

NEW LEADER GUIDE

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO:

AKA the coolest leader this side of the Mississippi

OUR NEWEST FEARLESS TROOP LEADER!



SERVICE UNIT CONTACT INFO

Girl Scouts River Valleys consists of nearly 144 service units. Think of service units as Girl Scout communities specific to a geographic region. Service units are made up of many dedicated volunteers working to build the Girl Scout Leadership Experience in their immediate area. Service unit team members and troop representatives meet several times throughout the year to share ideas, receive training, and talk about important announcements. By now, you've likely heard from your service unit or will at a leader meeting soon. If not, let us know and we'll get you connected!

YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE FOLLOWING SERVICE UNIT:



SERVICE UNIT NAME: _____ **SERVICE UNIT #:** _____

SERVICE UNIT MANAGER	
<p>The service unit manager ensures the service unit is functioning and supports new and existing volunteers. The service unit manager guides the service unit by sharing information provided by Girl Scouts River Valleys and facilitating service unit meetings.</p> <p><i>You'll get to know your service unit manager (a.k.a. SUM) at your leader meetings. They'll have the 4-1-1 on what's going on around Girl Scouts River Valleys.</i></p>	<p>Name of service unit manager:</p> <p>Contact info:</p>
SERVICE UNIT REGISTRAR	
<p>The registrar assists the members in your service unit with registration. They support and encourage accurate registrations for the Snacks & Magazines Sale and Cookie Program, and Early Bird registration.</p> <p><i>You will want to connect with the registrar to double check that your girls and troop volunteers are registered as members. Make sure to check in with them before Snacks & Magazines and the Cookie Program!</i></p>	<p>Name of service unit registrar:</p> <p>Contact info:</p>
SERVICE UNIT RECRUITER	
<p>Recruiters round up adult volunteers and girls in Girl Scouts, while ensuring that all girls in the assigning service unit have the opportunity to fully participate in Girl Scouting programs and activities.</p> <p><i>If you are looking for more girls to join your troop, let your recruiter know!</i></p>	<p>Name of service unit recruiter:</p> <p>Contact info:</p>
SERVICE UNIT TREASURER	
<p>The treasurer provides general oversight and management of all service unit finances.</p> <p><i>When you have questions about troop finance or need assistance with your bank account, contact the treasurer.</i></p>	<p>Name of service unit treasurer:</p> <p>Contact info:</p>
TROOP MENTOR	
<p>The troop mentor welcomes new leaders and introduces them to resources and support, including: the service unit team, leader meetings, and online training resources.</p> <p><i>You will want to connect with your service unit's troop mentor to learn more about getting started as a leader. The troop mentor wants to make sure that you have the best Girl Scout experience!</i></p>	<p>Name of troop mentor:</p> <p>Contact info:</p>

WELCOME!



*Thank you so much
for volunteering as a
Girl Scout troop leader!*

We're excited to have you on board! As a Girl Scout volunteer, you're building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. You get to shape some pretty awesome girls!

Pretty big feat, right? No fear—we're here to support you! We created this guide just for new troop leaders, with helpful advice on getting your troop going, learning Girl Scout lingo, and leading with gusto! Plus, we have some tips from troop leaders who have been in your shoes before.

Whether you've been a Girl Scout since kindergarten or if this is your first introduction to the organization, we hope this guide will provide useful information for your journey as a new troop leader. You can feel free to read through it now, or scan through it to use as a reference guide later.

You'll learn more about your local Girl Scout contacts throughout this guide, but always keep in mind that we're a resource at the River Valleys council! We always love to hear from you—feel free to give us a call at 800-845-0787 or email us at girlscouts@girlscoutsvr.org.

Yours in Girl Scouting,

Girl Scouts River Valleys



HERE'S WHAT'S INSIDE:

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NEW LEADER CHECKLIST



To get you started, here's a list of to-do's to get your troop up and running.

Getting Started...

- ☐ Complete new troop leader on-boarding (membership, background check, troop leader agreement, and welcome video). We'll send you emails directing you to the background check, troop leader agreement, and welcome video—so keep an eye on your email inbox.
- ☐ Get to know the Girl Scout program at Girl Scouts River Valleys' volunteer website (**Volunteers. GirlScoutsRV.org**), specifically looking at information under the "Troops" section.
- ☐ Attend an in-person or virtual New Leader Orientation session OR complete the Successful Leader Learning Series online through gsLearn.
- ☐ Pick a meeting location, date(s), and time(s).
- ☐ Send an introductory email to troop families, including the troop meeting schedule.
- ☐ Hold a Family Meeting (see pg. 20)
- ☐ Open a troop bank account (see pg. 30)
- ☐ Hold your first troop meeting.
- ☐ Identify your troop's fall product manager (if you're ready to participate) and cookie manager.

September–October

- ☐ Participate in the Snacks & Magazines fall product sale (optional).

December

- ☐ Complete troop cookie manager training (if you will be assisting with cookie sales for your troop).

February

- ☐ Participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program.
- ☐ Even though there's still snow on the ground, Girl Scout camp is right around the corner! February and March are a great time to check out camp opportunities for girls and troops of all ages and abilities. We'll send you more info about this when the time comes.

April–June

- ☐ Hold an end-of-year ceremony or Court of Awards.
- ☐ Register for the upcoming year during Early Bird Registration.
- ☐ Submit your Troop Finance Report (due June 30).

Planning For Your Best Troop Year

Work with your troop to create a Girl Scouting experience that's tailor-made for them. Troops who participate in a wide array of activities report higher satisfaction than those that don't.

To have a well-rounded Girl Scout experience, we encourage all troops to:

- Meet an average of twice per month during the school year
- Complete at least one activity or badge from each skill-building area (STEM, Outdoors, Life Skills, Entrepreneurship)
- Go on field trips and/or attend a council event
- Complete a Journey and Take Action Project
- Participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program
- Explore the outdoors

Pro Leader Tip:

The ideal troop size is 10-12 girls. Keep this in mind as you look for new members to join your troop.

ALL ABOUT GIRL SCOUTS



History

We're part of Girl Scouts of the United States of America (you'll commonly hear it referred to as **GSUSA**). GSUSA is over over 2.5 million strong—1.7 million girls and 750,000 adults who believe girls can change the world.

Find bolded terms
in the glossary,
starting on
pg. 31

It began over 100 years ago with one woman—Girl Scouts' founder **Juliette Gordon "Daisy" Low**, who believed in the power of every girl. In 1912, Juliette traveled to England to meet Sir Robert Baden-Powell (the founder of Boy Scouts). Upon her return to the United States, Juliette began the first Girl Scout troop to provide an environment to prepare girls to meet their world with courage, confidence, and character. This first troop of 18 girls played basketball, hiked, camped, swam, and learned about the world around them.

Today we continue the Girl Scout mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. We're the preeminent leadership development organization for girls. With programs for girls from coast to coast and across the globe, Girl Scouts offers every girl a chance to do something amazing.

Who was Juliette Gordon Low?



Our
leading
lady!

Juliette was born on October 31, 1860, which we celebrate yearly as Founder's Day. She was a compassionate, curious, and independent woman who was interested in nature, art, animals, and athletics. Throughout her childhood and young adulthood, she experienced several ear injuries. This contributed to an almost complete loss of hearing for the rest of her life. These experiences and interests played a strong role in the development of the ideals and values of Girl Scouts.

"Scouting rises within you and inspires you to put forth your best."

— Juliette Gordon Low

ALL ABOUT GIRL SCOUTS



Members

Members are girls, adult volunteer members, and lifetime Girl Scouts who are joined together in the pursuit of building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.



