



Volunteer Essentials

2019–2020

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Adventure Ahead!

Welcome to the great adventure that is Girl Scouting! Thanks to volunteers and mentors like you, generations of girls have learned to be leaders in their own lives and in the world. Have no doubt: You, and nearly a million other volunteers like you, are helping girls make a lasting impact on the world.

This guide, *Volunteer Essentials*, is designed to support busy troop leaders on the go. You can easily find what you need to get started on your Girl Scout Journey and search for answers throughout the troop year.

Think of *Volunteer Essentials* as your encyclopedia to Girl Scout volunteering—it's here when you need it, but there's no need to read it all today.

Get started by browsing through the sections in the table of contents.

New troop leader? We've got you covered. Check out the *New Leader's Guide to Success*, a resource designed especially for you!

We're so excited for you to join the Girl Scout movement.

Through our courage, confidence, and character building experiences, Girl Scouts grow as individuals and contributing members of society in the safe space of an all-girl environment.

Our council spans a 39-county region made up of nearly 14,500 girls and 7,000 volunteers. Together, we are **Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee**.

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

Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee (GSMIDTN) has always appreciated the value and support leaders bring to our organization. Starting in the 2020 membership year, GSMIDTN is excited to honor our volunteers in the following ways:

GSMIDTN will pay the GSUSA registration fees for one 01 and 02 for every troop.

GSMIDTN will pay for one CPR/First Aid/AED certification, Camping Skills I, and Camping Skills II for every troop.

This has been adopted as a standard practice moving forward for both our current and future volunteers, as a way to recognize them for all they do for the girls and our council in our 39 counties.

Thank you for joining our team. We can't wait to see the impact you will make this year!

— Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee Membership Team

Whatever your volunteer position, your hard work means girls will embark on new adventures, make friendships that last a lifetime, and deepen their connection to their community and the world. We're calling on all members of society to help girls reach their full potential, and you've answered that call. So thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

“I have a question... who do I ask?”

This guide was designed to provide you with a quick reference to help address your questions and concerns. For a complete staff listing by name, please visit <https://gsmidtn.org/about-us/staff-directory/>.

Topic:	Example Questions:	Call:	Phone:
Council Registrar	Who do I contact about a refund?	Eva Conwell Council Registrar	(615)460-0254 EConwell@gsmidtn.org
Training	Who do I ask about trainings?	Volunteer Relations Specialist	(615)460-0252 TColeman@gsmidtn.org KVanVleet@gsmidtn.org
Volunteer Relations	How do I get a tax-exempt number?	Sue Tims Director of Customer Enrichment/Engagement	(615)460-0235 STims@gsmidtn.org
The Cabin (shop)	How much are patches/books ————— How soon will my order ship?	Angela Jones Customer Engagement Specialist	(615)460-0222 NashvilleShop@gsmidtn.org
Resources	What is the resource center/what resources are available?	Poppy Lee Volunteer Relations Manager	(615)460-0255 PLee@gsmidtn.org
Awards	What are the requirements for the Highest Awards?	Poppy Lee Volunteer Relations Manager	(615)460-0255 PLee@gsmidtn.org
Product Programs	I have a question about Fall Product or the Cookie Program?	Tracy Tudder Product Program Manager	(615)460-0202 TTudder@gsmidtn.org
Camps	Who do I call about summer camp?	See Camp Director on Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee website	https://gsmidtn.org/about-us/staff-directory/
Programs	Who do I call about programs or events?	See the Program Organizer on Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee website calendar	https://gsmidtn.org/calendar/list/
Communications	Where can I send pictures/troop updates?	Communications Department	(615)460-0240 CommunicationsDept@gsmidtn.org

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All About Girl Scouts

[Girl Scouts](#) was founded in 1912 by trailblazer Juliette Gordon Low, the original powerhouse. We are the largest leadership development organization for girls in the world and a member of the [World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts](#), a sisterhood of close to 10 million girls and adults in 150 countries. With programs from coast to coast and across the globe, Girl Scouts offers every girl the chance to practice a lifetime of leadership, adventure, and success.

Who Can Join Girl Scouts—and How?

Girl Scouts is about sharing the fun, friendship, and the inherent power of girls and women in an inclusive, supportive, girl-led environment!

Girl Scout volunteers are a dynamic and diverse group, and there's no one "type" of volunteer. Whether you're a recent college grad, a parent, a retiree, or really, anyone with a sense of curiosity and adventure (female or male, who has passed the necessary volunteer application process), your unique skills and experiences help make Girl Scouting a powerful leadership experience for girls.

What all members share are the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#), as well as our extraordinary strengths as go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders. Each member also agrees to follow safety guidelines and pay the annual membership dues of \$25. Adults have the option to purchase a [lifetime membership](#) for \$400.

Girls at Every Grade Level

Girls can join in the fun at any grade level:

Girl Scout Daisy (grades K–1)
Girl Scout Brownie (grades 2–3)
Girl Scout Junior (grades 4–5)

Girl Scout Cadette (grades 6–8)
Girl Scout Senior (grades 9–10)
Girl Scout Ambassador (grades 11–12)

The Girl Scout Experience

At Girl Scouts, everything centers around the girl: Activities are girl-led, which gives girls the opportunity to take on leadership roles and learn by doing in a cooperative learning environment. [It's what makes Girl Scouts truly unique](#)—our program is designed by, with, and for girls.

The Girl Scout experience is *what girls do* and *how they do it*. When girls participate they experience [five measurable leadership benefits](#) or outcomes that will fuel their success. And although girls may start building their leadership skills in school and on sports teams, [research shows](#) that the courage, confidence, and character they develop as Girl Scouts stay with them throughout their lives.

What girls *do* in Girl Scouting all fits within three keys: discover, connect, and take action.

- When girls do exciting badge activities, earn a Girl Scout Journey award, attend an amazing event, or go camping, you are helping them *discover* who they are, what they care about, and what their talents are.
- Girls *connect* when they collaborate with other people, learn from others, and expand their horizons. This helps them care about, inspire, and team with others locally and globally.

- With your guidance, these budding leaders will connect with and care about others, and they'll be eager to *take action* to make the world a better place.

As for how they do it? The GSLE draws on three unique processes that help girls unlock the leader within.

- *Girl-led* means girls of every age take an active and age-appropriate role in figuring out the what, where, when, why, and how of all the exciting troop activities they'll do. The girl-led process is critically important to the GSLE—when girls know their voice matters, they feel empowered to make decisions and they stay engaged in their activities.
- Girls enjoy hands-on activities and *learn by doing*. Then, after [reflecting on their activities](#), girls gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and skills the activities require.
- Through *cooperative learning*, girls learn to share knowledge and skills in an atmosphere of respect and cooperation as they work toward a common goal.

As a volunteer, you'll draw on these Girl Scout processes as you lead girls of any age. Girl-led at the Daisy level will look very different from the Ambassador level, of course. What's most important is that girls make decisions about the activities to do *together* and that they also make choices *within* that activity. As they learn from their successes and failures—and gain a major confidence boost in the process—their girl-led process will give them the opportunity to lead within their peer group. By the time girls are Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, they'll be using the leadership skills they've developed in order to mentor younger girls.

One last tip about using the processes: Girls' time in Girl Scouting isn't a to-do list, so please don't ever feel that checking activities off a list is more important than tuning in to what interests girls and sparks their imaginations. Projects don't have to come out perfectly—in fact, it's a valuable learning experience when they don't—and girls don't have to fill their vests and sashes with badges. Because what matters most is the fun and learning that happens as girls make experiences their own, don't be afraid to [step back and let your girls take the lead](#).

Reflection

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

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

Reflection doesn't need to be a formal process, but you can kick-start the conversation with three simple questions: What?, So what?, and Now what?

- Go over with girls the *what* of the activity. For example, ask, “What did we do today? What part was your favorite? If we did it again, what would you want to do differently and what would you repeat?”

- Then move to the *so what* elements. You might ask, “So what did you learn by doing this activity? So what did you learn about yourself? So what did you learn about your community (or environment, school, or others) that you didn’t know before?”
- Lastly, review the *now what* with the girls. Say something like, “Now that we’ve done this, what would you like to do next? Now that you know this about yourselves, what would you like to try next? Now that we did this Take Action project, what do you think we should do next to make sure it continues on?”

What?, So what?, and Now what? —or whatever style of reflection you choose to use with your girls—are powerful elements of Girl Scouting, and they’ll carry these lessons with them for the rest of their lives.

