



Welcome to Girl Scouts!

A guide for new volunteers





girl scouts of southeastern michigan

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 of Southeastern Michigan (GSSEM). 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 location:

Clinton Twp Service Center & Council Shop
42800 Garfield Rd
Clinton Twp, MI 48038

Detroit Service Center
1333 Brewery Park Blvd, Ste 500
Detroit, MI 48207

Flint Service Center
Gateway Centre
5400 Gateway Centre Dr, Ste B
Flint, MI 48507

Southgate Service Center
1 Heritage Place, Ste 140
Southgate, MI 48195

White Lake Service Center
8545 Highland Rd
White Lake, MI 48386

Camp Hawthorn Hollow (CHH)
1046 Mayer Rd
Columbus, MI 48063

Camp Playfair (CPF)
3135 Lakeshore Rd
Lexington, MI 48450

Key contacts:

Your First Year Troop Support Specialist is your guide through your very first year of Girl Scouts. Ask them questions about getting started, structuring a troop meeting, activity ideas, and other troop management questions. Visit www.gssem.org/communities to learn your Service Unit and support contacts at GSSEM.

Get Connected

Connect with GSSEM staff and other volunteers for news fand ideas on how to bring the best Girl Scout experience to your troop on Rallyhood! Rallyhood is a communication and collaboration tool that allows volunteers to access key resources and pre-made meeting plans, trade troop management tips, create a troop webpage, and more! Learn more at www.gssem.org/rallyhood.

My Girl Scout Contacts

My Community Number: _____ My Service Unit Number: _____

My First Year Troop Support Specialist: _____

My Service Unit Manager: _____

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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)



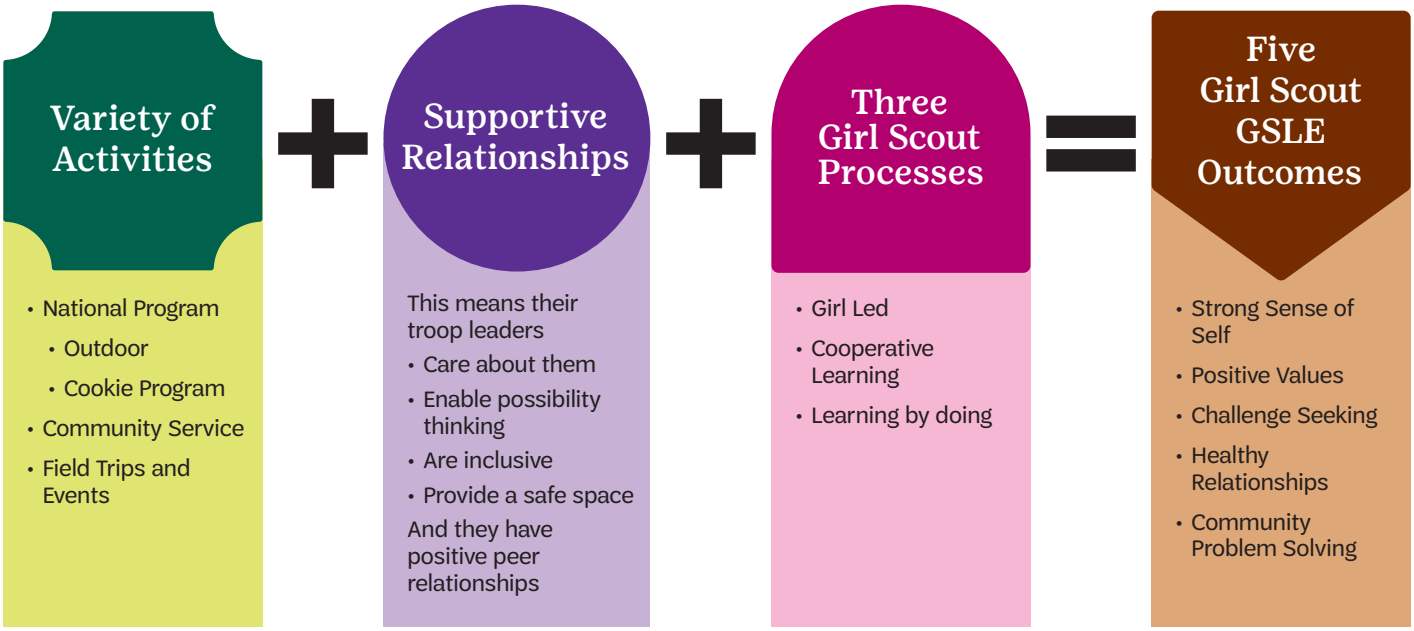
Ambassador
(Grades 11–12)



