

My First Year **Junior**

A complete guide for your first
year of leading a Girl Scout troop

Checklist for New Troop Leaders

Starting a New Girl Scout Troop

Week 1

- Register as a Girl Scout troop leader.
- Complete a **background check**. You will receive email invite from theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.
- Meet your placement specialist and **set up your troop profile**.
- Find a co-leader and invite girls to join your troop.
- Join the New Leader Academy** Facebook Group and register for required training: **TR 100: New Leader Training**.
- Meet your **troop support coordinator** who will be there to help you this year.

Week 3

- Complete your bank account set up and make your first deposit.
- Find out how to get a Zoom account for your troop **gsZoom Account FAQs**.
- Plan and hold your first troop meeting with the girls. Use your **New Leader Handbook** and the **Volunteer Toolkit**.

Week 2

- Complete new leader training (complete within first 60 days).
- Discover the ins and outs of the **Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)**.
- Find a bank for your troop account and submit the form to open a bank account **GSNETX Bank Account Process Request to Open a Bank Account**.
- Meet with your co-leader and plan a parent meeting **co-leader discussion questions**.
- Find your troop roster in VTK or MyGS. Email or call all new troop parents to introduce yourself.
- Hold the parent meeting (don't forget to use your **parent meeting agenda**).

Week 4

- Attend a leader meeting (in your service unit or council-led).
- Reach out to get help planning your year in Girl Scouts! Email NewTroop@GSNETX.ORG.
- Find out about the **GSNETX Cookie Program**.



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Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Our Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

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.

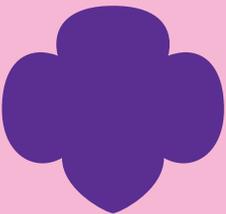
Girl Scout Law

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.

“Welcome to Girl Scouts and a great new adventure! Thanks to volunteers like you, a new generation of girls will get the courage, confidence and character they need to lead their lives and our world in the future. The Girl Scout team is here to support you, but YOU are enough—we couldn’t do this without YOU!”

Jennifer Bartkowski, CEO GSNETX

Thank you!



Troop Co-Leaders

- Help** girls reach their potential as creative, courageous leaders
- Create** a space where girls try new things without worrying about failing
- Teach** lessons girls will use for decades to come
- Try** new things along with their girls
- Develop** leaders’ own organizational and leadership skills
- Join** a global community of sisterhood

**Members may substitute for the word God in accordance with their own spiritual beliefs.*

Getting Started

New leaders often spend the first few weeks getting started and setting up their troop. Be sure to use your **CHECKLIST** on the inside of this handbook!



Setting up your Troop

Your placement specialist will reach out to you to set up this information in the membership system.

The number of girls to expect in your troop

As a new troop, you can expect to have 10-12 girls. Research has found this is the “sweet spot”—small enough to encourage individual development and large enough to provide an interactive and cooperative learning environment. If your troop doesn’t have enough girls assigned or you would like a larger group, GSNETX is here to help you!

Looking to grow your troop more?

As a troop leader, you can make sure your troop is available in the opportunity catalog for new members to register at will, and you can also share a direct link for new families to register directly in your troop through your MY GS account. Adults and girls alike can join your troop this way. If you would like help growing your troop, contact your placement specialist at any time throughout the year.

Meeting Location and Times

Remember, set meeting times that work with your schedule! You will need to choose a location for regular meetings (e.g. a local park, library, private homes). The troop can meet anywhere that follows the GS safety guidelines. You will also need to decide what day of the week and how often the troop will meet. Most of our troops meet twice a month. So, think about what day, which weeks of the month and the time-frame (1, 1.5, or 2 hours; right after school, weekday evening, weekend, etc.)

Troop Interests/Goals/Personality

Also, think about what your troop will want to accomplish this year. What are some goals? Will the troop focus on one theme for the year? We want to know what type of activities you will plan to do throughout your first year. Every troop has a unique “personality.” Let us know anything that is special about your troop! Will the girls speak a different language? Include girls with disabilities or learning differences? Do all the girls enjoy a specific sport or activity?

Building an Inclusive Troop

Establishing an inclusive environment that welcomes every girl, fosters a sense of belonging, and provides a safe space for everyone should be a top priority. Girls have a better experience when they are warmly welcomed into a troop.

www.gsnetx.org/newleader

Training

You'll find many helpful and interesting training courses offered in **gsLearn** located in your MY GS account.