Progression

Although program elements—like outdoor expeditions or entrepreneurial ventures—align across all grade levels, Girl Scout Brownies and Juniors won’t be doing the same activities as seasoned Seniors and Ambassadors. But with your support, they will get there!

Girl Scout programming is designed to be progressive, and it’s what makes Girl Scouting fun and effective! By building on the knowledge and skills they gain year after year, your girls’ confidence will grow exponentially, and they’ll be eager to take the next steps. As a volunteer, you will cultivate a [supportive, nonjudgmental space](#) where girls can test their skills and be unafraid to fail.

Keep in mind that good progression drives success for girls. We’ve outlined some suggestions that will help you determine when your girls are ready for their next [outdoor challenge](#) or [their next troop trip](#).

Inclusion

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

Inclusion is at the core of who we are; it’s about being a sister to every Girl Scout and celebrating our unique strengths. Part of the important work you do includes modeling friendship and kindness for your girls and showing them what it means to practice empathy. Here’s how you can [nurture an inclusive troop environment](#).

Equal Treatment: Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

The National Program Pillars

At Girl Scouts, girls lead their own adventures and team up with their fellow troop members in an all-girl environment to choose the exciting, hands-on activities that interest them most. Girl Scouts focuses on [four areas \(pillars\) that form the foundation](#) of the Girl Scout experience:

- [Outdoors](#): When girls embark on outdoor adventures, they learn to confidently meet challenges while developing a lifelong appreciation of nature.

- [Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics \(STEAM\)](#): Whether they're building a robot, developing a video game, or studying the stars, girls become better problem-solvers and critical thinkers through STEM activities.
- [Life Skills](#): Girls discover they have what it takes to become outspoken community advocates, make smart decisions about their finances, and form strong, healthy relationships. As you help girls plan their activities, give them opportunities to explore and up their game in each of the pillar areas.
- [Entrepreneurship](#): By participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program or Fall Product Program, girls learn the essentials of running their own business and how to think like entrepreneurs.

The Important Difference Between Journeys and Badges

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

- [Journeys](#) are topic-specific experiences through which girls explore their world by doing hands-on activities and taking the reins on age-appropriate Take Action projects. Because of their leadership focus, Journeys are also a prerequisite for the prestigious Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards.
- [Badges](#) are all about skill building. When a Girl Scout earns a badge, it shows that she's learned a new skill, such as how to make a healthy snack or take great digital photos. It may even spark an interest at school or plant the seed for a future career. Please remember that we don't expect you to be an expert in the badge topics; just have fun learning by doing with the girls!

If they choose, girls can pursue the badges they're excited about and Journey awards in the same year; encourage them to find the connections between the two to magnify their Girl Scout experience! While you're having fun, keep in mind that the quality of a girl's experience and the skills and pride she gains from earning leadership awards and skill-building badges far outweigh the quantity of badges she earns.

The Difference Between Community Service and Take Action Projects

As your girls look for meaningful ways to give back to their community, you can help sharpen their problem-solving skills and expand their definition of doing good by discussing community service and Take Action projects.

- *Community service projects* are all about making an impact right now and filling an immediate need in the community.
- Through their *Take Action projects*, girls change the world—or their part of it—and make it better, going forward. Take Action projects focus on creating a lasting, sustainable impact.

[Both projects serve important needs, but at different levels.](#) If your troop members want to pursue their Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award, they'll need to understand the kinds of projects that qualify. To make Take Action projects even more impactful for your girls, set time for them to [reflect on their projects](#). When girls make time to internalize the lessons they've learned, they're more likely to find success in their future projects—or anything else they put their minds to.

Traditions, Ceremonies, and Special Girl Scout Days

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

A few of those extra special days, when you'll want to crank up the celebrations, include:

- Juliette Gordon Low's birthday or Founder's Day, October 31, marks the birth in 1860 of Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low in Savannah, Georgia.
- [World Thinking Day](#), February 22, celebrates the birthdays of Girl Guide/Girl Scout founder Robert, Lord Baden-Powell (1857-1941) and World Chief Guide Olave, Lady Baden-Powell (1889-1977).
- Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12, commemorates the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first 18 girl members in Savannah, Georgia.

Whether you are making cool SWAPS to share with new friends or closing your meetings with a friendship circle, your troop won't want to miss out on these [traditions, ceremonies, and special Girl Scout days](#).

Highest Awards

As your girls discover their passions and the power of their voices, they'll want to take on an issue that's captured their interest and is meaningful to them. Encourage them to turn their vision into reality by taking on the ultimate Take Action projects in order to earn Girl Scouts' highest awards.

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

- [The Girl Scout Bronze Award](#) can be earned by Juniors who have completed one Junior Journey.
- [The Girl Scout Silver Award](#) can be earned by Cadettes who have completed one Cadette Journey.
- [The Girl Scout Gold Award](#) takes making the world a better place to a new level by solving society's grand challenges. Seniors and Ambassadors who have completed either two Girl Scout Senior-level Journeys, two Ambassador-level Journeys, or one of each can pursue their Gold Award.

Did you know that a Girl Scout who has earned her Gold Award immediately advances one rank in all four branches of the U.S. military? A number of college scholarship opportunities also await Gold Award Girl Scouts. A girl does not, however, have to earn a Bronze or Silver Award before earning the Girl Scout Gold Award. She is eligible to earn any recognition at the grade level in which she is registered.

Ask your council about the Gold Award Girl Scouts in your community and how they're doing their part to make the world a better place. For some serious inspiration, consider inviting a local Gold Award Girl Scout to speak to your girls about how she took the lead and made a difference. You'll be inspired when you see and hear what girls can accomplish as leaders—and by the confidence, values, and team-building expertise they gain while doing so!

Girl Scout Travel and Destinations

From their first local field trip as Daisies to exploration of another country as Seniors or Ambassadors, girls will find that Girl Scouts is the best way to travel. They'll challenge themselves in a safe environment that sparks their curiosity, and they'll create lifelong memories with their Girl Scout sisters. And the [Girl Scout Cookie Program](#) can help to make travel dreams a reality!

Traveling with Girl Scouts is very different from traveling with family, school, or other groups because [girls take the lead](#). As they make the decisions about where to go and what to do and take increasing responsibility for the planning and management of their trips, girls build important organizational and management skills that will benefit them in college and beyond.

Girl Scout travel is built on a [progression of activities, so girls are set up for success](#). Daisies and Brownies start with field trips and progress to day trips, overnights, and weekend trips. Juniors can take adventures farther with a longer regional trip. Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors can travel the United States and then the world. There are even opportunities for older girls to travel independently by joining trips their councils organize or participating in [Destinations](#). There's a whole world of possibilities for your girls!

Planning Ahead for Adventure

Get in touch with your council as you start thinking about planning a trip. They likely have training programs that will raise your confidence as a chaperone as well as an approval process for overnight and extended travel.

For questions about travel and your Intent to Travel forms, contact Sue Tims (615) 460-0235 or email at STims@gsmidtn.org.

Not sure where to begin? Check out the Girl Scout [Guide to U.S. Travel](#). This resource is designed for Juniors and older Girl Scouts who want to take extended trips—that is, longer than a weekend—but also features tips and tools for budding explorers who are just getting started with field trips and overnights.

Once girls have mastered planning trips in the United States, they might be ready for a global travel adventure! Global trips usually take a few years to plan, and the Girl Scout [Global Travel Toolkit](#) can walk you through the entire process.

Safety First

If you're planning any kind of trip—from a short field trip to an overseas expedition—the “Trips and Travel” section of [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) is your go-to resource for safety. Be sure to follow all the basic safety guidelines, like the buddy system and first-aid requirements, in addition to the specific guidelines for travel.

Note that extended travel (more than three nights) is not covered under the basic Girl Scout insurance plan and will require additional coverage.

Girl Scout Connections

It's easy to tie eye-opening travel opportunities into the leadership training and skill building your girls are doing in Girl Scouts! Your girls can use their creativity to connect any leadership [Journey](#) theme into an idea for travel, like a *Sow What?* trip focusing on sustainable agriculture and, naturally, sampling tasty food!

There are abundant opportunities to build real skills through earning badges too. The most obvious example is the Senior Traveler badge, but there are plenty more, such as Eco Camper, New Cuisines, Photography, and, of course, all the financial badges that help girls budget and earn money for their trips.

