Leader Guide

Your go-to guide for getting started as a Girl Scout troop leader.
Welcome to Girl Scouts!

We’re excited to have you on board! As a Girl Scout volunteer, you’re building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

Pretty big feat, right? No fear – we created this guide just for troop leaders, with helpful advice on getting your troop going, learning Girl Scout lingo, and leading with gusto! Whether you have been a Girl Scout since kindergarten, or if this is your first introduction to our movement, we have the tools, training resources, and people to support you each step of the way.

Feel free to give us a call at (800) 733-0011 or send a message through www.gsctx.org/ContactUs.

Yours in Girl Scouting,
Girl Scouts of Central Texas (GSCTX)

Please Note:
This handbook is not a replacement for Volunteer Essentials; this is a “quick start” handbook for troop leaders. Please read Volunteer Essentials for more detailed and complete information. Volunteer Essentials can be found at www.gsctx.org/VE.

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Follow us on social media and send us pictures of your troop activities!
Getting Your Troop Started

1. Complete Membership Registration & Criminal Background Check
   Help ensure the safety of our girls.
   • To register go to www.gsctx.org/volunteer and click on the "Volunteer Today" button on the left. Follow the registration prompts, choosing "I want to join as a Volunteer."
   • Once you've paid your GSUSA annual membership fee, you'll receive an email prompting you to complete a background check (CBC). For more information on criminal background checks, visit www.gsctx.org/CBC.
   • Follow the directions sent by email to complete your background check online.
   • You will receive a welcome email when your background check is approved.

2. Start Your Troop Leader Training
   Learn about your new role and the essentials of Girl Scouting. Complete the trainings located at www.gsctx.org/training:
   • Girl Scouting 101 (password GS101)
   • GSCTX Orientation
   • Leadership Essentials
   • Jumpstart (complete with your Service Unit team)
   • Money Manager (for opening your troop bank account)
   • CPR/AED & First Aid

3. Utilize the Volunteer Toolkit & Other Resources
   The Volunteer Toolkit includes everything you need to plan and implement your troop year.
   • Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)
     o Go to www.gsctx.org and choose "My GS" then "Volunteer Toolkit".
     o Your username is the email address you used to register yourself or your Girl Scout with Girl Scouts of Central Texas. If you can't remember your password, click the "Forgot Your Password" link.
     o More information about VTK can be found on page 9.
   • Additional Volunteer Resources www.gsctx.org/volresources
     o Volunteer Essentials www.gsctx.org/VE
     o Safety Activity Checkpoints www.gsctx.org/SAC
     o Troop Leader Resources including planning guides, tip sheets, and more www.gsctx.org/troop
     o Brand Guidelines – use to design flyers, t-shirts, and other materials www.gsctx.org/brand
   • Additional Program Resources
     o Frequently Asked Questions www.gsctx.org/FAQ
     o Program & Training Events www.gsctx.org/events
     o Girl Scout Cookie and Fall Product Program www.gsctx.org/cookies
     o Explore Our Camps www.gsctx.org/camps

4. Recruit Parents to Participate as Troop Friends and Family
   Introduce and welcome parents/adult volunteers to the Girl Scout experience and their responsibilities. This is essential to your success.
   • Check out the “Adult Interest Checklist” and “Parents we need you” resource in Jumpstart.
   • Contact adults who have shown interest in helping you run your troop.
   • See page 11 to learn more about how other parents/caregivers can help with your troop.
   • See page 12 for holding your first parent/caregiver meeting.
5. Submit your Troop Bank Account Request Form to GSCTX at customercare@gsctx.org.
   - **NOTE:** Form is located at [www.gsctx.org/forms](http://www.gsctx.org/forms). Select "Troop Financial Report" or "Troop Bank Account Request" form in the Troop Leader Forms and Documents Section.
   - All troop funds must be placed in a troop bank account.

6. Prepare for and Schedule Your First Troop Meeting
   Each Girl Scout meeting provides an opportunity to explore new worlds and learn new skills.
   - Review the Meetings Plans in the Volunteer Toolkit and the safety information in Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.
   - Set your meeting place and time, and communicate this info to parents. Share this with GSCTX by completing the Troop Update Form located at [www.gsctx.org/troopupdate](http://www.gsctx.org/troopupdate).
   - See [6 steps to a Fabulous Troop Meeting](http://www.gsctx.org/troopupdate) on page 13.

