Volunteer Essentials

2026–2028 Edition



girl scouts of southeastern michigan

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Welcome!

As a volunteer, you're not just helping—you're inspiring. You're a builder of community, a mentor, and a joyful guide who leads with kindness. Thanks to you, Girl Scouts of all ages will dream big, explore boldly, and make a real difference in the world. We're so glad you're here!

What's Inside?

This guide is designed to support you as a Girl Scout volunteer. From Girl Scout basics to managing your troop, we've got you covered! You can use the links in the Table of Contents to go directly to each section. Are you a new troop leader? We have a resource designed especially for you. Plus, council staff and volunteer coaches are ready to help throughout your first year and beyond!

Important Note: Links to third-party websites are provided for convenience only. Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) does not endorse or support the content of third-party links and is not responsible for the content or accuracy, availability, or privacy/security practices of other websites, and/or services or goods that may be linked to or advertised on such third-party websites. By clicking on a third-party link, you will leave the current GSUSA site whereby policies of such third-party link may differ from those of GSUSA.

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All About Girl Scouts

Girl Scouts' dreams are our dreams. A Girl Scout builds a better world—just as Girl Scouts have been doing for over a century. With programs coast-to-coast and around the globe, everyone can find their place in Girl Scouts and start creating the world they want to see.

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Girl Scout Volunteers

Girl Scout volunteers make up a dynamic and diverse group. Whether you're a recent college graduate, parent, retiree, or, really, anyone—of any gender, who is 18 years or older and has passed their council's screening process—with a sense of curiosity and adventure, your unique skills and experiences have the power to change lives. With you as their mentor, Girl Scouts will grow and thrive.

Girl Scout members and volunteers are united by the values in the **Girl Scout Promise and Law** and their shared commitment to embrace leadership in all forms. Each member agrees to follow Girl Scouts' safety guidelines and pay annual membership dues. Volunteers and adults also have the option to purchase a **lifetime membership**.

Girl Scout Grade Levels

Young people can join Girl Scouts at any point from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

- **Girl Scout Daisy** (grades K–1)
- **Girl Scout Brownie** (grades 2–3)
- **Girl Scout Junior** (grades 4–5)
- **Girl Scout Cadette** (grades 6–8)
- **Girl Scout Senior** (grades 9–10)
- **Girl Scout Ambassador** (grades 11–12)

Inclusion

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

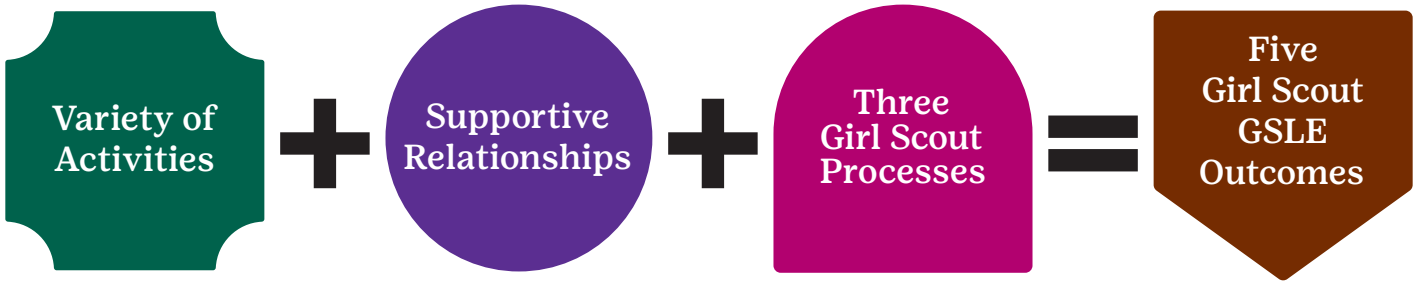
Inclusion is at the core of who we are; it's about being a sister to every Girl Scout and celebrating our unique strengths. This means that each Girl Scout needs to be able to feel seen for who they are and what they bring to the group.

Part of the important work you'll do as a volunteer is modeling friendship and compassion for your Girl Scouts, and showing them what it means to practice empathy. By treating all Girl Scouts with kindness and respect, you can nurture an inclusive troop environment.

A critical component of inclusion is ensuring everyone can participate in Girl Scout activities. When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of everyone involved, taking into account school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, dietary requirements, religious holidays, and the accessibility of transportation and meeting places.

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The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)



Regular meetings / activities | Emotionally & physically safe space | Girl Scout traditions

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) is our research-based impact model that describes what members do in Girl Scouts, who they do it with, how they do it, and how they benefit. When planning your year, make sure you're implementing all parts of the GSLE regularly.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience was designed to include a **variety of fun and challenging activities** to help Girl Scouts learn, grow, and thrive. These include activities associated with:

- National Program Portfolio (badges, awards, and patches)
- Outdoor and camping experiences
- Community service and Take Action projects
- Field trips and events
- Girl Scout Cookie Program

The GSLE also emphasizes **supportive relationships**, seen in how volunteers care for the Girl Scouts they lead—encouraging their creative thinking, honoring inclusion, and nurturing a safe space overall. As a result, Girl Scouts develop positive relationships with their peers and feel a sense of belonging. When Girl Scouts feel supported and safe, they're more likely to achieve the five GSLE outcomes described below and, ultimately, reflect the Girl Scout mission.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience draws on **three unique processes** that encourage Girl Scouts to try new things, write their own stories, and develop the skills and confidence to say, "I know I can do this!"

- **Girl-led.** Girl Scouts take the lead, no matter their age. From selecting badges to organizing activities, they gain confidence while following their dreams.
- **Learning by doing.** Participatory activities are fun for members of any age, but they also help Girl Scouts feel empowered to shape their own experience.
- **Cooperative learning.** Girl Scouts experience firsthand that teamwork, respect, and collaboration can fuel them through any challenge that comes their way.

As a volunteer, you'll draw on these three processes as you lead Girl Scouts!

Naturally, "girl-led" at the Daisy level will look very different from girl-led at the Ambassador level. What's most important is that your Girl Scouts make decisions about the activities they'll do *together* and make choices as they're doing the activities *together.* As they learn from their successful and not-so-successful tries, they gain confidence.

All Girl Scouts should have the opportunity to lead within their peer group. By the time they're Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, they'll be using the leadership skills they've developed to take on more ownership of their activities, mentor younger Girl Scouts, and take action to make the world a better place.

And finally, when a variety of activities, supportive adults, and the three Girl Scout processes are combined, Girl Scouts demonstrate the **five GSLE outcomes**:

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- **Strong sense of self.** Girl Scouts have confidence in themselves and their abilities and form positive identities.
- **Positive values.** Girl Scouts act ethically, honestly, and responsibly, and show concern for others.
- **Challenge seeking.** Girl Scouts learn to take appropriate risks, try things even if they might fail, and learn from mistakes.
- **Healthy relationships.** Girl Scouts develop and maintain healthy relationships by communicating their feelings directly and resolving conflicts constructively.
- **Community problem solving.** Girl Scouts desire to contribute to the world in purposeful and meaningful ways, learn how to identify problems in the community, and create "action plans" to solve them.

One last tip: Tuning in to what interests your Girl Scouts and sparks their imaginations is much more important than completing all the activities on your list. Projects don't have to come out perfectly—in fact, it's a valuable learning experience when they don't—and Girl Scouts don't have to fill their vests and sashes with badges. What matters most is the fun and learning that takes place as they make experiences their own—so don't be afraid to **step back and let your Girl Scouts take the lead**.

To learn more about the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, view our training on **gsLearn**.

Reflection

Reflection is the necessary post-activity debrief that reinforces what's been learned and gives Girl Scouts the confidence they need to make connections between the activities your troop tries and future challenges they might face.

Keep in mind that reflection doesn't need to be a formal process, though you can kick-start the conversation with three simple questions: 1) What? 2) So what? and 3) Now what?

First, go over the "what" of the activity. For example, ask:

- What did we do today?
- What part was your favorite?
- If we were to do it again, what would you want to do differently? What would you want to repeat?

Next, move to the "so what?" You might ask:

- So, what did you learn by doing this activity?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn about your community (or environment, school, etc.) that you didn't know before?
- Why do you think this activity was important?
- What key learning can we take with us?

For the "now what?" say something like:

- Now that we've done this, what would you like to do next?
- Now that you know [thing learned] about yourselves, what would you like to try next?
- Now that we've completed this Take Action project, what could we do to make sure it continues to have impact?
- Given this experience, what's more of a priority to you now?
- What are you curious to learn more about?
- Where would you like to go?
- Who would you like to meet?

This form of reflection, or however you choose to reflect with your Girl Scouts, is a powerful component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. It helps girls carry with them what they've learned throughout the rest of their lives.

Progression

Girl Scout programming grows with girls! While some activities—like outdoor adventures or learning business skills—are part of every Girl Scout grade level, each group experiences them in their own way. Brownies and Juniors won't be doing the same things as Seniors and Ambassadors, but with your support, they'll be ready when the time comes.

At Girl Scouts, progression is key, whether girls are camping, on a troop trip, or running their cookie businesses through the cookie program. Our programming is designed to build confidence and skills year after year, helping girls feel excited to try new things and take on bigger challenges. As a volunteer, you'll help create a safe, supportive space where girls can explore, make mistakes, and grow—every step of the way.

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The Girl Scout Program: National Program Pillars

Girl Scouts' four program pillars—STEM, Life Skills, Outdoors, and Entrepreneurship—form the foundation of the Girl Scout program.

1. **STEM.** Girl Scouts are naturally curious and have a strong desire to help others. Whether they're building a robot, developing a video game, or studying the stars, Girl Scouts become better problem-solvers and critical thinkers through STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and gain the confidence to turn their ideas into breakthrough inventions to help others.
2. **Life Skills.** Girl Scouts' life skills programming equips girls with practical skills and tools that foster financial literacy, civic engagement, and community service. It's programming that helps them discover that they have what it takes to raise their voices as community advocates, make smart decisions about their finances, and form strong, healthy relationships—skills that inspire them to accept challenges and overcome obstacles, now and always.
3. **Outdoors.** Girl Scouts have been building outdoor confidence and skills for over 100 years! They do this through a variety of outdoor adventures like camping and nature-focused badge work that have them spending time outdoors and developing a lifelong appreciation of nature. This appreciation sparks Girl Scouts' desire to take action as environmental stewards in their community and beyond.
4. **Entrepreneurship.** Starting with the iconic Girl Scout Cookie Program and including Girl Scouts' fall product program and a series of entrepreneurship badges, this pillar instills and nurtures an entrepreneurial mindset in girls. It fuels their curiosity and confidence as they learn the essentials of running their own businesses and how to think like entrepreneurs.

Important Differences: Patches, Badges, and Awards

Patch, badges, and awards are designed to give Girl Scouts different leadership-building experiences, all while they have fun!

- **Patches** are about sparking interest. Often called fun patches or participation patches, Girl Scouts receive them for participating in a special event or activity, like troop activities, events or activities that are part of council-sponsored programs... It could even be a trip to the zoo. Patches are worn on the back of a Girl Scouts' uniform.
- **Badges** are about skill building. When a Girl Scout earns a badge, it shows they've learned a new skill, such as how to make a first aid kit, build and test a toy race car, or take great digital photos. Badges may even seed a future career. Badges are worn on the front of a Girl Scout's uniform. You can find badge activity guides on Rallyhood in the Troop Leader Network Rally.
- **Awards** are about deepening understanding. Whether they're focused on leadership, service, or earning the Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award (Girl Scouts' Highest Awards), by earning an award, Girl Scouts show their commitment to growth and making a meaningful impact. Awards are often pins and worn on the front of a Girl Scout's uniform. Guidance on how to earn most awards may be found on Rallyhood in the Troop Leader Network Rally.

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Other Important Differences: Community Service and Take Action Projects

As your Girl Scouts look for meaningful ways to give back to their community, you can help sharpen their problem-solving skills and expand their definition of doing good by discussing community service and Take Action projects. **Both projects address essential needs, but at different levels**.

- When a Girl Scout performs community service, they're responding to an immediate need in a one-off, "doing for" capacity. In other words, they're making an impact *right now.*
- Through Take Action/service learning, Girl Scouts explore the root causes of a community need and address it in a lasting way; they truly make t he world—or their part of it—a better place.

