



# New Leader's Guide to Success



# NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

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### **The Girl Scout Promise**

On my honor, I will try:  
To serve God\* and my country,  
To help people at all times,  
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

### **The Girl Scout Law**

I will do my best to be honest  
and fair,  
friendly and helpful,  
considerate and caring,  
courageous and strong, and  
responsible for what I say and do,  
and to  
respect myself and others,  
respect authority,  
use resources wisely,  
make the world a better place,  
and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

### **Our Mission**

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

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

### **Who can be a Girl Scout?**

At Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts, we center the experiences of girls and women, and welcome youth members who identify as girls, transgender boys, and non-binary and gender non-conforming people, as well as adults of all genders.

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# Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Thank you for becoming a Girl Scout troop leader! We're thrilled you joined the Girl Scout Movement.

Girl Scouts is so much more than a fun activity—it's a movement. It's how girls become forces for good and make a difference in their schools and communities, across the country, and around the world. And while each troop's experience might look a little different, the fun, discovery, and power of sisterhood is the same. Girls—as well as the caring volunteers who support them—grow the values and leadership skills they need to power a lifetime of success and adventure, whatever that looks like for them.

This guide will prepare you to effectively lead during your first year as a Girl Scout troop leader. Need help along the way? Let us know! We have many tools, training resources, and people to support you through every step.

You're now a part of our team. We can't wait to see the impact you'll make this year!

### Council Contact Information

#### **GSEMA OFFICES**

Waltham Office at Camp Cedar Hill  
265 Beaver Street  
Waltham, MA 02452

Middleboro Office  
111 E. Grove Street  
Middleboro, MA 02346

Andover Office at Camp Maude Eaton  
143 Abbot Street  
Andover, MA 01810

#### **The Shop at Camp Cedar Hill Hours**

Our shop hours vary from season to season. Visit [gsema.org/shop](https://gsema.org/shop) for up-to-date store hours or to shop online.

**[gsema.org](https://gsema.org)**  
[customercare@gsema.org](mailto:customercare@gsema.org)





# NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

## You—A Girl Scout Leader!

### Your Role

Being a Girl Scout troop leader is an incredible journey for you and your girls. And together you'll shape the future through all you do today! Along the way, you'll hone your own leadership style and discover that you'll achieve more than you thought possible.

In Girl Scouting, leadership isn't about 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.



### Leadership is teaching girls:

- That they can do and be anything!
- That they are decision-makers who 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:

- Advises and cheers on your troop, not as a teacher with a planned lesson or activity.
- Ensures each girl can carry out her responsibilities within the troop.
- Encourages girls to build their skills and their ethics.
- Gives more responsibility to the girls as they grow and develop.



### It's important to remember that:

- You can't expect to know everything the girls might 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.

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## Let's Get Started!

### Managing Your Member Experience Online

After your background check is completed and you're approved to serve as a volunteer, you'll receive an email prompting you to log into MyGS, your Girl Scout member community. MyGS allows you to manage your member experience online.

On the Troop tab in MyGS, you can see any girls and adults who have signed up for your troop and add new girls to your troop—and the [Troop Opportunity Catalog](#) allows you as the troop leader to display available openings in your troop for girls and/or volunteers. New troops are automatically added, but you can update your information by completing a brief questionnaire at [bit.ly/opportunitycatalog](https://bit.ly/opportunitycatalog).

### Next Steps

Look out for a welcome email with details on training designed to build your confidence, and how to connect with your local community of volunteers and staff dedicated to support you.

## Troop Leader Learning Path

When you're set up for success, you're empowered to set up your girls for success! Become the best leader you can be with our convenient online training courses and supportive enrichment resources. Visit [gsema.org](https://gsema.org), click [MyGS](#) and choose [gsLearn](#) to get started!

### 1. New Leader Orientation

Confident leaders are prepared leaders, and this interactive, just-in-time learning course provides all the info you need to get started as a troop leader.

### 2. Program Level Essentials

Learn about the Girl Scout Program level – Daisies, Brownies, or more – that you lead, from developmental stages, meeting structure best practices, and the badges and recognitions your troop/group can earn in Girl Scouting.

