

New Troop Leader's

Guide to Success!

Everything a new leader needs to know for the best year ever!

girl scouts of central illinois

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My GSCI Support Contacts

Service Unit Number

Service Unit Manager

Service Unit Meeting Times/Dates

Fall Product Coordinator

Service Unit Meeting Location

Cookie Coordinator

Membership Engagement Coordinator

Fellow Volunteer

Membership Engagement Coordinator

Fellow Volunteer

Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Girl Scout Mission

Building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

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.*

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.

DEI Position Statement

Girl Scouts of Central Illinois aspires to be an organization that is anti-racist, inclusive of members' identities, and equitable, building accessibility to Girl Scouting for all.

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

Thank You!

Troop Leaders

Help girls reach their potential as creative, courageous leaders.
Create a space where girls try new things without worrying about failing.
Teach lessons girls will use for decades to come.
Try new things along with their girls.
Develop leaders' own organizational and leadership skills.
Join a global community of sisterhood.

Our Promise to Girls

- Meet regularly

-Experience a variety of purposeful activities, including...

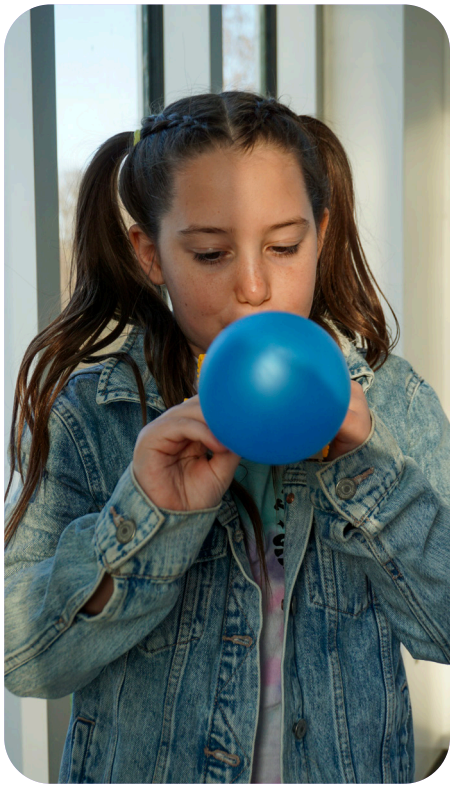
- Earning awards in one of the following categories utilizing the Girl Scout National Program which includes using the Girl Scout Leadership Experience in Outdoor, STEM, Entrepreneurship, or Life Skills
- Complete at least 4 skill building badges, at least one higher award, or one Leadership Journey
- Complete at least one community service or Take Action Project
- Take part in at least one outdoor activity
- Experience at least one field trip or Girl Scout event
- Develop entrepreneurship skills through product program participation

- Participate in Girl Scout traditions, including but not limited to...

- Saying the Promise and Law
- Wearing your Girl Scout uniform
- Singing Girl Scout Songs
- Taking part in ceremonies such as Bridging or Flag Ceremonies







Checklist for New Troop Leaders

Starting a New Girl Scout Troop

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

Week One

- [ ] Register as a Girl Scout troop leader.
- [ ] Complete your background check. You will receive an email invite from theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.
- [ ] Meet your MEC and set up a troop profile.
- [ ] Find a co-leader and invite girls to your troop.
- [ ] Log in to gsLearn, and in the Content Library, find "320 New Learning Path - All Levels." Click the heart to "favorite" it so that it is easier to find when you come back to it.
- [ ] In New Leader Learning Path in gsLearn, find "320 ZOOM New Leader Coach Sessions for New Leaders and Co-Leaders" and consider signing up.

Week Two

- [ ] Start your new leader training in gsLearn and complete within your first 60 days.
- [ ] Discover the ins and outs of the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK).
- [ ] Meet with your co-leader and plan a parent meeting. See page 16 for more on familial involvement.
- [ ] Find your troop roster in the VTK or MyAccount. Email or call all troop parents to introduce yourself.
- [ ] Find out when the local Service Unit meeting occurs each month and add it to your calendar.
- [ ] Join the private social media group for your Service Area, as well as the council page to keep in the loop.

Week Three

- [ ] Meet with your Membership Engagement Coordinator to work on opening up your troop bank account.
- [ ] Plan and hold your first troop meeting with the girls. Use the meeting plans provided in the Volunteer Toolkit.

Next few weeks

- [ ] Attend Basic Leader Training.
- [ ] Continue to use this checklist and take your Troop Leader Training on gsLearn.
- [ ] Ask questions! Staff and other volunteers are here and more than willing to help you map out the start of your new troop and your Girl Scout journey.

Complete in Your First Year

- [ ] Attend your Service Unit Meetings.
- [ ] Know who to connect with for advice/questions/ help and collect contacts on page 2 of this guide.
- [ ] Use your Volunteer Toolkit to set up your Troop Year Plan.
- [ ] Participate in the Fall Product Program to earn money for Girl Scout related expenses (Fall opportunity).
- [ ] Participate in the Cookie Program to earn money for Girl Scout related expenses (Spring opportunity).
- [ ] Attend a council sponsored event (Reference the Adventure Guide).
- [ ] Attend a service unit event.
- [ ] Visit your local Service Center and Trefoil Boutique.
- [ ] Use your Volunteer Essentials for a reference point to any questions.
- [ ] Use your Safety Activity Checkpoint.
- [ ] Register for the new Girl Scout year!

The Girl Scout Structure

When you join Girl Scouts, you're not just signing up for weekly troop meetings, you're stepping into a network - an entire movement - that spans the globe!