7. Attend Service Unit Meetings and Connect with Other Volunteers and Staff
   - Service Units consist of many dedicated volunteers in your area providing support to troop leaders, and are a great source of information on Girl Scout programs and events in your community, county, or area. Most service units meet monthly during the school year.
   - GSCTX staff also are a great resource. Contact us and we’ll be happy to help!

8. Have Fun!

   **We are here for you!**
   Contact us at 800-733-0011 or [www.gsctx.org/ContactUs](http://www.gsctx.org/ContactUs)

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### What’s the Word? Terms You’ll Want to Know

Review these acronyms that you most likely will encounter when working with Council and other Girl Scout volunteers.

- **Case** – A record of interaction between GSCTX Customer Care and members used to achieve resolution for a question, request, or concern
- **CBC** – Criminal Background Check
- **Customer Care** – Staff members who act as a first point of contact for inquiries
- **Doubleknot** – Resident Camp and Weekend Camp reservation system
- **eBiz** – Program and Training Registration system
- **GSCTX** – Girl Scouts of Central Texas
- **GSLE** – Girl Scout Leadership Experience
- **GSUSA** – Girl Scouts of the USA
- **Kodosky** – Our Austin Service Center, also our council’s headquarters
- **MDE** – Membership Development Executive
- **MY GS** – The portal to Volunteer Systems and VTK, located on the GSCTX homepage
- **Opportunity Catalog** – A list of available troop & volunteer possibilities for members to join
- **SU** – Service Unit
- **SUCM** – Service Unit Cookie Manager
- **SUD** – Service Unit Director
- **SUPRC** – Service Unit Public Relations Coordinator
- **SUR** – Service Unit Registrar
- **SUT** – Service Unit Treasurer
- **SU Team** – Service Unit Team
- **VE** – Volunteer Essentials
- **VEC** – Volunteer Enrichment Conference
- **VS** – Volunteer Systems (membership registration)
- **VTK** – Volunteer Toolkit
Where does My Troop Fit In? 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, NY.

Girl Scouts of Central Texas Council (GSCTX)
Independent 501(c)3 nonprofit chartered by GSUSA, overseeing all service units and troops within a 46 county footprint, operating under the guidance of a local volunteer board of directors, with a full-time staff led by our CEO.

Service Units
Comprised of volunteers who support the work of troops in a specific geographical area. Troops are a part of a service unit.

Troops
Volunteer-supervised groups of girls who participate in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Girl Scouts of Central Texas Map

GSCTX RETAIL SHOP LOCATIONS
- Kodosky (council headquarters)
- Waco
- Bryan/College Station
- Kyle

Area 1: Brownwood, San Angelo, Stephenville
Area 2: Killeen, Temple, Waco
Area 3: Bryan/College Station
Area 4: Austin, Kyle

GSCTX Offices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>City, State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kodosky Headquarters</td>
<td>12012 Park Thirty-Five Circle</td>
<td>Austin, TX 78753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownwood Service Center</td>
<td>901 Avenue B</td>
<td>Brownwood, TX 76801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan/College Station Service Center</td>
<td>1737 Briarcrest Drive, Suite 10</td>
<td>Bryan, TX 77802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killeen Service Center</td>
<td>2909 Lake Road</td>
<td>Killeen, TX 76543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle Service Center</td>
<td>187 Elmhurst Drive, Suite D</td>
<td>Kyle, TX 78640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Angelo Service Center</td>
<td>304 West Avenue A</td>
<td>San Angelo, TX 76903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephenville Service Center</td>
<td>201 Mistletoe Drive</td>
<td>Stephenville, TX 76401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple Service Center</td>
<td>2721 Exchange Place</td>
<td>Temple, TX 76504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waco Service Center</td>
<td>3700 West Waco Drive</td>
<td>Waco, TX 76710</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Make Your Troop Work for You  

**Troop Variations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Troop Leaders by Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two unrelated adults lead a troop. Other parents volunteer to help as needed.</td>
<td>One adult acts as the 'administrator', responding to emails, planning the troop calendar, etc. Other parents volunteer to lead specific grade levels, meetings, or activities based on skill or preference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girl-Led</th>
<th>Team-Led</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One adult acts as the 'leader' but each girl and parent rotates leading meetings, activities, and events. This is a great option to promote the 'girl-led' experience, as they get to teach their friends a new skill. Also a great option to rotate locations, purchasing supplies and snacks to cut down on troop dues.</td>
<td>All parents volunteer as troop leaders, and evenly divide responsibility by interest and/or skill set.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Shaping Your Troop Experience**

As a troop leader, you can structure your troop in a way that works best for you — from using parents to help lead meetings, to the number of meetings and activities per month, to what time of day and where you will meet.

