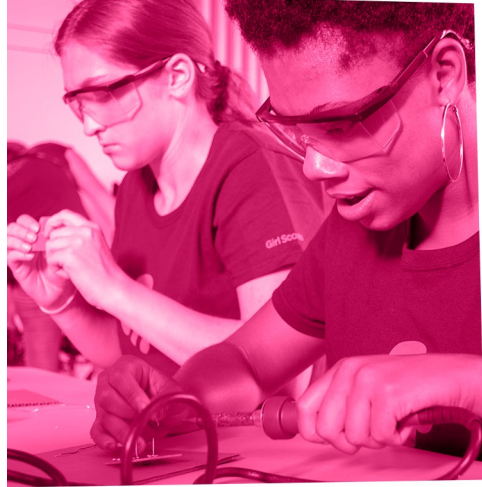


girl scouts
of central and western
massachusetts



New Leader's Guide to Success



INSIDE

<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">7</h1> <p style="color: white; font-weight: bold; margin-top: 20px;">Keeping Girls Safe</p>	<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">12</h1> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin-top: 20px;">Guiding Your Troop Experience</p>	<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">15</h1> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin-top: 20px;">Managing Troop Finances</p>	<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">16</h1> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin-top: 20px;">Volunteer Resources</p>	<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">17</h1> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin-top: 20px;">Training Path</p>
---	---	---	---	---

Top 5 pages to reference

Welcome to Girl Scouts	3
Let's Get Started	4
Girl Scout Levels	5
The Girl Scout Uniform.....	5
Governing Structure.....	5
The Girl Scout Program.....	6
Keeping Girls Safe	7
Your Volunteer Troop Committee	9
The Family Connection	10
Guiding Your Troop Experience	12
6 Elements of a Great Troop Meeting	14
Troop Finances	15
Volunteer Resources	16
Troop Leader Training Path	17

The 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.

The 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.

Our Mission

Building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

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



Follow us on
social media!

All our links are at the bottom of our website pages
<http://www.gscwm.org/>



NEW LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Thank you for becoming a Girl Scout leader! We're so excited to have you join the Girl Scout Movement.

Girl Scouts helps girls empower themselves to stand up and make a difference. By cultivating girls' leadership skills, we prepare them to overcome challenges and advocate for their ideas now and in the future. With an emphasis on self-discovery, character building, and community impact, Girl Scouts helps girls become a powerful force for good in the world.

No matter where or how you volunteer, you'll make a difference in girls' lives—and this go-to guide will prepare you to effectively lead during your first year as a Girl Scout volunteer. Need help along the way? Let us know! We have various tools, training resources, and people to support you through each step.

You're now a part of our team. We can't wait to see the impact you'll make this year!

Welcome to the Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts. You have made the decision to spend some of your valuable time impacting girls and giving them the experiences that they will carry with them for a lifetime. THANK YOU. We are so appreciative of your time and talent and look forward to working with you to make this experience meaningful for both you and the girls you are working with. Our founder Juliette Gordon Low said, "The work of today, is the history of tomorrow, and we are its makers." Your work with the Girl Scouts will prepare your girls for a lifetime of community impact and leadership skills.

**I hope that you have a wonderful year. Please call email or call us if you need assistance. We are here to help. 413-584-2602 or 508-365-0115. OR info@gscwm.org
With very best regards,**

Pattie





LET'S GET STARTED

Managing Your Member Experience Online

After your background check process is completed and you're approved to serve as a volunteer, you'll receive an email confirmation prompting you to log into MyGS, your Girl Scout member community, for the first time. MyGS allows you to manage your member experience online. It can also be accessed from the link in the header of any page at <http://www.gscwm.org/>

On the Troop tab in MyGS, you can see any girls and adults who have signed up for your troop and add new girls to your troop. The Troop Opportunity Catalog allows available openings in your troop for girls and/or volunteers to be displayed so people can register into those open spots.

Next Steps

You also received a welcome email with details on how to access our orientation video. This video gives you the basic information and resources you need to make things happen for your troop. (If you haven't received your welcome email, please check your junk email folder just to be safe.)

