are girl-led and that they learn by doing, individually and as a group. You'll also partner with other volunteers and council staff for support and guidance.
- Organizing fun, interactive, girl-led activities that address relevant issues and match their interests and needs.
- Providing guidance and information regarding Girl Scout group meetings with troop families on a regular and ongoing basis through a variety of tools, including email, phone calls, newsletters, blogs, other forms of social media, and any other method you choose.
- Processing and completing registration forms and other paperwork, such as permission slips.
- Communicating effectively and delivering clear, organized, and vibrant presentations or information to an individual or the group.
- Overseeing with honesty, integrity, and careful record-keeping the funds that your troop raises.
- Maintaining a close connection to your local volunteer service team and GSME.
- Facilitating an inclusive environment and positive experience for every Girl Scout.



## Planning for Your First Troop Meeting



Depending on the ages of your Girl Scouts, you might take the lead in guiding the structure and experiences of your troop—from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, from steering girl-led activities to setting financial expectations. You'll make these decisions collaboratively with your leadership team or co-leader, and with input from Girl Scouts and their parents and caregivers.

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

- When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?
- Where will we meet? Your meeting space should be somewhere safe, clean, and secure that allows all members to participate. Some great meeting space ideas include schools, places of worship, libraries, and community centers. If working with teens, consider meeting at coffee shops, bookstores, or another place they enjoy.
- Which components of the uniform will families need to purchase? Which uniform components will the troop provide for each member?
- Will our troop be a single-grade level or facilitated as a multi-level troop with Girl Scouts of many grade levels combined into one troop? If multi-level, how will we make sure they each get an age-appropriate experience?
- How will we keep troop activities and decisions girl-led? Use the Volunteer Toolkit to help you through this process by exploring options for activities and reviewing the meeting plans and resource lists.
- How often are we going to communicate with troop families? Which channels will we use to keep families in the loop? Effective communication will help set expectations and clarify parent/ caregiver responsibilities.
- Will our troop charge dues, use product program proceeds, and/or charge per activity? How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? What should our financial plan look like?



## Choosing a Meeting Place

Meeting places should be welcoming. This could mean locations that serve diverse populations, are openly inclusive, have diverse staff, and use welcoming language. What makes a great meeting space? It depends on your troop, but here are a few considerations as you visit potential locations:

- **Cost.** The space should be free to use.
- **Size.** Make sure the space is large enough for the whole group and all planned activities.
- **Availability.** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.
- **Resources.** Ask if tables and chairs come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby of some sort where you could store supplies or a safe outdoor space for activities.
- **Safety.** Potential spaces must be safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and have at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure first aid equipment is on hand.
- **Facilities.** Make sure that toilets are sanitary and accessible.
- **Communication-Friendly.** Check for cell reception in the potential space and whether Wi-Fi is available.
- **Allergen-Free.** Ensure that pet-dander and other common allergens won't bother susceptible individuals during meetings.
- **Accessibility.** Your space should accommodate anyone with disabilities including parents/caregivers with disabilities who may come to meetings.

### Need a few talking points to get the conversation started? Try...

*"I'm a Girl Scout volunteer with a group of [number of members] Girl Scouts. We're doing lots of great things for youth and for the community, like [something your group is doing] and [something else your troop is doing]. We're all about leadership—the kind that Girl Scouts use in their daily lives and the kind that makes our community better. We'd love to hold our meetings here because [reason why you'd like to meet there]."*

### Can We Meet in a Private Home?

Girl Scouts does not recommend holding troop meetings in private homes. If you are considering meeting in a private home, check with Girl Scouts of Maine to make sure it is permitted based on our council policy. In addition to the above, remember to ensure these standards:

- Always obtain prior approval from Girl Scouts of Maine.
- The private home must be the home of a registered, council-approved volunteer.
- Girl Scout members may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender resides.
- We require membership and background checks for all adults living in the home. Contact Girl Scouts of Maine for specific guidelines.
- Troop members need to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members.
- Animals should be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space.
- Homeowners should consider any personal insurance implications. The homeowner should ask their personal homeowner's insurance carrier if there are any insurance concerns with



troop meetings in the home. Also, volunteers should confirm with the council that troop meetings in the home are covered by the council's liability insurance carrier.

- Weapons must be out of view and in a locked space. Medication, cleaning products, or any poisonous substances must be stored in a secure space, out of sight, and preferably locked.

Stuck and need additional support? Contact Girl Scouts of Maine or your service unit support team for help with a troop meeting place.

## Virtual Meetings

If your group or troop can't meet in person, there are many ways to bring the power of Girl Scouting home! Meeting virtually can be a fun and engaging option for your troop.

Before setting up a virtual meeting, you'll want to:

- Partner with troop families to make sure Girl Scouts are safe online.
- Select a meeting platform that allows families who may not have internet access to call in.
- Think about logistics. Work with your troop to set up ground rules; consider how you will incorporate in-person meeting traditions in your virtual space and how you'll keep meetings on track.
- Talk with families on how to keep activities girl-led if they will be completing them from home.

Ahead of the meeting, send out a few simple, step-by-step instructions for how to access the platform and join the meeting. And don't worry if they want to use a web or social platform you're not as familiar with, because you'll learn alongside them! For more tips on successful virtual meetings, check out [Tips, Tools, and Ideas for Planning a Great Virtual Meeting](#).

## Girl Scout Troop Size

The troop size "sweet spot" is large enough to provide an interactive and cooperative learning environment and small enough to encourage individual development. Though the ideal troop size is 12 Girl Scouts, we recommend that groups be no fewer and no larger than:



- Girl Scout Daisies: 5–12 members
- Girl Scout Brownies: 10–20 members
- Girl Scout Juniors: 10–25 members
- Girl Scout Cadettes: 5–25 members
- Girl Scout Seniors: 5–30 members
- Girl Scout Ambassadors: 5–30 members


A Girl Scout troop/group must have a minimum of five Girl Scout youth and two unrelated, approved adult volunteers. Be sure to double-check the volunteer-to-youth ratio table below to make sure you have the right number of adults present for group meetings, events, travel, and camping. Adults and youth registering in groups of fewer than five Girl Scout youth and two approved adult volunteers who are not related to each other or in a relationship, at least one of whom is female, will be registered as individual Girl Scouts to accurately reflect their status and program experience. Individual members are always welcome to participate in Girl Scout activities and events.





# Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

From troop meetings to camping weekends and cookie booths, adult volunteers must always be present to ensure Girl Scouts have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level. If you are not sure about the number of adults you will need for your activity, the chart below breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of Girl Scouts; Girl Scouts of Maine may also establish maximums due to size or cost restrictions, so be sure to check with them as you plan your activity.

	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



## Safety in Girl Scouting

The emotional and physical safety and well-being of Girl Scouts is our top priority. Safety Activity Checkpoints outlines the Safety Standards and Guidelines used in Girl Scouting, which apply to all Girl Scout activities. All volunteers should review the Safety Activity Checkpoints manual, found on the GSME website, when planning activities to manage safety and risk in Girl Scout-sanctioned activities.

In Safety Activity Checkpoints, you will find:

- **Girl Scouts Safety Standards and Guidelines** which apply to all Girl Scout activities, including requirements for adult supervision, permission slips, preparation, field trips and overnight trips, and other vital information.
- **Activities not permitted** by Girl Scouts of the USA and actions that Girl Scouts and volunteers should not take.
- **Policies** surrounding chartered aircraft trips and aviation.
- **First aid** and overall health information.
- **Standards for well-being and inclusivity** along with ways to include Girl Scouts with disabilities and ways to ensure everyone's emotional safety.
- **Individual safety activity checkpoints** for specific activities—such as camping, internet use, and water sports—to provide activity-specific safety information.

The Safety Activity Checkpoints is laid out in three primary sections, Introduction: Safety Standards and Guidelines, Activities at a Glance, and Individual Safety Activity Checkpoint pages.

- **Introduction: Safety Standards and Guidelines** provides the standard safety guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) and GSME approved activities. This section is included in the Volunteer Handbook.
- **Girl Scouts' Activities-at-a-Glance** table provides a quick review of the safety standards for that activity with a focus on two critical points to keep in mind when considering and planning activities for you troop:
  - o Age-appropriate activities and participation by grade level, and
  - o Whether prior approval from Girl Scouts of Maine is required before anyone participates in a specific activity.
  - o The Activities-at-a-Glance section is a great quick reference but ensure you refer to the individual checkpoint as you plan your activity.
- **Individual Safety Activity Checkpoint** pages provide activity-specific safety measures and guidance on individual activities. You can print the individual checkpoints as needed.

### The Buddy System

Use the buddy system, in which the troop is divided into teams of at least two. Each Girl Scout is responsible for always staying with their buddy, warning their buddy of danger, giving their buddy immediate assistance if safe to do so, and seeking help if needed. They are encouraged to stay near the group or buddy with another team so if someone is injured, one person cares for the injured while others seek help.



## Registering Girls and Adults in Girl Scouting

Every participant (youth and adult) in Girl Scouting must register and become a member of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). GSUSA membership dues are valid for one year. Membership dues cannot be transferred to another member and are not refundable.

Preregistration for the upcoming membership year occurs in the spring. Early registration allows for uninterrupted receipt of forms and materials from the council, helps troops and councils plan ahead, and gets everyone excited about all the great things they want to do as Girl Scouts next year. A Girl Scout's grade level is determined by the current membership year beginning October 1.

Lifetime membership is available to anyone who accepts the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, pays the one-time lifetime membership fee, and is at least 18 years old (or a high school graduate or equivalent). Volunteers with ten or more years of service can become lifetime members at the discounted young alum rate.

### Adding New Girl Scouts to Your Troop

Growing your troop is a great way to share the power of the Girl Scout experience and there are many ways to get the word out, like hanging posters in local schools, using social media to reach families in your community, or including your troop in Girl Scouts of Maine's Participation Catalog

## Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion



Girl Scouts is for every girl, and that's why we embrace Girl Scouts of all abilities and backgrounds with a specific and positive philosophy of inclusion that benefits everyone. Each Girl Scout—regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, physical or cognitive ability, sexual orientation, primary language, or religion—is an equal and valued member of the group, and groups reflect the diversity of the community.

We believe inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. Inclusion is about belonging, all being offered the same opportunities with respect, dignity, and celebration of their unique strengths. It's about being a sister to every Girl Scout. You're accepting and inclusive when you:

- Welcome every Girl Scout and focus on building community. Show care by learning each person's name with correct pronunciation, caregivers included! Use a warm and friendly tone, and consistently greet each community member upon arrival. Say goodbye to each person by name as well.
- Emphasize cooperation instead of competition.



- Provide a confidential, socially comfortable environment. Occasionally ask those who participate in Girl Scout programs if anything is worrying or bothering them. Be a trusted adult they can come to with their needs and emotions without judgment. Allow, but don't require, participants to say the Pledge of Allegiance or the Girl Scout Promise and Law at meetings.
- Teach respect for, understanding of, and dignity toward all members and their families. Learn about the cultures and identities in your Girl Scout community and understand and respect cultural differences. Be sure not to put anyone on the spot or ask them to educate you. Welcome personal sharing about people's cultural traditions, languages they speak and diverse family structures. Make this kind of sharing a consistent, reliable part of your time together.

Embrace diverse gender expression by inviting each community member to share their preferred pronouns aloud or on name tags. Explain that no one must share if they don't want to. Make this conversation matter-of-fact and use a positive tone.

- Actively reach out to members and families who are traditionally excluded or underrepresented.
- Learn the most valuable ways to support individual children and adults with disabilities, learning differences and/or or neurodiversity. Ask parents, "What can I do to support your child to learn/participate/feel successful in our group?"
- Foster a sense of belonging to this community as a respected and valued peer.
- Honor the intrinsic value of each person's life.

For more information on GSME's stance on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, please see our website.

If you have questions about accommodating an individual member, please reach out to Girl Scouts of Maine at [customercare@gsmaine.org](mailto:customercare@gsmaine.org) or 207-772-1177.

## Focus on Being Accessible to All

A key part of creating an inclusive environment is the idea that everyone has access to be able to participate. As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, consider the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. Include the special needs of any members who have disabilities or whose parents or caregivers have disabilities. But please do not rely on visual cues to inform you of a disability; approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population has a disability—that's one in five people of every socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and religion. Disabilities include physical, sensory, and cognitive conditions.

If you want to find out what an individual with a disability needs to make their Girl Scout experience successful, simply ask them or their parent or caregiver. If you are open, honest, and receptive, they'll likely respond in kind, creating an atmosphere that enriches everyone.

It's important for all Girl Scouts to be rewarded based on their best efforts—not on the completion of a task. Give everyone the opportunity to do their best and they will! Sometimes that means changing a few rules or approaching an activity in a more creative way. Here are some examples of ways to modify activities so that everyone can participate:

- Invite a member to complete an activity after they have observed others doing it.
- If an activity is focused on using one sense that a Girl Scout does not have access to (like sight for a Girl Scout who is blind), find ways for them to participate using other senses. Can they touch the object or participate by hearing only?
- If an activity requires running, an individual who is unable to run could be asked to walk or do another physical movement.



## Language Related to Disability

Focus on a person's abilities—on what they can do rather than on what they cannot. In that spirit, use people-first language that puts the person before the disability.

### Say...

They have a learning disability.

They have a developmental delay.

They use a wheelchair.

### instead of...

They are learning disabled.

They are mentally retarded; she is slow.

They are wheelchair-bound.

When interacting with an individual (or parent/caregiver) with a disability, consider these tips:

- When talking to people with disabilities, speak directly to them, not through a family member or friend.
- It's okay to offer assistance to an individual with a disability but wait until your offer is accepted before you begin to help. Listen closely to any instructions the person may have.
- Leaning on a person's wheelchair is invading their space and can be considered rude.
- When speaking to an individual who is deaf and using an interpreter, speak to them, not to the interpreter.
- When speaking for more than a few minutes to an individual who uses a wheelchair, place yourself at their eye level.
- When greeting an individual with a visual disability, always identify yourself and others. You might say, "Hi, it's Sheryl. Tara is on my right, and Chris is on my left."

To learn more about delivering inclusive programming to your troop, take our GSUSA Delivering Inclusive Training course in gsLearn. Sign in to gsLearn through MyGS. Login, go to My Account, and click gsLearn.

## Registering Members with Cognitive Disabilities

Girl Scouts with cognitive disabilities can be registered as closely as possible to their chronological ages. They wear the uniform of that grade level. Make any adaptations for them for ongoing activities of the grade level to which the group belongs. Girl Scouts with cognitive disorders may choose to retain their youth membership through their 21st year, and then move into an adult membership category.



## Getting Support for Your Troop



Just as your Girl Scouts rally around each other for support, you will also have a dedicated Girl Scout support team, consisting of council staff and passionate volunteers like you. Your support team, which is called a service team at Girl Scouts of Maine, is ready to offer local learning opportunities and advice as well as answer your questions about the Girl Scout program, working with youth, product sales, and much more.

Before you hold your first troop meeting, consider the support and people resources you'll need to cultivate an energizing troop experience. Parents, friends, family, and other members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide time, experience, and ideas to a troop, so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your volunteer troop team. This team is made up of troop leaders (like you) and troop committee volunteers.



Your troop committee volunteers are the extra set of eyes, ears, and hands that help the troop safely explore the world around them. Depending on your troop's needs, they can play a more active role—for instance, someone can step up as a dedicated troop treasurer—or simply provide occasional help when you need to keep a meeting activity on track.

If a parent or caregiver isn't sure if they can commit to a committee or co-leader role, encourage them to try volunteering in a smaller capacity that matches their skill set. Just like your young Girl Scouts, once troop parents and caregivers discover they can succeed in their volunteer role, they'll feel empowered to volunteer again.

## Troop Management Tools and Resources

From toolkits and guides to regular contact with experienced individuals, you'll have all the support you need to be a Girl Scout volunteer. You can get such must-have tools as the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) and gsLearn to keep your troop going strong on MyGS—always accessible via the icon on the upper right corner of our website. Click the **login** button and then **my account** button and you'll find the **gsLearn and VTK buttons** via the left menu bar. They are accessible on any desktop, tablet, or mobile device, and they will be populated with any trainings you should view. Here's a list of some important resources you'll want to check out.



## The Volunteer Toolkit

The Volunteer Toolkit is a customizable planning tool where you can find suggested meeting plans for most badges and Journeys, access activity guides, track your Girl Scouts' achievements, and so much more. With inspiring ideas so you can engage your troop in a mix of activities all year long, it's the digital planning assistant that will help you power a fun-filled—and organized—Girl Scout year.

With the Volunteer Toolkit, Girl Scouts and troop leaders can explore meeting topics and program activities together and follow the fun as they plan their Girl Scout year. Using the Volunteer Toolkit:

### Troops and Troop Leaders can:

- Plan the troop's calendar year and meeting schedule.
- Email parents/caregivers with one click.
- View the troop roster, renew Girl Scout memberships, and update Girl Scout contact information.
- View meeting plans for Journeys and badges, including suggested tracks for multi-level groups (K-5 and 6-12).
- Customize meeting agendas to fit your troop.
- Explore individual meeting plans that show a breakdown of every step, including a list of materials needed, editable time allotments for each activity within a meeting, and printable meeting aids.
- Record attendance at meetings and their troop's badge and Journey achievements.
- Add council or custom events to the troop's calendar.
- Submit troop finance reports (depending on the council's process).
- Easily locate both national and local council resources, such as Safety Activity Checkpoints.

### Parents and Caregivers can:

- View the troop's meeting schedule and individual meeting plans to stay up to date on the badges and Journeys the troop is working on.
- Renew their memberships and update their contact information.
- View their Girl Scout's attendance and achievements.
- See upcoming events the troop is planning or attending.
- Easily locate both national and local council resources.
- View the troop's finance report (depending on the council's process).

Get started by visiting: [www.girlscoutsofmaine.org](http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org).



## gsLearn

**gsLearn** is our online training platform that gives you easy access to online and in-person learning opportunities as well as the ability to track all your accomplishments! Learn at your own pace, access additional resources, and repeat info when you need it!

**Accessing gsLearn.** To take advantage of the learning opportunities and other programmatic training offered to Troop Leaders, you'll need to access our online learning management tool, gsLearn. To access gsLearn, log in to MyGS. You will find gsLearn in the options on the left-hand navigation once you've logged into MyGS. The very first time you log in, no courses will show because our systems need to sync and verify that you have permission. Log out and return 30-60 minutes later to see your courses.

### Tools and Resources

**Girl Scout Handbooks.** These grade level-specific handbooks will break it down for your Girl Scouts. Adventures include earning badges and awards, running your own cookie business and learning about the traditions that have brought Girl Scouts together for over a century. [girlscoutshop.org](http://girlscoutshop.org)

**Safety Activity Checkpoints.** Safety is paramount in Girl Scouting, and Safety Activity Checkpoints contains everything you need to know to help keep everyone safe during a variety of exciting activities outside of their regular Girl Scout troop meetings.

