

# Troop Guide

A Guide for Leading Your Girl Scout Troop

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“Welcome! Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming thanks you for embarking on the great adventure of Girl Scouting!

Your commitment as a Girl Scout Volunteer will provide a foundation of confidence, experience, respect, and courage that stays with a young woman throughout her lifetime.

Because of you, our Girl Scouts have the opportunity to learn what they are capable of accomplishing and will prepare for a lifetime of leadership, success and adventure – together you will change the world!”

Sally J. Leep  
CEO, Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming

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# Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct

Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming (GSMW) supports adults who prepare girls to seek and meet the challenges of an ever-changing society. GSMW agrees to treat volunteers with respect and dignity and to protect confidential information, and further agrees to provide a position description, learning opportunities, and support necessary for the volunteer position.

## 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.

## High Ethical Standards

GSMW is committed to high ethical standards and we expect all volunteers to act in the best interest of the organization and its mission. This mission demands that we act in an ethical manner to uphold the public trust and the values of responsibility, integrity, openness, honesty, accountability, and respect in all that we do in the name of Girl Scouts.

## 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.

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

## In my capacity as a GSMW Volunteer I agree to uphold these values and I will:

- Affirm the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
- Take all required trainings and comply with all Girl Scout policies, procedures, and safety guidelines.
- Welcome girls and adults from a variety of backgrounds and include them in my group activities.
- Behave in a manner that models the ideals and values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law and ensure that all verbal or written communications (including telephone conversations, emails, texts, newsletters, electronic, and social media) do not contain profanity or condescending remarks. I will refrain from inappropriate displays of anger, aggression, or berating of individuals.
- Honor the leadership of the girls and support their decisions.
- Act responsibly when overseeing Girl Scout funds, maintain accurate records, and file required reports. Girl Scout funds are only to be used in direct support of Girl Scout programs and to pay for appropriate Girl Scout expenses.
- Not use any volunteer position for personal, political, or monetary gain.

I understand that if I do not comply with the above standards or if I otherwise act in a way that negatively impacts the image or goals of GSMW, I may be released from any volunteer role with GSMW.

# Terms and Conditions

**By selecting a Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming volunteer role and/or initiating the volunteer onboarding process, you agree to comply with the following Terms and Conditions:**

- I agree to abide by the Council's Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct.
- I agree to a background check in order to help ensure the safety of the girls served through Girl Scouting. I understand that volunteering with GSMW is a privilege and not a right.
- I understand that I may not hold a volunteer position if I have any debt with GSMW (whether related to cookie sales or otherwise), have committed a felony, or reside with a registered sex or violent offender.
- I agree to make the necessary time commitment and take the necessary training to fulfill my volunteer role.
- I agree to respect and maintain the confidentiality of information that I am exposed to while serving as a volunteer. I will treat all such information as confidential. Examples of privileged information include intellectual property, products and services (including software), personal contact information on members and staff, financial information, and health/medical information.
- I agree to comply with the policies and operational procedures outlined in Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints in addition to any specific procedures applicable to any role which I may accept.

Welcome to the Troop Guide. Within this book, you will find tips, council policies and procedures, and everything you need to know to have a successful Girl Scout year!

Throughout this guide, you may see links to additional helpful resources. Please visit [www.gsmw.org/troopguide](http://www.gsmw.org/troopguide) to navigate to these clickable links.



# Leader Checklist

## Before You Takeoff

- ☐ Register online as an adult member of Girl Scouts.  
<https://mygs.girlscouts.org/my-account>
- ☐ Complete a criminal background check. You will receive email invite from [noreply@Asurint.com](mailto:noreply@Asurint.com)



## Launching Your Troop: Week 2-3

- ☐ Complete a short training online to learn about your troop co-leader role, Girl Scouts and how to lead your Troop.
- ☐ You will receive an email with your training assignment once your background check is complete.
- ☐ Explore the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) and choose a year plan. Volunteer Toolkit is accessed through MyGS. <https://mygs.girlscouts.org/my-account>
- ☐ Find your troop roster in the Volunteer Toolkit or MyGS.
- ☐ Meet with your troop co-leader.
- ☐ Connect with local staff support team.
- ☐ Follow the GSMW Facebook page. [www.facebook.com/GSMWcouncil](https://www.facebook.com/GSMWcouncil)



## In Flight: Week 3-4

- ☐ Email or call all troop caregivers to introduce yourself.
- ☐ Host a caregiver meeting. Template available at [www.gsmw.org](http://www.gsmw.org).
- ☐ Schedule your first troop meeting.



