

girl scouts
of southern illinois



New Leader's Guide to Success





NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Table of Contents

Welcome to Girl Scouts.....	3
You—A Girl Scout Leader	4
Let's Get Started	5
Volunteer Resources.....	6
The Girl Scout Leadership Experience.....	7
Where Girl Scouts Can Take Your Girls.....	8
What Makes A Successful Troop Experience	9
Guiding Your Troop Experience	10
Family Connections	11
Your First Troop Meeting.....	12
Keeping Girls Safe.....	13
Funding the Fun.....	14
Quick References.....	15
Council Contact Information.....	16

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.

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.

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



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Thank you for becoming a Girl Scout troop 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!

Welcome new Troop Leaders!

Let me start by personally thanking you for your commitment to the Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois. Without your support and enthusiasm, the programs that we offer girls would not be happening at such a positive pace.

Your time invested on various projects, leading troop experiences and participating in service unit meetings and council programs are for the greater good of our girls. Your great care and commitment will build girls with confidence and character. As you review this guide, I do hope you will gain some inner satisfaction in knowing your efforts will make the Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois a better place in our communities.

Thank you sincerely for all your whole-hearted assistance, leadership and volunteerism!

Loretta Graham, CEO





NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

You—A Girl Scout Leader!

Your Role

Being a Girl Scout troop leader is an incredible journey for you and your girls. And together you'll shape the future through all you do today! Along the way, you'll hone your own leadership style and discover that you'll achieve more than you thought possible.

In Girl Scouting, leadership isn't about being in charge or having a title; it's recognizing that you're part of a team and understanding that team's needs and interests.



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:

- Advises and cheers on your troop, not as a teacher with a planned lesson or activity
- 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 can't expect to know everything the girls might want to learn
- You'll explore and learn alongside your girls and grow your confidence in the process
- 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



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Let's Get Started!

Managing Your Member Experience Online

After you have completed your volunteer registration steps, 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. You can also access MyGS via your council's website.

On the Troop tab in MyGS, you can see any girls and adults who have signed up for your troop and add new girls to your troop—and the Troop Opportunity Catalog allows you as the troop leader to display available openings in your troop for girls and/or volunteers. You can add your troop to the opportunity catalog by contacting Customer Care at (800)345-6858 or customercare@gssofsi.org.

Next Steps

Look out for a welcome email with details on any required trainings and how to connect with your service unit and council.

Troop Leader Learning Path

When you're set up for success, you'll be empowered to set up your troop for success! To help you become the best leader you can be, we offer in-person workshops, online training courses, and other great resources. You will find these courses along with other in the assigned New Leader Orientation Series.

Get started by visiting [gsLearn](#) to complete the Successful Leader Learning Series online.

Congratulations You're a Troop Leader!

Our New Leader Orientation includes training on:

- Becoming a Mandated Reporter
- Troop Money Management
- Using the Volunteer Toolkit
- Product Program (Nuts, Candy and Magazines/Cookies)
- Ceremonies & Traditions
- Traveling with Troops
- AND MORE!



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

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 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 by logging into MyGS by visiting our website gsofsi.org.

Successful Leader Learning Series

Confident leaders are prepared leaders, and this online learning series provides all the info you need to get started as a troop leader. Visit gsofsi.org and login to MyGS!

Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting

What does it mean to be a go-getting Girl Scout? These grade level-specific binders will help you break it down for your girls. It's part handbook, part badge book, and 100% fun! **Shop Girl Scout Guides and Handbooks:** <https://bit.ly/3efwAhK>

Girl Scouts at Home

Meeting virtually? Girl Scouts at Home is where you'll find family friendly activities, virtual meeting resources, and a virtual events calendar with engaging sessions everyone can do from home! Find it at girlscouts.org/athome.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

This guide has everything you need to prepare for and keep your girls safe during a range of activities outside the normal Girl Scout troop meeting. It can be found on the Volunteer Essentials > Safety page.

Volunteer Essentials

With key information, policies, and procedures that support the safe and consistent delivery of Girl Scout programming to girls across the council, Volunteer Essentials is just that—essential. By agreeing to be a Girl Scout volunteer, you agree to follow the guidance outlined in this resource. Volunteer Essentials is updated annually, and the latest version can always be found on our website.

Tips for Troop Leaders

When you're looking for real-world advice from fellow troop leaders who've been there, this volunteer-to-volunteer resource on the Girl Scouts of the USA website has the tips you need for a successful troop year. Find it at girlscouts.org/tipsfortroopleaders.



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

What makes Girl Scouts truly unique? Everything is designed especially for, and is tested by, girls! Our program centers on our research-backed Girl Scout Leadership Experience—that is, *what* girls do and *how* they do it. Activities are girl-led, which gives girls opportunities to explore leadership roles and to learn by doing in a cooperative-learning environment.