**Tips for structuring your troop:**

- **Troops can be structured by grade level**, or leaders may choose to facilitate multi-level troops with girls of different grade levels combined into one troop.
- **Determine the frequency of your meetings and the meeting/activity schedule.** Use the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) (see page 9 for more info) to help you through this process. Most troops meet twice per month, but you can choose a schedule that works best for you. Check the events calendar at [www.gsctx.org/calendar](http://www.gsctx.org/calendar).
- **Your meeting space should be somewhere safe**, clean, and secure that allows all girls to participate. Some great meeting space ideas include schools, churches, libraries, or community centers.
- **Remember, Girl Scouts is designed to be girl-led.** Talk to the girls and parents about what they’d like to get out of Girl Scouts this year. Encourage the girls to take on responsibilities like troop meeting activities, snacks, etc.
- **Think about how you want to guide.** Do you want to run every troop meeting? Consider rotating the responsibility with the different members of your troop. A parent/caregiver and girl could team up to lead one meeting.
- **Consider supply costs.** Does your troop need to charge monthly or annual dues to help off-set costs? Will you charge families per activity? It’s important to talk with parents about financial expectations up front. Assign a parent volunteer to help manage troop finances as Troop Treasurer.
- **Keep everyone in the loop.** Make sure parents know when and where your activities will be and how they can help. You can send parent emails directly through VTK to troop adults.
- **Make sure you’re having fun!**
Girl Scout levels

**Girl Scout Daisies** sparkle with that “first time ever” 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. Girl Scout Daisies can also earn Learning Petals and receive participation patches.

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

**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.

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

**Girl Scout Seniors** are ready to take the world by storm, and Girl Scouts gives them millions of ways to do it. Their experiences help to shape their world, while giving them a safe space to be themselves and explore their interests. Girl Scout Seniors can earn their Gold Award (which, by the way, adds something “extra” to college applications).

**Girl Scout Ambassadors** know that small acts create big change. While they get ready for life beyond high school, Girl Scouts helps them take flight. They also can earn the Gold Award.

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Dressed for Success Girl Scout Uniforms

Uniforms are an important part of the Girl Scout experience, connecting girls to Girl Scout traditions, displaying their accomplishments, and creating memories to last a lifetime. Girls want to look and feel their best when representing Girl Scouts and highlight their work in the community. And now they can, with uniform options that are in step with today’s trends and active lifestyles. Girl Scouts at each level now wear one required element (tunic, sash, or vest) to display official pins and awards. Girls can mix and match pieces from the official Girl Scout collection to complete the uniform. Troop Leaders may opt to collect money from parents and purchase sashes, vests, and insignia from a council shop, or ask parents/caregivers to purchase items on their own. Financial assistance for uniform components is available for girls that qualify.

Visit one of our shop locations to purchase uniforms, starter kits, and the latest in Girl Scout fashion and swag! Our shop staff are here to help! Or shop online at www.gsctx.org/shop.
The Girl Scout Program

At Girl Scouts, girls have tons of fun, make new friends, and go on fantastic new adventures. Our program centers on something called the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)—a collection of activities and experiences girls have as they complete Journeys, earn badges, sell cookies, go on exciting trips, explore the outdoors, and do Take Action projects that make a difference.

In Girl Scouts, girls will:

Discover
Find out who they are, what they care about, and what their talents are.

Connect
Collaborate with other people, locally and globally, to make a difference in the world.

Journeys
Girls choose a Journey that aligns with their interests. Every Girl Scout level has a Journey series to choose from, each including a Take Action project and all the skill building needed for success. As girls go on Journeys, they’ll earn awards for their uniforms. The Volunteer Toolkit and Journey books are the resources with all the requirements for earning awards.

