



National Service Projects: Fighting Hunger

Instructions for Troop Leaders

More than 50 million adults, kids, and families in the U.S. are experiencing food insecurity—that is, a lack of nutritious food to help them live an active, healthy life. The number has only increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and may include members of our own communities, friends and family, or members of our troops, making this a sensitive and important take action issue for Girl Scouts.

As they think about how to give back this holiday season, girls can make a big difference in their communities—and for children around the world—by supporting hunger relief efforts.

Here's how your troop can get started:

- 1. Discuss food insecurity in the U.S. and globally.** Using the discussion guide on page 4, lead your girls in a conversation about food insecurity, keeping in mind that they could be experiencing food insecurity themselves. You may want to reach out to troop families ahead of time to let them know about the discussion topic.
- 2. Ask your girls how they want to make an impact.** You may choose to collect food for your local food bank, write thank-you notes to food bank workers, volunteer at a drive-thru food pantry, or support families globally by partnering with UNICEF to provide nutritious food to children.

There are lots of ways for your troop to get involved, whether you're meeting safely in person or virtually and even if you aren't able to give food directly:

- 1. Support a food drive in your community**
 - Decide which food drive, food bank, or food pantry the troop will support.
 - Ask your troop to research food drives or food banks and pantries in your community. If you have younger girls, you may want to ask your troop families to help gather this info.
 - Is your school organizing a food drive you could support? Or a local house of worship? What about a grocery store or local business?
 - Is there a food bank or local organization you've worked with in the past that may need support?
 - If you aren't sure about food banks in your community, check out [Feeding America's network of local food banks](#). Food pantries can often be found on food bank websites as *agency partners* that distribute food from food banks.

- Set a goal of how much food your troop will collect or donate.
 - Goals can be a motivating factor for your girls! If your troop has ten girls, for instance, you might set a collection goal of five cans and five boxes per girl or a troop total of 75 packages of food.
- Organize your troop's own virtual or socially distanced food drive.

As you plan your drive, ask your troop to consider:

- When will the food drive begin and end?
- Where will your troop donate food?
 - Make sure to check that your local food bank is accepting donations and to see if they have any guidelines to follow.
 - Consider creating signs to clearly instruct others where and how to donate food items.
- Who might you ask to contribute to your food drive? How will you reach out to them?
- How will you collect food in a COVID-safe manner?
- How will the food be picked up or dropped off?

Need some help getting started? We've created a few resources to get you going. Check out our food drive toolkit, which includes guidelines, email templates and a sample flyer.

2. Thank a Food Bank Hero!

- Food bank staff and volunteers are on the front lines of combating hunger and food insecurity—and they'll be working especially hard during the holiday season.
- Write to a Food Bank Hero to show your troop's appreciation and send encouragement for the vital work they do.
- Mail your troop's thank-you notes to your local food bank to be shared with staff—handwritten cards are guaranteed to bring a smile to these heroes' faces.
- Visit [Feeding America's](#) website for inspiration or to send a thank-you virtually.

3. Volunteer at a drive-thru food pantry.

- Drive-thru food distribution programs offer a safe way for food banks to provide food for our struggling neighbors. Most are entirely contactless and all rely on the help of volunteers. Visit [Feeding America](#) to learn more about this option and to verify that your Girl Scouts are old enough to volunteer. Make sure to comply with [Girl Scouts' Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) and your council's safety guidelines.

Once your troop has completed this service project, remember to:

- Inspire others to give back! Post a photo of your project to your social networks using the hashtag #GirlScoutsGiveBack. Be sure to tag @girlscouts too!
- [Complete our survey](#) so your troop's impact can be counted in our national service projects.

- If you wish to recognize your troop's participation with a patch, we recommend this [Girl Scouts Give Back patch](#).

For all National Service Project activities taking place during COVID-19, please make sure that your troop complies with health and safety guidelines given by the CDC, your local government, and your local Girl Scout council.

Troop Discussion Guide—Hunger & Food Insecurity:

If we want to secure a brighter, more equitable future for all children, combatting food insecurity is an important first step. Check out Feeding America's [article on children and hunger](#) and resources on food insecurity to learn more. As you get ready to engage your girls in a potentially sensitive discussion, we also recommend checking out [Six Ways You Can Foster Respectful Conversations Within Your Troop](#).

Helpful Definitions:

- **Food security:** When people have physical and economic access to as much nutritious food as they need to live a healthy, active life
- **Food insecurity:** When a person or family is without reliable access to a sufficient amount of affordable, nutritious food. Food insecurity is one way we can measure and assess the risk of hunger.
- **Hunger:** a personal, physical sensation of discomfort caused by wanting or needing food

Discussion Questions:

- Think about one reason why access to food is important. Will you share your answer with the troop?
- Can you think of any examples of programs that provide food to people? (*for example: food drives, meals on wheels, school meal programs*)
- How is food insecurity different from hunger?
- Why is it important to us as a troop to help families and individuals who might be experiencing food insecurity?
- We can't always know how others are feeling or what challenges others may be experiencing—including who in our communities might be suffering from food insecurity. How can we express compassion and support to others, regardless of if we know their personal circumstances?
- Why is it important to care for our own community? How do we wish to support others around the world who might be food insecure as well?
- (*Especially for older girl troops*) How has COVID-19 changed your view on the importance of supporting our community? What increased challenges do you think COVID is causing to people's lives across the country?
- How can we, as a troop, help others? What actions feel most meaningful for us to do? What is achievable for us as a troop?
- *If your troop wants to think bigger, brainstorm some solutions to systemic food insecurity. What are some actions that we can take in the future—as a troop, or as a greater community—to help more people have access to food? Are there changes our government can support to help our communities become more food secure?*