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

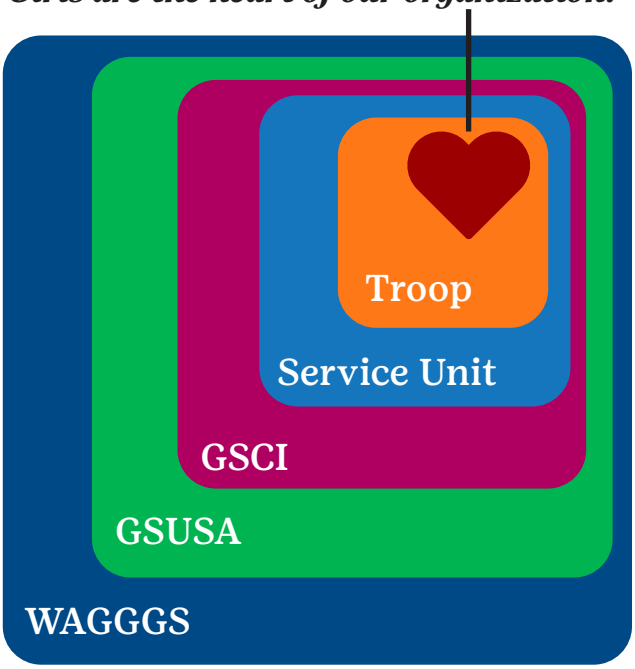
Service Unit
Comprised of volunteers who support the work of troop volunteers within a given geographic area.

Girl Scouts of Central Illinois (GSCI)
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 given geographic area.

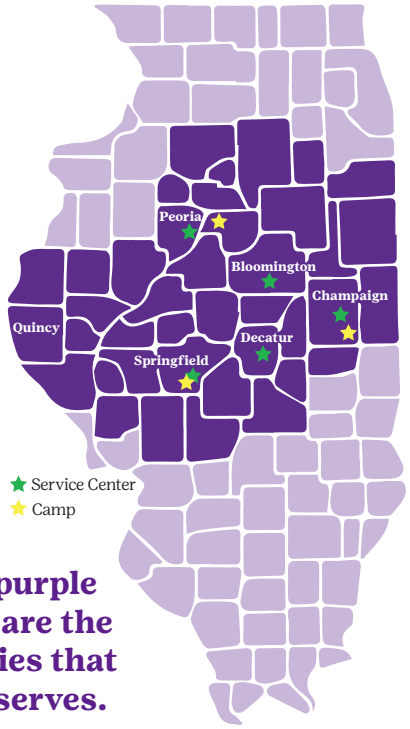
GSUSA -
A national organization supporting the work of more than 100 councils across the U.S. for more than 100 years. Headquarters located in New York, New York.

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGS)
A worldwide organization that connects Girl Scouts to a global sisterhood.

Girls are the heart of our organization!



Girl Scouts of Central Illinois



Dark purple areas are the counties that GSCI serves.

girl scouts of central illinois

Girl Scouts of Central Illinois serves 13,000 girls and 4,000 adult members annually in 38 counties throughout Central Illinois: Adams, Brown, Bureau, Cass, Champaign, Christian, DeWitt, Douglas, Ford, Fulton, Greene, Hancock, Iroquois, LaSalle, Livingston, Logan, Macon, Macoupin, Marshall, Mason, McDonough, McLean, Menard, Montgomery, Morgan, Moultrie, Peoria, Piatt, Pike, Putnam, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott, Shelby, Stark, Tazewell, Vermilion and Woodford.

Girl Scout Levels

Daisies (K-1)

Girl Scout Daisies sparkle with that "first time ever" newness in everything they do. They go on trips, learn about nature and science, and explore arts and their communities - and so much more! Girl Scout Daisies can also earn Petals.

Brownies (2-3)

Girl Scout Brownies work together, earn badges, and explore their community. Fun, friendship, and age-appropriate activities begin at the Girl Scout Brownie meeting and move out to their communities. While earning badges, they build skills, learn hobbies, and have fun with friends.

Juniors (4-5)

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! Everyday they wake up ready to play a new role.

Cadettes (6-8)

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

Seniors (9-10)

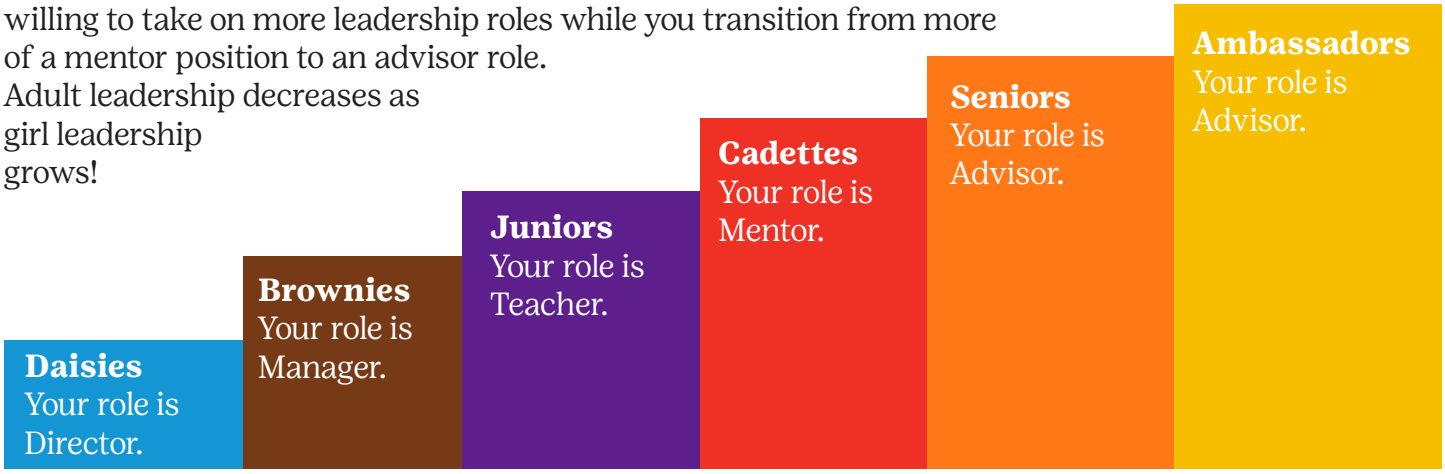
Girl Scout Seniors are ready to take the world by storm, and Girl Scouts gives them millions of ways to do it! Their experiences help shape their world, while giving them a safe space to be themselves and explore their interests. Girl Scout Seniors can earn their Gold Award (which adds something extra to a college application).

Ambassadors (11-12)

Girl Scout Ambassadors know that small actions can bring big change. While they get ready for life beyond high school, Girl Scouts helps them take flight. They also earn their Gold Award!