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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 Rallyhood 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.

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3. Let Girl Scouts shine by empowering them in three key ways.

- **Girl-Led:** Encourage Girl Scouts to take the lead, whatever their age. When you let your troop choose things like snacks, badge activities, or how to use cookie sale proceeds, you give them the confidence to grow their skills and follow their dreams.
- **Cooperative Learning:** Plan activities that have Girl Scouts working together and learning that principles of collaboration and mutual respect can help them conquer any challenge. Cooperative learning can be as simple as sharing supplies (for younger Girl Scouts) or playing games and completing activities that require teamwork (for older Girl Scouts).
- **Learning by Doing:** Hands-on activities aren't just fun, they're also empowering. Girl Scouts unlock their "I got this!" attitude as they work through details to get things done. At the end of each troop meeting, gather members for a discussion about what they experienced, what it means, and what they'll do together with what they learned.

Multi-level tip: "Girl-led" looks different at each age. Be sure to include program level–appropriate ways for each Girl Scout in your troop to keep it girl-led. For example, Brownies may pick which badges they'd like to earn, while Juniors may start leading specific activities with their peers or younger Girl Scouts. For more information, check out our Leading a Multi-Level Troop course available on gsLearn (girlscouts.org/gslearn).

Proven Results

Why follow these steps? Because they work! Studies show that Girl Scouts are more likely to develop a strong sense of self, positive values, healthy relationships, challenge-seeking traits, and community problem-solving skills when they experience all the elements of the GSLE—and as a troop leader, you're a key part of making the magic happen!

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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.

Troop leadership and support roles

- **Troop Leader/Co-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. They help plan and run meetings and activities, bringing the Girl Scout experience to life for the troop..
- **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. Troop Treasurers are responsible for submitting the annual troop finance report on behalf of the troop by June 21 every year.
- **Troop Product Program Manager:** When the cookie program or fall product program season comes, you'll want one volunteer who will commit to supporting your troop's efforts throughout the process. This person manages product program logistics, including troop orders, product delivery, and other key functions.
- **Troop Support Volunteer:** Every troop leader needs a little extra help. Ask family members to serve in this role to be a troop helper, providing support during meetings, field trips, and outdoor experiences to make sure everything runs smoothly. These volunteers also help ensure the safety and well-being of Girl Scouts during activities.

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.

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Troop Kickoff Meeting 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 Troop Kickoff Meeting training at www.gssem.org/troopkickoff

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.

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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

Access Key Volunteer Resources here

myGS (mygs.girlscouts.org)
The Girl Scout member account management system, myGS, 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.

Rallyhood (www.gssem.org/rallyhood)
Rallyhood easily connects you with other volunteers, parents, and council staff. This all-in-one platform combines many tools Girl Scout service units and troop leaders use to communicate and collaborate with families and other volunteers. **You can even find pre-made badge and award activity plans to use in your troop meetings on Rallyhood!** With your very own troop Rally, you can create a troopcalendar, share photos, post/reply to messages, and more! Email volunteerexp@gssem.org to request your troop Rally.

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. Shop at our Clinton Township or Southgate council retail shops or shop online! 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.gssem.org/veguide)
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.gssem.org/safety)
Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC) is a comprehensive collection of safety guidelines for GSSEM-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. To seek activity approval, please email travel@gssem.org.

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Girl Scout Handbooks (girlscoutshop.com/handbooks)
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.

Multi-level tip: Consider getting a handbook for each program level represented in your troop.

