



The Girl Scout Gold Award



Going for the Gold Self-Study Program



Going for the Gold Self-Study Program

Program description: Find out about the highest award Girl Scouts can earn—the Girl Scout Gold Award.

Learning objectives: Girls will learn the steps to earning the Gold Award and explore how to choose a great project that will make a difference.

Girl Scout grade level: Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors

Program strand: Leadership

Physical setting: Room with tables and chairs

Program duration: Two hours

Optimal group size: 1–50 girls

Preparation:

1. Make a copy of the Gold Award Packet and Gold Award Toolkit for each girl, available at GirlScoutsRV.org.
2. Make copies of the worksheets below:
 - Gold Award Steps (one per group)
 - My Community Map (one per girl)
 - Sustainability (one per girl)
 - Gold Award Project Brainstorm (one per girl)
 - Is it Golden?: Project Examples (optional, one per group)
3. Gather the supplies listed below:
 - Pens/pencils
 - Paper
 - Whiteboard or large paper
 - Markers

Notes to the facilitator:

Girls may complete the self study with their service unit, their troop or individually. Girls should work with an adult.

Any activities that are listed as group work can also be done individually.

Review the FAQ sheet prior to facilitation. This will assist you in answering girls' questions and being more familiar with the Gold Award process.

The activities outlined in this packet will help girls learn more about the Gold Award and the steps required to complete the award. These activities can be completed during one meeting session or split out over a few meetings.

Information check

Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Gold Award Packet

An important step in developing a Gold Award project is to understand the guidelines and requirements for the Gold Award. Ask girls:

- Why are you interested in earning the Gold Award?
- What do you already know about the Gold Award?

Read through the Gold Award requirements, found on pages 4–5 of the Gold Award Packet.

Tell girls they will be discussing root cause, active leadership and sustainability in more detail shortly.

Gold Award steps

Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Girl Scout Gold Award Steps sheet (one set for each group)

Pass out the Gold Award Steps to the girls. Girls may work individually or in groups to put the steps in the correct order. Once complete, review the steps for completing the Gold Award (correct order below).

Girl Scout Gold Award steps

1. Complete two Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador Journeys OR earn the Silver Award and complete one Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador Journey.
 2. Attend Going for the Gold—Gold Award Workshop (at “Here and Now for Seniors and Ambassadors” or via webinar) OR complete the Gold Award Self-Study Program.
 3. Brainstorm project ideas.
 4. Choose your project advisor—someone who has expertise in the topic of your project.
*Your parent/guardian or troop leader cannot be your project advisor.
 5. Complete and turn in your project proposal. Council staff will contact you after reviewing your proposal.
 6. Once directed by the council, schedule your Gold Award Committee presentation and present your project to the committee.
 7. Carry out your project after approval.
 8. Reflect and evaluate your project once it is complete.
 9. Complete and turn in your final report.
 10. Celebrate!
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Root cause

Time: 15 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard or large paper
- Markers

Root cause—the basic, fundamental or underlying factor of an issue

Gold Award projects work to address the root cause of an issue. To figure out what the root cause may be to any given issue, it is helpful to ask the question “Why?” When we work towards solving the root cause of a given issue, we begin to create lasting change.

Copy the following project example chart where everyone can see it. As a group, brainstorm a potential root cause for each issue. Add the ideas to the chart. Oftentimes there can be more than one answer.

Community Issue	Root Cause
Too much waste in the school cafeteria	?
Families in need of food	?
Communities in need of arts and music programming	?

Ask the following “Why” questions:

- Why is there too much waste in the school cafeteria?
- Why do families go without food?
- Why does our community lack programming in the arts?

Community Issue	Root Cause
Too much waste in the school cafeteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No compost or recycling program • Students use paper bag lunches vs. reusable bags for lunch
Families in need of food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources (food shelves, shelters) • Loss of job and a need for resume/interview skills
Communities in need of arts and music programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public is not aware of the importance or benefits of art and music • Art and music programs are cut from schools

Active leadership

Time: 15 minutes

Materials:

- My Community Map worksheet
- Writing utensils

Active leadership—leading, coordinating, educating and inspiring others; involving others in your efforts

Girls often think that active leadership means completing all of the work themselves. In fact, it is the opposite. One way to ensure girls will develop active leadership skills throughout their project is by finding others to help them.