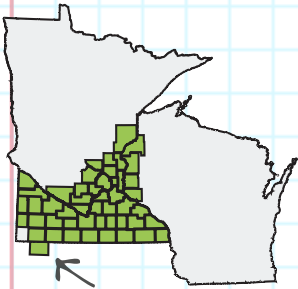
Troops

Troops are the most common way girls participate in Girl Scouts. Troops are led by volunteers (often parents, friends, or family members). The average troop size is 8-12 girls, but we've got troops of 20 and more! Troops allow girls to work as a team and build lasting friendships.



Service Units

Our council is made up of 144 **service units**. Service units are comprised of volunteers and girl members in an immediate geographic area. These service units are led by experienced individuals who support leaders, troops, and individual members. You may hear from your service unit volunteers regarding events, trainings, cookies, and much more!



We even serve a tiny part of Iowa!



Girl Scouts River Valleys

Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys is one of 111 councils in the U.S. and serves 28,000 girls in southern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. Our work is supported by more than 9,000 volunteers—including YOU! We'll get to know one another over the coming year (and for years to come!) as you and your troop attend council events, have questions, would like support, through our social media, and more.



Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. (commonly referred to as GSUSA) is the national organization to which Girl Scouts River Valleys belongs. Originally founded by Juliette Gordon Low, GSUSA now serves 2.5 million girls and adults. GSUSA is comprised of 111 Girl Scout councils in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.



W.A.G.G.G.S.

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (or W.A.G.G.G.S.) is a 146-member international organization whose mission is to "support girls and young women to develop their full potential as leaders and active citizens of the world" Girl Scouts of the USA is a member of W.A.G.G.G.S.

UNIFORMS



Girl Scouts wear uniforms in ceremonies, when officially representing Girl Scouts, and when they want to show their Girl Scout pride. We know girls go nuts about acquiring **patches**, **badges**, and **insignia** for their uniforms, and this is definitely one of the most memorable pieces of Girl Scouts for alums. Here are some basic tips:

- Sashes are worn from the right shoulder to the left hip.
- The insignia tab is worn on the left chest, over the heart.
- All unofficial awards go on the back of the uniform, including cookie, camp, and fun patches.
- For formal events, sashes, vests, and tunics are worn with white shirts and khaki pants or skirts.
- If you run out of space on the front of your uniform, you may place badges and awards on the back.

Our Girl Scout shop staff is awesome, and they understand how confusing finding all of the parts of a uniform can be! One of their tips for new Girl Scouts is to purchase a My Girl Scout Kit, which can range \$50 and up depending on what items you choose to put in the kit.

BUILD YOUR OWN KIT WITH:

- A Girl Scout sash, vest, or tunic
- American flag patch, Council ID set, membership pin, insignia tab, World Association Pin, and troop number patches
- Program Materials such as badge requirements and Journey books
- Select Girl Scout official apparel

Badges vs. Patches

What's the difference?

Badges earned by girls after completing steps found in *The Girls Guide to Girl Scouting*, VTK, or Girl Scouts River Valleys Planning Guides. Badges are placed on the front of the uniform.

Fun **patches** are given to girls for attending events or participating in non-Girl Scout program related activities. Patches should be placed on the back of the uniform.

Questions about uniforms? Stop by one of our retail shops or contact our shop staff at 800-845-0787 and they will be able to answer any of your questions! You can also find specifics on each grade level's uniform on our website.



Cool patches!
↙



↘
Some of our favorite Brownie badges!

OUR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



Our **Girl Scout Leadership Experience** is a one-of-a-kind leadership development program for girls, with proven results. It is based on time-tested methods and research-backed programming that help girls take the lead—in their own lives and in the world.

Girl Scouts is proven to help girls thrive in five key ways as they:



DEVELOP A STRONG SENSE OF SELF



DISPLAY POSITIVE VALUES



SEEK CHALLENGES & LEARN FROM SETBACKS



FORM AND MAINTAIN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



IDENTIFY & SOLVE PROBLEMS IN THE COMMUNITY

ACTIVE LEARNING PROCESS:

In addition to the leadership outcomes, Girl Scouting helps girls **Discover** who they are and what they care about; **Connect** with others; and **Take Action** to make the world a better place.



GIRL-LED

Girls lead the planning and decision-making as much as possible.



COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Girls engage in continuous cycles of action and reflection that result in deeper understanding of concepts and practical skills.

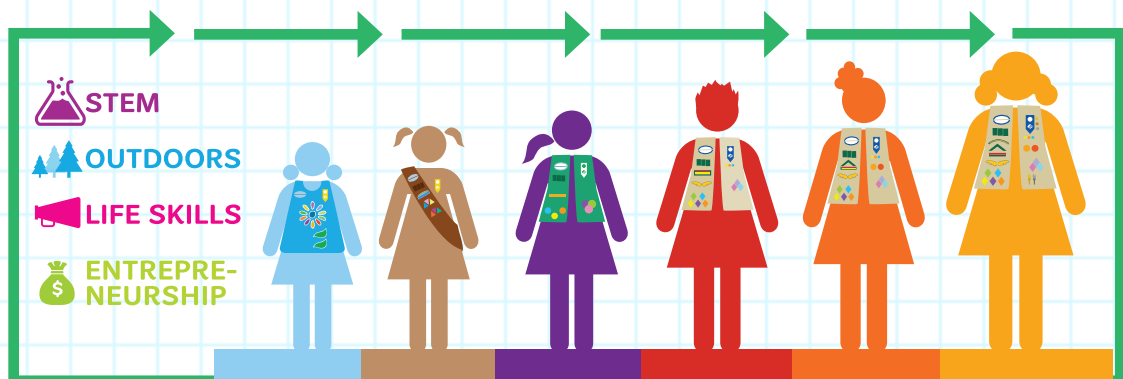


LEARNING BY DOING

Girls work together toward common goals.

Our Program

Everything a Girl Scout does centers around STEM, the outdoors, development of life skills, and entrepreneurship, and is designed to meet her where she is now and to grow along with her.



Whether she's building a robotic arm, coding her first app, building a shelter in the backcountry, or packing for her first hike, a Girl Scout has an exciting array of choices to suit her interests at every age.

PROGRAM: JOURNEYS & BADGES/PETALS



The Girl Scout program centers on our mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. We know that this part can be overwhelming and the program may look different than it did if you were a Girl Scout as a girl. **Journeys** and badges are the backbone of the program and will provide girls with a well-rounded Girl Scout experience!

Remember, as the leader, you get to customize the experience so it will fit for your girls!

Journeys

The Girl Scout Journey program lays the foundation for girls to build leadership skills, while learning about themselves and their world. Each Journey is made up of Discovering, Connecting, and Taking Action (or the three Keys to Leadership).

Through the Discover portion of the Journey, girls learn about broader topics, such as water or how to tell a story. Then, during the Connect portion, girls see how topics they learned during Discover connects to their world. Finally, through Taking Action, girls plan and implement a **Take Action project** that addresses a need in their community.

There are seven Journeys, with availability for different program grade levels.

Where can you find Journey activity plans?



Girl Scout Shop



Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)



Girl Scouts River Valleys Activity Plans

It's Your World—Change It! S VTK RV

It's Your Planet—Love It! S VTK RV

It's Your Story—Tell It! S VTK RV

Outdoor S VTK RV*

Think Like an Engineer VTK

Think Like a Programmer VTK

Think Like A Citizen Scientist VTK

**Content for the badges included in the Outdoor Journey may be found in council shops and Girl Scouts River Valleys Activity Plans. Information on the Take Action project piece of the Outdoor Journey will only be found in VTK.*

Journeys can be completed in a few ways, so pick the option that works best for you and your troop. One way to complete a Journey is to follow along with the Journey books and adult guides. These are broken down into 6 to 10 meetings. A second way to complete a Journey is through one of our online resources—in a three meeting format with River Valleys planning guides and activity plans or in a six meeting format in the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK). The final way to work on a Journey is to attend a council-led event, where girls earn part of the Journey and then complete the Take Action project on their own as a troop.