New leaders are required to complete **TR 100 Troop Leader Training** in the first year. It is best to take this virtual course within your first 90 days as a leader.

If your troop plans to go on field trips or other outings, at least one registered/background checked adult will need to take a qualifying first aid/CPR class.

Additionally, once your troop is ready to plan a campout, you will need to have an adult take TR301 GSNETX Camping. Another great training resource is the Virtual Meeting Playbook.



Check these out at www.gsnetx.org/volunteertraining.

A New Leader's Support System

Getting Connected, Socially

New Leader Academy is a special Facebook group just for GSNETX first year leaders! This cohesive community is a great forum to get questions answered in real time 24/7 and to get ideas for activities during meetings, planning ideas, and events of all kinds. A special group of volunteer mentors and staff members moderate the group. This is also a great place to reach out for help at any time.

Also on **Facebook**, you will find:

GSNETX Learning Channel – facebook.com/learningchannelgsnetx

Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas – facebook.com/gsnetx

GSNETX Product Sales Questions – facebook.com/groups/productquestionsgsnetx

Your Support System

Girl Scouts is all about sisterhood. As a leader, you are not alone! Your troop co-leader(s) and parents are your primary team. Get to know them and allow them to help!

Check out page 10, the 4Her resources for more ideas!

Your Service Unit

What is a service unit? It is a geographically defined area that consists of Girl Scout troops that are in the same community or school district. These troops are supported by a service unit team.

Service unit teams consist of experienced Girl Scout volunteers who are there to support one another through the Girl Scout year. The team includes a manager, treasurer, product coordinator, and more.

These volunteers work together to support you by providing activities and event opportunities in your area throughout the year. They also hold monthly meetings for leaders.

Service Unit Meetings

These meetings are usually held monthly and can be in person or virtual.

- Meet and network with fellow volunteers
- Learn about upcoming events and trainings, etc
- Share resources and materials

Your Troop Support Coordinator can get you connected to the volunteers in your service unit.

Your GSNETX Council Staff

We are here for you! Your troop support Coordinator will be here reaching out to you throughout your first year as a troop leader. You will receive a 10-part email series to help guide you through your first two months. If you have a private matter, a conflict to discuss, issues with registration or any other needs, GSNETX can help! Contact your troop support coordinator, Customer Care at 972-349-2403, or email newtroop@gsnetx.org.

Co-Leaders, Leading Together

Each troop needs two unrelated adults who are Girl Scout members and have completed a background check to be able to meet. A friend, neighbor, co-worker, or another parent are all great people to lead a troop with. If you need assistance recruiting a co-leader, talk to your placement specialist or troop support coordinator.

Before meeting with parents or the girls, you will want to get together and make some decisions about your troop. Once you have your parent/caregiver meeting you will include them in these decisions.

- Meeting logistics: When, where, how frequently and how long will the troop meet?
- The troop: Will the troop have girls in one grade or many?
- What kind of help will the troop need from parents?
- How will you handle your own daughter during troop activities?
- What type of communication will you use with the troop families?
- Troop finances: Will you have regular troop dues, a troop start-up fee? Who will be on the troop bank account?
- What would you like the troop uniform components to include? Will the leaders purchase for everyone with troop funds or will parents need to get this on their own?
- Plan out the parent/caregiver meeting.



For more information, check for the Co-Leader Discussion Questions on our New Leader page at gsnetx.org.

Working with Parents/Caregivers

Parent/Caregiver Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and introductions to one another and to the Girl Scouts. Ask about each girl and get to know her a little.
- Share how important each family will be to the troop.
- Discuss meeting location, day and times, uniforms and troop dues (you may want to collect at the meeting).
- Set expectations for communication and response times and how parents can get involved to help the troop (4Her program).
- Have parents complete health history forms, annual permission forms. Share contact info for all troop members.
- Discuss the types of activities the troop will participate this year (regular meetings, field trips, events, camping trips).
- Answer any questions the parents may have.

Helpful Tips!

- Don't try to do this alone! Ask parents directly to help with the troop and list out specific needs (4HER program).
- Invite a member of your service unit team to attend if you need help with this meeting.
- Have a "Get to Know my Girl" info sheet so that parents can share helpful info for working with their daughter.
- If girls will attend this meeting, have a craft or simple activity to keep them engaged.



Parents and other family members can take an active role in supporting your Girl Scout’s experience. Use this chart to engage parents at your parent meeting.