Individually or in small groups, brainstorm a list of potential people, community groups or organizations that could help you carry out a Gold Award project. Use the My Community Map worksheet to help brainstorm. Girls define the community they wish to reach—school district, religious community, neighborhood, etc.—and whether the project is done on a local, national or global scale.

Sustainability

Time: 15 minutes

Materials:

- Sustainability worksheet (half sheet)
- Writing utensils

Sustainability—a project that continues after your involvement ends and has a lasting impact in the community

Sustainability is a very important part of developing a quality Gold Award project. Sustainability is achieved at a higher level for a Gold Award project than for the Bronze or Silver Awards. Girls can ensure lasting change and sustainability of their project by working with others and collaborating with community organizations.

Split the girls into three groups. Assign each group one of the project examples from the Sustainability worksheet. Each group will come up with possible ways to make the project sustainable. Once groups are finished, come back together and share the different ideas on sustainability.

Possible ways to make the projects sustainable are listed below.

Project	Ways to make it sustainable
Creating a food-waste composting program for a school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a commitment from school officials to carry on the program • Make instructions that show how to set up a program and share them with other schools • Get commitments from other schools to try the program
Establishing a food shelf at a church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a commitment from a person or group to continue the food shelf program • Find other organizations to start their own program based on your methods
Developing an after-school art program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a person or group to carry on the after-school program • Get a commitment from a school to offer the program every year

Break

Time: 10 minutes

Service vs. Take Action

Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Gold Award Packet

Service project—a project that addresses an immediate, short-term need in the community; volunteering

Take Action project—a project that addresses the root cause of a community issue and has long-term effects

Read through the information on page 9 of the Gold Award Packet to learn more about Service vs. Take Action. As a large group, discuss the difference between Service and Take Action projects.

Here are a few more examples of Service projects vs. Take Action projects:

Service project	Take Action project
Volunteer to clean up in the school cafeteria	Develop a food-waste composting program in a school. Create an instructional pamphlet to share with other schools on how to start their own composting program.
Donate food to a food shelf	Establish a new food shelf program at a place of worship. Create an awareness event on homelessness and make it an annual event.
Donate art supplies	Develop art activities to be used in community centers or after-school programming. Create a high school club that delivers art programming to elementary students after school.

Is it Golden?

Time: 15 minutes

Materials:

- Paper (6 sheets for each group)
- Writing utensils
- Is it Golden?: Project Examples handout (optional)

Split the girls into teams of approximately 4–8 players. In this game, one person will read each project example aloud. If you wish, you may also pass out the “Is it Golden?: Project Examples” handout to each team or have the examples written on a whiteboard. Teams will have one minute to decide if the project is an example of a successful Gold Award project. Once they have made their decision, they will write down the answer on a sheet of paper: “Golden” if they think the answer is yes and “Not Golden” if they think it is no. Teams will hold up their answers at the same time. Teams will earn one point for answering correctly. If the answer was “Not Golden”, teams who answered correctly can try for a bonus point by describing how they could turn the project into a Take Action project.

1. Anna created an early learning literacy program for children in households where Spanish is the primary language spoken. She recruited members from her church to create a Gold Award team. Together they developed a series of learning activities, collected copies of popular children’s books, made felt learning boards and audio CDs in English and Spanish translations, and made word puzzles and magnets in Spanish with tips encouraging children and families to learn how to read English. Anna teamed with her school district’s Early Childhood and Family Education (ECFE) staff to teach students in the program using the materials created and to evaluate its impact on participating families. The materials will continue to be used by the ECFE program.
2. Sonia wanted to help children who are hospitalized for leukemia. She wanted to make them feel welcome at the hospital during a difficult time in their lives. Sonia made one hundred fleece blankets and delivered them to her local hospital to give to the children.

She also held a toy drive at her church and donated the collected toys to the hospital's playroom.