## Volunteer Resources

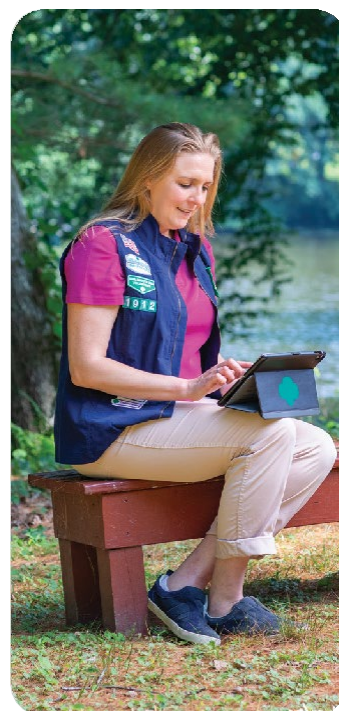
### Starting a Troop

We have a web page dedicated to getting started resources for new leaders, including links to our New Leader Drop-in Sessions, ideas for growing your troop, and where to ask for help.

Check it out at [gsema.org/gettingstarted](https://gsema.org/gettingstarted).

### Sample Year Plans

Wondering what a typical year in Girl Scouts can look like? Check out our sample year plans at [gsema.org/volunteerresources](https://gsema.org/volunteerresources).



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### The Volunteer Toolkit

This fully customizable digital planning tool provides you with Girl Scout program content, award requirements, and other resources, so that you can keep your Girl Scout year running smoothly. Accessible from any computer, tablet, or mobile device, the Volunteer Toolkit lets troop leaders:

- Explore meeting topics and program activities with their girls
- Print step-by-step activity guides and shopping lists
- Manage girl attendance and track achievements
- Add local events
- Track and share financial information
- Message and share meeting activities with troop families

...plus so much more! Learn more and access the Volunteer Toolkit by visiting [gsema.org](https://gsema.org) and clicking MyGS.

### Volunteer Essentials

With key information, policies, and procedures that support the safe and consistent delivery of Girl Scout programming to girls across the council, Volunteer Essentials is just that—essential. By agreeing to be a Girl Scout volunteer, you agree to follow the guidance outlined in this resource. Volunteer Essentials is updated annually, and the latest version can always be found on our website, [gsema.org/volunteeressentials](https://gsema.org/volunteeressentials).

### Safety Activity Checkpoints

This guide has everything you need to prepare for and keep your girls safe during a range of activities outside the normal Girl Scout troop meeting. It can be found at [gsema.org/safety](https://gsema.org/safety).

## The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

What makes Girl Scouts truly unique? Everything is designed especially for, and is tested by, girls! Our program centers on our research-backed Girl Scout Leadership Experience—that is, what girls do and how they do it. Activities are girl-led, which gives girls opportunities to explore leadership roles and to learn by doing in a cooperative-learning environment.

At Girl Scouts, girls will:

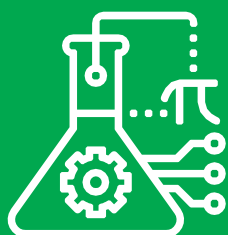
- **Discover:** Every activity girls tackle through Girl Scouts helps them discover who they are, what excites them, and what their talents are.
- **Connect:** Girls collaborate with and learn from other people as they expand their horizons. This helps them care about and inspire others.
- **Take Action:** As girls deepen their relationship with the world around them, they become eager to take action to make the world a better place.

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So, what does this mean for your troop? Through Girl Scouting, your girls will develop a strong sense of self, demonstrate positive values, seek challenges, solve significant problems in the community, and establish healthy relationships. These aren't just good qualities—they're leadership skills that will last a lifetime!

### What Girl Scouts Do

No matter what excites your girls, they'll find engaging and fun activities in the four areas that make up the core of the Girl Scout program:



#### **STEM**

Computer science, engineering, robotics, outdoor STEM, and more



#### **Outdoors**

Adventure and skill building, from the backyard to the backcountry, including through camping experiences for all ages



#### **Life Skills**

Civic engagement, healthy living, global citizenship, communication skills—to name a few



#### **Entrepreneurship**

The Girl Scout Cookie Program—the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world—teaches goal setting, decision making, money management, business ethics, and people skills



Whether they complete Girl Scout Leadership Journeys, earn badges, run their own cookie business, pack for their first hike, change the world through Take Action projects, or any combination of these activities, at Girl Scouts, every girl has countless ways to explore our four program areas and hone the skills they'll need to power a lifetime of success—whatever that looks like for them.

Explore the many exciting possibilities with the Award and Badge Explorer at [girlscouts.org/badges](https://www.girlscouts.org/badges).



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### Where Girl Scouts Can Take Your Girls

As your girls progress through Girl Scouts, they'll learn to take the reins and make their Girl Scout experiences their own—it's what being girl-led is all about! And as a leader, you'll encourage them to dream big and challenge themselves as they take their newfound passions to the next level.