Badges
What have your girls always wanted to do?
Make their own movie, go geocaching, plant a garden? Great news! They can learn to do all these things and more while earning Girl Scout badges (which are worn on the front of the vest or sash). Badges are skill builders! The Volunteer Toolkit and Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting are your resources for all the requirements. Visit the new Awards and Badge Explorer at www.gsctx.org/badges.

Patches
Think of patches like collecting memories in Girl Scouts. They’re often a part of the fun activities you can do in Girl Scouts without the requirements of badges. Patches are always worn on the back of the vest or sash. Check out our ongoing and monthly Patch Programs and our Council Own badges at www.gsctx.org/patchprogram.

Take Action
Do something to make the world a better place.

Highest Awards
These represent the highest honors a Girl Scout can earn.

Bronze. Silver. Gold.
All three awards give girls the chance to do big things while working on an issue they care about. Whether they want to plant a community garden and inspire others to eat healthy for their Bronze, advocate for animal rights for their Silver, or build a career network that encourages girls to become scientists and engineers for their Gold, they’ll inspire others (and you!).

*Girls who earn the Gold Award enter the military at a rank higher and receive preferred application consideration at many colleges and universities. www.gsctx.org/highestawards
The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is an online tool that allows you to:
• Create a member profile
• Update contact information
• Renew members
• Manage your troop
• Communicate with parents
• Inform parents about finances
• Plan your annual meeting & activities calendar. There are now many more pre-selected track options to choose from in Volunteer Toolkit.

Volunteer Essentials
This resource contains information about engaging girls, safety requirements, managing finances, and more. The policies and procedures in this document are updated on a regular basis. The latest version of Volunteer Essentials can be found at www.gsctx.org/VE.

Safety Activity Checkpoints
These are online lists containing everything you need to know to be prepared and keep your girls safe outside normal Girl Scout troop meetings. When preparing for any activity with girls, start by reading the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints for that particular activity. These can be found at www.gsctx.org/SAC.

Customer Care
Serving our volunteers is a top priority. Any time you contact us online through our “Contact Us” form at www.gsctx.org/ContactUs or send an email to customercare@gsctx.org, a case is created that can be viewed by multiple staff members to ensure your inquiry is resolved quickly. You can also reach us by calling 800-733-0011 during business hours.

En Español
For troop leaders who prefer their Girl Scout information in Spanish, we have resources online. Head on over to www.gsctx.org/Espanol and get what you need.

More information on VTK can be found at www.gsctx.org/VTK.

To Login, visit www.gsctx.org and choose “MYGS” then “Volunteer Toolkit”
Keeping Girls Safe

While working with girls and learning new skills is fun and rewarding, assuming responsibility for other people’s children means that some level of risk management and due diligence is involved. There are several resources we use to help you minimize risk and keep girls safe.

Understanding How Many Volunteers You Need

Girl Scout groups are large enough to provide a cooperative learning environment and small enough to allow development of individual girls. Girl Scouts’ volunteer-to-girl ratios show the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of girls. These supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of girls.

Your group must have at least two unrelated, approved volunteers present at all times, plus additional volunteers as necessary, depending on the size of the group and the ages and abilities of girls. Any adult that is supervising girls must be an approved volunteer. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old and must be screened before volunteering. One Troop Leader in every group must be female. Please refer to the ratio chart below.

Volunteer-to-Girl Ratio Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Meetings</th>
<th>Events, Travel and Camping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two unrelated Volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:</td>
<td>Two unrelated Volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Daisies (grades K-1)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2-3)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4-5)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6-8)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9-10)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11-12)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Planning Safe Activities

When preparing for any activity with girls, start by reading the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints for that particular activity. You can find these on the resources tab of the Volunteer Toolkit or at www.gsctx.org/SAC. Each Safety Activity Checkpoint offers you required guidelines on where to do this activity, how to include girls with disabilities, where to find both basic and specialized gear required for the activity, how to prepare yourselves for the activity, and what specific steps to follow on the day of the activity. Safety Activity Checkpoints will note if a First Aider is required.

