



The Girl Scout Cookie Program

Teaching Essential Skills for a Lifetime

A well known component of Girl Scouting is the Cookie Program, the largest girl-run business in the world. Once a year, Girl Scouts around the country venture into the entrepreneurial world to learn business and financial skills and earn money to fund their Girl Scouting goals. Through “learning by earning,” Girl Scouting aims to empower girls through the development of five essential skills: goal setting, money management, people skills, decision making, and business ethics.

In the spring of 2012, the Girl Scout Research Institute set out to understand the extent to which Girl Scouts actually develop these five essential skills, as well as to examine the specific ways girls benefit from their participation in the Cookie Program. Survey responses from 1417 Brownie and Junior Girl Scouts representing various regions of the country provide compelling evidence that girls do benefit from the Cookie Program through development of these essential skills.

Key Findings

1. Overall, a majority of Girl Scout “Cookie Entrepreneurs” develop¹ the 5 essential skills.

- ❖ 85% of girls developed Money Management skills, reporting that they had developed budgets, taken cookie orders, and handled customers’ money.
- ❖ 83% of girls developed Business Ethics, learning to fulfill promises to customers, keep true to the Girl Scout Promise and Law in their business dealings, and consider how best to contribute to their communities with their earnings.
- ❖ 80% of girls developed the Goal Setting skill, learning how to set sales goals relative to action plans and to create a set of objectives with their team to reach their goals.
- ❖ 77% of girls developed the Decision Making skill, learning how to work as a team to develop a basic business plan, deciding when and where to sell cookies, and reaching agreements on what to do with the money they earned.
- ❖ 75% of girls developed People Skills, learning to talk, listen, and work with different kinds of people while selling cookies.
- ❖ Significantly, more than half of girls (55%) achieved *all 5 skills*.

2. Learning the 5 essential skills has a positive impact on girls’ lives.²

- ❖ Girls who developed the 5 skills were more likely to report that they learned new things while selling cookies that will help them in school and other areas of their life than girls who did not (93% vs. 63%, respectively).
- ❖ Overall, girls reported that selling cookies was fun (96%). Learning by earning made it even more fun. Girls were more likely to report cookie selling was fun when they developed the 5 skills than when they did not (98% vs. 90%, respectively).
- ❖ Even though the vast majority of Girl Scouts were eager to sell cookies next year (95%), those who had achieved the 5 skills were even more eager than those who did not (95% vs. 90%, respectively).

3. Specific Girl Scout experiences can make the difference between achieving and not achieving the 5 essential skills.³

- ❖ Girls who attended troop or group meetings about selling cookies, practiced how to sell Girl Scout cookies with their friends and family, and worked toward the Cookie Business and Financial Literacy badges developed more goal setting, decision making, money management, people, and business ethics skills than girls who had fewer or none of those experiences.
- ❖ Girls who acted as leaders, engaged in hands-on learning experiences, and worked cooperatively as part of a team developed more of the 5 skills than girls who did not.⁴

Summary

Participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program helps girls learn skills they need to become successful adults who will contribute to their communities and strengthen the U.S. workforce. Long before they assume adult roles, the Girl Scout Cookie Program allows girls real-world opportunities to manage money, become ethical and reliable entrepreneurs, set goals, meet deadlines, work well with others, and understand customers. This learning occurs in an environment ideally suited to ensure the lessons are integrated into their everyday lives, for these girls are active, engaged learners who are having fun as they learn and earn.

Girls who developed the 5 skills had more fun selling cookies and realized that what they learned in Girl Scouts could help them in other areas of their lives. They also planned to sell cookies in the future. Girls were more likely to gain the 5 skills if they were active and engaged learners in the Cookie Program (i.e., attending meetings, practicing selling cookies, doing badge work). Collectively, these findings provide compelling evidence of the role Girl Scouting can play in developing financially empowered girl leaders. Learning valuable life skills via the Girl Scout Cookie Program helps girls become successful business leaders, now and in the future.



What do girls like the most about selling cookies?

“Working toward a goal and sorting and organizing the customers’ orders.”

-- Junior Girl Scout, 4th grade

“Knowing that I’m helping my troop and my community.”

– Junior Girl Scout, 5th grade

“Doing math to figure out how many I have left to sell for my goal.”

– Brownie Girl scout, 3rd grade

“I love counting how many I sold.”

– Brownie Girl Scout, 3rd grade

For other Girl Scout Research Institute studies, visit: www.girlscouts.org/research

1. Girls were considered to have developed a skill if they responded “Agree” or “Agree a lot” on survey items that measured the 5 essential skills (response scale: 1= Disagree a lot, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Agree a lot).

2. The percentage reported represents the average across the 5 skills.

3. Regression analyses were conducted to investigate the influence of Girl Scout factors on girls’ skills, controlling for girls’ grade level and duration in Girl Scouts. Significant factors across the 5 skills are described above.

4. Go to “Just for Adults!” to learn about the 3 Girl Scout processes http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_cookies/cookie_activity.asp