Troop Support Mentor Handbook

girl scouts of central texas

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Thank you

Thank you for accepting the role of troop support mentor. This position serves a vital role within your service unit team. As a troop support mentor, you will provide new troop leaders with a support system that makes them feel welcomed, prepared, confident, and excited to continue their experience in Girl Scouting. Let's face it—there's a lot to learn as a new troop leader, and the experience can be overwhelming. That's why new leaders need your support, to augment training and tools, and to deliver an outstanding leadership program for their Girl Scouts.

As a troop support mentor, you may be assigned one or more new troop leaders to support. Please make sure you communicate regularly with your Girl Scouts of Central Texas (GSCTX) membership engagement specialist and service unit leadership to address any questions or concerns you have while acting as a troop support mentor. We're here to help you succeed as a troop support mentor, so you can help our new troop leaders feel confident and happy in their roles.

As troop support mentor you will:

- Create an atmosphere of support and appreciation for new troop leaders.
- Provide one-on-one guidance in areas where more help is needed.
- Help new leaders feel more prepared and confident to lead their troops.
- Encourage the value of being actively involved in service unit activities.

Troop support mentor attributes:

1. Demonstrate enthusiasm and positivity. Support Mentors understand and believe in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and are excited and engaged in sharing it with others. Their actions demonstrate their commitment to Girl Scouts' mission, Promise, and Law.
2. Possess skills to interact well with volunteers of different racial, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic backgrounds, and ability levels.
3. Understand the basic concepts of Girl Scouting, its program, Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) and GSCTX policies and standards, and have the ability to guide others through them.
4. Ability to encourage and guide new leaders to complete their required training, point them to resources, and help them understand and participate in service unit and GSCTX activities.
5. Participate actively and regularly in service unit leadership team meetings (as appropriate in your service unit), service unit volunteer meetings, and annual service unit planning meetings.
6. Previous experience as a troop leader is highly recommended.
7. Good listening and verbal communication skills, and the ability to organize materials and accurately maintain records.
8. Enthusiastically recognize a new troop leader's accomplishments.
9. Must be committed to mentoring and be in regular communication with assigned new troop leaders for a full year.

Think About:

- Which of the above skills do you feel are your strengths?
- Which skills do you want to strengthen?
- Create a plan with your GSCTX membership engagement specialist or service unit leadership team to help you strengthen skills you feel could be better developed.

What Makes a Good Support Mentor?

Many people feel that being a mentor requires special skills, but mentors are simply people who have the qualities of good role models.

Mentors listen: Mentors maintain eye contact and give others their full attention.

Mentors guide: Mentors are there to help others find direction, not to push them.

Mentors educate: Mentors teach skills.

Mentors are specific: Mentors give specific advice on what was done well or could be corrected, what was achieved, and the benefits of various actions.

Mentors are admirable: Mentors work to set an example that others can follow.

Mentors are supportive: Mentors encourage others to learn and improve.

Mentors are practical: Mentors give insights about keeping on task and setting goals and priorities.

Mentors care: Mentors demonstrate their investment in other's progress.

Mentors provide insight: Mentors use their personal experience to help others avoid mistakes and learn from good decisions.

Mentors are accessible: Mentors are available as a resource and a sounding board.

Mentors criticize constructively: Mentors point out areas that need improvement, focusing on others' actions, not their character.



Tips for Building a Strong Mentoring Relationship

- Be accessible.
- Be a role model.
- Learn from those you mentor.
- Respect the other individuals.
- Empathize with the other person.
- See solutions and opportunities, not just barriers.
- Be a supporter, not an all-knowing authority figure.
- Be ready to help.
- Make a personal commitment to support the new leader.
- Listen and accept different viewpoints.
- Be flexible and open.

Give grace.

What to Expect as a Troop Support Mentor

To support new troop leaders, you will need to be familiar with the new leader experience, onboarding processes, and where to get help when needed. Supporting a new leader will be a team effort between GSCTX staff and the service unit.

The new leader support team is composed of:



Troop Support Mentor
Volunteer who provides regular check-ins with new troop leaders and provides ongoing support through a new leaders first-year experience.



Service Unit Team
Volunteers who provide ongoing support to troop leaders throughout their Girl Scout journey.



New Leader Mentor
GSCTX staff person responsible for supporting a new troop leader in their first year in the role through their Girl Scout journey.

Girl Scouts of Central Texas provides new troop leaders with a series of checklists to guide their onboarding and training for their first year. Please familiarize yourself with these checklists, which are included in this troop support mentor handbook, to help you follow the processes new leaders should be completing and the resources they have available.

Engaging with New Leaders

You will be assigned one or more new troop leaders to mentor by GSCTX support staff or your service unit leadership.

Once you have been matched with a new leader, reach out and introduce yourself. Contacting new leaders early is key to making them feel welcome and supported. Follow the troop support mentor checklists provided in this handbook to guide your introductory communication and ongoing check-ins.

Stress the Importance of Service Unit Involvement

We would love to have each new leader attend service unit leader meetings regularly. However, today's volunteers cannot always attend a monthly meeting. A variety of factors might prevent a leader from attending service unit meetings (childcare, shift work, transportation, etc.). This does not mean the new leader is not part of the service unit or not interested in staying connected. Show leaders where to find the most current service unit meeting information and the attendance expectations of your service unit. You are their main Girl Scout volunteer support as they get to know the organization, their youth members, and other adult members.

Troop Support Mentor Checklists

Whether a troop leader is new to the Girl Scout movement or has worked with a troop in another role, new leaders need support to understand the new troop start-up process, find and complete training, understand the benefits of connecting with the service unit, and find tools, forms, and other resources throughout their Girl Scout journey. We have provided a guide for you, as Support Mentor, to engage with your assigned new troop leaders across four important phases:

1. Introductory meeting
2. First 90 days
3. Beyond the first 90 days
4. Transition to year two

Before You Meet

Before being assigned to you as a troop support mentor, a new troop leader should have:

- Requested and received their new troop number.
- Become a registered member of GSCTX with a completed Criminal Background Check (CBC).
- Received their GSCTX new leader Mentor and service unit contact information.
- Completed or arranged a time to attend Jumpstart training (delivered by GSCTX staff or service unit leadership).
- Received information about service unit meetings.

Now it's your turn to reach out to the new troop leader to add an additional layer of support! If you meet with your new troop leader and discover one or more of the tasks listed above has not been completed, please contact your service unit leadership and/or member engagement specialist to help connect your new troop leader to the necessary training and information.