If Safety Activity Checkpoints do not exist for an activity you and the girls are interested in, contact Customer Care at www.gsctx.org/ContactUs or 800-733-0011 before making any definite plans with the girls.

What to do in an Emergency

Although we all hope the worst never happens, it’s important to know and follow our council’s procedures for handling emergency incidents. At the scene of the incident, safety is your first priority. Provide care for the injured person or obtain medical assistance and then immediately report the emergency to GSCTX staff. Call our office at 800-733-0011 during or after business hours. After hours, press “2” to be directly connected to our after-hours emergency service.

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/guardians and emergency services such as the police, fire department, or hospital.
Your Volunteer Troop Committee

On my honor, I will ... not do this alone!

Before you hold your first troop meeting with girls, consider the support and resources you’ll need throughout the year. Parents, friends, family, and other members of the community can provide time, experience, and ideas to a troop, so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your volunteer troop team. This team is made up of Troop Leaders (like you) and other Troop volunteers.

All of these adults must pass a criminal background check (CBC) and be approved. They commit to these roles based on the amount of time the volunteer has to give and interest in specific areas on the team. Interested individuals should be guided to the Join or Volunteer buttons at www.gsctx.org.

Other registered Troop volunteers (i.e. your “Troop Committee”) play a big role in making your troop run smoothly and in supporting the girls’ plans. They’re an extra set of eyes, ears, and hands whose skill sets are leveraged to help the troop safely explore the world around them. Ideally, you will have a Troop Cookie Coordinator, Troop Fall Product Coordinator, and a Troop Treasurer. Volunteers from this group may agree to take on other tasks, depending on what your troop needs are. For instance, they may be a chaperone for events that require more adult volunteers to meet the volunteer-to-girl ratio requirements, or agree to be the driver for an upcoming trip that also requires more volunteer supervision.

Some “Troop Friends and Family” members are not able to volunteer on a regular basis, but are ready to help out when you need an extra set of hands to manage an activity station, provide a snack, lead songs, and keep the activity on track and fun. Often parents start in this role if they want to be members but aren’t sure they can commit to a committee or leader role. Once they see how fun it is, they may sign up for more!

As a Troop Leader, you will guide the structure and experiences of your troop – from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, from steering girl-led activities to setting financial expectations. These decisions will be made collaboratively with your volunteer team, as well as with input from the girls and their parents/guardians.

Troop Leader Responsibilities
• Liaison with service unit volunteers and council staff
• Troop financial management
• Communication with parents
• Girl safety
• Guiding the troop’s Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

Troop Friends & Family Responsibilities
• Assist Troop Leader
• Girl safety
• May drive girls, coordinate finances, and/ or chaperone troop activities
• Provide extra help at troop meetings

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities
• Communicate with Troop Leadership
• Provide permission and information needed for participation in activities
• Ensure current membership for their girl
• Provide transportation to and from meetings
• Complete and submit the Health History form
• Participate/support troop activities

Girl Responsibilities
• Be ready to learn and have fun
• Use your imagination and creativity
• Always stay with the group and be safe
• Clean up after yourself
• Listen when others are speaking
• Have fun!

All Girl Scouts live by the Girl Scout Law!

(back page)
**Holding a Parent Meeting/Caregiver Meeting**

Hold a Parents & Caregiver Support Meeting as your chance to:

- Set up your Girl Scout year for success
- Get to know your Girl Scouts families
- Set clear expectations for the troop including dues, meeting/activity schedule, financial obligations, uniforms, etc.
- Ask for support and help for troop meetings and outings – the main reason people say they don’t help is they were never asked to help
- Brainstorm all the exciting things your troop wants to do this year

**Before the Meeting:**
- Review your troop roster invite and use it to email parents and caregivers the meeting date, time, and place
- Practice talking through your agenda so you feel prepared

**Welcome & Introductions:**
- Have each adult share their name and what they hope their daughter will get out of Girl Scouting
- Leader(s) share what they hope the troop will gain from the year

**Brief Overview of Girl Scouts**
- Mission: To build girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place
- Girl Scouts is girl-led (decision-making and planning), hands-on (active not passive), and collaborative (girls feel safer to try new things in collaborative, team-based environments)
- Girl Scouts of Central Texas (www.gsctx.org) is our local Council and the troop belongs to ________ service unit.