If your troop members want to pursue their Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award, they'll develop a Take Action project on an issue that's close to their hearts. To make Take Action projects even more impactful for your Girl Scouts, set aside time for them to reflect on their projects. When they take time to internalize the lessons they've learned, they're more likely to find success in future projects—or in anything else they put their minds to. For more information on Take Action projects, take the **Take Action Short & Snappy** on gsLearn

Traditions, Ceremonies, and Special Girl Scout Days

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

A few of those extra special days, when you're encouraged to turn up the celebrations, include:

- Juliette Gordon Low's birthday, or Founder's Day, on October 31, which marks the birth in 1860 of **Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low** in Savannah, Georgia.
- **World Thinking Day,** February 22, celebrating international friendship. This is an opportunity for Girl Scouts and Girl Guides to connect with one another and explore a common theme around the world.
- Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12, commemorating the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first 18 girl members in Savannah, Georgia.

At Girl Scouts, we embrace our rich cultural legacy. Whether they're working on a new badge, making new friends, or closing meetings with a friendship circle, your troop can learn and incorporate **traditions, ceremonies, and special Girl Scout days**—which are a few of the ways we remember and honor our long and cherished history.

Know that we continually review Girl Scout norms and traditions to ensure they're relevant and inclusive. At times this may lead to our modifying or discontinuing traditions to make way for new ones. Learn more about different types of ceremonies troops enjoy on **gsLearn**, including a general overview found in the **Girl Scout Ceremonies Short & Snappy,** as well as courses on specific ceremonies like bridging ceremonies and flag ceremonies.

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Highest Awards

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

As your Girl Scouts discover the power of their voices, they may want to take on an issue that's close to their hearts and meaningful to them. Encourage them to turn their ideas into reality by pursuing Girl Scouts' Highest Awards.

- The **Girl Scout Bronze Award** can be earned by a group of Juniors.
- The **Girl Scout Silver Award** can be earned by Cadettes, either individually or in a small group. GSSEM requires the submission and council approval of a project proposal to begin a Silver Award Project. Training is available for both Girl Scouts and supporting adults on the Girl Scout Silver Award.
- The **Girl Scout Gold Award** can be earned by Seniors and Ambassadors. Girl Scouts work individually to earn this award. GSSEM requires the submission and Highest Awards Committee approval of a project proposal to begin a Gold Award Project. Training is available for both Girl Scouts and supporting adults on the Girl Scout Gold Award.

Every Girl Scout can earn our Highest Awards. Please email **highestawards@gssem.org** to get started!

Girl Scout Travel

Girl Scouts love to explore—and travel is a big part of that adventure! Whether it's a local field trip or a journey across the globe, Girl Scout travel is special because the girls take the lead. They decide where to go and what to do, and they take on more responsibility as they grow, building lifelong skills along the way. From short outings to international trips or council-led **Destinations**, these experiences help Girl Scouts gain confidence, learn to plan, and discover the world in exciting new ways. Field trips and overnight adventures bring learning to life—connecting badge work to real-world experiences like exploring new cuisines, budgeting for a trip, and diving into nature.

Want to add a special Girl Scout touch? Consider visiting the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace in Savannah or one of the WAGGGS World Centers around the globe. Many councils also offer camps that troops can rent—perfect for staying local or going far!

As your troop plans its next journey, your role is to guide and cheer Girl Scouts on—not do the work for them. Share ideas, ask thoughtful questions, and support their decisions with enthusiasm. With your encouragement, they'll build confidence and create unforgettable memories!

International Travel

GSSEM troops/groups scheduling international travel must secure approval from **travel@gssem.org** for the trip and all activities occurring on the trip that require approval as listed in the **Safety Activity** Checkpoints. Troops travelling internationally must provide the following documentation to **travel@gssem.org** to secure approval for their trip:

- **Intent for International Travel**-submit to **travel@gssem.org** six months prior to international travel This form is NOT required for travel to Canada). You will be notified of the decision of your request within (10) business days of receipt of this form. The **Intent for International Travel form** must be approved before girls proceed with further planning.
- **Permission for Minors to Travel Internationally**
- **Authorization for Medical Treatment for Minors**
- **Authorization for Medical Treatment for Adults**
- Detailed itinerary including all troop/group activities
- Troop/group roster for all participants in the travel experience (youth and adult).
- Any specialized equipment that will be used, if applicable.
- Required agreements or contracts (for example, hiring a bus, use of premises).

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Planning Overnight Adventures

Girl Scout travel starts with day trips. Learn more through the **Field Trips & Travel course** on gsLearn or by reviewing our **Day Trips Checklist**.

Contact Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan at **travel@gssem.org** as soon as you start thinking about planning a trip to find out more about their approval process for overnight and extended travel. **Our website** offers information on planning local, national, and international troop travel as well as Girl Scout Destinations. Also, check out our **event calendar** for upcoming **Troop Travel Office Hours** dates.

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

Once Girl Scouts have mastered planning and embarking on trips in the U.S., they might be ready for a global travel adventure! Global trips usually take a few years to plan, and the **Girl Scout Guide to Global Travel** can guide you through the entire process.

Visiting Canada

Day Trip or Overnight: Due to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's unique geographic border with Canada, troops/groups crossing the border from Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's jurisdiction and staying for one night or less do not need to submit an Intent for International Travel form to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan.

Two nights or More: Troops/groups who are staying in Canada overnight two nights or longer, or are entering Canada from areas outside of Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's jurisdiction, must follow the **Troop/Group Travel – International Trip or Cruise Requirements**.

Remember that the international Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) requires U.S. and Canadian travelers to present a passport or other document that denotes identity and proof of citizenship when entering the US or Canada. A valid U.S. passport, an enhanced driver's license or NEXUS card meet the requirements of WHTI. Children under 16 need a birth certificate.

Consult with the **U.S. State Department's website** for travel information for U.S. citizens traveling into Canada (especially when traveling with minors), as requirements may change without notice.

Safety First

If you're planning any kind of trip—from a short field trip to an overseas expedition—the "Trip and Travel" section of Safety Activity Checkpoints is your go-to resource for safety. For troop travel and activity approval, please contact **travel@gssem.org**.

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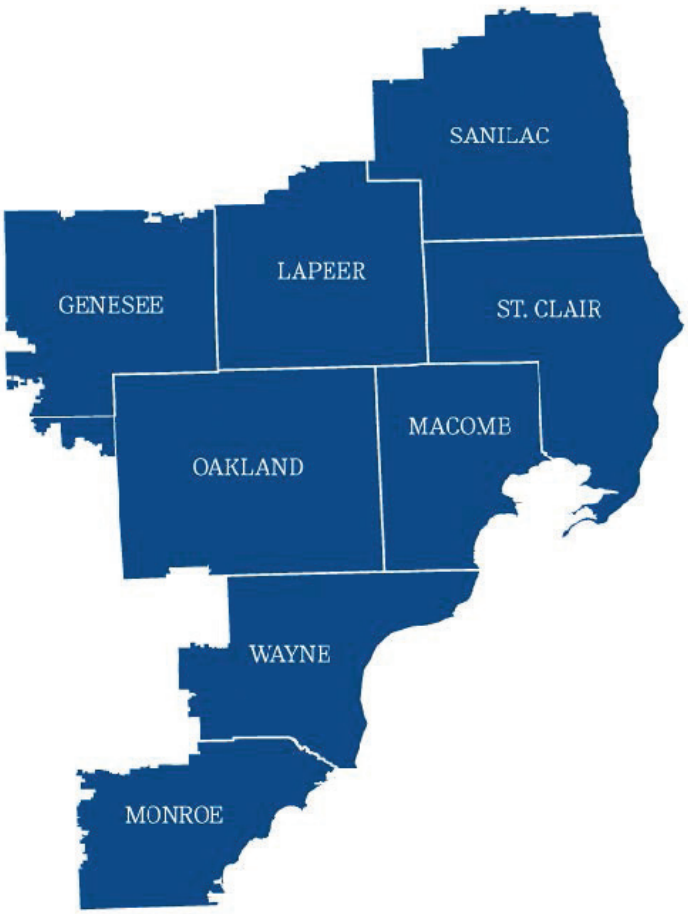
Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan (GSSEM) is the local council chartered by Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) to bring the excitement and adventure of Girl Scouting to our region. As Girl Scouts, girls discover the fun, friendship, and power of girls together.

Girl discover who they are and what they love to do through a wide variety of Girl Scouts experiences that spark their imaginations, build their confidence and celebrate every new achievement.

Caring, adult volunteers support and mentor the girls, and foster an environment where girls feel a sense of belonging, can try new things, overcome fears, and most of all—have fun!

GSSEM is comprised of an area including Genesee, Lapeer, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, Sanilac, St. Clair, and Wayne Counties. Our service area contains 12 smaller units called Communities, which are further divided into 2-4 Service Units apiece. Our volunteers may seek local support at the Community or Service Unit levels. Learn more about your service unit, your local level of support, using the **GSSEM Service Unit Finder**.



Our service area contains six service centers, including:

Clinton Township Service Center
42800 Garfield Rd
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
Birchwood Mall
4350 24th Ave, Space 518
Fort Gratiot, MI 48059

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

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

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan is here to support you as a volunteer. Here is where you can go to seek support:

Council Website: At **gssem.org**, you can access information about upcoming Girl Scout events, essential forms, and other Council information. Log into MyGS from our website to manage your Girl Scout account and access helpful resources like Rallyhood and **gsLearn**.

Social Media: Follow Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan (@GSSEM) on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram! We also recommend joining your Service Unit and/or Girl Scout Community social media to connect and share with volunteers near you. Not sure what your Service Unit is? Visit the **GSSEM Service Unit Finder** to find out!

Council Staff: Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan staff are here to support you! If you are ever unsure whom to contact, call 800-482-6734 and our receptionist will connect you where you need to go. These departments can assist with many common volunteer inquiries:

- **Customer Care: customercare@gssem.org**: Fields general questions (e.g. council shop hours, Girl Scout cookie program dates). They also assist with Girl Scout membership, background check, and event registration inquiries. Customer Care Coordinators are available Monday through Friday (8:30 AM-5:00 PM).
- **Finance: gssem-finance@gssem.org**: Answers questions about establishing troop bank accounts, managing troop finances, and troop annual financial reports.
- **Member Support: troopsupport@gssem.org**: Answers questions related to the troop experience and Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan policy.

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- **Product Program:** productsales@gssem.org: Fields questions about the Fall Product Program and Girl Scout Cookie Program.
- **Recruitment:** join@gssem.org: Assists with organizing a recruitment event at schools, houses of worship, and other locations in the community.
- **Volunteer Experience:** volunteerexp@gssem.org: Answers questions regarding mandatory Girl Scout volunteer training such as **Troop Leader Orientation**, **What Girl Scouts Do**, and the **GSSEM Girl Scouts Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Course**. Contact for assistance with using Rallyhood and gsLearn.

Administrative Volunteers: Administrative volunteers are local, behind the scenes volunteers who support troops and troop leaders. In your area, you may have:

- **Product Program Committee:** Council-wide volunteers who assist GSSEM with many aspects of the Girl Scout product programs, including answering volunteer questions related to the Fall Product and Girl Scout Cookie Programs.
- **Service Unit Manager:** A Service Unit volunteer who provides support to Troop Leaders based on their own troop leadership experience. They also organize regular Service Unit meetings throughout the school year to give troop volunteers the opportunity to network and share.
  Service Unit Managers may also work with:
  - **Communications Liaison:** A Service Unit volunteer who manages Service Unit social media accounts and other communications on behalf of the Service Unit.
  - **Resource Champion:** A Service Unit volunteer who assists Troop Leaders in accessing forms as well as using gsLearn and Rallyhood.
  - **First Year Leader Mentor:** A Service Unit volunteer who welcomes new volunteers into the Service Unit and assists them with the onboarding process.
- **Troop Organizer:** A Service Unit volunteer who supports recruitment efforts within a school district.

GSSEM Policies & Procedures

Volunteer Appointment and Reappointment

All appointed volunteers participating in the Girl Scout movement shall meet GSUSA and Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan membership requirements, be registered as a member of GSUSA (annual or lifetime membership), and shall agree to abide by the policies and principles of GSUSA and Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan.

Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance is available for membership and program resources for girl members whose families meet the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan income eligibility requirements as listed on the **Financial Aid Application Form**. Girls receiving financial aid are required to participate in the Cookie Program.

Customer Care

Customer Care is here to assist volunteers and parents in navigating the registration process. For general customer service needs and technical assistance, please contact our Customer Care team. Customer Care Coordinators are available Monday through Friday (8:30 AM-5:00 PM) at 1-800-482-6734 or by email at **customercare@gssem.org**.

Non-Discrimination

Girl Scouts is an inclusive organization. There shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, marital or socioeconomic status, disability, or age. In addition, to ensure full equality of opportunity in all operations and activities of the organization, affirmative action policies and procedures shall be utilized in the recruitment, selection, training, placement, and recognition of volunteers. Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan is committed to having its membership reflect the diversity of population groups within its jurisdiction.

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Code of Ethics

Volunteers are required to conduct themselves in a professional manner, keeping in mind that adult volunteers serve as role models to the girls they serve. This conduct will be reflected in appropriate dress, language and conduct. Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of girls and other volunteers and affect the image that Girl Scouts present to members and the community. Volunteers will serve to the best of their ability, but not beyond their capabilities. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times in order to protect the dignity and rights of individuals. Violation of confidentiality may be a cause for release from duties.

Sexual Harassment

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan is committed to an environment in which volunteer and staff relationships are characterized by dignity, courtesy, respect, and equitable treatment and an environment free of all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature." Sexual harassment is a form of illegal discrimination on the basis of an individual's gender. It frequently involves an expression of sexual conduct that seeks to exploit a relationship in which there is an imbalance of power (e.g., supervisor/ subordinate). It can also occur where there is a perception of power among or between colleagues or between individuals with no formal business relationship.

No volunteer, man or woman, may sexually harass another volunteer, employee, or Girl Scout member of the same or opposite sex, and may not advocate, solicit, or promote a particular personal lifestyle or sexual orientation.

Any volunteer who believes she/he has been the subject of sexual harassment should report the incident(s) to either her/his Member Support staff and/or Chief Executive Officer.

Retaliation against anyone who has reported an allegation of sexual harassment is expressly prohibited and, if it occurs, will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including release.

Duty to Report Threatening or Inappropriate Behavior by Other Adults

At Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan, staff and volunteers have a particular responsibility to girl and adult members. Therefore, if a volunteer witnesses behavior or relationships that could be potentially detrimental or developmentally inappropriate, volunteers are required to report immediately the behavior/relationship to Member Support staff or the GSSEM Chief Executive Officer.

Any adult engaging in behavior threatening the health or welfare of girls will be released from acting in an official Girl Scout capacity. Threatening behavior may include but is not limited to: neglect, physical abuse, withholding of food, lack of supervision, emotional maltreatment including verbal, physical or sexual abuse, abuse of prescription or illegal drugs, use of alcohol, or careless management of firearms.

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Troop Management

Your Role as a Girl Scout Volunteer

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you'll embark on your own leadership journey while you help Girl Scouts develop the leadership skills they'll use to make the world a better place. Below are a few basic concepts that outline what leadership means in Girl Scouting.

Leadership is teaching your Girl Scouts:

- That they can do and be anything!
- That they're 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, discusses with, and cheers on your troop, not as a teacher with a planned lesson or activity but as a mentor.
- Ensures each member understands and can carry out their responsibilities within the troop—and gives Girl Scouts more responsibilities as they grow and develop.
- Encourages Girl Scouts to build their skills and develop their ethics.
- Helps Girl Scouts feel seen and included—like they belong.

It's important to remember that:

- You can't know everything your Girl Scouts might ever want to learn.
- You'll explore and learn alongside your Girl Scouts and build your confidence in the process.
- You're not expected to know everything about Girl Scouting, but you should know where to go for information—and to ask for help when you need it.

Your Responsibilities as a Girl Scout Volunteer

- Embrace the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
- Guide and coach Girl Scouts through the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- Complete required trainings and follow Girl Scout policies, procedures, and safety guidelines.
- Share your skills and knowledge with positivity and flexibility.
- Partner with your Girl Scouts to ensure activities are girl-led and hands-on.
- Plan fun, interactive activities that reflect Girl Scouts' interests and needs.
- Communicate regularly with troop families using email, phone, social media, or other tools.
- Handle registration forms, permission slips, and other paperwork.
- Manage troop funds responsibly, with honesty and accurate record keeping.
- Stay connected with GSSEM, including the Member Support team.
- Nurture a positive and inclusive environment for every Girl Scout.

Planning Your First Troop Meeting

Your first troop meeting sets the tone for the rest of your Girl Scout Year! Your Recruitment Manager will assist you with a **Troop Kickoff Meeting** to explain troop operations and register families. Your First Year Troop Support Specialist will also work with you to schedule a leadership meeting with you to explain troop volunteer roles and meeting structure while giving new volunteers an opportunity to ask questions about the troop experience.

Choosing a Meeting Place

Meeting places should be welcoming to all. This could mean locations that serve diverse populations, are openly inclusive, have diverse staff, and use welcoming language. What makes a great meeting space depends on your troop, but look for spaces that are available and free to use, large enough for your troop activities, and equipped with resources that meet your needs. Also, make sure your space generally accommodates (is accessible to) individuals with physical disabilities who might attend meetings, including troop members and parents/caregivers.

Consider this as a starting point for a conversation with the contact of a potential meeting space:

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

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Can We Meet in a Private Home?

Girl Scouts does not recommend holding troop meetings in private homes. If you are considering meeting in a private home, remember to ensure these standards:

- The private home must be the home of a registered, council-approved volunteer.

  Girl Scout members may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender resides.

- Troop members need to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members.

  Animals should be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space.

- Homeowners should consider any personal insurance implications. The homeowner should ask their personal homeowner's insurance carrier if there are any insurance concerns with troop meetings in the home.

- Weapons must be out of view and in a locked space. Medication, cleaning products, or any poisonous substances must be stored in a secure space, out of sight, and preferably locked.

Stuck and need additional support? Contact your First Year Troop Support Specialist for help with a troop meeting place.

Girl Scout Troop Size

The troop size "sweet spot" is large enough to support an interactive and cooperative learning environment and small enough to encourage individual development. Though the ideal troop size is 12 Girl Scouts, we recommend that group membership falls within the below ranges—no smaller than the low end, and no larger than the high end.

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

A Girl Scout troop/group must have a minimum of three Girl Scout youth from three different families and two approved adult volunteers. Be sure to double-check the volunteer-to-youth ratio table on page 17 to make sure you have the right number of adults present for group meetings, events, travel, and camping.

Adults and youth registering in groups of fewer than three Girl Scout youth and two approved adult volunteers (Troop Leaders/Co-Leaders) who are not related to each other or in a relationship, at least one of whom is female, will be registered as individual Girl Scouts to accurately reflect their status and program experience. Individual members are always welcome to participate in Girl Scout activities and events.

Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

Girl Scout groups gathering in person or virtually must follow these guidelines:

- At least two unrelated, registered, background-checked Troop Leaders/Co-Leaders must be present and actively supervising. Youth leaders cannot take their place.
- At least one of the adults must be female.
- The two required adults must not be related or live in the same household.

Adult supervision rules apply to all Girl Scout activities, including meetings, trip/travel, camps, events, and activities. There are no exceptions. Report any deviation from this policy to GSSEMl.

Note: Invited or additional participating adults can be related, but they cannot replace the two unrelated leaders.

Determine the minimum number of adult chaperones needed:

- Adult-to-youth ratios vary based on participants' ages and the type of activity.
- Group meetings require fewer adults; refer to the "Group Meetings" column in the table below.
- Outings, activities, camping, and travel require more supervision. Refer to the "Events, Travel, and Camping" column in the table.

Count all children (Girl Scouts or not) in supervision ratios unless they're under the constant care of their own parent/guardian who is not acting as a chaperone.

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GIRL SCOUT ADULT-TO-YOUTH RATIOS	GROUP MEETINGS		EVENTS, TRAVEL, AND CAMPING	
	Two unrelated troop volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of youth:	**Add One** additional approved troop volunteer for each additional	**Two** unrelated troop volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of youth:	**Add One** additional approved troop volunteer for each additional
DAISY GIRL SCOUTS (Grades K–1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
BROWNIE GIRL SCOUTS (Grades 2–3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
JUNIOR GIRL SCOUTS (Grades 4–5)	25	1-10	16	1-8
CADETTE GIRL SCOUTS (Grades 6–8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
SENIOR GIRL SCOUTS (Grades 9–10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
AMBASSADOR GIRL SCOUTS (Grades 11–12)	30	1-15	24	1-12

Safety in Girl Scouting

The emotional and physical safety and well-being of Girl Scouts is our top priority. Our resource Safety Activity Checkpoints outlines the safety standards and guidelines used in Girl Scouting, which apply to all Girl Scout activities. Volunteers should refer to **Safety Activity Checkpoints** when planning Girl Scout-sanctioned activities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints contains two primary sections, an introduction, and an appendix. You'll find:

- Safety standards and requirements for adult supervision, transportation, permission slips, preparation for troop activities, and field trips and overnight trips.
- Individual safety checkpoints for specific activities—such as camping, internet use, and water sports—that provide activity-specific information.
- Specifics on activities not permitted by Girl Scouts of the USA and actions that Girl Scouts and volunteers should not take.
- Policies on chartered aircraft trips and aviation.
- First aid and overall health information.
- Standards for well-being and inclusivity, and ways to include Girl Scouts with disabilities and to support everyone's emotional safety.

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The Buddy System

Use the buddy system anytime your troop leaves your meeting site or attends a field trip. Divide your troop into teams of at least two members, with each Girl Scout responsible for always staying with their buddy/buddies, warning them of danger, giving them immediate assistance if it's safe to do so, and seeking help if needed. Girl Scouts are encouraged to stay near their buddy/buddies or join with another team, so that if someone is injured, one person cares for the injured party while others seek help.

Registering Girls and Adults in Girl Scouting

Every participant (youth and adult) must register to become a member of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). GSUSA membership dues are valid for the Girl Scout membership year, which runs annually from October 1 through September 30. Membership dues cannot be transferred to another member and are not refundable.

Preregistration for the upcoming membership year occurs in the spring. Early registration allows for uninterrupted receipt of forms and materials from GSSEM, helps troops plan ahead, and gets members excited about all the great things they'll do as Girl Scouts in the year to come. Note that a Girl Scout's grade level is determined by the current membership year beginning October 1.

Lifetime membership is available to anyone who accepts the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, pays the one-time lifetime membership fee, and is at least 18 years old (or a high school graduate or equivalent). Volunteers with ten or more years of service can become lifetime members at the discounted young alum rate.

Adding New Girl Scouts to Your Troop

Growing your troop is a great way to share the power of the Girl Scout experience! **There are many ways to get the word out**, like hanging posters in local schools, using social media to reach families in your community, and including your troop in GSSEM's opportunity catalog or troop catalog.

For help registering your troop, contact the GSSEM Customer Care team at **customercare@gssem.org**.

Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

Girl Scouts is for every girl, and that's why we embrace Girl Scouts of all abilities and backgrounds with a specific and positive philosophy of inclusion that benefits everyone. Each Girl Scout—regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, physical or cognitive ability, sexual orientation, primary language, or religion—is an equal and valued member of the group.

We believe inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. Inclusion is about cultivating environments that enable every Girl Scout to feel a sense of belonging. It's about treating everyone with respect and dignity, and celebrating their unique strengths. It's about being a sister to every Girl Scout. Some ways to cultivate inclusion and build belonging are to:

- Welcome every Girl Scout as a valued peer, and focus on building community. To start interactions off with care, learn each person's name, caregivers included, with correct pronunciation. Use a warm and friendly tone, and consistently greet each community member when they arrive. Say goodbye to each person by name as well.
- Cultivate cooperation over competition, when appropriate.
- Cultivate a confidential, socially comfortable environment. Occasionally ask those who participate in Girl Scout programming if anything is worrying or bothering them. Be a trusted adult they can come to with their needs and emotions without judgment. Allow, but don't require, participants to say the Pledge of Allegiance or the Girl Scout Promise and Law at meetings.
- Model respect for and understanding of all members and their families. Learn about the cultures and identities represented in your Girl Scout community, and honor cultural differences. Be sure not to put anyone on the spot or ask them to educate you about their culture/identity. Welcome personal sharing about people's cultural traditions, spoken languages, and family structures. Make this kind of sharing a consistent, reliable part of your time together.
- Embrace diverse gender expressions and identities. Invite each community member to share their personal pronouns aloud or on name tags, explaining that no one has to share if they don't want to. Make these conversations matter of fact and use a positive tone.

