

Time Honored Ceremonies

Ceremonies play an important part in Girl Scouts and are used not only to celebrate accomplishments, experience time-honored traditions, and reinforce the values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, but also to encourage girls to take a short pause in their busy lives and connect with their fellow Girl Scouts in fun and meaningful ways. Many examples of ceremonies—for awards, meeting openings and closings, and so on—are sewn right into the Journeys, including ideas for new ceremonies girls can create.

Girls use ceremonies for all sorts of reasons. Here's a brief list, in alphabetical order, so that you can become familiar with the most common Girl Scout ceremonies:

- **Bridging** ceremonies mark a girl's move from one grade level of Girl Scouting to another, such as from Junior to Cadette. (Note that Fly-Up is a special bridging ceremony for Girl Scout Brownies who are bridging to Juniors.) There are learning modules, as well as lots of ideas and resources about the bridging process and ceremonies in the [Volunteer Learning Portal \(training.gsnorcal.org\)](https://training.gsnorcal.org) for each level.
- **Closing** ceremonies finalize the meeting, with expectations for the next. A closing ceremony may be as simple as a hand squeeze while standing in a circle.
- **Court of Awards** is a time to recognize girls who have accomplished something spectacular during the Girl Scout year.
- **Flag ceremonies** can be part of any activity that honors the American flag.
- **Girl Scout Bronze (or Silver or Gold) Award** ceremonies honor Girl Scout Juniors who have earned the Girl Scout Bronze Award (Cadettes who have earned the Silver Award; Seniors or Ambassadors who have earned the Gold Award), and are usually held for a group and combined with council recognition.
- **Girl Scouts' Own** is a girl-led program that allows girls to explore their feelings and beliefs around a topic (such as the importance of friendship or the personal meaning they get from the Girl Scout Promise and Law) using the spoken word, favorite songs, poetry, or other methods of expression. It is never a religious ceremony.
- **Investiture** welcomes new members, girls or adults, into the Girl Scout family for the first time. Girls receive their Girl Scout, Brownie Girl Scout, or Daisy Girl Scout pin at this time.
- **Opening** ceremonies start troop meetings and can also begin other group meetings.
- **Pinning** ceremonies help celebrate when girls receive grade-level Girl Scout pins.
- **Rededication** ceremonies are opportunities for girls and adults to renew their commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
- **Golden Gate Bridging** is a special ceremony and celebration for girls bridging from Juniors to Cadettes, and is held in late April or early May. Bridging Juniors join 5,000 of their sisters and cross into older girlhood on one of the most famous bridges in the world! Girls from across the

country celebrate in true Northern Californian style on the Golden Gate Bridge and conclude the day with a party just for them. The girls play games, do crafts, and partake in activities that reflect the adventures that lie ahead as Cadettes on Crissy Field. Check out GSNorCal for event and registration information.

About Ceremonies

No One Right Way, Make New Traditions

Like much of Girl Scouting, there are few hard and fast rules for planning and carrying out ceremonies. What really counts is that the occasion has special meaning for the participants. There are traditional ways to do things, but it is also fun to create some new traditions. Some occasions call for pull-out-all-the-stops formality, and on other occasions, ceremonies can and should be more light-hearted and informal.

Mix & Match

Ceremonies can be mixed and matched or used in combination with each other. For example, a bridging ceremony might (and usually does!) incorporate an opening ceremony, a flag ceremony, a rededication ceremony, as well as using a closing ceremony.

Be Creative

Ceremonies can be edited to fit the situation, and become even more meaningful with a little personalization.

Girl Planning

The most important thing to remember when planning ceremonies is that they are for the girls. The most meaningful ceremonies to the girls will be the ones that they have planned themselves. Remember that ceremonies are opportunities for the girls, not the adults, to express themselves, and that is far more important than it is to put on a polished production.

If you're working with girls who want to host a special ceremony or event—large or small—be sure girls are leading the event-planning, instead of sitting by passively while you or another adult plans the event. To get girls started, ask them to think about the following questions:

- What sort of event do we have in mind?
- Who is our intended audience?
- Will it be outdoors?
- Does the audience have to be invited, or can anyone come?
- What's our main topic or focus?
- What's our objective—what do we hope to accomplish at the end of the day?
- Will one or more speakers need to be invited? If so, who? How do we find speakers?
- Where will the event take place?
- Is there a charge for this venue?
- Is the venue large enough to accommodate the audience?
- Do we have to obtain permission to use this venue? If so, from whom?
- Are there adequate facilities for the audience? If not, how much will extra portable toilets cost, and how many do we need?

- Is there adequate parking or a drop-off point for girls?
- Do we need tables? chairs? podiums? microphones? speakers?
- What sort of entertainment will we provide?
- Will we provide or sell refreshments? If so, what kinds?
- How many chaperones will we need? Who will we ask?
- What emergency care do we need to plan for? Is the event large enough that local police and fire departments need to be notified?
- Do we need to purchase additional insurance for non-Girl Scouts?
- How will we advertise the event?
- What decorations will we use?
- Will we give away any keepsakes?
- Will we charge for the event?
- Who will set up the event?
- Who will clean up after the event?
- How will we determine whether the event was a success?

Ideas for girl-led events with family, friends, and community experts are also available in the Leadership Journey adult guides!