

## GSUSA New Leader Onboarding: The Girl Scout Cookie Program

### Course Topic & Resource Outline

Course Completion Time: 20 minutes

#### **About This Course**

- Learn the basics of the Girl Scout Cookie Program
- Highlight exciting program opportunities
- Discover important safety guidelines
- Learn about tips to engage families in the product fun

#### **Lay the Foundation (optional)**

There are six program levels of Girl Scouts that correspond with grade levels. Program resources are available for each level to ensure age appropriateness and fun.

- Daisy (K-1)
- Brownie (2-3)
- Junior (4-5)
- Cadette (6-8)
- Senior (9-10)
- Ambassador (11-12)

There are many resources available to new leaders to help plan activities for your troops. It is recommended to bookmark these resources for future use:

- Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)
  - This platform helps leaders to plan for the Girl Scout year. It provides detailed lesson plans and guidance for completing badge work with troops.
- Girl Scout Shop
  - The shop sells badges, awards, pins, and all sorts of Girl Scout merchandise. You can shop from the main GSUSA site or help support GSofSI by visiting [our local shop page](#).
- Badge Booklets/Handbooks
  - Badge booklets and handbooks can be purchased from the Girl Scout Shop. Handbooks contain everything a Girl Scout needs to know about her program level. Most materials are available for print or digital download.
- Activity Zone
  - This resource will help you draw inspiration for activities to complete with your troop.
- Safety Activity Checkpoints (SACs)

- This document provides standard safety guidelines for GSUSA-approved activities. Troop leaders are responsible for ensuring all activities are planned and carried out in accordance with these guidelines.
- Council Finder
  - This link can be used to locate the contact information for your council.
- Uniform Guides
  - Use this link to download a uniform diagram for your troop grade level, which includes all official insignia.
- Award and Badge Explorer
  - Search for badges and Journey awards by age level and topic. Learn about what Girl Scouts do to earn them, and even purchase them, too.

The Girl Scout Organization includes both volunteer and professional staff who provide support to troop volunteers. As a new leader, be sure to tap into your service unit and council for support when you need it.

- Girl Scouts- the heart of our organization
- Troop- volunteer-supervised groups of Girl Scouts supported by their service unit and council
- Service Unit- each council's geographic area is divided into service units ran by volunteers who support the work of troop leaders in the area
- Council- each council is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit chartered by GSUSA, and oversees all service units and troops within a specific geographic area
- GSUSA- the national organization headquartered in New York City that supports over 100 councils across the United States for over 100 years

The many things Girl Scouts do during the year can be categorized into six groups, seen below:

- Awards and Badges
  - Troops earn badges to explore their interests and learn new skills. Badges cover lots of different topics and are grouped into life skills, STEM, entrepreneurship, and outdoor. Try to do a badge from each category every year. If it's a topic you don't know much about, don't worry—you don't have to know it all. Look for a parent, community member, or council event to help you and your troop. Awards are slightly different than badges and are earned by making a lasting difference in their community.
- Traditions
  - Traditions have evolved to provide a common experience for Girl Scouts across the country.
- Community Service

- Girl Scouts has a history of “doing a good turn” to help others through community service projects. Your troop may decide to participate in a community service project that you plan together during your troop meetings.
- Outdoor Experiences
  - Outdoor experiences are an important and fun part of the Girl Scout Program. You can plan those excursions together during a troop meeting. Many outdoor badges include a field trip component, so there’s no need to plan an extra activity—just build it right into your troop meetings.
- Cookies
  - The Cookie Program gives girls a chance to learn important skills while running their own entrepreneurial business. At the same time, it is the main way troops earn money for the things they want to do. Much of the planning and preparation for the cookie sale takes place during troop meetings. There is one cookie and one financial literacy badge for every year of Girl Scouting. We recommend you do those badges right before cookie season begins to help you get ready. You should also consider the Cookie Family Entrepreneur Pin, which is a great way to help families learn how they can help during cookie season. Your council or service unit will be an important source of information during this time.
- Field Trips & Council Events
  - This is another important aspect of the Girl Scout program, and though they take place outside of the meeting space, they are still a troop meeting.

Girl Scouts aspires to build leaders of the future who look at our world and take action to change it. We do this through the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), seen in the list below, and the 3 Girl Scout processes are at the heart of this experience. We ask leaders to make intentional choices when structuring troop meetings to bring these processes to life.