Girl Scout Leadership Progression Chart

No matter at which level you volunteer, you will notice that over time girls are willing to take on more leadership roles while you transition from more of a mentor position to an advisor role. Adult leadership decreases as girl leadership grows!



The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

In Girl Scouts, girls follow a path to discover who they are and what they care about. They connect with others by collaborating and making the world a better place. This process is called the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, or the GSLE. There are three keys and processes that make up this experience:

The Three Keys

Discover a strong sense of self, positive values, practical life skills, and critical thinking.

Connect with healthy relationships, teamwork, and conflict resolution within the community.

Take Action to advocate for self and others, be inspired to educate others to act and feel empowered to make a difference in the world.

The Three Processes

Girl Led: Girls of every grade level take an active role in determining what, why, and how they'll structure activities.

Learn by Doing: Girls have an active, hands on experience.

Cooperative Learning: Girls learn about themselves and each other when they team up on common goals.

4 Pillars of Girl Scouting

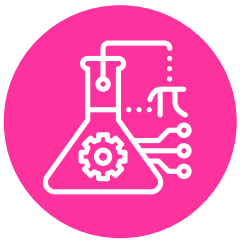
The Girl Scout Leadership Experience centers around activities in four major pillars: Outdoors, STEM, Entrepreneurship, and Life Skills. All programs are designed with a research-backed curriculum that centers around fun and friendship. To create engaging experiences, we focus on four core program areas to spark girls' interests.



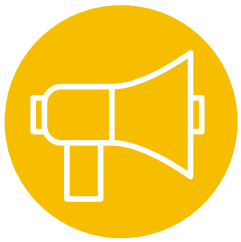
Outdoors



Entrepreneurship



STEM



Life Skills

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience and 4 Pillars of Girl Scouting achieve essential outcomes for girls:



A Strong Sense of Self

She has confidence in herself and her abilities.



Community Problem Solving

She works to make the world a better place.



Positive Values

She acts ethically, honestly, and responsibly.



Healthy Relationships

She maintains healthy relationships by communicating feelings directly and resolving conflicts constructively.



Challenge Seeking

She tries new things and learns from mistakes.

Journeys, Badges, and More!

With Girl Scouts, girls have tons of fun, make new friends, and go on fantastic new adventures. Girl Scouts experience a collection of activities as they complete Journeys, earn badges and patches, sell cookies, go on exciting trips, explore the outdoors, and do Take Action projects that make a difference. *Check out some of the Badges and Journeys Girl Scouts can take on at bit.ly/GSCIBadgesandJourneys.*

Journeys

Girl Scouts identify a problem, come up with a creative solution, create a team plan to make the solution a reality, put a plan into action, and talk about what they have learned. As girls go on Journeys, they'll earn awards to put on their uniforms.

The Volunteer Toolkit and Journey books are your resources for the requirements to earning awards.

Badges

What have your girls always wanted to do? Make their own movie, go geocaching, plant a garden? Great news! They can learn to do all these things and more while earning Girl Scout badges. Badges are worn on the front of the vest or sash.

The Volunteer Toolkit is your resource for the requirements to earning badges.

Patches

Think of patches like collecting memories in Girl Scouts. They're often a part of the fun activities you can do in Girl Scouts without the requirements of badges. Patches are always worn on the back of the vest or sash.

Highest Awards

Bronze. Silver. Gold. These represent the highest honors a Girl Scout can earn. All three awards give girls the chance to do big things while working on an issue they care about. Whether they want to plant a community garden and inspire others to eat healthy for their Bronze, advocate for animal rights for their Silver, or build a career network that encourages girls to become scientists and engineers for their Gold, they'll inspire others.



Honor Troops

Becoming an Honor Troop is easier than you think—these eight simple things are the mark of a successful troop. Use this as your checklist towards becoming an honor troop!

- **Set & keep a regular meeting time & location**
  Meet at least monthly and involve parents for support.
- **Participate in Girl Scout traditions**
  Learn and say the Promise and Law, sing Girl Scout songs, take part in simple ceremonies, and wear Girl Scout pins and uniforms.
- **Complete a service project**
  Identify a need in your community and take action! Girl Scouts in grades 4-12 can even earn Highest Awards for their service.
- **Take part in an outdoor activity**
  Go to your community park, take a hike, or go to camp.
- **Go on a field trip or attend a Girl Scout event**
  Take a field trip with your troop or visit the events calendar to find events for families and troops.
- **Choose badges to work on as a troop**
  Choose badges from a wide range of options that interest girls.
- **Participate in Girl Scout Product Programs**
  Fall Product Program and the Cookie Program are essential to join and raise funds for your troop and the Girl Scout Movement.
- **Most importantly, have fun!**
  Make memories with your troop that will last a lifetime!

Spirit of Juliette Awards

You know you're an awesome troop leader - let everyone else know, too! We know you are doing extraordinary things with and for your girls, so get credit for it with the Spirit of Juliette Awards system. Find the form with all of the activities by searching for Spirit of Juliette Award at GetYourGirlPower.org.

Each activity is worth a specific number of trefoils. For every 10 trefoils you earn, you will receive a patch/charm. Contact Customer Care with questions at customercare@girlscouts-gsci.org or 888-623-1237.

Co-Leaders: Leading Together

Each troop needs two unrelated adults who are Girl Scout members and have completed a background check to be able to meet. A friend, neighbor, co-worker, or another troop parent are all great options to be co-leaders. If you need assistance recruiting a co-leader, talk to your Membership Engagement Coordinator.

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

- Meeting Logistics: When, where, how frequently, and how long will the troop meetings be?

- The Troop: Will the troop be a multi-level troop (different program levels) or will it be exclusively one level?

- Talk about tasks and responsibilities for managing the troop. How will you divide up tasks between leaders and parents/caregivers? Focus on each person's strengths and interests.

- If applicable, how will you handle your own daughter during troop events and meetings?

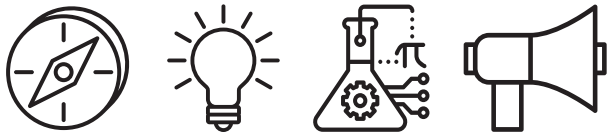
- Troop Finances: Will you have regular troop dues, and/or a troop start up fee? Who will be on the troop bank account?