## Reaching for the Stars: Week 4+

- ☐ Hold regular troop meetings and get to know your girls.
- ☐ Ask caregivers for help throughout the year.
- ☐ Sign the troop up to go to events together. [www.gsmw.org/events](http://www.gsmw.org/events)
- ☐ Attend service unit meetings and meet local volunteers.
- ☐ Utilize resources and other trainings to enhance your skills as a troop leader.
- ☐ Contact us anytime you need assistance at 406-252-0488 or [customercare@gsmw.org](mailto:customercare@gsmw.org)



# Getting Started



## Our Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

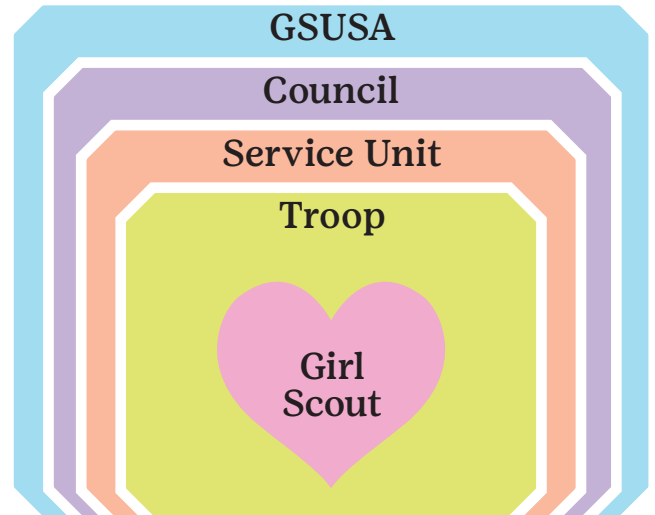
## The Girl Scout Promise

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.

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

## 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.



## 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 Montana and Wyoming

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

### Service Unit

All Girl Scout members including troops, girls, volunteers, caregivers, and community members that live in a geographic area. Service units are led by a team of volunteers who work with council staff to support and serve girls, troops, and volunteers in their area.

### Troops

A group of Girl Scouts supervised by troop volunteers who meet regularly.

## Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

What makes Girl Scouts truly unique? Everything is designed especially for, and is tested by, girls! Our program centers around 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 “learn by doing” in a cooperative-learning environment.

In Girl Scouts, girls will:

### Discover

Every activity girls tackle in Girl Scouts helps them discover who they are, what they care about, and what their talents are.

### Connect

Collaborate with and learn from other people and expand their horizons. This helps them care about and inspire others locally and globally.

### Take Action

Connect with and show care for others, 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 their community, and establish healthy relationships. These aren't just good qualities—they're leadership skills that will last a lifetime!

## Girl Scout Program

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, through camping experiences



### Life Skills

Civic engagement, healthy living, global citizenship, communication skills, and more



### Entrepreneurship

Goal setting, decision making, money management, business ethics, and people skills

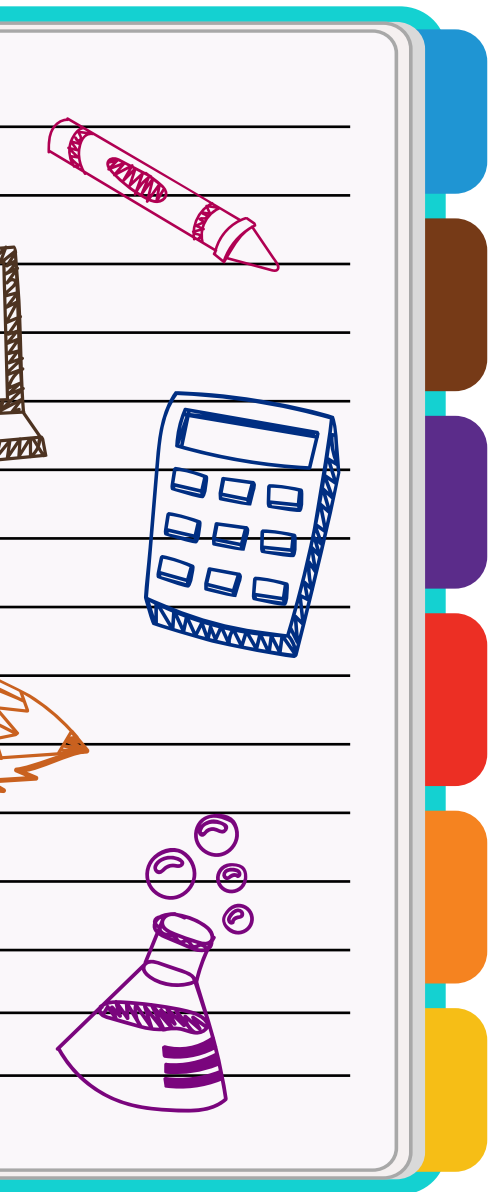
Whether they complete Girl Scout Leadership Journeys, earn badges, unleash their inner entrepreneur, pack for their first hike, or any combination of these activities, at Girl Scouts, every girl has countless ways to explore our four program areas and hone the skills they'll need to power a lifetime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

Explore all the possibilities with the Badge Explorer tool at [girlscouts.org/badgeexplorer](https://girlscouts.org/badgeexplorer).

## Grade Levels and 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!

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. By building on the knowledge and skills every year, your girls' confidence will grow and they'll be eager to take those next steps.



**Girl Scout Daisies (K-1st grade)** 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.

**Girl Scout Brownies (2nd-3rd grade)** work together as they earn badges and explore their communities. Friendship, fun, and activities begin at the Girl Scout Brownie meeting and move out to the community and the wider world.

**Girl Scout Juniors (4th-5th grade)** 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.

**Girl Scout Cadettes (6th-8th grade)** 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.

**Girl Scout Seniors (9th-10th grade)** 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 their Gold Award and change the world in a tangible, lasting way.