At Girl Scouts, girls will:

Discover: Every activity girls tackle through Girl Scouts helps them discover who they are, what excites them, and what their talents are.

Connect: Girls collaborate with and learn from other people as they expand their horizons. This helps them care about and inspire others.

Take action: As girls deepen their relationship with the world around them, they become eager to take action to make the world a better place.

So what does this mean for your troop? Through Girl Scouting, your girls will develop a strong sense of self, demonstrate positive values, seek challenges, solve significant problems in the community, and establish healthy relationships. These aren't just good qualities—they're leadership skills that will last a lifetime!

What Girl Scouts Do

No matter what excites your girls, they'll find engaging and fun activities in the four areas that make up the core of the Girl Scout program:



STEM

Computer science, engineering, robotics, outdoor STEM, and more



OUTDOORS

Adventure and skill building, from the backyard to the backcountry, including through camping experiences for all ages



LIFE SKILLS

Civic engagement, healthy living, global citizenship, communication skills—to name a few



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Girl Scout Cookie Program—the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world—teaches goal setting, decision making, money management, business ethics, and people skills

Whether they complete Girl Scout Leadership Journeys, earn badges, run their own cookie business, pack for their first hike, change the world through Take Action projects, or any combination of these activities, at Girl Scouts, every girl has countless ways to explore our four program areas and hone the skills they'll need to power a lifetime of success—whatever that looks like for them.

Explore the many exciting possibilities with the Award and Badge Explorer at [girlscouts.org/badges](https://www.girlscouts.org/badges).



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

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 sparkle with that first-time newness in everything they do. They go on trips, learn about nature and science, and explore the arts and their communities—and so much more. Daisies can also earn learning petals.



BROWNIES
2ND & 3RD

Girl Scout Brownies work together as they earn badges and explore their communities. Friendship, fun, and age-appropriate activities begin at the Girl Scout Brownie meeting and move out to the community and the wider world. While earning badges, Brownies build skills, learn hobbies, and have fun!



JUNIORS
4TH & 5TH

Girl Scout Juniors are big-idea thinkers. They're explorers at camp and product designers when they earn their Innovation and Storytelling badges, or even their Bronze Award. Every day, they wake up ready to play a new role.



CADETTES
6TH - 8TH

Girl Scout Cadettes chart their own courses and let their curiosity and imagination lead the way. They learn about the power of being a good friend, gain confidence by mentoring younger girls, and can earn their Silver Award.



SENIORS
9TH & 10TH

Girl Scout Seniors are ready to take the world by storm, and Girl Scouts gives them countless ways to do it. Their experiences shape their world, while giving them a safe space to be themselves and explore their interests. Seniors can earn the prestigious Gold Award.



AMBASSADORS
11TH & 12TH

Girl Scout Ambassadors know that small acts produce big change. While they get ready for life beyond high school, Girl Scouts helps them take flight. They can also earn their Gold Award and drive lasting impact in their communities.

Throughout their time as Girl Scouts, girls grow into forces for good who transform the world through the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. By earning these awards, your girls will tackle issues close to their hearts and make a real difference—and the Gold Award qualifies them for exclusive college scholarships and opens doors to promising career opportunities. The longer your girls are in Girl Scouts, the brighter their futures will be!



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

What Makes a Successful Troop Experience?

No matter where your girls live, a universal Girl Scout experience connects them to their fellow Girl Scout sisters around the country. And there are so many ways to make sure your girls get the full Girl Scout experience in a way that excites and inspires them!





NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

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 or co-leader before discussing the topics with families.

Meeting logistics:

- When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?
- Where will we meet? (Troop leader pro tip: great meeting spaces include schools, places of worship, libraries, and community centers. If working with teens, consider meeting at coffee shops, bookstores, or another place they enjoy.)
- If we meet virtually, which platform will we use? Can all girls access the necessary technology?

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?

Troop communication:

- How often will we communicate with troop families?
- How will we keep families in the loop? The Volunteer Toolkit? Emails? Group texts?

Money matters:

- 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? (Troop leader pro tip: get the full rundown on uniforms and insignia at [girlscouts.org/uniforms](https://www.girlscouts.org/uniforms).)
- Ask your Service Unit Manager or the council staff from the Community Engagement team about startup funds.

Your Troop Volunteer Team

You're never alone on your troop leader journey! Set the stage for a successful troop year by tapping into the people resources already at your fingertips: families, 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! All adult members associated with a troop should have a volunteer role.

Some members of your volunteer team might play more active roles than others—and that's OK! One caregiver in your troop might step up as a dedicated troop treasurer, while others might volunteer to chaperone a field trip. Some roles, especially those that involve handling troop funds and supervising girls, require additional registration and approval. Be sure those volunteers get signed up before they jump into the fun! **Become a Volunteer today!**



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Family Connections: The Key Ingredient to Successful Girl Scout Troops!

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're doing!

