







girl scouts
of southeastern
michigan

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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.

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 though your troop experience might look a little different this year, 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!

Welcome to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan!

We're so excited you've decided to join our mission of building girls of courage, confidence and character! Girl Scouts is a safe space for girls to discover their interests, learn new skills, and make lasting relationships. We're committed to helping every girl discover her true self and passion within, through meaningful experiences and guidance from mentors just like you.

This guide will serve as your "go-to," as it's packed full of resources, tips, and Girl Scout information that will make this process as seamless as possible. Your new troop will get off to a great start and continue to be successful for years to come. Included is step-by-step information on everything from completing new leader training, leading a troop meeting, and using Rallyhood, where you can find helpful resources like troop meeting plans, important forms, tips on managing your troop, and ways to connect with other troop leaders! You'll also find contact information for GSSEM staff who can assist with every aspect of leading your new troop.

I think I speak for everyone when I say there would be no Girl Scouts without leaders like you. Your time and dedication to girls and the Girl Scout program will speak for itself. Welcome to your new role as friend, mentor, counselor, advisor, and troop leader.

To an amazing Girl Scout year!

Monica Woodson, CEO



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.

Your Girl Scout Community

At Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan, we strive to not only cultivate sisterhood among girls. As a volunteer, you're part of the sisterhood too! There are several ways to get in touch with other Girl Scout volunteers near you:

- Connect with other troop leaders in your area at a service unit meeting.

 Visit the Service Unit Finder at www.gssem.org/mysu to confirm your service unit number.
- Attend a GSSEM volunteer-only event, like a mixer just for volunteers.
- Join the conversation on GSSEM's pages on Rallyhood, like our Volunteer Hub and Troop Leader Network. Be sure to introduce yourself on your service unit's Rally too!

Let's Get Started!

Managing Your Member Experience Online

After you have completed your volunteer registration steps, 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. You can also access MyGS via the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan website.

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 participation Catalog allows you as the troop leader to display available openings in your troop for girls and/or volunteers. You can add your troop to the opportunity catalog by visiting www.gssem.org/troopupdate and completing the online form.

Next Steps

Look out for your appointment email instructing you to sign the Troop Leader Volunteer Position Description, information on required trainings, and information about staff members who will support you as a volunteer.

Required Training for Troop Leaders

When you're set up for success, you'll be empowered to set up your troop for success! To help you become the best leader you can be, we offer live webinars, online training courses, and other great resources.

Get started by completing Troop Leader Orientation, a two-hour training covering everything you need to know to get your troop started. This training is available via webinar or online on gsLearn. Log into MyGS to access gsLearn. For assistance with registering for Troop Leader Orientation, please contact Customer Care at customercare@gssem.org. Please plan to complete Troop Leader Orientation, at least one Grade Level Essentials training, and the GSUSA Girl Scouts Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Course within 60 days of becoming a troop leader.

Once your troop has hosted its troop organization meeting, you will receive a call from your First Year Troop Support Specialist, your primary contact at Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan. They will assist you as you prepare for your first meeting and will support you throughout your first year of Girl Scouting.

Your First Year Troop Support Specialist will ensure your troop is set up for success by setting up a meeting with your troop leadership team to prepare for your first meeting, directing you to required and supplemental trainings to support you as you get started, and connecting you with your service unit. Prior to your first troop

meeting, your First Year Troop Support Specialist will share resources with you, including pre-made meeting activity plans, forms to share with families, and how to manage troop operations on Rallyhood.

GSSEM strongly recommends new troop leaders complete all required trainings prior to the troop's first meeting with girls. In total, GSSEM's required trainings for troop leaders will take approximately 3 hours and 30 minutes to complete. Please also consider taking the First Four Meetings Short & Snappy and the Managing Troop Finances webinar for more information about troop management.

Volunteer Resources

Rallyhood

Rallyhood is the one-stop shop to help Girl Scout volunteers and council staff come together and get things done. Rallyhood is a group collaboration platform that streamlines communications, and make communication among GSSEM volunteers, parents and staff easy! Using the Rallyhood website or app, troop leaders can:

- Explore pre-made meeting plans for badges, journeys, and awards on the Troop Leader Network.
- Communicate with your troop, other volunteers, and GSSEM staff.
- · Add troop events.

- View and download helpful forms and documents.
- Share troop photos with caregivers.

Plus so much more! Learn more about Rallyhood at www.gssem.org/rallyhood.

gsLearn

Confident leaders are prepared leaders and gsLearn provides all the information you need to successfully lead a troop. GSSEM has an extensive training library on gsLearn to help you work with girls and adults, manage your troop, explore the outdoors, and strengthen your ability to lead. For a full list of GSSEM trainings, visit www.gssem.org/traininglist. Learn how to access gsLearn at www.gssem.org/learning.

Girl Scout Handbooks

What does it mean to be a go-getting Girl Scout? These grade level-specific handbooks will help you break it down for your troop, from earning badges and exploring journeys to running their own cookie business.

