

New Leader Guide

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

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.



The Girl Scout Secret Sauce

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

Girl Scouts do activities in Four Pillars



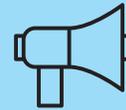
STEM



Outdoors



Entrepreneurship



Life Skills

Types of Activities:

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

5 Outcomes of the Girl Scout Experience

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

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

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

CEO Greeting

Thanks so much for making the decision to join the Girl Scout movement. Your service in support of our mission to build girls of courage, character, and confidence who make the world a better place is very much appreciated. By volunteering with Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore, you will make a positive impact on the lives of girls in our communities.

Serving as a Girl Scout leader is a commitment to helping girls become the best that they can be through a thoughtful and engaging Girl Scout experience. By creating a welcoming, safe, and interesting environment for your Girl Scouts, you are allowing them to learn, grow, and develop skills that will benefit them for years to come.

Girl Scouting is designed to be girl-led which teaches girls to develop planning and critical thinking skills, both essential to leadership. With your guidance, girls will take the lead in selecting what they do as a troop – from which badges and Journeys they earn, to what to eat on their first camp-out together, to determining what to do with the cookie money they’ve earned. Through this process, you’ll be teaching them collaboration, teamwork, and how to effectively advocate for their ideas. This may be one of the most essential of the leadership skills.

Thanks so much for your contribution to the Girl Scout mission and for partnering with us to build girls of character, courage, and confidence who make the world a better place.

Today, you are helping to develop the leaders of tomorrow. You are making a difference!

In gratitude,



Vivian TerMaat
CEO, Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore



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This guide takes the guesswork out of leading a troop.

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Checklist for New Troop Leaders

Starting a New Girl Scout Troop

Step 1

- Register as a Girl Scout troop leader or assistant leader.
- Complete a background check. Once your registration is processed, check your e-mail for a link to your background check. The e-mail will come from Sterling Volunteers. If you do not see it in your Inbox, check your Spam or Junk folders. If you still cannot find it, please call GSMISTS. Complete the background check within 48 hours. Background checks expire every 3 years.
- Have your Welcome Call with your First Year Troop Support Coordinator. They will support you this year.
- Find your troop roster in MY GS. Introduce yourself to the Girl Scouts in your troop by e-mail or phone call.
- Pick up your New Troop Starter Kit.

Step 2

- Begin GSMISTS New Leader Training, starting with the Troop Finance Training.
- Meet with your assistant leader. Plan a parent/caregiver meeting and talk troop meeting details.
- Schedule and hold a parent/caregiver meeting. Don't forget to use the parent/caregiver meeting agenda on page 10.

Step 3

- Explore the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK).
- Plan and schedule your first troop meeting with the girls.

Step 4

- Establish Your Troop Bank Account
 - All Girl Scout troops must have a checking account.
 - Complete Troop Finance Training.
- To Open Account:
- Secure two, unrelated adults, who are registered and approved Girl Scout volunteers to co-sign the account.
 - Request the Troop Bank Letter Packet from your First Year Troop Support Coordinator.
 - Complete account information on the Bank Account Information and ACH Authorization form. Submit to your First Year Troop Support Coordinator.

Step 5

- Attend a Service Unit Leader Meeting.



Getting Started

New leaders often spend the first few weeks getting started and setting up their troop. Be sure to use your **CHECKLIST** on page 4 of this guide.



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 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, GSMISTS is here to help you!

Looking to grow your troop more?

As a leader, you can make sure your troop is available in the Troop Catalog for new members to register at will. 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. Your troop will be displayed in the Troop Catalog until it has 12 girls in it. You are always welcome to grow the troop beyond 12 girls as long as there is the appropriate adult to girl ratio.

Meeting Location and Times

Remember, set meeting times that work with your schedule! You will need to choose a location for regular meetings—a local park, library, school, private homes—the troop can meet anywhere that follows the Girl Scout 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 ½ or 2 hours)—right after school, weekday evening, or weekend.

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? 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.

Training

New leaders are required to complete GSMISTS New Leader Training within 60 days.

This learning path can be found in gsLearn, accessed through your MY GS account.

Troop Finance Training must be completed before a troop bank account can be opened.

If your troop plans to go on outings and trips, at least one registered and approved Girl Scout volunteer will need to take an approved First Aid/CPR class.