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- Prioritize equitable communications, including feedback requests such as surveys, by ensuring consistent openness and reach to all members/families
- Learn the most valuable ways to support individual children and adults with disabilities, learning differences, and/or neurodivergence. Ask parents, "What can I do to support your child to participate/learn/feel successful in our group?"

To learn more about this topic, check out our **Delivering Inclusive Program** training on gsLearn. If you have questions about accommodating an individual member, please reach out to the GSSEM Member Support team.

Focus on Accessibility for All

A key part of creating an inclusive Girl Scout environment is making sure everyone is able to participate. As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, consider the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. Seek to learn about the special needs of any members who have disabilities or whose parents/caregivers have disabilities—though don't rely on visual cues to inform you. Disabilities include physical, sensory, and cognitive conditions, and not all of these are visible.

Approximately 20% of the U.S. population has a disability—that's one in five people across every socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and religion. If you want to find out what an individual with a disability needs **to make their Girl Scout experience successful**, simply ask them or their parent/caregiver. If you're open and receptive, they'll likely respond in kind.

Remember, it's important that all Girl Scouts be rewarded for their best efforts, not the completion of a task. Give everyone the opportunity to do their best, and they likely will! Sometimes that means changing a few rules or approaching an activity in a more creative way. Here are some examples of how to modify activities so that everyone can participate:

- Invite a member to complete an activity after they've observed others doing it.
- If an activity calls for using a sense that a Girl Scout doesn't have (like sight for a Girl Scout who's blind), find ways for them to participate using other senses. Can they touch objects and/or participate by hearing?
- If an activity calls for running, an individual who's unable to run might walk if possible and desired by them, or perhaps move in another way.

To learn more, take our trainings in our **Ability and Inclusion Learning Path** on gsLearn.

Language Related to Disability

First and foremost, seek personal preferences. How would the Girl Scout or family member you're interacting with like you to refer to their disability (if at all)? When this information can't be determined or you're speaking more generally, consider taking a person-first approach—acknowledging the person first, then the condition or disability, or what a person has, not what that person is. So not "schizophrenic person," but "person with schizophrenia."

Still, know that there's considerable disagreement here, with many in the disability community preferring an identity-first approach (e.g., "disabled person," not "person with a disability"), which reinforces the importance of establishing and honoring personal preferences whenever possible.

When interacting with a person with a disability that you're aware of, keep the following guidance in mind.

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

To learn more, take our **Delivering Inclusive Program** course on gsLearn.

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Troop Management

Registering Members with Cognitive Disabilities

Girl Scouts with cognitive disabilities can be registered as closely as possible to their chronological ages. They should wear the uniform of the associated grade level. As a volunteer, you're encouraged to make any adaptations to activities for Girl Scouts with cognitive disabilities.

These Girl Scouts may choose to retain their youth membership through their 21st year and then move into an adult membership category.

Getting Support for Your Troop

Remember, you're never alone—your Girl Scout support team has your back! Just like Girl Scouts support each other, y ou'll have a team of council staff and fellow volunteers ready to help you succeed. Here's how to build your own troop support system:

- **Connect with the GSSEM Member Support Team** (often called a service unit) for local training, advice, and answers to your questions.
- **Build your volunteer troop team early**—include parents, friends, family, and community members who bring energy and unique skills.
- **Know that troop committee volunteers** are your extra hands and eyes. They can help with meetings, outings, or take on specific roles like troop treasurer.
- **Encourage flexible volunteering**—even small roles make a big impact. Help caregivers find ways to contribute that match their strengths.
- **Empower your volunteers.** Just like the girls, once your fellow volunteers see they can succeed, they'll be excited to stay involved!

Troop Management Tools and Resources

From toolkits and guides to regular contact with experienced individuals, you'll have all the support you need to be a Girl Scout volunteer. You'll find tools to keep your troop going strong on **MyGS,** which you can always access via the icon on the upper right corner of our website. Click/tap the "login" button, then "my account"—you'll see the gsLearn and VTK buttons on the left menu bar, accessible on any desktop, tablet, or mobile device. The menu bar will be populated with any trainings you should view.

Following are some important resources you'll want to be sure to check out:

Rallyhood

Rallyhood is GSSEM's one-stop shop to help volunteers, caregivers, and GSSEM staff come together and get things done better and faster than ever before – all in one place. Through Rallyhood, volunteers can create web pages called Rallies to manage their troop. Through your troop's Rally, you can create, promote, share, and manage events, collect money, share pictures, post sign-up and polls, and communicate with caregivers. Volunteers may also join one of GSSEM's Rallies to explore helpful resources and content. Rallyhood is accessible via desktop or as an app. To get connected, visit the **GSSEM Rallyhood Success Center.**

With Rallyhood, girls and leaders can explore meeting topics and program activities together and follow the fun as they plan their Girl Scout year.

In your Troop's Rally, Troop Leaders can:

- Communicate with parents/caregivers on their troop Rally's message wall.
- Establish a troop calendar with regular troop meetings and events.
- Collect money for special events the troop is hosting.
- Post pictures of Girl Scout activities in the troop's gallery.
- Create signups for caregiver participation.

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On GSSEM Rallies, you can:

- View meeting plans for Journeys and badges, including plans for multi-level groups (K–5 and 6–12) in the **Troop Leader Network Rally**.
- Find Rallies specific to Girl Scout topics like Highest Awards, troop camping, or ceremonies and traditions and ask questions on the Rally's message wall.
- Connect with other volunteers and council throughout GSSEM.
- Download important files and resources via a Rally's Files Tab.
- Access important links related to the Rally's topic via the Links tab.

Get started by visiting **gssem.org/rallyhood** and by viewing Rallyhood tutorial videos on **gsLearn**.

gsLearn

gsLearn is our online training platform that gives you easy access to online and in-person learning opportunities as well as the ability to track all your accomplishments! Learn at your own pace, access additional resources, and repeat trainings as needed!

To access gsLearn, first log in to MyGS. You'll find the platform in the options on the left-hand navigation bar.

More Tools and Resources

- **Girl Scout handbooks.** These **grade level-specific handbooks** break it down for your Girl Scouts. Adventures include earning badges and awards, running a cookie business, and learning about the traditions that have brought Girl Scouts together for over a century.
- **Safety Activity Checkpoints.** Safety is paramount in Girl Scouting, and **Safety Activity Checkpoints** contains everything you need to know to help keep everyone safe during various activities done outside of regular Girl Scout troop meetings.
- **Tips for Troop Leaders.** When you're looking for real-world advice from fellow troop leaders who've been there/done that, this **volunteer-to-volunteer resource** has what you need for a successful troop year.
- **Troop year plans.** Our grade-level-specific **troop year plans** are the best tool for first-year troop leaders getting started with Girl Scouts, or to help any troop leader in planning out a well-balanced Girl Scout year. The entire year is mapped out—just follow along to help your Girl Scouts complete badge activities, improve their communities, and explore the world around them.
- **Girl Scout volunteers in your community.** Remember that Girl Scout support team we mentioned? You'll find it in your service unit! Troops are organized geographically into service units or communities, which are local networks of fellow leaders and administrative volunteers **ready to offer tips and advice** to help you succeed in your volunteer role.

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Even More Learning Opportunities

We know that when you have the knowledge and skills you need to manage your Girl Scouts, both you and your troop thrive. Connect with your service unit team in your service unit's Rally on Rallyhood.

GSSEM requires all new troops to complete the following trainings to successfully onboard:

- **Girl Scouts Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Course.** This training teaches volunteers how to recognize, respond to, and report child abuse and neglect. This course is required for all troop volunteers within 60 days of their role assignment. **Take the course.**
- **Troop Leader Orientation.** This course provides basic information about the Girl Scout program and troop management. This course must be completed within 60 days of the troop's start date. **Take the course.**
- **What Girl Scouts Do.** This course introduces what Girl Scouts do at each grade level and how they do it, helping you plan your troop's year. This course must be completed within 60 days of the troop's start date. The individual taking the training should complete the course for each level present in the troop; troops are required to complete the course for one Girl Scout level (e.g. What Brownies Do). At least one volunteer must also complete this course when the troop bridges or otherwise gains a new Girl Scout level. **Take the course.**
- **Managing Troop Finances.** Required for all Troop Treasurers, this course explores the basics of earning, collecting, managing, and annual reporting of troop funds and discusses GSSEM finance policies. This course must be completed by at least one troop volunteer. within 60 days of the troop's start date. **Take the course.**
- **Cookie Rookie.** Required for all Troop Product Program Managers, this course reviews the basics of the Girl Scout Cookie Program, including ways troops can sell, the current year's theme and dates, and key resources. This course must be ompleted by at least one troop volunteer. within 60 days of the troop's start date. **Take the course.**

Explore all of GSSEM's learning opportunity on our **Learning Page.**

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Troop Finances

With your guidance, your Girl Scouts will learn money management skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Your Girl Scout troop will plan and finance its own activities, and you'll coach your Girl Scouts as they earn and manage troop funds. Troop activities are powered by proceeds earned through council-sponsored product program activities (such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program), group money-earning activities (council approved, of course), and any dues your troop may charge.

Remember that all funds raised, earned, collected, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting belong to the troop as a whole and must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. Funds are administered through the troop and do not belong to individuals.

Establishing a Troop Account

You'll need a safe place to deposit your troop dues, product program proceeds, and other funds. If you're a new leader of an existing troop, you may inherit a checking account, but with a new troop, you'll want to open a new bank account. **All Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan troops must open its own independent troop bank account** in accordance with the steps outlined in the **Troop Banking Package**. Troop bank accounts may not be combined with other organization, booster club accounts, or personal accounts.

Recommended Banks

GSSEM strongly encourages all troops bank at one of GSSEM's recommended banks. Recommended banks have partnered with GSSEM to support our programs. GSSEM has obtained special pricing and services for our troop leaders at these banks. A current list of these banks may be found in the **Troop Banking Package**.

Here are a few helpful tips you can take to the bank:

- Be sure to find a bank that has free checking and low fees.
- Designate a "troop treasurer"—that is, one person responsible for troop funds and for keeping a daily account of expenditures.
- Ensure your account comes with a debit card you can use during activities or trips. These transactions are easier to track than cash payments at the end of the year.
- Be prepared and make sure another troop volunteer has a debit card for the troop account in case the main card is lost.
- Handle a lost troop debit card the same way you would a personal debit card: cancel it immediately.
- Keep troop funds in the bank before an activity or trip and pay for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.

Please refer to the **Troop Banking Package** and the **Opening a Troop Bank Account Short & Snappy** on **gsLearn** for more information on how to establish your troop bank account. GSSEM product program activities have specific banking and tracking procedures, which you can learn more about during Fall Product Program and Cookie Rookie trainings.

Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance is available for membership for first-year youth members whose families meet the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan income eligibility requirements as listed on the Financial Aid Application Form. Youth members receiving financial aid are required to participate in the Cookie Program. This form also contains information about what youth members may receive through financial assistance. Troops in their second year and beyond are encouraged to purchase memberships for youth members using funds raised through Girl Scout product programs. Families should contact the GSSEM Finance team at gssem-finance@gssem.org with questions regarding financial assistance for returning members.

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Money-Earning Basics for Troops

Troops flex their financial muscles in two distinct ways:

1. **The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other Girl Scout product sales** (authorized product sales such as calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy) organized by the council. All youth members are eligible to participate in two council-sponsored product program activities each year with volunteer supervision—the Girl Scout Cookie Program and one other council-authorized product program. Please remember, volunteers and Girl Scout council staff don't sell cookies and other products—Girl Scouts do.
2. **Group money-earning activities** organized by the troop (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by Girl Scouts (in partnership with volunteers) and that earn money for the group.