**Girl Scout Ambassadors (11th-12th grade)** 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.

## Highest Awards

All of the skills and experiences girls gain throughout their time in Girl Scouts set them up for special recognition through the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. Through their award projects, your girls will tackle issues close to their hearts and make a real difference—and if they decide to pursue their Gold Award, they'll also be eligible for unique college scholarships and open doors to promising career opportunities.



# Learning the Ropes

## Your Role as a Girl Scout Troop Co-Leader (Troop Administrator/Girl Program Mentor)

Being a Girl Scout Troop Co-Leader is an incredible journey along which you'll shape the future by working with girls today. With your guidance, encouragement, and go-getting spirit, your Girl Scouts will be ready to embark on a lifetime of leadership, success, and adventure. And 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 is about more than “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:**

- They can do and be anything!
- They are decision-makers and should own their decisions.
- They can live the Girl Scout Law every day.

### **As a co-leader, see yourself as a coach who:**

- Advises, discusses, and cheers on your troop.
- Ensures each girl understands and can carry out her responsibilities within the troop.
- Encourages girls to build their skills and their ethics.
- Gives more responsibilities to the girls as they grow and develop.

### **It's important to remember that:**

- You may not know everything that the girls want to learn.
- You will be exploring and learning right alongside your girls.
- You are not expected to know everything about Girl Scouts, but you should know where to go for information and ask for help when you need it!
- Council staff and your service unit volunteers are available to help as you get started and throughout your journey.

**“To be inspired is great, but to be an inspiration is an honor.”  
Juliette Gordon Low, Girl Scouts Founder**



## New Leader Resources

### MyGS

MyGS is your online account where you can manage your troop and family's membership and access the tools to manage your troop.

Once you are a registered member, you can log into MyGS from the Girl Scouts Montana and Wyoming website: [gsmw.org](https://gsmw.org).

In MyGS you can:

- Manage your Girl Scout membership and the memberships in your household and troop(s).
- View your troop roster of girls and adult volunteers.
- Maintain your contact information and preferences.
- Register for exciting in-person and virtual events for your Girl Scout, your family, or your troop to attend.
- Access the Volunteer Toolkit and gsLearn to make your Girl Scout volunteer experience a breeze!

### Volunteer Essentials

Volunteer Essentials is your go-to reference to answer all your frequently asked questions. Find it on our website under Members.

### Safety Activity Checkpoints

Safety Activity Checkpoints has everything you need to know to be prepared and keep your girls safe during a range of activities outside.

### Award and Badge Explorer

Use GSUSA's Explorer tool to find out about every award, badge, and pin your girls can earn: [girlscouts.org/badgeexplorer](https://girlscouts.org/badgeexplorer).



## New Leader Training

### gsLearn

gsLearn is Girl Scouts' official online and on demand training platform. Prepared leaders are confident leaders, and with these online courses available when you are, you will have all the info you need to be a great Girl Scout volunteer.

Courses include Taking Girls Outdoors, Product Programs, and more. We encourage you to take advantage of these on demand training courses to expand your knowledge and skills as a Girl Scout volunteer.

### Required New Leader Training

All new troop leaders are required to complete the Troop Leader Volunteer Orientation. Required training is virtual, free, and in **gsLearn** (located in your myGS account). Plan to complete this training prior to holding troop meetings with the girls.

This 45-minute training includes the following courses:

- Welcome to Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming
- Safety in Girl Scouting
- What Girl Scouts Do
- Your First Troop Meeting
- Troop Finances
- Family Engagement: The Key to Success

# The Volunteer Toolkit

## Your Digital Troop Assistant

### The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

This web-based program allows more time to focus on your girls. It makes managing your troop and planning your meetings smooth and easy all year long. You'll find meeting overviews, activity plans, badge and journey outlines, meeting aids, and Girl Scout resources.

### Plan and Customize Your Year

At Girl Scouts, we know that when girls take part in shaping their Girl Scouts experience and adventures, they will be more engaged and will have more fun! The VTK makes it easy for troop co-leaders and girls to explore meeting topics and ideas available for their grade level together and select what they want to include in their year. Co-leaders can take this information to plan and customize the troop's year using the VTK's pre-populated meeting plans, agendas, supply lists, and activity instructions.

### Manage Troop Rosters, Attendance, and Accomplishments

With the VTK you will be able to view your troop roster, update contact information, record attendance at meetings, track girls' badge and Journey achievements, and renew memberships.

### One-Click Communication

The VTK is not just for co-leaders, it's for caregivers, too! With its unique caregiver-view, caregivers can keep up with troop activities, meeting information, and what badges and Journeys their girls are working on. You can also email upcoming meeting agendas and troop plans to them with just one click.

### Easy Navigation at Your Fingertips!

Here are just a few of the many features you'll find inside the VTK. We strongly encourage troop co-leaders to utilize the VTK to streamline their troop management and planning. GSUSA continues to update and enhance the VTK with additional resources, features and functions.

### My Troop

- View, edit, download and print rosters.
- Edit contact info.
- View achievements and attendance.
- Email families.
- Renew memberships.