- How will you communicate with the parents/caregivers of your troop members? Email? A private Facebook group? Group Me? Who will be in charge of that communication?

- Examples of meeting activities and agendas can be found in the Volunteer Toolkit. More free materials and example activities can be found in Girl Scout Experience Boxes (Learn more at bit.ly/GSCIExperiences).

What?

Girl Scouts do activities in Four Pillars.



Traditions | Troop Meetings | Field Trips
Badges | Camp | Patches | Journeys
Product Programs | Take Action Project

How?

Girl Scouts experience our unique environment and three processes

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

Three Processes - Girl-led, learn by doing, cooperative learning

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

Why?

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

Outcomes and benefits of the Girl Scout experience include:

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

Managing Your Troop

Every troop leader's management style is different and often changes over time. Be flexible. Be informed. And don't be afraid to divide and conquer - delegating tasks to girls as well as adults will help the leader's work load.

Seek Adult Support

Any adult volunteers who want to help support the troop by working directly with the girls are required to be a registered member and complete a background check.

Adult to girl ratios must be met. See page 23 for the Volunteer-to-Girl Ratio Chart.

Register Troop Members

All girls and adult volunteers need to be registered before attending meetings.

At least two leaders are needed per troop.

Financial assistance is available for membership fees, uniforms, and programming.

Where Will Your Troop Meet?

The safety of girls is important to Girl Scouts of Central Illinois. GSCI strives to maintain a balance as a safety-conscious organization that challenges all girls to take risks in a safe environment. Troop interaction is critical to girls' social and organizational development.

Troop meetings should be held in facilities that are designed to meet the unique needs associated with public use and should be ADA-compliant to ensure the troop meeting is accessible for all girls. Examples of commonly used meeting locations include schools, libraries, places of worship, community centers, office spaces, and government buildings.

Things to consider when finding a meeting spot:

- Cost
-Size
-Availability
-Resources
- Safety
- Facilities
-Allergen-Free
-Accessibility
-Communication-Friendly

Certificate of Insurance

When reserving troop meeting space, you may be asked to provide a certificate of insurance to verify Girl Scout liability insurance coverage. Please contact customercare@girlscouts-gsci.org if a certificate of insurance is needed.

Managing Troop Meeting Time

Here is a suggested timeline for an average one hour meeting.

1. Pre-Meeting (time varies)
2. Opening (5 minutes)
3. Girl Scout Circle (5 minutes)
4. Program Activity (20 minutes)
5. Clean Up (5 minutes)
6. Sharing Time (5 minutes)
7. Snack Time (10 minutes)
8. Closing (3 minutes)

Find more in depth information on meeting planning in your Volunteer Toolkit.

Guiding Your Troop Experience

Use these questions to talk with your troop volunteers to outline your troop's structure before discussing these topics with parents/caregivers.

- How often, how long, and when will we meet? What parts of the year will we meet?

-Where will we meet? What will work best for the majority of our girls and their caregivers?

- Which component of the Girl Scout uniform will our troop members be required to purchase?

- Will our troop be a single-level troop, or a multi-level troop? If multi-level, how do we find activities that is age-appropriate for everyone?

- How are we going to work with the girls to decide on activities that are what they want to do, age appropriate, and help them discover, connect, and take action? You can use your Volunteer Toolkit for activity examples.

- With what platform and how often are we going to communicate with parents/guardians? Keeping everyone in the loop of what is going on with the troop is important. It is also important to communicate needs and preparations for specific activities your troop does.

- How will we fund the fun? Will we charge troop dues? Will we charge per activity? Will we push a successful product season and raise the funds we need from sales? Can we come up with a financial plan to see what we will need for a year of Girl Scouting? Money smarts are something Girl Scouts learn with the GSLE, but you will also have to use yours as their leader!

Remember, Girl Scouts is meant to be a girl-led program. Talk to the girls to see what they want to get out of their Girl Scouting year! The most important aspect of Girl Scouts is that they are having fun, as well as building courage, confidence, and character.







Working with Daisies

As the leader of a Daisy troop, your goal should be to act as a facilitator, enabling girls to experience planning, decision-making, leadership, and, yes, event failure! Remember, Girl Scouts is *girl-led*!

Daisies (K-1)	This Means
Can make simple choices and enjoy sharing their opinion.	When making troop decisions, offer the girls limited choices, such as choosing between two field trips. Allow girls to share their thoughts and take a vote to choose. This helps girls shape their experience.
Have loads of energy, and need to expend it with activity, movement outdoors, and or social time.	They'll enjoy going for a nature walk, engaging in thought-provoking STEM activities, hands on crafts, team-building activities, and more. Keeping busy with fun and enriching activity is important.
Are great builders and budding artists who yearn to grow and explore their passions.	Encourage young Daisies to follow their interests and passions. Empower them to learn more about what makes them happy, and what they could be good at.
Love to move and dance.	Do a fun activity that involves dancing! Prompt them to walk like a penguin, sing like a parrot, or dance like their favorite animal.
Are concrete thinkers and are focused on the here and now.	Show instead of telling. For example, you can show them how animals are cared for by going to the zoo, helping at an animal shelter, or putting together a care package for new pet owners.
Are only beginning to learn about basic number concepts, time, and money related knowledge.	Take time and try to work number activities into anything you do. Count supplies or walk them through a budget. Take part in a Product Sales Program to help them with math and money smarts!
Know how to follow simple directions and respond well to recognition for doing so.	Be specific with your requests and try to keep your directions to one step at a time. Acknowledge and praise girls as they follow directions and listen to motivate them to continue a desired trait.
Are just starting to build their vocabulary and writing skills.	If girls are trying to articulate something and struggling, encourage them to draw a picture to aid your understanding. Make sure they feel comfortable to ask questions about words they don't understand.