GIRL SCOUT LEVELS



DAISIES
K & 1ST

Girl Scout Daisies sparkle with that “first time ever” newness in everything they do. They go on trips, learn about nature and science and explore the arts and their communities—and so much more. Girl Scout Daisies can also earn Learning Petals and receive participation patches.



BROWNIES
2ND & 3RD

Girl Scout Brownies work together, earn badges, and explore their community. Friendship, fun, and age-appropriate activities begin at the Girl Scout Brownie meeting and move out to the community and wider world. While earning badges, they build skills, learn hobbies, and have fun!



JUNIORS
4TH & 5TH

Girl Scout Juniors are big-idea thinkers. They’re explorers at camp and product designers when they earn their Innovation and Storytelling badges, or even their Bronze Award. Every day, they wake up ready to play a new role.



CADETTES
6TH - 8TH

Girl Scout Cadettes chart their own course and let their curiosity and imagination lead the way. They learn about the power of being a good friend, gain confidence mentoring younger girls, and can earn the Silver Award.



SENIORS
9TH & 10TH

Girl Scout Seniors are ready to take the world by storm, and Girl Scouts gives them millions of ways to do it. Their experiences help to shape their world, while giving them a safe space to be themselves and explore their interests. Girl Scout Seniors can earn their Gold Award (which, by the way, adds something “extra” to college applications).



AMBASSADORS
11TH & 12TH

Girl Scout Ambassadors know that small acts create big change. While they get ready for life beyond high school, Girl Scouts helps them take flight. They also earn the Gold Award (which, by the way, adds something “extra” to college applications).

THE GIRL SCOUT UNIFORM

Uniforms are an important part of the Girl Scout experience, connecting girls to Girl Scout traditions, displaying their accomplishments, and creating memories to last a lifetime. Girls want to look and feel their best when representing Girl Scouts. And now they can, with uniform options that are in step with today’s trends and active lifestyles. Girl Scouts at each level now wear one required element (tunic, sash, or vest) to display official pins and awards. Girls then wear white tops and khaki bottoms to complete the uniform. Daisy and Brownies may also purchase the entire official uniform. Troop Leaders should direct parents to purchase items on their own. Subsidized financial assistance for uniform components is available for girls that qualify.

For adult members, the unifying look is an official Girl Scout scarf (or tie for men) worn with official membership pins and combined with their own navy blue business attire.

Visit one of our shop locations to purchase uniforms, starter kits, and more. Our shop staff are here to help! Or shop online at <http://www.girlscoutshop.com/CENTRAL-AND-WESTERN-MASSACHUSETTS-COUNCIL>

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA)

A national organization supporting the work of more than 100 councils across the U.S. for more than 100 years. Headquartered in New York, New York.

Girl Scouts of Central and Western MA GSCWM

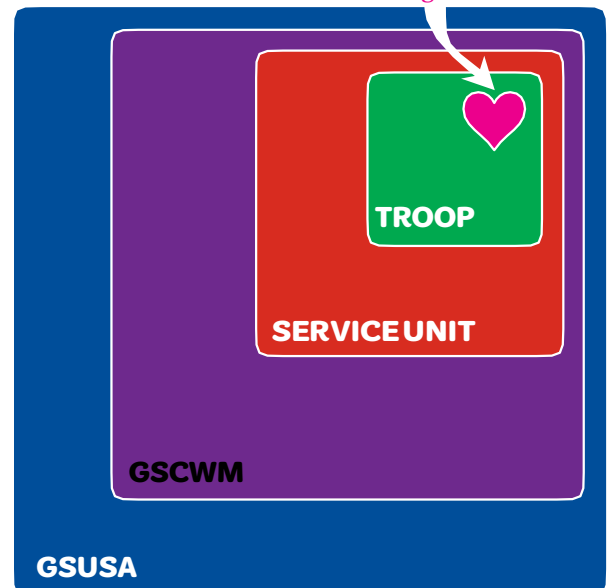
Independent 501(c) 3 nonprofit chartered by GSUSA operating under the direction of a local board of directors and overseeing all service units and troops within a given geographic area.