3. Erin introduced students and parents to aspects of engineering in order to open the door to future creative thinkers and problem solvers who can help our communities and the nation. With the aid of her fellow Robotics team members, she used her skills in math and science to develop a seminar on STEM education and opportunities to prepare or peak interest in students to pursue careers in a STEM field. The seminar was attended by nearly 200 students. The Robotics team at her school has adopted this event and will hold it yearly in their community.
4. Natasha wanted to help women and children overcoming domestic abuse. She partnered with a local women and children's shelter and found out that they needed new bookshelves. Natasha and her dad built two bookshelves and filled them with donated books. Now residents will always have books to read when they stay at the shelter.
5. Jessica addressed the issue of childhood obesity by teaching youth about healthy eating. She developed a website that shared healthy eating tips, including healthy snack options, easy recipes and information on the food groups. Jessica promoted the website by sharing it on her Facebook page. The website was also featured in her school district's e-newsletter. She will continue to update the website with new ideas and recipes.
6. Cassandra created a peer tutoring program at her high school to address the issue of dropping student achievement. She led members of the National Honor Society (NHS) to work with deans, teachers and students to offer peer tutoring three days each week. The program received positive feedback from students and tutors, and students who participated in the program saw an improvement in their grades. NHS will continue to run the peer tutoring program at the school and recruit new tutors each year.

Answers:

1. Golden
Why:

Community Issue	Developing early literacy in English language learners.
Root Cause	Not enough resources available to early childhood English language learners.
Active Leadership	Anna led a group from her church to carry out her project. She also partnered with her district's ECFE program to educate others.
Sustainability	Anna received a commitment from the ECFE program to continue to use her newly developed materials.
Take Action	This is a Take Action project.

2. Not Golden
Why:

Community Issue	Unclear
Root Cause	Unclear
Active Leadership	Sonia did not show active leadership. She completed all of the work herself.
Sustainability	The project is not sustainable; there is no plan in place for it to continue after her work is done.
Take Action	This is not a Take Action project. This is an example of a service project.
Bonus: Make it Golden	First, choose a clear issue and address the root cause. Create an event that raises awareness about leukemia. Build a team of others to research, develop and carry out the event. Create a support group for leukemia patients at the hospital. Make sure the plan is sustainable.

3. Golden
Why:

Community Issue	More students should consider pursuing a career in engineering or other STEM careers.
Root Cause	Not enough information for youth on STEM careers at her school.
Active Leadership	Erin worked with her Robotics team members to develop and lead a STEM seminar.
Sustainability	The Robotics team has now adopted the event and will make the seminar a yearly event in the community.
Take Action	This is a Take Action project.

4. Not Golden
Why:

Community Issue	Helping women and children who suffer from domestic abuse.
Root Cause	Unclear
Active Leadership	Natasha began to show some active leadership by partnering with the shelter, but only relied on her dad to help her work on her project. Natasha needs to include others from the community to show active leadership.
Sustainability	This project is not sustainable; there is no plan in place for it to continue after her work is done.
Take Action	This is not a Take Action project. This is an example of a service project.
Bonus: Make it Golden	Clearly identify an issue and root cause, such as “Children of domestic violence are at risk of falling behind in school. They often leave all of their belongings behind, including books.” Create a team to develop and lead a reading program for children and women at the shelter. Have community members donate their time to create bookshelves and donate books. Create literacy materials for the shelter to use after your involvement ends.

5. Not Golden
Why:

Community Issue	Childhood obesity
Root Cause	Not enough healthy living resources in our community geared towards youth
Active Leadership	Jessica did not show active leadership when she created a website by herself. She needs to include others from the community to show active leadership.
Sustainability	While Jessica plans to keep the website updated, she has not involved others to ensure sustainability if her involvement were to end.
Take Action	This project is in the beginning stages of a Take Action project.
Bonus: Make it Golden	This project needs to show more active leadership. Work with a nutritionist to develop activities for kids that teach healthy eating habits. Develop activities for children in local community programs on weekends or after school. Get a high school group to assist in delivering the activities. Create the website and share your new resource with community schools and programs to ensure sustainability.

6. Golden
Why:

Community Issue	Dropping student achievement
Root Cause	Tutoring programs were not offered at the school
Active Leadership	Cassandra led members of her school's National Honor Society as she carried out her project. She also worked with deans, teachers and students at the school.
Sustainability	The National Honor Society agreed to adopt the tutoring program and continue finding new tutors each year.
Take Action	This is a Take Action project.