Helpful Tips:

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

Working with Brownies

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

Brownies (2-3)	This Means
Have a lot of energy and like to move and do hands-on activities.	Take every opportunity to make your meetings more tailored to their energy levels. Make sure your activities are engaging and hands-on. Take a lot of activities outdoors to allow for movement and fresh air.
Are social and enjoy working in a team or group setting.	Allow activities that require teamwork and collaboration. This helps meet social needs, as well as furthers your troops bond!
Want to help others and appreciate being given a task.	Let girls lead, direct, and help out whenever possible. Allow the group to discuss and delegate individual tasks and responsibility.
Are concrete thinkers and focus on the here and now.	Do more than just read to the girls about the Brownie Elf's adventures. Ask questions to gauge understanding and further their understanding by putting themselves in another person's shoes.
Need clear directions and structure, and like to know what to expect.	Offer one direction at a time, and have girls create the schedule and flow of your meetings. Set up a schedule they can follow.
Are becoming comfortable with basic number and math concepts.	Offer support only when needed. Let the girls work through numbers when looking at troop budget, counting supplies, etc.
Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and tie shoes, use basic tools, learn to sew, etc.	Encourage girls' creative expression through making things with their hands. They may still require assistance on certain things, but encouraging them to be hands-on aids in their development skills.
Love to act in plays, create music, and express themselves.	Choose to run activities that heighten their imagination. Allow their desire to tell a story be expressed through activities.
Know how to follow rules and appreciate positive recognition.	Acknowledge and praise girls when their actions are positive and they are listening to instruction. Incentivize positive growth!

Letting Brownies Take the Lead:

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

For more about working with Juniors - Ambassadors, please see Volunteer Essentials on gsLearn.

Family Connections

The Key Ingredient to a Successful Girl Scout Troop!

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls when families step up and play an active role 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 an interest in things they are taking part in!

Kick the Year Off Right With a Parent/Caregiver Meeting
A parent/caregiver meeting should be the first meeting you should hold, outside of the first meeting with your co-leader. These meetings are important for the success of new and returning troops, as they help the caregivers know what to expect from the Girl Scouting year.



Why? Because it helps:

- Families understand what their girl is getting out of Girl Scouts
- Families and leaders will identify ways in which both are expected to support the troop as a team
- Families and leaders can agree about what the troop pays for and what individuals will be responsible for independently
- You can fill key troop positions - maybe a parent or caregiver is willing to become a co-leader or troop cookie manager
- Families will know how the troop will receive communication about events, troop meetings, etc
- Families learn about uniforms, books, and other 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 solid plan, girls benefit!

A sample step-by-step guide on how the parent meeting can be run can be found on page 17. An hour-long meeting can make a difference in your year ahead. 100% of troops with the most satisfied parents and troop leaders report they hold parent meetings. Meetings can be held before busy times in the Girl Scouting year, such as Cookie Season, to iron out details before a busy period starts.

Remember to make family part of the formula! While Girl Scout programming primarily focuses on girls themselves, it's important and helpful to open a few events to families throughout the year. Inviting a whole crew to celebrate her accomplishments in Girl Scouting - whether at holiday open houses, a bridging ceremony, or a fun "reverse meeting" where girls take on the role of leaders and guide the adults through an activity will help parents better understand the value of Girl Scouts and be more likely to invest their time to the troop.

That being said, there is no reason for one of these events to be the first time parents or caregivers are engaged in troop activity. Keep communication lines with families open all Girl Scouting year, whether it is a through a troop Facebook page, weekly email update, or interpersonal chats.

Importance of the Caregiver Meeting

All parents/caregivers are encouraged to play an active role with their girl's troop. If they will be working directly with the girls, they need to complete the approval process and register for a troop position.

Objectives of the Meeting

- Get caregivers involved early.
- Communicate troop dues, troop funds, and money earning plans.
- Determine meeting dates, time, and location.
- Register girls and adults for Girl Scouts.
- Complete paperwork (Health History, Code of Conduct, etc.).
- Form a troop committee with parents to help with Fall Product Program, Girl Scout Cookie Program, managing finances, driving, etc.
- Get to know each other.
- Identify how you plan to communicate.
- Discuss expectations.
- Ask for supply donations.
    - Art supplies: yarn, glue sticks, crayons, markers, construction paper, etc.
    - Meeting Supplies: paper, pens, pencils, tape, napkins, plates, cups, wet wipes, hand sanitizer, etc.



Planning the Meeting

- Get a list of interested girls from the GSCI Membership Engagement Coordinator.
- Set up the meeting site.
- If a contract signature is required at the meeting site, contact your Membership Engagement Coordinator.
- Contact caregivers with the meeting information.
- Include information about how to register in your meeting invitation for easy access.
- Prepare a sign up sheet of adult jobs that can be filled out by interested caregivers.
- Plan to have another adult there to run an activity for the girls that attend with their caregiver.

The Day of the Meeting

- Arrange the room to match your needs.
- Introductions, maybe a fun ice-breaker activity.
- Walk through adult troop roles: troop leader, treasurer, cookie coordinator, troop support, etc.
- Ask adults if they have any skills, knowledge, or special contacts they can share.
- Discuss troop meeting space and times.
- Discuss any troop dues (if applicable).
- Explain uniforms and books. Direct them to get these items at their closest Trefoil Boutique.
- Discuss platform of communication (email, Facebook, GroupMe, text chain, etc.).
- For more info, direct adults to the council website (GetYourGirlPower.org).

After the Meeting

- Follow up with a thank you and recap of the meeting.
- Send rosters out with adult information and contacts.
- Remind adults who are helping directly to register themselves.

Working with Parents/Caregivers

Unlike many other activities, a Girl Scout troop needs parent and caregiver support to thrive! Helping their girl's troop can bring a family closer and offer wonderful experiences for them to share together.

Crucial things to share at the meeting:

- Express how important it is to receive help from the families of the Girl Scout.

- Set a clear expectation to the parents/caregivers about what exactly is expected of them to handle.

- Make sure that there is an understanding and agreement on a budget. Are they willing to put money forward for dues, or are your funds coming solely from taking part in product programs? Do any of your members need financial assistance? If so, lead them to the correct resources offered.

- Make sure that all permission forms are available to fill out so you get all of the necessary paperwork done and out of the way!

- Discuss the types of activities the troop will participate in the year (field trips, regular meetings, Girl Scout events, camping trips, etc.), and what parts of the year your troop will stat active regularly.

- Make a cheat sheet of important resources so that they have important info in one spot.

