



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.

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

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 (GSMISTS), 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. 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. Through this process, you'll be teaching them collaboration, teamwork, and how to effectively advocate for their ideas.

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

In gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vivian TerMaat".

Vivian TerMaat
CEO, GSMISTS



Table of Contents

On average, troop leaders spend 6-11 hours per month (+ 8 hours during cookie season) volunteering. We want to help you enjoy as much of that time as possible!
This guide takes the guesswork out of leading a troop.

Welcome to Girl Scouts	1
A New Leader's Support System.....	3
The Girl Scout Leadership Experience	5
Putting the GSLE Into Practice	6
The Girl Scout Program.....	7
Getting Started	8
Training	9
Leading Together.....	10
Importance of Parent/Caregiver Meetings	11
Top Reasons Why a Parent/Caregiver Meeting Benefits Troops.....	12
How Many Volunteers Do You Need?	13
Let's Go! Your First Troop Meeting.....	14
Troop Year Plans	15
Planning Your Girl Scout Year	16
The Volunteer Toolkit: Your Digital Troop Assistant	17
Your Year in Girl Scouts	18
Girl Scout Troop Finances	19
Product Programs	20
Forms and Resources	21
GSMISTS Properties.....	22
Ready Set Take Action	23
Higher Awards and Girl Scout Traditions	24
Keeping Girls Safe and First Aid Kits.....	25
Stay Connected with GSMISTS.....	26

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. They will also get you enrolled in the Girl Scout Experience Box program (if applicable).

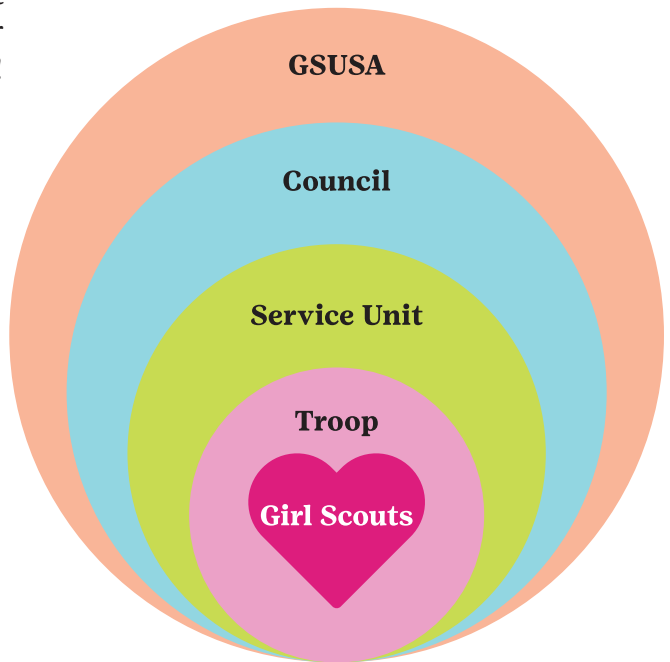
Your **First Year Troop Support Coordinator** will support you throughout your first year as a leader by:

- Setting up consistent phone calls with you. You may have a list of questions to talk through or maybe not. Either way you will have peace of mind knowing someone will be calling you.
- Connecting you with a Girl Scout Experience Box, which contains meeting plans and supplies for your first year as a troop leader. (For first year Daisy and Brownie troops).
- Inviting you to participate in the monthly New Leader Learning Labs and New Leader Round Tables.
- Introducing 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.

Girl Scout Experience Box

New Girl Scout Daisy (K-1) or Brownie (2-3) troops receive monthly complimentary supply boxes right to their troop leader's doorstep. Filled with step-by-step instructions, ready-to-go supplies, and thoughtful script suggestions, meeting planning just got easier!



A simplified glance at council structure, note that Girl Scouts are the heart of it all.



New Leader Learning Labs

These are structured training sessions designed to help new Girl Scout leaders build confidence and knowledge. Each lab follows a specific agenda and covers key topics such as troop management, meeting planning, and Girl Scout program basics.

Perfect for leaders who want a solid foundation and actionable guidance to start their Girl Scout journey strong. Meets virtually on Zoom. You will receive the Zoom information a week prior to meeting.

What to expect:

- Focused learning with a clear agenda.
- November, January, February, and March focus solely on the Cookie Program.
- Practical tips and tools for troop leadership.
- Recordings and notes emailed afterward for easy reference.

