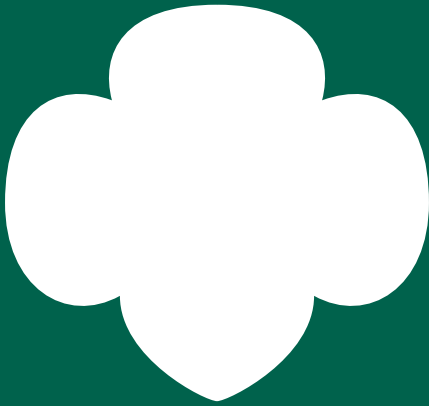




Welcome to Girl Scouts!

A guide for new volunteers



girl scouts 
heart of new jersey

Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Are you ready for the ride of a lifetime? That's what you'll get as a Girl Scout leader! In this role, you'll guide your own troop (a group of Girl Scouts from your local area) and help members build confidence, leadership skills, and friendships. In the process, you'll create lifelong memories for your troop and yourself.

We're here to support you every step of the way. Let's get started, and remember—your Girl Scout adventure starts today, but the best is yet to come.

Meet Our Council

Our council is **Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey**. We're your local connection to the larger Girl Scout organization. We support local troops, organize events, and provide resources and training for leaders like you, ensuring you have everything you need to help youth members have an unforgettable Girl Scout experience.

Our locations:

Westfield Service Center - Westfield Service Center, 201 E. Grove Street, Westfield, NJ 07090

Girl Scouts Leadership Center - 375 McCarter Highway, Newark, NJ 07114

Our Camps:

Camp DeWitt - 605 Montgomery Rd, Hillsborough, NJ 08844

The OVAL - 1 Girl Scout Ln, South Orange Village, NJ 07079

Camp Lou Henry Hoover - Camp Lou Henry Hoover Rd, Newton, NJ 07860

Contact Us

Contact GSHNJ at info@gshnj.org or by phone at **908-518-4400**

Notes

The Girl Scout Program

As Girl Scouts, youth members discover the fun, friendship, and power of working together. They grow courageous and strong through a wide variety of enriching experiences, such as field trips, skill-building sports clinics, community service projects, cultural exchanges, and environmental stewardship.

Badges are a key part of the Girl Scout program. Girl Scouts earn badges by learning new skills and doing activities that demonstrate their accomplishments and understanding.

In earning badges, Girl Scouts...

- **Build skills.** As they earn badges, Girl Scouts develop new skills and explore their interests.
- **Show their accomplishments.** When worn, badges show the world what a Girl Scout can do.
- **Make a difference.** Badge work helps Girl Scouts discover ways to make a difference in their community.

Girl Scouts Explore in a Fun and Safe Environment

Girl Scouts typically complete activities as part of a troop. A troop is a group of Girl Scouts and volunteers who meet regularly to have fun, learn new skills, and improve their community. Troop involvement allows Girl Scout members to grow their confidence, explore new interests, and find their voice. Troops can either be single-level or multi-level.

- A **single-level troop** is made up of Girl Scouts from a single program level, such as Daisies. This structure allows activities and experiences to be tailored to the group's age and developmental stage.
- A **multi-level troop** includes Girl Scouts from more than one program level—such as Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors—together in the same troop. This setup lets older Girl Scouts mentor younger ones, supports diverse learning, and balances shared activities with age-specific needs.

Both troop types offer unique benefits! The choice depends on leader preferences, community needs, and available resources.

Badge Levels

Badge Line for Cookie Business I

Daisy
(Grades K–1)



Brownie
(Grades 2–3)



Junior
(Grades 4–5)



Cadette
(Grades 6–8)



Senior
(Grades 9–10)