Helpful Tips:

- Don't try to do this alone! Ask parents directly to help with the troop. Make helping easier by listing out specific jobs and listing their responsibilities so that the parents who take them on know exactly what they are signing up to do.

- Invite a member of your service unit team to your parent meeting. They can help fill in any important information you may have missed, as well as answer specific questions caregivers may have.

- Have an "all about me" information sheet that parents can fill out about their daughter. This can help give you tips on how to work with the girls in your troop.

- If girls are attending, give them a taste of Girl Scouts by setting up an activity to keep them engaged.

- Reiterate that you are new to Girl Scouting too, so you will all be growing and learning together through your first Girl Scout year.



Fillable Positions for Caregivers

Parents, or any family member, can take an active role in supporting the girls in their Girl Scouting experience! The depth of responsibility varies. Volunteers help lighten the load of a leader so that they can focus on cultivating activities that make a girl's Girl Scouting experience special and memorable. Below are ways caregivers can help the troop throughout the year.

Help Needed	Description
Co- Leader	Partner with the troop leader to provide regular support for all troop activities, including meetings, events, camping, etc. Must be a member, have a background check, and take required trainings.
Meeting Helper and/or Drivers	Help around at regular meetings with activities. Drivers help drive girls to meetings and events. These roles both require adults who have memberships and a background check.
Troop Treasurer	Help leaders with all money matters, budgets, deposits, etc. Requires job holder to co-sign on the bank account. Treasurer must have a membership, and a background check.
Camping/Trip Adult	Trips and camping requires more adult involvement for the safety of the Girl Scouts. The Camp/Trip Adult helps plan and attend the trips. Must have a membership, background check, and camp training.
CPR/ First Aider	Attend events outside of regular meetings. Helps with any first aid needs that may come up in a Girl Scout outing. Required to have a membership, background check, and CPR/First Aid training.
Troop Product Manager	Promote and run Girl Scout Cookie Program and/or the Fall Product Program for troop members. Requires adult to have a membership, background check, and product trainings offered by council.
Supplies or Snack Coordinator	Assist with the troop by coordinating a schedule for supplies and/or snacks with fellow troop members' caregivers. No required accolades are necessary to hold this position.
Communication Support	Be the go to person when it comes to getting the word out to all troop caregivers. Keep everyone updated on upcoming events, troop news, etc. No required accolades are necessary to hold this position.

If you have a talent, or think of a specific job not listed above, speak up! From photographer, to hiking guru, to skit leader, there are so many different areas of help that could be beneficial to the troop. The help caregivers can give to the troop, as well as the general engagement of family members in Girl Scouts, helps build a strong foundation in which the troop can grow together. Every volunteer counts, and every helping hand makes life easier for the troop leader, so that they can focus on cultivating activities and plans that give the troop the best and most impactful Girl Scouting experience.

Volunteer Resources

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK):

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is your official source for delivering easy and 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 through your myGS account and on any device, the Volunteer Toolkit allows troop leaders to:

- Explore meeting topics and program activities with their girls
- Print step-by-step activity guides and shopping lists
- Manage girl attendance and track achievements
- Add local events to your calendar
- Edit the troop roster and update contact information
- Renew members
- Track and share financial information
- Message and share meeting activities with troop member caregivers

... plus so much more! Access the Volunteer Toolkit by logging into myGS at mygs.girlscouts.org!

Successful Leader Learning Series (GSUSA Foundation Series)

Confident leaders are prepared leaders, and this online learning series will give you all the information you need to get started as a troop leader. Available in your myGS account.

Girl Scout Handbook

What does it mean to be a go-getting Girl Scout? These grade level specific binders will help you break it down for your girls, and yourself! It's part handbook, part badge book, and 100% fun! These binders can be purchased at your local Trefoil Boutique.

Safety Activity Checkpoint

Available in your myGS account, this guide has everything you need to know to be prepared and keep your girls safe during a range of Girl Scout activities.

Volunteer Essentials

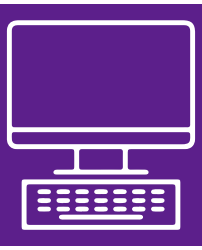
With key information, policies, and procedures that support the safe and consistent delivery of Girl Scout programming to girls across the council, Volunteer Essentials are just that - *essential*. By agreeing to be a Girl Scout volunteer, you agree to following the items outlined in this resource. Volunteer Essentials are updated annually, so get the newest essentials on your myGS account.

Tips for Troop Leaders

When you're looking for real-world advice from fellow leaders who have been there, this volunteer led resource is a great way to learn and take advice from others in the same boat as you! You can access these resources at girlscouts.org/tipsfortroopleaders.

Digital Access

GSCI Website: www.GetYourGirlPower.org
Facebook and Instagram: @gscentralil
YouTube: Girl Scouts of Central Illinois



** myGS can be accessed through the GSCI website in an icon at the top right corner. MyGS is where you can access most of the resources listed above. Social Media is also a great way to stay in the loop of what is happening in your council!*



Volunteer Toolkit

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is a comprehensive digital tool accessible on your computer, smartphone, or tablet. It is the primary support resource for troop leaders. For volunteers, this resource can replace the adult leader's guide for Journeys and the Girl Scout Handbook. This makes it easier on volunteers and acts as a one-stop shop for all resources they need.

My Troop

Manage all of your troop contacts, track your award and badge progress, take attendance, and communicate with parents and caregivers of troop members.

Finances

Share financial information with parents/guardians, as well as submit financial information to the council.

Year Plan

Customize your troop year based on the experiences girls want. At the beginning of each Girl Scout year, you'll usually spend the first two meetings deciding with the girls what they want to do. After setting up a plan of activities, log them in your VTK year plan. Note specifics, such as locations, dates, and times of your planned meetings. This is just another great way of keeping organized and efficient.

Explore

Setting up your troop year just got easier! The "Explore" tab lets you "Select your own" or use "Pre-selected Tracks" to jump start the Year Plan for your troop. Badge and award visuals let you see what your girls will earn.

Meeting Plan

View meeting details, including activity descriptions, meeting aids, material lists, and more. Customize activities, delete ones that your girls don't want to do, and replace them with new ones. Also, directly link to council sponsored activities, register your troop, and add events to your calendar.

