

Friends & Family Network (Adults)

Forming Your Friends & Family Network

You'll want to involve other adults in the troop. Most parents and guardians are helpful and supportive and sincerely appreciate your time and effort on behalf of their daughters. And you almost always have the same goal, which is to make Girl Scouting an enriching experience for their girls. Encourage them to check out www.GirlScouts4girls.org to find out how to expand their roles as advocates for their daughters.

In addition to the parents/guardians, think about the people you know whom you admire, who can connect with girls, who are dependable and responsible, and who realistically have time to spend volunteering. Consider business associates, neighbors, former classmates, friends, and so on. If you have trouble finding reliable, quality volunteers to assist, talk to your volunteer support team for advice and support. And feel free to use the sample welcome letter and friends/family checklist in the Girl Scout Daisy, Brownie, and Junior leadership Journeys to assist you in expanding your troop's adult network.

As part of the Basic Troop Leader training required for new leaders, you will take a short module called "[Getting Adults to Help](#)" found in the New Troop Leader section for each program level. training.gsnorcal.org

Troop Leaders are responsible for ensuring that all adult volunteer helpers are adult member-volunteers, which means they have current membership and current and approved electronic background check on file with GSNorCal. Troop volunteers must complete required training(s) for their role on the [Volunteer Learning Portal](#). Please notify volunteers helping your troop about these requirements. Be sure every volunteer reviews and follows the Girl Scout Safety Guidelines [[SAFETY-WISE: Girl Scout Safety Guidelines](#)].

Set up positions that work for you, and draw on other volunteers who possess skill sets that you may lack. When you're ready to invite parents, neighbors, friends, colleagues, and other respected adults to work with you, send them a letter and invite them to their first troop committee meeting.

Your troop committee members might help by:

- Helping at troop meetings
- Filling in for you
- Arranging meeting places
- Being responsible for communicating with girls and parents/guardians
- Locating adults with expertise on a topic of special interest to girls
- Assisting with trips and chaperoning
- Managing troop records

Sample Positions

A troop committee may be made up of general members or may include specific positions. The following positions have online training modules available:

training.gsnorcal.org

Fall Product or Cookie Manager: Manages all aspects of Girl Scout Fall Take Action Program or Entrepreneurship Program activities.

Troop Treasurer: Someone to keep track of the money and financial records.

Trip & Outdoor Advisor: The volunteer you'd look to whenever you need to transport girls for any reason; this person would have volunteers available to drive and chaperone.

Troop Driver: Someone to drive on occasional outings or trips.

Troop Helper/Chaperone: Attends all meetings with girls (or rotates with other adults) and plans meeting activities with girls and other adults.

Troop First Aider: Holds current first aid and CPR certification, accompanies the troop when a first aider is required, knows how to use the Safety Activity Checkpoints, and helps to train girls in safe ways to plan their activities.

Troop Camping Certified Adult: Assumes responsibility for camping activities, trains and prepares girls in camping skills. Attends camping trip.

Backpacking Certified Adult: (Juniors and older) Assumes responsibility for training and preparing girls for their backpacking experience. Attends backpacking trip.

Bronze Award Advisor: (Junior troops) Assumes responsibility for Bronze Award activities, trains girls in guidelines, and helps them through the process.

Silver Award Advisor: (Cadette troops) Assumes responsibility for Silver Award activities, trains girls in guidelines, and helps them through the process.

Gold Award Advisor: (Senior/Ambassador troops) Assumes responsibility for Gold Award activities, trains girls in guidelines, and helps them through the process.

STEM Advisor: Helps facilitate Girl Scout STEM programs for the troop, learns about the GSUSA STEM Badges, and advises/organizes girls with STEM activities.

The following positions are also suggested but do not have official training available:

Snack Coordinator: Develops schedule for snack responsibilities and communicates schedule to families.

Craft Coordinator: Plans and coordinates a few craft projects for certain meetings and collects supplies for a troop craft box.

Communication Coordinator: Phones families as necessary in the event of meeting changes or last-minute announcements and develops phone tree for use when troop is on outings.

Sibling Baby-sitter: Watch children during the meetings so other parents can get involved.

Photographer/Historian: Keeps all photos and activity records on file for the year. Creates a scrapbook for the troop and shares pictures with families. Updates troop website if available.

Troop Registrar: Keeps track of member information, ensures that all girls have completed registration and adult volunteers are member-volunteers with current and approved electronic background check on file with GSNorCal. They will create a troop roster, maintain a contact list and keep track of the troop records.

Asking for Help - Best Practices

Remember that not everyone will be able to help out in equal ways—some families may have stressors, such as money challenges, illness, or other problems that they may not feel comfortable sharing. Their daughters need Girl Scouting even more than the other girls!