The list below explains a number of roles your troop can use throughout the year.
4Her – make a commitment to volunteer 4 hours 4 her this year!

Help Needed	Description
Co-Leader	Partner with leader to provide regular support for all troop activities. Must be a member, background check and training required. Select “Troop Leader” when registering.
Meeting Helper/ Drivers	Assist leaders at meetings with activities. Drivers help drive girls to meetings and activities. Membership and background check required. Select “Troop Volunteer” when registering.
Troop Treasurer	Help leaders with all money matters, budgets, deposits, etc. Membership and background check required. Select “Troop Treasurer or Troop Volunteer”.
Camping Adult	Coordinate and attend troop campouts. Membership, background check and training required. Select “Troop Volunteer”.
CPR/First Aider	Attend outings outside regular meeting place. Membership, background check and certified training required. Select “Troop Volunteer”.
Troop Cookie Manager	Promote and run the cookie program for troop members. Membership, background check and training required. Select “Troop Cookie Manager”.
Supplies or Snack Coordinator	Provide assistance by providing or selecting snacks for troop meetings as needed. Collect/purchase troop supplies to be paid for by the troop for activities.
Communications Support	Share troop news, be the go to person to communicate Troop news, upcoming activities, etc. for the troop leaders.

If you have a talent not represented on this list, speak up and offer to share with the troop. From song and skit leaders to photographers, hobby experts, firewood suppliers and more, there is a place for you to volunteer with your Girl Scout troop. The help and engagement of every parent is important to the growth of the troop!

Pin and Badge Placement for Junior Uniforms

Girl Scout Junior Vest



Place your first Journey awards at the bottom of your vest. As you earn additional Journey awards, work your way up.

If your Journey awards and badges don't fit on the front of your vest or sash, you can wear them on the back.

Girl Scout Junior Sash



Place your Journey awards above your badges.

Girl Scout Troop Finances

Bank Accounts

- Two volunteers must be on the bank account.
- Find a bank with free accounts for GS Troops.
- Complete and submit the Request to Open a Bank Account form.
- Get approval and go to the bank together to complete the process.
- Register the account with GSNETX.

Suggested Banks that welcome Girl Scouts

Origin	BBVA Compass
Bank of the Ozarks	Landmark
Prosperity	Local Credit Unions
Point Bank	American National Bank
Veritex Community Bank	BB&T

Troop Budgets – Keeping good financial records is a must! Keep receipts and track troop activity costs. Troops should share financial information with parents 2-3 times a year. When planning make sure to keep the troop budget in mind and to save money to help fund next year’s activities, too.

Troop Dues – Most troops have troop dues and/or troop start-up fees. Make sure to be flexible with families when collecting troop monies. Troop dues/fees should be just enough to cover the cost of supplies, activity fees and badges/patches. Dues average \$3-5/meeting. Start-up fees range between \$5 and \$30 depending on the troop needs.



Tax Exempt Status – Girl Scout purchases are exempt from taxation in Texas. Always take an exemption form with you when making Girl Scout purchases. The form can be found at www.gsnetx.org/forms

Fund Raising – A troop’s primary money earning should come from the GSNETX fall product sale and Cookie Program. Once a troop has participated in the annual cookie program, they are able to participate in other troop money earning activities such as garage sales or car washes.

Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance is made available to all members and is intended to ensure the cost of membership never keeps a girl from experiencing Girl Scouts. For more information: www.gsnetx.org/financialassistance

For more information about finances check out Volunteer Essentials www.gsnetx.org/volunteeressentials.

Girl Scout Traditions

Hand Sign – Raise three fingers of the right hand with the thumb holding down the pinky. The 3 fingers represent the three parts of the Promise.

Handshake – Shaking hands with the left hand and make the GS sign with the right hand. The left hand is nearest to the heart and signifies friendship.

Friendship Circle – The unbroken chain of friendship. Girl Scouts stand in a circle crossing their right arms over their left, and clasping hands with their friends on both sides.

Girl Scout Out – fun way to end a meeting, girls are in the friendship circle, the girls spell Girl Scout

with each girl saying one letter, the girl who says “O” is the out. That girl in turn raises her arms still clasping hands, turning to the right and out of the circle. The next girl begins again with the G until the last girl is left as the winner.

SWAPS – Small tokens of friendship that girls often make and take to events or while traveling to swap with other Girl Scouts – “Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere”.