Badges/Petals

Girl Scouts earn badges that demonstrate a proficiency in a progression of skill-building activities. Generally, these activities connect to a specific subject matter (for example, first aid or animal habitats). Some even complement Journey activities. Skill-building areas include STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), Life Skills, Outdoors, and Entrepreneurship.

While all program grade levels earn badges, Girl Scout Daisies also earn petals and leaves. Each petal correlates to a line from the Girl Scout Law and the leaves focus on Financial Literacy.



PROGRESSIONS



PROGRAM LEVEL	GRADES	WHAT ARE THEY UP TO IN GIRL SCOUTS?	WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?
Daisies	K-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn the Girl Scout Promise and Law Earn petals, badges, and Journey Awards Make new friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of energy! Beginning to understand basic number concepts Just learning how to write and spell
Brownies	2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn badges and Journey Awards Develop cooperation Learn and try new challenge activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are social and enjoy working in groups Want to help and can handle individual responsibilities of a task Love to act in plays, create music, dance
Juniors	4-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn badges and Journey Awards Can earn the Bronze Award Develop team-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want to make decisions and express opinions Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others Are social and enjoy doing things in groups
Cadettes	6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn badges and Journey Awards Can earn the Silver Award Take action in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are spending more time with peer groups than family and concerned about friends and relationships their own age Can be very self-conscious Are navigating their increased independence
Seniors	9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn badges and Journey Awards Can earn the Gold Award Develop confidence in her leadership skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are beginning to clarify their own values and considering other view points Strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures
Ambassadors	11-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn badges and Journey Awards Can earn the Gold Award Explore and prepare for post-secondary education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can see complexity of situations and controversial issues Enjoy expressing their individuality Feel that there are more responsibilities and pressures

TROOP LEADING RESOURCES



As a leader, you'll have a few different resources available to help you lead your troop:



Volunteer Toolkit (a.k.a. VTK)

This online feature helps you manage and communicate with your troop and families, plan meetings, and keep track of whatever petal, badge, or Journey your troop is earning. VTK also has meeting guides, activity plans, and fun resources related to whatever petal or badge your troop is earning.

Access the Volunteer Toolkit and gsLearn through "MyGS" where you can also manage your membership and contact information.



Girl Scouts River Valleys Activity Plans

Our activity plans can be found on the volunteer website. The activity plans are a step-by-step guide on how to lead a meeting where girls will earn a badge or Journey. As a leader, you can lead the activities exactly as written, or pick and choose whichever ones would work best for your troop.



Girl Scout Guidebooks and Journey Books

The original Girl Scouts programming! The guidebooks and Journey books list the steps to earning a petal or badge with choices on how to complete that step.

While planning for your meetings, be sure to get girls involved! Whether it's deciding which badge or Journey to do next, or actually leading parts of the meeting, these resources will support your girls in developing their own leadership skills.

Keep in mind:

The most important thing to remember while planning your meetings is to include your girls in the planning process.

in the loop
A HELPFUL BLOG FOR TROOP LEADERS

Be sure to check out our In the Loop blog, full of useful tips and stories about being a troop leader! Find it on Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org/in-the-loop.

gsLearn

This online learning platform is home to the Successful Leader Learning Series—a set of online modules that covers topics ranging from the common parts of a troop meeting to what it means to be girl-led. You'll also be able to access to other trainings on topics like mental health and inclusivity.

HOW TO USE THE VOLUNTEER TOOLKIT (VTK)



VTK is a great resource that can help you plan meetings as a new troop leader. With prepopulated year plan options, it takes the guess work out of what to do. Log in, take a look, and play around! Just remember, all troop leaders registered with a troop have access to VTK—so be sure to communicate and work together when planning your year in VTK. If one troop leader makes a change or update, the other troop leader will see that change. To get you started, check out some VTK basics...

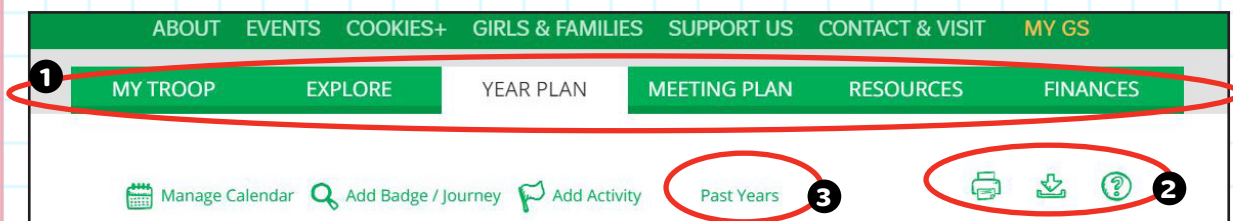
Logging in to VTK

Access the Volunteer Toolkit from our website at **GirlScoutsRV.org** by logging into MyGS.



Navigating VTK

When you first log in, you will be prompted to select a year plan. Don't worry, you can always select one and change it later. So feel free to play around with the options you have!



1 VTK Tabs → Flip to the next page to learn more about the VTK Tabs!

2 Features:

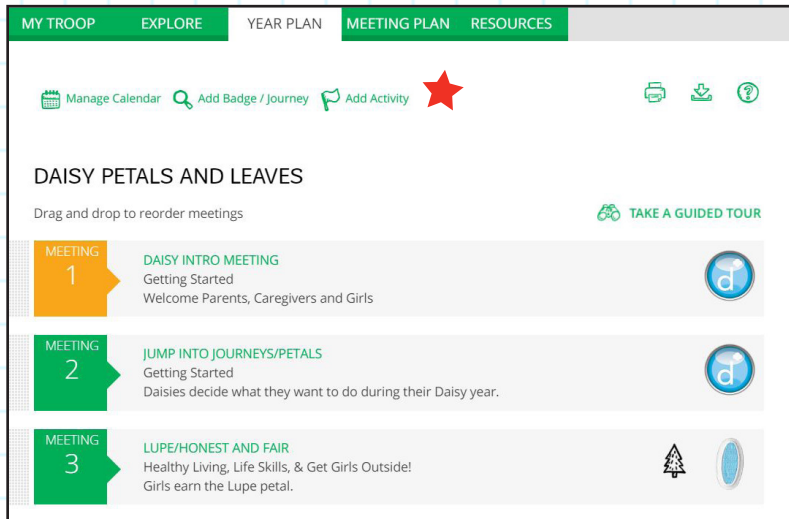
- Print your current section
- Download the plan or resource you are viewing
- Seek out additional help through the question mark icon

3 Past Years:

View archives of your troop's previous selected year plans from past membership years (for returning troops only).



VTK Tabs



MY TROOP

This tab holds your complete girl roster with primary parent/guardian name, email address, and phone number.

EXPLORE

View year plan options or build your own!

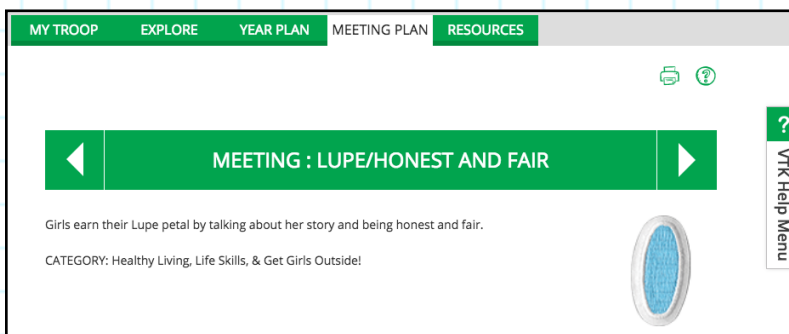
YEAR PLAN

Once you have selected a year plan, this page appears each time you log in. It lists all of your

meetings in your plan. You can specify dates and locations and add meetings or activities to your year plan from this tab. If you want to use a different meeting resource for your upcoming meeting (like an Activity Plan from our website or *The Girls Guide to Girl Scouting*) simply select “Add Activity” to your year plan to note what you are working on for that meeting.

