

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.

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

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.



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Thank you for becoming a Girl Scout Troop Admin/Leader! We're thrilled you joined the Girl Scout Movement.

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

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

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



Mary-Jane Strom
GSNorCal Council CEO

Our Council by the Numbers



34,489 Girls

Building courage, confidence, and character to make the world a better place.

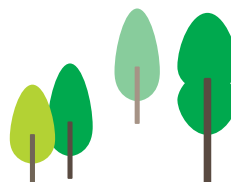
**\$319,366
Opportunity Fund**

Financial aid helps ensure equitable access, thanks to our generous donors.



3,603 Troops

Troop leaders are among our more than 26,000 volunteers.



**14,398 Outdoor
Badges Earned**

Girls have been learning about nature, even when access to the outdoors is limited.



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You—A Girl Scout Admin/Leader!

Being a Girl Scout Admin/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!

Leadership is teaching girls:

- That they can do and be anything!
- That they are decision-makers who should own their decisions
- How to live the Girl Scout Law by modeling it for them

As a leader, see yourself as a coach who:

- Ensures each girl can carry out her responsibilities within the troop
- Encourages girls to build their skills and their ethics
- Gives more responsibility to the girls as they grow and develop

It's important to remember that:

- You'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



Support From Your Service Unit

Think of service units as Girl Scout communities specific to a geographic region. Service units are made up of dedicated volunteers working to build the Girl Scout experience in their immediate area, for both girls and Troop Leaders/Admins. Together, they meet throughout the year to share ideas, receive training, organize special events for girls and volunteers, and lead local recruitment efforts.

Service units are a key part of the Girl Scout community, and we encourage you to lean on yours for support, especially in your first year. Your service unit's leader support manager is a great resource who you can call upon whenever you have questions. Your service unit's treasurer will help with all aspects of managing your Girl Scout finances. Your local service unit team is there to help with...well anything!

Get connected with your local service unit volunteers with the [Contact List for GSNorCal Service Units](#).



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Volunteer Resources

The Volunteer Toolkit

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

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

...plus so much more! Learn more and access the Volunteer Toolkit at <https://www.gsnorcal.org/en/members/for-volunteers.html#vtk>

Managing Your Member Experience Online

After your background check is complete 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.

MyGS is also home to the Volunteer Toolkit, your one-stop-shop for managing your troop roster, planning and tracking your troop's activities, communicating with troop families, and accessing badge and award program content. Learn more about MyGS at <https://www.gsnorcal.org/en/members/for-volunteers.html#mygs>

Forms & Documents

Find GSNorCal forms and documents, like permission slips, health history, financial aid, and more at <https://www.gsnorcal.org/en/members/for-volunteers/forms-and-documents.html>.

gsHelpCenter

Got Questions? We've got answers! Check out the gsHelpCenter for all your Girl Scout Member questions, how-tos, resources, and more! <https://helpcenter.gsnorcal.org/>

Volunteer Essentials

GSNorCal's official guidebook for volunteers, covering money management, *Safety-Wise*, group management, and key policies that support the safe and consistent delivery of Girl Scout programming to girls across the council. Find the Volunteer Essentials at <https://www.gsnorcal.org/en/members/for-volunteers/volunteer-essentials.html>



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Essential Girl Scout Experience

From the youngest Daisy to the most accomplished Ambassador, all Girl Scouting is united around the same experiences. Rooted in best practices for positive youth development and focused on the benefits girls of all ages receive through Girl Scouts, the Essential Girl Scout Experience is your roadmap to Girl Scout success.

Through the Essential Girl Scout Experience, all girls follow a path of sisterhood, receive mentoring from supportive adults, and explore who they are through special experiences.

SISTERHOOD

Flourish in an all-girl, girl-led space where she can gain confidence and build healthy relationships with her Girl Scout sisters.



SUPPORTIVE ADULTS

Adult volunteers provide a consistent supportive presence in a girl's life over time, making her feel valued and providing guidance and mentorship.



SPECIAL EXPERIENCES

The special experiences she'll have will expand her horizons, connect her to unique Girl Scout traditions, and help her discover who she is, and who she wants to be.