Looking to incorporate Girl Scout traditions into your trip? Look no farther than [the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace](#) in Savannah, Georgia! Your girls also have the chance to deepen their connections to Girl Scouts around the world by visiting one of the WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts)

[World Centers](#), which offer low-cost accommodations and special programs in five locations around the world.

Travel to an Epic Girl Event



And there's no better way to combine travel and Girl Scouting than by attending the epic G.I.R.L. 2020 convention, taking place October 23–25, 2020, in Orlando, Florida! It's the world's largest girl-led event for girls, young women, and everyone who supports them. This premier gathering for Girl

Scouts happens every three years, and they'll meet fellow go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders from around the country and the world—it's an amazing opportunity your girls won't want to miss! Are your girls looking to stay closer to home this year? Then ask your council about council-owned camps and other facilities that can be rented out.

Lift up the Girl Scout experience at every opportunity in your planning, but limit your role to facilitating the girls' brainstorming and planning, never doing the work for them. Share your ideas and insight, ask tough questions when you have to, and support all their decisions with enthusiasm and encouragement!

Engaging Girls and Engaging Families

Creating the kind of environment in which girls are unafraid to try new things and to be who they want to be starts with you! By meeting your girls where they are, you'll help them develop the leadership skills they'll use now and as they grow.

Understanding Healthy Development in Girls

It sounds simple, but just being attentive to what girls are experiencing as they mature is a big help to them—and to you, as your guide and mentor them!

You'll experience different joys and challenges with each Girl Scout level, but here are some guidelines for meeting girls' needs and abilities at different grade levels; you'll also find these listed in the adult guide of each leadership Journey.

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

Girl Scout Brownies

At the Girl Scout Brownie level (second and third grade), girls . . .

This means . . .

Have lots of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.

Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.

Are social and enjoy working in groups.

Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances.

Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.

Letting girls lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow girls as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.

Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.

Doing more than just reading to girls about the Brownie Elf's adventures. Ask girls questions to gauge their understanding and allow them to role play their own pretend visit to a new country.

Need clear directions and structure and like knowing what to expect.

Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share those at the start.

Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.

Offering support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.

Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, and the like.

Encouraging girls to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need some assistance, however, holding scissors, threading needles, and so on.

Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.

Girls might like to create a play about welcoming a new girl to their school or to tell a story through dance or creative movement.

Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job done well.

Acknowledging when the girls have listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again!

Girl Scout Juniors

At the Girl Scout Junior level (fourth and fifth grades), girls . . .

This means . . .

Want to make decisions and express their opinions.

Whenever possible, allowing girls to make decisions and express their opinions through guided discussion and active reflection activities. Also, have girls set rules for listening to others' opinions and offering assistance in decision making.

Are social and enjoy doing things in groups.	<i>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities.</i>
Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others.	<i>Although it's okay to have expectations, the expectation is not perfection! Share your own mistakes and what you learned from them, and be sure to create an environment where girls can be comfortable sharing theirs.</i>
Are concerned about equity and fairness.	<i>Not shying away from discussing why rules are in place and having girls develop their own rules for their group.</i>
Are beginning to think abstractly and critically and are capable of flexible thought. Juniors can consider more than one perspective as well as the feelings and attitudes of another.	<i>Asking girls to explain why they made a decision, to share their visions of their roles in the future, and to challenge their own and others' perspectives.</i>
Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination.	<i>Engaging girls in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow girls to express themselves through the written word, choreography, and so on.</i>
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	<i>Girls might like to tell a story through playwriting, playing an instrument, or choreographing a dance.</i>

Girl Scout Cadettes	
At the Girl Scout Cadette level (sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Are starting to spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>That girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities as well as tackling relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects.</i>
Can be very self-conscious — wanting to be like everyone else but fearing they are unique in their thoughts and feelings.	<i>Encouraging girls to share, but only when they are ready. At this age, they may be more comfortable sharing a piece of artwork or a fictional story than their own words. Throughout the activities, highlight and discuss differences as positive, interesting, and beautiful.</i>
Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions and allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

Girl Scout Seniors

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

Girl Scout Ambassadors

At the Girl Scout Ambassador level (eleventh and twelfth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Can see the complexity of situations and controversial issues—they understand that problems often have no clear solution and that varying points of view may each have merit.	<i>Inviting girls to develop stories as a group and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.</i>
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking	<i>Girls are more than able to go beyond community</i>

skills and can adapt logical thinking to real-life situations. Ambassadors recognize and incorporate practical limitations to solutions.	<i>service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.</i>
Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>Girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.</i>
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	<i>Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.</i>
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures —from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	<i>Acknowledging girls' pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.</i>
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults — at school and at home —and are looking to their futures.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience "fun failure," which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

Creating a Safe Space for Girls

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

Recognizing and Supporting Each Girl

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

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

Promoting Fairness

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

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

Building Trust

Girls need your belief in them and your support when they try new things. You'll also need to show them that you won't betray their confidence.

- Show girls you trust them to think for themselves and use their own judgment.
- Encourage them make the important decisions in the group.
- Give them assistance in correcting their own mistakes.
- Support girls in trusting one another — let them see firsthand how trust can be built, lost, regained, and strengthened.

Inspiring Open Communication

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

- Listen to the girls. Respond with words and actions.
- Speak your mind openly when you are happy or concerned about something, and encourage girls to do this too.
- Leave the door open for girls to seek advice, share ideas and feelings, and propose plans or improvements.

- Help girls see how open communication can result in action, discovery, better understanding of self and others, and a more comfortable climate for fun and accomplishment.

Managing Conflict

Conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, but if handled constructively, they show girls that they can overcome their differences, exercise diplomacy, and improve their communication and relationships. Respecting others and being a sister to every Girl Scout means that shouting, verbal abuse, or physical confrontations are never warranted and cannot be tolerated in the Girl Scout environment. When a conflict arises between girls or a girl and a volunteer, get those involved to sit down together and talk calmly and in a nonjudgmental manner. (Each party may need some time—a few days or a week—to calm down before being able to do this.) Talking in this way might feel uncomfortable and difficult now, but it lays the groundwork for working well together in the future. Whatever you do, *do not* spread your complaint around to others—that won't help the situation and causes only embarrassment and anger.

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

Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age

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

Listen

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

Be Honest

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

Be Open to Real Issues

Outside of Girl Scouts, girls may be dealing with issues like relationships, peer pressure, school, money, drugs, and other serious topics. [When you don't know, listen](#). Also seek help from your council if you need assistance or more information than you currently have.

Show Respect

Girls often say that their best experiences were the ones where adults treated them as equal partners. Being spoken to as young adults reinforces that their opinions matter and that they deserve respect.

Offer Options

Girls' needs and interests change and being flexible shows them that you respect them and their busy lives. Be ready with age-appropriate guidance and parameters no matter what the girls choose to do.

Stay Current

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

Remember to LUTE: Listen, Understand, Tolerate, and Empathize

Try using the LUTE method to thoughtfully respond when a girl is upset, angry, or confused.

Listen: Hear her out, ask for details, and reflect back what you hear; try “What happened next?” or “What did she say?”

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

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

Empathize: Let her know you can imagine feeling what she’s feeling with comments such as, “I’m sure that really hurts” or “I can imagine how painful this is for you.”

Addressing the Needs of Older Girls

Let these simple tips guide you in working with teenage girls:

- Think of yourself as a partner, a coach, or a mentor, not a “leader.”
- Ask girls what rules they need for safety and what group agreements they need to be a good team.
- Understand that girls need time to talk, unwind, and have fun together.
- Ask what they think and what they want to do.
- Encourage girls to speak their minds.
- Provide structure, but don’t micromanage.
- Give everyone a voice in the group.
- Treat girls like partners.
- Don’t repeat what’s said in the group to anyone outside of it (unless necessary for a girl’s safety).

When Sensitive Topics Come Up

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

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

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

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

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

Report Concerns

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

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

- Marked changes in behavior or personality (for example, unusual moodiness, aggressiveness, or sensitivity)
- Declining academic performance and/or inability to concentrate
- Withdrawal from school, family activities, or friendships
- Fatigue, apathy, or loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Sleep disturbances
- Increased secretiveness
- Deterioration in appearance and personal hygiene
- Eating extremes, unexplained weight loss, distorted body image
- Tendency toward perfectionism
- Giving away prized possessions; preoccupation with the subject of death
- Unexplained injuries, such as bruises, burns, or fractures
- Avoidance of eye contact or physical contact
- Excessive fearfulness or distrust of adults
- Abusive behavior toward other children, especially younger ones

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

Kick the Year off Right by Engaging Parents and Other Caregivers

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls when families step up and play an active part in the troop. Without meaningful support from parents and caregivers, it's difficult for a troop to be all it can be.

Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing!

What Is a Parent and Caregiver Meeting?

It's the first meeting you have to start each troop year —whether you are a new or returning troop. It is valuable for all troops.

Why Hold a Meeting?

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

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

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

How to Keep Parents and Other Caregivers on Board

Make the Ask(s)

The main reason people don't take action is because they were never asked to in the first place. That's why hearing one out of three Girl Scout parents say no one had communicated expectations around involvement with their girl's troop is so troubling. Parents may have many talents, but they're certainly not mind readers! If you're nervous about getting turned down, don't be. Sure, a few parents might be unable to lend a hand, but the helpers you do get will be worth their weight in gold. And just because someone wasn't available a month or two ago doesn't mean they won't be free to help now. Loop back, follow up, and ask again!

Make Sense of “Why”

Explain that not only does the whole troop benefit with extra help from parents and other caregivers, but also that girls feel a special sense of pride in seeing their own family member step up and take a leadership role. Getting involved can strengthen the caregiver/girl bond and is a meaningful way to show daughters that they are a priority in their parents' lives.

Make It Quick and Easy

Everybody's got a full plate these days, so instead of starting conversations with a list of tasks or responsibilities that parents and other caregivers could take on (which can be intimidating!), ask how much time each week they might be able to dedicate to the troop, then go from there. For instance, if a troop mom or dad has 15 minutes each week to spare, they could organize and manage the calendar for troop snacks and carpools. If a grandparent has one to two hours, they could assist with leading the troop through a specific badge on a topic they're already comfortable with.

Make Family Part of the Formula

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

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

Troop Management

Leadership is more than “being in charge” or having a title; it’s recognizing that you’re part of a team and understanding that team’s needs and interests.

Your Role as a Volunteer

The [Girl Scout Leadership Experience](#) is based on three keys—discover, connect, and take action—but it’s not just for the girls! As a Girl Scout leader, you’ll embark on your own leadership journey as you help girls develop the vital leadership skills they’ll use to make the world a better place. The Girl Scout perspective on leadership is permeated with a few basic, but all-important, concepts.

Leadership is teaching girls:

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

As a leader, see yourself as a coach who:

- Guides and instructs, not as a teacher with a canned lesson or activity or as someone who has to perform for the girls each week.
- Advises and discusses.
- Ensures each girl can carry out her responsibilities within the troop.
- Encourages girls to build their skills and their ethics.
- Gives more responsibilities to the girls as they grow and develop.

It’s important to remember that:

- You cannot know everything that the girls might ever want to learn.
- You’ll explore and learn alongside your girls and grow your confidence in the process.
- You’re not expected to know everything about Girl Scouting, but you should know where to go for information—and to ask for help when you need it.

Your Responsibilities as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Your responsibilities as a <https://gsmidtn.org/join-us/volunteer/> include:

- 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 a partnership with girls so that their activities are girl-led and that they learn by doing, individually and a group. You’ll also partner with other volunteers and council staff for support and guidance.
- Organizing fun, interactive, girl-led activities that address relevant issues and match girls’ interests and needs.

- Providing guidance and information regarding Girl Scout group meetings with girls' families on a regular and ongoing basis through a variety of tools, including email, phone calls, newsletters, blogs, other forms of social media, and any other method you choose.
- Processing and completing registration forms and other paperwork, such as permission slips.
- Communicating effectively and delivering clear, organized, and vibrant presentations or information to an individual or the group.
- Overseeing with honesty, integrity, and careful record-keeping the funds that girls raise.
- Maintaining a close connection to your volunteer support team as well as your council.
- [Facilitating a safe experience](#) for every girl.

Planning for Your First Troop Meeting

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

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

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

Choosing a Meeting Place

What makes a great meeting space? It depends on your troop, but here are a few considerations as you visit potential spaces:

Cost: The space should be free to use.

Size: Make sure the space is large enough for the whole group and all planned activities.

Availability: Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.

Resources: Ask if tables and chairs come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby of some sort where you could store supplies or a safe outdoor space for activities.

Safety: Potential spaces must be safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and have at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure first-aid equipment is on hand.

Facilities: It goes without saying, but make sure that toilets are sanitary and accessible.

Communication-friendly: Check for cell reception in the potential space and whether Wi-Fi is available.

Allergen-free: Ensure that pet dander and other common allergens won't bother susceptible girls during meetings.

Accessibility: Your space should accommodate girls with disabilities as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.

Need a few speaking points to get started? Try:

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

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

Girl Scout Troop Size

The troop size "sweet spot" is large enough to provide an interactive and cooperative learning environment and small enough to encourage individual development. Research has shown that the ideal troop size is 12 girls; recommended group sizes, by grade level, are:

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

A Girl Scout troop/group must have at minimum five girls and two approved adult volunteers. (Double-check the [volunteer-to-girl ratio chart](#) to make sure you've got the right amount of coverage for your troop!) Adults and girls registering in groups of fewer than five girls and/or two approved, unrelated adult volunteers, at least one of whom is female, will be registered as individual Girl Scouts to more accurately reflect their status and program experience. Individual girls are always welcome to participate in Girl Scout activities and events.

Registering Girls and Adults in Girl Scouting

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

another member and are not refundable. All Girl Scouts and adults must register through CouncilAlignMENT.

Spring Registration for the upcoming membership year occurs in the April through early June. Troop Leaders are encouraged to spring register their troop to avoid the fall rush and receive incentives. Spring registration helps girls and councils plan ahead, and gets girls excited about all the great stuff they want to do as Girl Scouts next year. Girl Scout grade level is determined by the current membership year beginning October 1.

[Lifetime membership](#) is available to anyone who accepts the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, pays the one-time lifetime membership fee, and is at least 18 years old (or a high school graduate or equivalent).

Adding New Girls to Your Troop

Growing your troop is a great way to share the power of the Girl Scout experience and [there are many ways to get the word out](#), like hanging posters at your girl's school and using social media to reach families in your community.

Your regional executive will be able to provide you with information about marketing and recruitment materials for adding new girls to your troops. If you have questions about who your regional executive is, call the main line at council and the Customer Engagement Team will connect you to the right person at (615) 383-0490.

Find registration, resources, and programs online at <https://ca52.councilalignment.org/>

Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

Girl Scouts is for every girl, and that's why we embrace girls of all abilities and backgrounds 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.

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

- Welcome every girl, and focus on building community.
- Emphasize cooperation instead of competition.
- Provide a safe and socially comfortable environment for girls.
- 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.
- Honor the intrinsic value of each person's life.

If you have questions about accommodating an individual girl, please reach out to your regional executive. If you have questions about who your regional executive is, call the main line at council and the Customer Engagement Team will connect you to the right person at (615) 383-0490.

As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, consider the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. Include the special needs of any members who have disabilities or whose parents or caregivers have disabilities. But, please, don't rely on visual cues to inform you of a disability: Approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population has a disability—that's one in five people of every socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and religion.

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

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

- Invite a girl to complete an activity after she has observed others doing it.
- If you are visiting a museum to view sculpture, find out if a girl who is blind might be given permission to touch the pieces.
- If an activity requires running, a girl who is unable to run could be asked to walk or do another physical movement.

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

Say . . .	Instead of . . .
She has a learning disability.	She is learning disabled.
She has a developmental delay.	She is mentally retarded; she is slow.
She uses a wheelchair.	She is wheelchair-bound.

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

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

Registering Girls with Cognitive Disabilities

Girls with cognitive disabilities can be registered as closely as possible to their chronological ages. They wear the uniform of that grade level. Make any adaptations for the girl to ongoing activities of the grade level to which the group belongs. Young women with cognitive disorders may choose to retain their girl membership through their twenty-first year, and then move into an adult membership category.

Getting Support for Your Troop

It takes a village to lift up the next generation of female leaders, but you won't do it alone. You can count on a dedicated Girl Scout support team, consisting of council staff and passionate volunteers just like you.

Your support team, which may be called a service unit at your council, is ready to offer local learning opportunities and advice as well as answer your questions about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, product sales, and so much more.