New Leader Round Tables

Round Tables are casual, conversational gatherings where new leaders can connect, share experiences, and ask questions in a relaxed setting. While there may be a suggested topic, the discussion is guided by the interests and needs of the participants.

Ideal for leaders looking for community, encouragement, and real-world advice from others who are walking the same path. Meets virtually on Zoom. You will receive the Zoom information a week prior to meeting.

What to expect:

- Informal, supportive environment.
- Open Q&A and peer-to-peer sharing.
- Real talk about everyday troop life.

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.

Adult Resource Weekends

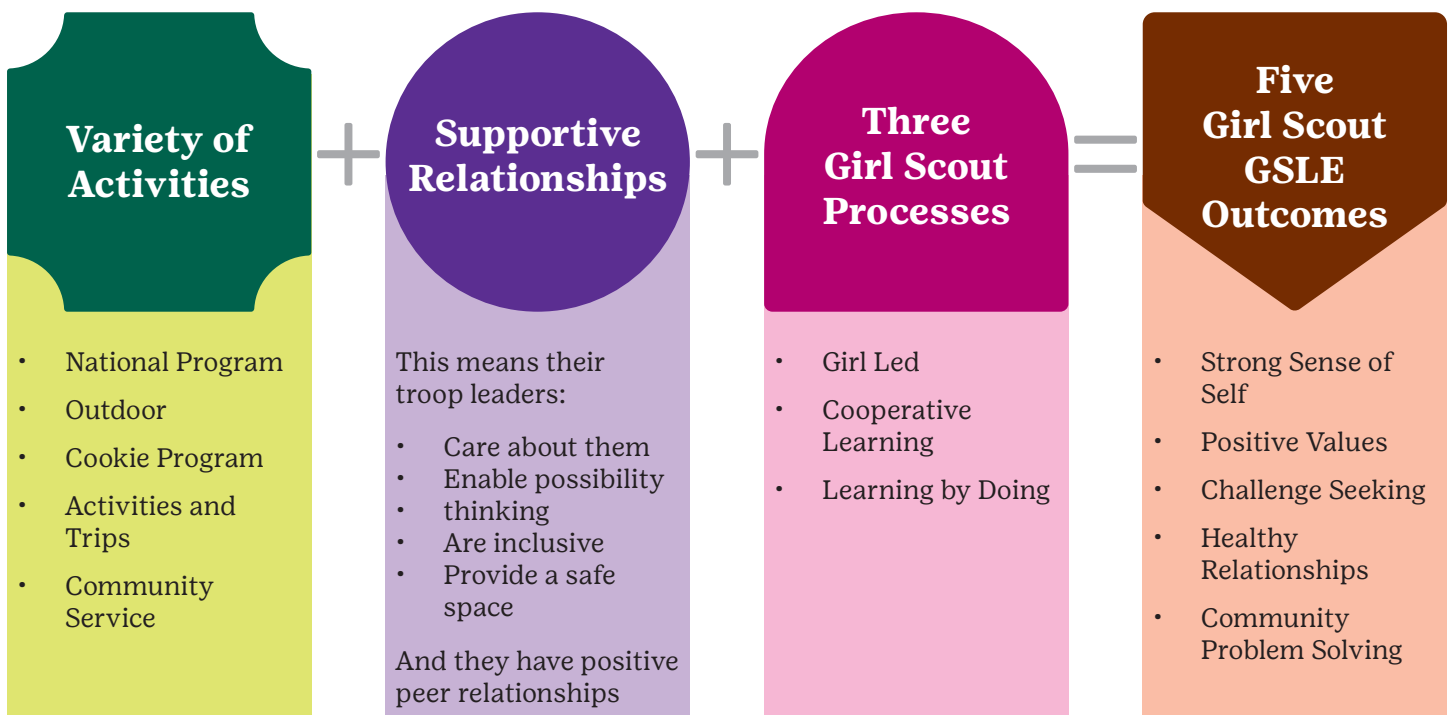
This event offers an opportunity for both new and veteran volunteers to come together, learn from each other, and deepen their understanding of Girl Scout activities and leadership

- Occur twice a year, at GSMISTS properties.
- Learn new skills and meet other GSMISTS volunteers.



The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

Girl Scouts look at the world and take action to change it for the better. They make friends, challenge themselves with new experiences, write their own stories, and develop the skills and confidence to say, “I know I can do this!” As a troop leader, you support this process—and the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) is the tool that helps you to do it.

