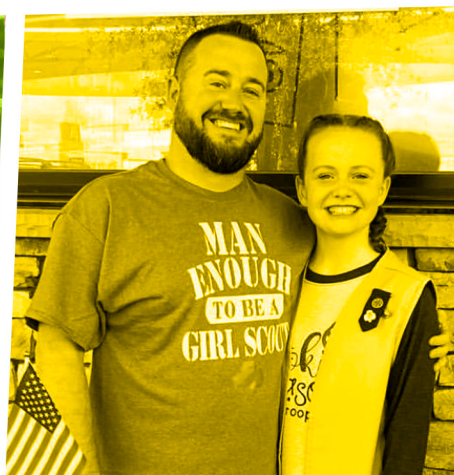


girl scouts 
in the heart
of pennsylvania



New Leader's Guide to Success





NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

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The Girl Scout Promise

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

The Girl Scout Law

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

Our Mission

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

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



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Thank you for becoming a Girl Scout leader! We're so excited to have you join the Girl Scout Movement.

Girl Scouts helps girls empower themselves to stand up and make a difference. By cultivating girls' leadership skills, we prepare them to overcome challenges and advocate for their ideas now and in the future. With an emphasis on self-discovery, character building, and community impact, Girl Scouts helps girls become a powerful force for good in the world.

No matter where or how you volunteer, you'll make a difference in girls' lives—and this go-to guide will prepare you to effectively lead during your first year as a Girl Scout volunteer. Need help along the way? Let us know! We have various tools, training resources, and people to support you through each step.

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

Dear Volunteer,

As a first year troop leader you are embarking on a highly rewarding journey that will provide exciting challenges and lifelong friendships for you and the girls in your troop. You will serve as a role model for these girls and play a pivotal part in their development while creating memories they will cherish for the rest of their lives. This creates a ripple effect that enriches your community and touches other lives as well. Please know you have a support network of Girl Scouts here to support you along the way. Thank you for your time and dedication to the mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

Yours in Girl Scouting,

Janet Donovan
President and Chief Executive Officer
Girl Scouts in the Heart of PA





NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

You—A Girl Scout Leader!

Being a Girl Scout leader is an incredible journey along which you'll shape the future by working with girls today. With your guidance, encouragement, and go-getting spirit, your Girl Scouts will be ready to embark on a lifetime of leadership, success, and adventure. And along the way, you'll hone your own leadership style and discover that you'll achieve more than you thought possible!

In Girl Scouting, leadership is about more than “being in charge” or having a title; it's recognizing that you're part of a team and understanding that team's needs and interests.



Leadership is teaching girls:

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

- Guides and instructs, not as a teacher providing rote lessons and activities
- Advises and discusses
- Ensures each girl can carry out her responsibilities within the troop
- Encourages girls to build their skills and their ethics
- Assigns more responsibilities to the girls as they grow and develop

It's important to remember that:

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



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Let's Get Started!

Managing Your Member Experience Online

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

On the Troop tab in MyGS, you can see any girls and adults who have signed up for your troop and add new girls to your troop—and the Troop Opportunity Catalog allows you as the troop leader to display available openings in your troop for girls and/or volunteers. You can add your troop to the opportunity catalog by contacting your Volunteer Support Coordinator.

Next Steps

Look out for a welcome email with details on any required trainings and how to connect with your service unit and council.

Troop Leader Training Path

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

Get started by contacting your Volunteer Support Coordinator to complete New Troop Leader Training Part 1 & 2.

Congratulations! You're a troop leader!

- Register as a GSHPA Girl Scout Volunteer!
- Submit all required GSHPA Background Checks
- Connect with your Volunteer Support Coordinator to complete New Troop Leader Training Pt. 1
- Complete New Troop Leader Training pt. 2 in gsLearn
- Connect with your Volunteer Support Coordinator to set up a Troop Number
- Open a Troop Bank Account
- Log into VTK and set up your year plan
- Take a breath and GET EXCITED!



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Volunteer Resources

The Volunteer Toolkit

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is your official source for delivering easy, fun troop meetings year-round! This fully customizable digital planning tool provides you with Girl Scout program content, award requirements, and other resources, so you can keep your Girl Scout year running smoothly. Accessible on any computer, tablet, or mobile device, the Volunteer Toolkit lets troop leaders:

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

... plus so much more! Learn more and access the Volunteer Toolkit by logging into myGS [gshpa.org](https://www.gshpa.org)

Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting

What does it mean to be a go-getting Girl Scout? These grade level-specific binders will help you break it down for your girls. It's part handbook, part badge book, and 100% fun!

Safety Activity Checkpoints

This guide has everything you need to know to be prepared and keep your girls safe during a range of activities outside the normal Girl Scout troop meeting. It can be found in the https://www.gshpa.org/en/for-volunteers/volunteer_essentials.html.