### Year Plans

- Specify meeting dates and locations.
- Preview and choose pre-populated year plans.
- Add and/or combine meeting plans to customize your year.
- Add custom troop activities like celebrations, field trips, etc.

### Meeting Plans

- View, download, or print individual meeting summaries, activity plans and supply lists.
- Track attendance and achievements.
- Search and print meeting aids such as name tags, handouts, and more.

## Learn more about the VTK

For more information about the Volunteer Toolkit, visit [www.gsmw.org/vtk](http://www.gsmw.org/vtk)



# A Leader's Support System

## Co-leader(s) and Caregivers

Girl Scouts is all about sisterhood. As a leader, you are not alone! Your troop co-leader(s) and caregivers are your primary team. Get to know them and allow them to help!

If you don't already have a co-leader, your Member Experience Manager will help recruit a second co-leader. You can also try asking a friend, co-worker, or neighbor. Girl Scout volunteers don't have to be a caregiver or have a girl in the troop!

## Service Unit

Service units are Girl Scout members grouped by geography. They are led by experienced, dedicated volunteers who support and serve girls, troops, and volunteers in their area.

Service units hold meetings for Girl Scout volunteers throughout the year to share ideas, receive training, and talk about important announcements.

They also organize events like community-wide service projects, summer day camps, cookie rallies, recruitments, celebrations, ceremonies, and more!

## GSMW Council Staff

We are here for you! Your Member Experience Manager will be reaching out to you throughout your first year as a troop leader, and after that, you will receive phone calls and emails from them to help support you regularly throughout your Girl Scout volunteer experience.

If you have a private matter, a conflict to discuss, issues with registration or any other needs, GSMW can help! Contact your Member Experience Manager or Customer Care at 406-252-0488, or email [customercare@gsmw.org](mailto:customercare@gsmw.org).





# Keeping Girls Safe



## Prepare for Emergencies

Although we all hope the worst never happens, you should be prepared and follow our council's procedures for handling emergency incidents.

In an emergency, first provide care for the injured person and/or obtain medical assistance, then immediately report the emergency to council staff by following the Emergency Procedures.

Always keep the following items readily available when with your Girl Scouts:

- Health and Permission Form for each girl. These must be filled out and signed annually by each girl's caregiver.
- First Aid Kit. Visit the American Red Cross' Anatomy of a First Aid Kit for a list of items to include.
- Local emergency services' contact information.
- Council Emergency Procedures

*(Items are located on our website in the Volunteer Essentials)*

## Volunteer-to-Girl Ratio

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

Adult volunteers must be registered members of Girl Scouts and have successfully completed a background screening.

Use the table to identify how many volunteers you need based on the number of girls participating:

Volunteer to Girl Ratio Chart	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, Camp	
	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	There should be one extra volunteer for every additional:	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	There should be one extra volunteer for every additional:
Daisies	12	1-6	6	1-4
Brownies	20	1-8	12	1-6
Juniors	25	1-10	16	1-8
Cadettes	25	1-12	20	1-10
Seniors	30	1-15	24	1-12
Ambassadors	30	1-15	24	1-12

## 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 certified first-aider is required. If a safety activity checkpoint doesn't exist for an activity you and your girls are interested in, contact GSMW before making any definite plans.

## First Aid/CPR

It is recommended that you have a CPR/First Aid certified volunteer with your group. For some activities, it is required and will be indicated in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

# Working with Caregivers

## Family Connections

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls when families step up and play an active part in the troop. Without meaningful support from caregivers, 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 are doing!

## Caregiver Meetings

Kick the year off right with a caregiver meeting! This should be the first meeting you hold to start each troop year—it sets up both new and returning troops for success. 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.

You'll also want to hold additional family meetings ahead of cookie season and at the end of the school year. Use Caregiver-Family meeting plans in the Volunteer Toolkit for meeting agendas, tips, and ideas!

## Building Your Troop Volunteer Team

Set the stage for a successful troop year by tapping into the people resources already at your fingertips: caregivers and other family members, friends, and members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide troops with time, experience, and ideas!

Ask each family to fill out the [Caregiver Involvement Form](#) to start gathering information about how they can help the troop. Most people are willing to help when asked! 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 transport girls or chaperone a field trip.

Please keep in mind that adult volunteers who will be working with girls other than their own, driving members, and/or handling troop funds and product inventory, must be approved volunteers by registering as an adult member and completing a criminal background check.

## Troop Volunteer Roles

### Troop Administrator (Co-Leader)

Works with the Girl Program Mentor to decide how to divide Troop tasks. Typically the Troop Administrator takes care of the communication and administrative tasks.

### Girl Program Mentor (Co-Leader)

Works with the Troop Administrator to decide how you want to divide Troop tasks. The Girl Program Mentor typically plans the troop meetings. Both Co-Leaders lead a group of girls.

### Troop Treasurer

Together with the second bank account signer/treasurer you will open and maintain the troop checking account, keep accurate records, and communicate financial information with troop members and council.

### Troop Fall Product Manager

Coordinate the annual Fall Product Program where girls take orders for nuts, candy, and magazines. You'll complete training and then guide the troop.

### Troop Cookie Manager

Coordinate the troop's Cookie Program by setting up cookie booths, manage inventory and money. You'll complete training and then guide the troop.