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

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

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

Troop Management Tools and Resources

From guides to regular contact with experienced people, you'll have all the support you need to be a Girl Scout volunteer. Here's a list of some important resources you'll want to check out.

*Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee is excited to share highlights of **CouncilAlignMENT**.*

What is CouncilAlignMENT?

CouncilAlignMENT is a single source, single entry system that has been designed by a Girl Scout Council to fulfill the needs of volunteers, parents, and staff who want to better serve Girl Scouts in our community. This software program speaks the Girl Scout language and we believe will provide our constituents with a meaningful experience.

Girls have more fun when they can shape their own experiences, do hands-on activities, and work together as teams. With CouncilAlignMENT, girls and leaders can explore meeting topics and program activities together, and follow the fun as they plan their Girl Scout year.

Through CouncilAlignMENT, troop leaders can:

- Plan the troop's calendar year and meeting schedule.
- Email parents/caregivers with one click.
- View the troop roster, renew girls' membership, and update girls' contact information.
- View meeting plans for badges
- Customize meeting agendas to fit your unique troop.
- Record girls' attendance at meetings and their badge and Journey achievements.
- Add council-sponsored or custom events to the troop's calendar.
- Easily locate frequently used forms.

Parents and caregivers can:

- View the troop’s meeting schedule and individual plans to stay up to date on the badges and Journeys they are working on.
- Renew their memberships, and update their contact information.
- View their Girl Scout’s achievements.
- See upcoming events Council is planning.

Get started by visiting:

The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting

What does it mean to be a go-getting Girl Scout? It’s all in *The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting*. These grade level-specific binders will help you break it down for your girls. It’s part handbook, part badge book, and 100 percent fun!

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Safety is paramount in Girl Scouting, and this resource—[Safety Activity Checkpoints](#)—contains everything you need to know to help keep your girls safe during a variety of exciting activities outside of their regular Girl Scout troop meetings.

Tips for Troop Leaders

When you’re looking for real-world advice from fellow troop leaders who’ve been there, this volunteer-to-volunteer resource, called Tips for Troop Leaders, on the Girl Scouts of the USA website has what you need for a successful troop year.

Girl Scout Volunteers in Your Community

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

Customer Care Contacts

Questions? Need help resolving an issue? We’ve got you! Reach out anytime by either clicking on the [“Contact Us”](#) form or email VolunteerResources@gsmidtn.org. During business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:30-4:30) you can reach a customer service specialist by calling (615) 383-0490

Newsletters/Communication

Want to know about everything happening at GSMIDTN? Make sure you stay connected with us on social media and are receiving our weekly newsletter, the Girl Scout Connection! The Girl Scout Connection lets you know about upcoming programs, trainings, and events going on at our council. We also have a quarterly magazine, On My Honor, which provides updates from the council along with stories from Girl Scouts. The Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee Community Group is the perfect place to connect with others across the 39 counties. This closed Facebook Group provides the best opportunity to ask questions, get inspiration, and help others.

Follow and like us on social media:

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/GSMidTN
- Latino Facebook: www.facebook.com/GSMIDTNEspanol
- Private Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/GSMIDTNGroup
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/gsmidtn
- Instagram: www.instagram.com/gsmidtn

Taking Advantage of Learning Opportunities

We know that when you have the knowledge and skills you need to manage your girls, both you and your troop will thrive. Contact your council to ask about ongoing learning opportunities that will help you grow your skills and confidence.

Girl Scout adult trainings provides leadership teams and other adult volunteers the knowledge and skills necessary for working with girls of all age levels. The courses are designed to enrich both girl and adult experiences.

Youth Protection is a required training for any volunteer, parent, or staff member that works regularly with girls. Some of the topics include how to recognize signs of child abuse and neglect, information on prevention, and steps to report suspected abuse.

Camping Skills 1 and 2 are now available for you to register on CouncilAlignMENT to prepare you for camping with your troop.

Camping Skills 1 prepares you to take your troop for a day in the outdoors or an overnight in a building with a fully equipped kitchen, stove, refrigerator, electricity, and running water.

Camping Skills 2 (designed to be taken after completing Camping Skills 1) prepares you for camping in cabins without kitchens, screened cabins, platform tents, or designated tent camping sites with bathroom facilities, water, and a pavilion.

Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee is pleased to offer 1 free training per troop for Camping Skills 1, Camping skills 2, First Aid/CPR/AED. To redeem your free trainings discuss with your troop leaders which volunteer will redeem the free trainings. Each troop receives one free training in each course, but the same adult does not have to redeem all three. Register for the desired training on CouncilAlignMENT, and email Kelly Van Vleet (KVanVleet@gsmidtn.org) to let her know which adult from your troop is redeeming the free training, along with the training name and date. The free training perk begins August 1st, 2019.

Note: The free CPR training credit cannot be applied to a training hosted by an outside organization. Both Camping Skills 1 and 2 are designed to be taken after completing three online trainings – Camp Information and Procedures, Camp Ready, and Camp Prep. If you have already taken Outdoor Skills, you do not need to take these trainings.

More information on available trainings can be found through the below link or by contacting the Volunteer Relations Department. Kelly and Tracy can be reached via phone (615) 460-0252 or email, KVanVleet@gsmidtn.org and TColeman@gsmidtn.org.
<https://gsmidtn.org/programs/adult-training/>

Knowing How Much You're Appreciated

Whatever your volunteer position, your hard work means the world to girls, to your council staff, and to Girl Scouts of the USA. We're calling on all members of society to help girls reach their full potential, and you've answered that call. So thank you, from the bottom of our hearts!

Just as you'll receive support throughout your volunteering experience, when you reach the end of the term you signed up for, you'll talk with your support team about the positive parts of your experience as well as the challenges you faced, and you'll discuss whether you want to return to this position or try something new. The end of your troop year, camp season, overseas trip, or series/event session is just the beginning of your next adventure with Girl Scouts!

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

Volunteer Appreciation Month

Without our passionate and dedicated volunteers, there would be no Girl Scouting. That's why we celebrate Volunteer Appreciation Week in April! And get ready to crank up the party as we ring in national Girl Scout Leader's Day on April 22.

Girl Scouts also celebrates Volunteers Make a Difference Week in conjunction with Make a Difference Day, which takes place during the weekend in autumn that we set our clocks back when daylight saving time ends. What can we say — we love our volunteers!

Product Programs

As the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world, the Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Girl Scout Fall Product Program are foundational experiences during which girls learn to think like entrepreneurs and to develop vital business skills. Plus, Product Programs proceeds power fun and enriching experiences for Girl Scout troops year-round!

Teaching Essential Skills for a Lifetime of Leadership

Through the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program, girls as young as five develop these five essential skills that will help them be successful today and throughout their lives:

- *Goal setting:* Girls learn to create a plan to reach their goals.
- *Decision making:* Girls learn to make decisions on their own and as a team.
- *Money management:* Girls learn to create a budget and handle money.
- *People skills:* Girls find their voice and up their confidence through customer interactions that build relationships.
- *Business ethics:* Girls learn to act responsibly and honestly, both in business and in life.

Check out our [5 Skills for Girls Toolkit](#) to see how you can foster these keys to success with your troop.

But the exciting skill building isn't just tied to the cookies themselves! Girls continue to hone their entrepreneurial skills and go-getting spirit by earning [Cookie Business badges and Financial Literacy badges](#).

Before your cookie bosses open shop, be sure to check out these helpful resources that will empower you to:

- Manage your troop's funds.
- Learn how girls participate in money earning.
- Discover how your troop can reach its financial goals.
- Understand just [how much your girls are capable of by grade level and how their entrepreneurial skills progress](#).

A Sweet Tradition

It has been decades since Girl Scouts began selling home-baked cookies to raise money. The idea was so popular that in 1936 Girl Scouts enlisted bakers to handle the growing demand—and the rest is history. Explore [Girl Scout Cookie History](#) to find out how cookies have bolstered generations of girls who make the world a better place.

Where Cookie Proceeds Go

After paying for the cost of cookies and materials, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local and help councils provide Girl Scout programs in STEAM, the outdoors, life skills, entrepreneurship, and more—in camps, through leadership training, and multiple other ways. A portion of the proceeds is directly managed by girls, and it's up to them to decide how to invest their troop's share of the earnings. Check out the "[Where the Cookie Money Goes](#)" handout to learn more.