Additionally, once your troop is ready to plan a campout, you will need to have at least one registered and approved Girl Scout volunteer take Troop Camping Skills training.

Check out gsLearn for these other quick trainings which will help you work with your troop:

- GSMISTS 450 Volunteer Toolkit
- GSUSA Delivering Inclusive Program
- GSUSA Mental Wellness 101
- GSUSA Daisy Grade Level Essentials
- GSUSA Daisy Petal Badges
- GSUSA Brownie Grade Level Essentials
- GSUSA Resilient. Ready. Strong. Patch
- GSUSA Tree Promise



A New Leader's Support System

Your Support System

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

Your GSMISTS Council Staff

We are here for you!

Your Placement Specialist will work with you to establish and grow your troop.

Your First Year Troop Support Coordinator will support you throughout your first year as a leader.

The First Year Troop Support Coordinator will:

- Set up consistent phone calls with you. You may have a list of questions to talk through or maybe not, either way you will have the peace of mind knowing someone will be calling you.
- Connect you with a New Troop Starter Kit.
- Invite you to participate in monthly New Leader Meetings.
- Invite you to attend New Leader Summits.
- Introduce you to your Service Unit.

Your Community Membership Manager will become your support system once after you have completed your first year as a leader.

New Troop Starter Kit

- This kit contains easy-to-follow meeting plans to help you lead your troop through your first 6 Daisy or Brownie meetings.
- In addition to badge activities and Girl Scout traditions, helpful tips and tricks to running successful troop meetings are included.
- Contains supplies such as tape, crayons, scissors, and activity pages to help you get started.
- Any badges completed and earned by your troop are not included.

Monthly New Leader Meetings

- Each meeting will have a topic to focus on where information will be shared with you. November, January, February, and March focus solely on cookie training.
- Meets virtually on Zoom. You will receive the Zoom information a week prior to each monthly meeting.
- Meetings are recorded. The link to the recording and any notes are e-mailed within 48 business hours.

New Leader Summits

Meet other new leaders during these in person days of learning and sharing.

Adult Resource Weekends

- Occur twice a year, in the fall at the Betsy Cutler House in Muskegon and in the spring at Camp Anna Behrens in Greenville.
- Learn new skills and meet other Girl Scout volunteers from throughout GSMISTS.

Your Service Unit

What is a Service Unit? It is a geographically defined area consisting of Girl Scout troops in the same community or school district. These troops are supported by a Service Unit team.

The team includes a Director, Treasurer, Product Program Manager, Event Manager, School Representative, and more. These volunteers work together to support you by providing activities and event opportunities in your area.

Troop leaders are invited to Service Unit meetings which are usually held monthly and can be in person or virtual. During these meetings you can:

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

Your Support Team

	NAME	PHONE	E-MAIL
First Year Troop Support Coordinator (GSMISTS Staff)			
Community Membership Manager (CMM) (GSMISTS Staff)			
Placement Specialist (GSMISTS Staff)			
Service Unit Name			
Service Unit Meeting Time			
Service Unit Meeting Location			
SERVICE UNIT VOLUNTEER POSITIONS	NAME	PHONE	E-MAIL
Service Unit Director			
Service Unit Event Manager			
Service Unit Product Program Manager			
Service Unit Treasurer			
Service Unit Recruiter			
Service Unit School Rep			

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, another parent are all great people to lead a troop with. If you need assistance recruiting an assistant leader, talk to your Placement Specialist or Community Membership Manager.

Before meeting with parents/caregivers 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/caregivers?
- How will you handle your own Girl Scout(s) 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.



Working with Parents/Caregivers

Unlike many other activities, a Girl Scout troop needs parent and caregiver support to thrive!

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/caregivers can get involved to help the troop.
- Have parents/caregivers complete health history forms and annual permission forms. Share contact info for all troop members.
- Discuss the types of activities the troop will participate this year (regular meetings, outings, events, camping trips).
- Answer any questions the parents/caregivers may have.

Helpful Tips for your Parent/Caregiver meeting!

- 100% of troops with the most satisfied parents and leaders report they hold a Parent/Caregiver Meeting
- Don't try to do this alone! Check out the Appendix of the electronic version of the *New Leader's Guide* for more information and tools to help get parents/caregivers involved.
- If Girl Scouts 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 their Girl Scout's experience.**

The list below explains a number of roles your troop can use throughout the year.