Open and regular communication is the best way to gain support from parents/guardians. Here are some ideas for successfully recruiting parent/guardian help:

- Online trainings are available for each position. Ask an interested parent to check out the modules for positions they might be interested in.
- Hold a parent meeting to let everyone get to know each other and learn about the girls' plans.
- Call parents of new girls to introduce yourself and welcome them.
- Send a parent interest survey to find out what the parents' interests and talents are.
- Invite the parents to attend troop meetings.
- Invite parents to special troop ceremonies.
- Plan something special: family picnic, etc., to invite the families to.
- Ask for help personally—sending a general plea in a newsletter or via email doesn't always work.
- Make yourself available after meetings to greet and chat with the parents—let them get to know you, and take the time to get to know them.
- Establish good communication: newsletters, e-group, parent meetings, etc. The more families know about the girls' plans, the more likely they are to offer to help.
- Do activities that involve family interaction: e.g. girls develop family safety plans.
- Ask parents to drive for field trips.
- Give sufficient notice; be specific about what you're asking for.
- Encourage parents to reach out to other adults; bring in resources.
- Recognize and thank parents for their contributions. Here are a few ideas for expressing thanks:
 - Have the girls make thank you cards.
 - Have the girls make small thank you gifts.
 - Remember to acknowledge contributions in newsletters or electronic communications.

**Remember that adults who volunteer with girls directly
must be members and background checked.**

Cash or Gift Card Thank You Gifts

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, volunteers are individuals who perform service for nonprofit organizations without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation. Offering stipends or other compensation to volunteers may inadvertently convert a "volunteer" into an "employee." Volunteers who receive stipends must be treated the same as paid staff and payroll tax contributions must be withheld from their pay; this goes for in-kind benefits as well (they must be assigned fair market value). Volunteer recognition gifts of limited value (e.g., logo shirt, plaque), fortunately, are considered a "de minimus benefit" and are not taxed. However, cash, a gift certificate or a similar item that can easily exchange for cash is treated as compensation.

First Parent/Guardian Meeting

A parent/guardian meeting, or a meeting of your friends-and-family network (as encouraged in many of the leadership Journeys), is a chance for you to get to know the families of the girls in your troop.

Take the "[Meeting With Parents/Guardians](#)" course under the New Troop Leader section of each program level. The course will walk you through the suggested agenda and there are many handouts for you to give the families. training.gsnorcal.org

Before the meeting, be sure you and/or your co-volunteers have done the following:

Planning for the Meeting

- For younger girls, arranged for a parent, another volunteer, or a group of older girls to do activities with the girls in your troop while you talk with their parents/guardians (if girls will attend the meeting, too)
- Practiced a discussion on the following:
 - Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law
 - Benefits of Girl Scouting for their daughters, including how the GSLE is a world-class system for developing girl leaders
 - All the fun the girls are going to have
 - Expectations for girls and their parents/guardians
 - Ideas of how parents and other guardians can participate in and enrich their daughters' Girl Scout experiences
- Determined when the Product Program (including Girl Scout Entrepreneur activities) will happen at GSNorCal; parents/guardians will absolutely want to know
- Determined what information parents should bring to the meeting
- Used the Friends and Family pages provided in the adult guides for many of the Journeys, or created your own one-page information sheet with
 - Contact information for you and co-volunteers and helpers
 - The day and time of each meeting
 - Location of and directions to the meeting place
 - What to bring with them
 - Information on how to get Journey resources—books, awards, and keepsakes—and other merchandise like sashes, vests, T-shirts, and so on)

- Gathered or created supplies, including:
 - A sign-in sheet
 - An information sheet
 - Permission forms for parents/guardians (also available from GSNorCal)
 - Health history forms (as required by GSNorCal)
 - GSUSA registration forms
- Prepared yourself to ask parents and guardians for help, being as specific as you can about the kind of help you will need (the Journey's Friends and Family pages will come in handy here)
- Decide on the date, location, and time of the meeting, and publicized to everyone

Sample Agenda

You're free to structure your parent/guardian meetings in whatever way works for you, but the following structure works for many new volunteers.

Why Girl Scouts?

- As the girls and adults arrive, ask them to sign in. If the girls' parents/guardians haven't already registered them online, you'll want to email or hand out information so they can do so. If possible, bring an internet enabled laptop or tablet so that people could register at the meeting. You may also want to email or hand out a brief information sheet before or at this meeting.
- Welcome the girls and adults, introduce yourself and other co-volunteers or helpers.
- Have adults and girls introduce themselves, discuss whether anyone in their families has been a Girl Scout, and talk about what Girl Scouting means to them. Welcome everyone, regardless of experience, and let them know they will be learning about Girl Scouts today. If you're new to Girl Scouting, don't worry - just let everyone know you'll be learning about Girl Scouting together!