Your council will provide a breakdown of how cookie program proceeds support Girl Scout activities locally. Please share this information with girls and their families so everyone understands that product program sales make it possible for your Girl Scout council to serve girls.

Troop members share in the proceeds from a successful product program; proceeds aren't distributed to individual girl members. Girls, however, may be eligible for rewards and credits that they put toward council-sponsored camps, programs, and Girl Scout swag. The council plan for rewards applies equally to all girls participating in the product program activity. Visit [the cookie section](#) of your council website for more information about individual rewards and troop proceeds locally.

The Girl Scout [Blue Book of Basic Documents](#) specifies that:

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

—"Ownership of Assets," *Blue Book of Basic Documents* (February 2019), page 22

Making s'mores under the stars, creating a lasting impact on your community, or ordering supplies for an eye-opening STEAM project—there are limitless ways to put troop proceeds toward dynamic Girl Scout

experiences! There are a few things, however, that don't qualify for "purposes of Girl Scouting," for instance, using troop proceeds to purchase memberships in or uniforms for another organization. We encourage all councils to remind their volunteers of this policy in order to protect the all-girl environment and to avoid diversion of Girl Scout funds.

Your Council's Role

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

Each council also selects the vendors of its choice to provide the products for their product programs. GSMIDTN is partnered with [Little Brownie Bakers](#) for you Cookie Program. For additional information on cookie varieties, including nutritional details, visit the [Meet the Cookies](#) section on [girlscoutcookies.org](#).

Councils also work with vendors to offer magazine subscriptions, nut and candy products, and more for the Fall Product Program. GSMIDTN partners with [Trophy Nut](#) and [M2 Media group](#). Each provide online tools and activities for girls to download. Magazine selection and sales may take place online — check with your product programs team at productprograms@gsmidtn.org for more information.

GSMIDTN does not participate in the Digital Cookie Platform. For further questions in regards to this contact productprograms@gsmidtn.org.

Your Role

You play an exciting role in giving your girls opportunities to practice the five skills in a girl-led, cooperative setting. Some of the things you'll do include:

- Get girls excited about the opportunities to support her troop (but allowing her participation to be voluntary).
- Support both competitive and apprehensive cookie bosses, helping all your girls set meaningful goals for themselves.
- Fostering partnerships with each girl's family to ensure cookie season success, whatever that may look like for her. Check out the [Creating Cookie Success](#) and [Coaching Your Budding Businesswoman](#) resources that will help you build a positive partnership with girls and families.

Not only can girls sell individually, but they can also participate in group booth sales during product programs. Your local council has additional guidance and processes to market and ensure every booth is in a safe and appropriate location for girls

As your girls grow, your role will evolve from a hands-on one to providing oversight and support where needed. No matter their ages, remember that *volunteers and parents/caregivers do not sell the product*. Your role is to encourage your girls and let their entrepreneurial spirit soar. Learning by doing is exactly

how your girls develop the business savvy and communication skills that will empower them to reach any goals they set for themselves.

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

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

Product Program Safety

Girl safety is the top priority while selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products. Volunteers, families, and girls should be familiar with and practice the safety guidelines outlined in local program resources as well as those available in the [safety](#) section of girlscoutcookies.org.

Please contact Kathleen Roder (KRoder@gsmidtn.org) or Tracy Tudder (TTudder@gsmidtn.org) in the Product Programs Office for more information on safety guidelines.

The Buddy System

Using the buddy system, girls are divided into teams of two. Each girl is responsible for staying with her buddy at all times, warning her buddy of danger, giving her buddy immediate assistance if safe to do so, and seeking help if needed. Girls are encouraged to stay near the group or buddy with another team of two so that in the event someone is injured, one person cares for the patient while two others seek help.

Preparing for Your Girl Scout Cookie Booth

Cookie booths—that is, cookie pop-up sales in areas with lots of foot traffic—are a fun way for girls to connect with their community and practice their sales pitch with new customers. Booth locations must be approved by council, facilitated within council jurisdiction, and participants must follow all council guidelines with regard to setting up, running, and taking down a booth.

Create a great cookie booth experience for your girls by:

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

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

And keep in mind:

- A minimum of two volunteers and two girls should be present at the booth at all times. With two or more volunteers, you'll have adequate booth coverage if the girls need to be accompanied to the restroom.
- If your Daisies are still learning how to make correct change, help them handle money as needed. But remember that girls make all sales at the booth!
- Changing/canceling your cookie booth hours or location? Keep your customers in the loop and update your eBudde with the new details. All scheduled booths are available on the Cookie Finder App ([IOS](#) or [Android](#)).
- Certain locations may be inappropriate for young girls based on the standards of your local community, may negatively impact the cookie program experience for girls, and/or may negatively impact our brand in your community. For additional clarity, girls should not sell in or in front of establishments that they themselves cannot legally patronize.
- Due to the contractual obligations we have for when Girl Scouts can set up booths at certain locations, girls in their capacity as Girl Scouts, may only setup booths within a restricted time frame. This policy was decided by GSUSA and national partners to protect their patrons.
- Additionally, with respect to marijuana dispensaries, we have been steadfastly combating the unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout trademark by the cannabis community, which has been marketing—without our authorization—certain cannabis products under our youth-appealing brand. We are continuing to aggressively fight these unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout brand and hope that our councils and volunteers will join Girl Scouts of the USA's efforts by discouraging cookie booth locations at such locations.

For more tips to make your booth a success, check out our [Cookie Booth Essentials](#). For additional information about setting up a booth and safety and security suggestions, consult your council guidelines

Cookie Donation Programs

Cookies also help girls make a big impact in their community! Your council may have an established cookie donation program where customers can purchase cookies that will be donated to an organization by your council. Cookie donations are not only a great talking point for girls to share with their customers—they're also a thoughtful way to show girls how cookies can help them give back.

With cookie donations, remember that:

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

Handling Product Complaints

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

Troops should notify their council if they are aware of any customer dissatisfaction.

Recognizing Cookie Sellers in the Media

The Girl Scout Cookie Program has always been about and focused on the program outcomes through which girls learn important entrepreneurial and life skills and invest their earnings to positively affect their local communities. The cookie program has never been about and does not focus on individual girls' sales results.

- There are many impressive cookie bosses throughout the United States, and the Girl Scout organization will continue to recognize dynamic cookie sellers for various achievements tied to the Girl Scout Cookie Program.
- Girl Scouts of the USA does not currently track the top seller(s) of Girl Scout Cookies on a national level and does not identify a specific Girl Scout as the number one or “record-breaking” national cookie seller.
- Girl Scout councils should not reference such girls as “top sellers” in the media. Doing so detracts from the essence of the Girl Scout Cookie Program, which is based on offering girls important experiences in entrepreneurship, business, and finance from a young age as well as providing girls and local Girl Scout councils with the funds necessary to power amazing experiences and opportunities for Girl Scouts year-round.

Troop Finances

How do girls become financially empowered women? Your Girl Scout troop should plan and finance its own activities, and you'll coach your girls as they earn and manage troop funds. Troop activities are powered by proceeds earned through council-sponsored product program activities (such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program and/or Fall Product Program), group money-earning activities (council approved, of course!), and any dues your troop may charge.

With your guidance, girls will learn key money skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

Establishing a Troop Account

No matter how much your troop plans on saving or spending, you'll need a safe place to deposit your troop dues, product sale proceeds, and other funds. If you've stepped up to lead an existing troop, you may inherit a checking account, but with a new troop, you'll want to open a new bank account. Here are a few helpful tips:

Banking Guidelines

Troop Account Activity

- Volunteers in Davidson, Rutherford, and Williamson Counties must use Pinnacle Bank, unless noted otherwise by their Regional Executive (R.E.). Volunteers in outlying areas are assigned a bank by their R.E.
- All signers must be registered members and have a clear background check.
- Three signers are needed for each account. Preferably signers should be the leader and co-leader or treasurer and the R.E.
- REs will send a letter to the bank to authorize each troop account. Volunteers must sign their paperwork at the bank within two weeks.
- Once an account is opened, any changes of name, address, signer, etc. must be approved by the R.E.
- Accounts are opened, closed, and/or frozen only with approval of the R.E.
- The signer who does the majority of the banking for each troop should carry the debit card. The other signer should carry the check book.
- Signers may also have online access and/or hard-copy statements as long as no additional fees are assessed by the banks.
- Multiple users can request online access if it is available. There should be troop account transparency with girls and parents; updates on funds and how they are being used should be shared regularly.
- REs conduct regular reviews of all accounts. If receipts are requested from a troop, signers must provide that information to the RE within 14 days.
- If a troop has a need for limits to be increased, the signer should request the increase at least five days in advance. (Requests may be sent to Accounting Director James Bosworth at jbosworth@gsmidtn.org for Pinnacle users or to your RE.)
- When troops disband, troop leaders should contact R.E. Final funds should be spent on/with the girls. The leader must then submit disbandment form and remaining funds and any supplies to the Council.
- As a reminder, no personal funds should ever be mixed with troop funds.
- If a check is submitted for insufficient funds the troop leader is responsible for any overdraft fees owed back to the bank and/or troop.
- Troops are not permitted to have savings accounts.
- If an account is left dormant the R.E. will take action to close it.
- Signers are not allowed to reimburse themselves. If a leader needs reimbursement, the secondary signer must issue the reimbursement via check.
- Please refer to Volunteer Essentials and/or the Service Unit Manual for more specific troop and service unit guidelines.

