



Girl Scout Senior & Ambassador Age Group Characteristics



Every Senior and Ambassador Girl Scout is unique, with different needs, interests and levels of development. Some girls may exhibit traits of older girls, while 9th grade Seniors may still be developing certain characteristics. It is so important to keep that in mind when working with Seniors and Ambassadors. As these girls move from teens into young women, it is important to remember the differences in their emotional, social, physical, and intellectual characteristics. A few 14 year old girls may not have started their period, while others may have finished their growth spurt. The girls will become less sensitive and more assertive as they move through puberty.

Developmental Characteristics for Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors Ages 14-18 years of Age

Physical Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most girls have completed the physical changes related to puberty by age 15• Some girls may experience obsessive dieting or eating disorders• Will continue to ask more involved questions about sexual development and want truthful answers• Concerned about body image and appearance - height, weight, stature, gait, hair, freckles, acne, orthodontics, glasses• Needs a lot of sleep for not only physical growth, but also emotional stability• Has concerns about good personal hygiene for herself and others
Intellectual Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has the ability and knowledge to challenge adults intellectually with an increased use of logic, abstract thinking, and reasoning skills• Become more interested in her community, world, and the future of both• Interested in moral reasoning and thinking about the meaning of life• Tendency to overestimate herself and doesn't always follow through• Greater capacity for setting goals• Tries to understand that her brain is still developing and many functions are affected: organization, short-term memory, impulse control, pleasure seeking, limit testing, and wanting immediate rewards• As the girls approach 17 and bridge into Girl Scout Adults, we know they will: Lessen the importance of their peer group and develop a few good friends and continue to develop and test values and beliefs, which will guide their present and future behaviors• Develop a sense of accomplishment, which centers on the ability to learn and apply new skills, deal with peer competition, self-control, share space with others, and gain greater strength.• Focus their interest on more realistic education and vocational plans• Will begin to recognize that parents can be their best friends and help them to make major choices for their future
Emotional Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May have high expectations and low self-esteem• Seeks privacy and time alone• Is concerned about physical and sexual attractiveness• Likes to arrange her own activities and be a part of making the rules• Worries about popularity, school work, test scores, college, money, and the future• Has an increase in the ability to make decisions• Mood swings and irritability are less common• Starts to integrate both physical and emotional intimacy into relationships
Social Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shifting the center of her social world from home to peers• Likes to try new things and have new adventures• Seeks trusted friends that share similar beliefs, values, and interests• Has a drive to attain independence and a need to define their individuality• May be influenced by peers to try risky behaviors (alcohol, driving, tobacco, drugs, sex)• Develops close friendships with other girls - BFFs• Finds that relationships can be difficult and create social problems at school and within the troop• Conflicts with parents often decrease with age and they begin to see parents as individuals and consider their perspectives• Likes it when others just listen to her talk; she just wants to be understood• Becomes less egocentric and places more emphasis on abstract values and more principles• Wants the girls, within a troop, to create a 'Troop Agreement' that helps her to maintain her own limits and find acceptable ways to interact and express emotions

PARENT/GUARDIAN SUPPORT OF A SENIOR AND AMBASSADOR



When a girl became a Daisy, Brownie, or even Junior for the first time, the girl and her parents were so excited. It was a new adventure for the whole family. As she comes into Seniors or Ambassadors, things will have changed a bit. The older girl is now in high school and she has expanded her world into sports teams, lessons of all kinds, clubs, hobbies, performances, and so much more. Girl Scouts is now very familiar, so now is the time to pick up the pace of activity and parent involvement as you need it.

Feel free to duplicate the following 'note' to use as a starter for a discussion of "Why it is important for your daughter to be involved in Girl Scouting as a Senior or Ambassador?" at your parents meeting. If you go on-line to www.girlscouts.org you will find many documents, with statistics, that you might use to supplement and support your discussion. Remind the parents that Juliette Low began Girl Scouts for girls 12 years old and older. She knew this was the most critical time for a girl to be involved in the value-based Girl Scout program.

Make sure they each have a copy of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, as well as the "The Sigh Effect" below. Now is the time that the Senior and Ambassador girls need their parents/guardians to support them, guide them, and say, "Yeah, Girl Scouts!"

THE SIGH EFFECT

Many times when a girl asks a parent/guardian to drive her to a Girl Scout meeting or activity, volunteer to drive for an outing, or take on a new leadership role on the Troop Committee and, without realizing it, before the parent responds to the girl's needs, the parent/guardian will sigh. This is called the "Sigh Effect."

This little bit of a negative, unconscious body response will let the girl know that her parent/guardian really is bothered by having to stop what s/he wants to do right then to help her or his daughter or her troop. Giving a small sigh, even when the final verbal response is positive, gives the girl a negative response. For example: Your daughter says, "Dad, our troop needs one dad to go with us camping next weekend. Could you be that dad?" Dad replies, after a short sigh, "Sure, I will be that dad." His daughter hears something quite different.

A girl, 14-17 years of age, really does want to please her parents. So when the sign effect is put into place, the girl's reaction is to back off. She might even say, "I don't really want to go to that activity anyway." She may tell her Mom or Dad, "I'm sure the troop can find someone else to do the job." Or she may just drop out of Girl Scouts all together. Be careful adults... of the Sigh Effect!