Service Unit Area Comprised of volunteers who support the work of troop volunteers within a given geographic area.

Troops

Volunteer-supervised groups of girls who participate in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Girls are the heart of our organization!



WHAT'S THE GIRL SCOUT PROGRAM?

At Girl Scouts, girls have tons of fun, make new friends, and go on fantastic new adventures. Our program centers on something called the Girl Scout Leadership Experience—a collection of activities and experiences girls have as they complete Journeys, earn badges, sell cookies, go on exciting trips, explore the outdoors and do Take Action projects that make a difference.

In Girl Scouts, girls will:



Discover

Find out who they are, what they care about, and what their talents are.



Connect

Collaborate with other people, locally and globally, to make a difference in the world.



Take Action

Do something to make the world a better place.



Journeys



Identify a problem, come up with a creative solution, create a team plan to make the solution a reality, put a plan into action, and talk about what they have learned. As girls go on Journeys, they'll earn awards to put on their uniforms. The Volunteer Toolkit and Journey books are your resources for the requirements to earning awards.



Badges

What have your girls always wanted to do?

Make their own movie, go geocaching, plant a garden? Great news! They can learn to do all these things and more while earning Girl Scout badges. Badges are worn on the front of the vest or sash.

The Volunteer Toolkit and Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting are your resources for the requirements to earning badges.



Patches

Think of patches like collecting memories in Girl Scouts. They're often a part of the fun activities you can do in Girl Scouts without the requirements of badges. Patches are always worn on the back of the vest or sash.

Highest Awards



Bronze. Silver. Gold.

These represent the highest honors a Girl Scout can earn.

All three awards give girls the chance to do big things while working on an issue they care about. Whether they want to plant a community garden and inspire others to eat healthy for their Bronze, advocate for animal rights for their Silver, or build a career network that encourages girls to become scientists and engineers for their Gold, they'll inspire others (and you!).

KEEPING GIRLS SAFE

While working with girls and learning new skills is fun and rewarding, assuming responsibility for other people’s children means that some level of risk management and due diligence is involved. There are several resources we use to help you minimize risk and keep girls safe.

Understanding How Many Volunteers You Need

Girl Scout groups are large enough to provide a cooperative learning environment and small enough to allow development of individual girls. Girl Scouts’ volunteer-to-girl ratios show the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of girls. These supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of girls.

Your group must have at least two unrelated, approved volunteers present at all times, plus additional registered CORted volunteers as necessary, depending on the size of the group and the ages and abilities of girls. Any adult that is supervising girls must be an approved volunteer. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old and must be screened before volunteering. One Troop Leader in every group must be female. Please refer to the ratio chart below.

Volunteer-to-Girl Ratio Chart	Group Meetings		Events, Travel and Camping	
	Two unrelated Volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:	Two unrelated Volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:
Girl Scout Daisies (grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12

Planning Safe Activities

When preparing for any activity with girls, start by reading the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints for that particular activity. You can find these on the resources tab of the Volunteer Toolkit. Each Safety Activity Checkpoint offers you required guidelines on where to do this activity, how to include girls with disabilities, where to find both basic and specialized gear required for the activity, how to prepare yourselves for the activity, and what specific steps to follow on the day of the activity. Safety Activity Checkpoints will note if a First Aider is required.

If Safety Activity Checkpoints do not exist for an activity you and the girls are interested in, contact Customer Care at info@gscwm.org 413-584-2602 before making any definite plans with the girls.



What to do in an Emergency

Although we all hope the worst never happens, it’s important to know and follow our council’s procedures for handling emergency incidents. At the scene of the incident, safety is your first priority. Provide care for the injured person or obtain medical assistance and then immediately report the emergency to GSCWM staff 413-584-2602, press “3”, and leave an urgent message with your name, brief description of the situation, and a phone number where you can be

Make sure a general first aid kit is available at your meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity. You may need to provide the kit if one is not already available at your meeting location. You must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of our council office, parents/guardians and emergency services such as the police, fire department, or hospital.

YOU—A GIRL SCOUT LEADER!