**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 what you need for a successful troop year.

**Troop Year Plans.** Our age-appropriate troop year plans are the best tool for first year troop leaders to get started with Girl Scouts without getting overwhelmed, or to help any troop leader with planning out a well-balanced Girl Scout year. The entire year is mapped out—just follow along to help your Girl Scouts complete badge activities, improve their communities, and explore the world around them. Access Troop Year Plans online here!

**Girl Scout Volunteers in Your Community.** Remember that Girl Scout support team we mentioned? You'll find them in your service unit! Troops are organized geographically into service units. You'll find a local network of fellow leaders and administrative volunteers ready to offer tips and advice to help you succeed in your volunteer role.

**Customer Care Contacts.** Questions? Need help resolving an issue? We've got you! Reach out anytime by either clicking on the "Contact Us" form at [www.girlscoutsofmaine.org](http://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org) or email [customercare@gsmaine.org](mailto:customercare@gsmaine.org). During business hours, Monday-Thursday, 8:30 am-5:30 pm, you can reach a customer service specialist by calling (207)772-1177

**Newsletters/Communication.** Twice a year, members receive a copy of the Compass Magazine in the mail!

### Take Advantage of Learning Opportunities

We know that when you have the knowledge and skills you need to manage your Girl Scouts, both you and your troop will thrive. We offer national onboarding training for new Troop Leaders in addition to local training courses provided by Girl Scouts of Maine.





## New Leader Onboarding Courses:

### **GSUSA New Leader Onboarding: What Girl Scouts Do**

In this course, you will learn about what girl scouts do and how they do it at each grade level so you can plan your troop's year. This course is presented through the lens of an experienced troop leader whose troop completed all grade levels of the Girl Scout program. You will have the opportunity to explore the troop's interactive journal and learn about the things they did on their Girl Scout journey. Please note, you are only required to explore the grade levels you will be leading, although you are welcome to explore more if you'd like.

### **GSUSA New Leader Onboarding: Your First Troop Meeting**

This course provides new troop leaders with the structure and tools to plan a successful first troop meeting—and beyond—with their Girl Scout troop.

### **GSUSA New Leader Onboarding: The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)**

The framework we use to grow future leaders, also known as the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, is what sets Girl Scouts apart from other organizations. In this course, you will learn how to facilitate the Girl Scout Leadership Experience with your troop in an age-appropriate way. Throughout the course, you will learn about lots of real-world examples so you can apply the framework as your troop ages through the Girl Scout program.

### **GSUSA New Leader Onboarding: The Girl Scout Cookie Program**

In this course, you will learn the basics of the Girl Scout Cookie program. You'll discover how and why Girl Scouts sell cookies, who the bakers are that make the cookies, and how to utilize your cookie proceeds with your troop. A review of all the exciting program options you can explore with your troop as you build their entrepreneurial skills is also included. Cookie selling safety and important ways to bring families and caregivers along in your troop's cookie business adventure are also part of the course.

These courses are available online via gsLearn as referenced above. Girl Scouts of Maine also offers additional local onboarding training for new Troop Leaders, as well as other ongoing training opportunities. Contact GSME to ask about additional training opportunities that will help you grow your skills and confidence.

## Other Program Courses Available

**Troop Camp Training.** When your Girl Scouts are ready to start getting outside and going camping, you can find your first classes to support you in gsLearn. After completing *Troop Camp Training, part 1: Preparation*, you can sign up for the in-person *Troop Camp Training, part 2: Overnight!*

**Delivering Inclusive Program.** In this course, you will practice using inclusive and equitable language to support the identities of all Girl Scouts and foster a cohesive troop environment.

**Mental Wellness Resources.** These resources help you support your Girl Scouts in learning about mental wellness.

**Daisy, Brownie, and Junior Essentials Learning Paths.** These include courses to help you with your Daisy, Brownie, or Junior Girl Scout Troop planning



## Girl Scout Participation in Activities with Other Scouting Organizations

The decision by Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to open the Boy Scout program to girls has fundamentally altered the nature of the relationship between BSA and Girl Scouts nationally and locally. Local relationships between BSA and Girl Scout councils that have led to partnerships and joint activities in the past, may now create certain risks or challenges for Girl Scouts. For this reason, we avoid joint recruiting and/or joint participation in community events or activities.

### Marketplace Confusion

To protect the integrity of the Girl Scout brand and reinforce our programming as unique, girl-only, and best in class, we must ensure that we take care that the activities in which our members participate are exclusive to the Girl Scout program, are safe and girl-led, and are conducted under the appropriate supervision of Girl Scouts.

### Protecting Use of Girl Scout Materials

Girl Scout materials are intended for the exclusive use of Girl Scouts and are protected as the intellectual property of Girl Scouts of the USA. Materials include but are not limited to: Girl Scout logo, tag lines, and/or program and badge requirements.



## Troop Finances



With your guidance, your Girl Scouts will learn money skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Your Girl Scout troop will plan and finance its own activities, and you'll coach your Girl Scouts as they earn and manage troop funds. Troop activities are powered by proceeds earned through council-sponsored product program activities (such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program), group money-earning activities (council approved, of course), and any dues your troop may charge.

Remember that all funds collected, raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting belong to the troop as a whole and must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. Funds are administered through the troop and do not belong to individuals.

**For Financial Guidelines**, please refer to the GSME Troop Banking and Finance Guidelines.

## Establishing a Troop Account

You'll need a safe place to deposit your troop dues, product program proceeds, and other funds. If you're a new leader of an existing troop, you may inherit a checking account, but with a new troop, you'll want to open a new bank account.

Here are a few helpful tips you can take to the bank:

- Be sure to find a bank that has free checking and low fees. GSME has recommendations in the GSME Troop Banking and Finance Guidelines.
- Designate a "troop treasurer," that is, one person who is responsible for troop funds and for keeping a daily account of expenditures.
- Ensure your account comes with a debit card that you can use during activities or trips. These transactions are easier to track at the end of the year than cash payments.
- Be prepared and make sure another troop volunteer has a debit card for the troop account in case the main card is lost.
- Handle a lost troop debit card the same way you would a personal debit card: cancel it immediately.
- Keep troop funds in the bank before an activity or trip and pay for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.

Follow Girl Scouts of Maine's financial policies and procedures for setting up an account. Council-sponsored product program activities have specific banking and tracking procedures.

## Money-Earning Basics for Troops

Troops flex their financial muscles in two distinct ways:

**The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other product sales of Girl Scouts** (authorized product sales such as calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy) organized by Girl Scouts of Maine. All youth members are eligible to participate in two council-sponsored product program activities each year with volunteer supervision—the Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Fall Product program. Please remember, volunteers and Girl Scout council staff don't sell cookies and other products—Girl Scouts do.

**Group money-earning activities** are organized by the troop (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by Girl Scouts (in partnership with volunteers) and that earn money for the group. To hold additional money-earning activities, a troop must have participated in both council-sponsored product programs that year.

## Participation Guidance

Girl Scout participation in both council-sponsored product program activities and group money-earning projects is based on the following:

- Voluntary participation.
- Permission from each member's parent or guardian.
- An understanding of and ability to explain clearly to others why the money is needed.
- An understanding that money earning should not exceed what the group needs to support its program activities.
- Observance of local ordinances related to involvement of children in money-earning activities as well as health and safety laws.
- Vigilance in protecting the personal safety of each member.
- Arrangements for safeguarding the money.



## Who pays for what

Part of financial management is being clear about expectations for who pays for what part of the Girl Scout experience. This is part of learning to live within their means and learning to earn their way to their goals. Girls need to make a plan, set realistic goals, build a budget, and earn the money to realize those goals.

Money should never stand between a girl and Girl Scouts. Financial assistance is available for some things and girls are able to earn their way for others. Parents can also help by helping her pay her dues, paying her membership fee, helping with transportation, sharing a skill or talent, donating supplies, or helping when asked by the troop leaders. This table also breaks down the traditional financial responsibilities:

Who...	Pays for What...	and How.
The Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniforms (optional)</li> <li>• Journey books and The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting</li> <li>• Troop dues</li> <li>• Annual membership fee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/guardians</li> <li>• Personal allowance</li> <li>• Troop funds</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Membership fees may be paid by the troop for all girls. Financial assistance is available for the membership fee.</p>
The Troop/ Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program supplies</li> <li>• Equipment</li> <li>• Earned awards and activity patches</li> <li>• Event/trip/camping fees</li> <li>• Service project expenses</li> </ul>	<p>Start-up money for new troops is available from your service unit and GSME. Do not use your personal money.</p> <p>Use money girls earn from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product Sales (fall and cookie sales)</li> <li>• troop dues</li> <li>• additional money-earning activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> All funds received should be deposited to the troop account. All funds spent must have a receipt for documentation.</p>
The Adult Volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual membership fee</li> <li>• Uniform and insignia (optional)</li> <li>• Personal copy of Facilitator Guide books that correspond with girl journey books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal funds</li> <li>• Troop funds</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Membership fees may be paid by the troop for adult volunteers. Financial assistance is available for the membership fee.</p>
Girl Scouts of Maine	<p>Set-up and administration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• council-wide events and programs</li> <li>• outdoor program activities</li> <li>• council properties</li> <li>• adult development – training courses and adult recognitions</li> <li>• GSME Website and publications</li> <li>• product sales</li> <li>• on-going support to service units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Giving Campaign</li> <li>• Grants</li> <li>• Donor gifts</li> <li>• Product Sales (fall and cookie sales)</li> <li>• United Way</li> <li>• GSME shops</li> <li>• Annual Women of Distinction Dinner</li> </ul>
Girl Scouts of the USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program research and development</li> <li>• Supplemental basic insurance coverage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership fees</li> <li>• Equipment agencies</li> </ul>



## Additional Guidelines

Keep these specific guidelines—some of which are required by the Internal Revenue Service—in mind to ensure that sales are conducted with legal and financial integrity.

- **All rewards earned by Girl Scouts through the product program activities must support Girl Scout program experiences** (such as camp, travel, and program events, but not scholarships or financial credit toward outside organizations).
- **Rewards are based on sales ranges** set by councils and may not be based on a dollar-per-dollar calculation.
- **Troops are encouraged to participate in council product programs as their primary money-earning activity**; any group money earning shouldn't compete with the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council product programs.
- **Obtain written approval from Girl Scouts of Maine before a group money-earning event**; Please submit the appropriate sections of the Troop Activity Form. Troop must participate in the Fall Product Program and the Cookie Program to do additional money-earning.
- **Girl Scouts does not allow the use of games of chance.** Any activity which could be considered a game of chance (raffles, contests, bingo) is not allowed.
- **Girl Scouts *Blue Book of Basic Documents* policy forbids Girl Scouts from the direct solicitation of cash.** Girl Scouts can collect partial payment toward the purchase of a package of Girl Scout Cookies and other Girl Scout–authorized products through participation in council-approved product program donation programs.
- **Girl Scouts forbids product demonstration parties** where the use of the Girl Scout trademark increases revenue for another business, such as in-home product parties. Any business using the Girl Scout trademark or other Girl Scout intellectual property must seek authorization from GSUSA.
- **Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the ages and abilities of the participants** and be consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- **Money earned is for Girl Scout activities and is not to be retained by individuals.** Girl Scouts can, however, be awarded incentives and/or may earn credits from their Girl Scout product programs. Funds acquired through group money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the group according to council procedures.
- **Raising money in times of national or international emergency.** Per Girl Scouts *Blue Book of Basic Documents* policy, the National CEO in consultation with the National Board Chair may give permission to raise money in times of a major national or international emergency with prior written notice to the National Board. Councils will be notified of this action in writing and troops should consult with their council for appropriate guidelines. Councils may designate an outside organization to receive donations.



## Sample Money-Earning Activities



### Collections/Drives

- Cell phones for refurbishment
- Used ink cartridges turned in for money
- Christmas tree recycling

### Food/M meal Events

- Lunch box auction (prepared lunch or meal auctioned off)
- Themed meals, like a high tea or a build-your-own-taco bar, related to activities Girl Scouts are planning; for instance, if they are earning money for travel, they could tie the meal to their destination

### Service(s)

- Service-a-thon (people sponsor a Girl Scout doing service and funds go to support a trip or other activity)
- Babysitting for holiday (New Year's Eve) or council events
- Raking leaves, weeding, cutting grass, shoveling snow, walking pets
- Cooking class or other specialty class
- The Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program are designed to unleash the entrepreneurial potential in Girl Scouts. From there, your troop may decide to earn additional funds on its own.

## Help Your Troop Reach Its Financial Goals

As a volunteer, you have the opportunity to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for your troop:

1. **Set goals for money-earning activities.** What does the group hope to accomplish through this activity? In addition to earning money, what skills do they hope to build? What leadership opportunities present themselves?
2. **Create a budget.** Use a budget worksheet that includes both expenses (the cost of supplies, admission to events, travel, and so on) and available income (the group's account balance, projected cookie proceeds, and so on).
3. **Determine how much the group needs to earn.** Subtract expenses from available income to determine how much money your group needs to earn.
4. **Make a plan.** The group can brainstorm and make decisions about its financial plans. Will cookie and other product programs—if approached proactively and energetically—earn enough money to meet the group's goals? If not, which group money-earning activities might offset the difference? Will more than one group money-earning activity be necessary to achieve the group's financial goals? In this planning stage, engage them through the Girl Scout processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) and consider the value of any potential activity. Have them weigh feasibility, implementation, and safety factors.
5. **Write it out.** Once the group has decided on its financial plan, describe it in writing. If the plan involves a group money-earning activity, fill out an application for approval from Girl Scouts of Maine and submit it along with the budget worksheet your troop created.

**Remember:** It's great for Girl Scouts to have opportunities like the Girl Scout Cookie Program to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals. As a volunteer, try to help them balance the money-earning they do with opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on earning and spending money. Take Action projects, for example, may not always require them to spend a lot of money!





## Financial Management and Product Program Abilities by Grade Level

As with other Girl Scout activities, Girl Scouts build their financial and sales savvy as they get older. Each individual will be different, but here you'll find some examples of the abilities and opportunities for the progression of Girl Scouts at each grade level.

### Girl Scout Daisies

- The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.
- Daisies may decide to pay dues to contribute to the cost of activities.
- Daisies can participate in Girl Scout Cookie Program activities and other council-sponsored product programs.
- Daisies are always paired with a volunteer when selling anything. They do the asking and deliver the product, but volunteers handle the money and keep them safe.
- Daisies should be given the opportunity to practice identifying money and counting back change with an adult during each transaction.

### Girl Scout Juniors

- The group volunteer retains overall responsibility for long-term budgeting and record keeping but shares or delegates all other financial responsibilities.
- Juniors set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.
- Juniors decide on group dues, if any. Dues are collected by them and recorded by a group treasurer selected by the troop.
- Juniors budget for the short-term needs of the group based on their plans and income from the group dues.
- Juniors budget for more long-term activities, such as overnight trips, group camping, and special events.
- Juniors budget for Take Action projects including the Girl Scout Bronze Award if they are pursuing it.

### Girl Scout Brownies

- The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and shares some of the group budgeting responsibilities.
- Brownies discuss the cost of activities (supplies, fees, transportation, rentals, and so on) with guidance from their volunteer(s).
- Brownies set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.
- Brownies may decide to pay dues to contribute to the cost of activities.

### Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

- Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors estimate costs based on plans.
- They determine the amount of group dues, if any, and the scope of money-earning projects.
- Set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.
- Carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning programs.
- Budget for extended travel, Take Action projects, and leadership projects including the Girl Scout Silver or Girl Scout Gold Awards, if they are pursuing them.
- May be involved in seeking donations for Take Action projects with council approval.
- Keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.



## Working with Sponsors and Other Organizations

Local sponsors can help councils power innovative programs for Girl Scouts. Community organizations, businesses, religious organizations, and individuals may be sponsors and may provide group meeting places, volunteer their time, offer in-kind donations, provide activity materials, or loan equipment. Encourage your Girl Scouts to celebrate a sponsor's contribution to the troop by sending thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take Action project.

For information on working with a sponsor, consult Girl Scouts of Maine for guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting guidelines, and policies or practices that must be followed. Girl Scouts of Maine may already have relationships with certain organizations or may know of some reasons not to collaborate with certain organizations.

When collaborating with any other organization, keep these additional guidelines in mind:

**Avoid fundraising for other organizations.** Girl Scouts are not allowed to solicit money on behalf of another organization when identifying themselves as Girl Scouts by wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, and so on. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. However, you and your group can support another organization through Take Action projects. Girl Scouts as individuals are able to participate in whatever events they choose as long as they are not wearing anything that officially identifies them as Girl Scouts.

**Steer clear of political fundraisers.** When in an official Girl Scout capacity or in any way identifying yourselves as Girl Scouts, your group may not participate, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign or work on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. Letter-writing campaigns are not allowed, nor is participating in a political rally, circulating a petition, or carrying a political banner.

**Be respectful when collaborating with religious organizations.** Girl Scout groups must respect the opinions and practices of religious partners, but no one should be required to take part in any religious observance or practice of the sponsoring group.

**Avoid selling or endorsing commercial products.** A commercial product is any product sold at a retail location. Since 1939, Girl Scouts and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products.



## Disbanding Troops and Unused Troop Funds

When a troop disbands, any unused Girl Scout money left in the account becomes the property of the council. Troop funds are not the property of any individual member. Before disbanding, ask your Girl Scouts how they want to pay it forward. They may decide to pay for Girl Scout activities or to donate any unused funds to their service unit or to another troop. Activities can also include purchasing materials to support another organization through Take Action projects.

## Closing the Troop Account

When closing a troop account, be sure all checks and other debits have cleared the account before you close it. Remember, you may have to close the account in person. Turn remaining funds over to a council staff member.



# Engaging Girl Scouts by Level

Creating the kind of environment in which Girl Scouts are unafraid to try new things and to be who they want to be starts with you! By meeting them where they are, you'll help them develop the leadership skills they'll use today and in the future.

## Understanding Healthy Development in Youth

It sounds simple, but just being attentive to what Girl Scouts are experiencing as they mature is a big help to them—and to you, as you guide and mentor them! You'll experience different joys and challenges with each Girl Scout level, but here are some guidelines for meeting their needs and abilities at different grade levels. Keep in mind that these guidelines reflect neurotypical experiences.



## Girl Scout Daisies

At the Girl Scout Daisy level (kindergarten and first grades), many Daisies...	This means . . .
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, or play outside.	They'll enjoy going on nature walks and outdoor scavenger hunts.
Are great builders and budding artists, though they are still developing their fine motor skills.	Encouraging them to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands, if they are able. They may need assistance holding scissors, cutting in a straight line, and so on.
Love to move and dance.	They might especially enjoy marching like a penguin, dancing like a dolphin, or acting out how they might care for animals in the jungle.
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	Showing instead of telling, for example, about how animals are cared for. Plan visits to animal shelters, farms, or zoos; meet care providers, or make a creative bird feeder.
Are only beginning to learn about basic number concepts, time, and money.	You'll want to take opportunities to count out supplies together—and, perhaps, the legs on a caterpillar!
Are just beginning to write and spell, and they don't always have the words for what they're thinking or feeling.	That having them draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate, or picking from images of feelings, is easier and more meaningful for them.
Know how to follow simple directions and respond well to recognition for doing so.	Being specific and offering only one direction at a time. Acknowledge when they have followed directions well to increase their motivation to listen and follow again.