- Variety of activities
- Supportive adults
- 3 Girl Scout processes
  - Girl-led: In the Girl Scout Cookie Program, Girl Scouts take the lead when they budget, plan, and market their cookie sales.
  - Learning by doing: Through the Girl Scout Cookie Program, Girl Scouts gain real life, hands-on experiences that can translate to future careers or businesses.
  - Cooperative learning: In the Girl Scout Cookie Program, Girl Scouts work together to set goals, decide how to use their money, and problem solve along the way.

### **Introduction to the Girl Scout Cookie Program**

In this course, we will review the basics of the Girl Scout Cookie Program, including:

- How and why Girl Scouts sell cookies
- Who the bakers are that make the cookies
- How to utilize the proceeds with your troop
- The badges available you can earn with your troop as they explore their entrepreneurial skills
- Cookie Program safety
- How to bring caregivers along in the cookie-selling venture

### **Where Do Girl Scout Cookies Come From?**

Depending on your council, your council will utilize one of two bakers. Each baker has their own key differences, but you will receive all information you need to know from you council about working with your baker.

- Little Brownie Bakers
  - This distributor has been baking Girl Scout Cookies® for over 35 years. They are licensed by GSUSA to provide a variety of cookies for the annual Cookie Sale including: Samoas®, Thin Mints®, Tagalongs®, Do-Si-Dos®, and Trefoils®.
- ABC Bakers
  - This distributor has been baking Girl Scout Cookies® since 1937. They provide a variety of cookies for the annual Cookie Sale including: Caramel deLites®, Thin Mints®, Peanut Butter Patties®, Peanut Butter Sandwiches, and Trefoils®.

### **The Five Skills**

Participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program allows Girl Scouts to learn and use five entrepreneurial skills:

- Goal Setting- Girl Scouts begin their cookie season by discussing their goals. Troops set goals together and work as a team throughout the sale to reach their goals. They develop a strong sense of self and cooperation and team-building skills as they learn to set and reach goals to succeed in school, on the job, and in life. Award to Earn: Cookie Entrepreneur pin
- Decision Making- Cookie sales fund the troop's goals, but deciding what to use cookie proceeds for challenges Girl Scouts to have important discussions and find consensus among their troop. They develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills that will help them make big and small decisions in their life; practice helps them make good decisions. Award to Earn: Cookie Boss badge
- Money Management- Girl Scouts learn key concepts in money management through the Girl Scout program. From creating budgets to taking orders and making change at booth

sales, Girl Scouts build a solid foundation in money management—and earn money to support their troop and fund their Girl Scout adventures. They gain practical life skills by knowing how to confidently handle, manage, and leverage money to do great things.

Award to Earn: Budget Builder badge (Brownies)

- People Skills- Girl Scouts know their customers, and build their people skills by talking about their product and learning how to deal with customers with the support of their families, caregivers, and of course, their Girl Scout troop! These experiences help them develop healthy relationships and conflict resolution skills for the future. Award to Earn: Cookie Collaborator badge
- Business Ethics- Girl Scouts build an understanding of what's right and wrong in the business of selling cookies—whether they are completing individual sales with family and friends or selling cookies as a troop at a booth sale. They practice putting the positive values they learn as Girl Scouts into action to become ethical leaders.

## **Two Types of Sales**

There are two types of sales within the Girl Scout Cookie Program: in-person sales and digital sales. However, even within these groups, Girl Scouts have a lot of options for selling their products. They can choose to sell in-person, digitally, or a combination of both—whatever works best for them!

- With in-person sales, Girl Scouts can choose to sell door-to-door while adhering to safety guidelines, or they can choose to participate in cookie booth sales.
- Girl Scouts who sell digitally can text or call family and friends to promote their platform, Digital Cookie.

## **Entrepreneurship Progression Chart**

As Girl Scouts grow, they develop their five skills as they participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program each year. As each year progresses, they build on the skills they learned the year before. Progression allows Girl Scouts to gain new skills over time. As you work with your group, acknowledge their skill development and encourage them to challenge themselves further. The entrepreneurship badges and pins will help you guide your Girl Scouts each year in an age-appropriate way.

- Money Manager- Learn money basics. Talk with your fellow troop members about different forms of money—coins, paper bills, checks, and credit—and practice counting it. Learn how much Girl Scout Cookies cost in your area.
- Decision Maker- Make plans for the coming Girl Scout year and set a budget. Talk about wants versus needs. Talk about how the troop can earn money through cookie program

participation, and look into your troop's proceeds from previous years to help you budget.