While program elements—like outdoor expeditions and entrepreneurial ventures—align across all grade levels, Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies won't be doing the same activities as seasoned Seniors and Ambassadors. But 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 those next steps. So what can you expect as they grow through each level of Girl Scouting?



**Girl Scout Daisies (Grades K & 1)** sparkle with that first-time newness in everything they do. They go on trips, learn about nature and science, and explore the arts and their communities—and so much more. Daisies can also earn learning petals.



**Girl Scout Brownies (Grades 2 & 3)** work together as they earn badges and explore their communities. Friendship, fun, and age-appropriate activities begin at the Girl Scout Brownie meeting and move out to the community and the wider world. While earning badges, Brownies build skills, learn hobbies, and have fun!



**Girl Scout Juniors (Grades 4 & 5)** are big-idea thinkers. They're explorers at camp and product designers when they earn their Innovation and Storytelling badges, or even their Bronze Award. Every day, they wake up ready to play a new role.



**Girl Scout Cadettes (Grades 6-8)** chart their own courses and let their curiosity and imagination lead the way. They learn about the power of being a good friend, gain confidence by mentoring younger girls, and can earn their Silver Award.



**Girl Scout Seniors (Grades 9 & 10)** are ready to take the world by storm, and Girl Scouts gives them countless ways to do it. Their experiences shape their world, while giving them a safe space to be themselves and explore their interests. Seniors can earn the prestigious Gold Award.



**Girl Scout Ambassadors (Grades 11 & 12)** know that small acts produce big change. While they get ready for life beyond high school, Girl Scouts helps them take flight. They can also earn their Gold Award and drive lasting impact in their communities.



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Throughout their time as Girl Scouts, girls grow into forces for good who transform the world through the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. By earning these awards, your girls will tackle issues close to their hearts and make a real difference—and the Gold Award qualifies them for exclusive college scholarships and opens doors to promising career opportunities. The longer your girls are in Girl Scouts, the brighter their futures will be!



## What Makes a Successful Troop Experience?

No matter where your girls live, a universal Girl Scout experience connects them to their fellow Girl Scouts around the country. And there are so many ways to make sure your girls get the full Girl Scout experience in a way that excites and inspires them!



### You can count on Girl Scouts to provide:

- All-girl spaces
- Supportive adult mentors
- Tools for family involvement
- Cooperative, hands-on learning
- Girl-led activities
- Rigorous safety standards

### Throughout the troop year, you'll support your girls as they...

- Attend regular meetings
- Earn badges and Girl Scout awards
- Complete Take Action projects
- Participate in the Cookie and Product Sale programs
- Get outdoors
- Go on field trips
- Learn Girl Scout traditions
- And, so much more!



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### Guiding Your Troop Experience

In leading a new troop, you'll want to guide the structure and experiences of your troop—from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, and 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 families.

Use these questions to guide your conversation with troop volunteers or co-leader before discussing the topics with families.

#### Meeting Logistics

When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?

Where will we meet?  
(Troop leader pro tip: great meeting spaces include schools, places of worship, libraries, and community centers. If working with teens, consider meeting at coffee shops, bookstores, or another place they enjoy.)

If we meet virtually, which platform will we use?  
Can all girls access the necessary technology?

#### Your Troop

Will our troop consist of girls in a single grade level or facilitated as a multi-level troop with girls of many grade levels?

#### Troop Communication

How often will we communicate with troop families?

How will we keep families in the loop? The Volunteer Toolkit? Emails? Group texts?

#### Money Matters

Will our troop charge dues?

How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? What should our financial plan look like?

Which components of the uniform—tunic, sash, vest—will troop families need to purchase? (Troop leader pro tip: get the full rundown on uniforms and insignia at [girlscouts.org/uniforms](https://girlscouts.org/uniforms).)

### Your Troop Volunteer Team

You're never alone on your troop leader journey! Set the stage for a successful troop year by tapping into the people resources already at your fingertips: families, friends, and members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide troops with time, experience, and ideas—so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your troop volunteer team! All adult members associated with a troop should have a volunteer role.

Some members of your volunteer team might play more active roles than others—and that's OK! One caregiver in your troop might step up as a dedicated troop treasurer, while others might volunteer to chaperone a field trip. Some roles, especially those that involve handling troop funds and supervising girls, require additional registration and approval. Be sure those volunteers get signed up before they jump into the fun! [gsema.org/waystovolunteer](https://gsema.org/waystovolunteer)

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### Family Connections: The Key Ingredient to Successful Girl Scout Troops!

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, 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're doing!

