

Participating in the Product Program

Support from GSNorCal

When you are set up for success, you are better able to set your girls up for success! That's why every year, GSNorCal provides kickoffs, guidelines, and procedures for conducting the product programs and determines how the proceeds and product rewards system will be managed. Your [Volunteer Learning Portal \(training.gsnorcal.org\)](https://training.gsnorcal.org) has everything you need for a successful Fall Product or Cookie Program: overview videos, guides, forms, helpful hints, and other resources are all there for you and your girls to have the most successful product program ever! GSNorCal staff are always eager to answer your questions when you contact info@gsnorcal.org or call (800) 447-4475 ext. 0.

Each council also selects the vendors of its choice to provide the products for their product programs. Two commercial bakers are licensed by GSUSA to produce Girl Scout Cookies: [Little Brownie Bakers](#) and [ABC Bakers](#). For additional information on cookie varieties, including nutritional details, visit the [Meet the Cookies](#) section on girlscoutcookies.org.

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](#). Each provides online tools and activities for girls to download. Magazine selection and sales may take place online—check with GSNorCal for more details.

Support from You and Your Troop Families

You play an exciting role in giving your girls opportunities to practice the five skills in a girl-led, cooperative setting. Some of the things you'll do include:

- Get girls excited about the opportunities to support her troop (but allowing her participation to be voluntary).
- Support both competitive and apprehensive cookie bosses, helping all your girls set meaningful goals for themselves.
- Fostering partnerships with each girl's family to ensure cookie season success, whatever that may look like for her. Check out the [Creating Cookie Success](#) and [Coaching Your Budding Businesswoman](#) resources that will help you build a positive partnership with girls and families.

Not only can girls sell individually, both in-person and using the online tools provided by each vendor, they can also participate in group booth sales during product programs. GSNorCal has additional guidance and processes to market and ensure every booth is in a safe and appropriate location for girls.

As your girls grow, your role will evolve from a hands-on one to providing oversight and support where needed. No matter their ages, remember that *volunteers and parents/caregivers do not sell the product*. Your role is to encourage your girls and let their entrepreneurial spirit soar. Learning by doing is exactly how your girls develop the business savvy and communication skills that will empower them to reach any goals they set for themselves.

Another critical task for each troop is to establish a clear accounting system for all proceeds and product during the programs. It's up to you to make sure that money is spent wisely, that excellent records are kept (remember to keep copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and that all product is tracked. For older girls, your job is to oversee their work as they learn to keep impeccable records. Be sure to attend product program orientation or training so you are aware of the systems and helpful tools available.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Fall Take Action Program can be exhilarating and busy times during the troop year, but you're never alone in your efforts! You can reach out to your service unit product program manager when you're feeling stuck, or you can [build a cookie team](#) to provide the support your troop needs.

Parent Permission

A parent, guardian, or other adult must give permission for girls to participate in the product programs and must know each girl's whereabouts when she is engaged in product programs, and if and when she is marketing product online.

Safety Activity Checkpoint

First, read the [Product Program Safety Activity Checkpoint](#). When girls are running their business, these tips will help keep girls safe and the programs enjoyable for everyone.

Prepare the Girls

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is so well known in communities, it's likely that your girls will already know a bit about it and want to get out there to start selling as soon as possible. The Fall Take Action Program is less well-known, but troops can earn higher profit per item, and it's a great way to engage girls in a Take Action project at the beginning of the year. Either way, it's important that the girls have a clear plan and purpose for their product program troop proceeds. One of your opportunities as a volunteer is to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for the girls:

- **Set goals for money-earning activities.** What do girls hope to accomplish through this activity? In addition to earning money, what skills do they hope to build? What leadership opportunities present themselves?
- **Create a budget.** Use a budget worksheet that includes both expenses (the cost of supplies, admission to events, travel, and so on) and available income (the group's account balance, projected sale proceeds, and so on).
- **Determine how much the group needs to earn.** Subtract expenses from available income to determine how much money your group needs to earn. Compute how many packages of

cookies or fall product items would need to be sold in order to be able to afford certain activities

- **Make a plan.** The group can brainstorm and make decisions about its financial plans. Will cookie and other product troop proceeds—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 in anticipated expense and anticipated income? Will more than one group money-earning activity be necessary to achieve the group’s financial goals? In this planning stage, engage the girls through the Girl Scout processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) and consider the value of any potential activity. Have them weigh feasibility, implementation, and safety factors.
- **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, fill out an application for approval from GSNorCal and submit it along with the budget worksheet the girls created.

Communicate with Parents

Girl safety is the top priority while selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products. Volunteers, families, and girls should be familiar with and practice the safety guidelines outlined in [Product Program Safety Activity Checkpoint](#) as well as those available in the [safety](#) section of girlscoutcookies.org.

Ensure that the parents/guardians of all participating girls are fully informed about the activity including the:

- Safety precautions in place
- Need for appropriate clothing and/or supplies
- Need for advance arrangements for and confirmation of all transportation Need for written permission from them in order for their girl to participate
- Approved locations for product program activities, which are also communicated to GSNorCal
- Financial responsibility of girls and financial accountability of parents

Communicate with Your Local Police Department

Establish a relationship with your local Police Department to determine any support they may be able to provide during product programs, especially those related to booths, and any safety precautions they might suggest. Many service units will make this contact so that troops don’t need to do it. While Police Departments vary from state to state and city to city, many of them have resources such as:

- School Resource Officers who have specific youth communication training community Volunteers who may be able to assist by being present during booths
- Providing information on areas and addresses to avoid, as well as access to known sex offender registries.

Prepare for Emergencies

Regardless of the type of activity, be prepared for emergencies involving girls or other adults. This should include having a first aid kit always available and making sure that if someone is injured and needs help, one adult cares for the injured person while another adult seeks help.

Arrange for Adult Supervision

Adults provide supervision and guidance for all grade levels, and must accompany Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors participating in the program. Adults must be present at booth activities, regardless of the age of the girls.

Adults who oversee Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors must:

- Be aware of how, when and where the girls are running their business and marketing products
- Be on call when girls are participating in product programs
- Be readily available to girls should they need assistance.
- Help girls understand how to be safe in their surroundings, and always enforce the use of the buddy system

Adult supervision for all Girl Scouts extends to any online activity. Consult the [“Computer/Online Use” Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for specific information about safe online practices for all activities, and to obtain a copy of the [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#).