Troop Support Mentor Introductory Meeting Checklist

- ☐ Reach out to your assigned new leader within the first week.
- ☐ Introduce yourself and explain you are there to support them through their first year as a Girl Scout leader. Make them feel welcomed and supported.
- ☐ Take your time. If your new leader is rushed or does not have the time to talk, reschedule for another time.
- ☐ Find out more about them (i.e., their reason(s) for participating in Girl Scouts and becoming a troop leader, their goals and expectations, what they have to offer, etc.). Tell them about your background with Girl Scouts and why you became a volunteer.
- ☐ Establish how you will communicate with each other: in person, via phone, text, or email.
- ☐ Decide how often you will communicate (i.e., monthly for 30, 60, 90-day check-ins and as needed via the leader's preferred communication channels).
- ☐ Be sure your new leader has your contact information.
- ☐ Invite the new leader to your next service unit meeting (if applicable at this time of year).
- ☐ Be ready to answer questions and connect the new leader with tools and resources that will set them up for a positive experience.



Troop Support Mentor First 90-Days: Monthly Checklists

Below is a recommended timeline with topics for checking in with your new leader during the first three months of their troop leader experience. Topics and timelines are flexible depending on the time of year a new troop leader begins their journey. If you need to discuss a topic listed under a later checklist, feel free to do so.

Month One Check-In

- [ ] Confirm whether new leader has completed "First 30 Days" tasks in New Leader Checklist, address any questions, and help identify any escalation paths as needed.
    - [ ] Confirm new leader can access their gsLearn account.
    - [ ] Confirm new leader knows how to find and access Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) or that they know where to find meeting plan information in the Girl Scout Experience Box for Daisies or Brownies.
    - [ ] Confirm new leader has been able to set up a bank account. Help troubleshoot the process, as needed.
- [ ] Ask if new leader has read the "Before Your First Meeting" New Leader Checklist and answer any questions about preparing for their first caregiver and troop meetings.

Depending on time of year:

- [ ] Offer to attend caregiver meeting to provide extra support.
- [ ] Offer to lead or help lead the first troop meeting to provide extra support.
- [ ] Ask if leader needs help with supplies or printing forms.
- [ ] Invite new leader to your next service unit meeting (if applicable at this time of year).

Month Two Check-In

- [ ] Confirm whether new leader has completed both "First 30 Days" and "First 60 Days" tasks in New Leader Checklist, address any questions, and help identify any escalation paths as needed.
    - [ ] If new leader had any issues with systems access at Month One Check-In, confirm that issues have been resolved.
- [ ] Confirm whether new leader has read the "Before Your First Meeting" New Leader Checklist, if this wasn't completed before the Month One Check-In.

Confirm that new leader is receiving expected communications:

- [ ] Has new leader received council communications (*Tuesday's Trefoil, Legendary Leader, Choose Your Adventure*)?
- [ ] Has new leader gained access to service unit communications platforms or email?
- [ ] Does new leader understand how to locate and register for service unit and GSCTX events (Volunteer Enrichment Conference, Trailblazers, CPR training, council events, etc.)?

Depending on time of year, ask if new leader has:

- [ ] Been given brief information about Fall Product Program or Girl Scout Cookie Program to discuss at their caregiver meeting. Explain more training will be given later; emphasize that these programs are optional and talk through pros/cons of participating in year one.
- [ ] Held a caregiver meeting. If the Support Mentor was not in attendance, ask if the leader was pleased with the meeting. What additional help is needed to communicate with caregivers? Are there questions asked by caregivers that new leader needs answered? Have all important forms been received and stored in a confidential but convenient place?
- [ ] Held a troop meeting. If the Support Mentor was not in attendance, ask if the leader was pleased with the meeting. What worked? What didn't? What questions do they have?
- [ ] Considered whether or not to host a troop investiture ceremony.
- [ ] Invite new leader to your next service unit meeting (if applicable at this time of year).

Month Three Check-In

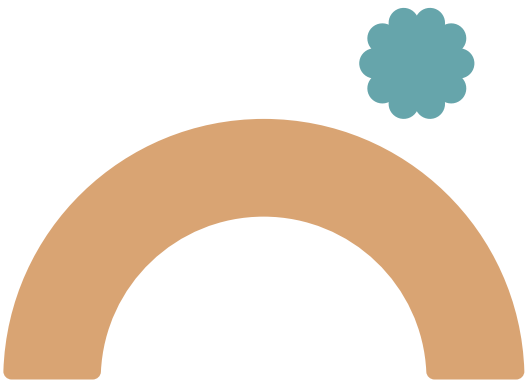
- [ ] Confirm whether new leader has completed “First 30 Days,” “First 60 Days,” and “First 90 Days” tasks in New Leader Checklist, address any questions, and help identify any escalation paths as needed.
- [ ] Confirm whether new leader has read the “Before Your First Meeting” New Leader Checklist, if this wasn’t completed before the Month Two Check-In.
- [ ] Confirm new leader has been able to locate and/or register for optional training offered through gsLearn and GSCTX.
- [ ] Confirm whether new leader has reviewed and considered the qualifications for the Super Troop Award.

Depending on time of year:

- [ ] Does troop leader feel troop meetings are going well?
- [ ] Does troop leader have any struggles managing their troop? Behaviors, conflicts, time management, caregiver engagement, etc.?
- [ ] Is the troop receiving quality participation from caregivers?
- [ ] Has troop leader attempted to arrange a field trip? Do they know where to find field trip ideas? Do they know what forms to use?
- [ ] In what areas does the troop leader need more support?

Support Mentor Beyond the First 90 Days Checklist

Thanks to your guidance and superior Mentoring skills, your new troop leader(s) has successfully navigated the first three months of Girl Scout leadership! At this point, you have established yourself as a reliable resource and hopefully, your new leader(s) feels comfortable reaching out to you with questions. As the new troop leader(s) continues their Girl Scout journey, consistent reassurance, support, and engagement is the focus of your role as their Support Mentor for the remainder of the Girl Scout year.



Suggested Mentoring Topics

Depending on the time of year and when the new troop leader began their journey, things to discuss:

- Pros/cons of participation in Fall Product Program (if new troop leader began their Girl Scout journey before August and has a bank account setup).
- Pros/cons of participation in Girl Scout Cookie Program (if new troop leader began their Girl Scout journey in time for troop cookie coordinator training and has a bank account setup).

Here are additional suggested topics for check-ins. Also, see Helpful Mentoring Topics and Activities in the Resources section of this handbook.

- Discuss how to make activities girl-led within the troop’s Girl Scout level.
- Share local field trips, community resources, and program ideas.
- Share ideas for Girl Scout level-appropriate troop travel.
- Discuss planning an activity or trip using Safety Activity Checkpoints and the Activity and Travel Application (ATA).

Support Mentor Transition to Year Two Checklist

Congratulations—You did it! You have helped your new troop leader(s) confidently navigate their first Girl Scout year. Now, it's time to help them transition to the next year.

- [ ] Confirm whether new leader has read "Transitioning to Year Two" in their New Leader Checklist.
- [ ] Confirm whether new leader has been able to locate the troop financial report in VTK and understands how to complete it.
- [ ] Ask if new leader has considered any changes they may wish to make to troop structure (i.e., caregiver support roles) or troop finances (i.e., charge troop dues to help fund troop activities).
- [ ] Recommend new leader to reach out to Girl Scouts and caregivers to confirm which current members are returning for another year of Girl Scouting fun.
- [ ] Ask if new leader has drafted a proposed troop budget for next year. Point the troop leader to the Troop Budget Planner for budgeting assistance: bit.ly/4l0UMBt.
- [ ] Confirm whether new leader is aware of council incentives for spring renewal and renewed their Girl Scouts membership for the upcoming year.
- [ ] Make sure new leader is aware of extended-year membership option for new members.