A parent/caregiver meeting should be the first meeting you hold each troop year—it sets up both new and returning troops for success! Scan code for a sample agenda.

#### Why? Because it helps:

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

Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging families in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When families are involved, leaders have support, and when the troop has a plan, girls benefit!

Check out our step-by-step guide and family meeting outline in the Volunteer Toolkit. This hour-long meeting will make all the difference in the year ahead: **100% of troops with the most satisfied parents and troop leaders report that they hold parent meetings.** You'll also want to hold an additional family meeting ahead of cookie season to introduce families to the program and how they can pitch in.

Although Girl Scout programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it's important and helpful to open a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting the whole crew—whether it's through a virtual meeting where siblings and caregivers

join in the fun or a bridging ceremony—helps families better understand the value of Girl Scouts and makes them more likely to invest their time and talents in the troop.

That said, there's no need to wait for one of these special events to engage families in their Girl Scouts' troop 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 girl “be the expert” at home, by, for example, explaining or teaching a new skill she's learned to the rest of the family.

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# Parent/Caregiver Meeting Agenda

Total Time: 30-60 Minutes

While you're welcome to put your own unique spin on this meeting, following this format will ensure the most relevant information is communicated clearly and that everyone's on the same page. *Note: This portion of the agenda has been set in Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) as 30 minutes, however it may take closer to an hour to provide parents with their introduction and portion of this meeting agenda.*

Topic	Description	Time
Welcome and Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leader introductions (share why you volunteer your time with Girl Scouts) and go over dates/times/frequency and locations of upcoming meetings</li><li>• Have caregivers introduce themselves and share expectations for this year of Girl Scouting</li></ul>	10 minutes
Discover the Girl Scout Difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain our mission as well as the <a href="#"><u>Girl Scout Promise and Law</u></a></li><li>• Discuss how our girl-led, hands-on, collaborative program helps girls take risks, dream bigger, and gain important skills—all while having fun and making friends</li><li>• Share overview of your year plan-including which badges, journeys, special trips, and outdoor adventures the troop may participate in</li></ul>	15-20 minutes
Family as Part of the Formula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain how you'll be engaging parents in their girls' Girl Scout lives by keeping them in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting</li><li>• Encourage them to let their daughters "be the expert" at home, explaining or teaching a new skill she's learned to the rest of the family-the <i>Family Tip Sheet</i> will help them do it</li><li>• Let them know there will be special events throughout the year for families to share with their girl and celebrate all they're achieving with the troop</li></ul>	10 minutes
Get them Hooked on Helping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using the <i>Make Her Experience Memorable</i> guide from the Volunteer Tool Kit, point out that spending just a little time to help can make a big impact</li><li>• Secure adults to help with organizing and managing the calendar for troop snacks, the carpool schedule, and the troop phone tree or social media page-all activities that can take as little as 15 minutes per week</li><li>• Encourage caregivers to consider other leadership opportunities listed-emphasize they're not just welcome to lend a hand, they're <i>wanted</i></li></ul>	10 minutes



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Money Matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline costs to parents and caregivers (sash or vest and other supplies needed for the year)</li> <li>• Explain dues expectations, and how they'll be used to support the troop</li> <li>• If participating in the Girl Scout Cookie or the Fall Product Program, explain how money raised benefits the troop, and briefly go over the five critical skills girls will develop in the process</li> </ul>	10 minutes
Wrap It Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure everyone has your phone and email, knows the troop number, and has all the information about the next troop meeting (date, time, location and any supplies the girls will need to bring).</li> <li>• Collect forms then leave time for questions, concerns, and simply to get to know people better</li> <li>• Remember: Both meetings should wrap up/close together.</li> </ul>	5 minutes
Closing: Friendship Circle	<p><i>Girl Scouts</i> join their parents/caregivers, and invite all to form a circle, cross arms, and then join hands. Then, close the meeting with a Friendship Squeeze. First, ask for a volunteer to start the Squeeze. If needed, use the Quiet Sign to get everyone settled. Say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think of a silent wish that you would like to pass along.</li> <li>• Once you get the wish and the squeeze passed to you, then you'll use your right hand to squeeze the hand of the friend next to you and it will travel all around the circle.</li> <li>• The last person to have her hand squeezed will say, "Goodbye, Girl Scouts."</li> <li>• Ready?</li> </ul> <p>Ask the girl who volunteered to start the Friendship Squeeze. After the squeeze has gone all the way around the circle, girl who began the squeeze says, "Goodbye, Girl Scouts."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now everyone raise your joined hands and twist clockwise out of the circle so that everyone is untwisted and facing away from the circle.</li> <li>• Remember to keep your Girl Scout promise and Girl Scout Law where you can see them and practice at home.</li> <li>• The next meeting is _____</li> <li>• See you next time, Girl Scouts!</li> </ul>	5-10 minutes

Follow up with a thank you, then keep the conversation going all year via email, in- person chats, and/or social media. Updating caregivers on troop activities helps them feel more invested and gives them a chance to build on their girl's experience at home.