- **Goal Setter-** Set sales goals as a troop and individually. Talk with troop members about how you can work together to reach your troops goal, and discuss different ways to sell cookies and set a goal for which ones you'll try. Brainstorm how you could use your cookie earnings to help others in your community.
- **Consumer Expert-** Think "cookie customers;" talk with troop members about why people may or may not choose to buy Girl Scout Cookies, and brainstorm ways to engage them. Come up with ideas for the perfect customer pitch, and practice explaining how your cookie earnings will be spent. Brainstorm ways to thank your customers.
- **Cookie Techie-** Use technology to grow business. Set a specific goal for your digital sales, and make a video for your friends and family network promoting online cookie sales using your sales pitch. Encourage the gifting of cookies to boost sales! Use your support network of friends and family to safely promote your digital storefront.
- **Networker-** Build your social support system. Connect with local business leaders for ideas about how to grow your Girl Scout Cookie business. Talk to friends and family about how they can help you expand your network; ask your customers to safely refer you to new customers. Follow up with past customers and tell them how you plan to use this year's cookie earnings to inspire them to increase their purchase.
- **Innovator-** Take it beyond Girl Scout Cookies. On your own or with your troop, think about a product or service you'd like to improve and brainstorm ways to make it happen. Come up with several ideas, then narrow to the best! Be prepared to go back to the drawing board—maybe more than once. Get feedback from potential consumers and improve your idea based on what they say. Research social entrepreneurs in your community and beyond.
- **Entrepreneur-** Take your business idea to the next level. Create and document a mission statement and business plan for your product/service area. Identify your customer base, competition, and potential obstacles. Practice sharing your business idea with your troop. Research how businesses are financed and think about how you could finance yours. Feel confident about your idea's business potential? Take action!

### **Girl Scout Cookies & National Program**

Girl Scouts build key life skills while learning to think like an entrepreneur, and they can also earn badges and pins as they learn these skills. They can earn badges in Cookie Business, Financial Literacy, and Entrepreneurship, and also earn Cookie Entrepreneur Family pins each year. You can find the full list of the badges and pins available in the Volunteer Toolkit, or view the [Cookie Badges and Pins](#) page.

### **Girl Scout Cookie Selling Safety**

Here are a few important safety tips when selling cookies:

- Show you're a Girl Scout. Wear the Girl Scout membership pin, vest, sash, or other Girl Scout clothing to identify yourself as a Girl Scout.
- Buddy Up. Always use the buddy system. It's not only safe, it's more fun, too!
- Be aware. Become familiar with the areas and neighborhoods where you'll be selling cookies.
- Partner with adults. Adults must accompany Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors when they're taking orders, selling cookies, or delivering cookies. Girl Scouts in grades 6-12 must be supervised by an adult when selling door-to-door and must never sell alone. Adults must be present at all times during cookie booth sales.
- Plan ahead. Be prepared for emergencies, and always have a plan for safeguarding money.
- Do not enter any homes or vehicles. Never enter someone's home or vehicle when you're selling or making deliveries. Avoid selling to people in vehicles (except at designated drive-thru cookie booths) or going into alleys.
- Sell in the daytime. Sell only during daylight hours unless accompanied by an adult.
- Protect privacy. Girl Scouts' last names, home addresses, and email addresses should never be given to customers. Be sure Girl Scouts do not share personal information while selling cookies. Also, protect customers' privacy by not sharing their information except when necessary.
- Be safe on the road. Always follow safe pedestrian practices, especially when crossing at intersections or walking along roadways. Be aware of traffic when unloading products and passengers from vehicles.
- Be safe online. Girl Scouts must have their caregivers' permission to participate in all online activities and must read and agree to the [GSUSA Internet Safety Pledge](#) before conducting any online activities. Additionally, to participate in Digital Cookie, Girl Scouts must read and abide by the [Girl Scout Digital Cookie Pledge](#), and caregivers must read and abide by the Digital Cookie Terms and Conditions for Parents/Guardians.

### **Making the Most of Your Cookie Proceeds**

Where exactly do the proceeds go? All proceeds stay local:

- Your Council
  - Programming
  - Trainings
  - Support Services
- Your Troop
  - Girls decide how to use their troop proceeds to fund their fun
    - Trips

- Events
- Supplies and uniforms
- Community projects

### **Selling Cookies at a Booth Sale**

Booth sales are a great place for Girl Scouts to practice their business and entrepreneurial skills. They learn:

- Customer Service
- Money Management
- Inventory Management
- Teamwork

Make sure Girl Scouts wear their membership vest, sash, pin, or other piece of Girl Scout apparel to designate them as a Girl Scout. This allows them to show their pride and also allows customers to easily identify them.