Help Needed	Description
Assistant Troop Leader	Partner with leader to provide regular support for all troop activities. Must be a member, background check, and training required.
Troop Helper/ Drivers	Assist leaders at meetings with activities. Drivers help drive girls to meetings and activities. Membership and background check required.
Troop Treasurer	Help leaders with all money matters, budgets, deposits, etc. Membership and background check required.
Camp Trained Adult	Coordinate and attend troop campouts. Membership, background check, and training required.
First Aider	Attend outings outside regular meeting place. Membership, background check, and First Aid/CPR training required.
Cookie Manager	Promote and run the cookie program for troop members. Membership, background check, and training required.
Supplies or Snack Coordinator	Help 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 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/caregiver is important to the growth of the troop!

How Many Volunteers Do You Need?

The adult supervision rule at Girl Scouts is a strict standard that requires whenever girls meet, whether in person or virtually, there must be at least two registered, approved adult volunteers who are unrelated (for example: not a sibling, spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, or anyone who would be considered a family member) and who do not live in the same residence with a minimum of one who is female. This applies to every Girl Scout gathering. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Use the table to identify how many volunteers 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 volunteer 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 volunteer 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 System” 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!

It doesn't need to be perfect. Did an activity run over time? Or, maybe an outing 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 to do upon arrival at the meeting so they 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**—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 for this.
- 5. Clean Up**—Girls clean up all supplies and always leave a place cleaner than they found it. Plan about 5 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.

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 6 Elements of a great 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/caregivers see that you're prepared for the meeting and ready to have a great time, they'll follow your lead!

The Volunteer Toolkit: Your Digital Troop Assistant

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

This comprehensive digital tool 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 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 leaders and girls explore meeting topics and ideas available for their grade level together and select what they want to include in their year. 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.

Learn more about the VTK

For more information about the Volunteer Toolkit, check out:

www.gsmists.org/en/for-volunteers/volunteer-toolkit.html



Easy Navigation at your Fingertips!

Here are just a few of the many features you'll find inside the VTK. We strongly encourage 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.
- Renew memberships.

YEAR PLANS

- Specify meeting dates and locations.
- Preview & choose pre-populated year plans.
- Add and/or combine meeting plans to customize your year.
- Add custom troop activities like celebrations, outings, 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 name tags, handouts, and more.

RESOURCES

- Access award logs, badge charts, meeting plans, and more.
- Access GSMISTS specific resources on troop leadership, safety, training, GS traditions and awards, trips and travel, Girl Scout Product Programs, and camp and outdoor programs.

FINANCES

- Submit the annual troop finance report.

Girl Scout Troop Finances

Bank Accounts

- Two unrelated, registered and approved volunteers must be on the troop bank account.
- Huntington Bank is the recommended bank.
- Troop bank accounts should be opened within thirty days of your Welcome Call with your First Year Troop Support Coordinator.
- Once the troop bank account is open a Bank Account Information and ACH Authorization Form must be submitted to your First Year Troop Support Coordinator.

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. If troop dues are collected, Girl Scouts shall not be excluded from any activities regardless of their ability to pay troop dues.

Money Earning

- A troop's primary money earning should come from the GSMISTS Fall Product Program and Cookie Program.
- Troops need to participate in the Fall Product Program and Cookie Program in order to participate in other troop money earning activities such as garage sales or car washes.

Ways to Use Troop Funds

- Paying for each Girl Scout's annual membership fee
- Paying for troop leader and assistant leader's annual membership fee.
- Purchasing badges, patches, and/or uniform pieces.
- Paying for trips, programs, and outings.
- Paying for adult training, such as First Aid/CPR, archery, or lifeguarding.

Finance Report

- Login to the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) to access your troop's annual finance report. Familiarizing yourself with the report will make it easier to submit.
- The troop finance report is available after October 1.
- The troop finance report is due annually by June 1.
- Using the Detailed Cash Report is encouraged to track expenses as they occur. It will help you when you complete the finance report.

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 e-mail: customercare@gsmists.org



Product 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 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 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 Program 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, outings and activities, camping, experiences, and more.

Fall Product Program | 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 arrive in November for distribution to girls and families.
- **Why:** Troops earn 10% of total sales and girls earn awards based on dollars sold.

Cookie Program | January - March

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.

