

# Computer and Internet Use: Safety Activity Checkpoints



**Council Approval:** Not Required

**Activity Permitted For:** D B J C S A

## About Computer and Internet Use

Girl Scouts use the internet for a variety of reasons such as:

- **Earn a technology award or other such award online.**
- **Research topics.** Girls can search for other Girl Scout council or group websites, or research a badge or community resource.
- **Visit Girl Scouting sites.** Girls can visit the [World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts \(WAGGGS\)](#) online or member countries' websites. They can also use Girl Scout vendor websites to learn more about product activities.
- **Build a website.** Girls could create a static webpage on the internet (one that looks the same each time users view it, with no commenting or posting capabilities) or set up a secure, password-protected website with a calendar and information for girls and families.
- **Blog about Girl Scouting.** Groups that are planning a Take Action project, road trip, or camping adventure can consider documenting their plans and experiences on a council or national blog, and divvy up the documentation duties (photography, writing, editing, and so on) among the group.
- **Sales.** Participate in on line Girl Scout product sales programs.

Adults should monitor websites that girls view, ensuring that they are safe and actively controlled. No girl or adult acting on behalf of girl members can conduct money-earning activities online with one exception: The GSUSA approved product sales programs. For more information, please see the safety activity checkpoints for **Cookie and Product Sales**.

Most girls will go online from their home computers, and older girls may access the internet on their mobile phones. For girls who cannot go online from home, check with your Girl Scout council for suggestions on sites where computers are available for use.

When planning a group learning session, identify locations—such a library, a Girl Scout program center, a school or college computer lab, a computer rental store with training facility, or a museum—that provides group members with opportunities to use computers and to access the internet.

#### Learn More:

- Girl Scouts of the USA
- Go Girls Only (for girls in grades 1–6)
- Stop, Think, Connect

## Safety Activity Checkpoints

**Copy and distribute the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge.** All girls, as well as their parents/guardians, must read, agree to, and abide by the [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#) when going online.

**Ensure girls' safety in website design.** Girls must understand that the internet is an open means of communication that anyone can access. As such, websites will often attract people other than their intended users. It is therefore imperative that any information that could jeopardize the safety and security of girls and adults not be disclosed on a website. The following measures help to ensure girls' safety while online:

- Use only first names, and never last names.
- Never post addresses, phone numbers, or email addresses of girls.
- Always have a parent or guardian's permission when using pictures of girls on a website. This is important for all girls, and special regulations apply for children younger than 13 years of age.
- Do not post addresses of group meeting places or dates and times of meetings, events, or trips. Instead, an adult who wishes to communicate about upcoming events with families of Girl Scouts should send an email to the families.
- Do not allow automatic posting of messages to a website. All postings on sites such as message boards or guest books should have adult oversight and be screened prior to posting live.
- Ensure that websites do not show personal email addresses of girls, but use a troop or group email or an adult's email address.

**Be aware of shared content.** When linking to other websites from your site, make sure site contents are in keeping with Girl Scout principles and activities. Avoid linking to commercial sites selling merchandise to avoid implied Girl Scout endorsement of the products they offer. Instead, seek out sites that support girls' participation in Girl Scouting. These sites should be tasteful and program-level appropriate. They should show diversity; be beneficial to girls, adults, and families; and be consistent with the mission of Girl Scouting. As a courtesy, consider emailing the site's webmaster for permission to link to the site.

Use similar criteria to determine which sites you support linking to your group's website.

**Respect copyrighted material.** The basic principle is, if it's not yours, don't use it. A group's website may not use copyrighted designs, text, graphics, or trademarked symbols without specific permission from the copyright or trademark holder.

Girls may use trademarks owned by GSUSA, which include the trefoil shape; Girl Scout Daisy pin and Girl Scout Brownie pin; contemporary and traditional Girl Scout pins; the words Girl Scout Daisy, Girl Scout Brownie, Girl Scout Junior, Girl Scout Cadette, Girl Scout Senior, Girl Scout Ambassador, Girl Scouting, Girl Scouts, and Girl Scout Cookies; Girl Scout Brownie Try-Its, Girl Scout Junior badges, and all Girl Scout Cadette and Ambassador interest project awards, names, and symbols; and all Girl Scout Journey insignia. Information on the use of GSUSA trademarks can be found on the [national website](#) under Girl Scout Central: Graphics Gallery, and under [Terms and Conditions](#) on the footer of each page of the national site.

Keep in mind that Girl Scout trademarks can be used only in accordance with guidelines for their use. The Girl Scout Trefoil, for example, may not be animated or used as wallpaper for a website. Check with your council's website for complete graphic guidelines and approval information.

Note, too, that some names (such as commercial products and cartoon characters) are trademarked and cannot be incorporated on most websites. Permission is also required from the author or publisher for the use of videos and music on websites—so don't post words from copyrighted songs, poems, or books, as permission must be granted from the record label, publisher, artist, poet, or author, and is nearly impossible to obtain.

A troop/group social networking site may be set up by groups whose girls are at least 13 years old and who have obtained parental permission to do so. In addition, all social networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter) must be approved by the council and must meet age limits set by the provider—usually 13 years old and older in most cases, which is in accordance with the United States Child Online Privacy and Protection Act (COPPA) and the Child Online Protection Act (COPA).

Any appearance in a Girl Scout–related online video or picture requires permission from each girl's parent or guardian, using the GSUSA girl/adult permission form. These completed forms should be held by the adult and/or council.

Girls may only post about their participation in Girl Scout programs on social media sites that allow them to restrict access to friends and family, such as Facebook, and not to social media sites open to anyone, such as Craigslist or eBay.

Girls should only share links to their Girl Scout program sites with family, friends, and others they know firsthand.

As part of Girl Scout programs, girls may create their own unique websites to market and sell Girl Scout products. For example with the Digital Cookie platform, girls are able to take and track orders, set sales goals, and show how they will use the proceeds from cookie sales to support Girl Scout activities. Girls upload videos to their websites to help market the Girl Scout Cookie sale. To keep girls safe when they use their own websites, keep in mind:

- Parents/guardians must review and approve a girl's website before it goes live.
- For girls under 13 years old, a parent or guardian must manage the girl's website and be responsible for all content, communication, and information posted.
- Parents/guardians must review and approve any pictures and videos before they are posted to a girl's Digital Cookie website. If the girl is under 13 years old, a parent or guardian must personally post the pictures and videos to the girl's website themselves—girls under 13 are not permitted to do this.