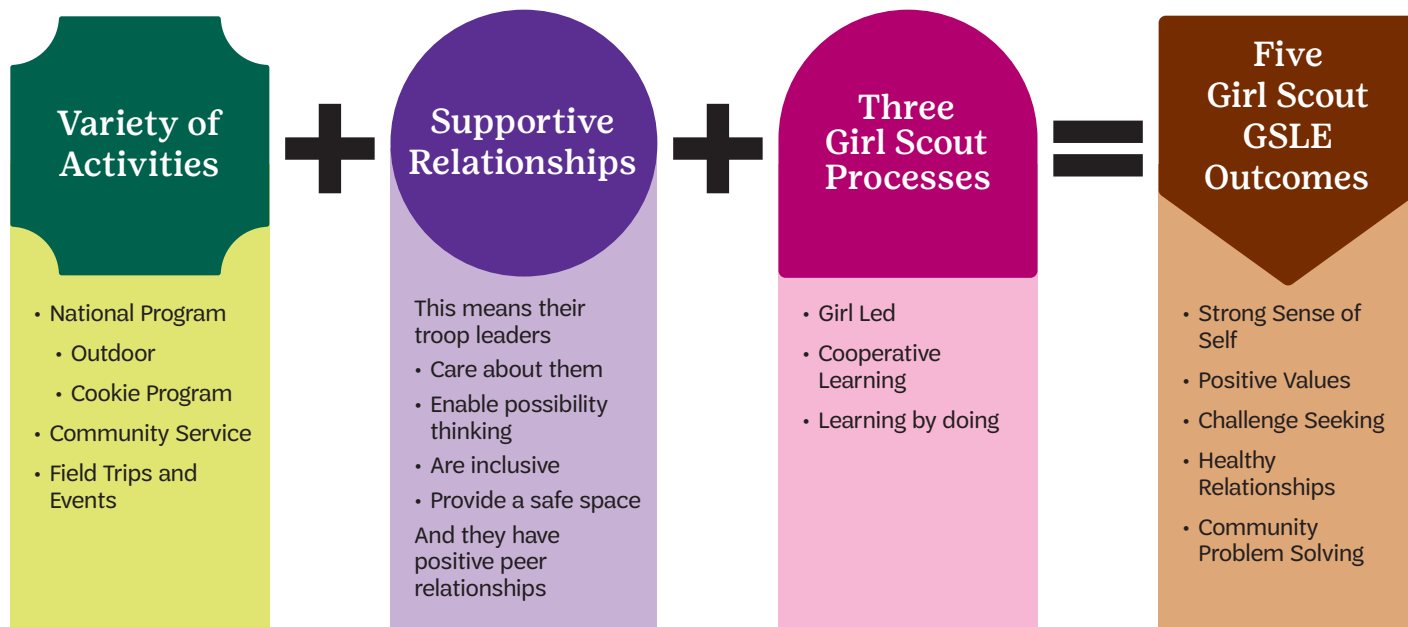


Ambassador
(Grades 11–12)



The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

Girl Scouts look at the world and take action to change it for the better. They make friends, challenge themselves with new experiences, write their own stories, and develop the skills and confidence to say, “I know I can do this!” As a troop leader, you support this process—and the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) is the tool that helps you to do it.



Putting the GSLE into Practice

It's time to put the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (our secret sauce) to work! Implementing it is simple. Just remember these three steps, and you're good to go:

1. Plan a variety of activities, both in and out of the meeting space. Explore Girl Scout badges in STEM, life skills, the outdoors, and entrepreneurship. Get out and experience the world through field trips, council-run events, community service, cookie sales, and more. Check out the Volunteer Toolkit ([girlscouts.org/forvolunteers](https://www.girlscouts.org/forvolunteers)) for all sorts of ideas.

Tip: Encourage them to explore a variety of activities in the Outdoors, STEM, Life Skills, Entrepreneurship, and even field trips, allowing them to discover new interests and passions.

2. Create a supportive environment. Support your Girl Scouts' physical, mental, and emotional well-being, and make sure other adult helpers provide positive support as well. Inspire and guide your Girl Scouts to value, respect, and encourage each other, too! As the troop leader, you'll want to make sure ALL Girl Scouts feel they are welcome, included, and all-around supported within the troop. Take the lead in creating safer spaces where Girl Scouts can thrive! Check out the [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) resource (see page 8) for more on this topic.

Tip: The main ways you can support girls in your troop are to make them feel welcomed and included, acknowledging their ideas and feelings, keeping them safe, and encouraging respect and teamwork among them.

An Experience for the Whole Family

Participation in Girl Scouts isn't just for youth members. Everyone in the family can have fun and benefit—Girl Scouts, their adults, and troop leaders, too! There are lots of ways for families to get involved, both big and small.