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### How You Can Support Our Troop

Many volunteer skills, interests and abilities are needed for a troop to be successful. Use this worksheet at a meeting with families in your Girl Scout troop to identify where personal interests align with the troop's needs. As a reminder, all volunteers must become registered members of Girl Scouts and complete the criminal background check.

#### Troop Leadership Team

Are you excited to work directly with girls in the troop? Troop leadership volunteers take in-person council training series, set up the troop's schedule, plan & facilitate regular troop meetings.

_____	_____
_____	_____

#### Additional Volunteer Roles

**Troop Cookie Coordinator** and/or **Fall Product Program Coordinator:** Are you organized and love snacks? Cookie and Fall Product Program Troop Coordinators are responsible for managing troop cookie and fall product inventory, including pick-up at council offices and distribution to families, as well as payment collection. These volunteers are provided with annual training on resources and processes, and is a seasonal role (September-October and December-March).

**Troop Treasurer:** Are you detail oriented? Act as co-signer on the troop's bank account, reconcile monthly bank statements, keep receipts for troop purchases, and submit a year-end financial report to council.

**Friends & Family:** There are lots of additional way to support your troop!

- **Meeting Assistant(s) or Guest Speaker:** Do you have a special skill? Interesting hobby? Want to help ensure the troop is meeting Girl Scout volunteer-to-girl safety ratios? You can assist with meeting activities or share your unique talents as a guest speaker.
- **Field Trip Coordinator:** Love planning adventures? Assist the troop leadership team with planning field trips and organizing carpooling or public transportation.
- **Troop First Aider:** Are you a doctor, nurse, or simply not squeamish when it comes to boo-boos? Become your troop's first aid by getting first aid/CPR certified through Girl Scouts or an equivalent course.
- **Service Unit Liaison:** Love being in the know? Attend local Girl Scout community meetings to get updates about town-wide activities and share with your troop leadership team.

## Sign Up to Help

Our troop families are a great resource for bringing meaningful program activities to our girls. By sharing a little bit about your interests, hobbies, and/or professional experiences, we will be able to match your time and talents to the activities, programs, and badges the girls will be working on this year.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture      | <input type="checkbox"/> Drawing/Painting           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts & Crafts     | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Issues       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Astronomy         | <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid, Health & Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Maintenance  | <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycling         | <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Fitness           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping           | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing          | <input type="checkbox"/> Horseback Riding           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career Planning   | <input type="checkbox"/> Human/Personal Relations   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry/Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care        | <input type="checkbox"/> Music, Singing             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computers         | <input type="checkbox"/> Sewing                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking/Nutrition | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dental Health     | <input type="checkbox"/> Woodworking                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drama             |   |

Other ways you can help:

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# Let's Go—Your First Troop Meeting!

Your first troop meeting is a great chance to get to know the girls and brainstorm the exciting things they want to do in the year to come. If you're feeling a little nervous about leading troop meetings and experiences with your girls, that's OK! Just remember that:

It doesn't need to be perfect. Did an activity run over time? Or maybe you had tech issues during your virtual meeting? Take a deep breath, roll with the changes, and have fun! The girls aren't expecting perfection from you: your time, attention, and guidance are the best part of your leadership.

Learn with your girls. Keeping activities girl-led also means that at some point the girls will want to earn a badge or complete a project in a subject unfamiliar to you. But don't let that hold you back! Be open with the girls when you don't know something and become their partner in learning more. You'll show them that learning is a lifelong process and that, with an open mind, they can overcome any challenges that come their way.

### Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

- 1. Ramp up.** Plan activities for the girls on arrival so that they have something to do until the meeting begins. This could be as simple as providing coloring pages, journaling, or talking with one another. (5 minutes)
- 2. Open.** Each troop decides how to open its meetings—most begin with the Girl Scout Promise and Law, a simple flag ceremony, song, game, story, or other activity designed by the girls. (5–10 minutes)
- 3. Conduct troop business.** Collect dues and make announcements, or plan an upcoming event or trip while families are present. (5 minutes)
- 4. Let the fun begin.** Use the meeting plans found in the Volunteer Toolkit! Activities are already designed to fit easily into this part of your meeting as you help your troop earn badges and complete Journeys. (30–45 minutes)
- 5. Clean up.** Because Girl Scouts should always leave a place cleaner than they found it! (5 minutes)
- 6. Close.** Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close—with a song, game, story, or friendship squeeze! (5–10 minutes)

### First Meeting Checklist

- **Cover the basics.** Review the details about when and where the meeting will take place and make sure families are aware.
- **Get ready.** Use the Volunteer Toolkit to verify your troop roster and email parents. This might be a great time to ask parents to provide you with any needed items, such as health history forms, uniform order forms, and troop dues.
- **Know the agenda.** Refer to our “Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting” and the Volunteer Toolkit sample meeting agenda.
- **Review and practice your agenda.** You'll feel calmer during the actual meeting and ready to make adjustments as needed.
- **Be prepared...for fun!** When the girls and parents see that you're prepared for the meeting and ready to have a great time, they'll follow your lead!



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### Give it a Try Using the Six-Part Meeting Template

	What will we do?	Who will lead?	What will we need?
Start Up Activity			
Opening			
Business			
Activity 1			
Optional Activity 2			
Optional Activity 3			
Clean-up			
Closing			



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## Keeping Girl Scouts Safe

### Understanding 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 chart below breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of girls.

Volunteer-to-Girl Ratio Chart	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:
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

### Planning Safe Activities

When preparing for any activity with girls, check Girl Scouts' Safety Activity Checkpoints at [gsema.org/safety](http://gsema.org/safety) for required guidelines on where to do the activity, how to include girls with disabilities, where to find both basic and specialized gear for the activity, and the specific steps to follow on the day of the activity. Safety Activity Checkpoints will also note if a first-aider is required.

If a safety activity checkpoint doesn't exist for an activity you and your girls are interested in, contact Customer Care at [customercare@gsema.org](mailto:customercare@gsema.org) before making any definite plans.

### What to Do in an Emergency

Although we all hope the worst never happens, you should know and follow our council's procedures for handling emergency incidents. Remember, at the scene of an incident, safety is your first priority. Provide care for the injured person and/or obtain medical assistance, then immediately report the emergency to and/or call 911 for emergency medical assistance, then report the emergency to GSEMA at 800-348-7788.

Learn more about identifying, mitigating and responding in the event of an emergency or injury by creating your own Emergency Action Plan using our worksheet.

### Funding the Fun

Your girls probably have some big ideas about what they want to do in Girl Scouts—and that's awesome! As a troop leader, you'll coach them as they learn to earn and manage troop funds. But where do you start? Troop activities are powered in two main ways:

**Troop dues.** Many troops decide to collect troop dues to help provide startup funds for troop activities and supplies. These could range from a few dollars per meeting to a lump sum for the entire school year. It's completely up to each troop to decide what works best for them to support the activities they want to do.

**Money-earning activities.** The fall product and cookie programs are the primary money-earning activities for a troop—and they're a hands-on way for girls to learn money management skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives. You'll learn the ins-and-outs of these programs in a separate training.



### Money FAQs

**Opening a bank account:** New troops will need to set up a bank account to collect dues, pay for troop supplies and activities, and collect product sales revenue.

**Financial assistance:** Finances shouldn't stand in the way of a Girl Scout's participation. Any girl needing financial assistance for membership can request it as part of the online member registration process. Other financial assistance is available for uniform components, events, and camps, and can be requested.

**Tax exemption:** Councils are 501(c)(3) nonprofits, so take advantage of your council's tax-exempt form when purchasing supplies and materials for Girl Scout troop use. GSEMA's form is available to volunteers who complete New Leader Orientation.

We know you might have more questions about troop finances, and we've got answers! Check out the troop finances portion of Volunteer Essentials and Financing the Fun on gsLearn for all the details you'll need to keep troop business running smoothly.





## NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

### Getting Started Checklist for New Troop Leaders

Ready to start? Here are the key to-dos for you to check off in your first few months getting your troop started and where to find more information within this guide. Please visit [gsema.org/forms](https://gsema.org/forms) to access many of the documents referenced in this checklist.