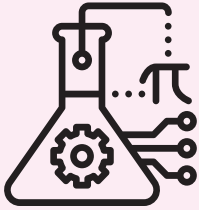


Putting the GSLE into Practice

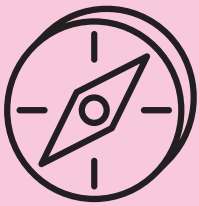
It's time to put the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (our secret sauce) to work! Implementing it is simple. Just remember these three tips, and you're good to go:

1. Encourage them to **explore a variety** of activities in the Outdoors, STEM, Life Skills, Entrepreneurship, and even field trips, allowing them to discover new interests and passions.
2. The main ways you can support girls in your troop are to make them feel **welcomed and included**, acknowledging their ideas and feelings, keeping them safe, and encouraging respect and teamwork among them.
3. “Girl-led” looks different at each age. Be sure to **include program level-appropriate ways** for each Girl Scout in your troop to keep it girl-led. For example, Brownies may pick which badges they'd like to earn, while Juniors may start leading specific activities with their peers or younger Girl Scouts.

Putting the GSLE Into Practice



Plan a variety of activities: This includes both in and out of the meeting space. Explore Girl Scout badges in STEM, life skills, the outdoors, and entrepreneurship. Get out and experience the world through activities, GSMISTS-developed, community service, cookie sales, and more. Check out the Volunteer Toolkit ([girlscouts.org/forvolunteers](https://www.girlscouts.org/forvolunteers)) for all sorts of ideas.



Create a supportive environment: Support your Girl Scouts' physical, mental, and emotional well-being, and make sure other adult helpers provide positive support as well. Inspire and guide your Girl Scouts to value, respect, and encourage each other, too! As the troop leader, you'll want to make sure ALL Girl Scouts feel they are welcome, included, and all-around supported within the troop. Take the lead in creating safer spaces where Girl Scouts can thrive!

Let Girl Scouts shine by empowering them in three key ways:



- **Girl-Led:** Encourage Girl Scouts to take the lead, whatever their age. When you let your troop choose things like snacks, badge activities, or how to use cookie sale proceeds, you give them the confidence to grow their skills and follow their dreams.
- **Cooperative Learning:** Plan activities that have Girl Scouts working together and learning that principles of collaboration and mutual respect can help them conquer any challenge. Cooperative learning can be as simple as sharing supplies (for younger Girl Scouts) or playing games and completing activities that require teamwork (for older Girl Scouts).
- **Learning by Doing:** Hands-on activities aren't just fun, they're also empowering. Girl Scouts unlock their "I got this!" attitude as they work through details to get things done. At the end of each troop meeting, gather members for a discussion about what they experienced, what it means, and what they'll do together with what they learned.

Proven Results

Why follow these steps? Because they work! Studies show that Girl Scouts are more likely to develop a strong sense of self, positive values, healthy relationships, challenge-seeking traits, and community problem-solving skills when they experience all the elements of the GSLE—and as a troop leader, you're a key part of making the magic happen!

The Girl Scout Program

Girl Scouts discover the fun, friendship, and power of working together. They grow courageous and strong through a wide variety of enriching experiences, such as activities, skill-building sports clinics, community service projects, cultural exchanges, and environmental stewardship. Badges are a key part of the Girl Scout program. Girl Scouts earn badges by learning new skills and doing activities that demonstrate their accomplishments and understanding.

In earning badges, Girl Scouts...

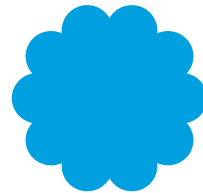
- **Build skills:** As they earn badges, Girl Scouts develop new skills and explore their interests.
- **Show their accomplishments:** When worn, badges show the world what a Girl Scout can do.
- **Make a difference:** Badge work helps Girl Scouts discover ways to make a difference in their community.

Girl Scouts Explore in a Fun and Safe Environment

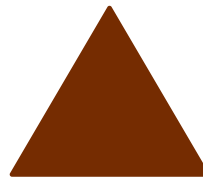
Girl Scouts typically complete activities as part of a troop. A troop is a group of Girl Scouts and volunteers who meet regularly to have fun, learn new skills, and improve their community. Troop involvement allows Girl Scout members to grow their confidence, explore new interests, and find their voice. Troops can either be single-level or multi-level.