Your Role

What does it mean to be a Girl Scout leader? It's the amazing journey of helping girls build courage, confidence, and character through Girl Scouts. As a leader, it's important to remember that leadership can bring many joys, including developing a personal relationship with each girl in the troop, building adult friendships through the sisterhood of Girl Scouts, receiving sincere appreciation and thanks from parents, and most importantly, knowing you are shaping the future by working with a girl today.

What does it mean to you to be a Girl Scout leader? That's something you'll discover throughout your time with the girls and adults in your troop, as well as through relationships you make with fellow volunteers and families. It's an exciting adventure!

As you build relationships, leadership ...

- will develop as you get to know each girl and adult troop member.
- means communicating with parents and co-leaders.
- includes understanding the needs and interests of the girls, helping them plan activities and excursions beyond the troop meeting, and guiding them as they discover new interests.

As a leader, it's important to remember that ...

- you cannot know everything the girls might ever want to learn.
- you'll also explore and learn many things along with the girls.
- you're expected to know where to go for information and resources, and get it when needed.
- it's okay not to know; you're not expected to know everything about Girl Scouting.

Leadership is teaching ...

- girls that they can do and be anything.
- girls that they are decision makers.
- girls not only for the sake of knowing things, but also for the sake of development and growth.
- through being a good role model.

See yourself as a coach ...

- not as a teacher with a canned lesson or activity or as someone who has to perform for the girls each week.
- who guides and instructs.
- who advises and discusses.
- and work so each girl can carry out responsibilities within the troop.
- as the girls build their skills and ethics.
- and give more responsibilities to the girls as they grow and develop.



“Belonging” in leadership means ...

- understanding you are part of a troop and a team.
- listening, providing suggestions, and contributing ideas.
- sticking with the girls through good times and bad.
- recognizing you belong to a larger organization beyond the troop that will provide support and resources.

YOUR VOLUNTEER TROOP COMMITTEE

On my honor, I will ... not do this alone!

Before you hold your first troop meeting with girls, consider the support and resources you'll need throughout the year. Parents, friends, family, and other members of the community can provide time, experience, and ideas to a troop, so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your volunteer troop team. This team is made up of Troop Leaders (like you) and Troop Committee volunteers.

All of these adults must be screened and approved. They commit to these roles based on the amount of time the volunteer has to give and interest in specific areas on the team. Interested individuals should be guided to the Join or Volunteer buttons at <http://www.gscwm.org/>.



The Troop Committee volunteers play a big role in making your troop run smoothly and in supporting the girls' plans. They're an extra set of eyes, ears and hands whose skill sets are leveraged to help the troop safely explore the world around them. Ideally, your Troop Committee will have a Troop Cookie Manager, Troop Fall Product Program Manager and a Troop Treasurer. Volunteers from this group may agree to take on other tasks, depending on what your troop needs are. For instance, they may be a chaperone for events that require more adult volunteers to meet the volunteer-to-girl ratio requirements, or agree to be the driver for an upcoming trip that also requires more volunteer supervision.

Some Troop Committee members are not able to volunteer on a regular basis but are ready to help out when you need an extra set of hands to manage an activity station, provide a snack, lead songs, and keep the activity on track and fun. Often parents start in this role if they aren't sure they can commit to a committee or leader role. Once they see how fun it is, they may sign up for more!

As a Troop Leader, you will guide the structure and experiences of your troop – from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, from steering girl-led activities to setting financial expectations. These decisions will be made collaboratively with your volunteer team, as well as with input from the girls and their parents/guardians.

Troop Leader Responsibilities

- Liaison with service unit volunteers and council staff
- Troop financial management
- Communication with parents
- Girl safety
- Guiding the troop's Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

Troop Committee Responsibilities

- Assist Troop Leader
- Girl safety
- May drive girls, coordinate finances, and/or chaperone troop activities
- Provide extra help at troop meetings

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Communicate with Troop Leadership
- Provide permission and information needed for participation in activities
- Ensure current membership for their girls
- Provide transportation to and from meetings
- Complete and submit the Health History form
-

Girl Responsibilities

- Be ready to learn and have fun
- Use your imagination and creativity
- Always stay with the group and be safe
- Clean up after yourself
- Listen when others are speaking
- Have fun!