# Girl Scout Brownies

At the Girl Scout Brownie level (second and third grades), many Brownies...	This means . . .
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, or play outside.	Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	Allowing them to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances if they would like to.
Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.	Letting them lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow them as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	Doing more than just reading to them about the Brownie Elf's adventures. Ask them questions to gauge their understanding and allow them to role play their own pretend visit to a new country.
Need clear directions and structure and like knowing what to expect.	Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have them create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share those at the start.
Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.	Offering support only when needed. Allow them to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.
Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills. Most can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, and the like.	Encouraging them to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands, if they are able to. They may need some assistance, however, holding scissors, threading needs, and so on.
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	They might like to create a play about welcoming a new student to their school or to tell a story through dance or creative movement.
Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job well done.	Acknowledging when they have listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again.



# Girl Scout Juniors

At the Girl Scout Junior level (fourth and fifth grades), many Juniors...	This means . . .
Want to make decisions and express their opinions.	Whenever possible, allowing them to make decisions and express their opinions through guided discussion and active reflection activities. Also, have them set rules for listening to others' opinions and offering assistance in decision making.
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	Allowing them to team up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities, if they would like to.
Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others.	Although it's okay to have expectations, the expectation is not perfection! Share your own mistakes and what you learned from them and be sure to create an environment where they can be comfortable sharing theirs.
Are concerned about equity and fairness.	Not shying away from discussing why rules are in place and having them develop their own rules for their group.
Are beginning to think abstractly and critically and are capable of flexible thought. Juniors can consider more than one perspective as well as the feelings and attitudes of another.	Asking them to explain why they made a decision, to share their visions of their roles in the future, and to challenge their own and others' perspectives.
Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination.	Engaging them in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow them to express themselves through the written word, choreography, and so on.
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	They might like to tell a story through playwriting, playing an instrument, or choreographing a dance.
May be starting puberty, which may include beginning breast development, skin changes, and weight changes. Some may be getting their periods.	Being sensitive to their changing bodies, possible discomfort over these changes, and their desire for more information or total avoidance of the topic. Create an environment that acknowledges and celebrates this transition as healthy and normal for them.





# Girl Scout Cadettes

At the Girl Scout Cadette level (sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), many Cadettes...	This means . . .
<p>Are going through puberty, including changes in their skin, body shape, and weight. Many also will be starting their menstrual cycles and have occasional shifts in mood.</p>	<p>Being sensitive to the many changes Cadettes are undergoing and acknowledging that these changes are as normal as growing taller! They need time to adapt to their changing bodies, and their feelings about their bodies may not keep up. Reinforce that, as with everything else, people go through puberty in different ways and at different times.</p>
<p>Are starting to spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.</p>	<p>That many will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities as well as tackling relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. If you're noticing a pattern of isolation for any troop member, check in with them—are they content to work solo, or are they being excluded?</p>
<p>Can be very self-conscious, wanting to be like everyone else but fearing they are unique in their thoughts and feelings.</p>	<p>Encouraging them to share, but only when they are ready. At this age, they may be more comfortable sharing a piece of artwork or a fictional story than their own words. Throughout the activities, highlight and discuss differences as positive, interesting, and beautiful.</p>
<p>Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.</p>	<p>Trusting them to plan and make key decisions and allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</p>



# Girl Scout Seniors

At the Girl Scout Senior level (ninth and tenth grades), many Seniors...	This means . . .
Are beginning to clarify their own values, consider alternative points of view on controversial issues, and see multiple aspects of a situation.	Asking them to explain the reasoning behind their decisions. Engage them in role-play and performances, where others can watch and offer alternative solutions.
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills and are able to plan and reflect on their own learning experiences.	They are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have them plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.
Spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	They will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that they interact with those they might not usually pair up with.
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	Encouraging them to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind them frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist them in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	Acknowledging their pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help them release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.	Trusting them to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.







# Girl Scout Ambassadors

**At the Girl Scout Ambassador level (eleventh and twelfth grades), many Ambassadors...**

**This means . . .**

Can see the complexity of situations and controversial issues—they understand that problems often have no clear solution and that varying points of view may each have merit.

Inviting them to develop stories as a group and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.

Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills and can adapt logical thinking to real-life situations. Most will recognize and incorporate practical limitations to solutions.

They are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have them plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.

Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.

They will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that they interact with those they might not usually pair up with.

Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.

Encouraging them to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind them frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist them in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.

Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.

Acknowledging their pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help them release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.

Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home—and are looking to their futures.

Trusting them to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.

## Creating a Safe Space for Girl Scouts



A safe space is where all Girl Scouts feel that they can be themselves, without explanation or judgment. As a volunteer, the environment you create is just as important as the activities they do—it's the key to developing the sort of group that they want to be part of! Cultivate a space where confidentiality is respected, and they can express their true selves.

Ask for help with this. No one expects you to be an expert at this, but it is all really important. Take advantage of having caring fellow volunteers and staff members who are happy to help.

## Recognize and Support Each Individual

You're a role model and a mentor to your troop. Since you play an important role in their lives, they need to know that you consider each of them an important person too. They can weather a poor meeting place or an activity that flops, but they cannot endure being ignored or rejected.

- Give a shout-out when you see them trying their best, not just when they've had a clear success.
- Emphasize the positive qualities that make each person worthy and unique.
- Be generous with praise and stingy with rebuke.
- Help your troop find ways to show acceptance of and support for one another.

## Promote Fairness

They are sensitive to fairness for all. They forgive mistakes if they are sure you are trying to be fair. They look for fairness in how responsibilities are shared, in handling of disagreements, and in your responses to performance and accomplishment.

- When possible, ask them what they think is fair before decisions are made.
- Explain your reasoning and show why you did something.
- Be willing to apologize if needed.
- Try to see that responsibilities as well as the chances for feeling important are equally divided.
- Help them explore and decide for themselves the fair ways of solving problems, carrying out activities, and responding to behavior and accomplishments.



## Build Trust

They need your belief and support when they try new things, and you'll need to show that you won't betray their confidence. Show them that you are making an effort to understand them as individuals.

- Inspire them to think for themselves and use their own judgment.
- Encourage them to make the important decisions in the group and ensure them that all troop members have an equal say.
- Give them assistance in correcting their own mistakes.
- Support them in trusting one another—let them see firsthand how trust can be built, lost, regained, and strengthened.



## Inspire Open Communication

They want someone who will listen to what they think, feel, and want to do. They like having someone they can talk to about the important things happening in their lives.

- Listen to them. Respond with words and actions.
- Speak your mind openly when you are happy or concerned about something and encourage them to do the same.
- Leave the door open for them to seek advice, share ideas and feelings, and propose plans or improvements.
- Help them see how open communication can result in action, discovery, better understanding of self and others, and a more comfortable climate for fun and accomplishment.

## Managing Conflict

Conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, and if handled constructively they show Girl Scouts that they can overcome their differences of opinions, exercise diplomacy, and improve their communication and relationships. Respecting others and being a sister to every Girl Scout means that shouting, verbal abuse, or physical confrontations are never warranted and cannot be tolerated in the Girl Scout environment.

When a conflict arises in your troop, get those involved to sit down together and talk calmly in a nonjudgmental manner, keeping in mind that each party may need some time—a few days or a week—to calm down before being able to do this. Talking in this way might feel uncomfortable and difficult now, but it lays the groundwork for working well together in the future. Whatever you do, do not spread your complaint around to others—that won't help the situation and causes only embarrassment and anger.



You'll also find conflict resolution activities in some of the Journeys, such as the Amaze Journey for Cadettes or the Mission Sisterhood Journey for Seniors.

If a conflict persists, be sure you explain the matter to your volunteer support team. If the supervisor cannot resolve the issues satisfactorily (or if the problem involves the supervisor), the issue can be taken to the next level of supervision and ultimately to Girl Scouts of Maine if you need extra help.

## Communicating Effectively with Girl Scouts of Any Age

Make sure your words and intentions create connection with members. Keep in mind how important the following approaches are.

**Listen.** Listening to them, as opposed to telling them what to think, feel, or do (no “you should”) is the first step in building a trusting relationship and helping them take ownership of their Girl Scout experience.

**Be Honest.** If you're not comfortable with a topic or activity, it's okay to say so. No one expects you to be an expert on every topic. Ask for alternatives or seek out volunteers with the required expertise. Owning up to mistakes—and apologizing for them—goes a long way.

**Be Open to Real Issues.** Outside of Girl Scouts, members may be dealing with issues like relationships, peer pressure, school, money, drugs, and other serious topics. When you don't know, listen. Also seek help from Girl Scouts of Maine if you need assistance or more information than you currently have.



**Show Respect.** Girl Scouts often say that their best experiences were the ones where adults treated them as equal partners. Speak to them respectfully to reinforce that their opinions matter and that they deserve respect.

**Offer Options.** Members' needs and interests change and being flexible shows them that you respect them and their busy lives. Be ready with age-appropriate guidance and parameters no matter what they choose to do.

**Stay Current.** Show members that you're interested in their world by asking them about the TV shows and movies they like; the books, magazines, or blogs they read; the social media influencers they follow; and the music they listen to.

**Remember LUTE: Listen, Understand, Tolerate, and Empathize.** Try using the LUTE method to thoughtfully respond when a member is upset, angry, or confused.

**Listen.** Hear them out, ask for details, and reflect back what you hear; try “What happened next?” or “What did they say?”

**Understand.** Show that you understand where they are coming from with comments such as, “So what I hear you saying is...” or “I understand why you're unhappy,” or “Your feelings are hurt; mine would be, too.”

**Tolerate.** You can tolerate the feelings that they just can't handle right now on their own. Let them know that you're there to listen and accept how they are feeling about the situation. Say something like: “Try talking to me about it. I'll listen,” or “I know you're mad—talking it out helps,” or “I can handle it—say whatever you want to.”

**Empathize.** Let them know you can imagine feeling what they are feeling with comments such as, “I'm sure that really hurts” or “I can imagine how painful this is for you.”

Remember you don't have to solve their problems for them or have all the answers. Ask them what they would like to do about the situation and how you can support them.

### **Addressing the Needs of Older Girl Scouts**

Let these simple tips guide you when working with teenage Girl Scouts:

- Allow yourself to learn and grow in your role. Think of yourself as a “guide on the side”—a partner, a coach, or a mentor, not a “leader.”
- Ask them what rules they need for safety and what group agreements they need to be a good team. When they take the lead in establishing group rules, they're more likely to stick to them.
- Understand that they need time to talk, unwind, and have fun together.
- Ask what they think and what they want to do.
- Encourage them to speak their minds.
- Provide structure, but don't micromanage.
- Give everyone a voice in the group—understanding that “speaking up” may look different for each person. For some, it might mean sharing their ideas in front of the entire group; for others it could mean submitting a written response or contributing as part of a group.
- Treat them like partners.
- Don't repeat what's said in the group to anyone outside of it (unless necessary for their safety). See “Report Concerns” below to understand the guard rails.



## When Sensitive Topics Come Up



It's an amazing feeling when your Girl Scouts put their trust in you—and when they do, they may come to you with some of the issues they are facing such as bullying, peer pressure, dating, athletic and academic performance, understanding their own identity, and more. Some of these issues may be considered sensitive by families who may have opinions or input about how, and whether, Girl Scouts should cover these topics with their troop.

Girl Scouts welcomes and serves youth and families from a wide spectrum of faiths and cultures. When they wish to participate in discussions or activities that could be considered sensitive—even for some—put the topic on hold until you have spoken with the parents and received guidance from Girl Scouts of Maine.

When Girl Scout activities involve sensitive issues, your role is that of a caring adult volunteer who can help them acquire skills and knowledge in a supportive atmosphere, not someone who advocates a particular position.

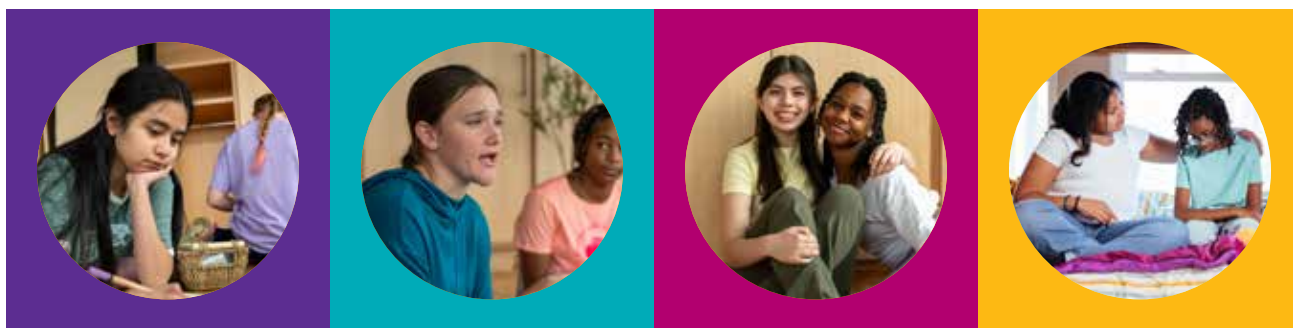
Girl Scouts of the USA does not take a position or develop materials on issues relating to human sexuality, birth control, or abortion. We feel our role is to help Girl Scouts develop self-confidence and good decision-making skills that will help them make wise choices in all areas of their lives. We believe parents and caregivers, along with schools and faith communities, are the primary sources of information on these topics.

At Girl Scouts of Maine, we have a Parent/Guardian Permission form for Sensitive Issues. If your troop is planning an event or activity where sensitive topics may come up, please distribute this form ahead of time.

Parents/caregivers make all decisions regarding their child's participation in the Girl Scout program that may be of a sensitive nature. As a volunteer leader, you must get written parental permission for any locally planned program offering that could be considered sensitive. Included on the permission form should be the topic of the activity, any specific content that might create controversy, and any action steps the Girl Scouts will take when the activity is complete. Be sure to have a form for each troop member and keep the forms on hand in case a problem arises. For activities not sponsored by Girl Scouts, find out in advance (from organizers or other volunteers who may be familiar with the content) what will be presented, and follow Girl Scouts of Maine's guidelines for obtaining written permission.



## Report Concerns



There may be times when you worry about the health and well-being of individuals in your group. Alcohol, drugs, sex, bullying, abuse, depression, and eating disorders are some of the issues they may encounter. You are on the frontlines of their lives which places you in a unique position to identify a situation in which they may need help. If you believe someone is at risk of hurting self or others, your role is to promptly bring that information to the parent/caregiver or the council, so they can get the expert assistance they need. Your concern about their well-being and safety is taken seriously and Girl Scouts of Maine will guide you in addressing these concerns.

Here are a few signs that could indicate someone needs expert help:

- Marked changes in behavior or personality (for example, unusual moodiness, aggressiveness, or sensitivity).
- Declining academic performance and/or inability to concentrate.
- Withdrawal from school, family activities, or friendships.
- Fatigue, apathy, or loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities.
- Sleep disturbances.
- Increased secretiveness.
- Deterioration in appearance and personal hygiene.
- Eating extremes, unexplained weight loss, distorted body image/efforts to hide their body.
- Tendency toward perfectionism (i.e. mistakes are considered unacceptable, unwillingness to start or try something for fear of failure, belief there is only one way to do something).
- Giving away prized possessions; preoccupation with the subject of death.
- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, or fractures.
- Avoidance of eye contact or physical contact.
- Excessive fearfulness or distrust of adults.
- Abusive behavior toward other children, especially younger ones, or animals.

You have been asked to take the **GSUSA Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention** course in gsLearn. This is now a required course for all GS volunteers and staff members. As a Girl Scout Volunteer, you are a Mandated Reporter according to Maine Law. Though not required, the State of Maine Mandated Reporter Training is helpful and informative for all of us who want to protect children.

Additionally, GSME offers mental wellness resources in gsLearn and courses throughout the state for Youth Mental Health First Aid certification. See our event calendar for upcoming dates.

## Engaging Families

You want your Girl Scouts to have fun, be inspired, take risks, and learn about themselves and the world—that's why you're a Girl Scout troop leader or troop volunteer! Parents and caregivers want the same thing for their children, but getting families to pitch in and play an active role in the troop while also enhancing the experience for their Girl Scout and themselves can be tricky for many volunteers. It doesn't have to be this way.



## Kick the Year Off Right by Engaging Parents and Caregivers

Parents and caregivers will feel most connected to the troop when you are proactive in engaging them early on. Express your desire for them to play an active role in troop life, and how that can contribute to the connection, joy, and sense of pride the Girl Scouts feel. At the same time, recognize that not all families have the same capacity to be involved for various reasons (don't take it personally!). Be open with parents about your hopes for their involvement and listen to what can work for them.





## What is a Parent and Caregiver Meeting?

It's the first meeting you hold to start each troop year—whether your troop is new or returning, it's valuable for all troops, every year.

**Why Hold a Meeting?** Kicking off each year with a parent and caregiver meeting sets the troop up for success. Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging parents in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When parents are involved, leaders have support, the troop has a plan, and troop members benefit! The meeting helps:

- Families understand what Girl Scouting can do for their child.
- 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 co-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.

For even more tips on working with troop families, check out Girl Scouts' Tips for Troop Leaders hub.

## How to Keep Parents and Caregivers Engaged



**Make the Ask(s).** The main reason people don't take action is because they were never asked to in the first place. One out of three Girl Scout parents say no one had communicated expectations around involvement with their child's troop—this is troubling! Parents may have many talents, but they're certainly not mind readers. Build a Grown-Ups Kaper Chart! Ask for what you need. If you're nervous about getting turned down, don't be because the answer is "no" UNLESS you ask! A few parents might be unable to offer assistance, but the helpers you do get will be worth their weight in gold. And just because someone wasn't available a month or two ago doesn't mean they won't be free to help now. Loop back, follow up, and ask again!

**Make Sense of "Why."** Explain that not only does the whole troop benefit with extra help from parents and other caregivers, but also that many Girl Scouts feel a special sense of pride in seeing their own family member take a leadership role. Getting involved can strengthen the caregiver/child bond and is a meaningful way to show them that they are a priority in their adults' lives.



**Find out What People Want to Do.** Start with asking what people enjoy doing and what they are good at. Does someone love coordinating events, making flyers, etc., or managing money? Does someone love using social media and could help promote cookie sales? Get a sense of the desires in the room that will energize people. Then talk about time commitment because it will really depend on what they are doing. It's easier to make time for something you find fun.