Additional questions to ask:

- [ ] Does troop leader feel their first year was successful?
- [ ] What additional support, if any, is needed to prepare for the transition into year two?
- [ ] What did the troop leader struggle with most during the first year? Behaviors, conflicts, time management, etc.
- [ ] Has troop leader considered being a Support Mentor to a new leader? After their first successful year, troop leaders can become a Support Mentor and make a difference in the Girl Scouts leadership experience for a future leader! Share your story and encourage other volunteers to become a part of this rewarding experience!.

Support Mentor Patch and Charms



Supporting our new Girl Scout leaders ensures volunteer satisfaction, the longevity of the Movement, and the quality of the Girl Scout experience. To acknowledge the significant role you've played in making our new troop leaders successful, please proudly display your Support Mentor patch and charms. Each Support Mentor will receive a Support Mentor patch at the beginning of their first year of service in the role. At the end of each school year, you will receive a charm to indicate your completed year of service as a Support Mentor. You will receive a new charm for each year you serve in the Support Mentor role.

New Leader Support Mentor Evaluation

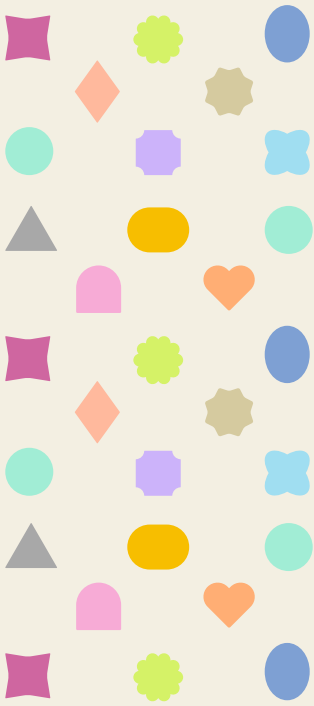
At the end of a new troop leader's first 90 days, new leader coach will email the new troop leader a link to a survey that includes these questions:

1. Which service unit do you belong to?
2. How would you rate the quality of support delivered by your troop support mentor?
3. How would you rate the accessibility of your troop support mentor?
4. Please share 2 - 3 ways in which your Girl Scout troop support mentor helped you navigate your first year as a troop leader.
5. Please suggest ways your mentor or the troop support mentor program could have been more effective.
6. How likely are you to continue going to your mentor for support and advice?
7. What additional support from your troop support mentor or from Girl Scouts of Central Texas would have improved your experience as a new leader in your first 90 days?

Troop Support Mentor Self-Assessment

Below are some questions to help you assess how you are doing. The questions are not designed to test you but are here to help you see how you are doing and if you might have some challenges or room for growth. We are hoping, too, that you will let us know if there are any areas where we can improve the training or information in this handbook. It is advisable to visit this page often during the mentoring year to allow for adjustments if necessary.

- I have a welcoming manner and I feel I have a positive relationship with the new leader(s) I am mentoring.
- I understand the new troop leader experience and can guide new leaders through the processes as described in the troop support mentor checklists and the new troop leader checklists.
- I understand the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and can promote it as part of the overall Girl Scout program.
- I understand Girl Scouts of Central Texas and Girl Scouts of the USA guidelines and policies and feel comfortable guiding new troop leaders in their use.
- The time I have available to communicate with new troop leaders aligns with their needs.
- I feel that my mentoring sessions with my new leader(s) are productive and a beneficial use of both my time and that of my new troop leaders'.
- I enjoy being a troop support mentor and am glad to be able to offer guidance to new leaders as they join the Girl Scout Movement.
- Having worked as a troop support mentor, I feel that council supported me with appropriate guidelines and tools to fulfill my role.
- Having used the Troop Support Mentor Handbook, I have suggestions on how to improve it for the future. (Please submit these ideas to us at **www.gsctx.org/contactus**)



Resources



Girl Scouts of Central Texas Service Unit
Troop Support Mentor Position Description

Position Summary:

This position is responsible for providing peer mentorship and local support to new troop leaders, helping them navigate the practical realities of running a troop within their specific service unit. In partnership with the service unit team, the service unit troop support mentor emphasizes welcoming, relationship-building, community connection, and local logistical support.

Accountability:

Appointed to the assigned service unit for a one-year term limit that is reviewed annually and accountable to the service unit leadership team and appropriate GSCTX staff.

Responsibilities:

- Welcomes new troop leaders into the service unit and builds supportive relationships by offering encouragement, local insights, and practical advice.
- Provides guidance on service-unit–specific information and connects new leaders with key volunteers within the service unit.
- Assists new leaders in identifying suitable local meeting locations and shares tips based on community knowledge and volunteer experience.
- Maintains regular, informal check-ins with new leaders throughout their first year.
- Submits the **GSCTX Service Unit Roster form** annually to accept/renew the role.
- Participates in succession planning for your role.

Position Commitments:

- Ensures that compliance with regulations governed by the following is met: GSUSA and GSCTX Policies and Procedures and your service unit leadership.
- Ability to effectively interact, work, and collaborate with people of various cultural backgrounds and promote an environment of inclusivity.
- Completes all training for the service unit Support Mentor position and checks in with the GSCTX membership staff or service unit leadership team for the most up-to-date training path.
- Be a registered adult member of GSUSA, have a current eligible criminal background check and Youth Protection Training on file at GSCTX, and be in good standing with GSCTX.

Top Skills You Will Gain from This Position:



Mentorship



Problem-solving and adaptability



Communication and improved interpersonal skills



Teamwork and collaboration



Creative thinking

New Troop Leader Checklists

A checklist for each stage in the process.

girl scouts of central texas

Checklists

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- First 90 Days 24
- Before Your First Meeting 25
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- First Troop Meeting 31
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- First Girl Scout Cookie Season 35
- Transitioning to Year Two 38
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Become a Troop Leader

1

☐ Request a new troop and troop number.

- Complete the Start a Troop Form (www.gsctx.org/starttroopform).
- Girl Scouts of Central Texas (GSCTX) staff will process the request, create a new troop for you, and let you know your troop number.

2

☐ Once you receive your troop number, register as a Girl Scout volunteer.

- Go to MyGS. (mygs.girlscouts.org).
- Click “Volunteer”.
- Complete your personal information.
- You should be able to find your newly formed troop number and select the troop leader role. (Pro tip: when starting the search, use your troop’s meeting location zip code and use a small search radius; once on the search page, use your troop’s five-digit number in the search bar.)
- Financial assistance is available to pay troop leaders’ membership dues, if needed. Reach out via www.gsctx.org/contactus.