Forms and Resources

All of the following forms and resources can be found at www.gsmists.org/en/for-volunteers/forms---resources.html

Volunteer Essentials

Series of webpages providing information on All About Girl Scouts, Engaging Girls and Families, Troop Management, Product Program, Troop Finances, and Safety.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

A resource providing the standard safety guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) and Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore's approved activities. Be sure to refer to it when planning all of your troop's activities.

GSMISTS Volunteer Policies and Procedures

A resource that provides GSMISTS Volunteer Policies and Procedures.

GSMISTS Activity and Trip Planning Guide

A resource that will help you plan safe activities and trips.

Money Earning and Fund Raising Guidelines

A resource providing information on money earning and fund raising.

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

Annual Permission and Health History Form

This form obtains parent/caregiver permission for all meetings for the Girl Scout year. It also gives permission for the following activities/trips:

- Located within GSMISTS council jurisdiction.
- Not exceeding 8 hours, including travel time.
- Not considered high risk/high adventures activities as outlined in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* and *GSMISTS Activity and Trip Planning Guide* (any activity requiring GSMISTS approval).

Girl Permission Form

Parents/caregivers complete this form for the following activities:

- Located outside GSMISTS council jurisdiction.
- Exceeding 8 hours, including travel time.
- Considered high risk/high adventures activities as outlined in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* and *GSMISTS Activity and Trip Planning Guide* (any activity requiring GSMISTS approval).

Activity and Trip Application Form

Required for Girl Scout events or activities requiring an extra level of safety, care, or permission. See *GSMISTS Activity and Trip Planning Guide* for more information.

Activity Insurance Purchase Form

Additional activity insurance needs to be purchased for certain activities or events. See *GSMISTS Activity and Trip Planning Guide* for more information.

Accident/Incident Report

Use this form to report any troop accidents or incidents to GSMISTS.

Guidelines for Girl Scout Meetings/Activities in the Home

Includes information on how to get your home approved for Girl Scout meetings and activities.

Permission to Participate in Product Programs

Required annually for Girl Scouts to participate in the Fall Product Program and/or Cookie Program.

Detailed Cash Report

Use this spreadsheet to troop incomes and expenses.

GSMISTS Events & Properties

GSMISTS works with over 50 Program Partners throughout the council who provide activities and events for troops. GSMISTS staff also provide opportunities at our properties and at other locations.

GSMISTS Event Calendar

Check out the events GSMISTS has planned for troops just like yours to participate in. The event calendar is updated regularly so make sure to bookmark it.

Programs on Demand

Choose your own adventure with Programs on Demand! Whether it be building birdhouses, going horseback riding, or getting creative at a studio, there is no shortage of what you and your troop can do! With Programs on Demand, you work directly with a Program Partner to set up the details of your activity.

Our Properties

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

With an adult who has completed Troop Camping Skills training, Girl Scouts can go troop camping at one of our properties.

Camp Anna Behrens

The 360 wooded acres at Camp Anna Behrens, located in Greenville, provides the perfect setting for a variety of outdoor activities. The property borders the Flat River on its western side with a large lake, two smaller lakes, marshes, and large stands of pine and hardwood trees. The perfect spot to host overnight events with several different types of lodging available for rental such as Brinkert's Troop House, Meijer and Wege Yurts, White Pine and Lodge Pole Cabins, and Sherwood Lodge. Two shower houses, available early May to early October, are also available for use on the property.

Camp Woodlands

This wooded 30 acre camp (leased from the Michigan DNR) is located 3 miles west of Alpena, surrounded by the Thunder Bay River State Forest. It provides unlimited area for nature exploration and is an excellent setting for nature programs. The main building has room for activities, a kitchen, and bathroom with showers, and an updated bunkroom, which sleeps 20. There are also 5 rustic campsites, with new outhouse facilities, surrounding the main building.

Betsy Cutler House

The Betsy Cutler House is located in North Muskegon and is used year-round for trainings, badge workshops, day camps, and overnights. The house sleeps up to 50 with mattresses. The property includes wetlands, 4 large ponds, and a creek. There are picnic tables, campfire area for outdoor cooking, an outdoor amphitheater with fire ring, wetland boardwalk, and nature trails.

Ludington Little House

Located close to downtown Ludington and 1.5 miles from Lake Michigan. The property has a capacity to sleep 20. Inside the building there is a full kitchen and 1/2 bath. Outside there is a picnic area, campfire ring, and space to pitch a few tents. The 20' x 40' cinderblock building is ideal for day use and overnights.