Participation Guidance

Girl Scout participation in both council-sponsored product program activities and group money-earning projects is based on the following:

- Voluntary participation
- Permission of each member's parent or guardian
- An understanding of (and ability to explain clearly to others) why the money is needed
- An understanding that money earning should not exceed what the group needs to support its program activities
- Observance of local ordinances related to involvement of children in money-earning activities as well as health and safety laws
- Vigilance in protecting the personal safety of each member
- Arrangements for safeguarding the money

Additional Guidelines

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

- **All rewards earned by Girl Scouts through product program activities must support Girl Scout program experiences** (such as camp, travel, and program events, but not scholarships or financial credits toward outside organizations).
- **Rewards are based on sales ranges** set by councils and may not be based on a dollar-per-dollar calculation.
- **Troops are encouraged to participate in council product programs as their primary money-earning activity**; any group money earning shouldn't compete with the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council product programs.
- **Written approval from the council is needed** before a group money-earning event; most councils ask that you submit a request for approval.
- **Girl Scouts discourages the use of games of chance.** Any activity that could be considered a game of chance (raffles, contests, bingo) must be approved by the local Girl Scout council and be conducted in compliance with all local and state laws.
- **Girl Scouts' *Blue Book of Basic Documents* policy forbids Girl Scouts from directly soliciting cash.** Girl Scouts can collect partial payment toward the purchase of a package of Girl Scout Cookies and other Girl Scout–authorized products through participation in council-approved product program donation programs. An exception is to allow Seniors and Ambassadors to solicit funds for their Gold Award projects.
- **Girl Scouts forbids product demonstration** parties where the use of the Girl Scout trademark increases revenue for another business, such as in-home product parties. Any business using the Girl Scout trademark or other Girl Scout intellectual property must seek authorization from GSUSA.
- **Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the ages and abilities of the participants** and be consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- **Money earned is for Girl Scout activities and is not to be retained by individuals.** Girl Scouts can, however, be awarded incentives and/or may earn credits from their Girl Scout product programs. Funds acquired through group money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the group according to council procedures.

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Troop Finances

Sample Money-Earning Activities Collections/drives

- Cell phones for refurbishment
- Used ink cartridges turned in for money
- Christmas tree recycling

Food/meal events

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

Services

- Service-a-thon (people sponsor a Girl Scout doing service and funds go to support a trip or other activity)
- Babysitting for a special event
- Raking leaves, weeding, cutting grass, shoveling snow, walking pets
- Cooking class or other specialty class

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

Help Your Troop Reach Its Financial Goals

As a volunteer, you have the opportunity to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for your troop:

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

Remember: It's great for Girl Scouts to have opportunities like the Girl Scout Cookie Program to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals. As a volunteer, try to help girls balance the money earning they do with opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on earning and spending money. Take Action projects, for example, may not always require them to spend any money!

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Troop Finances

Managing Troop Finances

Managing troop funds is one of the most important troop management tasks. Keep these helpful tips in mind when working with troop finances:

- Ensure your account comes with a debit card(s) that you can use during activities or trips. These transactions are easier to track at the end of the year.
- If you lose your troop debit card, cancel it immediately.
- Cash must be deposited into the troop bank account within 2-3 days of receipt.
- Keep troop funds in the bank before an activity or trip and pay for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.
- All monies raised by a troop for **any purpose** belong to the troop as a whole. Whatever is done with troop funds must benefit all girls in equal measure, no matter their ability to contribute troop dues or their participation in Product Programs. Troops may not create individual bank accounts or track girl contributions to troop funds, as this can result in tax-related consequences for the troop and can endanger Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's nonprofit status.
- All authorized signers on troop bank accounts are responsible for managing all aspects of the troop bank account including purchases, deposits, withdrawals, and record-keeping.
- Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan volunteers who are check signers are responsible for all overdrafts that they initiate.
- Non-sufficient funds checks written to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan are immediately turned over to a collection agency that may assess a fee for their services. The fee is payable by the offending party.

  In the event a troop receives a bad check, if still uncollected after being presented to the bank twice for payment, the troop has the option to forward the bad check to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan for collection agency follow-up.
- Payment to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan for the Cookie Program and Fall Product Program will be made through electronic Automated Clearing House (ACH) withdrawal from the troop bank account. ACH withdrawals will continue to be deducted from the bank account until all monies due to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan have been collected. If there are not enough funds in the account to cover the ACH withdrawal, non-sufficient funds charges incurred by Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan Finance Department may be added to the troop debt for each ACH rejection.

For more information on managing a troop bank account, please complete the **Managing Troop Finances course** or contact the GSSEM Finance Department at gssem-finance@gssem.org.

Important GSSEM Finance Policies

Please be aware of these important troop finance policies:

- All funds collected, raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting belong to the troop and must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. Funds are administered through the troop and do not belong to individuals.
- Personal use of troop funds at **ANY TIME** is illegal. Personal funds and troop funds should never be mixed.

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan takes misuse of troop funds extremely seriously. If personal use of troop monies occurs, Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan will begin collection procedures, taking legal action as necessary. Volunteers who misuse funds for which they are responsible will be released from all positions with Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan. Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan will pursue all available criminal and/or civil charges involving misuse of funds.

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Troop Finances

Record Keeping and Annual Reporting

Keeping accurate records is necessary when managing a troop bank account, as it makes annual reporting simple. All troops are required to submit the annual troop finance report by June 21 every year by using the document at **www.gssem.org/financereport**.

So long as a troop has an open bank account, troops must report annually to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan on the funds included within. If a troop is inactive for a year and no deposits or withdrawals occurred, troop leadership is still responsible for demonstrating that the funds within the bank account were unused.

Please refer to the **Finance Report Short & Snappy** for guidance on completing your troop's annual finance report.

Here are some tips for troop bank account record-keeping:

- Receipts must be written (i.e. for troop dues, when selling Girl Scout cookies in person) and collected for any transaction made using the troop's bank account. GSSEM recommends purchasing a carbon copy receipt book for this purpose.
- Receipts and records from troop bank account transactions should be retained for 3 years. Find a safe place to store your troop's receipts. If the volunteer managing the troop bank account no longer plans to continue, that volunteer should arrange the transfer of all receipts and other documents related to the troop bank account to the Troop Leader or Co-Leader before exiting their role.
- Accurate financial records and reports may be a condition of reappointment for troop volunteers for the next membership year. The GSSEM Volunteer Experience team monitors troop submission of the annual financial report.
- Troop financial records are subject to random or periodic audits by Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan staff.
- All financial records must also be available to caregivers and girls. Financial information should be reviewed with girls at least annually, though GSSEM recommends discussing troop finances with caregivers at least three times per year. You should make caregivers aware that troop financial records are available for their review upon request.
- Troop leaders should also communicate goal-setting objectives to parents when planning for Cookie or Fall Product Programs. Caregivers will demonstrate stronger support if they know both the troop goals and the activities or community take action projects planned for use of troop proceeds.

Girl and Adult Member Transfers

Individual girl and adult member transfers between troops are permitted at any time of the Girl Scout year. Girl members transferring between December 1 and May 1 of each year should be advised that any cookie sales and proceeds stay with the troop the cookies were sold with. GSSEM will make every effort to ensure girls receive all cookie program rewards from total sales.

Merging and Splitting of Troops

Money does not belong to any individual girl members. Thus, if one girl transfers to another troop, money does not transfer with her. If a troop divides into two troops, the money and materials of the original troop should be divided between the two troops in proportion to the number of girls moving into each new troop. The troop leader should contact their Member Support Specialist to inform them of the split and obtain new troop number(s), if necessary.

If one or more troops merge, money and material of each troop involved should be combined. Troop leader(s) should contact their Member Support Specialist regarding the merger and which troop is disbanding.

Due to the complex nature of the Girl Scout cookie program related to troop financials, troop splits are **not permitted** between December 1 and May 1 of any Girl Scout year. If it is no longer an option to continue meeting together, groups may choose to meet separately, but a final troop spilt cannot be completed until after May 1. Once the troop has decided to split, no significant purchases should be made from the troop bank account. Nominal purchases of less than $50 for troop meeting supplies are permitted. While the troop is waiting to complete the split, documentation, including receipts and purchase descriptions, for any nominal purchases must be retained until after the troop split is complete. For additional guidance regarding troop splits, please contact the Director of Member Support.

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Financial Management and Product Program Abilities by Grade Level

Girl Scouts build their financial and sales savvy as they grow in Girl Scouting. Each person learns a little differently, but below are some examples of opportunities for Girl Scouts' progression at each grade level.

Girl Scout Daisies

- The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.
- Parents/caregivers may decide to contribute to the cost of activities.
- Daisies can participate in Girl Scout Cookie Program activities and other council-sponsored product programs.
- Daisies are always paired with a volunteer when selling anything. They do the asking and deliver the product, but volunteers handle the money and keep girls safe.
- Daisies should be given the opportunity to practice identifying money and counting back change with an adult during each transaction.

Girl Scout Brownies

- The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and shares some of the group budgeting responsibilities.
- Brownies discuss the cost of activities (supplies, fees, transportation, rentals, and so on) with guidance from their volunteer(s).
- Brownies set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.
- Brownies may decide to pay dues to contribute to the cost of activities.

Girl Scout Juniors

- The group volunteer retains overall responsibility for long-term budgeting and record keeping but shares or delegates all other financial responsibilities.
- Juniors set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.
- Juniors decide on group dues, if any. Dues are collected by them and recorded by a group treasurer selected by the troop.
- Juniors budget for the short-term needs of the group based on their plans and income from the group dues.
- Juniors budget for more long-term activities, such as overnight trips, group camping, and special events.
- Juniors budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Bronze Award if they're pursuing it.

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Troop Finances

Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

- Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors estimate costs based on plans.
- They determine the amount of group dues, if any, and the scope of money-earning projects.
- They set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.
- They carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning programs.
- They budget for extended travel, Take Action projects, and leadership projects, including the Girl Scout Silver or Gold Award if they're pursuing theirs.
- They may be involved in seeking donations for Take Action projects, with council approval.
- They keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.

Working with Sponsors and Other Organizations

Local sponsors help bring Girl Scout experiences to life! Community partners—like businesses, organizations, and individuals—can support your troop in creative, meaningful, and inclusive ways. Make the most of these connections! Keep in mind that sponsors may be able to offer meeting spaces, volunteer time, activity materials, in-kind donations, and/or equipment.

Don't forget to celebrate your sponsors for their support! Encourage your Girl Scouts to say thank you with cards or invitations to meetings or ceremonies, or by teaming up on a Take Action project.

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

Troops/groups must seek approval from GSSEM when seeking sponsorship. Please use the **Solicitation & Sponsorship Approval Request** for this purpose.

Here are a few tips for partnering with other organizations:

- **Don't fundraise in uniform.** Girl Scouts can't raise money for other organizations while wearing anything that identifies them as Girl Scouts (like uniforms or pins). However, they *can* support causes through Take Action projects or community service.
- **Keep it nonpolitical.** Girl Scouts should not participate in political campaigns or events in any official capacity. That means no rallies, petitions, or political fundraising while representing Girl Scouts.
- **Respect religious practices.** Girl Scout groups should be respectful when working with religious organizations, but no one should be required to participate in religious observances.
- **Avoid endorsing commercial products.** Girl Scouts and volunteers shouldn't promote or sell retail products. This policy has been in place since 1939!

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Disbanding Troops and Unused Troop Funds

When a troop disbands, any unused Girl Scout money left in the account becomes the property of the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan. Troop funds are not the property of any individual member. Before disbanding, ask your Girl Scouts how they want to pay it forward. They may decide to pay for Girl Scout activities or donate any unused funds to their service unit or another troop. Activities can also include purchasing materials to support another organization through Take Action projects. Spending remaining troop funds must be a girl-led decision by current youth members. Funds may not be spent on Girl Scouts who are not registered in the current membership year. Please remember that according to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan and GSUSA policy (and to avoid having to pay taxes to the IRS), troop funds may not be refunded or paid out directly to Girl Scout youth, adults, or families.

If Troop Leaders have not been able to identify new troop leadership prior to disbanding, troop leaders should contact all troop caregivers to inform them of their decision to no longer lead the troop and make one last attempt to recruit caregivers to serve as troop leaders. If a final attempt to identify new leadership is unsuccessful, Troop Leader should contact their Member Support Specialist for support with additional alternatives to keep the troop from disbanding. If youth members are interested in troop participation, the GSSEM Member Support team will then communicate with caregivers and work to place the girls in new troop.