3

☐ Complete your criminal background check.

When you register in the troop leader role, a background check request will be automatically triggered for you. Check your email, including spam, for an email from our third-party background check provider. You will need to fill out some information for them to complete your background check.

4

☐ Connect with staff and volunteers in your area.

You will receive a call or email from GSCTX support staff as well as from your local volunteer leadership group, which we refer to as a service unit. If you do not hear from anyone within two weeks of starting your troop, please contact us. (www.gsctx.org/contactus)



Become a Troop Leader

5

☐ Start recruiting members for your new troop.

- Tell adults in your local community that you have started a new troop and invite them to volunteer alongside you.
- The ideal size to aim for in a new troop is 10-12 youth.
- Let youth in your community (school, place of worship, neighborhood, etc.) know that you've started a new troop and invite them to join.
- Your GSCTX support staff has resources to help you recruit.
- Have all newly recruited adults and youth register for membership in MyGS. Make sure to provide them with your troop number. (mygs.girlscouts.org)
- Financial assistance is available for youth membership dues. (www.gsctx.org/fa)



6

☐ Locate a CPR/first aid training near you and register.

GSCTX requires CPR/first aid to ensure youth safety. CPR/first aid training must include an in-person component. If you are not able to find training, please reach out to your local support staff or contact us. (www.gsctx.org/contactus)

7

☐ Attend a service unit meeting.

Dates and times will be included in the communication you receive from your support staff.

8

☐ Check out the Volunteer Toolkit, an online tool for leaders like you to use for troop meeting planning.

Log in to MyGS (mygs.girlscouts.org) and select "Volunteer Toolkit" from the left-hand navigation.

First 30 Days

1

- [ ] Complete required Girl Scout training.
  - The majority of training is online through gsLearn. You will receive an email with instructions to access gsLearn. Required trainings should show on your dashboard and are labeled as the "578 Essential Troop Leader Training" path.
  - All volunteers working directly with youth must complete GSCTX Youth Protection Training on an annual basis to help keep our youth safe.
  - At least one adult must be certified in CPR and first aid. Training can be found through our Event Calendar (**www.gsctx.org/calendar**) or through local community resources.

2

- [ ] Attend a Jumpstart meeting. These are regularly offered meetings for brand new troop leaders to help you onboard to your new role, receive needed information, meet other new leaders, and ask any questions you may have.

3

- [ ] Attend a service unit meeting. You should have received information about service unit meetings from the new leader coach and when you attended your Jumpstart training.

4

- [ ] Submit Volunteer Driver Form (www.gsctx.org/driver).

5

- [ ] Hold a caregiver meeting (see Caregiver Meeting checklist).



First 30 Days

6

- [ ] Start planning your year in the Volunteer Toolkit. This is a great resource with meeting plans and activities to help you out.
    - Log in to MyGS (mygs.girlscouts.org) and select “Volunteer Toolkit” from the left-hand navigation.
    - Leaders of new Daisy or Brownie level troops can receive meeting plans in your Girl Scout Experience Box, shipped to your location of choice. (www.gsctx.org/gsbox)





7

- [ ] Work with your troop treasurer and service unit treasurer or service unit lead of operations to open a bank account. Resources can be found on the Bank Account Request Form. (www.gsctx.org/bankaccount)

It is highly recommended that your troop treasurer takes Girl Scout finance training on gsLearn. [Log in to MyGS (mygs.girlscouts.org) and select gsLearn from the left-hand navigation.] This training helps to explain what documentation your troop must collect and track throughout the year to submit your troop financial report at the end of the year.

First 60 Days

1

☐ Encourage caregivers in your troop to become certified in CPR and first aid.

- Locate a CPR/first aid training near you and register. GSCTX requires CPR/first aid to ensure youth safety. Training must include an in-person component. If you are not able to find training, please reach out to your local support staff or contact us. (www.gsctx.org/contactus)
- If adults in your troop already hold certification, or are in an approved field, have them submit their certification to GSCTX to be held on file. (www.gsctx.org/contactus)



2

☐ Complete Let's Go! 1 - Out and About and Let's Go! GSCTX Policies.

- These trainings can be found online in gsLearn. [Log in to MyGS (mygs.girlscouts.org) and select gsLearn from the left-hand navigation.]
- Encourage at least one other adult in the troop to complete Let's Go! trainings to allow your troop to embark on field trip opportunities.



3

☐ Attend a service unit meeting if you have not already.

- You should have received information about service unit meetings when you attended your Jumpstart training, or you can ask your new leader coach.
- Other adults in your troop can attend with you or can represent the troop for you at the meeting.

First 60 Days

4

☐ Connect with your troop support mentor, if applicable.

If you have questions or have not yet been connected with a troop support mentor, reach out to your service unit leadership or your new leader coach.



5

☐ Explore the GSCTX website for Girl Scout activity opportunities. (www.gsctx.org)

- Event Calendar includes events your Girl Scouts can attend as a troop or as individuals. (**www.gsctx.org/calendar**)
- GSCTX Patch Programs are curricula that you can use to lead your troop through special patches created locally. (**www.gsctx.org/patches**)
- See if Girl Scouts on the Go! mobile programming serves your area. Girl Scouts on the Go! brings staff-led programming directly to your troop! Just make a reservation, then leave the meeting plan to us. (**www.gsctx.org/gsonthego**)

First 90 Days

1

☐ Assess what help or additional resources you need to make your troop successful.

- Reach out to your service unit or your new leader coach with questions.
- Reach out to caregivers to ask for help at the troop level.



2

☐ Learn what other resources are available in your area.

- Service unit-led events. You will learn about these by attending service unit meetings and receiving service unit communications. If you aren't receiving communications, reach out to service unit leadership or your new leader coach.
- Find local businesses, organizations, parks, and community partners to visit for field trips. (Some suggestions include the fire department, police department, libraries, veterinarian's offices, city or county officials' offices, and animal shelters. Other troops in your service unit may have additional local recommendations, as well.)
- Here is a great resource for places around Central Texas that may be near you or just a short drive away.

Before Your First Meeting

1

☐ Find a meeting location.

- Some ideas for meeting locations include schools, places of worship, libraries, public parks, community centers, or Girl Scout houses.
- Girl Scout volunteers in your area, such as your service unit leadership, may have more meeting location ideas, as well.

2

☐ Determine the day and time that works best for meetings.

This day and time should work for most families in the troop but, as the leader, you get the final say in determining meeting times.

3

☐ Determine the frequency and duration of meetings.

Many troops opt to meet twice per month for one- to one-and-a-half hours, but you can do what works best for you and your troop's families.

4

☐ Visit the Volunteer Toolkit, a tool for leaders like you to use for troop meeting planning.