**Make it Quick and Easy.** Continue the conversation by asking how much time each week they might be able to dedicate to the troop, then go from there. For instance, if a troop caregiver has 15 minutes each week to spare, they could organize and manage the calendar for troop snacks and carpools. If a grandparent has one to two hours, they could assist with leading the troop through a specific badge on a topic they're already comfortable with. Be time conscious and consider the commitment.

**Make Family Part of the Formula.** While Girl Scout programming is always focused on the Girl Scouts, it's important and helpful to open a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting the whole crew to celebrate their accomplishments in Girl Scouting—whether at a holiday open house, a bridging ceremony, or a fun “reverse meeting” where Girl Scouts take the role of leaders and guide the adults, including caregivers, through an activity—will help parents and caregivers better understand the value of Girl Scouts, and they'll be more likely to invest their time and talents to the troop.

That said, there's no need to wait for a special event to engage families in their Girl Scout's life. 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 troop is doing and learning during each meeting. The first meeting is a great time to ask how they prefer to receive updates!

Encourage them to let their Girl Scouts “be the experts” at home, explaining or teaching the new skills they've learned.



## Girl Scout Product Programs



Learning to think like an entrepreneur? Developing business smarts? Getting to know customers and building lasting relationships? There's so much more to that package of Thin Mints®.

Whether they participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program or the Girl Scout Fall Product Program (or both!), everything they learn prepares them to take on the world. Plus, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay in your local community to power amazing year-round experiences that broaden their worlds and spark their sense of wonder.

## Five Essential Skills

Girl Scouts as young as five develop five essential skills through the Girl Scout Cookie Program that will help them be successful today and throughout their lives:

- **Goal Setting.** Girl Scouts learn to create a plan to reach their goals.
- **Decision Making.** Girl Scouts learn to make decisions on their own and as a team.
- **Money Management.** Girl Scouts learn to create a budget and handle money.
- **People Skills.** Girl Scouts find their voice and up their confidence through customer interactions that build relationships.
- **Business Ethics.** Girl Scouts learn to act responsibly and honestly, both in business and in life.

But building their business know-how isn't just tied to the cookies themselves! Girl Scouts at any level can continue honing their entrepreneurial skills by earning the Cookie Business badges, Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin, and the Financial Literacy badges year over year.

Before your entrepreneurs open shop, be sure to check out these helpful troop leader resources that will empower you to:

- Manage your troop's funds.
- Learn how Girl Scouts participate in money earning.
- Discover how your troop can reach its financial goals.
- Plan activities to help them earn cookie pins and badges.
- Understand just how much your Girl Scouts are capable of by grade level and how their entrepreneurial skills progress.

### Girl Scout Cookie History

What started with Girl Scouts selling home-baked cookies to raise money grew into enlisting professional bakers in 1936 to handle the growing demand—and the rest is history. Explore Girl Scout Cookie History to find out how cookies have helped build generations of female entrepreneurs and leaders who make the world a better place.

## Where Cookie Proceeds Go

After paying for the cost of cookies and materials, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local and help councils provide Girl Scout programs in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the outdoors, life skills, entrepreneurship, in camps, through leadership training, and multiple other ways. A portion of the proceeds is directly managed by Girl Scouts, and it's up to them to decide how to invest their troop's share of the earnings.

Girl Scouts of Maine will provide a breakdown of how cookie program proceeds support Girl Scout activities locally. Please share this information with Girl Scouts and their families so everyone understands that product programs support your local council.

Troop members share in the proceeds from successful product programs; proceeds are not distributed to individual members. Girl Scouts, however, may be eligible for rewards and credits that they put toward council-sponsored camps, programs, and travel experiences. The council plan for rewards applies equally to all participants in the product program activity. Visit the cookie section Girl Scouts of Maine website for more information about individual rewards and troop proceeds locally.

The Girl Scouts Blue Book of Basic Documents specifies that:

*“All money and other assets, including property, that are raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting must be held and authorized by a Girl Scout council or Girl Scouts of the USA. Such money and other assets must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting.”*

“Ownership of Assets,” Girl Scouts Blue Book of Basic Documents

Making s'mores under the stars, creating a lasting impact in your community, or ordering supplies for an eye-opening STEM project—there are limitless ways to put troop proceeds toward dynamic Girl Scout experiences! There are a few things, however, that don't qualify for “purposes of Girl Scouting,” for instance, using troop proceeds to purchase memberships in or uniforms for another organization. We encourage all councils to remind their volunteers of this policy in order to avoid diversion of Girl Scout funds.



## Girl Scouts of Maine's Role



When you are set up for success, you are better able to set up your Girl Scouts for success! That's why every year, Girl Scouts of Maine provides trainings, guidelines, and procedures for conducting the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program and determines how the proceeds and product rewards system will be managed. Check the cookie section of our website to find the answers you need as well as local trainings and resources.

Each council selects the vendors of its choice to provide the products for their product programs. Two commercial bakers are licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies: Little Brownie Bakers and ABC Bakers. GSME gets our cookies from ABC Bakers. You can also Meet the Cookies and find additional info on cookie varieties, including nutritional details.

Councils also work with vendors to offer magazine subscriptions, nut and candy products, and more for the fall product program. These companies are Ashdon Farms, Trophy Nut, and M2 Media Group. M2 Media Group provides online tools and activities for Girl Scouts. See our website for more details.

## Your Role

You play an exciting role in giving your Girl Scouts opportunities to practice the five essential skills as they learn how to think like entrepreneurs. Some of the things you'll do include:

- Get Girl Scouts excited about the opportunities to support the troop in earning their way to achieve their activity goals (but allowing their participation to be voluntary).
- Support both competitive and apprehensive cookie bosses, helping all of them set meaningful goals for themselves.
- Fostering partnerships with each Girl Scout's family to ensure cookie season success, whatever that may look like for the Girl Scout, will help you build a positive partnership with Girl Scouts and families. The Cookie Entrepreneur Family pin is designed to help families support their growth at home.

Not only can Girl Scouts sell individually, both in-person and using the online tools provided, but they can also participate in group booth sales during product programs. Girl Scouts will always be able to sell cookies to members of their personal network, regardless of where they live. Your local council may have additional guidance and processes to ensure every booth is in a safe and appropriate location.

As your Girl Scouts grow, your role will evolve from a hands-on one to providing oversight and support where needed. No matter their ages, remember that volunteers and parents/caregivers do not sell the product. Your role is to encourage your troop and let their entrepreneurial spirit soar. Learning by doing is exactly how your Girl Scouts develop the business savvy and communication skills that will empower them to reach any goals they set for themselves.

Another critical task for each troop is to establish a clear accounting system for all proceeds and product during the programs. It's up to you to make sure that money is spent wisely, that excellent records are kept (remember to keep copies of all receipts), and that all product is tracked. For older Girl Scouts, your job is to oversee their work as they learn to keep impeccable records. Be sure to attend product program orientation or training so you are aware of the systems and helpful tools available.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and the fall product program can be exhilarating and busy times during the troop year, but you're never alone in your efforts! You can reach out to your service unit product program manager when you're feeling stuck, or you can build a cookie team to provide the support your troop needs.

## Product Program Safety

Safety is the top priority while participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and other product programs. Volunteers, families, and Girl Scouts should be familiar with and practice the safety guidelines outlined in local program resources as well as those available in the troop leader resources section of [girlscout.org](http://girlscout.org) and in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

## Selling Cookies Online

Before Girl Scouts open their online storefront, they should partner with their troop leader and their families to learn how to safely run their online business.

We know Girl Scouts and their troops are creative, and the Girl Scout Cookie Program provides the perfect opportunity to highlight this creativity. Participants **can** use vanity URLs to add a creative component to their marketing and learning (e.g. Shana's Cookie Sale or Buy Cookies from Shana). Troops and Girl Scouts **cannot** use GSUSA's intellectual property (Buy Thin Mints Now or Buy Girl Scout Cookies) as part of a vanity URL.

A few more online safety practices to keep in mind:

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program is a girl-led program; they should always lead online marketing and sales efforts, with the supervision of a caregiver.
- Girl Scouts engaging in online sales and marketing must review and apply the Digital Marketing Tips for Cookie Entrepreneurs and Their Families.
- Girl Scouts, volunteers and caregivers must review and adhere to the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge, the Digital Cookie Pledge, and Girl Scouts' Safety Activity Checkpoints Product Programs.
- Posting individual or troop sales links to resale sites (Craigslist, eBay, Facebook Marketplace, etc.) is **prohibited**.
- Girl Scouts must adhere to all terms and conditions on the Digital Cookie platform.
- Girl Scouts of the USA reserves the right to remove or disable their link for any reason including violation of guidance, inventory fulfillment issues, safety issues, or if sales and marketing activity goes viral and otherwise creates unanticipated disruption.

Additionally, families, Girl Scouts, and volunteers should contact and collaborate with their council and GSUSA in advance of any national news media opportunities tied to their online marketing and sales efforts.



## The Buddy System

Remember to always incorporate the buddy system when Girl Scouts engage in Product Sales. Girl Scouts should not sell or deliver cookies alone.

Adults should provide supervision and guidance for all program levels, and must accompany Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors when they are selling, taking orders, and delivering products. Adults oversee Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors and must be aware of how, when, and where they are when selling products. In addition, an adult must be readily available to them when they are participating in product programs. This can be accomplished by an adult being present with them or by having an adult and Girl Scouts exchange telephone numbers.



## Preparing for Your Girl Scout Cookie Booth

Cookie booths—that is, cookie pop-up shops in areas with lots of foot traffic—are a fun way for Girl Scouts to connect with their community and practice their sales pitch with new customers. Booth locations must be approved by councils, facilitated within council jurisdiction, and participants must follow all council guidelines regarding setting up, running, and taking down a booth. Cookie Booths are only permitted within the jurisdiction of the Girl Scout and troop's primary council.

Create a great cookie booth experience for your Girl Scouts by:

- Working directly with your local Service Unit Product Program Supervisor.
- Using your best judgment in setting up cookie booths in locations that will be open, accessible, and safe for all members and potential customers.
- Get written permission.
- Choosing a high traffic area—this could be your local supermarket, mall, or park—where the maximum number of customers can visit the booth.
- Checking out your booth site ahead of the sale. Talk to business owners in the area so they'll know what to expect. Find out what security measures are in place—these may include lights for evening sales and whether a security camera watches the booth area—and where the nearest bathrooms are located.
- Respecting the surrounding businesses by making sure the booth isn't blocking a store entrance or exit.





Encourage your Girl Scouts to unleash their creativity—and work on their advertising skills—to make colorful signs and booth decorations that potential customers can't resist! Remind them to be polite and to have their sales pitch ready for interested customers.

And keep in mind:

- Adults must always be present for cookie booths in public places.
- For each troop cookie booth, a minimum of two adults (at least one of whom is a registered Girl Scout volunteer with the required background check), and three Girl Scouts should be present at all times. With two or more volunteers, you'll have adequate booth coverage if Girl Scouts need to be accompanied to the restroom.
- Daisies are still learning how to make correct change. Help them handle money as needed but remember that Girl Scouts make all sales at the booth!
- Keep your customers in the loop and update your baker's software system if you need to cancel or are unable to attend a cookie booth. If not, customers could be routed to cancelled booths as all scheduled booths are available on GSUSA's Find Cookie Now!
- Certain locations may be inappropriate for younger Girl Scouts based on the standards of your local community and may negatively impact the cookie program experience for Girl Scouts, and/or may negatively impact our brand in the community. For additional clarity, Girl Scouts should not sell in or in front of establishments that they themselves cannot legally patronize.
- Additionally, with respect to marijuana dispensaries, we have been steadfastly combating the unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout trademark by the cannabis community, which has been marketing—without our authorization—certain cannabis products under our youth-appealing brand. We are continuing to aggressively fight these unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout brand and hope that our councils and volunteers will join Girl Scouts of the USA's efforts by discouraging cookie booth locations at such locations.
- Retail sales without Girl Scouts present are not approved by GSUSA. Councils, troops, and Girl Scouts may not sell cookies in a retail space where Girl Scouts cannot be present to market, manage inventory, collect, and process payments for cookies. Store employees and/or adults cannot sell cookies on behalf of a Girl Scout or troop.
- For more tips to make your booth a success, check out our Cookie Booth Essentials. For additional information about setting up a booth and safety and security suggestions, consult Girl Scouts of Maine guidelines. In case of an unfortunate incident, please submit an Incident Report.





## Cookie Donation Programs

Cookies also help Girl Scouts make a big impact in their community! Girl Scouts of Maine will have an established cookie donation program where customers can purchase cookies that will be donated to an organization by Girl Scouts of Maine. Encourage your troop members to share about the Cookie Donation program with customers. It's a great way for customers to give back to their community, too!

With cookie donations, remember that:

- All cookie donation programs must be approved by Girl Scouts of Maine.
- Donated cookies must stay within the council jurisdiction unless Girl Scouts of Maine has the approval from other council jurisdictions.
- Donated products cannot be resold and must be used in a responsible and ethical way.
- Donated products are used in a way that does not undermine the work of councils or jeopardize the integrity of the Girl Scout brand.



## Handling Product Complaints

Girl Scout Cookies are well loved and for good reason—it has always been the practice of Girl Scout councils and the bakers to guarantee customer satisfaction with their delicious cookies. If a customer is not satisfied with the quality of their cookies for some reason, they can contact the baker via the phone number printed on the side of the cookie package. Troops should notify their council if they are aware of any customer dissatisfaction.



## Recognizing Cookie Sellers in the Media

Focusing on entrepreneurial outcomes has always been the emphasis of the Girl Scout Cookie Program. The cookie program has never been about and does not focus on individual sales results.

- There are many impressive cookie entrepreneurs throughout the U.S., and the Girl Scout Movement will continue to recognize dynamic cookie entrepreneurs for various achievements tied to the Girl Scout Cookie Program and through their participation in Girl Scouts.
- Girl Scouts of the USA does not currently track the top seller(s) of Girl Scout Cookies on a national level and does not identify a specific Girl Scout as the number one or “record-breaking” national cookie seller.
- Girl Scout councils should not reference such individuals as “top sellers” in the media. Doing so detracts from the essence of the Girl Scout Cookie Program, which is based on offering members important experiences in entrepreneurship, business, and finance from an early age as well as providing Girl Scouts and local Girl Scout councils with the funds necessary to power amazing experiences and opportunities for Girl Scouts year-round.
- A Girl Scout’s or troop’s sales link should not be highlighted when speaking to the media. All calls to action should be directed to the Girl Scout Cookie Finder or a council’s own cookie finder/map and not a specific individual or troop.
- Volunteers, parents/caregivers, and Girl Scouts may not secure paid media to enhance a troop’s or individual’s positioning in the media.



## Know How Much You are Appreciated

What begins with Girl Scouts speaking up at a troop meeting can go all the way to speaking in front of their city council for a cause they champion—and they will have your support to thank for that. Your volunteer role makes a powerful difference. Girl Scouts wouldn't exist without volunteers like you. Your first step as a troop leader may lead to other volunteer opportunities once this year is over.

When you're ready for more opportunities, be sure to let your Girl Scouts of Maine service team know how you'd like to be a part of Girl Scouts' lives in the future—whether in the same position or in other, flexible ways. Are you ready to organize a series or event? Take a trip? Work with Girl Scouts at camp? Work with a troop as a yearlong volunteer? Share your skills at a council office, working behind the scenes? The possibilities are endless and can be tailored to fit your skills and interests.

Did you know that in addition to our traditional Troop Volunteer role, we also have Specialty Volunteers! These are individuals who would like to share specific skills, talents, or interests with Girl Scouts! The individual specialty volunteer decides how much time to spend, how far to travel, and even the age Girl Scout to work with. For more information go to our website.



### Volunteer Appreciation

Without our passionate and dedicated volunteers, there would be no Girl Scouting. That's why we celebrate National Volunteer Month every April and turn up the party as we ring in National Girl Scout Leader's Day on April 22.

Girl Scouts also celebrates National Volunteer Week, which falls during the third week of April. What can we say, we love our volunteers!

Each service unit holds a celebration of a year well-done to recognize good work done at the local level. Council-wide, we hold an annual celebration to highlight Girl Scouts who have earned their highest awards as well as adult members who receive nationally recognized Girl Scout awards.

Recipients of all of these awards are nominated by fellow Girl Scout adults who have seen their good work in action! Who would you like to nominate? Check out our Adult Recognitions page on the GSME website.

### Additional Resources and Support

We know that volunteering isn't always easy, especially when you're new, so we can't thank you enough for giving your time and energy to be the mentor and role model your troop needs! Guiding your Girl Scouts—even if you're still figuring things out—is nothing short of amazing!

The important thing to remember is, you're not alone. We are in this with you, ready to always help and support you! Thanks again! It's going to be a great Girl Scout year!

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# Girl Scouts of Maine 2024-2026 Volunteer Handbook

## Safety Activity Checkpoints



# GSME SAFETY ACTIVITY CHECKPOINTS

Safety guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA)  
and Girl Scouts of Maine approved activities.

2024–2026 Edition

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# Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines

*Safety Activity Checkpoints* (SACP) provides the standard safety guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) and Girl Scouts of Maine's (GSME) approved activities.

GSUSA, local councils, and other units holding a credential—including USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO)—shall be responsible for seeing that all activities are planned and carried out in a manner that considers the health, safety, and general well-being of all participants in accordance with these standard safety guidelines.

In this section, you will find GSUSA's standard safety guidelines, by topic, **which apply to all Girl Scout activities**. Please read and become familiar with all topics in this section.

Throughout Safety Activity Checkpoints, several individual activities, such as Paddling and Rowing, Climbing and Adventure, and Target Sports, are categorized under related sections to provide continuity as well as grade level and skill progression information.

**Standard Safety Guidelines** are to be used in conjunction with the specific, individual activity's safety checkpoints along with reasonable common-sense adjustments to ensure a safe and positive experience for Girl Scout members. The intent of providing these standard safety guidelines is to establish a checklist for success and to foster confident leadership.

## Adult Supervision

Girl Scouts has a strict standard that **whenever Girl Scouts meet, whether in person or virtually, there are to be at least two unrelated, registered, and Girl Scout-approved adults who have been background checked, and one of whom is female, supervising Girl Scout members**. A registered and approved adult volunteer is one who has passed a background check and has been through the council's volunteer onboarding and training process. The two adult volunteers must not be related to each other (for example, not a sibling, spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, or anyone who would be considered a family member) and who do not live in the same residence.

**This requirement applies to every Girl Scout gathering** including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep-away travel, special events, activities, and projects. Non-member children who are present should be considered in the ratios. Members should be advised of this policy so that they can report to GSME if there is a violation.

Troop leaders must always be adults. Youth or youth members are not permitted to substitute for adult supervision. This rule applies to every Girl Scout gathering including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep-away travel, events, activities, and projects. **There are no exceptions to this rule.**

There are different specific adult-to-youth ratio requirements for Girl Scout troop meetings as compared to events outside of the regular Girl Scout troop meeting such as outings, activities, camping, and travel. Activities and travel outside of the regular troop meeting space require more adult supervision.