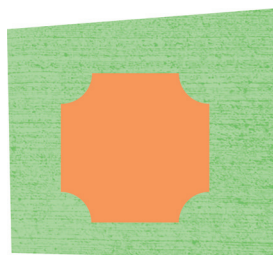




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Six Troop Fundamentals

Sisterhood, supportive adults, and special experiences happen through the six troop fundamentals. Engaging your troop in these areas will introduce them to a variety of activities, experiences, and opportunities that will fuel their development, build new skills, and challenge them to grow. Use the [Girl Scout Planner](#) to help you plan your troop year by adding activities for each of the six troop fundamentals.



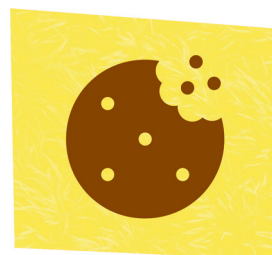
BADGES, JOURNEYS & AWARDS

Level up the skills you love, try exciting activities for the first time, or team up with your troop to solve a problem in your community! From robotics to first aid, outdoor survival training to a Take Action project, your girls will explore their world, build skills, and improve their community.



OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Get outside with your troop as often as possible, whether it's exploring your local park, taking your first hike, camping, or zip-lining! They'll learn useful skills, self-reliance, and teamwork as they enjoy the sunshine and learn to treasure the planet we call home.



PRODUCT PROGRAM

The Girl Scout Product Programs are the largest entrepreneurial leadership programs for girls in the world! Whether she's building her online business from the ground up in the Cookie Program or fundraising through the Fall Product Program, girls use the funds they earn for service products, camping, travel, and more.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Whether your troop attends a local service unit scavenger hunt or learns to build robots through a GSNorCal program, they'll make lifelong memories. Special experiences expand girls' horizons and introduce them to ideas, goals, careers, and adventures they might have never otherwise experienced!



COMMUNITY SERVICE

From Take Action projects and Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards to food drives and beach clean-ups, making community service a core part of your troop experience will teach girls to see with open eyes, fight for what they believe in, and commit to changing the world for the better.



GIRL SCOUT TRADITIONS

Flag ceremonies, camp songs, bridging, and s'mores—Girl Scout traditions connect girls around the country and the world! As she learns about the history and tradition of Girl Scouts, she'll lean on her community of sisters for support as she grows, becoming a better person because of her enthusiastic and diverse community of Girl Scouts.



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Where Girl Scouts Can Take Your Girls

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

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

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



DAISIES
K & 1ST

GIRL SCOUT DAISIES can...

- Learn about nature, science, and through skill-building Petals and badges
- Make a difference through a Leadership Journey
- Explore the world around them through age-appropriate outdoor activities



BROWNIES
2ND & 3RD

GIRL SCOUT BROWNIES can...

- Try out high-adventure activities like archery or kayaking for the first time
- Bond with their friends as they start their own cookie business
- Explore the great beyond as Space Science adventurer



JUNIORS
4TH & 5TH

GIRL SCOUT JUNIORS can...

- Earn their Bronze Award, the first of Girl Scouts' Highest Awards
- Become a CEO when they market and sell cookies
- Build a robot or blaze new trails on an overnight camping trip



CADETTES
6TH – 8TH

GIRL SCOUT CADETTES can...

- Gain confidence by mentoring younger girls as a Program Aide
- Backpack through the wilderness or write and direct their own movies
- Demonstrate leadership by earning the Silver Award



SENIORS
9TH & 10TH

GIRL SCOUT SENIORS can...

- Be a Counselor-In-Training at Girl Scout Camp
- Travel to amazing places like Costa Rica, Japan, or India
- Earn the Girl Scout Gold Award and change the world in a tangible, lasting way



AMBASSADORS
11TH & 12TH

GIRL SCOUT AMBASSADORS can...

- Complete a Take Action project and become eligible for college scholarships
- Explore career paths, connect with women leaders, and build their networks
- Earn the Girl Scout Gold Award—which (by the way) adds that “little something extra” to your college applications

The longer your girls are in Girl Scouts, the brighter their futures will be—and they'll have you to thank for it!



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Guiding Your Troop Experience

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

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

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?
- What kind of family involvement do we want?

Meeting logistics:

- When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we meet?
- Where will we meet? (Pro tip: schools, libraries, places of worship, or community centers make great meeting spaces.)

Troop funds:

- Will our troop charge dues?
- How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? What should our financial plan look like?
- Which components of the uniform—tunic, sash, vest—will troop families need to purchase? See more at www.gsnorcal.org/families

Troop communication:

- How often will we communicate with troop families?
- How will we keep families in the loop on what their girls are learning and doing?