- Log in to MyGS (mygs.girlscouts.org) and select "Volunteer Toolkit" from the left-hand navigation.
- You can create a plan for the activities you'd like to do with your troop throughout the year and the toolkit will provide meeting guides and supply lists.
- Leaders of new Daisy or Brownie level troops can receive meeting plans in your Girl Scout Experience Box, shipped to your location of choice. (www.gsctx.org/gsbox)



Before Your First Meeting

5

☐ Check out the Troop Year Planner (www.gsctx.org/troop#plans) for additional meeting planning ideas.







6

☐ Set a structure for your meetings such as:

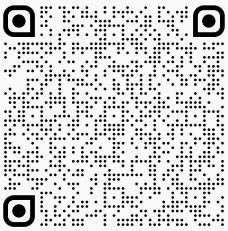
- Have a fun activity that requires no instruction for youth to do as they arrive (for example, Girl Scout coloring sheets or puzzles).
- Recite the pledge of allegiance and the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
- Introduce the meeting's topics.
- Girl Scout Activity (badges, petals, etc.).
- Fun activities (song, game, craft, etc.).
- Friendship circle (Learn more about the friendship circle in the Traditions, Events, and Ceremonies checklist.)
- Considerations: If your meeting is immediately after school or another activity, Girl Scouts may need extra active time and activities or may need time for snack.

Before Your First Meeting

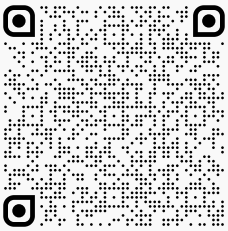
7

☐ Send health history and permission forms to caregivers if possible and/or have printed copies to hand out at the first meeting.

- Girl Scout Health History Record



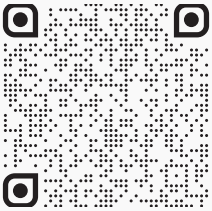
- Permission for Meetings, Media, Day Trips, and Treatment



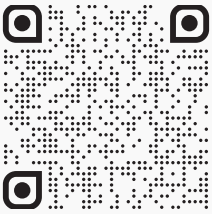
- Uniform information – at a minimum, each youth member should have a membership pin.



Financial assistance is available for uniforms if needed. (www.gsctx.org/fa)



Uniforms can be purchased from the Girl Scout Shop in person, over the phone, or by email utilizing these order forms.



- Have a secure method to store completed health and permission forms, such as a binder. For adult health forms, if preferred, you can store them in signed, sealed envelopes that will only be opened by emergency personnel if needed.

8

☐ Gather needed supplies for your meeting.

- Supplies may include crayons, markers, paper, poster board for a group contract, badge requirements, printouts from Volunteer Toolkit, etc.
- Make sure that you have a basic first aid kit.
- Check with your service unit to see if there are resources or supplies available.

Caregiver Meeting

1

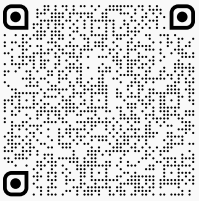
- [ ] Come prepared with a list of expectations for caregiver participation. The Girl Scout Caregiver Agreement is a great starting resource. (bit.ly/4uZqZyC)

2

- [ ] Have a list of roles that need to be filled (e.g.,co-leader, treasurer, product coordinators). Make sure that once a caregiver selects a role, they claim it in MyGS. (mygs.girlscouts.org)



  - Here is a great resource: Families Make it Happen



3

- [ ] Have caregivers stepping into volunteer roles complete their background check, take Youth Protection Training, and fill out a driver form.

4

- [ ] Share information on meeting frequency, days, and times.

5

- [ ] Discuss the troop's desire to participate in the Fall Product Program and the Girl Scout Cookie Program.
  - Registration for the Fall Product Program typically occurs in August or September. Registration for the cookie program typically occurs in October or November. If your troop forms after these dates or just isn't ready to participate, you may consider saving this discussion until year two.
  - To participate in either the fall product or cookie program, your troop must have a troop bank account. (See the First 30 Days checklist for more information.)

Caregiver Meeting

6

- [ ] Discuss snacks. Questions to ask may include: Will you serve snacks at meetings? Who will purchase the snacks? Are there dietary restrictions to be aware of?

7

- [ ] Determine the type of structure that will work for your troop. Will the leaders plan meetings and lead all activities or will caregivers rotate through the planning and leading of activities? Remember that Girl Scouts is a girl-led program and even our youngest members can help with the planning.



8

- [ ] Determine your troop's financial structure. Will you charge dues? If so, will you collect dues at every meeting or annually? Will the troop pay for activities (like badges and field trips), or will individual families need to pay for activities? Do you anticipate the financial structure changing for subsequent years once the troop has proceeds from the Fall Product Program or the Girl Scout Cookie Program? Check out the Troop Finances Quick Start Guide in this document for sample troop budgets and access to our Troop Budget Planner tool.

9

- [ ] Provide information on financial assistance available through council for membership dues and uniform components. (www.gsctx.org/fa)

Caregiver Meeting

10

- [ ] Determine if Girl Scouts will wear uniforms to meetings and, if so, which components each Girl Scout should have (for example, should Girl Scouts wear their tunic/vest/sash? Do you want Girl Scouts to also purchase a uniform shirt?).

  Note that if your troop plans to participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program, each Girl Scout needs, at a minimum, a membership pin.

11

- [ ] If you have not already collected all needed health history and permission forms, have copies available for caregivers to complete at the meeting:
  - Girl Scout Health History Record
  - Permission for Meetings, Media, Day Trips, and Treatment



12

- [ ] Have a secure method to store completed forms, such as a binder. For adult health forms, if preferred, you can store them in signed, sealed envelopes that will only be opened by emergency personnel if needed.



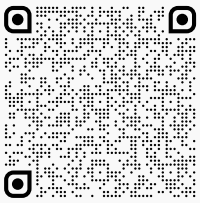
First Troop Meeting

1

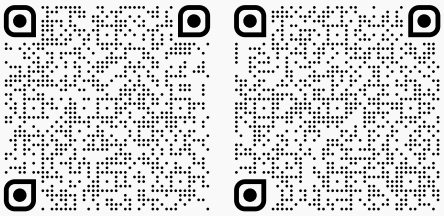
- [ ] Breathe! You've got this!

2

- [ ] Routine helps establish the troop, especially with younger Girl Scouts.
  - Have a fun activity that requires no instruction for youth to do as they arrive (for example, Girl Scout coloring sheets or puzzles).
  - Recite the pledge of allegiance and the Girl Scout Promise and Law.



  - Introduce the meeting's topics.
  - Girl Scout activity (badges, petals, etc.).
  - Fun activity (song, game, craft, etc.).



  - Friendship circle (Learn more about the friendship circle in the Traditions, Events, and Ceremonies checklist.)
  - Considerations: If your meeting is immediately after school or another activity, Girl Scouts may need extra active time and activities or may need time for snack.

3

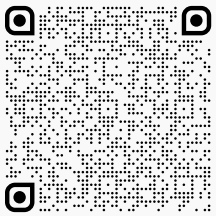
- [ ] Introduce yourself and any other adults helping.