- ☐ Register yourself (and every adult helping with the troop) as a volunteer at [mygs.girlscouts.org](https://mygs.girlscouts.org).
- ☐ Submit your CORI/SORI form (and one for every adult volunteer).
- ☐ Complete New Leader Orientation for new troop leaders.
- ☐ Connect with your support network:
  - My Volunteer Support Specialist (staff) is: \_\_\_\_\_
  - My community's Service Unit Coordinator (volunteer): \_\_\_\_\_
  - My community's Service Unit New Leader Mentor (volunteer): \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Check your Troop Roster on [mygs.girlscouts.org](https://mygs.girlscouts.org) for a list of girls and volunteers in your troop.
- ☐ Keep girls safe by ensuring you have enough registered, background checked volunteers.
- ☐ Meet with your troop co-leader(s) and volunteer team to decide:
  - your troop's meeting location, frequency, and time.
  - how to best communicate with each other.
  - who will be on the troop's bank account.
- ☐ Complete the troop bank account form to open your account with your troop's co-leaders and/or troop treasurer.
- ☐ Funding the fun: Decide if your troop will collect dues, and learn about how to participate in the fall product and cookie programs.
- ☐ Host a parents and caregivers meeting, see page 11 and New Leader Orientation.
- ☐ Plan your first troop meeting using the first meeting checklist on page 12 of this guide, and the Volunteer Toolkit at [mygs.girlscouts.org](https://mygs.girlscouts.org).

### Tips for a Successful First Year in Girl Scouts

- ☐ Continue to welcome new members to your troop, making sure that they register.
- ☐ Take the Essentials training in gsLearn for your program level (Daisies, Brownies, etc.).
- ☐ Review Volunteer Essentials to learn more about The Girl Scout Experience, Engaging Girls and Families, Troop Management, Product Program, Troop Finances, and Safety.
- ☐ Complete Financing the Fun training on gsLearn to learn more about earning and spending money with a Girl Scout troop.
- ☐ Participate in a GSEMA Program. Search for fun troop activities at [gsema.org/programs](https://gsema.org/programs).
- ☐ Help girls earn a badge or the Daisy petals.
- ☐ Participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Learn more at [gsema.org/forsellers](https://gsema.org/forsellers).
- ☐ Go beyond your troop meeting with a field trip. Check Going Places with Girl Scouts in gsLearn first.
- ☐ Complete a community service project.

**You did it! Now you're ready to celebrate with an end of the year ceremony.**

# NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

## Your Year in Girl Scouts

August	September	October	November
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review your roster &amp; troop details</li> <li>Start planning your troop year</li> <li>Renew or register girls and adults</li> <li>National S'mores Day: August 10</li> <li>Contact your service team for the leader meeting schedule for your service unit               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan to have at least one troop volunteer attend each service unit leader meeting</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan first parent meeting and troop meeting</li> <li>Invite new girls to your troop</li> <li>Investiture and rededication ceremonies</li> <li>Bridging ceremonies (if not completed in the spring)</li> </ul> <p>Fall Product Program Begins</p>	<p>Girl Scout Membership Year Begins: October 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International Day of the Girl: October 11</li> <li>Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday (Founder's Day): October 31</li> <li>Hold a Bring a Friend event to invite new girls to join Girl Scouts</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer Conference</li> <li>Continue to attend your local leader meetings</li> <li>Sign up for additional training or complete your initial training</li> <li>Thinking about camping? Complete Troop Camp Training, Part 1 in gsLearn</li> <li>Girl Scout Cookie Program training</li> </ul>
December	January	February	March
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Happy Holidays!</li> <li>Talk with your troop about community service and Take Action projects</li> <li>Continue to check in with your co-leader(s) and reconcile troop finances</li> <li>Consider holding a mid-year parent/guardian meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Happy New Year!</li> <li>Service Unit Cookie Rallies</li> <li>Confirm your roster and troop details</li> <li>Make sure all girls and adults are registered</li> <li>Camp registration opens—check out individual, troop, and family camp options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Girl Scout Cookie Program begins</li> </ul>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to attend your local leader meetings</li> <li>Planning a trip? Be sure to submit Troop Activity Forms as required</li> <li>World Thinking Day: February 22</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cookie deliveries!</li> <li>Continue to check in with your co-leader(s) and reconcile troop finances</li> <li>Girl Scout Week:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Girl Scout Sunday</li> <li>Girl Scout Jummah</li> <li>Girl Scout Sabbath Shabbat</li> <li>Girl Scout Birthday: March 12</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
April	May	June	July
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Happy Volunteer Appreciation Month!</li> </ul> <p>Early Renewal Begins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cookie booths</li> <li>Earth Day: April 22</li> <li>Continue to attend your local leader meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early renewal continues</li> <li>GSEMA Annual Volunteer Celebration</li> <li>Plan an end of year and/or bridging ceremony</li> <li>Final ACH withdrawal for cookies</li> <li>Continue to check in with your co-leader(s) and reconcile troop finances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Troop finance reports due</li> <li>Is your troop early renewed?</li> <li>Hold an end of year and/or bridging ceremony</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to check in with your co-leader(s) and reconcile troop finances</li> <li>Enjoy your summer!</li> </ul> 

# NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

## Girl Scout Traditions

Juliette Gordon Low, founder of Girl Scouts, understood how special words and signs helped to establish a feeling of belonging. Girl Scouts and Girl Guides all around the world share special signs like a handshake, a squeeze, a motto, and a slogan. These special signs overcome barriers of language and culture as they remind us of the values we live by.