## For Troop Meetings


The adult-to-youth ratio means *a minimum* of two registered, approved, adult volunteers who are unrelated, including one female, for up to this number of Girl Scouts:

- 12 Daisy Girl Scouts
- 20 Brownie Girl Scouts
- 25 Junior Girl Scouts
- 25 Cadette Girl Scouts
- 30 Senior Girl Scouts
- 30 Ambassador Girl Scouts

There should be one extra registered, approved, adult volunteer for every additional:

- 1-6 Daisy Girl Scouts
- 1-8 Brownie Girl Scouts
- 1-10 Junior Girl Scouts
- 1-12 Cadette Girl Scouts
- 1-15 Senior Girl Scouts
- 1-15 Ambassador Girl Scouts

## Adult Volunteer-to-Youth Ratios

	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





## For Outings, Activities, Travel, and Camping

The adult-to-youth ratio means *a minimum* of two registered, approved, adult volunteers who are unrelated, including one female, for up to this number of Girl Scouts:

- 6 Daisy Girl Scouts
- 12 Brownie Girl Scouts
- 16 Junior Girl Scouts
- 20 Cadette Girl Scouts
- 24 Senior Girl Scouts
- 24 Ambassador Girl Scouts

There should be one extra registered, approved, adult volunteer for every additional:

- 1–4 Daisy Girl Scouts
- 1–6 Brownie Girl Scouts
- 1–8 Junior Girl Scouts
- 1–10 Cadette Girl Scouts
- 1–12 Senior Girl Scouts
- 1–12 Ambassador Girl Scouts

Some high-adventure activities may require more adult-to-youth supervision than stated above. For those activities, the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints will provide the specific adult-to-youth supervision ratios. Remember, some activities are less safe for younger members, particularly Daisies and Brownies. Younger Girl Scout members may not be permitted to participate based on their age, as appropriate, and this will be specified on the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints. In cases where younger girl participation is an option, but only under certain conditions, this is indicated on the first page of the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints.

**Note:** For mixed-grade level troops (Multi-Level Troops), use the adult-to-youth ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop. For example, if the troop consists of Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy adult-to-youth ratio should be followed.

**Activity Council Approval Requirement.** On the first page of each individual activity's safety activity checkpoints, you will see a field indicating whether Girl Scouts of Maine requires you to have prior council approval to perform the activity. Council prior approval is required for those activities that are rated as high risk by Girl Scouts' national insurance carriers. GSME may approve an activity once for the duration of the year or require individual approval each time the activity takes place. This is a council decision as local norms and laws vary from state to state. The council approval requirement types are:

- Required. You must check with Girl Scouts of Maine for prior approval.
- Not Required. You do not need to check with GSME for prior approval or it is covered by the Annual Permission Form.

**Activities Not Listed in Safety Activity Checkpoints.** In a challenging, learn-by-doing environment like Girl Scouts, it is only natural that Girl Scout members will sometimes want to take part in activities that are not specifically addressed in Safety Activity Checkpoints. If safety checkpoints are not provided for a specific activity in Safety Activity Checkpoints, the first step is always to contact Girl Scouts of Maine to make sure the activity is okay.

Be sure to have a plan or process in place for addressing and handling requests for activities that are not specifically listed in Safety Activity Checkpoints. When considering activities not specifically listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*:



- **Consult with Girl Scouts of Maine for clarification and approval in advance.** GSME may or may not permit the activity. If we do approve the activity, we may direct you to a specific vendor or facility or advise you to stay away from other vendors or facilities.
- **Investigate** whether the activity is similar to another activity and if the safety activity checkpoints for that activity can easily translate and apply to an approved activity, then follow those checkpoints.
- **Consider** whether the proposed activity requires any additional expert supervision or special certification for the instructor.
- **Think about the quality of the experience** in terms of how participation ties to Girl Scouts' Five Outcomes, the long-term positive outcomes Girl Scout members receive in Girl Scouting.

**Selecting an Activity to Do with Girl Scout Members.** When considering what types of activities to do, whether specifically listed in Safety Activity Checkpoints or not, be thoughtful and intentional when selecting the activity and be mindful of the long-term positive outcomes that Girl Scout members receive through Girl Scouting. Think about how participating in the activity ties to at least one of the Girl Scouts Five Outcomes. Girl Scouts has proven to help girls thrive in five ways:

**Strong sense of self.** Girls have confidence in themselves and their abilities and form positive identities.

**Positive values.** Girls act ethically, honestly, and responsibly and show concern for others.

**Challenge seeking.** Girls take appropriate risks, try things even though they might fail, and learn from their mistakes.

**Healthy relationships.** Girls develop and maintain healthy relationships by communicating their feelings directly and resolving conflict constructively.

**Community problem solving.** Girls contribute to the world in purposeful and meaningful ways, learn how to identify problems in the community, and create “action plans” to solve them.

Activities chosen should work towards intentionally helping Girl Scout members be successful in these key areas. As part of the planning process, consider how and why the activity selected connects to Girl Scouts Five Outcomes. Make it girl-led by sharing these outcomes with them and engaging them in the activity selection and planning process.

## Infectious Disease Safety in Girl Scouts

The health and safety of our members is always Girl Scouts' highest priority. Recognize that communicable diseases, including COVID-19, have always presented risks for Girl Scout members to handle. Following Centers for Disease Control standards along with guidance from local jurisdictions is expected. Be prepared to monitor evolving health matters.



## Have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

Keeping to the Girl Scout motto, “Be Prepared,” proper preparation is the key to success. An important thing to consider, before heading out on a trip or to an activity, is an Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Volunteers can review their troop’s EAP with participants as a learning experience for them, to the extent it makes sense according to their age and maturity.

For the adult volunteer, it is important to think about and document an EAP for troop meetings and activities to ensure you are prepared in the event of an accident or injury. When creating an EAP, think through scenarios of what can go wrong, such as physical injury, severe weather, fire, intruders, missing persons, or sudden illness. This basic step is invaluable. The key elements included in an effective risk management plan are:

### Identify the type of emergency:

- **Medical:** A member becomes suddenly ill.
- **Accidental injury:** A member is hurt during an activity.
- **Weather-related crisis or challenging environment:** As with backpacking. Always pay attention to weather so that the activity can be rescheduled if there is a severe storm or weather-related risk.
- **Fire:** Become aware of all entrances and exits, and alternative exit routes.
- **Missing or lost member.**
- **Mitigate and minimize the damage, injury, or time element in seeking help:** Know how far the activity is from the nearest Emergency Medical Service (EMS).
  - If EMS is **more than 30 minutes away**, an Advanced First Aider should always be present, preferably with Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR) credentials.
  - If EMS is **less than 30 minutes away**, a General First Aider should be present with Girl Scout members.
- **If more than 200 people at an event**, an Advanced First Aider should be added to the General First Aider for every 200 people.
- **Make sure emergency response vehicles can access the area where the activity is being held.** If an emergency vehicle cannot access the site, notify either local EMS, park services, or other authorities ahead of time and tell them where you will be, what you will be doing, and how many members are with you.

### Respond once having confirmed the properly trained first aiders are present:

- **Immediately engage the first aider** to the accident scene involving an illness, accident, or injury.
- **Notify and coordinate the arrival of emergency medical services or law enforcement.**
- **Contact all relevant parties:**
  - Parents or legal guardians
  - Council staff
  - Law enforcement
  - Property owner or facility manager



## Key Components of an Effective Emergency Action Plan

- **Contact list.** Create a chart, table, or simple list for all participants, including adults, with parent and legal guardian contact phone numbers as well as key emergency phone numbers in addition to 911, such as the nearest hospital, medical center, law enforcement office, or emergency transportation. Share this information with a trusted individual, so that all information does not rest with one person. Consider a hard copy for quick reference in an emergency.
- **Roles and responsibilities.** Keep predetermined and established emergency role assignments showing who does what in the event of an emergency. For example, the leader stays with Girl Scout members while the co-leader calls for help and coordinates the arrival of emergency services and notifies the parents, or vice versa. Agree on this ahead of time so that you are calm and prepared if the worst occurs. Also think through what you will do if the injured person is one of the adults.
- **Exit strategy.** Be aware of all emergency exits and/or evacuation plans beforehand. Identify and communicate alternative exit routes with all present.
- **Meeting place.** Determine and communicate a prearranged meeting place (designated spot) in the event the group becomes separated, or a Girl Scout member should become lost.
- **Communication method.** Have a method of emergency communication that works. If camping or backpacking, consider a whistle or horn as an emergency call-out. Make sure to inform Girl Scout members that this is the sound of an emergency. When they hear this sound, they know to go to the designated spot. If there is cell service at the activity site, save all contact names and numbers, including those for the appropriate authorities, in your mobile phones before the activity takes place.

**Activity Preparation.** Communicate with Girl Scouts of Maine and caregivers about the activity, including details about safety precautions and any appropriate clothing or supplies that may be necessary. Follow GSME procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and guidelines about general health examinations. Girl Scouts are key to activity planning. Keeping their grade level abilities in mind, encourage them to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.

**Review Safety Activity Checkpoints with Instructors.** Standard Safety Guidelines and the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, camp, or GSME as appropriate to determine if the safety checkpoints can be complied with. Take any questions or issues with safety compliance to GSME for guidance and next steps.

**Itinerary and Key Contacts.** Give an itinerary to a contact person at home. Call the contact person upon departure and return. Create a list that includes Girl Scout members' parent/caregiver contact information, council contacts, and emergency services contacts. Keep this list on hand or post in an easily accessible location. Emergency and parent contact information should be saved to an adult's mobile phone on the trip and be provided to the contact person at home.

### Organizing Gear

- **Safety Gear** includes clothing and equipment members will need to safely take part in the activity. These items are necessary to ensure safety. Always opt to take the safety equipment offered by an organization or facility, even if it is not specifically listed in the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints. If the facility offers helmets, always accept the use of helmets, and have members wear them.



- **Required Gear** simply means activity-specific gear necessary to participate in the activity. For example, for skiing, members will need skis, boots, and poles, or otherwise plan for rental equipment.
- **Additional Gear** may include items that support a safe and healthy outdoor learning experience. Always take additional gear into consideration when planning an outdoor activity or trip in addition to the safety gear required for the specific activity. These are items that often make the experience more comfortable. Recommended items, based on Girl Scout experience, include:
  - o Layers of clothing for wintertime or activities on or by the water or mountains, where temperatures or wind can change dramatically within a short period of time
  - o Sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, sun visor, and lip balm
  - o Change of clothes for water-related activities or those involving dirt or mud, such as spelunking
  - o Comfortable shoes and socks if hiking or spending long days outside in order to prevent ticks and blisters
  - o Watch, compass, and map(s)
  - o Insect repellent
  - o Towels for waterfront, pool, and paddling activities
  - o Bottle of drinking water and healthy snacks
  - o Backpacks (Girl Scout members carry their own gear and supplies)

**Instructor Credibility.** Verify instructor knowledge, experience, and maturity. Ensure the volunteers or onsite instructors possess the proper skills, knowledge, training, and certification, or documented experience required to meet GSME’s guidelines and as outlined in the individual activity’s safety activity checkpoints for the approved activity.

With respect to instructing and safeguarding children, maturity level and years of experience can positively impact the support needed for volunteers to safeguard Girl Scout members. For example, while the legal definition of an adult lifeguard is 18, qualified lifeguards of 21 years of age or over are preferred whenever possible.

**Visiting and Participating Adults.** Occasionally, friends and family members join Girl Scout outings or trips, or experts in a subject may be invited to troop meetings to help work on badges. Verify with Girl Scouts of Maine any specific requirements when adults attend Girl Scout gatherings. Arrange for background checks for participating adults or episodic volunteers. Depending on your jurisdiction, there may be specific background check, fingerprinting, or child abuse prevention training requirements for adults who will regularly or periodically attend Girl Scout gatherings, have shared oversight over members, participate in an overnight stay, handle money, or drive youth members.

**Facility General Insurance.** Commercial general liability insurance protects the Girl Scout organization. The facility or vendor that hosts your troop event (for example, a riding stable, a hotel, or a bus company) should carry general liability insurance and auto liability insurance when motor vehicles are involved. A facility that carries valid general liability insurance has almost always been examined for risk by its insurance carrier. If a facility or vendor does not carry general liability insurance, it’s a red flag. It may not be safe, so it would be best to select another facility or vendor. When GSME requires you to provide documented evidence of insurance, ask the facility for a



certificate of insurance for your records. Be aware that some places either do not or cannot provide a certificate of insurance to all customers, only provide a certificate of insurance when a group is very large, or if the group plans to pay a certain amount in advance. Still, the conversation will give you an idea of whether the facility is adequately insured, and you can consult your GSME representative for next steps.

When planning to use a written contract with a facility or when considering a new vendor, remember to consult with Girl Scouts of Maine for the proper insurance requirements and to see if GSME uses an approved vendor list. Check to confirm the certificate of insurance you will be obtaining validates the insurance limits outlined in your contract or agreement before submitting a contract to GSME for signature.

**Activity Accident Insurance.** Activity accident insurance is supplemental health insurance that protects registered Girl Scout members. Registered members are automatically covered under activity accident insurance when participating in all Girl Scout events and activities. Invited non-member participants are also covered. When planning extended trips, always consult with Girl Scouts of Maine to see if extra activity accident insurance is needed. International trips always require Activity Accident Insurance Plan 3PI.

**Leave No Trace.** Girl Scouts has a long tradition of leaving an area better than we found it. Search the web for tips on environmental responsibility and remember our principle of Leave No Trace. Doing so will teach Girl Scout members responsibility and safeguard your troop and GSME from complications or issues involving the use of public property.

**Weather Conditions.** Always monitor the weather in the days preceding an activity or trip. Check the local weather report on the day of the trip. For circumstances in which forecasted weather could be a risk to safety, consider scheduling alternatives and options. In the case of severe wind, lightning, hail, ice, snowstorm, flood warnings due to heavy rain, or a hurricane or tropical storm, make contingency plans for itineraries and transportation. Reschedule the event if the weather report is severe. Adhere to public safety announcements concerning staying indoors or evacuating the area. In extremely hot weather, do outdoor activities in the morning and late afternoon hours and, during the hottest time of day, stay in a shaded area or inside with air conditioning. On extremely hot days, it is important to plan for easy access to plenty of drinking water to prevent heat exhaustion and dehydration. If extreme weather or temperature conditions prevent a trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

**Buddy System.** For trips and activities, it is helpful for members of similar age to pair up as partners. Each Girl Scout member is responsible for staying with their buddy throughout a trip or activity. A buddy can warn their partner of danger, lend a helping hand, or get immediate assistance when the situation warrants it. All Girl Scout members are encouraged to stay near the group so if someone is injured or not feeling well, there are others, including an adult, close by to seek help.

**Annual Permission Forms.** Annual permission forms are parental or legal guardian consent forms for attendance at regular troop meetings throughout the year. Please keep copies of all permission forms for all Girl Scout members.

**Permission Slips for Day Trips and Activities.** It is imperative to secure a signed permission slip from a child's parent or guardian for any trip or special activity outside the troop meeting space, not covered by the Annual Permission Form. This applies to all Girl Scout members under the age of 18. Always keep a copy of these permissions. In most cases, one parental consent or one legal guardian is legally acceptable. However, there may be circumstances regarding a custody



situation or a standard in GSME where dual parental consent is required. For international trips, written consent is generally required from both parents/legal guardians. If there is a question about single versus dual parental or dual guardian consent, consult Girl Scouts of Maine and they can consult local or state laws for specific local guidance.

**Overnight Trips.** Prepare Girl Scout members to be away from home by involving them in planning the activity or event so they know what to expect. On trips where male volunteers are part of the group, it is not appropriate for them to sleep in the same space as girl members. Always support and maintain a single-sex atmosphere for sleeping quarters. Men may participate only when separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms are available for their use. Men should not be in a situation where they must walk through Girl Scouts' sleeping quarters to enter or exit their sleeping quarters or access restrooms. In some circumstances, such as a museum or mall overnight, with hundreds of Girl Scouts, this type of accommodation may not be possible. If this is the case, men do not supervise girls in the sleeping area of the event and the adult-to-youth ratio is adjusted accordingly.

An exception is made for family members during events such as parent-daughter or family overnights, where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. Also please make note of the following:

- Each participant has their own bed.
- Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if youth members are to share a bed.
- Youth members and adults do not share a bed;
- It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area with youth members.
- If an adult female does share the sleeping area, there must always be at least two unrelated adult females present.

**Vacation Rentals.** See About Travel/Trips for specific safety checkpoints when utilizing Airbnb, VRBO, and HomeAway. There are specific steps that must be followed when utilizing these privately owned property rentals, steps that are not necessarily taken with traditional commercially owned and operated properties such as hotels.

**Modeling the Right Behavior.** Adult volunteers should adhere to the Girl Scout Promise and Law. When spending time with Girl Scout members or representing Girl Scouts, do not consume alcohol, smoke, vape, or use foul language. Always obey the law, for example, by not texting while driving or jaywalking.

**Drugs and Alcohol.** Volunteers and adults may not purchase, consume, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol, recreational drugs/substances, prescription drugs, or over-the-counter medications which impair performance or judgment while participating in Girl Scout-sanctioned activities, in the presence of Girl Scout members, while conducting Girl Scout business, or in Girl Scout branded clothing. Alcohol or any substance which may impair one's judgment must never be used by volunteers, adult members, or any other adult in the presence of a youth member, or immediately prior to a Girl Scout activity.

Youth members are not permitted to attend events where alcohol is being served and consumed. However, with prior council approval, youth members may be permitted to attend functions at locations where alcohol is incidentally being purchased by adults and then taken away to be consumed elsewhere, away from youth members. For example, GSME may approve an event taking place at an arena, stadium, theme park, movie theater, or places where alcoholic beverages are sold at a concession stand and taken away to be consumed.