4

- [ ] Do an icebreaker, even if the Girl Scouts know each other already.

5

- [ ] Complete a group contract/ agreement related to behavioral expectations, etc. Make sure that the Girl Scouts all have an opportunity to contribute. After the meeting, make sure to share this with caregivers so that they understand the expectations and can reinforce them.



First Troop Meeting

6

- [ ] Talk about what the Girl Scouts want to get out of the year.



7

- [ ] Items to have with you:
  - Materials to make name tags.
  - Completed forms in your binder or folder and blanks for those who still need to complete them.
    - Girl Scout Health History Record
    - Permission for Meetings, Media, Day Trips, and Treatment
  - First aid kit.
  - Supplies for your planned activities.
  - Snacks, if applicable.
  - The Girl Scout Promise and Law, on poster board if possible but, if not, on paper.

First Fall Product Program

1

- [ ] Decide if the Fall Product Program is a good fit for your troop.

  This program is a low-risk, friends and family chocolates, nuts, magazines, and more sale from which the troop gets a high percentage of the proceeds.

2

- [ ] Watch for your service unit's Fall Product Program sign-up. This typically comes out in August or September.

3

- [ ] Assign your troop's fall product coordinator if you have not already.



4

- [ ] The fall product coordinator must complete fall product coordinator training.

5

- [ ] Make sure that your bank account is set up. (See the First 30 Days checklist for more information.)

  Have your troop treasurer submit an ACH form to provide permission for council to take payments from, and deposit proceeds into, your troop's bank account. If you have already completed this form for a product sale, you do not need to fill it out again. (www.gsctx.org/ach)

6

- [ ] Assist your fall product coordinator with communicating with all troop families regarding Fall Product Program dates, permission forms, etc.

First Fall Product Program

7

- [ ] Set aside time in a meeting prior to the start of the program to introduce the Fall Product Program to your Girl Scouts and help them prepare for the program. (The fall product coordinator should be leading this, but you will set aside the time.)

8

- [ ] Share back the results after the program with the Girl Scouts. Discuss what went well, what they thought could improve, what the troop will do with the proceeds, etc.

First Girl Scout Cookie Season

1

- [ ] Decide if the Girl Scout Cookie Program is a good fit for your troop.

  Reach out to your service unit cookie manager if you have questions.



2

- [ ] Watch for the cookie program sign-up. This typically comes out in September or October.

3

- [ ] Assign your troop's cookie coordinator if you have not already.



4

- [ ] Your troop's order for gluten-free cookies is typically due ahead of all other cookie orders, during cookie program sign-up. Your service unit cookie manager can provide details and help with planning your pre-order if you would like to sell gluten free cookies.

5

- [ ] The cookie coordinator must attend cookie coordinator training. Training is led by the Girl Scouts of Central Texas Product Programs team. Starting in the fall, training session dates are listed on the event calendar. (www.gsctx.org/calendar)

  As the troop leader, you may want to attend cookie coordinator training along with your troop cookie coordinator so that you understand the process. However, only the cookie coordinator is required to attend.

First Girl Scout Cookie Season

6

- [ ] Make sure that your bank account is set up. (See the First 30 Days checklist for more information.)

  Have your treasurer submit an ACH form to provide permission for council to take payments from, and deposit proceeds into, your troop's bank account. If you already completed this form for a product sale, you do not need to fill it out again. (**www.gsctx.org/ach**)

7

- [ ] Assist your cookie coordinator with communicating with all troop families regarding program requirements, permission forms, troop goals, and Girl Scout initial orders. An in-person meeting is encouraged. Make sure to schedule this meeting by early November, as initial cookie orders are due in early December.

8

- [ ] Confirm that all Girl Scouts who want to participate in the cookie program have Girl Scout memberships and the necessary uniform components (at minimum, the Girl Scout membership pin). Financial assistance is available for both. (www.gsctx.org/fa)

9

- [ ] Set aside time in a meeting prior to the start of the program to introduce the Girl Scout Cookie Program to troop members and help them prepare.

  Your service unit likely has Cookie Captains (older Girl Scouts learning leadership skills) who can assist you with cookie program training and may come to your meeting to teach your troop about cookies and the cookie program.

First Girl Scout Cookie Season

10

- [ ] Help your troop set a troop sales goal. What will you do with the proceeds? How many packages do you need to sell to reach your goal?

11

- [ ] Look for cookie rallies hosted by your service unit or the council, which will help your Girl Scouts prepare for the cookie program.
    - Preparation will include a focus on the five skills of the Girl Scout Cookie Program: goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics. Each Girl Scout level has a badge that correlates with the age-appropriate application of these skills.
    - Typical preparation also includes learning the cookie price per package, learning the different flavors of cookies, being able to explain their cookie program goal, and communicating what the troop plans to do with their earnings, in addition to cookie selling etiquette. Depending on their age, Girl Scouts may also practice money handling and advanced sales techniques.

12

- [ ] Consider visiting the Girl Scouts of Central Texas retail shop for cookie booth merchandise. (www.gsctx.org/locations)

13

- [ ] Share back the results after the cookie program with the Girl Scouts. Discuss what went well, what they thought could improve, progress towards the goal, etc.



Transitioning to Year Two

1

- [ ] Your troop treasurer must submit the troop's financial report in Volunteer Toolkit by May 1. They may need help from you to identify all transactions and answer some of the questions.
    - Additional information will be provided by your service unit treasurer or service unit lead of operations.
    - As always, if you have questions, reach out to your service unit team or your new leader coach.
    - The VTK Finance Tab Volunteer Training in gsLearn covers what you need to know to use the VTK Finance tab to prepare your year-end financial report.



2

- [ ] Have caregivers commit to their Girl Scouts continuing for another year in your troop and for the adults to continue in their volunteer roles. This will make it easier for your troop to hit the road running in the fall.

3

- [ ] Inform your troop about early membership renewal incentives beginning April 1. (www.gsctx.org/renew)

4

- [ ] If your troop is interested in spending a weekend at one of our Girl Scout camps, make a reservation. (www.gsctx.org/rentcamp)

Transitioning to Year Two

5

☐ Is your troop bridging (moving up) to the next Girl Scout level? Will you have an end of year party or ceremony? If so, plan your troop's bridging ceremony.

6

☐ Plan and budget for the following year.

- Estimate how many Girl Scouts and key troop volunteers will be returning next year, to calculate the membership dues budget.
- What badges do the Girl Scouts want to earn?
- What activities will you do?
- Do you want to make any changes to the troop structure (for example, assigning caregivers to different troop support roles)?
- Do you want to make any changes to the troop finance structure (for example, start or stop charging troop dues or reconsider what the troop funds are used for)?
- Planning early takes the pressure off during the rest of the year.
- Consult the Troop Budget Planner for support with setting your budget. (bit.ly/4l0UMBt)

7

☐ Determine what your troop will do over the summer.