### Friends and Family Helpers

Provide extra support to the troop as needed. Work with girls at troop meetings, transport girls, chaperone field trips, supervise cookie booths, or other support as needed

# Starting the Adventure

Your first troop meeting is a great chance to get to know the girls and brainstorm all 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 a field trip didn't go according to plan? 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. Be open with the girls and when you don't know something and that you will be learning together. You'll show them that learning is a lifelong process and that with an open mind, they can overcome any challenge that comes their way.

## Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

The only requirement for your troop meetings is that your girls are engaged and having fun! Many leaders use this basic structure for troop meetings:

- **Pre-Meeting Activity** – Plan an activity for girls upon arrival at the meeting so they have something to do before the meeting begins. Plan about 5 minutes for this, it could be snack, creating a thank you card, coloring a page to donate, etc.
- **Opening** – Each troop decides what they will do regularly. Most begin with

reciting the Girl Scout Promise & Law, a song, game, story, or other activity designed by the girls. Plan 5-10 minutes.

- **Troop Business** – Collect dues, take attendance, make announcements or plan upcoming activities while caregivers may be present.
- **Let the fun begin!** This is your activity for the meeting. Work on a badge, journey, or complete other activities during this time. Plan 30 minutes to 1 hour.
- **Clean Up** – Girls clean up all supplies and always leave a place cleaner than they found it. Plan about 5 minutes.
- **Closing** – As a troop, girls decide how they will end each meeting – a song, a game, a Girl Scout tradition. Plan up to 10 minutes.

## Got Snacks?

Snacks are optional, but if your troop has chosen to include snacks, guide families to consider healthy snacks and always share any food allergies the girls in your troop may have.

## First Meeting Checklist

- ☐ Cover the basics. Review the details about when and where the meeting will take place and make sure caregivers are aware.
- ☐ Get ready. Use the VTK to verify your troop roster and email caregivers. This might be a great time to remind caregivers to send health history forms, uniform orders, and troop dues to the meeting.
- ☐ Know the agenda. Refer to the Elements of a Troop Meeting list and your meeting agenda/plans.
- ☐ Review and practice your agenda. You'll feel calmer during the actual meeting and ready to make adjustments as needed.
- ☐ Prepare for Fun! When girls and caregivers see you're prepared for the meeting and ready to have a great time, they'll follow your lead!

# Troop Finances

## Troop Funds

Troop activities are powered by proceeds. It's completely up to each troop to decide what works best for them to support the activities planned.

**Product Programs:** The Fall Product and Cookie Programs are the primary money earning activities for a troop each year. Participation in these programs allow girls to earn rewards, learn important finance and business skills, and generate funds for the troop's adventures!

**Money-Earning Activities:** Activities organized by the troop (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with volunteers) and that earn money for the group. Council pre-approval and participation in product programs is required.

**Troop Dues:** Some troops decide to collect troop dues to help provide funds for troop activities and supplies. These could range from a few dollars per meeting to a lump sum for the entire school year.

## Financial Assistance

Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming never wants a family's financial means to dictate a Girl Scout's experience.

Financial assistance is available for membership fees, uniforms, programs, and camp as well as travel scholarships and additional requests.

If you or a caregiver requires financial assistance, please visit [gsmw.org](https://gsmw.org) or contact GSMW for more information.

## Product Programs

Girl Scout Troops set goals for how to spend their proceeds on program-related activities, such as supplies for Troop meetings and paying their own way towards a trip or outdoor adventures. Girl Scout Troops may also choose to use proceeds to purchase materials for a project to benefit the community.

By having a voice in the product programs, girls are learning how to run a business and gain the confidence to make important decisions. They also learn how to develop a budget, interact with customers, and handle money. Your Troop will use proceeds to fuel their Girl Scout adventures throughout the year, including STEM, outdoor experiences, travel, and community projects.

Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming hosts two Product Programs a year: Fall Product Program and the Girl Scout Cookie Program.

## Fall Product Program

The smaller of the two programs, girls sell nuts, candy, and magazines to friends and family. The Fall Product Program happens at the start of each new Girl Scout year in September/October.

Learn more about the Fall Product Program at [gsmw.org/FallProgram](https://gsmw.org/FallProgram).

## Girl Scout Cookie Program

The largest girl-led program/business in the world giving girls an opportunity to sell cookies at cookie booths, on their online storefronts, and in-person. The Cookie Program is held February to April each year.

Learn more about the Cookie Program at [gsmw.org/CookieResources](https://gsmw.org/CookieResources).



## Opening a New Troop Bank Account

No matter how much your troop plans to save or spend, you'll need a safe place to deposit your troop dues, product program proceeds, and other funds. If you've stepped up to lead an existing troop, you may inherit a checking account, but with a new troop, you'll want to open a new bank account.

**To open a new troop bank account or change signers on an existing account:**

### 1 Identify the Two Required Bank Account Signers and the Bank of Your Choice

- Troop bank accounts are required to have 2 registered, background checked, approved adult Girl Scout volunteers as signers who are not related or live in the same household.
- Account signers must understand and agree to the Troop Banking Acknowledgements.
- Bank accounts must be opened under the Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming's tax ID number.
- Bank accounts should be opened at First Interstate Bank if available, or Glacier Bank/Western Security Bank. If neither are available, please contact the GSMW Accounting Department.