Resources

Find additional resources to support the activities that your girls choose to do. Easy access to the Safety Activity Checkpoint and other helpful resources. Add meeting aids to specific meetings in your year plan.

Questions?

How do I get started with the Volunteer Toolkit? Visit GetYourGirlPower.org and access your myGS account in the upper right corner of the site. Log in and access your toolkit. A guide to the toolkit can help you see all it has to offer. The toolkit guide can be found on the GSCI website under the "Volunteer Resources" tab.

Need more assistance? Email customercare@girlscouts-gsci.org or call at 888-623-1237.

Troop Safety

The safety and well-being of girl and adult members is our highest priority. As a volunteer, it is imperative to know and understand the safety policies and procedures in place, where to look for them, or who to ask for more information if necessary. Listed below are some of the main resources in which safety guidelines from Girl Scouts have been laid out and listed.



Volunteer Essentials:
A guide to important policies and procedures of Girl Scouts, including safety.

Safety Activity Checkpoints:
Activity specific safety guidelines for activities, including camping, participating in public events such as parades, and even safety measures to use while selling during Product Programs.

Council Website:
Find additional resources under the volunteer section of the GSCI website, GetYourGirlPower.org.

Insurance Information:
Registered Girl Scout members are covered by basic accident insurance when participating in Girl Scout activities. If an accident occurs, inquire with Customer Care for resources.

General Safety Guidelines

Keep guardians informed! Communicate regularly about troop meetings and activities. Use permission slips anytime the troop is doing anything outside of your normal meeting place and time.

Girls are never alone! Girls should always be using the buddy system, as well as be accompanied by two approved adults at a time.

Adults are never alone with girls! At least one troop leader, along with another troop leader or troop volunteer should be present any time girls are together to keep up with the set girl to adult ratios for safety.

Be prepared! Have a first aid kit, non-emergency number of local law enforcement, and a charged cell phone on hand in case of emergency.

Know your surroundings! This goes for both the regular meetings and troop outings. Know about the people and place you are in. Assess any possible risks and take the appropriate actions. Learn more information in the Volunteer Essentials.

Follow all safety policies and procedure! These are outlined in the Volunteer Essentials. Contact a GSCI staff member for any questions or clarifications.

Keeping Girls Safe

While working with girls and learning new skills is fun and rewarding, assuming responsibility for other's children means that some level of risk management and due diligence is involved. There are several resources we use to help minimize risk and keep girls safe.

Understanding How Many Volunteers You Need

Girl Scout groups are large enough to provide a cooperative learning environment and small enough to allow development of individual girls. Girl Scouts' volunteer-to-girl ratios show the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of girls. These ratios exist to ensure safety.

Your troop must have at least two unrelated, approved (registered and background checked) volunteers present at all times, plus additional volunteers as necessary, depending on the size of the group, age group, and activity. All adult volunteers must be 18 or older, have a background check, and at least one of the leaders must be a female. For mixed-grade level troops, use the volunteer-to-girl ration for the lowest level in the group.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, Camping	
Volunteer-to-Girl Ratio Chart	2 unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this # of girls:	Plus 1 additional volunteer for each additional # of this many girls:	2 unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this # of girls:	Plus 1 additional volunteer for each additional # of this many girls:
Daisies (Grade K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
Brownies (Grade 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
Juniors (Grade 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8
Cadettes (Grade 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
Seniors (Grade 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
Ambassadors (Grade 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12

Planning Safe Activities

When preparing for any activities with girls, start by reading the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints to see if the activity fits within those safety restrictions. The Activity Checkpoints offer you required guidelines on where to do activities, how to make it inclusive for girls with disabilities, where to find both basic and specialized materials needed for the activity, how to prepare yourself for running the activity, and what to do the day of the activity to make sure everything is ready to go. The Safety Activity Checkpoint also notes if a First Aider is required, however we recommend that a First Aider be present for all activities. The Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints can be found on our website under Volunteer Forms & Documents.

What to do in an Emergency

Although we all hope that the worst will never happen, it's important to know and follow our council's procedures for handling emergency incidents. At the scene of the incident, safety is your first priority. Provide care for the injured person or obtain medical assistance, and then immediately report the emergency to Girl Scouts of Central Illinois by contacting the management staff in your area, as seen in the Procedures for Emergencies document under "Forms and Documents" on our website. Be prepared to share troop information, as well as who was involved.

Make sure a general first aid kit is available at your meeting place, as well as one that accompanies you on trip outings. You may have to purchase one for the troop from troop funding. Remember to always have names and numbers from the council office, troop parents, and emergency services such as police, fire departments, and hospitals.

Troop Finances

Open a Bank Account - As Troop Leader, you along with one other approved, unrelated volunteer should establish a bank account for all troop related money, including revenue from the Fall Product Program and Girl Scout Cookie Program, as well as troop dues (if applicable).

- Any troop that is managing money is required to maintain an active bank account for all Girl Scout related transactions to take place. Paperwork for banking can be found on our website under Volunteer "Forms and Documents".

- Troop financial status should be fully transparent to troop members. Any adult can ask to see the account information and financial status at any time.

- The troop must complete and submit a troop financial report at the end of each troop year.

Financial Assistance - Financial issues shouldn't stand in the way of a Girl Scout's participation. Caregivers can apply for financial assistance to offset the cost of purchasing a membership, camp, uniform essentials, council programming, etc. Contact GSCI by calling 888-623-1237 or emailing customercare@girlscouts-gsci.org to learn more about financial assistance options.

Tax Exemption - As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, volunteers can use GSCI sales tax exemption form when purchasing supplies for Girl Scout specific activities. Contact your council for a copy.

Funding the Fun!

Girls have some big ideas about what they want to do in Girl Scouts - and as their troop leader, you will guide them to budget and plan what you can do with your funds. How will you get all of the money for troop related activities?

Troop Dues - Many troops decide to collect troop dues as a way to provide start up funds for troop activities and supplies. These could range from $1-2 each meeting, or $30-40 for the whole year paid at once. It's completely up to the troop. Keep in mind the demographic you are serving, as sometimes troop dues aren't feasible for families, and troop dues cannot be required.