MEETING PLAN

Each meeting plan gives you a meeting overview, activity plan, materials list, and resources. You can send reminder emails, track attendance and achievements, and customize your meeting agenda from this tab.



There is even a handy-dandy VTK Help Menu on the right-hand side of your page!

RESOURCES

There are several sections of resources listed on this tab—both from GSUSA and Girl Scouts River Valleys. You can always check out Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org for more resources or call us with questions!

PROGRAM DELIVERY OPTIONS



While in-person meetings are the most common way girls participate in Girl Scouts, the possibilities shouldn't end there! For those times when meeting in person aren't an option (like a snowstorm that keeps folks at home, or if girls have health conditions that prevent them from joining in that week), look for alternatives that keep the fun going.

Virtual Troop Meetings

When you aren't able to meet in person, consider hosting a troop meeting online. Virtual troop meetings are an excellent way to stay connected and can also offer girls the ability to get tech-savvy and flex their skills in a virtual world. (Meeting virtually can also be an appealing option for holding a family meeting for busy parents and guardians!)

Virtual Platform Options

- Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting, Google Meet, and Webex are video and audio-conferencing tools. While many have a free version, they might come with limitations (such as meeting duration or a maximum number of participants). Also, note that you may be prompted to subscribe to an upgraded (paid) version.
- Facebook Groups. Set up a private group just for your troop. Use Facebook Live to stream troop meetings.
- FaceTime. Note that all users have to have an iPhone or similar Apple device to access this feature. This can be good for touching base one-on-one.

Whatever platform your troop decides on, remember to follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints for Virtual Troop Meetings. In addition, make sure that your virtual option is inclusive—you may have girls in your troop with varying levels of internet access, device options, or other economic circumstances. Ensure you're accommodating all girls before moving forward with your virtual plans.



FIND MORE ON THE WEB!



Our suite of websites has lots of need-to-know information for troop leaders!



Main Website **GirlScoutsRV.org**

Find Girl Scout news, info for families and girls, and our event listings.



Volunteer Website **Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org**

Find everything you need to know about being a troop leader here. (Including our In the Loop Blog!)



Camp Website **Camp.GirlScoutsRV.org**

Find camp sessions, packing lists, and register for camp online!

Reference Forms and Articles - Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org/reference

Activity Planning and Approval Forms

Need a permission slip? Getting ready to plan a day, overnight, or extended trip? Check out the activity planning and approval forms, including the:

- Parent/Guardian Permission Slip for Troop Activities
- Girl Scout Trip - Travel Request Form
- Girl Scout Trip - Planning Worksheet

Certificate of Insurance Request:

Certain locations, such as schools or libraries, ask to see proof of insurance in the form of a Certificate of Insurance (COI) when reserving a space. Use our online form to request a copy.

Financial Assistance Forms:

Girl Scouting is open to all girls and adults regardless of their financial situations. To encourage participation, Girl Scouts River Valleys makes funds available to help girls and adults who need financial assistance. Information on how to request financial assistance for events, camp, uniforms, or books can be found online.

Health and Safety Forms:

Part of keeping girls safe at all troop meetings and outings means having the right paperwork completed. Check out our health and safety forms web page for permission forms, health history forms, medication forms, and more.

Troop Finances:

The troop finance web page covers how to open a bank account, troop finance best practices, money earning information, troop finance report forms, and more.

Council Events - GirlScoutsRV.org/Events

There is always a new or unique experience waiting for you at Girl Scouts! Check out our events page for the most up-to-date listing of council events.

Equipment Reservation - Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org/Equipment-Check-Out

Girl Scouts River Valleys has many items available for check-out such as camping equipment, flags, and program kits. See a list of available items and submit a request online.

CEREMONIES



Here at Girl Scouts, we think ceremonies are a great way to celebrate different aspects of the Girl Scout year, from first joining the Girl Scout family and honoring themes that are important to girls to **bridging** into a new program grade level and everything in between. Come on, who doesn't love to celebrate!

Investitures

Investitures (mark this term in your glossary!) are a way to welcome new members into the Girl Scout family. During an investiture ceremony, new girls are presented with the Girl Scout (general), Girl Scout Brownie, or Girl Scout Daisy pin in front of friends and families. Your troop can host this ceremony at the start of your troop year, and there are many ways you can conduct the ceremony!

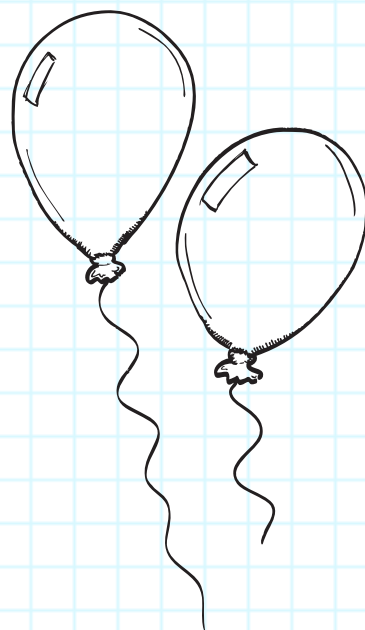


Rededication

Generally, investitures are tied to a Rededication ceremony. Rededication is a time for current members to reconnect with the Girl Scout mission and their commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Consider a Rededication ceremony for your second year.

Girl Scouts' Own Ceremony

A Girl Scouts' Own ceremony is completely girl-led and planned. The ceremony centers around a theme, such as nature, service, or sisterhood. These ceremonies can include, but are not limited to, spoken word, songs, poetry, or dance. It is important that it encompasses the girls' expression of their feelings on the topic picked out by the troop. Try this one a couple months into the year, once your girls feel more comfortable around one another.





Court of Awards

Another common ceremony is the **Court of Awards**. This ceremony recognizes girls' accomplishments throughout the year. It can be held at any time during the year and wherever the troop or service unit wishes it to be. The Court of Awards includes both girls and volunteers.

Flag Ceremonies

Flag ceremonies are used to honor the American flag and occur at the beginning and end of an event and/or meeting. While not a required part of troop meetings, it is recommended for girls to have some familiarity with the process of the flag ceremony.



Bridging Ceremonies

Bridging ceremonies signify a girl's move from one level of Girl Scouting to another (for example, Girl Scout Daisies to Girl Scout Brownies). It is a ceremony that provides girls an opportunity to reflect on their achievements and look forward to new adventures and responsibilities to come. Traditionally, girls cross over a bridge (this can be a real bridge or something your girls make) sharing what they have learned at their level.

A special bridging ceremony for Girl Scout Brownies is called a **"Fly Up"**; a girl will receive her Girl Scout pin along with her Brownie wings. Put this one on the back burner until girls are ready to bridge from Brownies to Juniors.



For more details on ceremonies, including how to conduct your own with your troop, visit our website and review the Girl Scout Ceremonies & Celebrations article found under "Reference" then "Articles" at Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org.

SETTING UP YOUR TROOP MEETINGS



Each Girl Scout meeting provides an opportunity to explore the world and learn new skills. As a troop leader, you can customize your year and the activities in each meeting with your girls. Flexibility is key—based on the needs and interests of your girls, you might have a meeting where you do just one activity, and then your next meeting may include three activities. The typical ninety-minute meeting consists of:

Pre-Meeting: This is the period before the meeting officially begins. Troop leaders, parents, and girls can use this time to chat and greet one another. Since you will be talking and setting up, the girls should have an easy, self-directed activity to engage their attention.

This troop started their pre-meeting with coloring!