**Girl Scout Troop Specifics**
- Meeting time, day, frequency, and locations
- Finances:
  - Dues (how much, how often)
  - Financial assistance available
  - How will the troop fund fun activities?
- Uniforms (will the girls wear a sash or vest, or choose one or the other for themselves?)
- Participating in the cookie and fall product program – helps girls learn budgeting and business skills, plus contributes to Council costs for camps, training, and other resources.
- How will the troop members communicate with each other?

**Forms & Actions to Take**
- Girl Health History and Emergency Medical Authorization (located at www.gsctx.org/forms)
- Permission for Meetings, Media, Day Trips and Treatments (www.gsctx.org/forms)
- Girl Membership Registration online (www.gsctx.org/join)

**Activities with Girls (if they are present)**
- Fun activities while adults meet
- Brainstorming activity ideas

**Reminder of next meeting date and goodbyes!**
6 Steps to a Fabulous Troop Meeting!

If you are feeling a little nervous about leading troop meetings and experiences with your girls – that’s ok! Working directly with girls can be challenging at times but it is always rewarding and can be a lot of fun. As a Girl Scout Troop Leader you are encouraged to listen to the girls with an open-mind and lead them with your heart.

Many adults feel that, when working with kids, they have to be the expert and have everything perfect. But this is not the case in Girl Scouts. Planning the meeting ahead of time will help – but remember to be flexible and creative if things don’t go as planned or you run out of time. Remember that Girl Scouts is girl-led!

Organizing your meeting is easy with the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK). The simple guide below will give you the framework for how a typical meeting runs. The VTK will help you fill your meeting with specific activities and timelines.

1. **Start Up:** Plan an activity for girls to work on before the meeting begins. It can be simple – coloring pages, journaling, or talking with others. This part is so important, because it breaks the ice and helps girls get excited about the meeting! *(5 minutes)*

2. **Opening:** As a girl-led organization, we encourage the girls to decide what they want to open with. Example openers include the Girl Scout Promise and Law, song, or game. Get creative and don’t be afraid to switch things up occasionally. *(5-10 minutes)*

3. **Business:** This is the time to let girls plan their upcoming meetings, collect dues, make announcements, and decide which council or Service Unit events they’d like to attend, and which badges they’d like to earn. Consider using this as practice for girls in doing research and coming prepared to present! Not only will this help the meeting run more smoothly, but it also builds transferable skills, which the girls can take far past their Girl Scout years. *(5-10 minutes)*

4. **Activities:** Work towards earning badges and completing Journeys. Again, this portion of the meeting should be heavily girl-led, with the troop leader offering support on the side. It may feel like you’re not doing as much as you should, but trust us, you will be amazed at how capable the girls can be. *(30-45 minutes)*

5. **Clean up:** Girl Scouts should always leave a place cleaner than they found it! They might even enjoy the tradition of a kaper chart, so that everyone takes turns at each responsibility. *(5 minutes)*

6. **Closing:** Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close – with a song, a game, or a story. As caregivers arrive, provide any important updates or reminders about upcoming meetings and activities. *(5-10 minutes)* Check out the “GSCTX Tip Sheets” found at [www.gsctx.org/troop](http://www.gsctx.org/troop) for additional meeting ideas.

Super Awards Set Up Your Year for Success!

The Super Awards showcase girls and adults working in partnership to give each girl an amazing Girl Scout experience. Surveys show that a satisfied and happy Girl Scout is having fun with her friends and has a quality experience engaged in meaningful activities throughout the year.

A Super Troop, Super G.I.R.L., or Super Service Unit meets deadlines for registration and membership, serves the community, uses VTK, participates in Product Program, and above all, gets out and does fun things while being change-makers.

The new Super Awards recognize these super Girl Scout achievements with an additional cookie bonus for troops and service units, and eligibility for an exclusive pin through the GSCTX Shop.

To learn more about Super Awards and get requirements and deadlines, visit [www.gsctx.org/super](http://www.gsctx.org/super).
Funding the Fun Managing Troop Finances

Bank Account
All troops should establish a bank account with two unrelated adult signers for collection of troop dues (optional), payment of troop supplies and activities, and the Cookie and Fall Product Programs. To request a Troop Bank Account visit www.gsctx.org/forms and look for the “Troop Bank Account Request Form” under Troop Leader Forms and Documents. Keep in mind that all troop funds are girl-earned and girl-spent. Decisions using funds are made by the whole troop.