Kaper Charts – A chart dividing up troop responsibilities. Indicates all the jobs available and who is responsible during a meeting or a camp-out.

Keeping Girls Safe and First Aid Kits

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. Purchase a Girl Scout first-aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the girls can assemble a kit.



Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms, and health histories may be included as well. Check the kit regularly. Make sure the flashlight batteries work. Check expiration dates and replace any used or out-of-date contents.

Items to include:

- Adhesive bandages
- Sterile gauze pads
- Antibiotic ointment packets
- Hydrocortisone ointment packets
- Antiseptic wipe packets
- Nonlatex gloves
- Instant cold compress

Always keep your kit and your emergency card with the troop at all times.

Troop Communication

Good communication is essential to a well-run troop. It's a great idea to discuss how troop communications will be handled. Does everyone need to be in special troop Facebook group, an email group, etc. Will you make phone call reminders or text? Be sure to include response expectations in this conversation. A good idea is to always provide a deadline for communication responses. Do you have a parent who will be the designated communications person?

It's also important to keep an open and honest communication line with parents regarding behavior and/or special needs of girls and the troop.



Forms, All Kinds of Forms

gsnetx.org/forms

As a troop leader, you will find that forms are a necessity! Some useful forms you will need include:

Girl Health History Forms – To be completed by care givers each year

Permission Forms – To be completed by care givers each year

Activity Approval Forms – This form is required for Girl Scout events or activities that may require extra levels of safety, care or permission. It is also required for any money-earning activity

beyond the Girl Scout cookie program or fall product sales.

Opening or changing a Girl Scout bank account and ACH registration – See finances section on page 12.

Tax Exemption Form – Whenever purchasing troop supplies, etc.

Troop Changes Form – Making changes to your troop members

Troop Info Update Form – Updating meeting information and troop description

Your Year in Girl Scouts

AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
 National S'more Day  Recruit New Girls to Your Troop Back to Girl Scouts Plan Your Year GSNETX Leader Kick-Off	Hispanic History Month Back to Girl Scouts Investiture Ceremonies Fall Product Begins Recruit New Girls to Your Troop	Girl Scout Membership Year Begins  Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday	Thanksgiving
DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
	Happy New Year!  Cookie Sale	Black History Month  World Thinking Day Engineering Week	Women's History Month  Girl Scout Week Girl Scouts Celebrate Faith
APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
Earth Day National Volunteer Month  Girl Scout Leader Day	Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month  National Bridging Week Mental Health Awareness Month Early Bird Renewal/ Extended Year Membership Begins	National Get Outdoors Day Day/Twilight Camps Resident Camps	Independence Day Resident Camps

Visit gsnetx.org/events to learn more about our events and find the most up-to-date information. All events are subject to change without notice.

Product Sales Program

5 Skills + Financial Literacy

Each year, troops have two opportunities to participate in council sponsored money earning activities: the Fall Product Program and the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Each of these programs offer girls and troops the opportunity to earn funds to power their Girl Scout adventures, as well as rewards to keep girls engaged and motivated.

Through their participation in product sales programs, girls are able to launch their very own businesses while learning important life skills along the way:

Goal Setting

Decision Making

Money Management

People Skills

Business Ethics

There are also Cookie Business Badges and curriculum that help troop volunteers guide girls on this journey to developing their confidence in having a voice to set their goals, decide what they want to do with the money earned and understanding how to successfully run their Cookie Program.

- With the support of a volunteer in your Service Unit and the council Product Sales team, you will be connected to resources and support to ensure that you and your troop have everything that you need to have a successful experience.
- It's important to remember that any funds earned through money earning activities become property of the troop as a whole to further the Girl Scout experience.
- It must also be a girl-led decision on how these funds should be spent. Troop funds can be used towards meeting supplies, badges, field trips and activities, camping, experiences and more.

Fall Product Program | September – October

This is a great way to get girls and families comfortable with participating in council sponsored money earning activities.

- **What:** Girls sell nuts, candy and magazines online to family and friends.
- **How:** Customers can select to have their order delivered by the Girl Scout or shipped directly to them. Products to be delivered by girls will be shipped directly to the troop in November for distribution to girls and families.
- **Why:** Troops earn 20% of total sales that will be deposited into troop bank accounts in December.

Cookie Program | December – February

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world! The bulk of the troop's funds are earned through girls' participation in the Cookie Program and it's where they truly get to put the 5 Skills they have learned into action.