Volunteer Essentials

With key information, policies, and procedures that support the safe and consistent delivery of Girl Scout programming to girls across the council, Volunteer Essentials is just that—essential. By agreeing to be a Girl Scout volunteer, you agree to follow the items outlined in this resource.

Volunteer Essentials

is updated annually, and the newest version can always be found on our website. Find it at https://www.gshpa.org/en/for-volunteers/volunteer_essentials.html.

Tips for Troop Leaders

When you're looking for real-world advice from fellow troop leaders who've been there, this volunteer-to-volunteer resource on the Girl Scouts of the USA website has the tips you need for a successful troop year. Find it at [girlscouts.org/tipsfortroopleaders](https://www.girlscouts.org/tipsfortroopleaders).



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

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

In Girl Scouts, girls will:

Discover: Every activity girls tackle in Girl Scouts helps them discover who they are, what they care about, and what their talents are.

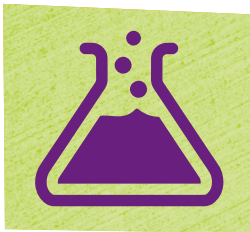
Connect: Girls collaborate with and learn from other people and expand their horizons. This helps them care about and inspire others locally and globally.

Take Action: As girls connect with and show care for others, they become eager to take action to make the world a better place.

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

What is the Girl Scout Program?

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



STEM

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



OUTDOORS

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



LIFE SKILLS

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



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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

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

Explore the many exciting possibilities with the Award and Badge Explorer at https://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/badges/badge_explorer.html.





NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Where Girl Scouts Can Take Your Girls

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

While program elements—like outdoor expeditions and entrepreneurial ventures—align across all grade levels, Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies won't be doing the same activities as seasoned Seniors and Ambassadors. But by building on the knowledge and skills they gain year after year, your girls' confidence will grow exponentially and they'll be eager to take those next steps.

So what can you expect as they grow through each level of Girl Scouting?



DAISIES
K & 1ST

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



BROWNIES
2ND & 3RD

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



JUNIORS
4TH & 5TH

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



CADETTES
6TH - 8TH

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



SENIORS
9TH & 10TH

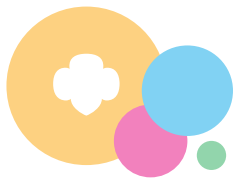
Girl Scout Seniors are ready to take the world by storm, and Girl Scouts gives them countless ways to do it. Their experiences shape their world, while giving them a safe space to be themselves and explore their interests. Seniors can earn their Gold Award and change the world in a tangible, lasting way.



AMBASSADORS
11TH & 12TH

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

All of the skills and experiences girls gain throughout their time in Girl Scouts set them up for special recognition through the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. Through their award projects, your girls will tackle issues close to their hearts and make a real difference—and if they decide to pursue their Gold Award, they'll also be eligible for unique college scholarships and open doors to promising career opportunities. The longer your girls are in Girl Scouts, the brighter their futures will be—and they'll have you to thank for it!



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

What Makes a Successful Troop Experience?

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





NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Guiding Your Troop Experience

In leading a new troop, you'll want to guide the structure and experiences of your troop—from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, and from steering girl-led activities to setting financial expectations. You'll make these decisions collaboratively with your volunteer team or co-leader, as well as with input from the girls and their parents/caregivers.

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

Meeting logistics:

- When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?
- Where will we meet? (Troop leader pro tip: great meeting spaces include schools, places of worship, libraries, and community centers. If working with teens, consider meeting at coffee shops, bookstores, or another place they enjoy.)

Your troop:

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

Troop communication:

- How often will we communicate with troop families?
- How will we keep families in the loop? The Volunteer Toolkit? Emails? Group texts?

Money matters:

- Will our troop charge dues? Troops are permitted to charge dues, but it is totally up to the troop if they want to do that! Chat with your Volunteer Support Coordinator for best practices!
- How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? What should our financial plan look like?
- Which components of the uniform—the tunic, sash, or vest—will troop families need to purchase? (Troop leader pro tip: get the full rundown on uniforms and insignia at girlscouts.org/en/our-program/uniforms).

Your Troop Volunteer Team

It takes a village to lift up the next generation of leaders; you don't have to embark on your troop leader journey alone! Set the stage for a successful troop year by tapping into the people resources already at your fingertips: caregivers and other family members, friends, and members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide troops with time, experience, and ideas—so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your troop volunteer team!

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

Visit gshpa.org for more information!





NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

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

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls when families step up and play an active part in the troop. Without meaningful support from parents, it's difficult for a troop to be all it can be. Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing!

Kick the Year Off Right With a Parents and Caregivers Meeting

A parent and caregiver meeting should be the first meeting you hold to start each troop year—it sets up both new and returning troops for success!