As a troop leader, you can engage families by:

- Communicating with them about what their Girl Scouts are doing
- Including them in Girl Scout celebrations
- Encouraging their participation in Girl Scout activities
- Enlisting their help with specific group support roles (outlined below)

Multi-level tip: Facilitating a multi-level troop is a great way to include the whole family in the Girl Scout experience, since siblings of different program levels can attend the same troop meetings.

When families feel engaged, they're more likely to help out. And their involvement results in the best possible experience for troop members. Family support also helps your troop members stay connected over time.

Building Your Troop Leadership and Support System

Although managing the Girl Scout experience for your troop is rewarding, it can be time-consuming. Luckily, there are many ways that parents/caregivers and other family members can engage to support your efforts. No matter how much or little time someone has, there's always a way for them to volunteer. Anyone who helps with your troop and interacts with the girls must be a registered member, complete an online background check and online Child Abuse Prevention Training.

Troop leadership and support roles

- **Troop leader:** As troop leader, you guide and mentor Girl Scouts in your troop. You support their personal growth, leadership skill development, and community involvement through engaging activities and learning experiences.
- **Co-leader:** A co-leader provides general backup and support. They help plan and run meetings and activities, bringing the Girl Scout experience to life for your troop.
- **Treasurer:** This volunteer manages the troop's finances. They oversee budgeting, track expenses, and clearly communicate financial information to support the troop's activities and goals.
- **Cookie manager:** When cookie season comes, you'll want one volunteer who will commit to supporting your troop's efforts throughout the process. This person manages cookie sale logistics, including troop orders, cookie delivery, and other key functions.
- **Outdoor helper:** It's great to have one volunteer dedicated to supporting your troop's outdoor experiences and learning. This person can help your troop explore the outdoors, serve as the camp-certified volunteer for the troop, and take on other outdoor-related responsibilities.
- **Support Volunteer:** Every troop leader needs a little extra help. Ask family members to serve as troop helpers, providing support during meetings to make sure everything runs smoothly.
- **Field trip chaperone:** This volunteer ensures the safety and well-being of Girl Scouts during outings. They supervise activities while promoting teamwork and making sure guidelines are followed.

Multi-level tip: Parents/caregivers with multiple Girl Scouts in a troop may especially enjoy volunteering. Getting involved lets them embrace the Girl Scout experience together as a family.

Family/Caregiver Meeting Checklist

Communication with families is key and it all starts at your Family/Caregiver Meeting. Here's a meeting checklist you can follow to make sure to cover the most important points with your families/caregivers.

1. Welcome and introductions

- ☐ Leader introductions
- ☐ Family/caregiver introductions
- ☐ Troop meeting logistics

2. Discover the Girl Scout difference

- ☐ Mission; Promise and Law
- ☐ What Girl Scouts do
- ☐ How Girl Scouts do it (GSLE)
- ☐ Troop Year Plan

3. Family as part of the formula

- ☐ Why family engagement?
- ☐ Communication methods

4. Getting families involved

- ☐ Troop leadership opportunities
- ☐ Other ways to help

5. Money matters and more

- ☐ Uniforms, supplies, and other costs
- ☐ How troops pay for things
- ☐ Paperwork

6. Wrap it up

- ☐ Close with intention
- ☐ Q&A

For more family/caregiver meeting content, check out the Family Engagement training on [gsLearn](https://girlscouts.org/gslearn) (girlscouts.org/gslearn).

Note: If Girl Scouts will be attending this meeting, consider starting out by having the families/caregivers and Girl Scouts introduce themselves and discuss their hopes for their Girl Scout experience. Then provide a short craft activity for Girl Scouts to do while the parents/caregivers attend their part of the meeting.

Multi-level tip: Encourage older Girl Scouts to lead a simple activity for younger Girl Scouts while the family/caregiver meeting takes place.

Resources to Simplify Your Experience

Girl Scouts provides a selection of useful tools—both in print and online—to support you in preparing for your volunteer role and getting started with troop meetings.