- **What:** Girls sell cookies to customers near and far online, in-person, and at booth sales.
- **How:** Family and friends support their favorite Girl Scout by purchasing cookies to help her reach her goal. With the support of parents/ caregivers and troop volunteers, girls can also participate in booth sales at local grocery stores, restaurants and more.
- **Why:** Troops earn proceeds on each package of cookies sold and girls earn rewards based on the number of packages they sell.

Ready, Set, Take Action

Community Service and Take Action Projects

Make the world a better place. For over 100 years, Girl Scouts have been encouraged to do anything they set their sights on and as a result, Girl Scouts continue to make an impact locally and globally.

Community Service Projects

Community service projects address an immediate need in the community and are appropriate for every Girl Scout – Junior through Ambassador! A great definition of community service is, “Community service makes the world a better place for some people right now.”

Take Action Projects

Take Action projects transform a community service project into a long-term, lasting impact for the community. With Take Action projects, girls are challenged and encouraged to research, plan, and lead projects that tackle the root of a local, national, or global problem. Girls think bigger and are encouraged to solve and address the problem in a way that will prohibit the problem from reoccurring. Take Action projects aim for long-term benefits that change the world in a meaningful, measurable, and sustainable way!

What is Take Action?

Girls will create and carry out a Take Action project with every Journey they complete. The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards all require the completion of a Take Action project.

Overview of Take Action

A Take Action project is a chance for girls to partner with others in their community to solve a problem. They learn about getting to the root causes of issues, mobilizing and engaging community members and volunteers, and striving toward creating a lasting change in their world. An important component is to understand and address the cause of a problem.

Girls must also make sure each project is sustainable and that the impact is measurable.

- **Sustainable:** Girls must make arrangements to ensure that the project creates lasting change and is not a one-time event. (Collaborate with community leaders and/or organization; creating relationships with mentors)
- **Measurable:** The success of the project can be determined based on the number of people the project helped, the number of people who were involved, any reduction in the community’s need, and other concrete numbers.

Steps of a Good Take Action Project

1. Girls identify assets and needs in a community.
2. Girls reach out beyond their circle to meet others. Try to meet people affected by your issue and people who are trying to solve it.
3. Girls make a decision about what they will take action on.
4. Girls learn the steps needed to carry out an action plan.
5. Girls assist with project logistics.
6. Girls take action alongside community members.
7. Girls reflect on their action and assess what they gained from it. Girls celebrate their community accomplishments.

Girl Scout Camping

When Girl Scouts get outside and connect with nature in a girl-led setting, they grow in self-confidence, develop their leadership skills, and foster a passion for environmental stewardship. Many Girl Scouts will tell you that camping trips and summer camp are some of the best things about their Girl Scout experience.

Our Camp and Outdoor Program

With a troop camp-trained adult along, girls can go troop camping at one of our five beautiful camps throughout the school year. Summer brings day/twilight camps, sleep away camping, and fun summer day camps for our girls to enjoy. Summer opportunities are announced in February /March each year. For more information about our camps check our website: gsnetx.org/camp

Camp Properties

STEM Center of Excellence Located in South Dallas, this camp is the perfect mix of hands-on STEM exploration and traditional camp activities. Workshops, trail hiking, and swimming is just some of the fun to be found here. Don't forget the s'mores!

Camp Bette Perot in Palestine is home to our Equestrian Leadership Center. Camp in a platform tent, cabin, or lodge. Swim in a sparkling pool, go for a horseback ride, go finishing, challenge yourself on the ropes course and so much more!

Camp Rocky Point is our rustic property on Lake Texoma. Hop into a platform tent to start your camping adventure. This waterfront camp features canoeing, kayaking, swimming and even axe throwing!

Camp Gambill is a tranquil camp retreat outside of Paris, Texas. This beautiful property features air conditioned cabins, a calming lake, Goosey Golf and a mascot, Kippy the Goose. Activities include swimming, hiking, kayaking, laser tag and paddle boating.

Camp K (Kadohadocho) is 150 rustic acres outside Pottsboro on Lake Texoma. This property is for our most adventurous, primitive campers.

Higher Awards

As a Junior Girl Scout troop, your girls are able to complete the first level of our higher awards – **The Bronze Award**.

Girl Scout Juniors team up to make a difference in their community. They learn important leadership skills, discover new passions, and watch how seemingly small actions make a big difference. Girls may earn individually or as a troop. Earning the Bronze award includes the completing of a

GS Journey and a suggested 20+ hours of project planning, implementation and promotion. Learn more about the Bronze award at gsnetx.org under Programs and Highest Awards.