Grand Haven Little House

The Girl Scout "Little House", has been in downtown Grand Haven since 1942. As of Fall 2021 the old "Little House" has been torn down and a new "Little House" is being built in its place. The new "Little House" will have a full kitchen, 1-1/2 bathrooms with a shower, activity areas and an office/bedroom area. The new "Little House" will be done by late 2022.

Find out more about our properties at www.gsmists.org/en/properties/our-properties.html

Stay Connected with GSMISTS

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 e-mail 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.

Digital Newsletter In the Know

A monthly newsletter sent to your e-mail or available on gsmists.org. *In the Know* is for troop leaders and service unit team members to stay informed on GSMISTS happenings and activities.

What's inside:

- Membership Info
- Product Program
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Upcoming Events
- Ways to Support GSMISTS
- Shop Updates

Be Featured

You or your troop could be featured on our social media channels, or e-mail newsletters! Simply submit a photo to communications@gsmists.org or tag us on social media [@gsmists](https://www.instagram.com/gsmists) sharing your adventure, project, or accomplishment!



Digital Newsletter Shore Shout Out

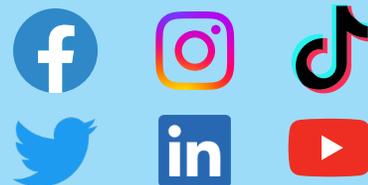
A quarterly newsletter sent to your e-mail or available on gsmists.org. *Shore Shout Out* is for for Girl Scout families to share GSMISTS happenings and activities.

What's inside:

- Membership Info
- Product Program
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Upcoming Events
- Ways to Support GSMISTS
- Shop Updates

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Girl Scout Traditions

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

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 troop 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, permission forms, and health histories should 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
- Non latex gloves
- Instant cold compress

Always keep your kit and GSMISTS Emergency Procedures with the troop at all times.

Ready, Set, Take Action

Community Service and Take Action Projects

Make the world a better place. For over 110 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–Daisy 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.

Girl Scouts 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 a Take 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.
8. Girls celebrate their community accomplishments.

Meeting as a Troop

Your Troop Year at a Glance

We have found that troops who meet at least 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! 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 outings 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**.

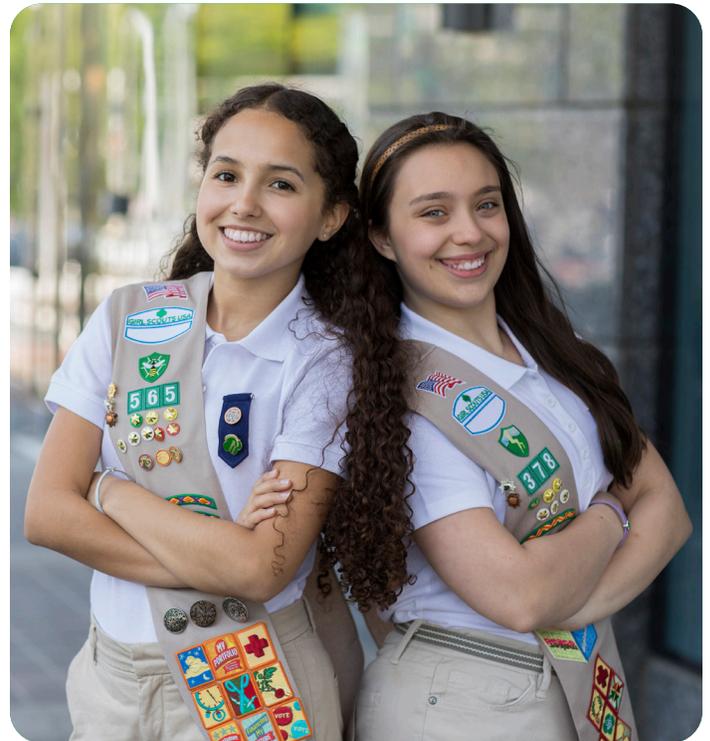
Troop Leader Blueprint—Find even more badges, Journeys and activities broken down to help you! Located on our website, the Blueprint has info on how to work with girls and their families to great ideas for icebreakers and games, meeting virtually and in person, and more.