Prior to officially disbanding, Troop Leaders should complete the **Disbanding Troop Checklist** to ensure they have completed all the necessary steps for disbanding a Girl Scout troop. Disbanding troops must submit the following to the GSSEM Finance Department:

- A final **annual troop finance report**. This report must be submitted within 15 days of a troop's decision to disband.
- A cashier's check, made payable to "Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan," with the remaining balance of the troop bank account (only if funds remain in the bank account).
- Notification from the bank that the account has been closed.
- The disbanding troop number and contact information of all active troop leaders and authorized signers prior to the troop disbanding.

Closing the Troop Account

When closing a troop account, be sure all checks and other debits have cleared the account before you close it. Submit remaining funds to:

Chief Financial Officer
Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan
1333 Brewery Park Blvd., Suite 500
Detroit, MI 48207

Contact the GSSEM Member Support Team for more information on disbanding a Girl Scout troop.

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Engaging Girl Scouts by Level

Creating the kind of environment in which Girl Scouts are unafraid to try new things and to be who they want to be starts with you! By meeting them where they are, you'll help Girl Scouts develop the leadership skills they'll use today and in the future.

Understanding Healthy Development in Youth

It sounds simple, but just being attentive to what Girl Scouts are experiencing as they mature is a big help to them—and to you, as you guide and mentor them! You'll experience different joys and challenges with each Girl Scout level; below are some guidelines for meeting Girl Scouts' needs and abilities at different grade levels. Keep in mind that these guidelines reflect neurotypical experiences.

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

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Engaging Girl Scouts by Level

GIRL SCOUT BROWNIES	
At the Girl Scout Brownie level (second and third grades), many Brownies...	**This means...**
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, or play outside.	Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	Allowing them to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances if they would like to.
Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.	Letting them lead, direct, and help in activities whenever possible. Allow them to make decisions as a group about individual roles and responsibilities.
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	Doing more than just reading to them about the Brownie Elf's adventures. Ask them questions to gauge their understanding and allow them to role-play their own pretend visit to a new country.
Need clear directions and structure and like knowing what to expect.	Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have them create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share those at the start.
Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.	Offering support only when needed. Allow them to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.
Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills. Most can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, and the like.	Encouraging them to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands, if they're able to. They may need some assistance, however, holding scissors, threading needs, and so on.
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	They might like to create a play about welcoming a new student to their school or to tell a story through dance or creative movement.
Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job well done.	Acknowledging when they've listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again.

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Engaging Girl Scouts by Level

GIRL SCOUT JUNIORS	
At the Girl Scout Junior level (fourth and fifth grades), many Juniors...	**This means...**
Want to make decisions and express their opinions.	Whenever possible, allowing them to make decisions and express their opinions through guided discussion and active reflection activities. Also, have them set rules for listening to others' opinions and offering assistance in decision making.
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	Allowing them to team up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities, if they would like to.
Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others.	Although it's okay to have expectations, the expectation is not perfection Share your own mistakes and what you learned from them, and be sure to create an environment where they can be comfortable sharing theirs.
Are concerned about equity and fairness.	Not shying away from discussing why rules are in place and having them develop their own rules for their group.
Are beginning to think abstractly and critically and are capable of flexible thought. Juniors can consider more than one perspective as well as the feelings and attitudes of other people.	Asking them to explain why they made a decision to share their visions of their roles in the future, and to challenge their own and others' perspectives.
Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination.	Engaging them in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow them to express themselves through the written word, choreography, and so on.
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	They might like to tell a story through playwriting, playing an instrument, or choreographing a dance.
May be starting puberty, which may include beginning breast development, skin changes, and weight changes. Some may be getting their periods.	Being sensitive to their changing bodies, possible discomfort over these changes, and their desire for more information or total avoidance of the topic. Create an environment that acknowledges and celebrates this transition as healthy and normal for them.

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Engaging Girl Scouts by Level

GIRL SCOUT CADETTES

At the Girl Scout Cadette level (sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), many Cadettes...	This means...
Are going through puberty, including changes in their skin, body shape, and weight. Many also will be starting their menstrual cycles and have occasional shifts in mood.	Being sensitive to the many changes Cadettes are undergoing and acknowledging that these changes are as normal as growing taller! They need time to adapt to their changing bodies, and their feelings about their bodies may not keep up. Reinforce that, as with everything else, people go through puberty in different ways and at different times.
Are starting to spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	That many will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities as well as tackling relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. If you're noticing a pattern of isolation for any troop member, check in with them—are they content to work solo, or are they being excluded?
Can be very self-conscious, wanting to be like everyone else but fearing they're unique in their thoughts and feelings.	Encouraging them to share, but only if they're ready. At this age, they may be more comfortable sharing a piece of artwork or a fictional story than their own words. Throughout activities, highlight and discuss differences as positive, interesting, and beautiful.
Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.	Trusting them to plan and make key decisions and allowing them to experience "fun failure," which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.

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Engaging Girl Scouts by Level

GIRL SCOUT SENIORS

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

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Engaging Girl Scouts by Level

GIRL SCOUT AMBASSADORS

At the Girl Scout Ambassador level (eleventh and twelfth grades), many Ambassadors...	This means...
Can see the complexity of situations and controversial issues—they understand that problems often have no clear solution and that varying points of view may each have merit.	Inviting them to develop stories as a group and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.
Have strong problem-solving and critical-thinking skills and can adapt logical thinking to real-life situations. Most will recognize and incorporate practical limitations to solutions.	They are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have them plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.
Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	They'll enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that they interact with those they might not usually pair up with.
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	Encouraging them to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind them frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist them in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	Acknowledging their pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help them release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home—and are looking to their futures.	Trusting them to plan and make key decisions, and allowing them to experience "fun failure," which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.

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Creating a Safe Space for Girl Scouts

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

Recognize and Support Each Girl Scout

You're a role model and a mentor to your Girl Scouts. Since you play an important role in their lives, they need to know that you consider each of them an important person, too. It's likely they'll weather an ill-equipped meeting place or an activity that flops—but being ignored or rejected by their troop leader is something they should never have to experience.

Remember to:

- Give shout-outs when you see Girl Scouts trying their best, not just when they've had clear success.
- Emphasize the positive qualities that make each Girl Scout worthy and unique.
- Be generous with praise—but not with criticism.
- Help Girl Scouts find ways to show acceptance of and support for one another.

Promote Fairness

In a Girl Scout troop, fairness is fostered by sharing responsibilities, addressing disagreements constructively, and responding consistently to accomplishments. When you model this commitment, it makes the inevitable mistakes easier to forgive. When possible, ask your group what they think is fair before decisions are made.

Remember to:

- Try to ensure responsibilities as well as chances for feeling important are evenly divided among troop members.
- Help Girl Scouts explore and decide for themselves fair ways of solving problems, carrying out activities, and responding to behaviors and accomplishments.
- Explain your reasoning for making certain decisions.
- Be willing to apologize as needed.

Build Trust

Girl Scouts need your support when they try new things, and you'll need to demonstrate that you won't betray their confidence. Show them you're making an effort to understand them as individuals.

- Inspire them to think for themselves and use their own judgment.
- Encourage them to make important decisions in the group and assure them that all troop members have an equal say.
- Offer them assistance in correcting/addressing their mistakes.
- Support them in trusting one another—let them see firsthand how trust can be built, lost, regained, and strengthened.

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Creating a Safe Space for Girl Scouts

Inspire Open Communication

Promote open communication by listening and responding positively to what your Girl Scouts think, feel, and want to do. They'll appreciate having someone they can talk to about the important things happening in their lives.

- Speak your mind when you're happy or concerned about something, and encourage Girl Scouts to do the same.
- Leave the door open for Girl Scouts to seek advice, share ideas, and propose plans or improvements.
- Help them see how open communication can promote helpful action, discovery, a better understanding of self and others, and an atmosphere that fuels fun and accomplishment.

Manage Conflict

Conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, and if handled constructively they show Girl Scouts they can manage differences of opinion, exercise diplomacy, and improve their communication and relationships. Respecting others and being a sister to every Girl Scout means that shouting, verbal abuse, or physical confrontations are never warranted and cannot be tolerated in the Girl Scout environment.

When a conflict arises in your troop, try to get those involved to sit down together and talk calmly in a nonjudgmental manner, keeping in mind that each party may need some time—perhaps a few days or a week—to settle first. Explain to Girl Scouts that communicating in this way might feel uncomfortable and difficult in the moment, but it lays the groundwork for working well together in the future.

Whatever you do, don't spread word of the conflict, as this won't help the situation and may cause Girl Scouts embarrassment or anger.

GSSEM encourages troop leaders to sign up for an upcoming **Managing Girl Scout Behavior** webinar to learn a four-step approach to correcting Girl Scouts' behavior in the troop setting. For navigating disagreements with adults, view the **Difficult Conversations** webinar, which gives volunteers tools for how to have and structure conversations with caregivers and volunteers in a disagreement. All families should have a signed **Parent/Guardian Agreement** on file with the troop every year which has families agree to support the troop by engaging in positive behaviors in a Girl Scout setting.

If a conflict persists, be sure you explain the matter to your troop's volunteer support team. If the volunteer support team cannot resolve the issues satisfactorily (or if the problem involves a volunteer on the troop/group's volunteer support team), please contact your Member Support Specialist. If they are unable to resolve the issues satisfactorily, Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan will inform you of next steps. Please refer to the **Volunteer Relations Process Short & Snappy** for more information.

Communicate Effectively with Girl Scouts of Any Age

Make sure your words and actions nurture connection among members. Keep in mind how important the following approaches are.

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

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

Be open to real issues. Outside of Girl Scouts, members may be dealing with issues involving relationships, peer pressure, school, money, drugs, and other serious topics. When you don't know, listen. And seek help from GSSEM if you need assistance or more information than you currently have.

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Creating a Safe Space for Girl Scouts

Show respect. Girl Scouts often say that their best experiences were the ones where adults treated them as equal partners. Speak to them respectfully to reinforce that their opinions matter and that they deserve respect.

Offer options. Members' needs and interests change; being flexible shows them you respect them and their busy lives. Be ready with age-appropriate guidance and parameters no matter what Girl Scouts choose to do.

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

Address the Needs of Older Girl Scouts

Let these simple tips guide you when working with teenage Girl Scouts:

- Think of yourself as a "guide on the side"—a partner, a coach, or a mentor, not a "leader."
- Ask them what rules they need for safety and about the group agreements they need to be a good team. When they take the lead in establishing group rules, they're more likely to stick to them.
- Understand that they need time to talk, unwind, and have fun together.
- Ask what they think and what they want to do.
- Encourage them to speak their minds.
- Provide structure, but don't micromanage.
- Give everyone a voice in the group, understanding that "speaking up" may look different for each person. For some, it might mean sharing their ideas in front of the entire group; for others it could mean providing a written response or contributing as part of a group.
- Treat them like partners.
- Don't repeat what's said in the group to anyone outside of it (unless necessary for girls' safety). See "Report Concerns" below to understand the guard rails.

Be Prepared for Sensitive Topics

It's an amazing feeling when your Girl Scouts put their trust in you. When they do, they may come to you with some of the issues they're facing, such as bullying, peer pressure, dating, athletic and academic performance, understanding their own identity, and more. Some of these issues might be considered sensitive by families who may have opinions or input about how, and whether, Girl Scouts should cover these topics with their troop.

Girl Scouts welcomes and serves youth and families from a wide spectrum of faiths and cultures. When members make clear that they want to participate in discussions or activities that could be considered sensitive—even just for some—put the topic on hold until you've spoken with a parent/caregiver of the members and received guidance from GSSEM.

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

Neither Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan, nor Girl Scouts of the USA does not take a position or develop materials on issues relating to human sexuality, birth control, or abortion. We feel our role is to help Girl Scouts develop self-confidence and good decision-making skills that will help them make wise choices in all areas of their lives. We believe parents and caregivers, along with schools and faith communities, are the primary sources of information on these topics.