Financial Assistance
Financial difficulties 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 membership registration process. Other financial partnership is available for books, badges, uniforms, and council activities/camps. The form is available online at www.gsctx.org/forms. Type “financial partnership” in the Search bar to download the application.

Troop Dues
Many troops decide to collect troop dues as a way to help provide start-up funding for troop activities and supplies. These could range from $1-2 per meeting, to $30-40 for the entire school year paid all at one time. It’s completely up to each troop to decide what works best for them.

Money-earning Activities
The Cookie and Fall Product Programs are the primary money-earning activities for a troop. If a troop participates in these programs, they may also opt to participate in a limited number of additional money-earning activities.

Tax Exemption
As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, volunteers can utilize our tax-exempt number when purchasing supplies and materials (except at the GSCTX Shop). A tax-exempt card is provided to troop leaders by the Service Unit at the start of each membership year.

Managing Your Troop Funds
Keep track of receipts and expenses. All income and expenses are reported annually in May, either by turning in a form, or by using the VTK Finance tab.

Girl Scout Product Programs

When Girl Scouts participate in the Cookie Programs and Fall Product Programs, girls learn important skills and their troops earn proceeds from each package sold. Troops can decide how their cookie and fall product funds are spent, from funding a troop camping trip to funding their Bronze Award. GSCTX Product Programs ensure Girl Scouts are earning while they learn!

Troop leaders will receive more information about getting started in the Cookie Program in late fall. In preparation for the Cookie Program (mid-January through the end of February), we encourage you to solicit parent or caregiver help early! Helping can be as simple as picking up cookies for the troop, managing the online software system (Smart Cookies), hosting a cookie rally, or someone taking charge for your troop by being the Troop Cookie Coordinator. The more the merrier when it comes to the success of your troop’s Cookie Program!
**October**

Our new Girl Scout year officially begins!

- Oct. 1, recruit girls and adults to join your troop this month.
- Oct. 1–31, Fall Product Program
- Oct. 17 Int’l Day of the Girl
- Oct. 31, Founder’s Day

**November**

Prep for the GSCTX Cookie Program.

- Hold a troop meeting all about cookies this month.
- Check out our event calendar, and get involved with our council-led programs.

**December**

GSCTX Cookie Program & the spirit of the holidays!

- Place your initial cookie order.
- Participate in service projects in your community!

**January**

Happy New Year! Set some goals.

- Registration for summer resident camps open!
- GSCTX Cookie Program begins.

**February**

- Feb. 22, World Thinking Day.
  Have your troop connect with international Girl Scout sisters!
- GSCTX Cookie Program ends.

**March**

- March 12, Girl Scout Birthday.
- Girl Scout Week – look for fun activities for girls to celebrate being Girl Scouts.
- Volunteer recognitions due. Celebrate the accomplishments of our Volunteers through peer nominations.

**April**

Volunteer Appreciation Month!

- Apr. 22, a special day to thank volunteers for all they do. We’ll be celebrating YOU!
- Apr. 25, Girls in ICT Day

**May**

Early Bird Registration.

- May 1, Troop/SU Reports of Banking Activity due to Service Unit Treasurer.
- Renew your troop’s memberships for next year (and get in on some great perks!).

**June**

- Higher Award Ceremonies – celebrate the incredible work of our Gold and Silver award earners.
- Summer camp begins! Hooray! Who’s excited for next summer already?!?
- June 5, World Environment Day

**July**

You won’t want to miss VEC!

- Attend Volunteer Enrichment Conference (VEC) – a day full of training, updates, friends, and fun!

**August**

We’re gearing up for the new year by forming troops, recruiting volunteers and girls, and planning the upcoming year!

- Make sure your info is correct – update the Troop Update Form for your troop!

**September**

Prep for the new Girl Scout year!

- Renew your memberships.
- Attend the Trailblazers campout. Have fun with other leaders, get motivated for the new year, and head home with inspirational ideas for your troop.

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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
Building 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.

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU! CONTACT US AT 800-733-0011 OR WWW.GSCTX.ORG/CONTACTUS