Account Limits

- All accounts will be opened with only the GSMIDTN tax ID number.
- Each troop will be permitted to have only one debit card.
- ATM daily limit is \$110.00.
- Debit card transaction limit is \$500.00
- There is no daily limit and no check total limit.

- No electronic transfers are permitted between accounts. Please see additional Paypal and Venmo policies.

Follow your council’s financial policies and procedures for setting up an account. Most council-sponsored product program activities have specific banking and tracking procedures.

- Designate a “troop treasurer,” that is, one person who is responsible for troop funds and for keeping a daily account of expenditures.
- Handle a lost troop debit card the same way you would a personal debit card: cancel it immediately.
- Keep troop funds in the bank before an activity or trip, and pay for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.

Troop Disbanding and Unused Troop Funds

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

Closing the Troop Account

When closing a troop account, be sure all checks and other debits have cleared the account before you close it. Turn remaining funds over to your Regional Executive.

Final funds should be spent on/with the girls. Examples include a final girl activity or if eligible, a lifetime Girl Scout memberships. The leader must then follow disbandment process by submitting disbandment form, returning all remaining funds and any supplies to the Council, and closing troop bank account.

Money-Earning Basics for Troops

Troops flex their financial muscles in two distinct ways:

- [The Girl Scout Cookie Program](#) and other Girl Scout–authorized products (such as calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy), organized by your council. All girl members are eligible to participate in two council-sponsored product sale activities each year with volunteer supervision: the cookie program and one other council-authorized product sale. Please remember, volunteers and Girl Scout council staff don’t sell cookies and other products—girls do.
- Group money-earning activities organized by the troop (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with volunteers) and that earn money for the group.

Participation Guidance

Girls’ participation in both council-sponsored product sale activities and group money-earning projects is based upon the following:

- Voluntary participation
- Written permission of each girl’s parent or guardian

- An understanding of (and ability to explain clearly to others) why the money is needed
- An understanding that money earning should not exceed what the group needs to support its program activities
- Observance of local ordinances related to involvement of children in money-earning activities as well as health and safety laws
- Vigilance in protecting the [personal safety](#) of each girl
- Arrangements for [safeguarding the money](#)

Additional Guidelines

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

- All rewards earned by girls through the product sale activities must support Girl Scout program experiences (such as camp, travel, and program events, but not scholarships or financial credits toward outside organizations).
- Rewards are based on sales ranges set by councils and may not be based on a dollar-per-dollar calculation.
- Troops are encouraged to participate in council product sales as their primary money-earning activity; any group money earning shouldn't compete with the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council product sales.
- Be sure to submit your Permission to Conduct a Money Earning Project form for approval 30 days before a group money-earning event.
- Girl Scouts discourages the use of games of chance. Any activity which could be considered a game of chance (raffles, contests, bingo) must be approved by the local Girl Scout council and be conducted in compliance with all local and state laws.
- Girl Scouts' [Blue Book](#) policy forbids girls from the direct solicitation of cash. Girls can collect partial payment toward the purchase of a package of Girl Scout Cookies and other Girl Scout-authorized products through participation in council-approved product sale donation programs.
- Girl Scouts forbids product demonstration parties where the use of the Girl Scout trademark increases revenue for another business, such as in-home product parties. Any business using the Girl Scout trademark or other Girl Scout intellectual property must seek authorization from GSUSA.
- Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the ages and abilities of the girls and consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Movement.
- Money earned is for Girl Scout activities and is not to be retained by individuals. Girls can, however, be awarded incentives and/or may earn credits from their Girl Scout product sales. Funds acquired through group money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the group according to council procedures.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other council-sponsored product sales are designed to unleash the entrepreneurial potential in your girls. From there, your troop may decide to earn additional funds on its own.

Sample Money-Earning Activities

Collections/Drives

- Cell phones for refurbishment
- Used ink cartridges turned in for money

- Christmas tree recycling

Food/Meal Events

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

Service(s)

- Service-a-thon (people sponsor a girl doing service and funds go to support a trip or other activity)
- Babysitting for holiday (New Year's Eve) or council events
- Raking leaves, weeding, cutting grass, shoveling snow, walking pets
- Cooking class or other specialty class

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other council-sponsored product sales are designed to unleash the entrepreneurial potential in your girls. From there, your troop may decide to earn additional funds on its own.

Help Your Troop Reach Its Financial Goals

We get it—there's something exciting about opening that first case of Girl Scout Cookies. However, before your girls take part in all the cookie program fun, it's important they have a clear plan and purpose for their product sale activities. As a volunteer, you have the opportunity to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for the girls:

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

Remember: It's great for girls to have opportunities like the Girl Scout Cookie Program and/or Fall Product Program to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals as part of the GSLE. As a volunteer, try to help girls balance the money earning they do with opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on

earning and spending money. Take Action projects, for example, may not always require girls to spend a lot of money!

Financial Management and Product Program Abilities by Grade Level

As with other Girl Scout activities, girls build their financial and sales savvy as they get older. Every girl will be different, but here you'll find some examples of the abilities and [opportunities for progression](#) of girls at [each grade level](#).

Girl Scout Daisies

The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.

Parents/guardians may decide they will contribute to the cost of activities.

Girls can participate in Girl Scout Cookie activities and other council-sponsored product sales.

Daisies are always paired with a volunteer when selling anything. Girls do the asking and deliver the product, but volunteers handle the money and keep the girls secure.

Girls should be given the opportunity to practice identifying money and counting back change with an adult during each transaction.

Girl Scout Brownies

The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and shares some of the group-budgeting responsibilities.

Girls discuss the cost of activities (supplies, fees, transportation, rentals, and so on) with guidance from their volunteer(s).

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls may decide to pay dues to contribute to the cost of activities.

Girl Scout Juniors

The group volunteer retains overall responsibility for long-term budgeting and record keeping, but shares or delegates all other financial responsibilities.

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls decide on group dues, if any. Dues are collected by girls and recorded by a group treasurer selected by the girls.

Girls budget for the short-term needs of the group based on their plans and income from the group

dues.

Girls budget for more long-term activities, such as overnight trips, group camping, and special events.

Girls budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Bronze Award, if they are pursuing it.

Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

Girls estimate costs based on plans.

Girls determine the amount of group dues, if any, and the scope of money-earning projects.

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning projects.

Girls budget for extended travel, Take Action projects, and leadership projects.

Girls may be involved in seeking donations for Take Action projects with council approval.

Girls keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.

Girls budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Silver or Gold Awards, if they are pursuing them.

Working with Sponsors and Other Organizations

Every girl deserves an empowering leadership experience like Girl Scouts, and local sponsors can help councils make that vision a reality. Community organizations, businesses, religious organizations, and individuals may be sponsors and may provide group meeting places, volunteer their time, offer in-kind donations, provide activity materials, or loan equipment. Encourage your girls to celebrate a sponsor's contribution to the troop by sending thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take Action project.

For information on working with a sponsor, consult your council, which can give you guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting guidelines, and any council policies or practices that must be followed. Your council may already have relationships with certain organizations or may know of some reasons **not** to collaborate with certain organizations.

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

Avoid Fundraising for Other Organizations

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

Steer Clear of Political Fundraisers

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

Be Respectful When Collaborating with Religious Organizations

Girl Scout groups must respect the opinions and practices of religious partners, but no girl should be required to take part in any religious observance or practice of the sponsoring group.