### 2 Request Authorization to Open the New Troop Account

- Submit the Bank Account Authorization Request Form to council.
- Allow 5 business days for processing.
- Forms will be emailed to approved signers once the Bank Account Authorization Request Form is submitted and approved.

### 3 Open a New Bank Account

- Take the Bank Account Authorization Letter to the bank.
- This process can take up to 3 weeks depending on bank policy and procedures (requires council signatures by mail).



## Financial Management

All funds collected, raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting belong to the troop and must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. Funds are administered through the troop and do not belong to individuals. Under no circumstances shall the money be divided among members of the troop for personal use, used by the Account Signers for her/his personal use or donated to another organization.

## End of Year Financials

Troops are required to submit their end of year financials through the each year by June 30. A copy of the current year May bank statement and the check register must also be submitted. Detailed information about submitting the report will be provided in May.

## 4

### Report New Bank Account Information to Council

- Submit the ACH Form within 5 days of opening the new account to confirm the troop has opened the new bank account.
- New troop startup funds will be distributed upon receipt of the ACH form.
- The council uses ACH for all financial transactions with troop bank accounts, including payments for the Fall Product Program and Cookie Program.

## 5

### GSMW Bank Account Policies

- Troop funds must never be combined with personal funds.
- Debit cards are permissible and require the same documentation and receipts as other expenses.
- An End-of-Year Annual Financial Report must be submitted by June 30 each year.
- Misuse of troop funds will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

## Budget & Record Keeping

Each troop should collaborate in the preparation of an annual budget at the start of the program year. Girls should be included in this process, in an age-appropriate manner, to enhance their financial literacy skills.

Troops may agree to charge members of the troop a nominal dues amount to support Girl Scout troop activities. This amount should be carefully thought out by the leaders and communicated and agreed upon with the caregivers.

All disbursements and deposits should be recorded in a checkbook, electronic spreadsheet, or personal banking software. The bank statement should be reconciled to these records monthly. Financial checks and balances should be in place to help prevent misuse of troop funds. A person other than the one preparing the bank reconciliation should also review the reconciliation each month. Best practices provide that separate individuals manage the account and receive the bank statements.

There must be a clear separation of personal and troop funds. Signers are responsible for any fees or charges for overdrawing the troop account. All cash payments should be receipted. A written receipt must be provided to the caregivers or other volunteers. Under no circumstances should a check be written to and signed by the same person.



### Questions to consider:

- What types of activities will be planned?
- What are the costs associated with these activities?
- How will the troop fund these activities?
- Will money earning activities be required?
- What are your goals for the Fall Product and Cookie Program?

Find more [Troop Banking](#) information on our website under [Volunteer Essentials](#).



A file should be maintained with bank statements, all cookie records, and records supporting all financial transactions for at least three (3) years after the end of the program year. Troop financial records should be shared with and made available to girls and caregivers throughout the year to maintain transparency.

## Changing Bank Signers

Troops must follow GSMW's process for changing troop account signers. The troop leader should notify the Accounting Department of changes on troop accounts in order to have a new bank letter issued. When changes are made to troop accounts, a Troop Banking Request Form needs to be submitted to GSMW.

## End-of-Year Financial Reports

Troops are required to submit the End-of-Year Financial Report directly to GSMW by June 30 of each year. The report can be found at [gsmw.org](http://gsmw.org). The annual report covers financial transactions which took place throughout the year. Troops established during the year should report their finances starting in the month organized. These reports will be reviewed by GSMW to ensure policies are being appropriately followed and funds are being utilized to benefit girls. **Troops who do not turn in their annual financials may have their account closed.**

## Fraud

Unfortunately, fraud happens even within Girl Scouts. Please follow the practices outlined in these guidelines to help prevent unauthorized use of troop funds. The troop funds belong to the girls and should be treated as such. If a leader or caregiver within the troop suspects that troop funds are being mismanaged, first discuss the matter with the Troop Leader, focusing on the facts and documentation. If there is a possibility that the leader has mismanaged funds, contact GSMW Accounting Department immediately at 406-252-0488. Please make every effort to be proactive and establish good financial procedures and controls. Good financial management allows the troop to focus its energies on the Girl Scout Experience.