Parents/caregivers make all decisions regarding their child's participation in Girl Scout programming that may be of a sensitive nature. As a volunteer leader, you must get written parental permission for any locally planned program offering that could be considered sensitive. Included on the permission form should be the topic of the activity, any specific content that might create controversy, and any action steps the Girl Scouts will take when the activity is complete. Be sure to have a form for each troop member and keep the forms on hand in case a problem arises. For activities not sponsored by Girl Scouts, find out in advance (from organizers or other volunteers who may be familiar with the content) what will be presented, and obtain written approval using the **Troop Leader/Guardian Event & Activity Permission Form**.

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Creating a Safe Space for Girl Scouts

Report Concerns

There may be times when you worry about the health and well-being of individuals in your group. Alcohol, drugs, sex, bullying, abuse, depression, and eating disorders are some of the issues they may encounter. You're on the frontlines of their lives, which places you in a unique position to identify a situation in which Girl Scouts may need help. If you believe someone is at risk of hurting themself or others, your role is to promptly bring that information to the parent/caregiver or the council so the Girl Scout can get the expert assistance they need. Your concern about their well-being and safety is taken seriously, and GSSEM Member Support staff will guide you in addressing these concerns.

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

- Marked changes in behavior or personality (for example, unusual moodiness, aggressiveness, or sensitivity)
- Declining academic performance and/or inability to concentrate
- Withdrawal from school, family activities, or friendships
- Fatigue, apathy, or loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Sleep disturbances
- Increased secretiveness
- Deterioration in appearance and personal hygiene
- Eating extremes, unexplained weight loss, distorted body image/efforts to hide their body
- Tendency toward perfectionism (e.g., mistakes are considered unacceptable, there's an unwillingness to start or try something for fear of failure, or a belief that there's only one way to do something)
- Giving away prized possessions; preoccupation with the subject of death
- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, or fractures
- Avoidance of eye contact or physical contact
- Excessive fearfulness or distrust of adults
- Abusive behavior toward other children, especially younger ones, or animals

If you notice any of these signs in a Girl Scout youth, GSSEM recommends referring the girl to experts at school or in the community. Share your concern with the girl's family, if this is feasible, but only after seeking the girl's consent. To explore more related to concerning behavior in Girl Scouts, GSSEM recommends taking **Youth Mental Health First Aid** training, **Managing Girl Scout Behavior** course, and the **Girl Scouts Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Course**.

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Engage Families

You want your Girl Scouts to have fun, be inspired, take healthy risks, and learn about themselves and the world—that's why you're a Girl Scout volunteer! Parents and caregivers want the same thing for their children, but getting families to pitch in and play an active role in the troop while enhancing the experience for their Girl Scout and themselves can be tricky for many volunteers. It doesn't have to be this way.

Kick the Year Off Right by Engaging Parents and Caregivers

Parents and caregivers will feel most connected to the troop when you're proactive in engaging them early on. Express your desire for them to play an active role in troop life, and how this can contribute to the connection, joy, and sense of pride that Girl Scouts feel. At the same time, recognize that not all families have the capacity to be involved, for various reasons (don't take it personally!). Be open with parents about your hopes for their involvement and listen to what can work for them.

What Is a Parent/Caregiver Meeting?

It's the first meeting that starts each troop year—and whether you're leading a new or returning troop, it's a valuable meeting.

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

- Families understand what Girl Scouting can do for their child.
- Families and leaders identify ways they'll 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 or schedule changes.
- Families learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics.

For more tips on working with troop families, check out Girl Scouts' **Tips for Troop Leaders** hub.

Tips for Engaging Families in Your Troop

- **Just ask!** Many parents want to help—they just haven't been asked. Be clear about what you need, and don't worry if someone says no. Follow up later—they might be available next time!
- **Explain the "why."** Helping out benefits the whole troop and strengthens the bond between Girl Scouts and their caregivers. It's a meaningful way to show support.
- **Discover talents.** Ask what people enjoy and what they're good at—event planning, social media, budgeting, etc. Matching tasks to interests makes volunteering fun and sustainable.
- **Keep it simple.** Find out how much time someone can give. Even 15 minutes a week can make a difference—like organizing snack schedules or carpools.
- **Include families in the fun.** Host a few family-friendly events during the year—like a holiday open house or a "reverse meeting" where Girl Scouts lead the adults in an activity.
- **Stay connected.** Keep communication open year-round through emails, chats, or social media. Ask families how they prefer to receive updates at your first meeting.
- **Let Girl Scouts teach at home.** Encourage caregivers to let their Girl Scouts share what they've learned. This builds confidence and reinforces new skills.

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Girl Scout Product Programs

Learning to think like an entrepreneur? Developing business smarts? Getting to know customers and building lasting relationships? There's so much more to that package of Thin Mints®.

Whether they participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program or the Girl Scout Fall Product Program (or both!), Girl Scouts learn things that prepare them to take on the world. Plus, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay in your local community to power amazing year-round experiences that broaden Girl Scouts' worlds and spark their sense of wonder.

Five Essential Skills

By participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program, Girl Scouts as young as five develop five essential skills that help them be successful today and throughout their lives:

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

But building their business know-how isn't just tied to the cookies themselves! Girl Scouts at any level can continue honing their entrepreneurial skills by earning our **Cookie Business badges, Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin**, and **Financial Literacy badges** year after year.

Before your entrepreneurs open shop, be sure to check out the website, **www.gssem.org/cookies**, and our **helpful troop leader resources** that will empower you to:

- Manage your troop's funds.
- Learn how Girl Scouts participate in money-earning activities.
- Discover how your troop can reach its financial goals.
- Plan activities to help Girl Scouts earn cookie pins and badges.
- Understand just how much your Girl Scouts are capable of and **how their entrepreneurial skills progress**.

Girl Scout Cookie History

What started with Girl Scouts selling home-baked cookies to raise money grew into enlisting professional bakers in 1936 to handle the growing demand—and the rest is history. **Explore Girl Scout Cookie history** to find out how cookies have helped build generations of female entrepreneurs and leaders who make the world a better place.

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Girl Scout Product Programs

Where Cookie Proceeds Go

After paying for the cost of cookies and materials, **Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local** and help councils provide Girl Scout programs in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the outdoors, life skills, entrepreneurship, and more—in camps, through leadership training, and in multiple other ways. A portion of the proceeds is directly managed by Girl Scouts, and it's up to them to decide how to invest their troop's share of the earnings.

GSSEM provides a breakdown of how cookie program proceeds support Girl Scout activities locally. Please share this information with Girl Scouts and their families so everyone understands how product programs support your local council.

Troop members share in the proceeds from successful product programs; proceeds are not distributed to individual members. Girl Scouts, however, may be eligible for rewards and credits that they put toward council-sponsored camps, programs, and store related credits, or travel experiences. The council plan for rewards applies equally to all participants in the product program activity. Visit **www.gssem.org/cookies** for more information about individual rewards and troop proceeds locally.

Girl Scouts' *Blue Book of Basic Documents* ("Owners of Assets") specifies: "All money and other assets, including property, that are raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting must be held and authorized by a Girl Scout council or Girl Scouts of the USA. Such money and other assets must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting."

Making s'mores under the stars, creating a lasting impact in your community, or ordering supplies for an eye-opening STEM project... There are limitless ways to put troop proceeds toward dynamic Girl Scout experiences! There are a few things, however, that don't qualify as "purposes of Girl Scouting"—for instance, using troop proceeds to purchase memberships or uniforms for another organization. We encourage all councils to remind their volunteers of this policy in order to avoid diversion of Girl Scout funds.

GSSEM's Role

When *you* are set up for success, you're better able to set your Girl Scouts up for success! That's why every year, GSSEM provides trainings and guidelines for conducting the Girl Scout Cookie Program and fall product program, as well as determines how the proceeds and product rewards system will be managed. Check **www.gssem.org/cookies** to find the answers you need, in addition to local trainings and resources.

Each council also selects the vendors of its choice to provide the products for their product programs. Two commercial bakers are licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies: **Little Brownie Bakers** and **ABC Bakers**. **Meet the Cookies** for additional information on cookie varieties, including nutritional details.

Councils also work with vendors to offer magazine subscriptions, nut and candy products, and more for the fall product program. These companies are **Ashdon Farms**, **Trophy Nut**, and **M2 Media Group**. M2 Media Group provides online tools and activities for Girl Scouts. Check with the GSSEM Product Program team for more details.

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Girl Scout Product Programs

Your Role

You help Girl Scouts develop the **five essential skills and think like entrepreneurs.** Your key actions are to:

Motivate participation

- Get Girl Scouts excited about supporting the troop, while keeping participation voluntary.
- Help them choose from the menu of **ways to participate in the Cookie Program**.

Support goal setting

- Encourage both confident and hesitant sellers to set meaningful **personal goals**.
- **Foster family partnerships** for success; introduce the **Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin** as a resource.

Guide sales opportunities

- Inform Girl Scouts about options: individual sales (in-person and online) and cookie booths.
- Ensure cookie booth locations follow council safety guidelines.

Shift your role as opportunities grow

- Move from hands-on involvement to oversigh and support.
- Remember, volunteers and caregivers don't sell; Girl Scouts lead the effort.

Manage finances and records

- Establish a clear accounting system for proceeds and products.
- Keep excellent records and copies of receipts; track all inventory.
- For older Girl Scouts, supervise as they learn record-keeping skills.
- Attend product program trainings to learn systems and tools.

Build a support network.

- Reach out to your service unit product program manage if you need help.
- Consider forming a cookie team to share responsibilities.

Product Program Safety

Safety is the top priority while participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and other product programs. Volunteers, families, and Girl Scouts should be familiar with and practice the safety guidelines outlined in local program resources as well as those available in the **troop leader resources** section of girlscout.org and in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Selling Cookies Online

Before Girl Scouts open their online storefront, they should partner with their troop leader and their family to learn how to safely run an online business.

We know Girl Scouts and their troops are creative, and the Girl Scout Cookie Program provides the perfect opportunity to highlight this creativity. Participants can use vanity URLs to add a creative component to their marketing and learning (e.g., Shana's Cookie Sale or Buy Cookies from Shana). However, troops and individual Girl Scouts cannot use GSUSA's intellectual property (Buy Thin Mints Now or Buy Girl Scout Cookies) as part of a vanity URL.

A few more online safety practices to keep in mind:

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program is a girl-led program; Girl Scouts should always lead online marketing and sales efforts, with the supervision of their caregiver.
- Girl Scouts engaging in online sales and marketing must review and apply the **Digital Marketing Tips for Cookie Entrepreneurs and Their Families**.
- Girl Scouts, volunteers, and caregivers must review and adhere to the **Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge**, the **Digital Cookie Pledge**, and the product program section of Girl Scouts' Safety Activity Checkpoints resource.

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- Posting individual or troop sales links to resale sites (Craigslist, eBay, Facebook Marketplace, etc.) is prohibited.
- Girl Scouts must adhere to all terms and conditions on the Digital Cookie platform.
- Girl Scouts of the USA reserves the right to remove or disable Girl Scouts' Digital Cookie links for any reason, including violation of guidance, inventory fulfillment issues, safety issues, or if sales and marketing activity goes viral and otherwise creates unanticipated disruption.

Additionally, families, Girl Scouts, and volunteers should contact and collaborate with GSSEM and GSUSA in advance of any national news media opportunities tied to their online marketing and sales efforts.

Supervising Girl Scouts While Selling

Remember to always incorporate the buddy system when Girl Scouts engage in product sales. Girl Scouts should not sell or deliver cookies alone.

Adults should provide supervision and guidance for all program levels, and must accompany Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors when they're selling, taking orders, and delivering products. Adults oversee Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors and must be aware of how, when, and where they're selling products. In addition, an adult must be readily available to Girl Scouts when they're participating in product programs. This can be accomplished by having an adult present with them or by having an adult and Girl Scouts exchange telephone numbers.

Preparing for Your Girl Scout Cookie Booth

Cookie booths—which can be thought of as cookie pop-up shops in areas with lots of foot traffic—are a fun way for Girl Scouts to connect with their community and practice their sales pitch with new customers. Booth locations must be approved by councils and facilitated within council jurisdictions, and participants must follow all council guidelines regarding setting up, running, and taking down a booth.

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan will arrange cookie booth opportunities at places of business across the council. Troops may sign up for booth locations in the eBudde cookie management system, or troops may make their own arrangements for cookie booths with local stores in their area not listed in eBudde (e.g. schools, places of worship, local community events, etc). Please refer to the Troop Cookie Manager Guide for more information about selecting and making arrangements for booths in accordance with GSSEM policy.