Opening (5 mins): The official start of the meeting. Opening activities:

- Focus the girls on the meeting
- Are chosen by the girls
- Often include the Girl Scout Promise and Law
- May include a simple flag ceremony, song, game, or story

Business Meeting (10–20 mins): This is the time for special announcements, dues, attendance, making plans, deciding/voting on activities, and other troop business. During the business meeting, girls will learn how to lead, influence others, and communicate feelings and opinions. Little by little, allow girls to take responsibility for more of the business of the troop. Depending on how much you have to discuss, this section could also be done as part of your opening.

Activities (20–40 mins): Girls get a chance to build skills, try new things, explore their interests, and work cooperatively with others. Girls help plan the activities they'll do during troop meetings. These can include:

- Ideas from Leadership Journeys or *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*
- Badge activity
- Physical activity (active games, etc.)
- Outdoor time/field trip

Snack time (10 mins, optional): Depending on the age range of your girls, troops may need some time to take a break and eat a quick snack. Parents/girls can take turns bringing in snacks.

Clean-up (10 mins): Clean-up teaches girls to be responsible and allows girls to practice the Girl Scout tenant: "Leave things better than you found them." Use a **Kaper Chart** to split up the tasks fairly amongst the troop.

Closing (5 mins): The official end of the meeting. During this time, you can remind the girls of what you reviewed during today's meeting, what's coming up in the next meeting or activity, and end on a positive note. Many troops like to close the meeting with a traditional **Friendship Circle**.

Pro Leader Tip

Name the meeting (with the date) after which badge or activity you are completing, in case you need to fill in a parent of a girl who might have missed a meeting!

For more detailed information, including meeting and year plans for specific program levels, please visit the "Troops" tab at Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org. We have also included a sample attendance tracker, so you can keep track of which girls attended what meeting.

WHERE & WHEN TO MEET WITH YOUR TROOP



You and your co-leader (if you have one) will work with girls and their families to determine the best time, date, and location to meet.

While it's important to ask for feedback from families as to when dates and times work, ultimately, the troop leader(s) is responsible for deciding the time, date, and location of meetings.

Girls and adults participating in troops can meet once a week, once a month, or twice a month—how often is up to you and your troop members. Most troops meet once or twice a month for about two hours.

Not sure where to start looking for a meeting space? Your service unit volunteers could be a big help, since they often have lots of great local knowledge and experience!

Troops can meet once a week, once a month, or twice a month—how often is up to you and your troop members. Most troops meet twice a month for 1.5-2 hours.

A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for participation of all girls. Consider meeting rooms at schools, houses of worship, libraries, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses. Here are a few things to keep in mind when choosing a meeting place:

Safety: You'll want your location to be safe, secure, clean, properly heated/cooled, and free from hazards with all exits clearly marked.

Cost: Free or low-cost to use is best!

Availability: Be sure the location will be available at the time and date of your meetings.

Facilities: Sanitary and accessible restrooms are a must.

Accessibility: Be sure to accommodate girls with disabilities and their caregivers.



This troop meets at their local immersion school!

FAMILY MEETING



Having a family meeting is key to setting up a successful year of Girl Scouting! It's also a great opportunity to ask parents and guardians for their support throughout the year.

What is a family meeting?

A family meeting is designed to provide an opportunity for troop leaders to connect directly with families and friends to foster engagement with the troop. It's typically held three times a year: before the troop itself meets for the first time, mid-year before the start of cookie season, and as a wrap up to end the program year.

How do I prepare for the family meeting?

Here's a checklist of tasks as you prepare for your meeting:



- **Choose a meeting day and location:** Select a date, time, and location that will suit you and your families' needs. When choosing a meeting space, consider a location and time based on the needs of your families' schedules, but know that you might not be able to accommodate everyone. The meeting space should have enough room to accommodate families and their Girl Scout(s) and should ideally be where you plan to meet as a troop throughout the year. This will give girls and families some general familiarity with the location and how to get there.
- **Invite troop families:** Prepare and distribute an invitation to all troop families (parents/guardians) to attend. Introduce yourself, provide the meeting location details, and request for forms or materials you need the families to complete (like the registration form, health history form, permission slip, dues, etc.) Be sure to provide blank copies of the forms you need them to complete along with the invitation.
- **Create a Girl Activity:** Plan an activity that the girls can do during the meeting while you chat with the families. This should be an activity that the girls can do by themselves. You can also set aside a nearby area of the meeting space where girls can work on a quiet activity together with your co-leader while you meet with parents.

What materials should I prepare before the meeting?

- **Girl Activity Supplies:** Coloring sheets, crayons, etc.
- **Forms:** Bring extra copies of registration forms, health history forms, and permission slips. All of these forms can be found online at Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org under the reference tab. You'll see examples of our health history form and permission slip on the following pages.
- **Misc. supplies:** Nametags, contact list, sign-in sheet.

Tip:

Find sample agendas and email templates for all three family meetings in the "Troop Family Meetings" article on the Volunteer website.

SAMPLE FAMILY MEETING AGENDA



Below is a sample agenda you can follow for your meeting, but remember, this is **your** meeting! Structure it to fit your needs.

Welcome

- **Open the meeting:** Greet everyone who attends and ask them to sign in. Collect any necessary forms from families.
- **Girl activity:** For in-person meetings, plan an activity that girls can do while you chat with families. You can set aside a nearby area of the meeting space for girls to work on together under the supervision of another adult volunteer.

Pro Leader Tip:

*Set boundaries
with your parents,
and share expectations
with your families.*

Troop Specifics and Your Year Plan

- **Review your troop's details:** Reiterate your troop number, troop meeting date, time, and location. Introduce any adults who might be working with girls at your meetings.
- **Discuss drop-off and pick-up procedures:** Emphasize that an adult should connect with you directly when dropping off their girl(s) so you can confirm who will be picking up their girl(s) after the meeting.
- **Snack time:** Depending on when your troop meets, it might be a good idea to provide a snack for girls during the meeting. Decide who will be responsible for bringing snack for each meeting and be sure to check with families about allergies or food concerns.
- **Share Girl Scout materials:** Go over program materials like *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* and Journey books. You can also explain how your troop will use the materials during the year (such as earning different badges, working on a Journey, etc.) and how their girls will benefit from the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Set Expectations Around Communications

- Discuss how you will keep in touch with families about upcoming troop activities, dates, and reminders. Decide on a method of communication (email, phone, or text) that works best for everyone. Have families confirm their preferred contact information.
- Remind families that it's their responsibility to read all applicable information and reply on time—this includes deadlines for payments, turning in forms, and assisting with the troop as needed.



Troop Finances

- **Discuss troop costs:** Decide if your troop will be collecting dues from each family. Troop dues help with the cost of meeting supplies, uniforms, badges, and other troop-related expenses.
- **Fall Product (Snacks & Magazines) and the Cookie Program:** Talk to your families about taking part in the Snacks & Magazines and Cookie Program, or other money-earning activities.
- Remind families that financial assistance is available to all girls for shop purchases, troop dues, camp, and council events at **GirlScoutsRV.org/Financial-Assistance**.

Encourage Parents/Guardians to Volunteer with Your Troop

- There are many ways to involve families. and share their knowledge with the troop. Ask adults to drive or chaperone girls on trips, bring snacks, share special skills or provide support during troop meetings. Remind parents and guardians that any adult who has regular contact with girls, handles money, or chaperones must be a registered Girl Scout member and complete a background check.
- Even with troop leadership in place, parents and guardians can still play a role and are important for the success of a troop. Possible troop positions include (but are not limited to): troop leader, troop volunteer, troop fall product manager, troop cookie manager, and troop treasurer.

Closing

- **Wrap up:** Allow time for questions and thank everyone for attending.



Hooray, you did it!