- Will you continue to meet regularly, meet occasionally, or take a break?
- There are often DIY Girl Scout activities and challenges provided on the GSCTX website. (**www.gsctx.org**)
- Will you host or attend family fun events?
- Will you take a troop trip?

8

☐ Take advantage of learning and networking opportunities for troop volunteers such as our Volunteer Enrichment Conference offered each summer and our Trailblazers adult weekend in the fall. Both offer opportunities to attend workshops and network with other Girl Scout volunteers from across Central Texas. Registration can be found on the Event Calendar. (www.gsctx.org/calendar)

Traditions, Events, and Ceremonies

Traditions

Girl Scout Promise and Law

Often recited at the beginning of a troop meeting or Girl Scout gathering, the Girl Scout Promise and Law remind us to be honest, to be good citizens, to help others, and to make the world a better place.

Girl Scout Sign

Girl Scouts make the Girl Scout sign—raising three fingers of the right hand with the thumb holding down the pinky—when they say the Girl Scout Promise. The three fingers represent the three parts of the Girl Scout Promise.

Make New Friends

The song Make New Friends is a Girl Scout favorite, which may be sung in a friendship circle, at a Girl Scout sign-along, or at the opening or closing of a troop meeting.

Lyrics:

Make new friends,

But keep the old.

One is silver and the other's gold.

A circle is round,

It has no end.

That's how long I want to be your friend.

Friendship Circle

Representing the unbroken chain of friendship among Girl Scouts and Girl Guides around the world, the friendship circle is often used to close a Girl Scout meeting or ceremony. The friendship circle involves Girl Scouts 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. As each member of the circle makes their wish, they put out their right foot toward the center of the circle, so others know they have made their wish. Once the squeeze has made its way around the whole circle, everyone turns outward to take into the world what they learned at Girl Scouts.

SWAPS

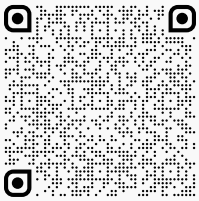
SWAPS stands for "Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere." They are small tokens of friendship that Girl Scouts exchange with one another, and each SWAPS uniquely reflects a fellow Girl Scout, their troop, or a memory of a special event. Exchanging SWAPS is a great way to share stories and get to know Girl Scouts from across the country and the world. Any time you meet with Girl Scouts or Girl Guides from different troops, it is appropriate to exchange SWAPS, though doing so is optional.

Traditions, Events, and Ceremonies

Traditions

Sit-Upons

A long-time Girl Scout tradition, a “sit-upon” is something you sit upon to keep dry and warm when sitting on the ground, a log, or any other cold/wet area. Sit-upons are usually homemade and are a great craft for Girl Scouts to make in preparation for a hike or camping trip.



S’mores

S’more is a contraction of the phrase “some more.” A sweet snack consisting of a chocolate bar and toasted marshmallows sandwiched between graham crackers, the first known recipe for the treat was published in the 1927 Girl Scout handbook: Tramping and Trailing with the Girl Scouts. Today, the s’more remains a favorite treat to make and serve during Girl Scout campouts.

Highest Awards

The Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards, together known as Girl Scout Highest Awards, are the most prestigious awards a Girl Scout can earn as a Junior (Bronze Award), Cadette (Silver Award), or Senior/Ambassador Girl Scout (Gold Award). The Highest Awards encourage Girl Scouts to identify an issue in their community, and then take action to solve it. Through their Highest Awards projects, Girl Scouts actively work to make the world a better place as they build leadership skills.



Events

Juliette Gordon Low’s Birthday

October 31 marks the birth in 1860 of Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low in Savannah, Georgia. Troops and service units often acknowledge and celebrate Low’s birthday through group activities.

World Thinking Day

World Thinking Day, February 22, is a day of international friendship celebrated by Girl Scouts and Girl Guides from over 150 countries around the world. World Thinking Day encourages Girl Scouts to learn about cultures other than their own and about how girls’ lives differ based on where they live, their cultures, and customs. Each year, Girl Scouts are encouraged to explore a different World Thinking Day theme, which typically becomes available from Girl Scouts of the USA in January. Search “World Thinking Day” and look for the link at girlscouts.org for more information.

Girl Scout Week

Girl Scout Week is celebrated each March, starting with Girl Scout Sunday, and ending with Girl Scout Sabbath on a Saturday. The week always falls during Girl Scouts’ birthday, March 12, the date on which Girl Scouts was founded in 1912. Most years Girl Scouts of the USA releases a guide to celebrating Girl Scout Week, which typically becomes available in February. Search “Girl Scout Week” for more information.

Traditions, Events, and Ceremonies

Ceremonies

Investiture

An investiture ceremony welcomes 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.

Bridging and end-of-year celebrations

Bridging ceremonies mark a Girl Scout's move from one level of Girl Scouting to another (for example, from Daisy to Brownie).

Flag ceremonies

Flag ceremonies can be part of any activity that honors the American flag. Flag ceremonies are often conducted during summer camp, at formal meetings, or at formal community events.

Traditions

Traditions connect Girl Scouts across the globe. They link current Girl Scouts to the trailblazers who came before them and remind them of the camaraderie that comes with the Trefoil they wear. Check out our additional Traditions and Ceremony Activity Guides on the Troop Planning Resources page.

Girl Scouts of Central Texas Acronym Glossary

- **ATA:** Activity and travel application – a form that is needed any time your troop travels overnight or participates in a day trip with a high-risk activity.
- **BAR:** Bank account request form – a form that is needed when a troop or service unit needs to open a new bank account, change a signer on an existing bank account, or close a bank account.
- **CBC:** Criminal background check – required of all volunteers, staff, and adults who will be traveling with a troop or responsible for supervising youth who are not part of their household.
- **FA** or FP: Financial aid or financial partnership – assistance available to help defray the costs of being a Girl Scout member and attending Girl Scout Camp and activities.
- **GSCTX:** Girl Scouts of Central Texas – our council, which serves Girl Scouts in 46 counties across Central Texas.
- **GSLE:** Girl Scout Leadership Experience – Girl Scout's model of program delivery encompassing the principles of girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning.
- **GSUSA:** Girl Scouts of the United States of America, also referred to as Girl Scouts of the USA, our national organization.
- **MES:** Membership Engagement Specialist – staff members who are there to support volunteers in any way needed; a liaison between volunteers and the council.
- **MY** (typically followed by two numbers): Membership year – this designates which Girl Scout year is being referred to; the Girl Scout year spans from October 1 to September 30 with the membership year referring to the year encompassing January through September.
- **PC:** Program Credits – credits earned by Girl Scouts through the cookie program for meeting certain goals; credits can be used for summer camp, council events, troop travel, and purchases in the council shop.
- **STEM:** Science, technology, engineering, and math – one of the four pillars of the Girl Scout program.
- **SU:** Service unit – a group of troops in a small geographic area bounded by specified zip codes; service unit leadership are all volunteers.
- **SUCM:** Service unit cookie manager – a volunteer who facilitates the service unit's participation in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and mentors troops through the process.
- **SUD*:** Service unit director – a volunteer who helps lead the service unit.
- **SUFPM:** Service unit fall product manager – a volunteer who facilitates the service unit's participation in the fall product program.
- **SUR*:** Service unit registrar – a volunteer who helps with recruitment and connecting new Girl Scouts with troops.
- **SUT*:** Service unit treasurer – a volunteer who helps with service unit finances and troop banking.
- **TCC:** Troop cookie coordinator – a volunteer who leads the troop through the Girl Scout Cookie Program.
- **TFPC:** Troop fall product coordinator – a volunteer who leads the troop through the fall product program.
- **TL:** Troop leader – a volunteer who leads a troop of Girl Scouts through the Girl Scout experience.
- **TUF:** Troop update form – a form that should be filled out annually or when you want to make changes to your troop such as changes to the meeting location or number of open spots.
- **VEC:** Volunteer Enrichment Conference - annual event for volunteers to gain skills and new tools through training sessions as you connect with other volunteers across our council area.
- **VTK:** Volunteer Toolkit – a resource available to all leaders that includes meeting plans, year plans, handouts, and other helpful documents.
- **WAGGGS:** World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts – the worldwide collaborative organization that GSUSA is a part of, connecting Girl Scouts and Girl Guides across the world.
- **WTD:** World Thinking Day – a day of international friendship and learning about other cultures celebrated by Girl Scouts each February.
- **YPT:** Youth protection training – a training required for all volunteers and staff.