If Girls Are Present

Ask the girls to go with the adult or teen in charge of their activity and begin the discussion.

About Girl Scouts

Discuss the information you prepared for this meeting:

- All the fun girls are going to have!
- When and where the group will meet
- The Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law
- The Girl Scout program, especially what the GSLE is and what the program does for their daughters
- When Girl Scout cookies (and other products) will go on sale and how participation in Product Program teaches life skills and helps fund group activities
- How you plan to keep in touch with parents/guardians (Facebook page or group, Twitter, email, text messaging, a phone tree, or flyers the girls take home are just some ideas)

- Ask parents/guardians what they would like their girls to experience in Girl Scouting. Explain that girl planning and decision-making is an important part of Girl Scouting— and you will share what the girls plan before finalizing the calendar.

How Much Does It Cost?

- The cost of membership, including the annual GSUSA dues, the \$15 Council Service Fee (for girls, not adult members), and any resources parents/guardians will need to buy (such as a girl's book for a Journey). Adult volunteers will pay the annual GSUSA dues plus their adult background check fees.
- Discuss the availability of financial aid and how the Girl Scout Entrepreneurial Program and other product programs generate funds for the troop treasury
- Download the Uniform Cost Sheet from the Volunteer Learning Portal, if the girls want to wear uniforms
- Discuss whether dues or start-up contributions will be collected. Care should be taken to establish an amount that is affordable for all families. GSNorCal recommends \$25-\$35. Additional funds can be earned through participating in the product program.
- That families can also make donations to GSNorCal - and why they might want to do that!

Asking Adults to Help

That you are looking for additional volunteers, and explain what they would be doing (be as specific as possible!). Use downloads from the Volunteer Learning Portal:

- Sign-up sheet
- Parent Interest Survey
- Discuss adult training responsibilities

Health and Safety Guidelines

- Girl Health History Forms needed for all girls
- Annual Permission Form—an Activity/Event Permission Form will always be used for activities outside the troop's usual meeting time and/or place and the importance of completing and returning it
- Supervision and driving guidelines for meetings and trips, Troop Driver Form, proof of insurance and license number for drivers
- Show a few Safety Activity Checkpoints

Registration (including adult background check) is required for any adults who will volunteer with the troop and/or attend an overnight event, including adults who will be supervising girls in the minimum Adult-to-Girl ratio, driving girls, working with money or Girl Scout products, or working with the girls' or other adults' personal information.

Closing the Meeting

Collect any forms. Remind the group of the next meeting and thank everyone for attending. Hold the next meeting when it makes sense for you and your co-volunteers—that may be in two months if face-to-face meetings are best, or not at all if you're diligent about keeping in touch with parents/guardians via Facebook, Twitter, text messages, email, phone calls, or some other form of communication. It is recommended that a parent meeting take place at the end of the year.

After the Meeting

After the meeting, follow up with any parents/guardians who did not attend to connect them with the troop, inform them of decisions, and discuss how they can best help the girls.

Working With Parents/Guardians

Using “I” Statements

Perhaps the most important tip for communicating with parents/guardians is for you to use “I” statements instead of “you” statements. “I” statements tell, which are detailed in the aMAZE Journey for Girl Scout Cadettes, tell someone what you need from her or him, while “you” statements may make the person feel defensive.

Here are some examples of "you" statements	Now look at "I" statements
"Your daughter just isn't responsible."	"I'd really like to help your daughter learn to take on more responsibility."
"You're not doing your share."	"I'd appreciate it if you could help me with registration."

If you need help with specific scenarios involving parents/guardians, try the following:

If a parent or guardian...	You can say...
Is uninvolved and asks how she can help but seems to have no idea of how to follow through or take leadership of even the smallest activity	"I do need your help. Here are some written guidelines on how to prepare for our camping trip."
Constantly talks about all the ways you could make the group better	"I need your leadership. Project ideas you would like to develop and lead can fit in well with our plan. Please put your ideas in writing, and perhaps I can help you carry them out."
Tells you things like, "Denise's mother is on welfare, and Denise really doesn't belong in this group."	"I need your sensitivity. Girl Scouting is for all girls, and by teaching your daughter to be sensitive to others' feelings you help teach the whole group sensitivity."

If a parent or guardian...	You can say...
Shifts parental responsibilities to you and is so busy with her own life that she allows no time to help.	“I love volunteering for Girl Scouts and want to make a difference. If you could take a few moments from your busy schedule to let me know what you value about what we’re doing, I’d appreciate it. It would keep me going for another year.”