



COVID-19 Highest Awards Guidelines: April 2, 2020

Gold, Silver and Bronze Award Girl Scouts are the youth leaders their communities need to create solutions to the new and ever-changing challenges that arise from this global pandemic.

We recognize the impact of the COVID-19 closures and 'stay at home orders' are having on Girl Scouts who want to earn the highest awards. We're committed to supporting girls with the time and space they need to adjust to these changes, so when they're ready, they can safely harness their enthusiasm and facilitate meaningful solutions with their communities!

To ensure all Girl Scouts who want to earn the Highest Awards this year have the opportunity, Girl Scouts is offering a **3-month deadline extension from September 30 to December 31, 2020** for Girl Scouts who are graduating from 5th grade (Juniors who seek to earn the Bronze Award), 8th grade (Cadettes who seek to earn the Silver Award) and 12th grade (Ambassadors who seek to earn the Gold Award) this year. These Girl Scouts will bridge to the next program level officially on October 1, 2020 and, without this extension, would be no longer eligible to earn the Bronze, Silver or Gold Award, respectively.

Girl Scouts should have a project identified, a plan in place and be ready to take action no later than September 30, 2020. This means:

- 5th grade Juniors should be on Step 6 of their Bronze Award by September 30, 2020
- 8th grade Cadettes should be on Step 7 of their Silver Award by September 30, 2020
- 12th grade Ambassadors should have an approved Gold Award proposal on file with GSMISTS by September 30, 2020

GSMISTS Troop Leaders approve Bronze or Silver Award projects, so we kindly remind them to be "honest and fair" when using this extension.

Graduating 12th grade Ambassadors should plan to have an adult membership in order to use the extension. We want every girl or adult to be a member if they are working on a Girl Scout activity. A Girl Scout membership not only provides activity insurance, but also ensures there is no disruption to the council/national structure and support Girl Scouts offers. These Gold Award Candidates may renew as an adult or choose [Lifetime Membership](#). Thanks for helping us keep Girl Scouts safe and engaged during the extension!

Here are some coaching tips for girls:

Help girls feel confident in making impact through virtual solutions.

It might take a bit of coaching to help girls grasp how to transform their hands-on, interactive, resource-driven project into a new structure that accommodates today's challenges. Be patient and understanding as you help them identify useful knowledge and resources.

Just like in pre-pandemic times, virtual solutions must address the root cause of a community issue with sustainable and measurable impact. Girls should be able to say "here's the change I wanted to make, and here's how I know I made it"—and they should be able to provide proof that their solution made that meaningful change. Be sure girls are following the Safety Activity Checkpoints for virtual events, just like they would for in-person settings.

Facilitate reflection that positions girls as the *leaders and change makers we know they are*. Guide them through the "*What? So What? Now What?*" framework by asking: What? (What is happening/changing?), So What? (So, what does that matter?) and Now What? (Now what do we do better/differently in these new circumstances?) It may also be pertinent to add: "Who is this impacting and how?" This framework will help girls analyze the situation and harness their leadership to develop new solutions that creatively meet their community's needs.

Obstacles provide opportunity to problem-solve; barriers don't and should be addressed.

Obstacles can be overcome—While girls no longer have in-person access to a site and/or their target audience, those people are still seeking engagement! Use the "*What? So What? Now What?*" reflection framework to help girls brainstorm other ways of meeting their community needs. Problem solving is a critical part of the highest awards. So, can they harness digital solutions to engage their target audience or broaden their impact by scheduling online "train the trainer" sessions that equip peer or adult volunteers to host sessions on their topic?

Barriers are showstoppers—girls may lack access to computers/the internet or experience funding/resource shortages. Reach out to GSMISTS for support.

Community partners may need time to adjust. Give it to them!

Like all of us, community partners and other organizations are also in a significant period of adjustment. They may lack the capacity or interest to continue supporting girls' projects right now. And, project advisors may be too overwhelmed to give proper attention, guidance and support. Coach girls to be patient and mindful that "right now" might not be the right timing and waiting a month or two may give community partners, project advisors and other teammates time to adjust and become receptive. This is one reason GSUSA put the national extension in place.

When community partners are available, girls can lead with forward thinking. Encourage girls to flex their leadership muscles by proactively asking: What's your current situation? What do you need now/today that has shifted from the original plan? And, how can my work/plan support your new goals?

Thank you for thoughtfully investing in girls so they can safely and confidently continue to make the world a better place!