Other tips for booth sales:

- All booth sales must take place in a designated, council-approved area.
- Booths should not block a store entrance or exit.
- Make sure there is adequate space for a table for the cookies to be on display, and the participating Girl Scouts. Ensure that pedestrians, bikes, and cars can safely pass by.
- Always have a first-aid kit available at the booth.
- Have approved volunteers/adults present at a booth at all times. Be sure to check with your council's Volunteer Essentials for more information on approved adults.
- Safeguard the cookie money as you sell. Keep the cashbox in a safe and secure place. Never leave the money unattended, and make sure an adult is managing the cashbox at all times. You can reduce cash transactions by offering credit card options.

### **"What If" Scenarios**

You may receive some questions about the Girl Scout organization, or something may happen that you may not expect. Preparation is key, so here are some examples:

- *What is the difference between Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts?* Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts are two completely different organizations. Let your troop members talk to cookie customers about what the Girl Scout experience has been like for them. Stay positive, and don't put other organizations down. Just lift Girl Scouts up!
- *Angry customers:* Never argue or negatively engage with them. Try to stay calm and get a good look at the person, in case you need to describe them later. Always practice good listening skills before replying. Do not engage with someone if the situation escalates.



- *Where do all of the cookie proceeds go?* Girl Scout cookie proceeds stay local to power amazing adventures and life-changing opportunities. As a pro-tip, your troop can create a poster displaying how they plan to use their cookie proceeds to share with customers.
- *Why is palm oil in Girl Scout cookies?* Palm oil is an ingredient found in most baked snacks sold in the U.S. It ensures shelf life and serves as an alternative to trans fats. There are no viable or readily available alternatives at this time. GSUSA is a member of RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) which supports efforts to promote the growth and use of sustainable palm oil products. Remember, if someone is asking questions that you can't answer, feel free to direct them to the Girl Scouts website for more information.

### **Strategies for Bringing Families into the Fold**

Girl Scouts cannot sell cookies or build these important life skills without the support of those closest to them. You as a troop leader need the support of the families, too! Families can support in a number of important ways:

- Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin- Families can work with their Girl Scout at home to help them earn this pin.
- Families can help Girl Scouts set up their Digital Cookie site (if possible) and abide by safety rules to ensure their Girl Scout's success.
- Families help with money management and model the 5 skills Girl Scouts are learning in this program.
- Caregivers can volunteer as the Cookie Manager, supporting the cookie booths, or assisting with product pickup and deliveries. It takes everyone pitching in to make the Cookie Program a success.

### **Keep It Girl-Led**

It is important for families to support their Girl Scout while not doing things for them that they can do themselves. It may be easier, but this is not how Girl Scouts learn. Allowing them to do everything they can on their own will ensure they get every lesson out of the Girl Scout Cookie experience. They can:

- Greet the customers
- Take money and give change
- Add up the total and pack each order

### **Keep It Fun**

Remind your families to keep it fun! It can be a fun bonding experience that takes work, but gives the Girl Scouts an opportunity to grow alongside their families.

### **Your Cookie Kickoff Meeting**

It is important to get the Girl Scouts excited about their cookie business, but there is a lot of information to cover. A Cookie Kickoff Meeting for parents and caregivers can set families up for success. This meeting will provide key details and allow them the chance to ask questions.

1. Hold a brief opening- Have the troop recite the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
2. Set up a separate activity for the troop to enjoy while you are providing the key details of the cookie program to your families.
3. If your troop has a troop cookie manager, encourage them to lead the parent and caregiver part of the meeting.
4. Have a meeting agenda.
  - a. Benefits and skills learned
    - i. Make sure to cover the benefits of the Girl Scout Cookie Program and also cover the 5 skills girls will learn.
  - b. Review resources
    - i. Use the Cookie Family Connection Guide or materials provided by GSofSI. Include any Permission forms and cover activities they can do at home, such as the Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin.
  - c. Cookie Sale logistics
    - i. Go over the different ways to sell and cover any booth dates you have planned. Cover safety tips and important deadlines, and inform families you will send reminders often.

This course provides an overview of the Girl Scout Cookie Program, but be sure to check with GSofSI about more specific details on our local program. Check in with your council representative on other required trainings, key dates, and other local details that you need to know. Some details like the time of the cookie season or the baking company used may be different from council to council, but one thing remains the same—Girl Scouts make wonderful memories while building skills that will last a lifetime!