Higher Awards

Once your troop becomes a Junior Girl Scout troop, they 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 Girl Scout Journey and a suggested 20+ hours of project planning, implementation and promotion.

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 gsmists.org under **Activities, Highest Awards**.



Your Year in Girl Scouts

OCTOBER

- New Membership Year Begins
- New Leader Monthly Meeting: Volunteer Toolkit Training
- Investiture/Rededication Ceremonies
- Fall Product Program Occurs
- Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday

NOVEMBER

- New Leader Monthly Meeting: Cookie Training
- Native American Heritage Month

DECEMBER

- New Leader Monthly Meeting: World Thinking Day
- New Leader Summit



JANUARY

- New Leader Monthly Meetings: Cookies Part 1 & Part 2
- Cookie Program Begins



FEBRUARY

- New Leader Monthly Meeting: Cookies Part 3
- World Thinking Day
- Black History Month



MARCH

- New Leader Monthly Meeting: Cookies Part 4
- Girl Scout Week
- Women's History Month

APRIL

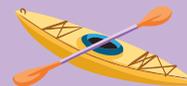
- Early Bird Renewal/Extended Year Membership Begins
- New Leader Monthly Meeting: Finance Report Training
- National Volunteer Month
- Girl Scout Leader's Day
- Earth Day

MAY

- New Leader Monthly Meeting: Bridging and End of the Year Ceremonies and Summer Activities
- Bridging Ceremonies
- Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month
- Mental Health Awareness Month

JUNE

- National Get Outdoors Day
- Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge
- New Leader Summit



JULY

- Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge
- Community Camp Weekends at Camp Anna Behrens



AUGUST

- Recruit New Girls to Your Troop
- Plan Your Year
- National S'more Day
- Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge



SEPTEMBER

- Recruit New Girls to Your Troop
- Investiture/Rededication Ceremonies
- Fall Product Program Sales Training
- Girl Scouts Love State Parks
- Hispanic History Month (Sept 15 to Oct 15)

Planning Your Girl Scout Year

- Choose your dates—be sure to consider holidays and schedules.
- Decide how many Girl Scout meetings/activities a month the troop will do.
- We recommend you start with the badges included in your New Troop Starter Kit.
- Decide how the troop will choose meeting topics and activities. Remember to keep it girl-led.
- Have a list of ideas for the girls to vote on doing and when to do each, or have the girls bring ideas to your meeting for a vote.
- Alternate regular meetings with fun outings or events.
- Include a wide variety of activities for the girls to participate in throughout the year.
- Keep it age appropriate.
- Consider what the troop will do during inclement weather, illness, etc. Is virtual an option for your troop?
- Will the troop do one activity each month during the summer or be on a break?
- Remember to be flexible—be prepared for a meeting plan to run askew and adjust—keep it fun! If girls miss a meeting, it's okay. Making up a badge is voluntary.
- Take time to get to know the girls and their interests—make sure at least one meeting meets each girl's individual interests.
- As you plan your year, engage the parents/caregivers with the girls—have each girl sign up to lead a meeting with her parent/caregiver, she chooses the badge/activity and you serve as their mentor.

4 Girl Scout Pillars

- STEM
- Outdoors
- Life Skills
- Entrepreneurship

Other ideas to include

- Outings
- Service Unit Events
- Community Service
- Council-led Events
- GSMISTS Patch Programs

Resources to help you plan

- Volunteer Toolkit
- Service Unit leader meetings
- Get ideas from experienced Troop Leaders
- GSUSA Badge booklets & Journeys
- GSUSA & GSMISTS Patch Programs

Example of how to plan your calendar

For meeting 1 & 2 each month – rotate badges/activities based on the 4 pillars

Month 1 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 2 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 3 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 4 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 5 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 6 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?
Month 7 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 8 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 9 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 10 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 11 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	Month 12 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?

girlscouts 
of michigan
shore to shore



Our three Service Centers are not only shops, but also places to connect with GSMISTS staff members, hold meetings, and participate in events. Call one of our Customer Care Specialists with any questions.

Grand Rapids

3275 Walker Avenue NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49544
Telephone: 616.784.3341
Fax: 616.784.8187

Muskegon

1201 E. River Road
Muskegon, MI 49445
Telephone: 231.744.4774
Fax: 616.784.8187

Traverse City

1820 Oak Hollow Drive
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Telephone: 231.947.7354
Fax: 616.784.8187