

Frequently Asked Questions

New Program Content from Girl Scouts of the USA

Get Ready! New Program Content Coming for Back to Troop 2018–19

Here's what's new for Back to Troop 2018–2019.

BADGES

College Preparation

- **Ambassador: College Knowledge**

From test prep to financial aid, Ambassadors walk through all the steps of the college admission process and get ready to attend the school of their choice.

Cybersecurity

- **Three badges per level for Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors**

Girls learn how computers and the internet work and apply the concepts of safety and protection to the technology they use every day. These badges are developed in partnership with the Cyber Innovation Center.

Environmental Stewardship

- **Daisy: Eco Learner**
Daisies learn three new ways to protect the environment when they go outdoors.
- **Brownie: Eco Friend**
Brownies treat outdoor spaces with kindness and teach others how they can, too.
- **Cadette: Eco Trekker**
Cadettes learn the skills for minimizing impact on the environment while planning and taking an outdoor trek.
- **Senior: Eco Explorer**
Seniors research different environmental issues and take at least one trip to see how an area is affected.
- **Ambassador: Eco Advocate**
Ambassadors advocate for environmental issues concerning nature.

Note that the **Junior Eco Camper** badge was completed for Back to Troop 2017–18.

Mechanical Engineering

- **Three badges per level for Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors**
Girls complete hands-on engineering activities as they use the Design Thinking Process and learn about the science behind their designs.
 - **Design Challenge badges for Daisies**
Board Game, Roller Coaster, and Model Car
 - **Design Challenge badges for Brownies**
Leap Boat, Fling Flyer, and Race Car
 - **Design Challenge badges for Juniors**

Paddle Boat, Crane, and Balloon Car (Junior badges are developed in partnership with WGBH/Design Squad)

Robotics

- **Three badges per level for Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors**
Girls design and showcase their own robots after learning how they're built and programmed. "Unplugged" activities allow girls to earn badges without buying kits, but troops can use kits to supplement the badge experience if they're available.

Space Science

- **Daisy: Space Science Explorer**
Like real space scientists, Daisies explore and observe the Sun, Moon, and stars while looking at the sky and talking about what they see.
- **Brownie: Space Science Adventurer**
Brownies investigate the complexities of the sky and learn to see things in new ways.
- **Junior: Space Science Investigator**
Juniors venture through the Solar System and beyond, seeing that space is even bigger than they may have imagined.

JOURNEYS

- **Computer Science: Think Like a Programmer (Cadettes, Seniors, Ambassadors, and Multi-level 6–12)**
Girls participate in interactive computational-thinking activities to learn how programmers solve problems. At each level, girls explore how computers work, learn about algorithms, and create user-centered designs. They learn how to see needs in the world and come up with solutions before they plan and create their Take Action projects. This Journey is developed in partnership with Code.org.
- **Engineering: Think Like an Engineer (Cadettes, Seniors, Ambassadors, and Multi-level 6–12)**
Girls learn how to think like an engineer by participating in hands-on design challenges and completing a Take Action project. At each level, girls spot problems and come up with solutions using the Design Thinking Process before creating a sustainable Take Action project for their community. This Journey is developed in partnership with Museum of Science, Boston & WGBH/Design Squad.

GENERAL

Will the Girl Scout National Proficiency badge logs and charts be updated?

Yes. The National Proficiency badge charts and award logs will be updated for all levels and will be available on girlscouts.org by the beginning of September 2018.

Has there been an updated badge placement chart for the vests/sashes?

The Girl Scout Merchandising team is working on the updated diagrams now. They will be updated for all levels on girlscouts.org by the end of October.

What is the policy for girls doing badges outside of their age level?

Badges are carefully designed to be developmentally appropriate for girls, and to provide them with appropriate progression and things to look forward to. Therefore, we hope girls will stick to earning the badges for their level, master those skills, and be excited about getting to do new badges as they grow in Girl Scouting.

How will Juliettes and individually registered girls get this information?

Individually registered girls will be able to purchase badge booklets from their council shops and add them to *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*. You can also reach out to council staff for PDFs of these files.

Do the new Journey awards physically fit together like the old Journey awards into one large linked award?

No, they are not in that format.

Will all of the three-piece Journey awards go away?

No, they will remain the awards for the three original Journeys. That has not changed.

Why do all the Take Action awards look the same?

By creating one design for each grade level, people will be able to see at a glance how many Take Action projects a girl did as she progressed through Girl Scouts.

Would a girl earn multiple Take Action awards? One for each Journey they do?

Yes.

Will girls be able to earn the LiA award when working with younger girls on the STEM and Outdoor Journeys?

Yes. There is new information about earning the LiA with the newer Journeys in the Resource section of the Volunteer Toolkit.

How will the new Journeys impact the Summit Award and its prerequisites?

Girls will still earn the Summit Award once they have completed ANY three Journeys for their grade level, including the newer Journeys.

Are the Journey and Take Action awards separately awarded?