*Your service unit may not have a SUD, SUT, or SUR. Some service units divide the roles differently and have a service unit lead of operations, a service unit lead of membership, and a service unit lead of programs.



Helpful Mentoring Topics and Activities

Topics

- Discuss what roles or assignments adults in the troop should have (use Families Make It Happen form, emphasize importance of assigning a troop cookie coordinator).
- Discuss a troop agreement and consequences, and girl/adult partnership in support and accountability.
- Discuss methods of troop government appropriate to the troop age level.
- Discuss how the leader will facilitate the Girl Scouts in the troop to acquire leadership and decision-making skills and how to make activities girl-led within the troop's Girl Scout level.
- Share local field trips, community resources, and program ideas.
- Share ideas for Girl Scout level-appropriate troop travel.
- Share information regarding service unit or troop camp outs; discuss how to reserve space at Girl Scout camps.
- Discuss planning an activity or trip using *Safety Activity Checkpoints* and the *Activity and Travel Application (ATA)*.
- Discuss take-action projects versus community service, as appropriate to the troop's Girl Scout level; suggest age-appropriate community service ideas.
- Provide an overview of *Volunteer Essentials*.
- Discuss the membership year calendar and the importance of the dates due for paperwork (including end-of-year paperwork).
- Introduce key dates in the Girl Scout year to help new troop leaders plan meetings, activities, and events, and be prepared for product programs (for example: Juliette Gordon Low birthday, Girl Scout Cookie Rallies, World Thinking Day, Girl Scout Week, service unit "traditional" events).
- Help plan troop ceremonies together with other adults in the troop (for example: Investiture, Bridging).
- Provide a list of helpful community resources that a leader may wish to use.

Activities

- Arrange time for new leaders to get together before or after service unit leader meetings. Mentors may also get together at the same time.

Tips for Troop Support Mentors

1. Maintain regular contact. Mentors should assume they are the “givers” in the relationship. Consistent contact models dependability and builds trust.
2. Always be honest. Trust and respect are the foundations on which mentorship is built.
3. Do not expect to have all the answers. Sometimes just listening attentively is all the leader needs.
4. Nurture self-sufficiency. Your goal is not to “clone” yourself but to encourage confidence and independent thinking.
5. Be clear about your expectations and your boundaries. Set up ground rules and communicate them to the leader. Some leaders may require more attention so specify times they may contact you. Other leaders may be self-sufficient and may not appreciate constant check-ins. Remain in contact enough to show support without stifling their independence.
6. Show the leader you value them by finding opportunities for them to be the decision maker and a role model for their troop.
7. Respect confidentiality and listen patiently. Give the leader time to get to issues they find sensitive or embarrassing.
8. Keep notes on the needs and comments of the leader. Refer the leader to programs and training you feel the leader might benefit from.
9. Provide support for working with caregivers in the leader’s troop by giving suggestions or offering to attend caregiver meetings.
10. If the relationship seems to stall, hang in there and continue to offer support.

Understanding and Overcoming Communication Barriers

Barriers to Communication

- Cultural differences
- Regional differences
- Gender differences
- Unconscious bias
- Differences in perception
- Differences in listening ability
- Differences in interpretation (semantics)
- Differences in status

Overcoming Barriers

- Seek to understand others
- Create a safe environment (maintain confidentiality, be open to differences in perception, interpretation, and cultural experiences)
- Practice active listening
- Use “I” statements (What I’m hearing is...)
- Speak using clear, objective messages
- Use appropriate body language
- Attend to the obvious

Steps for Being an Active Listener

Be Attentive

You can create a positive atmosphere by being alert, non-distracted, and maintaining good eye contact. This helps the person feel more important and more positive.

Be Interested

Sincerely care about the other person's needs.

Be Open

Suspend judgment and don't jump to any conclusion. Don't let the other person "hook" you into getting angry, hurt, or upset.

Be Encouraging

Use noncommittal verbal acknowledgments like, "I see," "Oh," and "Interesting!"

Be Sensitive

Pay attention to what is NOT being said, as much as to what is being said. Watch for body language, tone of voice, and hidden agendas.

Be Reflective

Send back to the speaker what you observe and what you believe the speaker is trying to say.



Ground Rules

- Don't interrupt.
- Don't change the subject.
- Don't make presumptions.
- Don't rehearse your response in your mind while the speaker is talking.
- Don't interrogate.
- Don't focus solely on giving advice.



Communication Styles

It is important to know how each leader prefers to receive communication from you. Everyone is different. Establishing how to communicate with each new leader will prevent problems in the future. No matter the type of communication, *you make the first contact*.

Do you know how each generation prefers to communicate?

Generations	Communications	Messages that motivate
Matures Prior to 1946	Formal – Written	Your experience is respected.
Boomers 1946-1964	In person	You are valued, you are needed.
Gen X 1965-1980	Direct and immediate E-mail Voice mail	Forget the rules. Do it your way.
Nexters – Gen Y 1980-2000	Text messaging Social media	You will work with other bright, creative people.
Gen Z 1996-2015	Hand-held communication devices FaceTime Solutions will be digitally crowd-sourced	They are more interested in social rewards (mentorship and constant feedback) but are also motivated by meaningful work and given responsibility.

Make sure you ask the new leader how they would like you to communicate.

Social media communication is popular and is an acceptable way to communicate for adults and youth.

Remember the internet is an open forum and its benefits of easy access and sharing of information can attract those who would use that information to cause harm. Refer to the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoint for "Computer/Online Use" for information regarding social media and computer safety.