### The Girl Scout Sign

The Girl Scout Sign is made when reciting the Girl Scout Promise and Law. The sign is formed with the righthand, by using the thumb to hold down the pinky, leaving the three middle fingers extended to represent the three parts of the Promise.

### The Girl Scout Handshake

Another form of greeting between Girl Guides and Girl Scouts is the Girl Scout handshake. Girls raise their right hand in the Girl Scout sign and shake using their left hand, denoting friendliness and loyalty.

### The Girl Scout Motto

The Girl Scout motto is "Be prepared." Girl Scouts of yesteryear learned skills for fun, but also to cope with emergencies of their times. Today, the motto reminds girls to be prepared to help others in need in their community and around the world.

### Make New Friends

At the end of each Girl Scout Meeting, finish by singing "Make New Friends." Do this with the Friendship Circle and finish up with the Friendship Squeeze.

*"Make new friends, but keep the old.  
One is silver, the other is gold.  
A circle is round, it has no end.  
That's how long, I will be your friend.*

*A circle's round  
It has no end.  
That's how long  
I want to be your friend."*

### The Friendship Circle

The Friendship Circle involves Girl Scouts standing in a circle, crossing their right arms over their left, and clasping hands with their friends on both sides.

### The Friendship Squeeze

To end meetings and activities with the Friendship Squeeze, everyone gathers in the Friendship Circle. Once everyone is silent and each girl crosses her right arm over her left and holds hands with the person on each side. Once everyone is silent, the leader or a girl starts the Friendship Squeeze by squeezing the hand of the person next to her. One by one, each girl passes on the squeeze until it travels around the full circle. Some troops also tie in "Girl Scout Out," by raising their hands above their heads and slowly loosening and letting go of the hands of the persons next to them as they turn around and say "Girl Scout Out."

### Girl Scout Uniforms

Girl Scouts at each level have one recommended element (tunic, sash, or vest) for the display of official pins and awards which should be worn when girls participate in ceremonies or officially represent the Girl Scout Movement. For adult members, the unifying look of the uniform is a Girl Scout official scarf or tie, worn with the official membership pins, combined with their own navy blue business attire. An adult vest is also available in the Girl Scout Shop.

### The Girl Scout Slogan

The Girl Scout slogan is "Do a good turn daily." In the early days of Girl Scouting, girls tied a knot in their neckerchiefs. They could not untie the knot until a good deed was accomplished. Today, the slogan is a reminder of the many ways girls can contribute to the lives of others.

### Kaper Charts

A Kaper Chart is a Girl Scout tradition for dividing up troop responsibilities among the girls. Each job or chore is called a Kaper. A Kaper Chart is a list of assignments, similar to a chore list. Examples of Kapers are cleaning up or taking out trash. Kapers can also be fun tasks like the Girl Scout Promise leader, activity helper, snack helper, and Friendship Squeeze leader. Using a Kaper system right from the start helps build leadership and ownership in troop activities to assist with group behavior management.

### SWAPS

SWAPS (Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere), the tradition of Girl Scouts exchanging keepsakes, started long ago when Girl Scouts and Girl Guides first gathered for fun, song, and making new friends. SWAPS are the perfect way for Girl Scouts to meet each other and promote friendship. Each one is a memory of a special event or Girl Scout Sister.

### Quiet Sign

The Quiet Sign is a way to silence a crowd without shouting at anyone. The sign is made by holding up the right hand with all five fingers extended. It refers to the original Fifth Law of Girl Scouting: A Girl Scout is courteous.

Girl Scouts always leave a place  
better than they found it.



## Discover events, activities, and opportunities available near you.

Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts programs and events are jam-packed with experiences that support an amazing Girl Scout year—trainings for volunteers, programs for Girl Scouts and families, outdoor adventure opportunities, and much more! All of our programs are developed with Girl Scouts in mind; they are girl-focused and girl-led to deliver opportunities that empower them to try new things, conquer their fears, and set and reach high goals with their Girl Scout pals.

**Learn more at [gsema.org](https://gsema.org).**

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