- **A single-level troop** is made up of Girl Scouts from a single program level, such as Daisies. This structure allows activities and experiences to be tailored to the group's age and developmental stage.
- **A multi-level troop** includes Girl Scouts from more than one program level—such as Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors—together in the same troop. This setup lets older Girl Scouts mentor younger ones, supports diverse learning, and balances shared activities with age-specific needs.

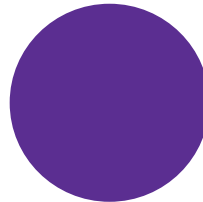
Badge Levels



Daisy
(Grades K-1)



Brownie
(Grades 2-3)



Junior
(Grades 4-5)



Cadette
(Grades 6-8)



Senior
(Grades 9-10)



Ambassador
(Grades 11-12)

Getting Started



Setting up your Troop

Your Placement Specialist will reach out to you to set up this information in the membership system.

Troop Catalog

The Troop Catalog is our on-line tool for parents to search for a troop for their daughter. Parents can enter different search criteria such as dates, times, frequency of troop meetings, location of troop meetings, etc. Because of this troops may have girls from a variety of schools in their troops. GSUSA has deemed 12 girls the ideal number for a troop. Your troop will appear in the Troop Catalog until this max has been reached.

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 MyGS 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 volunteer-to-youth 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 home—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 that will work for you.

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. It can be found in gsLearn which is packed with indispensable volunteer trainings and courses, including new leader onboarding material, program training, and advice for guiding Girl Scouts at every grade level. You can access both national and GSMISTS-specific courses through gsLearn via your myGS account at <https://mygs.girlscouts.org>. Troop Finance Training must be completed before a troop bank account can be opened.

If your troop plans to go on activities 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.

Getting Started

Please note the following courses take approximately two hours to complete.

- 450 GSMISTS New Leader Training
- 450 GSMISTS Activity & Trip Planning
- GSUSA Girl Scout Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Training

Enrichment Trainings

These trainings help leaders be their best. None are required but they all provide useful information that will help you lead with confidence.

- GSMISTS Daisies and Brownie Leader Training
- GSUSA Delivering Inclusive Program
- GSUSA Mental Wellness
- GSUSA Leading Multi-Level Troop
- GSUSA Volunteer Toolkit Troop Leader View



Beyond Troop Meetings

- Troop Camping Skills
- Archery
- Small Craft
- Lifeguarding
- Wilderness Camping Skills

"Leadership is not about being in charge, but about taking care of those in your charge."

Juliette Gordon Low, founder of GSUSA

Leading Together

Girl Scouts has a strict standard that whenever Girl Scouts meet, whether in person or virtually, there are to be at least two unrelated, registered, and Girl Scout–approved adults who have been background checked, and one of whom is female, supervising Girl Scout members. A registered and approved adult volunteer is one who has passed a background check and has been through the GSMISTS volunteer onboarding and training process. The two adult volunteers must not be related to each other (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. There are no exceptions to this rule.

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?
- 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.



Importance of Parent/Caregiver Meetings

What is a Parent/Caregiver Meeting? It's the first meeting of the year you have whether you are a new or returning troop, it's valuable to hold a Parent/Caregiver Meeting at the start of each year.

Why Hold a Meeting? This sets the troop up for success. Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging parents in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When parents are involved, leaders have support, the troop has a plan, and troop member's benefit!

Getting Parents Involved

You want your Girl Scouts to have fun, be inspired, take risks, and learn about themselves and the world—that's why you're a Girl Scout troop leader or troop volunteer! Parents and caregivers want the same thing for their children, but getting families to pitch in and play an active role in the troop while also enhancing the experience for their Girl Scout and themselves can be tricky for many volunteers. It doesn't have to be this way.

Make it Quick and Easy

Continue the conversation by asking how much time each week they might be able to dedicate to the troop, then go from there. For instance, if a troop caregiver has 15 minutes each week to spare, they could manage the calendar for troop snacks and carpools. If a grandparent has two hours, they could assist with leading the troop through a badge on a topic they're already comfortable with. Be time conscious and consider the commitment.