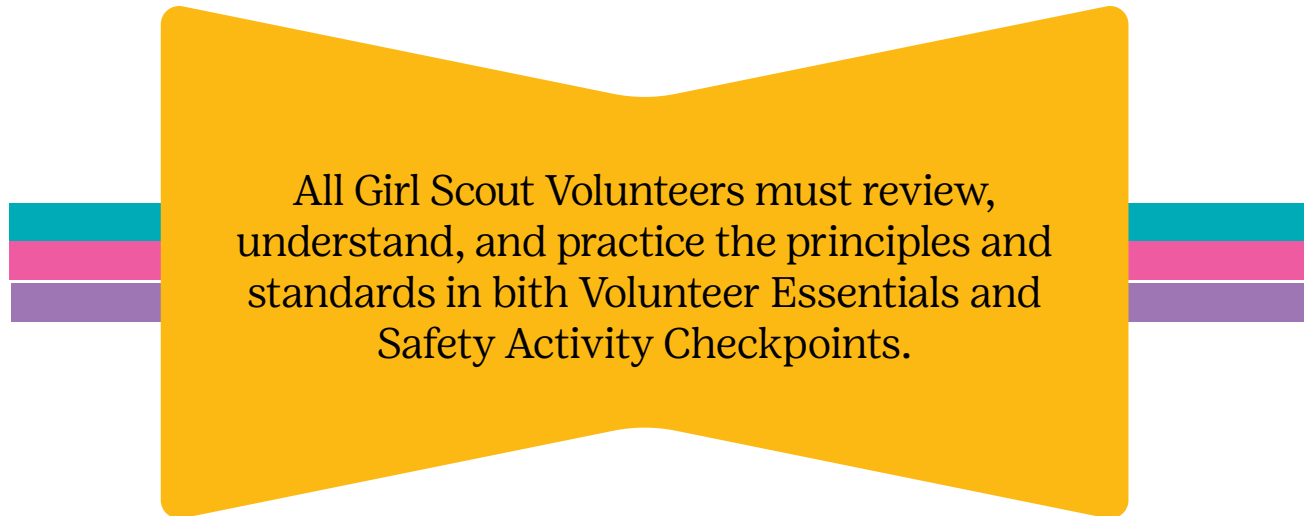


**Firearms.** Firearms and/or weapons are prohibited at any Girl Scout activity and on Girl Scout owned or leased property except when in the possession of a sworn officer of the law, council-authorized property staff, a certified instructor, licensed wildlife control personnel, and/or trained adult while conducting a council-approved Girl Scout program activity. Volunteers and adults do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of Girl Scout members, unless given special permission by GSME for target sport activities.

**Online Safety.** Instruct all Girl Scout members never to put their full names, location, or contact information online, engage in virtual conversations with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group websites, publish first names only and never divulge members' location or contact information. Teach members the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge and ask them to read it, understand it, discuss it, and commit to following it.

**Money Earning Activities.** Safety is an important consideration during money earning activities, including Girl Scout Cookie Program sales and other council-sponsored product sales. During Girl Scout product programs, you are responsible for the safety of Girl Scout members, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to serve as their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, members cannot raise money for other organizations, participate in money earning activities that represent partisan politics, or are not Girl Scout-approved product sales and efforts. It is imperative that Girl Scouts do not partake in anything that can be construed as unrelated business income. This is essential to protect our organization's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. If there is a questionable circumstance, consult Girl Scouts of Maine

**Volunteer Essentials.** A key resource for volunteers in Girl Scouting is *Volunteer Essentials*. While Safety Activity Checkpoints focuses on safety guidance and parameters, *Volunteer Essentials* addresses an array of topics such as Engaging Girls and Families, Troop Management, Product Program, Troop Finances, and the Leader's Guide to Success. All Girl Scout volunteers are instructed to review, understand, and practice the principles and standards in both *Volunteer Essentials* and *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.



All Girl Scout Volunteers must review, understand, and practice the principles and standards in both *Volunteer Essentials* and *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.





## Understanding Which Activities Are Not Permitted

After being thoroughly investigated by Girl Scouts leadership, some activities are clearly classified as “not permitted.” Each sport or activity on the “not permitted” list is evaluated annually with respect to safety factors, council feedback, insurability, and accident history. These activities pose a high risk of bodily injury, require extensive prior experience to safely participate, or may require a driver’s license, such as ATVs. Activities with a poor accident history based on loss data gathered from various industries are not approved and therefore “not permitted.” The purpose of prohibiting certain activities is first and foremost to protect Girl Scout members, but also to safeguard the financial and reputational well-being of GSME and the Girl Scout organization.

GSUSA does not approve, endorse, or provide safety checkpoints for “not permitted” activities.

### The following activities are in the not permitted category:

- Bungee jumping
- Flying in privately owned planes, helicopters, or blimps
- Hang gliding
- Untethered hot air ballooning
- Hunting
- Snowmobiling
- Riding a motorbike
- Riding electric scooters
- Using outdoor trampolines
- Parachuting or skydiving
- Parasailing
- Paintball tagging
- Riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs)
- Stunt skiing
- Zorbing

**Bungee Jumping.** Bungee jumping is not highly regulated for safety or consistent in terms of facilitation from one place to the next. It is an activity that carries a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance companies that have access to the accident history of bungee jumping have deemed this activity high risk and dangerous.

**Hang Gliding, Parasailing, Zorbing, Parachuting/Skydiving, and Untethered Hot Air Ballooning.** These sports also have inconsistent safety regulations, inconsistency of facilitation, and specific insurance implications or exclusions. These are activities that carry a significant risk of bodily injury. Insurance carriers with knowledge of these activities, from a loss experience perspective, view them as a high safety risk, meaning they see frequent and/or severe accidents associated with these sports.

**Privately Owned Aircraft.** Flying in a privately owned aircraft is a very clear exclusion under GSUSA and GSME’s commercial general liability insurance policies. In the event of an incident involving an aircraft accident, GSME would be financially liable for potential liability and resulting lawsuits. Even with a specific non-owned aviation liability policy, a private plane is a separate and distinct insurable interest (compared to a professional chartered aircraft tour). In other words, even under non-owned aviation insurance, privately owned and/or operated planes are often excluded.

**Outdoor Trampolines.** Outdoor trampolines, particularly those with stilted metal frames, pose a high risk of injury. The activity can result in sprains and fractures of the arms or legs—as well as potentially serious head and neck injuries. The risk of injury is so high in the case of children that the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly discourages the use of trampolines at home. Outdoor



trampoline park injuries also are an area of emerging concern. Indoor trampolines in a confined, padded indoor facility with higher supervision are safer, but still not recommended for children under six years old. For reference see: AAOS: American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons.

**Paintball Tag.** Paintball tag is offered in specialized parks where participants shoot pellets of paint at each other throughout an obstacle course, woods, or maze. The pressure used in a paintball gun is quite strong. When hit by a paintball pellet, a person is certain to experience some pain, swelling, and perhaps a bruise or welt for a couple of days. Shooting someone with a paintball pellet is likely to cause a minor injury but has the potential to cause a more serious injury to eyes, mouth, ears, and throat. For these reasons, paintball tag is prohibited. Target paintball shooting, however, is permitted.

**Hunting.** Hunting is a sport that requires handling firearms in the wilderness, high maturity levels, and the availability of expert guides. Shooting accidents are common during hunting trips.

**Jet Skis, Motorbikes, ATVs, Snowmobiles, and Electric Scooters.** Jet skiing, motor biking, and riding snowmobiles, ATVs, and electronic scooters are prohibited due to the extremely high incidence of serious injury involved. Most insurance carriers are not comfortable with these activities due to poor accident history. Insurance companies require that an operator hold a valid driver's license. Adults and children riding on the back of motorbikes and jet skis as passengers are exposed to a high risk of serious injury with no active opportunity to actually learn the skill.

## Chartered Aircraft Trips and Aviation

**Chartered small aircraft trips require prior council approval for every flight.**

This activity is permitted only with trip-specific council prior approval. The safety factors involving chartered aircraft, equipment, and pilots are transparent and readily verifiable, unlike private aircraft. Confirm with GSME ahead of time that chartered aviation participation is covered under GSME's general liability policy or non-owned aviation liability insurance policy. Again, these policies will almost always exclude privately owned aircraft.

Girl Scouts of Maine will confirm that the aviation company has evidenced proper insurance showing at least one million dollars aviation liability insurance and five million dollars umbrella. It is strongly recommended that GSME consult with their insurance broker and/or GSUSA Risk & Insurance for assistance when vetting insurance issues and implications.

**Tethered Hot Air Ballooning.** Some outdoor parks may offer the opportunity to learn the skill of hot air ballooning in a relatively safe and controlled environment utilizing a tethered hot air balloon. Consult with GSME so they can check their general liability insurance or non-owned aviation liability policy to determine if this activity is covered. A hot air balloon is an aircraft and viewed the same as small planes or helicopters from an aviation risk perspective. Therefore, the same standard applies—professionally chartered and tethered hot air balloon rides will be considered. Private rides and untethered balloon rides are not permitted.



## Other Actions Girl Scouts and Volunteers Should Not Take

For legal reasons, there are other activities that Girl Scout members and volunteers are not permitted to participate in while representing Girl Scouts. Avoiding these will preserve the integrity of our organization. These include:

- Endorsement of commercial products or services.
- Solicitation of financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting.
- Participation in political campaigns or legislative activities unless the legislative activity has been specifically GSME approved.

## First Aid

Make sure at least one adult who is certified in first aid/CPR accompanies the troop/group to all activities. See required qualifications below.

### What to Do if There Is an Accident

Although you hope the worst never happens, you must observe GSME procedures for handling accidents and fatalities. If a Girl Scout needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services, and then follow council procedures for accidents and incidents.

At the scene of an accident, first provide all possible care for the injured person(s). Follow established GSME procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency. To do this, you must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of council staff, parents/caregivers, and emergency services such as the police, fire department, or hospital. Check with Girl Scouts of Maine for emergency contact information and keep your emergency action plan current with the appropriate contact information. **After calling 911, in an emergency contact GSME at 207-722-1177, immediately.**

Girl Scouts of Maine has a 24-hour emergency number. You will need:

- The exact time and location of the incident
- A description of the incident
- The names of the people involved
- The names of any witnesses

After receiving a report of an accident, council staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance at the scene, if needed, and will contact parents/caregivers, as appropriate. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with respect to notifying parents or legal guardians. If the media is involved, let council-designated staff discuss the incident with media representatives.

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, **the police must be immediately notified. A responsible volunteer must remain at the scene the entire time.** In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings and follow police instructions. Do not share information about the accident with anyone but the police, GSME, and, if applicable, insurance representatives or legal counsel.



## When Someone Needs Emergency Care

Girl Scout members need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting any accidents, illnesses, or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities to adult volunteers. Make sure you know what you do and do not need to report. Reporting requirements vary by council; check with Girl Scouts of Maine for specifics.

## Be Prepared

Follow these steps (and any others specific to your region or circumstances) to be prepared in case accidents or emergencies occur:

- Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.
- Know the type of extreme weather to expect in your area (tornadoes, hurricanes, and lightning). Consult with GSME for the most relevant information for you to share with Girl Scout members.
- Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons, and building security issues. Every Girl Scout member and adult volunteer must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and your Girl Scout members, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.

Assemble a well-stocked first aid kit that is always accessible. First aid administered in the first few minutes can make a significant difference in the severity of an injury. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911, and then administer first aid, if appropriately trained.

## First Aid/CPR

For many activities, Girl Scouts recommends that at least one adult volunteer be first aid/CPR certified. You can take advantage of first aid/CPR training offered by organizations such as:

- American Red Cross
- National Safety Council
- EMP America
- American Heart Association
- American Safety and Health Institute (ASHI)
- Medic
- Other sponsoring organizations approved by your council

If through the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or American Heart Association you have a chance to be fully trained in first aid and CPR, doing so may make your activity planning go a little more smoothly.

## First Aiders

**General First Aider.** A general first aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout–approved first aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for adult and pediatric CPR, first aid, and AED (Automated External Defibrillator) training that, minimally, includes face-to-face, hands-on skill checks for:

- Checking a conscious victim
- Checking an unconscious victim
- Adult and pediatric CPR



- Adult and pediatric conscious choking
- Controlling bleeding
- Sudden illness

**Advanced First Aider.** An advanced first aider is an adult with general first aid certification and additional health, safety, or emergency response expertise. For example, a physician, physician’s assistant, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, paramedic, military medic, person with wilderness training, certified lifeguard, or emergency medical technician (EMT) meets these requirements.

The individual activity’s safety activity checkpoints will always tell you when a first aider needs to be present. Since activities can take place in a variety of locations, the presence of a first aider and the qualifications they must have are based on the remoteness and scope of the activity, as specified in the following chart:

Access to EMS	Minimum Level of First Aid Required
Less than 30 minutes	General First Aid
More than 30 minutes*	Advanced First Aid or Wilderness & Remote First Aid (WRFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR)

*\*Although a Wilderness & Remote First Aid Responder is not required, it is strongly recommended when traveling with groups in areas that are greater than 30 minutes from EMS.*

It is important to understand the differences between a first aid course and a wilderness rated course. Although standard first aid training provides basic incident response, wilderness rated courses include training on remote assessment skills, as well as emergency first aid response, including evacuation techniques to use when EMS is not readily available.

**Note:** The presence of an advanced first aider is required at sleepaway camp and other large gatherings. For large events—200 people or more—there should be, in addition to a regular first aider(s), one advanced first aider for every 200 participants. The following healthcare providers may also serve as advanced first aiders for large groups: physician, physician’s assistant, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, paramedic, military medic, and emergency medical technician.

### First Aid Kit

Make sure a general first aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies Girl Scout members 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. You can purchase a Girl Scout first aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the Girl Scouts can assemble a kit yourselves. The American Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its Anatomy of a First Aid Kit (note that the American Red Cross’s suggested list includes aspirin, which you will not provide to a minor without direct parent or guardian permission). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs by including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites, and the like. Want to get the troop involved? There’s a First Aid badge for all but the Daisy program level.

In addition to standard contents, all kits should contain council and emergency telephone numbers. Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms, and health histories may also be included.



## Overall Health, Well-Being, and Inclusivity

**Health History Form.** An annual health history form must be completed and signed by one parent/guardian for every Girl Scout and kept on file with the troop leader.

Follow council guidelines to comply with this requirement. The form should reflect any significant medical conditions, health issues, or allergies, and be updated each year. The form can also reflect any over-the-counter medication that a Girl Scout is not permitted to take, if there is any.

If parents send medication on trips or activities, it should be in its original labeled container and controlled and administered by one designated adult. Health history forms can be shared with the site camp physician or nurse ahead of time.

Always keep a current and signed health history form for each Girl Scout member with you when traveling. GSME does not require an updated mid-year health history for overnight trips, but please do review these forms with parents shortly before taking trips to be sure the information is up to date. For physically demanding activities, such as water sports, horseback riding, or skiing, an additional current health history form may be obtained to make sure all adults are aware of any current medical conditions or special needs. Councils will retain all health history forms in accordance with state record retention requirements and laws.

**Health Exams and Health Exam Forms.** Some councils also require a health exam for any activity that is three overnights or longer, which may include sleepaway camp. Again, follow GSME's guidelines with respect to health exams. In most cases, the health exam needs to have been completed within one year of the last date of the trip in order for Girl Scout members to participate. Girl Scouts of Maine requires a current health exam for adult volunteers who participate in trips of three nights or more as well. A health exam can be given by a licensed physician, a nurse practitioner, a physician's assistant, or a registered nurse. The medical provider must sign the health exam form.

For large events or trips longer in duration, such as sleepaway camp or a weeklong trip to a ranch, the designated health professional at the trip location is responsible for collecting all health exam forms and health history forms for members and adults.

Health exam forms and health history forms are to be shared only with designated health professionals and council staff responsible for coordinating them. All health and medical information are private (by law) and must not be shared or publicly available, so keep forms safe and secure. Only share information on a need-to-know basis.

Councils will retain all health exam forms in accordance with individual state record retention requirements and laws.

**Vaccination and Immunization.** Issues or questions with respect to vaccination exemption periodically arise with activity and trip participation. Vaccine exemption laws vary by state and focus on public and private school attendance more directly than they do for youth organizations. Therefore, it is best to obtain local and state legal guidance and proceed in accordance with the state law as it applies to school attendance. A general overview of state laws regarding school immunization exemption is provided and annually updated on the Centers for Disease Control's website.

If you have any questions about your obligation to communicate a Girl Scout member's non-immunization with other troop parents, contact Girl Scouts of Maine for legal guidance as privacy laws may apply. Absent state laws that speak directly to vaccines and communicating non-immunization with parents of youth groups, the guidance is to follow the standard and protocol as it pertains to school attendance.



**Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Lyme Disease Prevention.** Mosquitoes, ticks, and insect bites are an inherent risk to any warm weather outdoor activity. Ensure parents and caregivers are aware of the need to have their children properly covered, preferably with closed shoes and light-colored clothing and socks. It is important to advise families of this risk and the safety precautions they should take. The understanding that your troop or council cannot be held responsible for tick bites can be reinforced with a waiver reference on a permission slip.

An excellent source for learning more is the CDC's Lyme Disease web page.

To learn more about using insect repellent safely, visit the Environmental Protection Agency website at Repellents: Protection against Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Other Arthropods. To learn more about safely using DEET directly on the skin and on children, check out EPA DEET.

**Emotional Safety.** In Girl Scouts, emotional safety is just as important as physical safety. Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouts a place where members feel comfortable, seen, and are able to be who they are. Protect their emotional safety by creating a team agreement and coaching everyone to honor this agreement. Team agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting diverse opinions and feelings, resolving conflicts constructively, avoiding physical and verbal bullying or clique behavior, practicing fairness, and showing positive, respectful, and helpful communication with others.

**Physical or Sexual Abuse.** Physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse of youth is forbidden. Sexual pressure, sexual advances, improper touching, sexual communication, including text messaging, and sexual activity of any kind with Girl Scout members is not tolerated. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, including between youth, notify appropriate council staff immediately. Incidences of abuse of any kind will result in immediate council intervention. Volunteers are responsible for following GSME's guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse with respect to members.

**Youth Violence and Bullying.** Youth violence or bullying is also not tolerated in Girl Scouts. Youth violence occurs when young people intentionally use physical force or power to threaten or harm others. Bullying is a form of youth violence. Volunteers should become familiar with the signs, risk factors, and preventive measures against this type of behavior. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify the appropriate council staff for guidance. The CDC provides excellent resources on this topic, including:

- CDC Youth Violence
- CDC Bullying
- CDC Youth Violence Prevention

**Child Abuse.** All states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have specific laws which identify persons who are required to report suspected child abuse to an appropriate agency. Therefore, if you witness or suspect child abuse or neglect, whether inside or outside of Girl Scouting, always notify the appropriate council staff immediately and follow GSME's guidelines for reporting your concerns to the proper agency within your state. For more information, please review these available resources:

- GSUSA Girl Scouts Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention course in gsLearn
- Child Welfare Information Gateway about Child Abuse and Neglect
- How to Report Child Abuse and Neglect
- CDC Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

**Mental Health and Safety.** As an adult volunteer overseeing the activities and behaviors of young people, you may witness other signs of harmful tendencies such as self-harm. Self-harm



can take a physical form such as cutting, burning, bruising, excessive scratching, hair pulling, poisoning, or drug use. Other tendencies of self-harm are suicidal ideations that can be expressed verbally or with the written word. Another harmful expression involves harm to others which can be detected verbally or with physical aggression. If a situation of this nature is observed or comes to your attention in any form, always notify an appropriate council staff member immediately and follow GSME's guidelines with respect to next steps. The CDC provides informative guidance around identifying and responding to harmful behaviors: Self-Directed Violence and Other Forms of Self-Injury and also a section on at-risk youth, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Youth at Risk. Encourage Girl Scouts to consider earning mental wellness badges, found on the Mental Wellness and Inclusion page.