Volunteer Resources

myGS (mygs.girlscouts.org)

The Girl Scout member account management system, [myGS](https://mygs.girlscouts.org), is your go-to portal for managing your troop's Girl Scout experience. Here you'll find membership information and additional troop management tools, including gsEvents, the Volunteer Toolkit, and gsLearn. Families also have access to myGS to manage memberships in their household.

Volunteer Toolkit (girlscouts.org/vtk)

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is a digital planning tool that helps troop leaders run a Girl Scout troop or experience. The VTK provides Girl Scout programming at your fingertips, offering fully scripted meeting plans, badge requirements, and Troop Year Plans to help you deliver an engaging and exciting Girl Scout year. This tool is available on any device and can be found at girlscouts.org/vtk or you can also access it on your myGS navigation bar under My Account.

gsLearn (girlscouts.org/gslearn)

gsLearn is packed with indispensable volunteer trainings and courses, including new leader onboarding material, program training, and advice for guiding Girl Scouts at every grade level. You can access both national and council-specific courses through gsLearn, which is found on your myGS navigation bar.

Multi-level tip: Be sure to check out Leading a Multi-Level Troop and other training courses designed for multi-level troops.

Girl Scout Shop (girlscoutshop.com)

Girl Scout uniforms are a great way for Girl Scouts to show their pride and display their achievements! Find uniforms, badges, leader resources, apparel, outdoor gear, gifts, and more—all in one place. Plus, every purchase at [GirlScouts.org](https://girlscouts.org) supports Girl Scouts everywhere and helps power our mission. Shop online or visit a local council store today!

gsEvents (girlscouts.org/gsevents)

gsEvents is a tool that lets you search for Girl Scout-affiliated events by title, date, location, topic, age range, and other criteria. Instructions to access gsEvents can be found at girlscouts.org/gsevents or by clicking My Events on your myGS navigation bar.

Volunteer Essentials (www.gshnj.org/volunteer-essentials)

This detailed guide to volunteer policies and procedures is designed to support busy troop volunteers. Inside you'll find everything you need to dive into your newest adventure—being an awesome Girl Scout leader.

Safety Activity Checkpoints (www.gshnj.org/safe-spaces)

Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC) is a comprehensive collection of safety guidelines for GSUSA- and council-approved activities. The resource lays out standards that ensure the physical and emotional safety of youth. It also guides leaders in considering equity, diversity, and inclusivity when planning activities, making sure that all Girl Scouts who want to participate are included. Whether you're looking for field trip guidelines or tips for creating an inclusive meeting space, you'll find key information here.

Forms and Documents (www.gshnj.org/formsanddocs)

This comprehensive collection of forms and documents is designed to keep busy troop volunteers organized and prepared. Inside you'll find everything you need to navigate the essentials—from registration guides to annual permission slips and all the necessary paperwork for your Girl Scout adventures.



Access Key
Volunteer
Resources
here

Handbooks are available for Girl Scouts at each program level, Daisy through Ambassador. These serve as guides for the Girl Scout experience, meeting Girl Scouts where they are and introducing them to the programming and other foundational aspects of being a Girl Scout. Handbooks are not required, but they're a helpful resource. You can ask that each Girl Scout get one, or you can choose to obtain one copy for your troop to share.

Family Connection (girlscouts.org/familyconnection)

A guide for families as they begin their Girl Scout adventure! Packed with background info, family activities, and places for Girl Scouts to write down their favorite memories from the year, Girl Scout Family Connection is a go-to guide to the year ahead for families.

Notes

Get Ready!

Follow this checklist to kick off a great Girl Scout year.

To get started...

- ☐ Register as a volunteer with Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey.
- ☐ Complete a background check through our online vendor, Asurint.
- ☐ If you haven't already, reach out to your network to find a potential co-leader for your new troop.
- ☐ Complete self-paced, online training.
- ☐ Meet with your co-leader(s) to plan an initial family/caregiver meeting.
- ☐ Invite potential members to join the troop. (Talk to a council representative for recruitment support, if needed.)
- ☐ Visit MyGS to understand where badges and other program resources are hosted in the Volunteer Toolkit and available training courses in gsLearn (girlscouts.org/gsllearn).

In your first month...