Make the Ask(s)

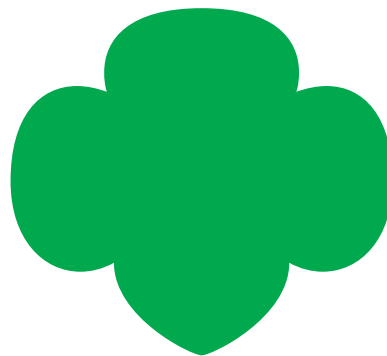
Parents may have many talents, but they're certainly not mind readers. Ask for what you need. If you're nervous about getting turned down, don't be. Sure, a few parents might be unable to help, but the helpers you do get will be worth their weight in gold. Remember, just because someone wasn't available a month or two ago doesn't mean they won't be free to help now. Loop back, follow up, and ask again!

Find out What People Want to Do

Start with asking what people enjoy doing and what they are good at. Does someone love coordinating events, making flyers, etc., or managing money? Does someone love using social media and could help promote cookie sales? Get a sense of the desires in the room that will energize people. Then talk about time commitment because it will really depend on what they are doing. It's easier to make time for something you find fun.

Make Sense of "Why"

Explain that not only does the whole troop benefit with extra help from parents and other caregivers, but also that many Girl Scouts feel a special sense of pride in seeing their own family member take a leadership role. Getting involved can strengthen the caregiver/child bond and is a meaningful way to show them that they are a priority in their adults' lives.



Top Reasons Why a Parent/Caregiver Meeting Benefits Troops

1

Troop leaders get to meet each girl and get to know them a little.

2

Families understand what Girl Scouting can do for their child.

3

Families and leaders identify ways they can work as a team to support the troop.

4

Families and leaders agree about what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually.

5

You fill key troop positions—you never know which parent will make an awesome assistant leader or outdoor helper.

6

Families learn about uniforms, troop dues, and other important basics.

7

Families will learn troop meeting details such as: *time, date, locations, and frequency*

8

Complete paperwork such as the Annual Permission and Health History Form.

Important Meeting Reminders:

- All adults accompanying troop/group meetings or activities on a regular basis (more than 1 time); or attending any overnight activity; or who at any time assume care, custody, or control of girl members and/or Girl Scout money must be both a registered adult member of GSUSA and a volunteer of GSMISTS. This includes trip chaperones and drivers.
- Girl Scout Troop meetings are for registered Girl Scouts only.

How Many Volunteers Do You Need?

Girl Scouts has a strict standard that whenever Girl Scouts meet, whether in person or virtually, there are to be at least two unrelated, registered, and Girl Scout-approved adults who have been background checked, and one of whom is female, supervising Girl Scout members. A registered and approved adult volunteer is one who has passed a background check and has been through the council's volunteer onboarding and training process. The two adult volunteers must not be related to each other (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. 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		EVENTS, TRAVEL, AND CAMPING	
	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 Six 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!

Troop Year Plans









Ready to plan your troop year? Our age-appropriate troop year plans are the best tool for first year troop leaders to get started with Girl Scouts without getting overwhelmed. The entire year is mapped out—just follow along to help your Girl Scouts complete badge activities, improve their communities, and explore the world around them.

Year Plan Examples

BROWNIE Year Plan 1 Try and Explore

Your Awesome Year as a Girl Scout Volunteer









Brownies are excited to discover all they can do and be. Whether they're learning to make their favorite snack or exploring a neighborhood vegetable garden, Brownies are figuring out who they are and how being their authentic selves makes them an important part of their community. As their leader, you get a front-row seat to all this action! You will guide your Girl Scouts through activities focused on exploration, confidence, and practical skills that will help them become their best selves. When you use this plan to map out your 90-minute meetings and activities, you'll see just how simple it can be to make a huge difference in your Girl Scouts' lives. Get ready for a year of adventure and excitement as you help them grow.

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
 • Family welcome party	 Two meetings plus field trip: • Outdoor Art Creator (parts one and two) • Field trip	 Two meetings plus service project: • Mechanical Engineering: Race Car (parts one and two) • Service project	 • Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin
JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
 Two meetings: • My Cookie Customers (parts one and two)	 Two meetings plus event: • Snacks (parts one and two) • World Thinking Day event	 Two meetings plus field trip: • Girl Scout Way (parts one and two)	 Two meetings • Bugs (parts one and two)

BROWNIE Year Plan 2 Try and Explore

Your Awesome Year as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Third grade Brownies are proud of their abilities and excited to show the world what they're made of. Whether they're flexing their business skills at a cookie booth or learning how to help in emergency situations, they're taking pride in who they are and what they have to offer their community. As their leader, you'll be amazed at your Brownies' capabilities and bravery in trying new things. This guide will help you as your Girl Scouts explore activities focused on discovery, confidence, and practical skills that will help them become their best selves. When you use this plan to map out your 90-minute meetings and activities, you'll see just how simple it can be to make a huge difference in your Girl Scouts' lives. Get ready for a year of adventure and excitement as you help them grow.