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT



As a troop leader, you'll be developing meaningful relationships with the girls in your troop. Parents and guardians can also provide assistance and experience to your troop, and help make meetings and events run more smoothly. Here are some tips on fostering relationships with your girls' families:

- **Let them know that families and troop leaders need to work together to support the troop.** Here are some benefits of parent/guardian involvement that you can share with families:
 - Parents and guardians know their children better than anyone else. They can provide insight and help when it comes to planning and problem-solving.
 - Involving caregivers can help keep girls interested in the troop and troop activities.
 - Involved caregivers become closer to their girls, develop an extended social network, and are actively contributing to the community.
- **Ask for help in transporting girls on trips, bringing snacks, sharing special talents with the troop, or by attending troop meetings.** Make a check list of tasks you'd like assistance with and have a sign-up sheet to ensure parent/guardian participation.
- **Communicate often with parents and guardians** (through email or printed updates). Talk to parents as they pick up and drop off their girls.

If parents or guardians will be working directly with girls, they'll need to become a registered volunteer. There are many ways that the families can participate in a girl's Girl Scouting experience.

Troop Volunteer Positions:

- Troop Leaders
- Troop Cookie Manager
- Troop Fall Product Manager
- Troop Treasurer
- Troop Volunteer (field trip chaperone, occasional help, etc.)

You can find plenty more regarding what sort of commitment comes with each of these roles at Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org under "Troops."

MANAGING GIRL BEHAVIOR & TROOP CONFLICT



It is not uncommon for girls or troops to have disagreements or a behavior issue from time to time. The best way to address these topics is to be proactive right from the start! When you take a little bit of time at the beginning of the year to set the tone and expectations for all leaders, girls, and families in your troop, your year will run that much more smoothly. And, when an issue does arise, everyone will be on the same page about how to correct the situation.

Here are a few things you can do now, to help manage conflict down the road:

Create a Troop Agreement

A troop agreement is when the leaders and girls work together to come up with an agreed-upon set of rules for troop meetings and outings. Use the Girl Scout Promise and Law to help start the conversation!

Have girls and families sign the Girl Code of Conduct

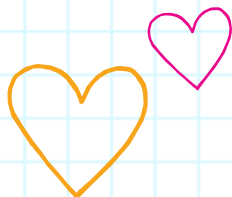
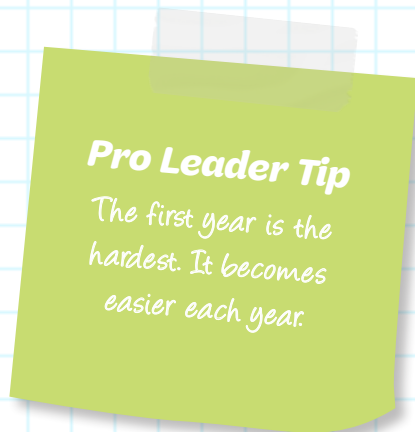
The Girl Code of Conduct outlines basic expectations that girls should follow at meetings. Feel free to use the handout provided by Girl Scouts River Valleys, or create your own! The key is to make sure all girls in the troop follow the same rules.

Have families sign the Parent-Guardian Agreement

The Parent-Guardian Agreement helps ensure that families understand what their responsibilities are as the parent of a Girl Scout.

Be sure to check out these resources at Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org in the “Reference” section:

- Troop Parent/Guardian Agreement form
- Girl Code of Conduct
- Prevent and Handle Troop Conflict
- Creating a Positive Atmosphere



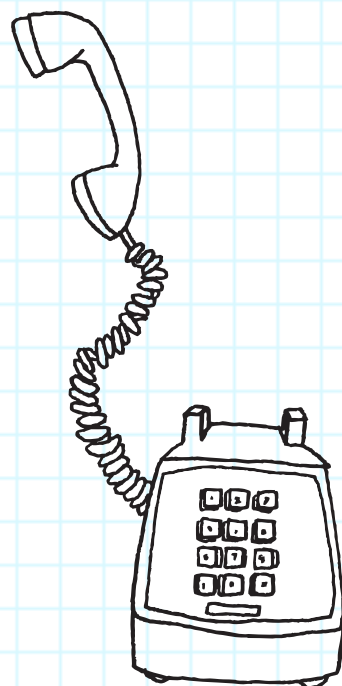
COMMUNICATIONS



One of your responsibilities as a troop leader is to build and maintain strong lines of communication with your families. And never fear, Girl Scouts River Valleys is here to help! We have a ton of resources to help you do this, and we're just a phone call away if you want more support. Here are a few notes to get you started.

There are many ways that you can communicate with your families. Many leaders utilize email and closed, private groups on Facebook to communicate with their families. Some co-leaders even create a troop email account that can be used for communication to families. It is important to remember that some people are not "online" and prefer a phone call or a text message reminder. Discuss the most convenient methods of communication for you at your family meeting and take into consideration what works for your families.

Of course, you do not want to overwhelm your families with too much information, but do remember that **transparency is important in building community with families so they feel more included in your troop**. Your families probably do not need to know every single detail of what happened during your troop meeting (like which girls chose apples instead of bananas), but they will want to know about the bigger things that happened during the meeting (like how your troop will be participating in the cookie sale or if their girl fell and scraped her knee). Miscommunication or lack of communication can lead to confusion or conflict. If you have questions or concerns about your troop, remember that your troop mentor or service unit manager are there to help you figure it out!



MANAGING CONFLICT

Here are some steps to keep in mind:

1. Remember your role as a Girl Scout. Be honest and fair, considerate and caring, responsible for what you say and do, and show respect to yourself and others.
2. Approach the conflict from an objective place.
3. Conflict usually stems from miscommunication. Try not to blame or judge the person you're talking to.

SAFETY FIRST!



Safety Steps

Zoe is a leader for a Girl Scout Brownie troop that meets every other week at her daughter's elementary school. At a troop meeting, the girls are working on their Fair Play badge. While the girls are untangling themselves from a human knot, Zoe hears a shout from one of the girls in the troop, Linnie. Zoe runs closer to see what happened, and Linnie has tripped while moving and landed on her arm. While Linnie is starting to cry, Zoe is thinking about what to do.

What should she do next?

First, don't freak out!

1. Tend to the girl. Provide any necessary or immediate first aid.
2. If needed, call 9-1-1.
3. Call the girl's parents/guardians to inform them of what happened.
4. Fill out the Accident Incident Report, which can be found on the Volunteer website, and return it to Girl Scouts River Valleys (400 Robert St. South, Saint Paul, MN 55107).

The safety and well-being of girl and adult members is our highest priority. As a troop leader, it's imperative to know and understand the safety policies and procedures in place, where to look, or whom to ask for more information when necessary. Below are some of the main resources where safety policies are listed. Safety policies can feel scary and overwhelming, so know that if you take some time now to review them, you'll feel more confident as you participate in Girl Scouts. And, we've got your back! If you have questions or concerns about safety or responsibilities, give us a call.

Safety Activity Checkpoints: Safety Activity Checkpoints are safety documents that outline policies and procedures to ensure girls and volunteers stay safe during a variety of indoor and outdoor activities like swimming, hiking, archery, horseback riding, hayrides, canoeing, and more. You will find information on how to include girls of all abilities, gear you may need, required supervision or certification, and other topics that will help you prepare for emergencies. Many activities have age requirements and some activities require council-approval before hand. If you are planning a field trip or activity—be sure to review Safety Activity Checkpoints first!

For the most accurate and complete information about Girl Scouts River Valleys policies and procedures—including Safety Activity Checkpoints, refer to our website at **Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org/Polices**.



HOW MANY VOLUNTEERS DO YOU NEED?