# Girl Scout Calendar

August	September	October	November
Recruit New Girls & Adults to Your Troop  Update Troop Info in MyGs  Plan Your Year  Hold a Caregiver Meeting	Back to Troop Time: Encourage Girls to Renew by Sept. 30  Bridging, Investiture, and Rededication Ceremonies  Kick-Off the School Year with a Fun Troop Activity!	Girl Scout Membership Year Begins Oct. 1  Fall Product Program  Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday Oct. 31  Recruit Girls and Adults to Your Troop	Fall Product Pickup Time  Troop Giving Season: Discuss Plans for Holidays
December	January	February	March
Happy Holidays! Check out the GSMW Shop for Specials  Fall Product ACH Sweep  Look for Community Engagement Activities	Happy New Year!  Troop Product Manager Training Begins  Plan Cookie Goals  Look out for the Camp Guide	Volunteer Recognition Nominations  Cookie Program Begins  World Thinking Day Feb. 22  Recruit Caregivers to Volunteer	Girl Scout Week March 12  Cookie Program Booth Sales Begin  Girl Scouts Celebrate Faith  Women's History Month
April	May	June	July
Earth Day April 22: Work on Outdoor Focused Badges  Volunteer Appreciation  Girl Scout Leader Day April 22  Early Bird Renewal/Extended Year  Cookie Program ACH Sweep	National Bridging Week  Mental Health Awareness Month  Early Bird Renewal/Extended Year  Cookie Program ACH Sweep  Have an End of Year Party Before Summer!	Summer Camp Begins  Highest Award Ceremonies  EOY Financial Report	Independence Day  Summer Camp



# Girl Scout Uniforms

Girl Scouts from each grade level have one official uniform item (a sash, vest, or tunic) to display badges, pins, awards, and other insignia. This item is required when girls participate in ceremonies or officially represent Girl Scouts.

## Retail Services – Uniforms, badges and more!

Retail services has everything you need to help you and your Girl Scouts prepare for the exciting adventures ahead, including uniforms, badges, fun patches, and more!

We offer a variety of ways to shop:

- In-person shopping at our Billings and Great Falls, Montana stores.
- Pop-Up Shops at events throughout the council.
- Email: [shop@gsmw.org](mailto:shop@gsmw.org)
- Phone: 406-252-0488
- GSUSA's online retail store is available 24/7 offering a variety of Girl Scout items. This official retail store also includes branded items that our online store may not carry. Visit [www.gsmw.org/shop](http://www.gsmw.org/shop) for more details.



Sash, Vest, or Tunic\*



American Flag Patch



Insignia Tab\*



Council ID Set\*



4 Digit Troop Number\*



World Trefoil Pin



Membership Pin\*



*\*Color and style vary by grade level.*

# Traditions and Ceremonies

## Girl Scout Sign

Raise three fingers of the right hand with the thumb holding down the pinky. The 3 fingers represent the three parts of the Girl Scout Promise.

## Girl Scout Handshake

Shaking hands with the left hand and make the GS sign with the right hand. The left hand is nearest to the heart and signifies friendship.

## Friendship Circle

Representing the unbroken chain of friendship among Girl Scouts and Girl Guides around the world, the Friendship Circle involves girls standing in a circle, crossing their right arms over their left, and clasping hands with their friends on both sides. Everyone then makes a silent wish as a friendship squeeze is passed from hand to hand around the circle.



## SWAPS

SWAPS stands for “Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere.” They are small tokens of friendship that Girl Scouts exchange with one another, and each SWAP uniquely reflects a fellow Girl Scout, their troop, or a memory of a special event. They’re a great way to share stories and get to know Girl Scouts from across the country and the world.

## Kaper Charts

A chart dividing up troop responsibilities. Indicates all the jobs available and who is responsible during a meeting or a camp-out.





## Ceremonies

Ceremonies help Girl Scouts celebrate special moments and accomplishments throughout the year, such as bridging to another level or earning a National Leadership Journey award. They can plan a ceremony around a theme, such as friendship or nature, and express themselves in words or song. There are all kinds of ceremonies, here are the most popular:

- **Bridging Ceremonies** mark a girl's move from one level of Girl Scouting to another. Find bridging kits for every level: [www.gsmw.org/shop](http://www.gsmw.org/shop)
- **Flag Ceremonies** can be part of any activity that honors the American flag. Be sure to observe flag etiquette during a flag ceremony.
- **Investiture Ceremonies** welcome new members into the Girl Scout family for the first time. New Girl Scouts receive their membership pin as well as their grade-level pin at this ceremony.
- **Court of Awards Ceremonies** honors Girl Scouts' accomplishments. They are presented with their badges, year pins, and other recognitions earned during the year. Volunteers may also be recognized during the ceremony. The Court of Awards can be held anytime during the year, at any location, and as often as the troop wants.
- **Opening Ceremonies** can kick off regular Girl Scout meetings and make them feel special!
- **Rededication Ceremonies** are an opportunity for Girl Scouts, their families, and volunteers to renew their commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

## Girl Scout Days

Throughout the year, Girl Scouts and Girl Scout volunteers celebrate some very special days in Girl Scouting.

- **Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday** or Founder's Day, October 31, marks the birth in 1860 of Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low in Savannah, Georgia.
- **World Thinking Day**, February 22, celebrates the birthdays of Girl Guide/Girl Scout founder Lord Baden-Powell (1857–1941) and World Chief Guide Lady Baden-Powell (1889–1977). The day is also a time to donate funds to the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund.
- **Girl Scouts' Birthday**, March 12, commemorates the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first 18 members in Savannah, Georgia.
- **Girl Scout Week** is celebrated each March, starting with Girl Scout Sunday and ending with Girl Scout Sabbath on a Saturday, and it always includes Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12.
- **Girl Scouts Celebrate Faith** events give Girl Scouts an opportunity to be recognized at their places of worship during Girl Scout Week, share their legacy of service to others, and deepen their connection to their faith and Girl Scouting. Celebration days include Girl Scout Sunday, Girl Scout Jummah, and Girl Scout Sabbath/Shabbat.
- **Girl Scout Leader's Day**, April 22, honors all the volunteers who work as leaders and mentors in partnership with girls. On this day, Girl Scouts, their families, and their communities find special ways to thank their Girl Scout volunteers.