Avoid Selling or Endorsing Commercial Products

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

FUND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Troop Money Earning Activities and Troop Sponsorships

I. Introduction

It is important that all troops and leaders read and understand Volunteer Essentials (Chapter 5) regulations concerning troop fundraising before beginning any money-earning activity. Girl Scout troops/groups are financed by dues, a share of money earned through Girl Scout-sponsored product sales, and money-earning activities that the group plans.

II. Guidelines

A. Money Earning Activities

The highest priority money-earning activities for all Girl Scout troops are the product sales, both the Fall Product Program and the Cookie Program. In order to earn the most troop income and support Girl Scout programming provided by our organization for ALL Girl Scouts, it is required that troops put these two money-earning events at the top of their troop budgeting plans, before seeking other means of support.

B. Direct to Troop/Group Donations

Individual Girl Scout troops may accept donations to be deposited into their troop account for troop use in amounts less than \$250. Any donations given by an individual or otherwise directly to the troop does not constitute a tax deductible donation and therefore does not qualify for a tax receipt issued by the organization. Further, any donations in the amount of \$250 or more should be directed to the Council for use to support ALL girls in scouting throughout our communities. Any donation made directly to the Council will be acknowledged with a tax receipt letter as long as appropriate contact information has been provided. Donations made directly to the Council are not subject to disbursement to individual Girl Scout troops. (More information on Matching Gifts is below.)

C. Matching Gifts

Many generous employers offer matching gift programs for cash donations and/or volunteer hours to the non-profit of the employee's choice. We encourage anyone with an interest in and passion for building girls of courage, confidence and character to designate Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee as their chosen nonprofit to receive such funds. However, please note that matching funds must be designated to the Council and may not be received and deposited into troop accounts. Businesses have strict accounting practices that mandate matching gifts be received by a 501(c)(3) organization and individual troops do not meet such criteria.

Incentive for Matching Gifts

In an effort to encourage Girl Scout parents and volunteers who participate in Employer Matching donation programs, beginning August 1, 2017 troops will be eligible to receive an incentive when a donation is received by Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee as a result of their employer matching program. The troop/group associated with matching donation will receive 20% of the total donation in the form of a Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee shop gift certificate. In order to be eligible for this incentive, the matching gift must be at least \$100. Further, the incentive gift certificate may not exceed \$1,250.

- Incentive gift certificates for eligible matching gift donations made to the Council will be distributed once the donation has been received by Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee. *Please note that due to the disbursement policy of many companies, there will likely be a delay of up to 9 months before funds are received and gift certificates are issued.*
- All requests for employer matching gifts should be made by the employee and designated to Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee.
- Anonymous gifts are not eligible for the matching gift incentive.

D. Community Support

Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee wants to develop and maintain strong relationships in the communities where our members reside. Girl Scout troops are encouraged to connect with members of the community and to establish good relationships and a support structure for their individual Girl Scout troop/group. Community organizations, businesses, or individuals can be in-kind sponsors and may provide group meeting places, volunteer time, activity materials, or equipment for a local Girl Scout troop/group. However, a troop/group should not solicit major funding from community partners and/or businesses.

III. Sources of Income

- A troop/group **must** participate in the Fall Product Program and Cookie Program, if available at the time of group formation, in order to conduct any other money-earning projects.
- Troops/groups needing additional funds after conducting the Fall Product Program and/or the Cookie Program, may conduct a troop money-earning project. All troop money-earning projects **must** be submitted to the Volunteer Relations Manager for approval.
- Troops/groups should always choose money-earning activities that have program value for girls and that are consistent with Girl Scout program standards and policies. Troops/groups must provide a service or product in order to earn money.
- **troops and service units should not solicit cash donations or gift cards from individuals or businesses, as a rule.** If a troop has a relationship/connection with a corporation that has a volunteer incentive program that gives cash donations to a not-for-profit organization in honor of an employee who volunteers with a troop/group, the donation must be made to Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee, **in order for the donating organization to receive tax deductibility.** There will be times when a donor specifically wants to make a gift to a troop, but the gift, whether in-kind or cash, should not have a value of more than \$250. Please refer to Section II, B of this policy.

IV. Tax Letter to Donors

Regarding gifts of any kind, inform Girl Scout adults that a **troop/group leader cannot validate any gift as a charitable deduction.** Solicitations of businesses, organizations, or individuals for cash contributions are part of the overall fund development plan of Girl Scouts. Only donations made to a 501(c) (3) organization as determined by the IRS are tax-deductible according to law. Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee is the possessor of the 501(c) (3) determination from the IRS for Girl Scouts, not individual troops. **If it is the intention of a donor to get a tax-deduction for a gift to Girl Scouts, this gift needs to be given directly to Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee and not to individual troops/groups.**

V. Project Planning and Budget Development

A. Troop/group money – earning projects

- The amount of money needed in a troop treasury should be determined by plans **set by the girls** in the troop (after planning their calendar of activities.) The troop should develop a budget and be able to describe when and how they will use the money. All girls in the troop should participate in the decision-making and goal-setting. The amount of money raised **may not** exceed the amount needed to support group activities.
- Girl Scout troops/groups should be realistic about the scale of their projects and trips and choose activities that can be funded by their participation in Girl Scouts-sponsored product sales and other money-earning activities permitted by Girl Scout policies and practices.
- Money that is earned through the methods described above should be spent in order to benefit the girls who helped earn it.

- Money in a group account belongs to the group and not to any individual girl(s). It is to be used for Girl Scout activities only.
- Money should generally be used within the year that it was earned to cover the costs of activities for that year. It should only be carried over to the next year when a group is planning for a large event or trip.
- Girls may contribute a portion of their group treasury to organizations or projects they consider worthwhile. (For example, local or international community service organizations and/or environmental projects.)
- In-kind donations are a great way for your girls to contribute to their favorite nonprofits, especially local organizations that make a difference in your community. In-kind donations are when instead of giving money to buy needed goods and services, the goods and services themselves are given. Girl Scouts may ask for in-kind donations but may not ask for monetary donation. Girl Scouts may not make monetary donations to other organizations in their capacity as Girl Scouts, fulfilling wish list items and providing nonprofits with gift cards are a great way to help. Just be sure these gift cards are specific to the nonprofit. Examples include purchasing a PetSmart gift card for the local humane society or a Publix gift card for the food bank. Donations of prepaid gift card from companies such as Visa or MasterCard are not permitted.

B. Service unit expenses

Service unit managers are encouraged to spend the majority of the money collected during a membership year in the same year in order to benefit current Girl Scouts. Service units may need money for copies, meeting refreshments, postage, and possible meeting space rental. The largest expenses are often awards that are given during the leader banquets each spring.

Safety

In Girl Scouting, the emotional and physical safety and well-being of girls is our top priority. *Safety Activity Checkpoints* outlines the Safety Standards and Guidelines used in Girl Scouting, which apply to *all* Girl Scout activities.

All volunteers should review the [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) manual when planning activities with girls in order to manage safety and risk in Girl Scout-sanctioned activities.

In *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, you'll find:

- Girl Scout Activity Safety Standards and Guidelines with requirements for adult supervision, permission slips, preparation, field trips and overnight trips, and other vital information
- Activities that are not permitted by GSUSA, and actions that girls and volunteers should not take
- Policies surrounding chartered aircraft trips and aviation
- First-aid and overall health information you'll need from the girls

- Standards for well-being and inclusivity, including working with girls with disabilities and ensuring emotional safety
- A breakdown of specific activities—such as camping, internet use, and water sports—and their individual safety checkpoints

Following the Safety Standards and Guidelines is an Activity-at-a-Glance chart which details two critical points to keep in mind:

- Age-appropriate activities and participation by grade level
- Whether prior approval from your council is required before girls participate in a specific activity

Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

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

Not sure just how many adults you'll need for your activity? The following chart breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of girls; councils may also establish maximums due to size or cost restrictions, so be sure to check with them as you plan your activity.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	<i>Two</i> unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of girls:	<i>One</i> additional volunteer to each additional:	<i>Two</i> unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of girls:	<i>One</i> additional volunteer to each additional:
Girl Scout Daisies (grades K–1)	12	1–6	6	1–4
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2–3)	20	1–8	12	1–6
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4–5)	25	1–10	16	1–8
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6–8)	25	1–12	20	1–10

Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9–10)	30	1–15	24	1–12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11–12)	30	1–15	24	1–12