A parent/caregiver meeting should be the first meeting you hold each troop year—it sets up both new and returning troops for success!



Why? Because it helps:

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

Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging families in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When families are involved, leaders have support, and when the troop has a plan, girls benefit!

Check out our step-by-step guide and family meeting outline in the Volunteer Toolkit. This hour-long meeting will make all the difference in the year ahead: **100% of troops with the most satisfied parents and troop leaders report that they hold parent meetings.** You'll also want to hold an additional family meeting ahead of cookie season to introduce families to the program and how they can pitch in.

Although Girl Scout programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it's important and helpful to open a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting the whole crew—whether it's through a virtual meeting where siblings and caregivers join in the fun or a bridging ceremony—helps families better understand the value of Girl Scouts and makes them more likely to invest their time and talents in the troop.

That said, there's no need to wait for one of these special events to engage families in their Girl Scouts' troop lives. Keep communication lines open throughout the year—whether it's through your troop's social media page, personal emails, or in-person chats—to keep parents in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting, and encourage them to let their girl “be the expert” at home, by, for example, explaining or teaching a new skill she's learned to the rest of the family.



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Let's Go—Your First Troop Meeting!

Your first troop meeting is a great chance to get to know the girls and brainstorm 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 you had tech issues during your virtual meeting? 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.

Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

- 1. Ramp up.** Plan activities for the girls on arrival so that they have something to do until the meeting begins. This could be as simple as providing coloring pages, journaling, or talking with one another. (5 minutes)
- 2. Open.** 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. Conduct troop business.** Collect dues and make announcements, or plan an upcoming event or trip while families are present. (5 minutes)
- 4. Let the fun begin.** 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. Close.** Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close—with a song, game, story, or pretty much anything else! (5–10 minutes)

Meeting virtually? Check out a sample meeting agenda and other helpful resources in the “For Troop Leaders” section of Girl Scouts at Home as well as virtual-friendly activity adaptations in the Volunteer Toolkit!

First meeting checklist:

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



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Keeping Girls Safe

Understanding How Many Volunteers You Need

From camping weekends to cookie booths, adult volunteers must always be present to ensure their girls have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level.

Not sure just how many adults you'll need for your activity? The 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

Planning Safe Activities

When preparing for any activity with girls, check Girl Scouts' *Safety Activity Checkpoints* 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. *Safety Activity Checkpoints* will also note if a first-aid kit is required.

If a safety activity checkpoint doesn't exist for an activity you and your girls are interested in, contact Customer Care at customercare@gsofsi.org before making any definite plans.

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 (800) 345-6858 Option 3.

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity. You may need to provide the kit if one is not already available at your meeting location. You must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of our council office, parents/caregivers of your girls, and emergency services such as the police, fire department, and hospital.



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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 product 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! Check out the troop finances portion of the Successful Leader Learning Series on gsLearn and in Volunteer Essentials for the details you'll need to keep troop business running smoothly.

Organizational Structure

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA): A national organization supporting the work of more than 100 councils across the U.S. for more than 100 years. Headquartered in New York City.

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois: Independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit chartered by GSUSA, operating under the direction of a local board of directors, and overseeing all service units and troops within a specific geographic area.

Service Unit: Made up of volunteers who support the work of troop volunteers within a given geographic area.

Troops: Volunteer-supervised groups of girls.

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. Check out our Banking section on our website and courses related to troop money management in gsLearn.

Financial assistance. Finances shouldn't stand in the way of a Girl Scout's participation. Any girl needing financial assistance for membership can request it as part of the online member registration process. Other financial assistance is available for uniform components, events, and camps, and can be requested.

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.





NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS



Quick References

For questions about Finance , Trips/Travel, Safety, Product Program or anything else: please contact GSofSI by emailing customercare@gsfsi.org or calling (800) 345-6858.

In case of emergency, call 911 first (if needed). Notify the council through its 24/7 emergency line, (800) 345-6858, Option 3.



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Council Contact Information

Where we're located and how to connect!

Office:

Girl Scouts Service Center
4 Ginger Creek Parkway
Glen Carbon, IL 62034

Office and Shop Hours:

Office: Monday-Thursday 8:00am-5:30pm

Shop: Monday-Thursday 8:30am-5:00pm

Or shop online 24/7 at

[https://girl-scouts-of-southern-illinois.square.site/!](https://girl-scouts-of-southern-illinois.square.site/)

Website: gsofsi.org

Phone: (800)345-6858

Email: customercare@gsofsi.org

Twitter:

[@GSofSI](https://twitter.com/GSofSI)

Facebook:

[@GirlScoutsofSouthernIllinois](https://www.facebook.com/GirlScoutsofSouthernIllinois)

Instagram:

[@girlscoutsofsouthernillinois](https://www.instagram.com/girlscoutsofsouthernillinois)

Youtube:

[Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois](https://www.youtube.com/GirlScoutsOfSouthernIllinois)