Project brainstorm

Time: 20 Minutes

Materials:

- Gold Award Project Brainstorm worksheet
- Writing utensils

Individually or in a group, brainstorm possible project ideas for the Girl Scout Gold Award. For a larger group, break into smaller groups based on the following:

- **Girls who have no idea what they will do for a Gold Award project**
This group should brainstorm possible issues that could be addressed in the community

- **Girls who have a few ideas for potential Gold Award projects**
This group should share their ideas and get feedback from others. What ideas will make a strong Gold Award project?
 - **Girls who are confident in one Gold Award project idea**
This group should apply what you have talked about today to their project idea. What issue have they chosen and what is the root cause? Brainstorm ways to include active leadership and make the project sustainable.
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Additional resources to assist with the Girl Scout Gold Award project:

- Girl Scout Senior and Ambassador Journey books: *It's Your World—Change It!*, *It's Your Planet—Love It!* and *It's Your Story—Tell It!*
- Questions? Contact your local council office at 1-800-845-0787 and ask to speak to a Program Specialist about the Gold Award or email goldaward@girlscoutsrv.org.
- River Valleys' Highest Awards webpage: Go to GirlScoutsRV.org and do a search for "Highest Awards."

Gold Award Steps

<p>Complete two Senior or Ambassador Journeys OR earn the Silver Award and complete one Senior or Ambassador Journey.</p>	<p>Attend Going for the Gold—Gold Award Workshop (at “Here and Now for Seniors and Ambassadors” or via webinar) OR complete the Gold Award Self-Study Program.</p>
<p>Brainstorm project ideas.</p>	<p>Choose your project advisor—someone who has expertise in the topic of your project. *Your parent/guardian or troop leader cannot be your project advisor.</p>
<p>Complete and turn in your project proposal. Council staff will contact you after reviewing your proposal.</p>	<p>Once directed by the council, schedule your Gold Award Committee presentation and present your project to the committee.</p>
<p>Carry out your project after approval.</p>	<p>Reflect and evaluate your project once it is complete.</p>
<p>Complete and turn in your final report.</p>	<p>Celebrate!</p>

My Community Map

Make a list of organizations or people who you could potentially involve in your Gold Award project. By leading, coordinating, educating and inspiring others, you will show active leadership throughout your project.

Community
groups or organizations

School
groups or clubs

Other community
resources
(people, buildings, etc.)

Sustainability

Project	Ways to make it sustainable
Creating a food-waste composting program for a school	
Establishing a food shelf at a church	
Developing an after-school art program	

Sustainability

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Developing an after-school art program	

Is it Golden: Project Examples

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Gold Award Project Brainstorm

Issues I am concerned about in my community

Resources in my community (people, organizations, buildings, etc.)

Project ideas

My community needs...

Girl Scout Gold Award: Frequently Asked Questions

Who can earn the Girl Scout Gold Award?

A girl must be a registered Girl Scout Senior or Girl Scout Ambassador.

Can individually registered girl members or Juliettes earn the Girl Scout Gold Award?

Any girl, who meets the grade-level and membership requirements, can work on and earn her Girl Scout Gold Award.

Can a girl earn the Girl Scout Gold Award even if she hasn't been in Girl Scouts very long?

Yes! She just needs to be a registered Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador to begin her Gold Award project.

Why are Journeys prerequisites to earning the Gold Award?

Journeys give girls a full picture of what they will do as they work to earn Girl Scouting's highest award. The skills girls gain while working on the Journeys will help them develop, plan and implement their Gold Award project.

How do girls know when a Journey is "complete?"

A Journey is complete when a girl has earned the Journey Award, which includes creating and carrying out a Take Action project.

What makes the Gold Award project different from the Journey Take Action project?

In contrast to Journey Take Action projects, which give girls themes on which to base their project, the Girl Scout Gold Award project has no pre-designed theme. Girls select their own theme, design, and execute their Gold Award project. Think of the Gold Award as a bigger, more substantial Take Action project.

Does a Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador need to do the two Journeys in any particular order?

No. She can complete either two Girl Scout Senior-level Journeys, two Girl Scout Ambassador-level Journeys or one of each.

What are the minimum hours required to earn the Gold Award?

After the prerequisites are fulfilled, the minimum number of hours to use as a guide is 80 hours.

Not all projects will require the same length of time to complete from planning to sharing and celebration. The time it takes to earn the award will depend on the nature of the project, the size of the team and the support of the community. Quality of the project should be emphasized over quantity of hours.

Can a troop or group do their Gold Award together?

No. The Gold Award is an individual girl's journey. The Gold Award process requires a girl to take control of her leadership development and grow in new ways that a group setting cannot provide. This is a commitment she makes and completes as an individual.