Why? Because it helps:

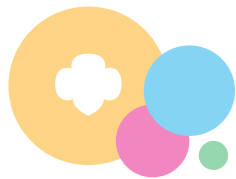
- Families understand what Girl Scouting can do for their girl
- Families and leaders identify ways they will work as a team to support the troop
- Families and leaders agree about what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually
- You fill key troop positions—you never know which parent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

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

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

And remember to make family part of the formula! While Girl Scout programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it's important and helpful to open a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting a whole crew to celebrate her accomplishments in Girl Scouting—whether at a holiday open house, a bridging ceremony, or a fun “reverse meeting” where girls take on the role of leader and guide the adults, including caregivers, through an activity—will help parents better understand the value of Girl Scouts and be more likely to invest their time and talents with the troop.

That said, there's no need to wait for one of these special events to engage parents in their Girl Scouts' troop lives. Keep communication lines open throughout the year—whether it's through your troop's social media page, personal emails, or in-person chats—to keep parents in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting, and encourage them to let their daughters “be the expert” at home, by, for example, explaining or teaching a new skill she's learned to the rest of the family.



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Let's Go—Your First Troop Meeting!

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

It doesn't need to be perfect.

Did an activity run overtime? Or maybe a field trip didn't go according to plan? Take a deep breath, roll with the changes, and have fun! The girls aren't expecting perfection from you: your time, attention, and guidance are the best part of your leadership.

Learn with your girls.

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

Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

The only requirement for your meeting? That your girls are laughing, smiling, and having a fun time! That being said, many troop leaders use this basic structure for their meetings:

1. Ramp up.

Plan activities for the girls on arrival at the meeting so they have something to do until the meeting begins. This could be as simple as coloring pages, journaling, or talking with one another. (5 minutes)

2. Opening.

Each troop decides how to open its meetings—most begin with the Girl Scout Promise and Law, a simple flag ceremony, song, game, story, or other activity designed by the girls. (5–10 minutes)

3. Troop business.

Collect dues and make announcements, or plan an upcoming event or trip while families are present. (5 minutes)

4. Let the fun begin.

Use the meeting plans found in the Volunteer Toolkit! Activities are already designed to fit easily into this part of your meeting as you help your troop earn badges and complete Journeys. (30–45 minutes)

5. Clean up.

Because Girl Scouts should always leave a place cleaner than they found it! (5 minutes)

6. Closing.

Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close—with a song, a game, a story, or pretty much anything else! (5–10 minutes)

First meeting checklist:

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



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Keeping Girls Safe

Understanding How Many Volunteers You Need

From camping weekends to cookie booths, adult volunteers must always be present to ensure their girls have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level.

Not sure just how many adults you'll need for your activity? The helpful chart below breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of girls.

Volunteer-to-Girl Ratio Chart	Group Meetings		Events, Travel and Camping	
	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:
Girl Scout Daisies (grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8

Planning Safe Activities

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

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

What to Do in an Emergency

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

GSHPA staff is available Monday – Friday 8:30am-5pm at 1-800-692-7816

GSHPA staff can be contacted after hours in the event of an emergency at 1-866-205-4744 – please leave a message and GSHPA staff will return your call.

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



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Funding the Fun

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

Troop activities are powered in two main ways:

Troop dues:

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

Money-earning activities:

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

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

Organizational Structure

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA)

A national organization supporting the work of more than 100 councils across the U.S. for more than 100 years. Headquartered in New York City.

Girl Scouts in the Heart of Pennsylvania

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

Service Unit

Made up of volunteers who support the work of troop volunteers within a given geographic area.

Troops

Volunteer-supervised groups of girls.

Money FAQs

Our three most frequently asked about troop finance topics:

Opening a bank account: New troops will need to set up a bank account to collect dues, pay for troop supplies and activities and collect product sales revenue. In order to start this process, please submit a Troop/Group Bank Account Request form. Additionally, each signer must complete all required trainings before being added to the account.

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

Tax exemption: Councils are 501(c)(3) nonprofits, so take advantage of your council's tax-exempt form when purchasing supplies and materials for Girl Scout troop use. **Contact your VSC for details.**





NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS



Quick References

Member Services: 1-800-692-7816 or memberservices@gshpa.org

In case of emergency, GSHPA staff can be contacted after hours in the event of an emergency at 1-866-205-4744 – please leave a message and GSHPA staff will return your call.



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Council Contact Information

Where we're located and how to connect

Offices

**Girl Scouts in the Heart of
PA 350 Hale Avenue
Harrisburg, PA 17104**



@GSHPA



www.facebook.com/GSHPA



@gsheartpa



gshpablog.wordpress.com/

Office Hours

Monday - Friday

8:30am - 5pm

girlscouts 
in the heart
of pennsylvania

gshpa.org

1-800-692-7816

memberservices@gshpa.org