Whatever the activity, from camping to cookies sales, adult supervision is required regardless of the grade level of the girls. The table below shows the minimum number of adults needed to supervise a specific number of girls (councils may also establish maximums due to size or cost restrictions). These adult-to-girl supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of all girls taking part in the activity. For example, if one adult has to respond to an emergency, a second adult is always on hand for the rest of the girls. We hope you find this chart helpful!

Pro Leader Tip

Never feel bad asking for help. Delegate tasks, and meet with your co-leader regularly.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	Two unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for every:	Additional adult to each additional # of girls:	Two unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for every:	Additional adult to each additional # of girls:
Daisies	12	1-6	6	1-4
Brownies	20	1-8	12	1-6
Juniors	25	1-10	16	1-8
Cadettes	25	1-12	20	1-10
Seniors	30	1-15	24	1-12
Ambassadors	30	1-15	24	1-12

Here are some examples of ways to utilize this chart: If you're meeting with 17 Daisies, you'll need three adults, at least two of whom are unrelated (in other words, you and someone who is not your sibling, spouse, parent, or child), and at least one of whom is female. This is determined as follows: for up to 12 Daisies you need two adults, and one more adult for up to six additional girls. Since you have 17 girls, you need three adults (2+1). If, however, you have 17 Cadettes attending a group meeting you need only two unrelated adults, at least one of whom is female, since the chart shows that two adults can manage up to 25 Cadettes.

In addition to the adult-to-girl ratios, please remember that adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old, be a current registered member, and have a background check on record.

KNOWING YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES



Before getting started as a troop leader, it is important to review and understand what you will be responsible for. These responsibilities will help guide your experience and ensure that you know what you are held accountable for. No need to feel stressed out when reading through; many of these responsibilities are things you probably assumed already!

- **Accepting the Girl Scout Promise and Law.**
- Understanding the Three Keys to Leadership that are the basis of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience: **Discover, Connect, and Take Action.**
- **Sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills** with a positive and flexible approach.
- **Working in partnership** with girls so that their activities are girl-led, allow them to learn by doing, and for cooperative (group) learning. 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 girls' interests and needs.
- Facilitating a **safe experience** for every girl by following Volunteer Essentials, Safety-Wise, and Girl Scouts River Valleys Policies.
- **Providing guidance and information** regarding Girl Scout group meetings with girls' parents or guardians 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 girls raise.
- **Maintaining a close connection to your service unit.**

Girl Scouts River Valleys Policies

Girl Scouts River Valleys policies are your primary source of guidance when it comes to knowing your responsibilities as a troop leader.

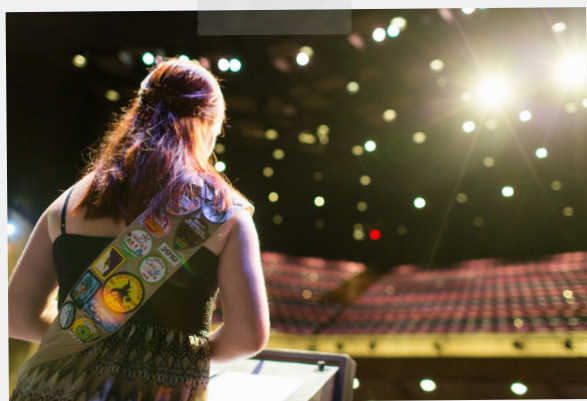
Volunteer Essentials

Volunteer Essentials is a manual of Girl Scout program and activity guidelines published by Girl Scouts of the USA for volunteers to use as needed. Think of Volunteer Essentials as your encyclopedia to Girl Scout volunteering. It's there when you need it. Feel free to skim through it - but there's no need for you to read the entire document! Just know the information is there when you need it.

You can find Girl Scouts River Valleys Policies, Volunteer Essentials, and Safety-Wise at Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org.



INCLUSIVITY

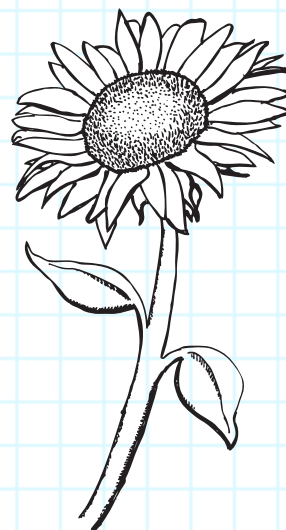


Girl Scouts River Valleys embraces girls of all abilities, backgrounds, and heritage, with a specific and positive philosophy of inclusion that benefits everyone. Each girl—without regard to socioeconomic status, race, physical or cognitive ability, ethnicity, primary language, or religion—is an equal and valued member of the group, and groups reflect the diversity of the community.

Inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. Inclusion is about belonging, about all girls being offered the same opportunities, about respect and dignity, and about honoring the uniqueness of and differences among us all.

You're accepting and inclusive when you:

- Welcome every girl and focus on building community.
- Emphasize cooperation instead of competition.
- Provide a safe and socially comfortable environment for girls.
- Honor the intrinsic value of each person's life.
- Teach respect for, understanding of, and dignity toward all girls and their families.
- Actively reach out to girls and families who are traditionally excluded or marginalized.
- Foster a sense of belonging to community as a respected and valued peer.



TROOP FINANCE



Troop finance should not be an intimidating part of your troop leading experience. To ensure that finances are managed appropriately, troops must open a bank account. There should be two registered, unrelated adult volunteers in charge of the bank account. One should be the keeper of the checkbook and debit card; the other should receive the monthly statements. For more information about opening the troop bank account, please review the Troop Finance Introduction at **Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org**.



Girls should be included in making decisions about how their troop's money is spent; this is key when managing troop finance. Money-earning is an opportunity for girls to gain business and financial literacy skills that are appropriate to their program grade level. Troop finance also provides the opportunity for girls to understand that they must do their part to help the troop earn money to accomplish the things they want to do.

How Money is Earned

Girl Scout troops should be self-sustaining through the participation in the Fall Product and Cookie Program activities. Troop dues may be collected to help a new troop accumulate money in their bank account. Troops may also plan and carry out their own supplemental money earning projects (think garage sale, craft fair, or car wash)—just be sure to follow all money earning guidelines found at **Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org/reference/policies**.

Troop dues are small amounts of money girls bring to each meeting or to kick off the year.

Principles that are important to Girl Scouts River Valleys in regards to troop finance:

- Girl Scouts is a nonprofit organization.
- Girl Scouting should be affordable.
- Troops are exempt from paying state sales tax in Minnesota and Wisconsin on purchases used solely for Girl Scout activities. (See MN or WI Certificate of Exemption form at **Volunteers.GirlScoutsRV.org**).
- Money donated to or earned by a troop becomes that troop's property and does not belong to individual girls, volunteers, or parents/guardians. Funds used should equally benefit all members of the troop and not individuals.

We know that it can be intimidating to keep track of everything that goes in and out of the troop bank account. **Check out our Troop Finance Tracker on the web to make your year easier!**



At the end of the Girl Scout year, you'll need to submit your Troop Finance Report, which includes info about your troop's income and expenses. Girl Scouts of the USA and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires these documents, and they help to protect the interest of your troop and you as a volunteer. It's a pretty simple process and we'll reach out to you later with more information.

GLOSSARY



Ambassador	A Girl Scout in 11 th or 12 th grade.
Badges	Girls earn badges in a variety of skill areas to help them grow into well-rounded adults. Badges are official awards worn on the front of the sash or vest.
Bridging	Girls graduate from one grade level to another (Daisy to Brownie, Brownie to Junior, etc.) in a bridging ceremony. When girls complete the steps outlined in The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting, they earn a rainbow bridging award.
Brownie	A Girl Scout in 2 nd or 3 rd grade.
Buddy System	Girl Scouts always use this safety practice of pairing by twos (a "truddy" is pairing by threes). This system is often useful on field trips and outings.
Cadette	A Girl Scout in 6 th through 8 th grades.
Caddie	Older Girl Scouts who serve as mentors and helpers for younger girls at their troop meetings, events, and/or camps. (Junior Caddie Training, Caddie Training, and Senior Caddie Training are requirements to serve as a Caddie.)
Court of Awards	A ceremony to present badges and earned recognitions at any grade level typically held at the end of the school year.
Daisy	A Girl Scout in kindergarten or 1 st grade. Also Juliette Gordon Low's nickname!
Friendship Circle	Girl Scouts, both girls and adults, stand in a circle holding hands, right arm over left arm, which stands for the unbroken chain of friendship with Girl Scouts and Girl Guides around the world.
Friendship Squeeze	Within a friendship circle, one person gently squeezes the hand of the next person and the squeeze is silently passed around the circle.