Can girls begin working on their Gold Award the summer after they bridge (transition) from one Girl Scout level to the next?

Yes. Girls can begin to earn the Gold Award over the summer.

Does a girl need to get approval for her project before she begins?

Yes. Girl Scout Gold Award projects must be approved by the Gold Award Committee. Girls should submit their project proposal at least four weeks prior to their estimated project start date. Their proposal will be reviewed by council staff. Girls will be contacted by council staff to discuss their project proposal. Council staff works with the girls to ensure that they have a successful presentation with the Gold Award Committee. When prompted, girls will present their proposal to the Gold Award Committee for approval.

What is the role of the council's Girl Scout Gold Award Committee?

Girl Scout Gold Award Committees are typically comprised of community members, educators, key volunteers and young women who have earned the Girl Scout Gold Award. The committee works with designated council staff.

The committee's role is to ensure that girls' projects meet the national guidelines. The committee reviews the Girl Scout Gold Award project proposal, makes recommendations for project development and resources, approves the project and reads the final report. If a girl's project has not yet achieved its goals, the committee provides suggestions and tips to help her develop a high-quality Gold Award project.

What is the difference between a troop volunteer and a Girl Scout Gold Award project advisor in the Girl Scout Gold Award process? Do girls need both?

A troop volunteer is the adult who works with an ongoing troop or group. Once a girl identifies her issue, the troop volunteer might help her identify a person in the community who could be a great project advisor.

A Girl Scout Gold Award project advisor is a volunteer that guides a girl as she takes her project from the planning stage to implementation. The project advisor is not a girl's parent or a Girl Scout troop volunteer. The project advisor is typically someone from the community who is knowledgeable about the issue and who can provide guidance, experience and expertise along the way.

Why can't a parent be a Girl Scout Gold Award project advisor?

Girls are encouraged to connect with their community when earning the Girl Scout Gold Award. That means working with a project advisor who is not her parent.

At what point should a Girl Scout Gold Award project advisor be identified?

The project advisor should be identified in the planning phase before the Girl Scout Gold Award project proposal is turned in to the council. The project advisor expands the network of adults available to the girl and provides expertise for a girl's project. If a girl has an idea before she starts any work on her Girl Scout Gold Award, she might want to identify her project advisor from the very beginning.

What does it mean to have a sustainable project?

A sustainable project is one that lasts after the girl's involvement ends. One way to create a sustainable project is by collaborating with community groups, civic associations, non-profit agencies, local government and/or religious organizations to ensure the project lasts beyond the girl's involvement.

How does sustainability in a Gold Award project differ from other Take Action projects?

Gold Award guidelines give girls tools to examine the underlying root cause of issues, develop a sustainable project plan and measure the impact of their project on their community, the target audience and themselves. A girl's learning progresses as she completes different awards. When working on their Girl Scout Bronze Award, Junior Girl Scouts will reflect on how the project could continue, while Girl Scout Cadettes plan for sustainability and Seniors and Ambassadors work to ensure the sustainability of their project in order to meet the Gold Award standards of excellence.

While Juniors explore an issue that affects their Girl Scout community, Cadettes create a community map of their neighborhood or school. Meanwhile Seniors and Ambassadors earning the Gold Award assess an issue and its effect more broadly by interviewing community leaders, conducting research using a variety of sources, and investigating other community solutions to a similar problem.

What if a girl is 18 and graduating? Can she complete her project when she is in college?

A girl has until the end of the Girl Scout membership year (September 30) after graduation from high school to submit her final paperwork.

What if a girl's project is not completed by the council ceremony time?

Girls and their project advisors are encouraged to work within the council timeline; however, the ceremony time should not dictate whether or not a girl is able to earn her Girl Scout Gold or Silver Award. She can be honored in a local ceremony or come back for the council-wide ceremony the next year. Final reports are due March 1 for inclusion in River Valleys' spring Gold and Silver Award Ceremony.

If a girl starts working on her Gold Award project and moves, can she still earn her award?

Councils and overseas committees are encouraged to be flexible to serve the girl's best interests. If a girl moves, she should work with her council and/or overseas committee to complete the project.

Do we need a different set of requirements for girls with disabilities to earn the Girl Scout Gold Award?

No. The Gold Award is done to the best of a girl's ability. There is no need to have special requirements for girls with disabilities. Encourage flexibility and the recruitment of advisors that can work with the girl individually.