Volunteer Toolkit <https://www.gsnorcal.org/en/members/for-volunteers.html#vtk>

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is your official source for delivering easy, fun troop meetings year-round! It's a fully customizable digital planning tool filled with Girl Scout program content, award requirements, and troop communication tools. Print step-by-step activity guides, manage your troop roster, track and share financial information, message troop families, and so much more!

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 Admin/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! Many troops have one or more Assistant Troop Leaders. Ideally, your troop will have a Troop Product Manager, Troop Treasurer, and a few Troop Helpers.

Troop Product Managers support the girls as they become young entrepreneurs! They'll coordinate the annual Cookie Program or Fall Product Program at the troop level.

Troop Treasurers help make all the troop's activities possible by managing the troop funds and bank account. They also complete the year end troop financial report.

Troop Helpers support the girls throughout their Girl Scout experience by working with the troop leader as a team to coordinate troop activities.

All troop volunteers must complete a background check. Get volunteers signed up at www.gsnorcal.org/join before they jump in.



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The Family Connection

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!



Why? Because it helps:

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

Make Family Part of the Formula

- **Host a parent/caregiver meeting:** A parent and caregiver meeting should be the first meeting you hold to start each troop year and before you kick-off the Cookie Program—it sets up both new and returning troops for success! View our example for [Parent/Caregiver Meeting Playlist](#).
- **Invite caregivers to participate:** Encourage your troop parents/caregivers to lend their unique strengths, time, experience, or ideas to the troop, whether as a driver or chaperone for troop events, leading a badge activity related to their skills, or helping to plan your outdoor adventures. We recommend you ask that at least one adult from each family register as a volunteer, even if it's just as a Troop Helper!
- **Keep communication lines open:** Whether it's through emails, troop newsletters, or in-person chats, keep parents/caregivers 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.
- **Invite families to important events:** Inviting a whole crew to celebrate her accomplishments in Girl Scouting—whether at a holiday party, a bridging ceremony, awards ceremony—will help parents/caregivers better understand the value of Girl Scouts and be more likely to invest their time and talents with the troop.

To learn more, download the free *Girl Scout Family Connection* guide! <https://www.gsnorcal.org/en/members/for-parents-and-families.html>



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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 Take Action Program 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! You'll learn more about troop finances in your New Troop Leader Learning path. You can also check out 636 Managing Troop Finances course in [gsLearn](#) and in [Volunteer Essentials](#) for the details you'll need to keep troop business running smooth!

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. *Volunteer Essentials* breaks down the process for you.

Financial assistance: Finances shouldn't stand in the way of a Girl Scout's participation. Any girl needing financial assistance for membership, uniforms, events, program books, and camps, can request it online at <https://helpcenter.gsnorcal.org/resources/financial-aid/>

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.





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Keeping Girls Safe

From camping weekends to cookie booths, registered, background checked adult volunteers must always be present to ensure their girls have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level. 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
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12



Planning Safe Activities

When preparing for any activity with girls, check Girl Scouts' *Safety Activity Checkpoints* at <https://www.gsnorcal.org/en/members/for-volunteers/forms-and-documents.html> 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.

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 GSNorCal staff. Call our office Monday-Friday, 8AM-5PM at 800-447-4475, ext. 2093 or after business hours on our emergency line at 877-636-1912.



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Your First Troop Meeting

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 Admins/Leaders use this basic structure for their meetings:

- 1. Pre-Meeting Activity:** 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. Main Activity:** 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)

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 over time? 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.

First meeting checklist:

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



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Council Contact Information

Offices & Retail Shops

Alameda (Council Headquarters)

1301 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 200
Alameda, CA 94501

Chico Office

2511 Floral Ave.
Chico, CA 95973

Eureka Office

3203 T Street
Eureka, CA 95503

Redding Office

1670 Market St. Ste 248
Redding, CA 96001

San Jose Office

1310 S. Bascom Ave.
San Jose, CA 95128

Santa Rosa Office

4825 Old Redwood Hwy
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Support & Retail Shop Hours

Member Services:

800-447-4475
Monday-Friday 9 AM-5 PM

gsHelpCenter:

<https://helpcenter.gsnorcal.org/>

Retail Shops:

Visit www.gsnorcal.org/shop for your local store hours.

Or Shop Online 24/7 at

www.gsnorcal.org/shop



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girl scouts 
of northern california

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