Cadette Girl Scouts may earn the **Silver Award**, our second-highest award and Seniors and Ambassadors may earn the highest award, **The Gold Award**. For more information about these awards, visit our website gsnetx.org.

The Volunteer Toolkit: Your Digital Troop Assistant

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

This web-based program allows you more time to focus on your girls. It makes managing your troop and planning your meetings smooth and easy all year long. Inside, you'll find meeting overviews, activity plans, badge and journey outlines, meeting aids, Girl Scout resources and more!

Plan and Customize Your Year

At Girl Scouts, we know that when girls take part in shaping their Girl Scouts experience and adventures, they will be more engaged and will have more fun! The VTK makes it easy for troop co-leaders and girls explore meeting topics and ideas available for their grade level together and select what they want to include in their year. Co-leaders can take this information to plan and customize the troop's year using the VTK's pre-populated meeting plans, agendas, supply lists, and activity instructions.

Manage Troop Rosters, Attendance, and Accomplishments

With the VTK you will be able to view your troop roster, update contact information, record attendance at meetings, track girls' badge and Journey achievements, and renew memberships.

One-Click Communication

The VTK is not just for co-leaders, it's for parents, too! With its unique parent-view, parents can keep up with troop activities, meeting information, and what badges and Journeys their girls are working on. You can also email upcoming meeting agendas and troop plan to them with just one click.

Learn more about the VTK

For more information about the Volunteer Toolkit, check our website: www.gsnetx.org/vtk or contact Kelsey Brown and schedule a VTK meeting with her at kbrown@gsnetx.org

Easy Navigation at your Fingertips!

Here are just a few of the many features you'll find inside the VTK. We strongly encourage troop co-leaders to utilize the VTK to streamline their troop management and planning. GSUSA continues to update and enhance the VTK with additional resources, features and functions.

MY TROOP

- View, edit, download and print rosters.
- Edit contact info.
- View achievements and attendance.
- Email families.
- Renew memberships.

YEAR PLANS

- Specify meeting dates and locations.
- Preview and choose pre-populated year plans.
- Add and/or combine meeting plans to customize your year.
- Add custom troop activities like celebrations, field trips, camping trips, etc.

MEETING PLANS

- View, download, or print individual meeting summaries, activity plans and supply lists.
- Track attendance and achievements.
- Search and print meeting aids such as nametags, handouts, and more.

RESOURCES

- Access award logs, badge charts, meeting plans, and more.
- Access council specific resources on troop leadership, safety, training, GS traditions and awards, trips and travel, GS product sale, and camp and outdoor programs.

FINANCES

- Submit the annual troop finance report.

How Many Volunteers Do You Need?

Troop co-leaders are responsible for arranging and maintaining proper adult supervision for meetings and activities. Each troop meeting or Girl Scout group must have at least two unrelated adult members and a background check on file present at all times, plus additional adult volunteers as necessary. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old and one adult in every group must be female.

Use the table to identify how many adults you need based on the number of girls participating:

	TROOP MEETING		FIELD TRIP	
	The adult-to-girl ratio is two unrelated volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:	There should be one extra adult for every additional:	The adult-to-girl ratio is two unrelated volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:	There should be one extra adult for every additional:
Daisies K-grade 1	12 Girl Scouts	1-6 Girl Scouts	6 Girl Scouts	1-4 Girl Scouts
Brownies grades 2-3	20 Girl Scouts	1-8 Girl Scouts	12 Girl Scouts	1-6 Girl Scouts
Juniors grades 4-5	25 Girl Scouts	1-10 Girl Scouts	16 Girl Scouts	1-8 Girl Scouts
Cadettes grades 6-8	25 Girl Scouts	1-12 Girl Scouts	20 Girl Scouts	1-10 Girl Scouts
Seniors grades 9-10	30 Girl Scouts	1-15 Girl Scouts	24 Girl Scouts	1-12 Girl Scouts
Ambassadors grades 11-12	30 Girl Scouts	1-15 Girl Scouts	24 Girl Scouts	1-12 Girl Scouts

Safety Responsibilities for Girls

Girls who learn about and practice safe and healthy behaviors are likely to establish lifelong habits of safety consciousness. For that reason, each Girl Scout is expected to:

- Assist you and other volunteers in safety planning.
- Listen to and follow your safety instructions and suggestions.
- Learn and practice safety skills.
- Learn to “think safety” at all times and to be prepared.
- Identify and evaluate an unsafe situation.
- Know how, when, and where to get help when needed.
- Practice the buddy method when participating in troop activities.