The Take Action project is a key element of completing a Journey. A Journey is not complete until a Take Action project has been done. For example, although volunteers can give the girls the STEM-specific award after the third meeting if they wish, the Journey has not been completed until the Take Action project is done.



VOLUNTEER TOOLKIT

What is the Volunteer Toolkit?

The Volunteer Toolkit (or VTK) was designed to support troop leaders in planning and delivering a troop meeting to girls. The intent was to consolidate resources into one digital tool to save troop leaders time and assist them with planning their year, meeting agendas, and troop management.

Why don't administrative volunteers, including council trainers, have access to the VTK?

The VTK was designed to support troop leaders in planning and delivering a troop meeting to girls. VTK access is granted at the troop level because it is intended for troop leaders.

When will administrative volunteers, including council trainers, have access to the VTK?

Access for additional audiences is something we're considering for the future. We

recognize that administrative volunteers (trainers, service unit managers, troop mentors, event directors) need additional information in order to support troop leaders. In the meantime, councils have a VTK demo site that they can share.

When will parents of individually registered girls have access to the VTK?

Access for additional audiences is something we're considering for the future. In the meantime, councils may access PDF resources of the new program content through their council staff.

Can VTK users view program content for grade levels besides their own? Older girls need to see younger girl content, especially for LiA.

VTK users can access all program content on the VTK for all levels. Go to the "Year Plan" tab, click on "Add a Meeting," and you'll arrive at a meeting library search and filter.

How will the new C/S/A content coming out in July be available on the VTK?

New C/S/A Content coming out in July 2018 will have prepopulated options on the "Explore" tab of the VTK, if that is the given troop grade level. If not, this content can be found using the "Add a Meeting" search/filter feature.

When will Year Plans and meeting plans for C/S/A be available on the VTK?

National Program rollout deployment is scheduled for July 17, 2018.

Will there be a calendar option in the VTK for older girl leaders to populate themselves?

All volunteers, including C/S/A, can add a custom activity to the Year Plan. It is shown in a list view rather than a calendar view.

Where can I find VTK tutorials or guides?

The VTK offers a "Help" menu that appears on the lower right side of the screen.

Is VTK available for Multi-level troops?

Yes—this enhancement went live in Fall 2016. For 2018, multi-level content for older girls in grades 6–12 has also been added.

I'm having trouble using the VTK; I'm receiving error messages.

VTK access is dependent on your troop leader status. You need to have current membership status for the upcoming membership year (2018–19), as well as having an active (up-to-date) troop leader role assigned to you. We suggest contacting your council for further support.

When will the Finance tab be activated, and when will councils be able to view the reports?

Each council makes a local decision about when to activate the Finance tab. The Finance tab is a way for troop leaders to submit their end-of-year financial report to their council. Parents have a "read only" view of this data. Councils receive individual troop reports, as

well as an aggregated report of all troops in their council.

How do I access the VTK?

You'll find a "sign in" link on your council web page. Additionally, you can look for "MyGS Sign In" in the upper right corner—click on that and select "Volunteer Toolkit."

Why can't I view my Year Plan for the upcoming membership year? Example: My troop bridged from Brownie to Junior and now I want to view/add the Junior Year Plan options.

VTK Year Plan change over occurred on Friday, June 29, 2018. At that time, Year Plans for 2017–2018 were archived. During the week of July 17th, the 2018–2019 Year Plans will become available. Archived plans can still be viewed by troop leaders, but they cannot be edited.

Is there training for the VTK?

Aside from the video tutorials (which will be updated in Fall 2018), there is no formal training for the VTK. We encourage councils/service units to use the VTK demo site to share VTK functionality with troop leaders at volunteer events and service unit meetings. There are also VTK promotional assets for councils to download from the Brand Center, to share with volunteers and parents.

Can co-leaders of the same troop access the VTK?

Yes! VTK access is granted at the troop level, so all troop leaders/co-leaders have access to the same account. Because this is at the troop level, any edits/changes made by one leader will apply to and be visible by all the other leaders—so coordination between leaders is important.

If I have a Multi-level troop, can all leaders view the VTK?

Yes. VTK defaults to the program level identified at the time of registration; it's based on the troop number. If one large troop is working in patrols at the grade level with just one troop number, one VTK account is to be shared amongst all troop leaders.

Will a Journey leader guide be printed for the new program content, or do they have to use the VTK?

There are no printed leader guides for the new Journeys that were released in July 2017, nor will there be for new Journeys released in 2018. Volunteer resources in support of the new Journeys are available via the VTK.

Are volunteers able to upload their own resources to VTK?

No, volunteers can't upload their own resources to VTK. However, they can add a custom activity to the Year Plan. For example, if there is a field trip to the fire station or they're attending a council event, these items can be added to the troop Year Plan. Troop leaders can also edit and customize an existing meeting plan as needed. For example, if they wanted to add something or adjust the time needed for various agenda items, they are able to do that.