Learn More About Girl Scout Traditions and Ceremonies here: <https://www.girlscouts.org/en/members/for-volunteers/traditions-and-ceremonies.html>



## Quick References

### GSMW's Website

[www.gsmw.org](http://www.gsmw.org)

### Volunteer Essentials

[www.gsmw.org/essentials](http://www.gsmw.org/essentials)

### New Leader Resources

[www.gsmw.org/resources](http://www.gsmw.org/resources)

### Badge and Award Explorer

[www.girlscouts.org/BadgeExplorer](http://www.girlscouts.org/BadgeExplorer)

### Programs & Events

[www.gsmw.org/events](http://www.gsmw.org/events)

### Fall Product Program

[www.gsmw.org/FallProduct](http://www.gsmw.org/FallProduct)

### Cookie Program

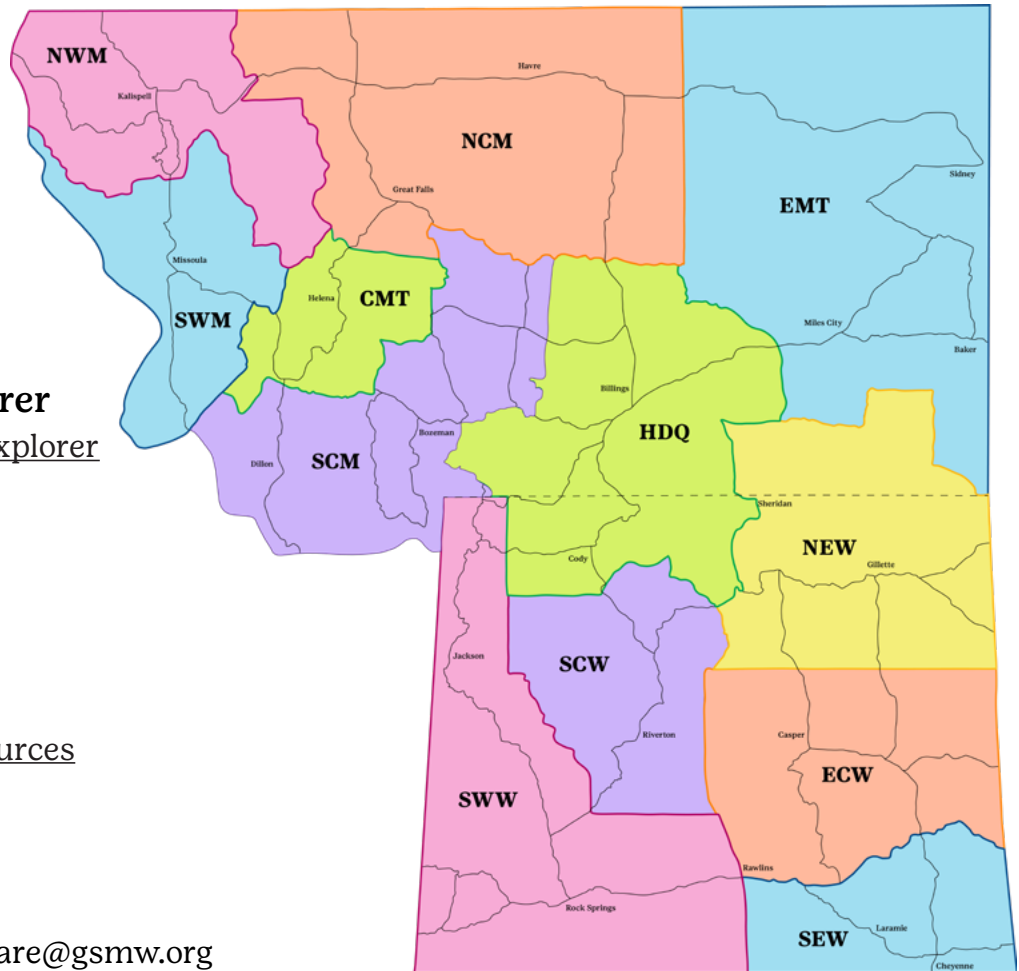
[www.gsmw.org/CookieResources](http://www.gsmw.org/CookieResources)

### Retail Services

[www.gsmw.org/shop](http://www.gsmw.org/shop)

### Member Services

406-252-0488 or [customercare@gsmw.org](mailto:customercare@gsmw.org)



## Keep the Good Times Rolling

- You are off to a great start. Keep the good times rolling!
- Hold regular troop meetings.
- Get to know your girls.
- Ask caregivers for help.
- Sign the troop up to go to events together.
- Attend service unit meetings and meet local volunteers.
- Join the GSMW Facebook group!
- Review the monthly Membership Newsletter.
- Contact our team anytime you have a question or need assistance at 406-252-0488 or [customercare@gsmw.org](mailto:customercare@gsmw.org).