Let's Go!

Your First Troop Meeting

Your first troop meeting is a great chance to get to know the girls and brainstorm all the exciting things they want to do in the year to come. If you're feeling a little nervous about leading troop meetings and experiences with your girls, that's OK! Just remember that:

It doesn't need to be perfect. Did an activity run over time? Or, maybe a field trip didn't go according to plan? Take a deep breath, roll with the changes, and have fun! The girls aren't expecting perfection from you: your time, attention, and guidance are the best part of your leadership.

Learn with your girls. Keeping activities girl-led also means that at some point, the girls will want to earn a badge or complete a project in a subject unfamiliar to you. Don't let that hold you back. Be open with the girls and when you don't know something and that you will be learning together. You'll show them that learning is a lifelong process and that with an open mind, they can overcome any challenge that comes their way.

Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

The only requirement for your troop meetings is that your girls are engaged and having fun! Many leaders use this basic structure for troop meetings:

- 1. Ramp Up** – plan an opening activity for girls upon arrival at the meeting so that have something to do before the meeting begins. Plan about five minutes for this, it could be snack, or creating a thank you card, coloring a page to donate, etc.
- 2. Opening** – Each troop decides what they will do regularly. Most begin with the reciting the Girl Scout Promise & Law, a song, game, story, or other activity designed by the girls. Plan 5-10 minutes for this.
- 3. Troop Business** – Collect dues, take attendance, make announcements or plan

upcoming activities while parents may be present.

- 4. Let the fun begin!** This is your activity for the meeting, work on a badge, journey, or complete other activities during this time plan 30 minutes to 1 hour according to your meeting time.
- 5. Clean Up** – Girls clean up all supplies and always leave a place cleaner than they found it. Plan about five minutes.
- 6. Closing** – As a troop, girls decide how they will end each meeting – a song, a game, a Girl Scout tradition. Plan 5-10 minutes for this.

Got Snacks?

Snacks are optional, but if your troop has chosen to include snacks, guide families to consider healthy snacks and always share any food allergies the girls in your troop may have. Include snack time as part of your troop meeting.

First Meeting Checklist

- Cover the basics. Review the details about when and where the meeting will take place and make sure parents/caregivers are aware.
- Get ready. Use the VTK to verify your troop roster and email parents. This might be a great time to remind parents to send health history forms, uniform orders, and troop dues to the meeting.
- Know the agenda. Refer to the Six Elements of a Troop Meeting list and your meeting agenda/plans
- Review and practice your agenda. You'll feel calmer during the actual meeting and ready to make adjustments as needed.
- Prepare for Fun! When the girls and parents see that you're prepared for the meeting and ready to have a great time, they'll follow your lead!

Working with Juniors

As a Junior leader, you will discover how fun the girls are as they begin to develop leadership skills, test boundaries, pursue new interests and become more independent. This is also a time girls will be learning how to build their relationship skills. Your job as the troop facilitator will be to ensure that activities are age-appropriate and based on their needs, interests and abilities.



*Girl Scouts
is girl-led!*

Juniors (4th/5th Grade Girls)	This means
Are starting to change physically.	Girls are starting to have growth spurts and develop; some may begin to go through puberty and have questions about these changes. Be prepared for any situation.
Are experiencing social changes.	Girls are beginning to form cliques and developing new friendships. This is a great time to continue revisiting the GS Law and what each line represents.
Beginning to leave the child stage and become tweens.	Girls are more social, talkative and they are stretching boundaries. They may also experience fast emotional shifts.
Are discovering what they like.	This is a great time for the girls to try new things at meetings and outings. Support the interests of each girl and encourage the girls to go outside their comfort zone trying new things. Girls this age also like to plan and go on trips.
Are active and want to have fun together.	Girls want to be in action - this is a good time to really follow the 3 processes of Girl Scouts – girl led, learning by doing and cooperative learning.
More aware of the world around them.	The girls enjoy performing service and being involved in their community.
Like making decisions and leading.	The girls enjoy brainstorming & choosing the activities they participate in. Girls also want to be in charge, and letting girls lead the meeting is a great way to keep everyone's attention.