GSSEM Event Calendar

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan offers events all across our council. Bring your troop or attend an event solo to make new friends! Whatever your girls are interested in, there's an event to spark their curiosity! Learn more at www.gssem.org/calendar.

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 www.gssem.org/safety.

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, www.gssem.org/veguide.

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 on the Girl Scouts of the USA website has the tips you need for a successful troop year. Find it at www.girlscouts.org/tipsfortroopleaders.

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.

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:



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 www.girlscouts.org/badges.

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 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 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 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 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 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 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.

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!

For tips on working with each level of Girl Scouting, take a Grade Level Essentials training on gsLearn.

What Makes a Successful Troop Experience?

No matter where your girls live, a universal Girl Scout experience connects them to their fellow Girl Scout sisters 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...

- · Tools for family involvement
- All-girl spaces
- Supportive adult mentors
- · 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 Fall Program
- Learn Girl Scout traditions
- Go on field trips
- Get outdoors

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 other troop volunteers 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? Rallyhood? 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).

*Uniforms are not required.

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! New volunteers may register at www.gssem.org by clicking "Volunteer Now".

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! Your Recruitment Specialist will assist you with your first parents and caregivers meeting, or Troop Organization Meeting.

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.
- You fill key troop positions—you never know which parent will make an awesome assistant leader or troop cookie manager!
- Families know how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events and schedule changes.
- Families learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics.



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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 the introductory troop meetings for each grade level on Rallyhood. 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 caregiver meetings**. You'll also want to hold an additional caregiver 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 Rally on Rallyhood, 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.

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! Your First Year Troop Support Specialist is available to assist you. 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.

First meeting checklist:

- 1. **Cover the basics.** Review the details about when and where the meeting will take place and make sure families are aware.
- 2. Get ready. Use the MyGS Member Profile 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.
- 3. Know the agenda. Refer to our "Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting" and the sample meeting agendas in Rallyhood.
- 4. Review and practice your agenda. You'll feel calmer during the actual meeting and ready to make adjustments as needed.
- 5. 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!

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 on Rallyhood! 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 pretty much anything else! (5–10 minutes)

Keeping Girls 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.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
Volunteer-to-youth ratio chart	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of youth:	Plus one additional volunteer for each additional number of this many youth:	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of youth:	Plus one additional volunteer for each additional number of this many youth:
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 www.gssem.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 your First Year Troop Support Specialist 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 GSSEM by calling 800-482-6734 (Monday-Friday 8:30 am-5 pm) or 800-887-9892 if the incident occurs after business hours. Please also complete a Volunteer Report of Accident or Unusual Incident found at www.gssem.org/accident.

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity. You may need to provide the kit if one is not already available at your meeting location. You must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of our council office, parents/caregivers of your girls, and emergency services such as the police, fire department, and hospital.

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

Our two most frequently asked-about troop finance topics:

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 program revenue. Volunteer Essentials breaks down the process for you. www.gssem.org/bankingpackage

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. www.gssem.org/fa

We know you have more questions about troop finances, and we've got answers! Check out the Managing Troop Finance webinar and Volunteer Essentials for the details you'll need to be a good steward of the troop's money.

Organizational Structure

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA): A national organization supporting the work of more than 100 councils across the U.S. for more than 100 years. Headquartered in New York City.

Girl Scount of Southeastern Michigan:

Independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit chartered by GSUSA, operating under the direction of a local board of directors, and overseeing all service units and troops within a specific geographic area.

Communities and Service Units: Made up of volunteers who support the work of troop volunteers within a given geographic area.

Troops: Volunteer-supervised groups of girls.





Quick References

For questions about:

Finance

gssem-finance@gssem.org

Trips, Travel, and Activity Approval

Consult the Safety Activity Checkpoints before doing any activity with your Girl Scout troop to see if it requires council approval. Request activity approval at travel@gssem.org.

Safety

Please contact your First Year Troop Support Specialist with questions about safety.

Product Program

productsales@gssem.org

Or anything else

customercare@gssem.org or 800-482-6734.

In case of emergency, Call 800-482-6734 during business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:30 am-5 pm) or 800-887-9892 if the incident occurs after business hours, then fill out the Volunteer Report of Accident or Unusual Incident found at www.gssem.org/accident.

Council Contact Information

Offices Clinton Township Service Center and Council Shop

42800 Garfield Clinton Twp., MI 48038

Detroit Service Center

1333 Brewery Park Blvd. Suite 500 Detroit, MI 48207

Flint Service Center Gateway Centre

5400 Gateway Centre Dr. Suite B Flint, MI 48507

Port Huron Service Center

4350 24th Ave, Space 518 Fort Gratiot, MI 48059

Southgate Service Center and Boutique Shop

1 Heritage Place, Suite 140 Southgate, MI 48195

White Lake Service Center

8545 Highland Rd. White Lake, MI 48386

Office & Shop Hours

www.gssem.org/locations













www.gssem.org 800-482-6734 customercare@gssem.org