How do I find a list of what is available in VTK? I don't always know what things are called.

Go to the "Resources" tab and click on "Badge & Journey Meeting Plans" for the grade level of your preference and you'll see different categories for the types of meetings available in VTK.

Are there plans to make VTK an app?

There are no immediate plans, but we hear this is a need. In the meantime, VTK is designed to be mobile responsive so it can be viewed easily on a smartphone or tablet.

How will administrative volunteers who are planning service unit events or day camps access the new program?

Ask your council staff for Program PDFs for content only available on the VTK.

Did you say a Multi-level option is coming to VTK?

Multi-level access in VTK has been active since Fall 2016, and in 2017 Multi-level content exclusively for grades K–5 was added. What's new this July is Multi-level curriculum for 6–12.

Can you mix Journey and Badge Year plans? Can Year Plans be customized? Can I add/remove options or rearrange content?

Yes—there are a couple of options! Troop leaders can create a custom Year Plan and add whichever meeting plans (badges/Journeys) they wish. The troop leader could also select a Year Plan, such as the badge plan, and swap in/out different badges from the Meeting Plan library. They can add Journey meeting plans as well.

Will the new Multi-level Year Plans include meeting lessons where both age levels can do the lesson together, or do the two age groups need to be led separately?

The new Multi-level content is designed to be done together, adjusting the difficulty of activities based on the grade level of the girls.

VTK doesn't seem to work on Firefox. Do I need to use a certain browser?

VTK works best on Chrome, but it should work on all browsers.

When will the VTK be updated with the new program content?

Mid-July, slated for July 17th release.

Can VTK be used for someone who leads 3 different troops?

Yes! The troop leader can toggle between troop accounts.

Can Multi-level leaders build a Year Plan with the classic Journeys/badges?

Yes! The leader will need to add meeting plans per grade level that she has. (Daisy + Brownie, for example.) The new Multi-level content is the only integrated Multi-level curriculum we have at the present. However, leaders are welcome to leverage the existing materials and create their own Year Plan.

VTK only had two of the three Journeys available. When will it have all three of the classic Journeys?

The third classic Journey was already added for Daisies last summer. The remaining *It's Your World!* Brownie and Junior Journey is being added this July.

STEM

What is the new STEM program for Back to Troop 2018?

New Journeys for Cadettes/Seniors/Ambassadors/Multi-level

- Think Like an Engineer
- Think Like a Programmer

New badges for Cadettes/Seniors/Ambassadors

- Robotics (3 per grade level)

New badges for Daisies/Brownies/Juniors

- Cybersecurity (3 per grade level)
- Mechanical Engineering (3 per grade level)
Note: These are the DIY versions of the Mechanical Engineering badges. The previous version, which used GoldieBlox kits, can still be used if desired.
- Space Science (1 per grade level)

Do girls need computers or other devices to do the Think Like a Programmer Journey?

No. The program focuses on computational thinking—how programmers think through and solve problems. Girls can learn this without using a computer. In fact, it's often more effective! In addition, the “unplugged” activities give every girl the opportunity to earn the badges, even if she doesn't own a device. The program includes links to sites that offer online activities for girls who want to go further.

Do we have to buy robotics kits in order to earn the robotics badges?

No. The Robotics badges were designed to be “unplugged.” That means that girls do not need a kit to earn the badges; they can do the badge requirements with common household objects. This ensures that every girl has the opportunity to earn the badges, even if she can't afford a kit. (Of course, if you have robotics kits, you can certainly use them!)

Why don't older girls have a Think Like a Citizen Scientist Journey?

We know the topic is of great interest to older girls and are actively pursuing ways to develop this program for them.

When girls do the new STEM Journeys, do their Take Action projects have to

involve engineering or programming?

No, this isn't required (although girls can if they want to!).

The Think Like an Engineer Journey teaches girls the design thinking process—how engineers solve problems. When girls develop their Take Action projects, they use their design thinking skills: how to identify a problem, research the causes, develop possible (or prototype) solutions, and get feedback from users to improve the project.

The Think Like a Programmer Journey teaches girls computational thinking—how computer scientists and programmers solve problems. When girls develop their Take Action projects, they use their computational thinking skills: how to break a big problem down into smaller ones, develop possible (or prototype) solutions, and get feedback from users to improve the project.

When girls use the design thinking process (or computational thinking) to develop their projects, they're thinking like engineers (or programmers) to make the world a better place.

How can I guide girls who do want to develop Take Action projects that focus on engineering or computer science?

Check out the Girl Scout Take Action Guide for Think Like an Engineer and Think Like a Programmer. Both are available in the Meeting Aids section on the VTK. They include the following information:

- Take Action: Your Path to Silver and Gold
- How to Make Your Project Sustainable
- Your Take Action Talent Inventory
- Your Take Action Decision Bracket
- Finding Take Action Inspiration
- Take Action Project Examples (This includes 12 project examples; approximately half address STEM issues.)