Helpful Tips!

- Let the girls establish troop rules with you.
- Give girls the opportunity to express themselves.
- Give girls the responsibility for tasks.
- Vary troop activities.
- Use secret ballots to vote.
- Teach girls how to build consensus.
- Have girls take turns partnering with each troop member.
- Consider creating secret sister opportunities during the year.
- Allow the girls more independence while keeping them safe at the same time.

Meeting as a Troop

Your Troop Year at a Glance

We have found that troops who meet twice a month have the best experience! Make sure you mix it up and that meetings and outings capture the interests of the girls in your troop! In the rest of your handbook we have provided a simple set of meeting plans for you to use. More information on leading these badges can be found in your **Volunteer Toolkit**.

This is a great starting place for a troop to get started, but a troop isn't just about earning badges or Journeys, it really about making sure that the girls are making age appropriate decisions and having fun. To that end, you will want to weave a variety of activities into your Girl Scout year. Girls will enjoy getting outdoors, performing community service, going on field trips and just hanging out together having fun and having new experiences. Two pieces of advice: keep it girl-led and keep it fun!

To help you create a well-rounded year in Girl Scouting, set up your troop calendar in your **Volunteer Toolkit**. For help finding just the right balance, contact our **New Troop Program Support Coordinator at kbrown@gsnetx.org to set up a time to plan out your year together.**

Resources For Planning Meetings

Virtual Meetings

In today's world many troops are finding the need to offer virtual meetings. Some troops will continue to meet virtually and some are going to go with a hybrid model of in person meetings along with virtual meetings. It's a great idea to discuss this with your co-leader(s) and your troop families. You can find some great information and tools for virtual meetings on our website: **gsnetx.org/blueprint** under the Meeting Planning Tools. You will find info on how to get a gsZoom license, backgrounds, how to adapt badge plans and connect with your girls virtually!

Virtual Meeting Playbook – This is a great resource for leaders to learn how to adapt to a virtual meeting format. Check it out at: **www.gsnetx.org/volunteertraining**

Troop Leader Blueprint – Find even more badges, journeys and activities broken down to help you! Located on our website, the Blueprint has info on how to work with girls and their families to great ideas for icebreakers and games, meeting virtually and in person, and more. Troop Leader Blueprint (**gsnetx.org/blueprint**)

Jumpstart – Unsure how to lead STEM badges? This is your easy to use, on-the-go digital assistant helping leaders deliver empowering, enjoyable, STEM programming to girls! Just create an account on our website at **gsnetx.org/jumpstart**

Here's to a great year in Girl Scouting!

The rest of this handbook includes 8-10 meeting plans that have been simplified to help you get your year started! These meeting plans are meant to be used in conjunction with the Volunteer Toolkit. We hope this helps you gain confidence as you embark on your own Girl Scout journey.

Your Junior Year-at-a-Glance

Junior Girl Scout Adventures

Junior Girl Scouts are ready to broaden their world! Girls enjoy starting with a simple overnight trip of 1-2 days and look forward to extended overnight travel of 3 or more nights!

It's always best to start with a council camp for your troop's first campout and progress to traveling away from home. Planning for campouts and other trips is an opportunity for girls to develop decision-making skills and work collaboratively with leaders and troop volunteers. Be sure to include a Girl Scout purpose to your trip such as how the trip fits into badge earning opportunities and what skills the girls will gain from the experience. Make sure the girls are involved in each step of the planning process.

Things to think about before you get started:

- What is the approval process from GSNETX?
- Financing your adventure
- Plan for safety
- Communication with families
- Permissions and paperwork

For more information about taking your troop camping or on a trip:

www.gsnetx.org/volunteeressentials.

The Girl Scout Secret Sauce

WHAT:

Girl Scouts do activities in Four Pillars



Traditions | Troop Meetings | Field Trips
Badges | Patches | Journeys | Camp
Cookie Business | Take Action Projects

HOW:

Girl Scouts experience our unique environment and three processes

Environment = all-girl safe space with supportive adult mentors (you!)

Three processes = girl-led, learn by doing, cooperative learning

The "**secret sauce**" is the vehicle that distinguishes Girl Scouts from other youth organizations and the driver of amazing leadership outcomes!

WHY:

Girl Scouts become people of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

Outcomes, or benefits, of the Girl Scout experience include:

Sense of Self • Positive Values
Healthy Relationships • Challenge Seeking
Community Problem Solving