Money-Earning Activities - When most people think "Girl Scout", the iconic cookies come to mind. A great part of the Girl Scout program is it's ability to teach girls more about numbers and entrepreneurship through our Fall Product Program and the Girl Scout Cookie Program. As well as being a wonderful source of learning for the girls, the product programs serve as a major way to raise money for your Girl Scouting year.

Managing Troop Funds

Remember, Girl Scout funds are girl-earned, as well as girl-spent. How the funds are used is a decision that should heavily involve the Girl Scouts, with you guiding them through the budgeting process. It is also important to note that all troop funds are used for full troop expenses. Funds cannot be used for individual girl use. Funds can be used to purchase badges and patches, Journey and guide books, uniform components (if purchased for all of the girls in the troop), celebrations and ceremonies, community service projects, field trips and more.

As the girls begin to spend their troop funds, you or the designated volunteer in charge of finances should keep track of all troop spending, as well as money added to the account. This will be important in the process of reporting all finances at the end of the Girl Scouting year. It will also make it easier to share financial aspects of the troop, in the case that a caregiver would like to see it.

Girl Scout Product Programs

Five Core Skills and Financial Literacy

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

Five Core Skills

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

Goal Setting

Decision Making

Money Management

People Skills

Business Ethics

There are also Cookie Business Badges and curriculum that can help volunteers guide girls on this journey to develop their confidence and set goals for themselves. This is also a great way for them to learn budgeting and speak out on what they would like revenue from sales programs to go towards. To succeed in running a product program for your troop, it helps to remember:

- With the support of a volunteer Service Unit and the council Product Sales team, you will be connected to resources and support that ensure you and your troop will have a successful and smoothly ran product season.

- It's important to remember that any funds earned through money earning opportunities become property of the troop as a whole and should further their Girl Scout experience.

- It must also be a girl-led decision on how these funds should be spent. Troop funds can be used towards meeting supplies, badges, field trips, camping, council programming, and more!

Fall Product Program

This is a great way to get girls and families comfortable with participating in council sponsored learning and money earning opportunities and earn troop funds at the beginning of the Girl Scout year.

What: Girls sell nuts, candy, magazines, and more online or in person to family and friends.

How: Customers can select to have their order delivered by the Girl Scout or shipped directly to them. Products to be delivered by girls will be picked up by the designated product lead of the troop at the end of the selling season when all product is ready to deliver.

Why: Troops earn a large portion of revenue from the sales, which serves as a good beginning of the year boost to the troop bank account!

Girl Scout Cookie Program

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

What: Girls sell cookies to customers near and far online, in-person, and at booth sales.

How: Family and friends can support a Girl Scout by purchasing cookies to help her reach her goal. With the support of parents/guardians and troop volunteers, girls can also participate in booth sales at local grocery stores, restaurants, and more.

Why: Troops earn proceeds on each package of cookies sold and girls earn rewards based on the number of packages they sell.

Girl Scout Year at a Glance

The Volunteer Toolkit is a great place to show you you Girl Scout year plan options. This sample troop year plan shows ideas for trips, traditions, and activities that you can customize based on the interests of your troop. A reminder, each troop's plans will look different, as your troop year should be tailored to pique the interest of the girls in your troop!

Fall: September - November

Parent/Caregiver Meeting: A way to share Girl Scout traditions with troop caregivers and engage them as possible troop volunteers.

Regular Troop Meetings: (weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly based on the girl's schedules) Focus on setting goals and plans for the year.

Use the Volunteer Toolkit: Helps set up a plan for the Girl Scouting year. Also a great source of information when choosing which badges and Journeys to complete.

Identify Trips: Figure out trips, events, etc. that will make Journeys and badgework come to life.

Implement a Community Service Project: Choose a project that aligns with your troop's interests and goals.

Register to attend community and council sponsored programming.

Fall Product Program: A great source of funds for troop activities at the beginning of the year.

Happy Birthday Juliette: Celebrate Girl Scout Founder's birthday on October 31!

Winter: December - February

Continue Regular Meeting: Make sure to implement the girl-led plans.

Attend the Girl Scout Cookie Program Training: Both troop leader, as well as troop appointed cookie coordinator should attend the training.

Participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program: It's a great way to earn money and develop financial skills. A few key concepts include:

- Order Taking
- Cookie Delivery
- Booth Sales

Participate in Girl Scout World Thinking Day: On February 22, girls honor our sister Girl Guides and Girl Scouts by taking time to give thanks for their international friendships and remember that GSUSA is part of a global community. Look at girlscouts.org/worldthinkingday for more!

Register for Summer Camp: There are so many different ways Girl Scouts can get the camp experience, whether it's a overnight camp or day camp. Check out the summer camp sessions GSCI provides at bit.ly/GSCICampandOutdoors.

Spring: March - May

Continue with Regular Meetings.

Girl Scout Week: Celebrated each March, starting with Girl Scout Sunday and ending with Girl Scout Sabbath on Saturday. It always includes the celebration of the Girl Scout birthday (Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the first Girl Scout troop on March 12).

Awards Ceremony: Celebrate awards with a girl-designed ceremony. Some leaders prefer to give awards as the girls earn them. Ending the troop year with a gathering is a great way to re-engage the parents and recognize the girls for all of the hard work and successes they have had in the Girl Scout year.

Renewal: Late spring is a great time to register for the next year of Girl Scouting. There are often incentives, for troops that choose to get ahead of the game and register early for the coming year.

Summer: June - August

Submit your Troop Finance Report: You can find the specific forms you need to do the financial report correctly on the GSCI website under the "Document and Forms" tab.

Summer Camp Begins: Encourage your troop to take advantage of the unique Girl Scout camping experience. It is a wonderful way to stay active during the summer, make friends, and soak in the outdoor aspect of Girl Scouts.

Change It Up: Many troops take the summer off (usually due to availability), but that doesn't mean you have to! Take advantage of the time the girls have off of school! Take trips and take advantage of the wonderful weather. As girls get older, summer is often the perfect time for them to participate in short-term Girl Scout experiences, like the Girl Scout Destinations experience!

customercare@girlscouts-gsci.org | 888-623-1237