**Accommodate All Members.** Girl Scouts is committed to making reasonable accommodations for any physical or cognitive conditions. Talk to Girl Scout members of all abilities and their caregivers; ask about needs and accommodations. Always be sure to contact the location, facility, and/or instructors to ensure they are able to accommodate all participants. For more information, visit Disabled World. Whenever possible, the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints will provide additional resources specific to that sport or activity. Our goal is to include all who have a desire to participate.

**Equity.** Girl Scouts has a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we welcome and embrace individuals of all abilities and backgrounds into our sisterhood. For Girl Scouts, equity means that we ensure that all Girl Scout members and their families feel comfortable and have access to whatever is needed to fully participate in Girl Scouts. Follow the general guidance below, as well as any activity-specific recommendations in those chapters.

Consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the Girl Scout members in your troop. What might affect their participation in an activity, or how comfortable they feel on a field trip? What might get in the way of family communications, or a troop member's ability to access information? Work with members and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all Girl Scout members and their families feel comfortable and have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as proper equipment, prior experiences, and the skills needed to enjoy the activity.

- Some activities addressed here—from indoor skydiving to horseback riding to sailing—can be expensive and out of reach for families. Girl Scouting—and the opportunity for participants to set goals, earn funds, and make decisions—means that expensive or exclusive activities can be within reach. Make sure budget plans include ways for all to participate. Clearly communicate any costs the family is expected to bear, and identify tactics to discreetly support them. Has the troop budgeted funds for this? How about your GSME?
- Consider body size and ability as potential barriers to participation. Ask vendors such as horseback or kayak outfitters about any weight or similar restrictions before booking to ensure that all can join in. If not, choose a vendor with more inclusive equipment and resources.
- Identify and communicate what gear is provided by the vendor, what is shared by all members of the troop, and what must be brought by each individual.
- Required or recommended gear for many activities can be expensive or unfamiliar to families. Help Girl Scouts find appropriate gear by borrowing, thrifting, or renting. Check the GSME office for items your troop may be able to check out, or ask the vendor if they have extras. Show participants how to use any equipment they are expected to bring. Make needs clear to parents/caregivers to ensure everyone is prepared and confident.
- Provide progressive opportunities to build skills and confidence in new sports—especially aquatics. Water sports are often accessible only to privileged communities. Contact your local YMCA or public pool for swim lessons that will build comfort and success not only in the water, but on it.
- Meet all participants where they are. If your troop has different levels of experience, teach to the level of the least experienced so no one gets left behind.





# Transporting Girl Scouts

How parents decide to transport Girl Scouts between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent's individual decision and responsibility.

**For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities**, in which a group will be transported in privately owned vehicles, arrange qualified drivers and ensure:

- Every driver must be a registered, background-checked member (approved adult volunteer) at least 21 years old, and have a safe driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle, and meets council standards and policies for driving and transportation.
- Girl Scout youth members never drive other members to, from, or during activities or field trips.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, registered background-checked members (approved adult volunteers) in the vehicle, one of whom is female.
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, registered background-checked members (approved adult volunteers), one of whom is female.

## Plan for Safe Driving

- Review and implement the standards in the Checklist for Drivers, later in this section. Share it with all drivers, in advance. Build possible delays into your schedule. Allowing time for traffic or other delays will help prevent urgency and stress, which can be dangerous when driving.
- Provide directions for each vehicle.
- For driving trips of more than a few hours, plan a stop where all cars can meet and gather. This will avoid having drivers follow too closely or worry about being separated from the group.
- Anticipate stops every couple of hours for drivers to rest and refresh. Let drivers know they can stop more often if needed.
- Arrange for relief drivers if drive time will last six hours or more.
- In each vehicle, there should be a first aid kit, and permission and health history forms for each person in that car.

**Borrowing or Renting Vehicles.** When borrowing or renting vehicles, drivers may rent cars or minivans in their own names without council staff signature. Make sure the car is adequately insured; consult the driver's auto insurance company. Know who is responsible for damage to, or loss of, the vehicle. Be sure the vehicle is used only for Girl Scout purposes, as non-related use can compromise coverage. Please complete the Vehicle Rental Agreement found on the GSME website, for approval at least three weeks prior to your trip.

To avoid surprises, read rental agreements to be familiar with the terms of the agreement and to be sure you comply with the terms. For example, in many cases the minimum age of drivers is 25, and the maximum age is often under 70.



**Chartered Vehicles.** Chartered vehicles, such as buses, are contracted, usually with the driver or operator, for a group's exclusive use. Volunteers may not sign contracts for charters even if there is no cost. Contact GSME to request approval and signature.

**Taxis and ride-sharing services,** including Uber and Lyft, may be used with these guidelines:

- **An adult should ride in each vehicle** with Girl Scouts when multiple vehicles are being used.
- **Wait for your ride in a safe place.** For taxis, when possible, call (or ask your hotel to call), rather than hailing from the street. Use a taxi stand at airports. Stand away from traffic while waiting.
- **For taxis,** check that the taxi is appropriately marked.
- **For ride-sharing services:**
  - Check that the vehicle's license plate, make, and model match what is shown in the app.
  - Compare the app's photo with the driver. Ask for their name and be sure it matches the app.
  - Ask, "Who are you here to pick up?" They should have your first name, but no other information about you.
- **If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, do not get into the vehicle.** If you become uncomfortable, end the ride. Report your experience to the taxi service or ride-sharing app.
- **Send your in-town trip contact the name of the driver and your destination.** Most apps have a sharing feature for this purpose.
- **Do not share information about the group or where you are staying with any strangers.**
- **Each passenger must wear a seat belt.**
- **Enter and exit curbside.**
- **In foreign countries,** consult a local expert about how best to call for taxis or rides. Reputable practices vary.

**Recreational Vehicles, Campers, and Trailers.** Whether privately owned or rented, these may be used if the driver has the appropriate training and license for the vehicle. Passengers must use seat belts when the vehicle is in motion and may not ride in a trailer or in the bed of a truck.

**Vans Designed for 15 Passengers.** GSME insurance does not allow volunteers to operate 15-passenger vans as the design of the vehicles makes them inherently unsafe for the average non-professional driver. School buses, minibuses, and minivans are preferred.

*Note: These rules do not apply to commercial or professionally operated services such as airport shuttles. Professionally operated commercial vans designed for 15 passengers are permitted.*

**Commercial and common-carrier transportation** is available to the public. They include buses, trains, airlines, ferries, and similar modes of transportation. In the United States, these are regulated and can be considered safe. Keep it girl-led; members can compare fares and schedules and make decisions with adult support.

**When traveling internationally,** consider the transportation options available in the host country and determine safety and accessibility specific to the location.



## Checklist for Drivers—Please print this page for each driver

When driving a car, RV, or camper, take the following precautions and ask all other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all volunteer drivers are at least 21 years old.
- Only adult volunteers transport Girl Scout members.
- Wear seat belts and insist that all passengers do the same. Each person must have their own, fixed seat belt.
- Anyone under 12 must ride in the back seats. Use car seats and boosters as required by your state.
- Never transport Girl Scout members in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper-trailer.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first aid kit and a flashlight.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns, and fluid levels before each trip, and recheck them periodically on long trips.
- Load gear appropriately. Heavy objects and luggage can affect vehicle stability and handling. Avoid overloading, especially on the top or back of any vehicle.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date including, but not limited to, your driver's license, vehicle registration, any state or local inspections, and insurance coverage.
- Follow the best driving safety practices:
  - o Keep at least a two-car-length distance between you and the car ahead of you.
  - o Do not talk or text on a cell phone or other device.
  - o Do not use ear buds or headphones.
  - o Turn your lights on when your windshield wipers are on.
- No caravanning (cars following closely together with the lead vehicle in charge) is allowed. Each driver must have information about the route and destination in addition to the cell phone numbers of other drivers.
- Know what to do in case of breakdown or accident. It is smart to have reflectors, a flashlight, a few tools, and a good spare tire.
- Take time to familiarize yourself with any new or rented vehicle.
- Take a break when you need it. The volunteer in charge of your trip will plan occasional stops, but it is okay to pull over to a safe place whenever you are too tired to continue.
- Relief drivers should be planned for long drives of six hours or more.
- Do NOT drive when you are tired or taking medication that makes you drowsy.

Check with GSME for any other council specific guidelines or requirements.



## Troop Meeting Space

**Always Choose a Safe Meeting Space.** Consider the age range and the type of activities you want to engage in when selecting a location or facility for your troop meetings. A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all Girl Scout members. You might consider rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses for your meeting location. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places they enjoy spending time. Below are a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations:

- **Accessibility.** Be sure the space can accommodate those with disabilities, including parents/caregivers. Also consider transportation access, based on your troop's needs: Is the meeting site close to public transportation? Is there a safe place for Girl Scouts to get dropped off? Is there parking on site?
- **Allergen-free.** Ensure pet-dander, smoke, and other common allergens will not bother susceptible members during meetings.
- **Availability.** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time of your troop meetings.
- **Communication friendly.** Be sure your cell phone works in the meeting space or there is a land line for emergencies. Internet access is helpful.
- **Cost.** The space should be free to use. However, you may wish to develop a partnership with the facility and provide them with community service (e.g., flower planting in the spring at the entrance, or a clean-up day for the grounds) or offer a donation toward maintenance or utilities.
- **Facilities.** Sanitary and accessible restrooms and toilets are critical.
- **Resources.** Determine what types of furnishings come with the room and ensure the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby or closet where you can store supplies.
- **Safety.** Ensure the space is safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on location), free from hazards, and has at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also check to see if a first aid kit and equipment (e.g., portable defibrillator), smoke detectors, and a fire extinguisher are on site.
- **Size.** Make sure the space is large enough to accommodate the whole group and all planned activities.

**Can We Meet in a Private Home?** Girl Scouts does not recommend holding troop meetings in private homes.



## Activities at a Glance

Girl Scout activities require consideration by the safe and caring adults who guide Girl Scouts as they plan each activity. Awareness of the abilities of each member and considering the progression of skills it takes from the easiest to the most difficult part of the activity is the role of the adults. Making sure the complexity of an activity does not exceed an individual's ability is why Girl Scouts safety activity checkpoints are based on progressive experience.

Certain activities have been rated by Girl Scouts' national insurance company as high risk. High risk activities are those that, if practiced unsafely or in an unsafe environment, could cause serious injury or death to a participant, could require crisis communication if an injury occurs, or if not handled appropriately, could negatively impact the Girl Scout reputation or brand. High risk activities require prior council approval. A council can provide approval for an activity in a manner that does not require approval every single time the troop practices an activity. However, a volunteer must confirm that the activity is approved by GSME prior to participation whenever Prior Council Approval is indicated as "Required."

As you explore the many options to engage Girl Scout members in exciting activities, you will notice that there are recommendations for some activities to start at an older grade level. These recommendations are based on progressive experience and have taken into consideration the emotional, physical, and developmental stages of participants and are intended to guide you as you plan activities with them. Reach out to GSME if you have specific questions about progression in Girl Scouting. Guidelines may differ from state to state. The ultimate goal is for Girl Scout members to feel confident and comfortable with each planned activity.

Activities-at-a-Glance	Daisy	Brownie	Junior	Cadette	Senior	Ambassadors	High Risk?	Prior Council Approval Required?	Additional Comments and Required Instructor Certifications, Experience, and Verification
Aerial Fitness	*	*	*	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Includes silks, hoops, trapeze. Verify instructor experience and credentials.
Amusement Parks	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.
Animal Interaction and Adventure	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction
Backpacking	*	*	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Backpacking is not recommended for Daisies and Brownies due to weight restrictions on their small frames and the need, when backpacking, to be able to carry all their needed supplies. For Daisies and Brownies, refer to <i>Hiking Activity Checkpoints</i> .
Bicycling	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Council approval is required for long rides or difficult terrain.



Activities-at-a-Glance	Daisy	Brownie	Junior	Cadette	Senior	Ambassador	High Risk?	Prior Council Approval Required?	Additional Comments and Required Instructor Certifications, Experience, and Verification
Camping	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Ensure that at least one adult is trained for camping as required by Girl Scouts of Maine
<b>Climbing and Adventure</b>									
Challenge Courses	*D	*B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Instructor trained and certified by a verified agency who demonstrates competence in equipment maintenance, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training.*Daisies and Brownies may participate only in activities that have been designed for their grade levels and that have equipment that suits the size and ability of each Girl Scout member. Outdoor high ropes and high elements are only permitted for Juniors and older.
Climbing and Rappelling	*D	*B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Daisies and Brownies are permitted to boulder, slackline, and do low challenge elements. Note that Daisies and Brownies may participate only in activities designed for their ages, with equipment suitable to the size and ability of each Girl Scout member. *Brownies can participate in most indoor climbing activities provided a minimum of one facilitator and an additional adult are present, and facilitators are skilled in selecting appropriate activities, teaching, and supervising spotting and lowering techniques, and modifying tasks to meet any specific needs. Outdoor high ropes, high elements, and rappelling are only permitted for Juniors and older.
Recreational Tree Climbing			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	A certified instructor with documented experience in leading and teaching tree climbing is required. In recreational tree climbing, climbers use ropes, harnesses, saddles, and climbing techniques to ascend into the crowns of trees.
Zip Lining	*D	*B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Not permitted for Daisies, except for playground zip lines. *Canopy tours are not permitted for Daisies or Brownies on non-Girl Scout sites.



Activities-at-a-Glance	Daisy	Brownie	Junior	Cadette	Senior	Ambassador	High Risk?	Council Approval Required	Additional Comments and Required Instructor Certifications, Experience, and Verification
Community Clean-Up	D	B	J	C	S	A	X	<a href="#">Required</a>	Check grade-permission levels that apply to the individual type of projects that are outlined in the Community Clean-up Safety Activity Checkpoints. For example, beachfront, waterways, parks, and roadsides.
Computer and Internet Use	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	All Girl Scout members, as well as their parents and guardians, must read, agree to, and abide by the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge when online.
Virtual Troop Meetings	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Always follow the Virtual Meeting Activity Checkpoints.
Cookie and Product Programs	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Adults must accompany Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors when they are selling, taking orders, and delivering products. Adults oversee Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors and must be aware of how, when, and where they are when selling products.
Cross-Country Skiing		B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	First Aider has a current certificate in first aid including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED and is prepared to handle cases of frostbite, cold exposure, hypothermia, sprains, and altitude sickness. *Not recommended for Daisies due to complexity and strength.
Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding	D	B	J	C	S	A	X	<a href="#">Required</a>	Instructors are certified by the Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) and the American Association of Snowboard Instructors (AASI) or possess equivalent certification.
Fencing		B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult is a certified fencing instructor or has equivalent certification or documented experience according to GSME's guidelines. Ensure there is a ratio of one instructor for every ten fencers.
Fishing and Ice Fishing	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Adult or fishing instructor completes Girl Scouts small craft safety training or has equivalent certification or documented experience (competencies); the ratio of instructor-to-participant is one-to-ten.
Geocaching	D*	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	*Daisies are permitted when working with older Girl Scout members and adults as part of another outdoor activity.



Activities-at-a-Glance	Daisy	Brownie	Junior	Cadette	Seniors	Ambassadors	High Risk?	Prior Council Approval Required?	Additional Comments and Required Instructor Certifications, Experience, and Verification
Go-Karting			J	C	S	A	X	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Juniors may not independently drive go-karts unless on a rail system.
Hayrides	*D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Qualified driver who is licensed to drive a motor vehicle, is at least 21 years of age (25 and older preferred), and has experience hauling a trailer and driving the vehicle being used.
Hiking	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	
Horseback Riding	D*		J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Riding instructors are adults (at least 18 years old) who have current certification from an accredited horsemanship instructor training organization, such as the Certified Horsemanship Association and American Association for Horsemanship Safety, or documented proof of a minimum of three years' experience successfully instructing in a general horseback riding program. *Daisies are only allowed on pony rides and hand-led horseback walks.
Ice Skating and Roller Skating	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Council approval may be required for natural bodies of water.
Indoor Skydiving			J	C	S	A	X	<a href="#">Required</a>	Instructor holds instructional flight certification from the International Bodyflight Association or has council approved equivalent certification or documented experience and skill in teaching and/or supervising indoor skydiving.
Indoor Trampoline	*D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	*Daisies under the age of six may not participate.
<b>Inflatable Activities</b>									
Aquatic Bounces & Slides		B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Aquatic bounce houses and inflatable bounce bubbles and slides are approved for Brownies and above.
Aquatic Climbing Walls			J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Aquatic climbing walls are not permitted for Daisies and Brownies. Juniors and above may take part in aquatic climbing wall activities when they are strong swimmers and can swim in water deeper than five feet.
Bounce Houses	*D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	*Daisies can only take part in bounce houses that are specific for their age, height, and weight.
Log Rolling		B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Log rolling is not permitted for Daisies.
Bubble Soccer			J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Bubble soccer is not permitted for Daisies and Brownies.





Activities-at-a-Glance	Daisy	Brownie	Junior	Cadette	Senior	Ambassador	High Risk?	Prior Council Approval Required?	Additional Comments and Required Instructor Certifications, Experience, and Verification
Land Sports See Misc. Activities Safety Activity Checkpoints.	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Ensure adults are well versed in rules and aware of safety concerns for the designated sport.
Laser Tag See Misc. Activities Safety Activity Checkpoints.	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Verify vendor is licensed and insured.
Offshore Water/Large Passenger Vessels	D	B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Large water vessels such as ferries, cruise ships, and whale-watching boats must be licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard.
Orienteering			J	C	S	A		Not Required	Orienteering is not recommended for Daisies and Brownies, except when 1:1 with an adult, but they may be ready to learn pre-orienteering activities such as map reading, navigation, and map drawing.
Outdoor Cooking	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	<b>Ensure that at least one adult is trained for outdoor cooking as required by GSME</b>
<b>Paddle Sport Activities</b>									
Canoeing	*D	B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow the Master Paddling Chart for instructor/expert certification by water type. At least one adult instructor or guide is currently certified by the American Canoe Association, or other sponsoring organization approved by GSME. *Not recommended for Daisies except with an experienced adult in each canoe on flat water.
Corcl Boats		B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow the Master Paddling Chart for certification by water type.
Kayaking		B*	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow the Master Paddling Chart for instructor/expert certification by water type. *Flat water only for Brownies.
Packrafting		B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow the Master Paddling Chart for instructor certification by water type.
Row Boating	*D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow the Master Paddling Chart for certification by water type. *Daisies may use basic row boats only if they have an adult in the boat with them.
Stand-Up Paddleboarding			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow the Master Paddling Chart for instructor/expert certification by water type.
Whitewater Rafting		B*	J**	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow the Master Paddling Chart for instructor/expert certification by water type, and for program grade levels permitted to raft in various conditions.