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
 • Back to troop	 Two meetings plus service project: • Flying Flyer (parts one and two) • Hunger Service Project	 Two meetings: • Celebrate Community (parts one and two)	 One meeting: • Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin
JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
 Two meetings: • Cookie Decision Maker (Parts one and two)	 Two meetings plus event: • Making Friends (parts one and two) • World Thinking Day event	 Two meetings plus field trip: • Senses (parts one and two) • Field trip	 Two meetings plus field trip: • First Aid (part one) • Service project • Field trip

Girl Scouts are excited to embark on new adventures, make friends, and spread fun wherever they go. As their leader, you get a front-row seat! You will guide your Girl Scouts through activities focused on giving them the social and practical skills that will serve them as they start school and discover all they can do and be. Planning for your troop year should always be girl-led. But to get you started, we've collected a variety of our most popular badges and awards into one action-packed plan! Get ready for a year of giggles and wonder as you help them grow.



Troop leaders, start here. Follow this QR code to access your blueprint to leading a fun Girl Scout Troop

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 meeting plans included in your Girl Scout Experience Box.
- 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 activities or trips.
- 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

- Activities and Trips
- Service Unit Events
- Community Service
- GSMISTS-Developed Events
- GSMISTS Patch Programs

Resources to help you plan

- Girl Scout Experience Box
- Year Plans
- Volunteer Toolkit
- Service Unit meetings
- Get ideas from experienced troop leaders
- GSUSA Badges
- 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?

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 to 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. Badge booklets can be downloaded directly from the VTK.

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 achievements, and renew memberships.



Learn more about the VTK

For more information about the Volunteer Toolkit available on MyGS, check out this QR code

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 by the June 1st deadline.

Your Year in Girl Scouts

OCTOBER

- New Leader Learning Lab: Volunteer Toolkit Training
- New Membership Year Begins
- Investiture/Rededication Ceremonies
- Treats & Reads Program
- Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday

NOVEMBER

- New Leader Learning Lab: Cookie Training
- Native American Heritage Month

DECEMBER

- New Leader Learning Lab: World Thinking Day
- GSMISTS Bake and Build Program

JANUARY

- New Leader Learning Lab: Cookies Part 1 & Part 2
- Cookie Program Begins

FEBRUARY

- New Leader Learning Lab: Cookies Part 3
- World Thinking Day
- Black History Month

MARCH

- New Leader Learning Lab: Cookies Part 4
- Girl Scout Week
- Women's History Month

APRIL

- New Leader Learning Lab: Finance Training Report
- Early Bird Renewal/Extended Year Membership Begins
- National Volunteer Month
- Girl Scout Leader's Day
- Earth Day
- GSMISTS Junior Arborist Program

MAY

- New Leader Learning Lab: Bridging and End of the Year Ceremonies and Summer Activities
- Bridging Ceremonies
- Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Heritage Month
- Mental Health Awareness Month

JUNE

- National Get Outdoors Day
- Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge

JULY

- Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge

AUGUST

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

SEPTEMBER

- New Leader Learning Lab: Treats & Reads Training
- Recruit New Girls to Your Troop
- Investiture/Rededication Ceremonies
- Girl Scouts Love State Parks
- Hispanic History Month (Sept 15 to Oct 15)

Girl Scout Troop Finances

Bank Accounts

- Each account must have two registered, approved signers: the Troop Leader and Primary Assistant Troop Leader. These individuals are responsible for managing funds.
- 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 online.

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 GSMISTS Treats & Reads Program and Cookie Program.
- Troops need to participate in Treats & Reads 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 activities and trips.
- 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

GSMISTS believes every girl deserves the opportunity to participate in Girl Scouts. Financial assistance is available to those experiencing financial need and who qualify according to household income guidelines. Assistance can cover membership and uniform fees

For more information e-mail: customercare@gsmists.org



Product Programs

Treats & Reads and Cookies

Each year, troops can participate in two council-sponsored money-earning activities: Treats & Reads Program and the Girl Scout Cookie Program. These programs are essential to help girls and troops earn funds for their adventures while offering rewards to keep them motivated and engaged. With the support of a volunteer in your Service Unit and the council Product Program team, you'll have access to resources and assistance to ensure a successful experience for you and your troop!