Fly Up

When Brownies bridge to Juniors, it's called "flying up." This is how they earn their Brownie wings. Girls who fly up from Brownies can wear their wings on their vest/sash at every future program grade level.



Girl-led

An idea that girls of every grade level take an active role in determining what, where, when, why, and how they'll structure activities. Adults provide guidance, ensuring that planning, organization, and set-up are age-appropriate. Evaluation of all activities is done jointly with girls and is integral to a high-quality Girl Scout experience.

Girl Scout Handshake

Formal way of greeting other Girl Scouts by shaking with the left hand, while giving the Girl Scout sign with the right hand.

Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

The Girl Scout program. The GSLE includes Three Keys to Leadership: girls Discover themselves and others; Connect with others; and Take Action to make the world a better place. Activities are girl-led, which gives girls the opportunity to learn by doing in a cooperative learning environment.

Girl Scout Sign

Official Girl Scout greeting. The right hand is raised shoulder high with the three middle fingers extended and the thumb crossing over the palm to hold down the little finger.

Girl Scout Week

Annual celebration during the week of March 12 (the Girl Scout Birthday) to celebrate the beginning of Girl Scouts in the U.S.A.

Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. (GSUSA)

National organization of Girl Scouts headquartered in New York, NY. Membership dues are paid to GSUSA. Their website is [girlscouts.org](https://www.girlscouts.org).

The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting

A guidebook for each program level full of information about being a Girl Scout and how to earn legacy badges.

gsLearn

An online learning platform for troop leaders where you will find digital trainings from GSUSA and Girl Scouts River Valleys, accessible through MyGS.

Highest Awards (Bronze, Silver, Gold)

The highest awards that a Junior (Bronze), Cadette (Silver), and Senior/ Ambassador (Gold) can earn by completing a specific Take Action Project.



Insignia	Girl Scout official emblem, buttons, badges, pins, and other official forms of recognition which may be worn on the uniform by registered members.
Investiture	A special ceremony in which a new member accepts the Girl Scout Promise and Law and receives the membership pin.
Journeys	The key program component to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. Journeys teach today's Girl Scouts what it takes to be a leader. There are seven Journey series for each program level where girls will learn the three "keys to leadership," Discover, Connect, and Take Action. Also known as Journey Awards.
Junior	A Girl Scout in 4 th or 5 th grade.
Kaper Chart	A chart that divides the jobs within the troop/group. The chart typically rotates or can easily be changed so that everyone experiences each job and has the opportunity for leadership.
Membership Dues	An annual fee to Girl Scouts of the USA for registration which goes directly to National Headquarters.
MyGS	Where troop leaders and members login to renew their Girl Scout membership, update contact info, and access Volunteer Toolkit. You can access it online at GirlScoutsRV.org .
Patches/Fun Patch	Unofficial recognitions for participation in a troop/group or council-wide event that are worn on the back of the sash or vest.
Program Aide Training	This training is available for older girls (Cadettes, Seniors, Ambassadors) and focuses on deepening leadership skills and building up older girls to be mentors of younger girls.
Program Grade Level (PGL)	Girl Scouting is divided into six different program grade levels: Daisy (grades K-1), Brownie (2-3), Junior (4-5), Cadette (6-8), Senior (9-10), Ambassador (11-12).
Quiet Sign	Girl Scout signal for silence in a group situation. The person in charge raises her/his right hand and Girl Scouts fall silent as they raise their right hand also.
Safety Activity Checkpoints	This document includes detailed procedures for ensuring safety while planning and participating in a variety of activities like swimming, hiking, archery, horseback riding, hayrides, canoeing, and more.



Senior	A Girl Scout in 9 th or 10 th grade.
Service Project	A project that is done for the community and addresses an immediate, short-term need in the community, such as volunteering.
Service Unit	Geographic unit of troops/groups within a region led by experienced volunteers who support leaders and troops.
Service Unit Manager (SUM)	An experienced volunteer who manages the local service unit.
Slogan & Motto	The Girl Scout slogan is “Do a good turn daily.” The Girl Scout motto is “Be prepared.”
Take Action Project	A project that is done with the community, addresses the root cause of a community issue, and has long-term impact.
Trefoil	International symbol of Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting. The trefoil represents the three parts of the Girl Scout promise.
Troop Dues	A small amount of money girls bring to each meeting or to kick off the year to help cover the cost of basic troop supplies. Each troop decides whether or not to charge dues and sets the amount.
Volunteer Essentials	A comprehensive resource for volunteers that covers topics on safety, responsibilities, traditions, the Girl Scout program, troop finance, and more.
World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (W.A.G.G.G.S.)	Worldwide organization of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts with over 146 member countries to which GSUSA belongs. W.A.G.G.G.S. headquarters is in London, England.
World Thinking Day (WTD)	Celebrated since 1926, World Thinking Day is a day of international friendship, speaking out on issues that affect girls and young women, and fundraising for 10 million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts around the world. Girls traditionally learn about the cultures and traditions of W.A.G.G.G.S. member countries.



USEFUL INFORMATION

OUR MISSION

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

GIRL SCOUT PROMISE

On my honor, I will try:

To serve God* and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

GIRL SCOUT LAW

I will do my best to be

honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,

and to

respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place, and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.

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

GIRL SCOUT YEAR AT A GLANCE

SEPTEMBER

- **Snacks & Magazines sale begins**

OCTOBER

- **Our new Girl Scout year officially begins! - Oct. 1**
- **Founder's Day: Oct. 31**

Honors Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday in 1860

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

- Stop by your local Girl Scouts River Valleys retail shop during one of our open houses for discounts on gift merchandise, door prizes, and yummy winter treats.

GIRL SCOUT YEAR AT A GLANCE

JANUARY

- Get ready for a great cookie sale!

FEBRUARY

- **Cookie Season begins**
- **Summer camp registration opens.** *(Watch for a sneak peak to start picking your favorite sessions!)*
- **World Thinking Day: Feb. 22**
Have your troop connect with international Girl Scout sisters!

MARCH

- **Girl Scout Birthday: Mar. 12**
Celebrates the first Girl Scout meeting in the United States in 1912.
- **Girl Scout Week**
Celebrated each March, starting with Girl Scout Sunday and ending with Girl Scout Sabbath on a Saturday, and it always includes Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12.
- **Girl Scout Sunday, Sabbath, and Jummah**
Give girls an opportunity to attend their place of worship and be recognized as a Girl Scout.

APRIL

- **Girl Scout Leader's Day: April 22**
A special day to thank volunteers for all they do. We'll be celebrating YOU!

MAY

- Go on a spring field trip!

JUNE

- **Summer camp begins!**
(WAHOO! Who's excited for next summer already?!)

JULY

- We hope you and your troop will be finding adventure in the great outdoors at a camp session, troop outing, traveling, or field trip.

AUGUST

- We're gearing up for the new year by forming new troops, recruiting volunteers and girls, and planning all the exciting things in store for the upcoming membership year (like next year's program theme, events, trainings, and more!).

SEPTEMBER

- Renew your membership and prep for another great Girl Scout year.



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