Activities-at-a-Glance	Daisy	Brownie	Junior	Cadette	Senior	Ambassador	High Risk?	Prior Council Approval Required?	Additional Comments and Required Instructor Certifications, Experience, and Verification
Parades & Other Large Group Gatherings	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	
Pocket Knife and Jackknife Safety	*D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	See Pocket Knife and Jackknife Activity Checkpoints for all instructor requirements and grade-level recommendations. *Daisies can learn pocket knife and jackknife safety with cardboard or wood examples.
Rocketry / Model Rocketry			J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Daisies and Brownies are not ready to participate in model rocketry as defined in this activity. Daisies and Brownies can participate in simple science experiments like air-powered drinking straw rockets, balloon rockets, stomp rockets, or water-powered bicycle pump rockets. Daisies and Brownies may observe model rocket launches at a safe distance.
Sailing		B*	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Adult or sailing instructor is certified as a sailing instructor or sailing counselor by U.S. Sailing, completes Girl Scouts small craft safety training, or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience according to GSME's guidelines. The instructor-to-girl ratio is one to four. *Thoroughly verify Brownie maturity level for sailing.
Scuba Diving				C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Scuba diving teacher holds instructional certification from Scuba Schools International (SSI), Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), or the YMCA. The instructor-to-girl ratio is one to four.
Segway See Misc.s Activities Safety Activity Checkpoints.					S	A		Not Required	Vendor must be licensed and insured. Segway is only permitted when used in a pedestrian environment, not on public roads.
Skateboarding See Misc. Activities Safety Activity Checkpoints.		B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Skate parks are for experienced skaters. Beginners should not be in skate parks.
Sledding, Tobogganing, and Snow Tubing	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	Girl Scout members must go feet-first and helmets are strongly recommended. Girl Scout members are not permitted to be towed behind any vehicle, including snowmobiles. No sledding near trees, buildings, or roadways.



Activities-at -a-Glance	Daisy	Brownie	Junior	Cadette	Senior	Ambassador	High Risk?	Prior Council Approval Required?	Additional Comments and Required Instructor Certifications, Experience, and Verification
Snorkeling			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Snorkeling instructor holds instructional certification from Scuba Schools International (SSI) or the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) or has equivalent certification. If the instructor is not also a certified lifeguard, you will need a lifeguard present. Lifeguards need current American Red Cross Lifeguarding plus Waterfront Module, or YMCA Waterfront Lifeguarding certification or equivalent experience. One lifeguard is needed for every 25 swimmers.
Snowshoeing	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	Instruction is given by an adult with experience teaching and/or supervising snowshoeing or has documented experience.
Spelunking/ Caving			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Instruction is given by an adult with experience teaching and/or supervising spelunking or has documented experience.
STEM, Arts, Crafts See Misc. Activities Safety Activity Checkpoints.	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	
Surfing			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Instructors should hold a certification from the National Surf Schools and Instructors Association, the International Surfing Association, or similar certification. Notify lifeguards and point out location of other surfers. Ocean lifeguard certifications, according to local and state norms and standards, are required. The instructor-to-girl ratio is one to four. Surfers must demonstrate appropriate swim skill level.
Swimming	D	B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Follow the lifeguard certification requirements and ratios listed in Swimming Safety Activity Checkpoints.
<b>Target Sport Activities</b>									
3-D Archery				C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult is certified by the National Field Archery Association, USA Archery, or Easton Foundation. In addition, one adult to every ten Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Air/BB Guns		B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult is a certified National Rifle Association range safety officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor. In addition, one adult to every five Brownies and one adult to every ten Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.



Activities-at-a-Glance	Daisy	Brownie	Junior	Cadette	Senior	Ambassador	High Risk?	Prior Council Approval Required?	Additional Comments and Required Instructor Certifications, Experience, and Verification
Archery		B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult has certification from the National Field Archery Association, USA Archery, or Easton Foundation. In addition, one adult to every five Brownies and one adult to every ten Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required unless on a Girl Scout site.
Ax/Hatchet Throwing				C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult instructor trained in ax/hatchet form and technique, safety, range rules, and emergency procedures. In addition, one adult to every two Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Knife Throwing				C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult instructor trained in knife throwing form and technique, safety, range rules, and emergency procedures. In addition, one adult to every two Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Muzzle Loading				*C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Must be 12 years or older to participate. One adult is a certified National Rifle Association range safety officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor. In addition, one adult to every two Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Pistol					*S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Must be 14 years or older to participate. One adult is a certified National Rifle Association range safety officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor. In addition, one adult to every four Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Rifle				*C		A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Must be 12 years old or older to participate. One adult is a certified National Rifle Association range safety officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor. In addition, one adult to every eight Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Shotgun—Trap/Skeet Shooting				*C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	*Must be 12 years old or older to participate. One adult is a certified National Rifle Association range safety officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor. In addition, one adult to every eight Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Slingshot	D	B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult instructor trained in slingshot form and technique, safety, range rules, and emergency procedures. In addition, one adult to every five Daisies and Brownies and one adult to every ten Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.
Target Paintball		B	J	C	S	A		<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult is trained in paintball safety, range rules, and emergency procedures. In addition, one adult to every five Brownies and one adult to every ten Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors is required.



Activities-at -a-Glance	Daisy	Brownie	Junior	Cadette	Senior	Ambassador	High Ris?k	Prior Council Approval Required?	Additional Comments and Required Instructor Certifications, Experience, and Verification
Tethered Balloon Rides			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Ensure operators have liability insurance and are licensed through the Federal Aviation Administration. Pilots must be currently licensed.
Tools - Hand and Power	D	B	J	C	S	A		Not Required	See the Tools—Hand and Power Safety Activity Checkpoints for grade level permission and progression. Certain power tools are not permitted for all grade levels. Adults must be present to meet the adult-to-youth ratios listed in the Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines.
Travel/Trips	D	B	J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	See Travel/Trips Safety Activity Checkpoints for grade-level trip and travel length recommendations.
Tubing			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	One adult must complete Girl Scouts small craft safety training or equivalent, and have experience teaching and supervising tubing activities. If tubing behind a motorboat, make sure the driver is an adult and has a valid license to operate the motorboat. Girl Scout members are not permitted to be towed by jet skis or wave runners. Follow the lifeguard certification requirements and ratios listed in Swimming Safety Activity Checkpoints. Adults must be present to meet the adult-to-youth ratios listed in the
Waterskiing and Wakeboarding			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	Ensure the adult or instructor is certified by USA Water Ski or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience according to GSME's guidelines. Confirm the boat driver is an adult, has an appropriate license, and is skilled in operating the watercraft. Follow the lifeguard certification requirements and ratios listed in Swimming Safety Activity Checkpoints.
Windsurfing			J	C	S	A	x	<a href="#">Required</a>	In addition to a lifeguard, at least one adult present should have Girl Scouts small craft safety training or equivalent.





# Girl Scouts of Maine 2024-2026 Volunteer Handbook

## Troop Banking and Finance Guidelines



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# Financial Policies



The Council abides by the policies and standards of Girl Scouts of the USA and complies with applicable IRS requirements.

**Every Troop is required to have a bank account.** The account must be established under the Council's federal tax ID. All bank accounts require a minimum of two unrelated adult signers who are currently registered members of Girl Scouts and have successfully completed the required background check.

All money collected, or earned, in the name of Girl Scouts must be deposited in the established bank account and thereafter used for the purpose of providing the Girl Scout Experience to girls in the troop.

All signers are responsible for safeguarding and maintaining sufficient funds to cover payments drawn on the account. As with any bank account, signers are legally responsible for all account transactions.

Volunteers who misuse or misappropriate funds will be released from Girl Scout Volunteer positions. The Council may file criminal and/or civil charges.

The Council allows up to two (2) debit cards for each account to be utilized for troop purchases. The Council prohibits troops and service units from applying for credit cards or utilizing PayPal. Troops can receive Venmo payments through Digital Cookie for the Cookie program, but cannot set up a troop Venmo account.

Security of troop funds is necessary to safeguard troop assets. The bank account should be reconciled regularly, preferably monthly. It is best practice to have one signer use the checkbook and a different signer receive bank statements for review and reconciliation. Both signers should review the bank statement together. Authorized signers must have access to the bank account records. All bank statements, financial records and receipts should be kept for a minimum of three years.

Note: Troops may not solicit cash donations, if your troop receives a donation for more than \$200, send the donation with a note to the resource development department at GSME so that a letter of acknowledgement and tax receipt note can be sent to the donor. If the donation is less than \$200, have the troop send a thank you note to the donor. Please refer to the money earning section of Volunteer Essentials for more information regarding donations.

Annual Troop Finance Reports must be submitted to the Council through the VTK. This report is a summary of the troop's financial activity throughout the year and should be shared with girls and parents/guardians upon completion, please let parents know that they can log into the VTK to see your report.

When a troop disbands, leaders must close the troop account and send any remaining funds to GSME to be distributed back to the service unit or to any girls continuing as Juliettes or in a different troop.



# Opening a Troop Bank Account



## GSME Bank Account Procedures

- All troop funds must be deposited in a bank. Accounts may be either savings or checking.
- Troop funds must never be combined with personal funds. Do not help the girls by lending them money.
- All troop bank accounts must be opened in the name of: Girl Scouts of Maine Troop # \_\_\_\_\_
- The troop bank account must be opened using Girl Scouts of Maine's employer tax identification number: 01-0269802.
- Debit cards are permissible and require the same documentation and receipts as other expenses.
- Two unrelated registered signers are required on the troop bank account.

\*Misuse of troop funds may be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

## GSME Preferred Banks

The unique structure of Girl Scout banking, coupled with a continually changing banking environment have made it necessary for Girl Scouts of Maine to work with preferred banks, our preferred banks are as follows:

Bangor Savings Bank  
Bath Savings Bank  
Camden National Bank  
First National Bank  
Gorham Savings Bank  
Katahdin Trust  
Kennebunk Savings Bank  
Key Bank  
Machias Savings Bank  
Norway Savings Bank  
Peoples United  
Saco and Biddeford Savings Institution

Bank accounts are to be established with the banks listed above. Using preferred banks ensures that troop accounts are set up consistently.



## Start the Process

1. Each signer must be a registered adult volunteer and have a current membership with GSUSA.
2. Staff of the Council are not authorized to be signers on a troop or service unit account.
3. Each signer must have a current approved background check on file with the Council.
4. The troop must reach out to Customer Care to let us know: What bank you will be using, which branch you will be opening your account at, and who your two signers will be.
5. Volunteer Support will review your bank information and send out a troop bank letter to the two signers to bring to the bank when you open your account.
6. When the account has been opened the troop leaders must complete and sign a bank information form and send it to GSME.

NOTE: GSME will fund each new troop account with \$25 which will be direct deposited into the troop account when the bank information form is received and approved by GSME.

## Debit Cards and Statements

The troop may obtain debit cards to be used for deposits and payments. GSME authorizes a maximum of two (2) debit cards per troop. The debit cards will be in the name of two of the signers on the account. Please request that the bank mail copies of monthly statements to one signer monthly. Both signers should review the statement each month to ensure appropriate spending of troop funds. Any concerns about misuse of troop funds should be immediately brought to the attention of Girl Scouts of Maine. Please contact your Volunteer Support Specialist.

## Ordering Checks

While troops are not required to have checks, they may be convenient for conducting troop business, including reimbursing volunteers.

## Fund Management

Troop funds are for the benefit of all girls in the troop and should be spent in the year the funds are earned, unless the troop has a long-range plan for spending the funds. It is important to note that the funds belong to the troop as a whole. Per IRS guidelines for charitable organizations, troops are prohibited from keeping separate individual girl accounts. All funds expended should benefit all girls in the troop.

All money received from parents or cookie customers should be deposited as soon as possible and should never be held in a personal checking account. For security reasons, we do not recommend keeping cash in a house or vehicle. It is critical that all authorized signers are in communication with the other signers before spending funds to prevent overdrafts on the account.

Cash withdrawals should only be made if absolutely necessary – i.e., cookie booth change, tips for taxis or hotel services. Be sure to keep receipts in these instances proving the funds withdrawn were spent for troop purposes. GSME recommends keeping your ATM receipt and purchase receipt together and writing the purpose and amount of the ATM withdrawal on the ATM receipt.

Each account signer should make sure that there are funds in the account to cover the amount of the transaction before writing a check or making a purchase with the troop debit card. All expenses should be paid for by troop check/debit card. Blank checks should never be pre-signed and debit cards should not be used by anyone other than the person they are issued to. If there is an instance where a signer paid out of pocket for troop supplies and needs to be reimbursed using troop funds, those reimbursements should be approved and authorized by a signer other than the payee. Receipts are required for reimbursement. Issue a check to the individual being reimbursed.



## Paying for Product Program

GSME will initiate an electronic transfer from the troop's bank account to pay the Council for product program transactions (i.e. Cookie and Fall programs). It is important that adequate funds are available. The specific dates that GSME will draft the troop accounts are included in product sales calendars and training materials and the troop will receive reminder communications during the sale.

## Accepting Check Payments

A troop can choose to accept checks as a form of payment from customers and parents for product program or national membership dues. If a troop accepts checks as a form of payment, the troop may receive a check that is returned due to nonsufficient funds (NSF).

GSME strongly recommends troops obtain customer phone number for checks received, checks received must be given to the troop leader and deposited by the leader into the troop account within 7 business days.

### Tips for Collections:

In the event of an NSF check, immediately notify the payer to request re-payment as quickly as possible. It is sometimes best to request a cash payment or cashier's check.

In the event of parent non-payment please follow the steps outlined in the Parent Collection Form: <https://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscoutsofmaine-redesign/documents/product-program/Parent-Collection-Form.pdf>

**NOTE:** If a parent owes at the end of the sale activity, **DO NOT COVER WITH TROOP FUNDS.** Immediately contact the Product Program Team so the amount can be deducted from the ACH withdrawal. **DO NOT WAIT**-the girls have worked hard for their money. This process assures them they will have what they earned.

Because these circumstances are often beyond the control of the troop, GSME does not expect troops to bear the financial burden when NSF checks are received or in instances of parent nonpayment. Submit original information received from your bank regarding NSF deposits and fees, and/or Parent Collection Forms to the address below, and ACH will be remitted to your troop account covering any NSF check amounts (including fees), and parent non-payment amounts.

### GSME

ATTN: Finance Department  
138 Gannett Drive  
South Portland, ME 04106

Or email [customercare@gsmaine.org](mailto:customercare@gsmaine.org)

All other checks: Accepting checks for any other reason than product program or national dues is at the troop's own risk.



# Budget and Record Keeping



Each troop should collaborate in the preparation of an annual budget at the start of the program year. Girls should be included in this process, in an age appropriate manner, to enhance their financial literacy skills.

## Questions to consider:

- What types of activities will be planned?
- What are the costs associated with these activities?
- How will the troop fund these activities?
- Will money earning activities be required?
- What are your goals for the cookie and fall sale?

Troops may need to create multi-year budget plans for costlier travel trips.

Troops may agree to charge members of the troop a nominal dues amount to support Girl Scout troop activities. This amount should be carefully thought out by the leaders and communicated and agreed upon with the parents and guardians.

All disbursements and deposits should be recorded in a checkbook, electronic spreadsheet or personal banking software. The bank statement should be reconciled to these records monthly. Financial checks and balances should be in place to help prevent misuse of troop funds. A person other than the one preparing the bank reconciliation should also review the reconciliation each month. Best practices provide that separate individuals manage the account and receive the bank statements.

There must be a clear separation of personal and troop funds. No personal expenses should be paid from the troop account and no troop money should be deposited in personal bank accounts. Signers are responsible for any fees or charges for overdrawing the Troop account.

All cash payments should be receipted. A written receipt must be provided to the parents, guardians or other volunteers.

Under no circumstances should a check be written to and signed by the same person.

A file should be maintained with bank statements, all cookie records, and records supporting all financial transactions for at least three (3) years after the end of the program year. Troop financial records should be shared with and made available to girls and guardians throughout the year to maintain transparency.



# Changing Signers



Troops must follow GSME's process for changing troop account signers. The troop leader should notify their Volunteer Support Specialist of changes on troop accounts in order to have a new bank letter issued. When changes are made to troop accounts a new bank information form needs to be submitted to GSME.

Each signer must have a current background check as well as a current Girl Scout membership.

**IMPORTANT** - The leader should collect and destroy debit cards/checks from any person(s) who are no longer involved with the troop or act as signers on the account and/or request that the bank discontinue access to the card.

# Annual Reporting



Troops are required to submit the Annual Troop Finance Report directly to GSME using the Volunteer Toolkit. The report is on the "Finance" tab of the Volunteer Toolkit, and accessible by Troop Leaders. The annual report covers financial transactions which took place throughout the year. Troops established during the year should report their finances starting in the month organized. These reports will be reviewed by GSME to ensure policies are being appropriately followed and funds are being utilized to benefit girls.

Troop financial records should be shared with and made available to girls and guardians throughout the year to ensure there is transparency in the troop's financial activities. It is a great part of financial literacy to have open discussions about the troop's finances throughout the year.



# Disbanding Your Troop



A troop may disband when there is a leadership change and there are no longer any leaders registered in a troop. If a troop disbands, it is important to make final decisions about the use of the troop's remaining funds after bills have been paid and have cleared the account. Considerations might include:

- Holding a final gathering to celebrate the troop's friendships and accomplishments.
- Donating funds to a charity based on the troop's area of interest. Funds can also be donated to the local Service Unit or the Council. Some common areas of need in Girl Scouting: financial assistance for girls for uniforms, registration fees for membership camp, travel, events, or for day camp, a favorite resident camp or Gold/Silver award projects.
- Transferring funds to another troop for the benefit of the girls continuing their Girl Scout experience.

After determining with the girls the best use for remaining funds. The troop leaders must close the disbanded troop account. Please submit a check with any remaining funds to GSME.

Funds remaining from disbanded troop accounts will be distributed as follows:

- For girls continuing with Girl Scouts in another troop, the funds will be transferred to the new troop(s).
- If no girls are continuing, remaining funds will be transferred to the local Service Unit.

# Fraud



Unfortunately, fraud happens even within Girl Scouts. Please follow the practices outlined in these guidelines to help prevent unauthorized use of troop funds. The Troop funds belong to the girls and should be treated as such. If a leader or parent within the troop suspects that troop funds are being mismanaged, first discuss the matter with the Troop Leader, focusing on the facts and documentation. If there is a possibility that the leader has mismanaged funds, contact GSME. Please make every effort to be proactive and establish good financial procedures and controls. Good financial management allows the troop to focus its energies on the Girl Scout Experience.



# Additional Resources



## Refer Questions to:

### Local Bank

- Not receiving bank statements
- Debit Card Issues
- Reset Debit Card Pin Number
- Errors on Bank Statements
- Check orders

### GSME

- Status of new account/signature changes
- Unresolved issues with local bank
- Suspected fraud on account

### Troop Banking Materials GSME

- M14 Bank Information Form