Common types of cookie booths include:

Cookie stand

- A small lemonade-stand-style booth run by a Girl Scout (or Girl Scouts from one household), supervised by their parent/caregiver(s). For safety reasons, two adults are recommended.

Drive-thru

- Set up in a parking lot or open area; customers stay in their vehicles.
- Troops should create a safe lane and keep Girl Scouts away from traffic.
- Typically run by a larger group of Girl Scouts, with appropriate adult supervision.

Standard booth

- Set up at the entrance or exit of a business or retailer.
- Usually run by 2-4 girls, with the appropriate adult supervision.

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Girl Scout Product Programs

You can use the below rubric to help you determine whether a given site would make for a successful cookie booth location. (These are best practices, but councils reserve the right to deny a location for any reason.) Remember to follow council guidelines for requesting and approving cookie booth sites.

Must-haves	Nice-to-haves
✓ Safety focused (visible, well-lit, etc.) ✓ ADA accessible ✓ Space for set up ✓ Schedule alignment ✓ Accessible to underage patrons	✓ Cell service ✓ Options for indoor or outdoor booths ✓ Restrooms ✓ Ease of physical access (parking lot entrance)
Booth should have at least one of the following	**Exact booth setup location must be one of these options**
✓ Heavy foot traffic ✓ High street visibility ✓ Strong social media presence ✓ Proximity to other high traffic stores or events	✓ Sidewalk space ✓ Entryway/exit space ✓ Drive-thru space

Encourage your Girl Scouts to unleash their creativity—and work on their advertising skills—in making colorful signs and booth decorations that potential customers can't resist! Remind them to be polite and to have their sales pitch ready for interested customers.

And keep in mind:

- Booths where any Girl Scout is not accompanied by their own parent/caregiver require two registered, background-checked Girl Scout volunteers.
- Cookie booths at which all members are under the direct supervision of their own parent/caregiver do not require adults to be registered, background-checked Girl Scout volunteers.
  - Best practice would be to have two adults present in case of accidents or necessary breaks.
  - Parents/caregivers are encouraged to register as volunteers to help support the full experience.
- Certain locations may be inappropriate for younger Girl Scouts based on the standards of your community and could negatively impact the cookie program experience for Girl Scouts and/or negatively impact the Girl Scout brand in the community. For example, Girl Scouts should not sell cookies in or in front of establishments that they themselves cannot legally patronize.
- Additionally, with respect to marijuana dispensaries, we have been steadfastly combating unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout trademark by the cannabis community, which has been marketing—without our authorization—certain cannabis products under our youth-appealing brand. We continue to aggressively fight these unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout brand.

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- Retail sales without Girl Scouts present are not approved by GSUSA. Councils, troops, and Girl Scouts may not sell cookies in a retail space where Girl Scouts cannot be present to market and manage inventory and collect and process payment for cookies. Store employees and/or adults cannot sell cookies on behalf of a Girl Scout or troop.
- Daisies are still learning how to make correct change. Help them handle money as needed, but remember that Girl Scouts make all sales at the booth!
- Keep your customers in the loop and update your baker's software system if you need to cancel or are unable to attend a cookie booth. If not, customers could be routed to cancelled booths as all scheduled booths are available on GSUSA's **Cookie Finder**!

For more tips to make your booth a success, check out our **Cookie Booth Essentials** (**Spanish version**). For additional information about setting up a booth and safety and security suggestions, consult GSSEM guidelines.

Contact the GSSEM Product Program team at **productsales@gssem.org** for information on reporting any cookie sale-related incidents.

Cookie Donation Programs

Cookies help Girl Scouts make a big impact in their community! GSSEM has an established cookie donation program that allows customers to purchase cookies for donation to an organization by GSSEM. Encourage your troop members to let customers know about these programs—it's a great way for customers to give back to their community, too!

With cookie donations, remember that:

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

Handling Product Complaints

Girl Scout Cookies are well loved and for good reason—it has always been the practice of Girl Scout councils and the bakers to guarantee customer satisfaction. If a customer isn't satisfied with the quality of their cookies for some reason, they can contact the baker at the phone number printed on the side of the cookie package. Troops should notify their council if they're aware of any such customer dissatisfaction.

Recognizing Cookie Sellers in the Media

The Girl Scout Cookie Program has always emphasized entrepreneurial outcomes. It has never been about and does not focus on individual sales results. With this in mind, know that:

- There are many impressive cookie entrepreneurs throughout the U.S., and the Girl Scout Movement will continue to recognize dynamic cookie entrepreneurs for various achievements tied to the Girl Scout Cookie Program and their participation in Girl Scouts.
- Girl Scouts of the USA does not currently track the top seller(s) of Girl Scout Cookies on a national level and does not identify a specific Girl Scout as the number one or "record-breaking" national cookie seller.
- Girl Scout councils should not reference such individuals as "top sellers" in the media. Doing so detracts from the essence of the Girl Scout Cookie Program, which is based on offering members important experiences in entrepreneurship, business, and finance from an early age as well as providing Girl Scouts and local Girl Scout councils with the funds necessary to power amazing experiences and opportunities for Girl Scouts year-round.
- A Girl Scout's or troop's sales link should not be highlighted when speaking to the media. All calls to action should be directed to the Girl Scout Cookie Finder or a council's own cookie finder/map and not a specific individual or troop.
- Volunteers, parents/caregivers, and Girl Scouts may not secure paid media to enhance a troop's or individual's positioning in the media.

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Insurance

Insurance Overview

Girl Scouts provides Activity Accident Insurance underwritten by Mutual of Omaha to support Girl Scouts participating in Girl Scout approved and supervised activities and events. Activity Accident insurance is automatic upon membership registration and applies to all adult and youth members who may become injured during a Girl Scout approved and supervised activity.

This coverage works like supplemental medical/health coverage and is intended to help with out-of-pocket medical expenses that may not be covered by personal insurance. Activity Accident insurance extends to non-members who are personally invited to participate in a Girl Scout approved and supervised activity, whether an adult volunteer for the day, or a friend of a Girl Scout who is joining along to try the program.

Activity Accident coverage applies to day events, overnight trips (including camp), and international travel. A summary of these coverage types for each category can be found here:

	Class 1 Activity Accident	**Class 2 Added Sickness**	**Class 3 International Travel and Inbound**
Eligibility	All member and *nonmember participants of Girl Scout sponsored and supervised daylong events and activities. (100% participation) * Nonmember participants are those personally invited by a registered member (adult or youth) to participate in a Girl Scout activity as a guest or visitor.	All member and *nonmember participants of Girl Scout sponsored and supervised overnight events, lasting one night or greater. (100% participation) * Nonmember participants are those personally invited by a registered member (adult or youth) to participate in a Girl Scout activity as a guest or visitor	All member and *nonmember participants of Girl Scout sponsored and supervised international travel or inbound international travel. (100% participation) * Nonmember participants are those personally invited by a registered member (adult or youth) to participate in a Girl Scout activity as a guest or visitor
Coverage (any approved and supervised Girl Scout Activity)	Day events	Overnight events	International travel
Premium Rates	No cost to Girl Scout councils or troops.	No cost to Girl Scout councils or troops.	No cost to Girl Scout councils or troops.

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Insurance

Benefit Amounts			
Accidental Death	$15,000	$15,000	$15,000
Accidental Dismemberment	$20,000	$20,000	$20,000
Paralysis	$20,000	$20,000	$20,000
Heart or Circulatory Malfunction Death Benefit	$15,000	$15,000	$15,000
Medical Expenses Accidents	$20,000	$20,000	$20,000
Dental Treatment	Not to exceed $5,000 per injury	Not to exceed $5,000 per injury	Not to exceed $5,000 per injury
Medical Expenses Sickness	NOT INCLUDED	$10,000	$10,000
Infectious Exposure Benefit	Not to exceed $1,500 per injury	Not to exceed $1,500 per injury	Not to exceed $1,500 per injury
Surface Ambulance Service	$3,000	$3,000	Benefits coordinated and paid by AXA Worldwide Travel Assistance
Air Ambulance Service	$5,000	$5,000	Benefits coordinated and paid by AXA Worldwide Travel Assistance
For Return Transportation Expense	Benefits coordinated and paid by AXA Worldwide Travel Assistance	Benefits coordinated and paid by AXA Worldwide Travel Assistance	Benefits coordinated and paid by AXA Worldwide Travel Assistance
Repatriation Expense	Benefits coordinated and paid by AXA Worldwide Travel Assistance	Benefits coordinated and paid by AXA Worldwide Travel Assistance	Benefits coordinated and paid by AXA Worldwide Travel Assistance

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Insurance

Automobile Insurance

It is the volunteer's responsibility to arrange private auto insurance protection appropriate for their own circumstances. Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan will not reimburse for the cost of physical damage, deductibles or liability claims. Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan strongly recommends, but does not require, that vehicle owners carry collision and comprehensive coverage. Under Michigan no-fault insurance law, if an accident should occur with an allegation of negligence, the car owner's auto liability insurance provides coverage first, and then if applicable, Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's general liability insurance will take effect.

General Liability Insurance (paid for by Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan)

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan general liability insurance is different and separate from the various types of supplemental accident and health insurance coverage available through Mutual of Omaha.

General Liability coverage is intended to provide coverage in response to allegations of negligence or liability on the part of Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan, its employees, volunteers, officers or directors resulting in injury to people or damage to someone else's property. Coverage also extends to allegations of libel, slander, or false arrest.

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan liability insurance covers all volunteers whether or not they are registered adult Girl Scout members as long as they are performing duties related to Girl Scouts and during a supervised activity in keeping with the Girl Scout Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints. The Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints are common sense rules that everyone should follow.

If you need a copy of a Certificate of Liability for your meeting location or event, please contact the Finance Dept. at **gssem-finance@gssem.org** and complete the **Certificate of Liability Insurance Request**.

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Know How Much You're Appreciated

What begins with Girl Scouts speaking up at a troop meeting can go all the way to speaking in front of their city council for a cause they champion—and they'll have your support to thank for it. Your volunteer role makes a powerful difference: Girl Scouts wouldn't exist without volunteers like you. And your first step as a troop leader may lead you to other volunteer opportunities once this year is over.

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

GSSEM spotlights volunteers regularly in our **GirlTalk blog**, showcasing their exemplary leadership. If you would like to spotlight a volunteer, please visit **www.gssem.org/spotlight** to access the Volunteer Spotlight Nomination Form.

Do you know an amazing volunteer who goes above and beyond? If so, please nominate them for one of the five Volunteer National Awards! Honorees are invited to the annual Volunteer National Awards ceremony held in the spring. The Volunteer National Awards nomination form may be found at **gssem.org/volrecognition**. The Volunteer Experience team can also help you identify thoughtful ways to informally recognize volunteers. For more information on both formal and informal recognitions, check out the **Volunteer Recognition Information Packet**.

We'll say it again: without our passionate and dedicated volunteers, there would be no Girl Scouting. That's why we celebrate National Volunteer Month every April (including National Volunteer Week the third week of that month) and turn up the party as we ring in National Girl Scout Leader's Day on April 22.

What can we say? We love our volunteers!

Learn more about volunteer appreciation at **www.gssem.org/volrecognition**.

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Additional Resources and Support

We know that volunteering isn't always easy, especially when you're new, so we can't thank you enough for giving your time and energy to be the mentor and role model your troop needs! Guiding your Girl Scouts—even if you're still figuring things out—is nothing short of amazing!

The important thing to remember is, you're not alone. We are in this with you, ready to always help and support you! Thanks again! It's going to be a great Girl Scout year!

Contact GSSEM
Phone: 800-482-6734
Email: customercare@gssem.org

GSSEM Service Centers

Clinton Township Service Center
42800 Garfield Rd
Clinton Twp. MI 48038

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

Flint Service Center
Gateway Centre
5400 Gateway Centre Drive, Ste. B
Flint, MI 48507

Port Huron Service Center
Birchwood Mall
4350 24th Ave, Space 518
Fort Gratiot, MI 48059

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

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

GSSEM Campgrounds

Camp Hawthorn Hollow
1046 Mayer Rd
Columbus, MI 48063

Camp Playfair
3135 Lakeshore Rd
Lexington, MI 48450

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