- ☐ Hold your family/caregiver meeting.
- ☐ Check out [GSUSA's Troop Year Plans](#) as you start planning for your first troop meeting.
- ☐ Confirm your troop roster by logging into myGS (girlscouts.org/forvolunteers).
- ☐ Connect with your service unit for peer-to-peer advice, local event info and coordination, and general support.
- ☐ Determine where you'll hold your meetings and host your first troop meeting. (If you're having trouble finding a location, reach out to a council representative for help.)
- ☐ Request a [Bank Authorization Letter](#) and open your troop bank account.
- ☐ Access gsLearn (girlscouts.org/gsllearn) and make sure you take the following courses:
 - ☐ GSHNJ New Leader Fundamentals (135)
 - ☐ GSHNJ Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Course (135)
 - ☐ Level-Specific Training
 - ☐ Review optional training courses at any time.

Family/Caregiver Meeting: Holding a family/caregiver meeting is a key part of starting your troop year. It helps set expectations for families and shows them how they can support the troop. You can use the Family/Caregiver Meeting Checklist on page 7 to plan your troop's meeting.

Multi-level tip: Troop Year Plans are available for both single-level and multi-level troops. The multi-level Troop Year Plans are designed with badges that are easy to facilitate simultaneously across levels.

Service Units: Your service unit is an organized network of Girl Scout youth, family members, and volunteers (including all current troop leaders) in your area. It is a source of peer-to-peer advice and support. Service units typically hold regular troop leader meetings to share details on upcoming events, product programs, and other timely topics.

In your first three months...

- ☐ Host your first one or two troop meetings.
- ☐ Follow up with the council if you have any additional questions at info@gshnj.org or 908-518-4400.

In your first year...

- ☐ Complete First Aid/CPR training if you plan to take your troop on outings away from your usual meeting space.
- ☐ Complete Outdoors and Overnights Training six months prior to any overnight trips you plan for your troop.

Plan Your Girl Scout Year

It's go time! Get started with the ready-to-use Troop Year Plans on myGS. Then use the calendar below to build out a Girl Scout year packed with fun, friendship, learning, and so much more.

The Girl Scout Membership Year

The Girl Scout membership year runs from October 1 through September 30. Current Girl Scouts can renew their membership for the next year starting on April 1. New Girl Scouts can start at any time.

Fall milestones:

- New membership year starts October 1
- Fall product program begins mid-September

Winter milestones:

- Prepare for cookie season
- Attend cookie rallies
- Cookie program begins in early January

September

December

Happy holidays!

October

10/11 International Day of the Girl

10/31 Juliette Gordon Low's birthday/Founder's Day

January

Happy New Year!

November

Plan a [Friendsgiving!](#)

February

2/22 World Thinking Day

Spring milestones:

- Consider planning a trip or service project
- Early Girl Scout registration begins for next membership year
- Celebrate Girl Scout Week

Summer milestones:

- Hold closing/bridging ceremonies
- Provide optional activities for families to complete together over the summer (such as [Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors](#))

March

3/8– 3/14 Celebrate Girl Scout Week!

3/8 Girl Scout Sunday

3/13 Girl Scout Jummah

3/13–3/14 Girl Scout Sabbath Shabbat

3/12 Girl Scouts' birthday

June

April

Happy Volunteer Appreciation Month! (Thank you!)

4/01 Early renewal begins

4/22 Earth Day—April 22

4/22 Leader Appreciation Day—April 22

July

7/31 Annual Troop Finance report due

May

August

You're on a Roll

Now that you have all the tools you need for a strong start, below is easy access to the useful information that will help you soar together with your Girl Scout Troop.



[Girl Scout Promise and Law](#)



[Make New Friends](#)



[What Do Girl Scouts Do?](#)



[Uniform Insignia Placement](#)



[Troop Year Plans](#)



[Tips for Troop Leaders](#)



It's time to be inspired and have fun with your troop! When leaders and Girl Scouts work together, the sky's the limit—so get ready to soar!

TM ® & © 2025 Girl Scouts of the United States of America. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical methods, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, now known or hereinafter invented, without the prior written permission of Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA), except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permissions requests, write to GSUSA at the address below or visit the www.girlscouts.org website to access permission request forms.

First published in 2025 by Girl Scouts of the United States of America, 420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018-2798, www.girlscouts.org