Treats & Reads Program | October



The Treats & Reads Program is a great way to kick off the year and get girls and families comfortable with participating in council sponsored money earning activities.

- **What:** Girls sell nuts, candy, and magazines to family and friends.
- **How:** Customers can choose to have their order delivered by a Girl Scout or shipped directly to them. Products for girl delivery arrive in November for distribution to girls and families.
- **Why:** Troops earn 15% 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! Most troop funds are earned through girls' participation in the Cookie Program.

- **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. With the support of parents/caregivers and troop volunteers, girls can also participate in booth sales at local venues.
- **Why:** Troops earn proceeds on each package of cookies sold and girls earn rewards based on the number of packages they sell.

By participating in product programs, girls can start their own businesses and develop **five essential life skills along the way:**

Goal Setting

Decision Making

Money Management

People Skills

Business Ethics

Explore the Cookie Business Badges, which help troop volunteers guide girls on this journey to developing their confidence in setting goals, deciding how to use their earnings, and successfully running their Cookie Program.

Important Reminders: Troop Funds

- It is essential that the decision on how to spend these funds is girl-led.
- Troop funds can be used for meeting supplies, badges, activities, trips, camping, experiences, and more.
- Any funds earned through money earning activities belong to the troop as a whole and are used to enhance the Girl Scout experience.

Forms and Resources

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.

Volunteer Policies and Procedures

A resource that provides GSMISTS Volunteer Policies and Procedures.

Activity and Trip Planning Guide

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

Money-Earning and Fundraising Guidelines

A resource providing information on money-earning and fundraising.

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

Troop Leadership

Meetings/Activities in Home Guidelines

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

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).

Activities and Trips

Permission to Participate in Product Programs

Required annually for Girl Scouts to participate in the Treats & Reads Program and/or Cookie Program.

Activity and Trip Application Form

Many activities, including high risk activities (such as swimming, horseback riding, zip lining) and all overnights, must be approved prior to participating. Use this form to receive approval.

Safety

Accident/Incident Report

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

Troop Finance

Detailed Cash Report

Use this spreadsheet to record troop incomes and expenses.



All of the following forms and resources can be found here

GSMISTS Properties

GSMISTS has five properties beyond our service centers across Northern and Western Michigan, where you and your Girl Scout Troop can book overnights, plan activities, have troop meetings, and more!



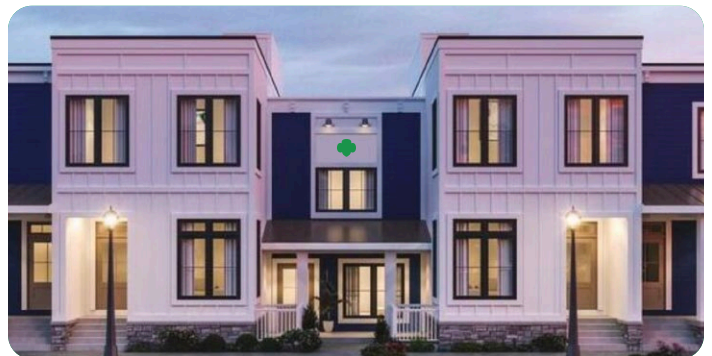
Camp Anna Behrens |
9841 Colby Road, Greenville, MI 48838



Camp Woodlands |
1950 Indian Reserve Road, Alpena, MI 49707



Betsy Cutler House |
1217 E. River Road, Muskegon, MI 49445



Grand Haven Little House |
313 Franklin Avenue, Grand Haven, MI 49417



Ludington Little House |
1024 Olmstead Street, Ludington, MI 49431



Learn more about
our properties and
rent one for your
Troop today!

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.”

Taking Action is the chance for Community Partnership

Taking Action 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.

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!

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.

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 earning a Girl Scout Leadership Award (from any of the four categories - Personal Leadership, Peer Leadership, Teaching Leadership, or Community Advocacy) 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 **Members, For Girl Scouts, Highest Awards**.



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 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.



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 Newsletters

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.

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

Want to be added to the e-mail list?
Contact communications@gmists.org


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 sharing your adventure, project, or accomplishment!



Follow us!

Follow us for uplifting stories and council updates.



@gsmists | #gsmists

Character • Courage • Confidence

girlscouts 
of michigan
shore to shore