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.

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Get Ready!

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

To get started...

- ❑ Register as a volunteer with GSSEM, if you haven't already.
- ❑ Complete a background check.
- ❑ Invite potential members to join the troop. (Need help? Reach out to customercare@gssem.org)
- ❑ Visit myGS to understand where badges and other program resources are hosted in Rallyhood and available training courses in gsLearn (www.gssem.org/learning).
- ❑ If you haven't already, reach out to your network to find a potential co-leader for your new troop.
- ❑ Explore Rallyhood and join key Rallies for members-only information. The Volunteer Hub and Troop Leader Network are great places to start! (www.gssem.org/rallyhood)

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 (www.gssem.org/mygs).
- ❑ 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 each out to your First Year Troop Support Specialist for help.)
- ❑ Open your troop bank account using the steps outlined in the Troop Banking Package (www.gssem.org/bankingpackage).
- ❑ Access gsLearn (girlscouts.org/gslearn) to complete required trainings within 60 days of your troop's start date*:
  - ☐ Girl Scout Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Course - www.gssem.org/prevention
    *Required for all troop volunteers within 60 days of role appointment.
  - ☐ Troop Leader Orientation - www.gssem.org/tlo
  - ☐ At least one What Girl Scouts Do training - www.gssem.org//gradelevel
  - ☐ Managing Troop Finances - www.gssem.org/troopfinances (required for Troop Treasurers)
  - ☐ Cookie Rookie - www.gssem.org/cookietrainng (required for Troop Product Program Managers.)
    *Cookie Rookie must be completed by February 15.

In your first three months...

- ❑ Optional: Complete first aid/CPR training or identify someone who has to serve as the troop's first aider if your troop has planned activities that require a first aider.
- ❑ Hold your required leadership meeting with your First Year Troop Support Specialist before meeting with girls.
- ❑ Host your first one or two troop meetings. Use the First Four Meetings Short & Snappy and meeting activity plans in Rallyhood to guide you (www.gssem.org/first4).

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 Troop Kickoff 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/cookie sales, and other timely topics.

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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

Winter milestones:

- Prepare for cookie season
- Attend cookie rallies
- Cookie program begins

September

Complete Fall Product Program training

9/17 Volunteer Try-It Day: Songs and Games in Troyl

October

10/1, 7:00-8:30 PM 2027 Membership Year Kickoff

10/11 International Day of the Girl

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

November

Share troop finances with the troop and families.

11/19 New Leader Roundtablei

December

Hold family/caregiver meeting to discuss the troop's participation in the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Submit required forms to participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program (www.gssem.org/csr)

January

Happy New Year!

1/5 Girl Scout Cookie Program begins

1/21 New Leader Roundtable

February

2/9 Cookie booth selection begins

2/11 Cookie Program initial order due at 11:59 PM

2/11 Cookie cupboards open

2/20, 2/22-24 Cookie delivery sites

2/22 World Thinking Day

Share troop finances with the troop and families

2/26 Cookie booth sales begin, cookie cupboards open

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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

3/7– 3/13 Celebrate Girl Scout Week!
3/7 Girl Scout Sunday
3/12 Girl Scouts' birthday
3/12 Girl Scout Jummah
3/13 Girl Scout Sabbath
3/15 Cookie Program initial order ACH sweep

April

Happy Volunteer Appreciation Month! (Thank you!)
4/15 Early renewal begins
4/16 Cookie cupboards close
4/18 Cookie Program ends and final reward orders due
4/22 Earth Day—April 22
4/22 Leader Appreciation Day—April 22
4/29 Volunteer Service and Leadership Recognition

May

Share troop finances with the troop and families
5/3 Cookie Program final ACH sweep
5/20 New Leader Roundtable
Mid May Troop reward pickup

June

6/21 Submit your troop's annual finance report and May bank statement (www.gssem.org/financereport)

July

Enjoy your summer!

August

Get ready for Girl Scouts!
Look for the new versions of:

- Volunteer Essentials
- Safety Activity Checkpoints
- Back to Troop Training

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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!

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