All Girl Scouts live by the Girl Scout Law!



The Secret Ingredient of Successful Girl Scout Troops: FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Obviously, you want the girls in your troop to have fun, be inspired, take risks, and learn about themselves and the world this year—that's why you're a Girl Scout troop leader! The thing is, parents and caregivers want the same thing for their girls, but getting families to pitch in and play an active role in the troop, while also enhancing the experience for their own daughter, can be tricky for many volunteers. *It doesn't have to be this way!* After your troop's initial parent meeting, here's how you can best keep parents and caregivers on board.

Make the ask(s)

The main reason people don't take action is because they were never asked to in the first place. That's why hearing one out of three Girl Scout parents say no one had communicated expectations around involvement with their girl's troop is so troubling. Parents may have many talents, but they're certainly not mind readers! If you're nervous about getting turned down, don't be. Sure, a few parents might be unable to lend a hand, but the helpers you do get will be worth their weight in gold. And 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, ask again!

Make sense of “why”

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

Make it quick and easy

Everybody's got a full plate these days, so instead of starting parent conversations with a list of tasks or responsibilities they could take on (which can be intimidating!), ask caregivers how much time each week they might be able to dedicate to the troop, then go from there. For instance, if a troop mom or dad has 15 minutes each week to spare, they could organize and manage the calendar for troop snacks and carpools. If a grandparent has one to two hours, they could assist with leading the troop through a specific badge on a topic they're already comfortable with. For more ways parents and other caregivers can help out when faced with a tricky schedule, check out the *Family Resources* tab in the Volunteer Toolkit.

Make family part of the formula

While Girl Scouts programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it's important and helpful to open up a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting a whole crew to celebrate her accomplishments in Girl Scouting—whether at a holiday open house, a bridging ceremony, or a fun “reverse meeting” where girls take the role of leaders and guide the adults, including caregivers, through an activity—will help parents better understand the value of Girl Scouts and be more likely to invest their time and talents with the troop. That said, there's no need to wait for one of these special events to engage parents in their girls' Girl Scout lives. Keep communication lines open throughout the year—whether it's through your troop's social media page, personal emails, or in-person chats—to keep parents in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting, and encourage them to let their daughters “be the expert” at home, such as explaining or teaching a new skill she's learned to the rest of the family.

Meeting #1: Kicking the Year Off Right by Engaging Parents

THE PARENT MEETING

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls when families step up and play an active part in the troop. Without meaningful support from parents, it's difficult for a troop to be all it can be. Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing!

So, what is a Parent Meeting? It's the first meeting you hold to start each troop year—whether you are a new or returning troop. It's valuable for *all* troops.

100% of troops with the most satisfied parents and troop leaders report they hold a parent meeting.

Why? Because it helps:

- parents understand what Girl Scouting can do for their girl
- parents and leaders identify ways they will work as a team to support the troop
- parents and leaders agree on what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually
- fill key troop positions—you never know which parent will make an awesome assistant leaders, troop cookie manager, etc.
- parents know how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events, schedule changes, etc.
- parents learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics

Kicking off each year with a parent meeting 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, and the troop has a plan, girls benefit!

The best news? We've made it easy for you. Check out our step-by-step guide and parent meeting outline on the VTK. This hour-long meeting will make all the difference in the year ahead.



GUIDING YOUR TROOP EXPERIENCE

Use these questions to talk with your Troop Committee volunteers to outline your troop's structure before discussing these topics with parents/guardians.

- ✓ **How often, when will we meet, and for how long (length of each meeting and until what part of year)?**
- ✓ **Where will we meet?** Your meeting space should be somewhere safe, clean, and secure that allows all girls to participate. Some great meeting space ideas include:
 - schools
 - places of worship
 - libraries
 - community centers
- ✓ **The components of the uniform will families need to purchase?**
- ✓ **Will our troop be a single-grade level or facilitated as a multi-level troop with girls of many grade levels combined into one troop?** If multi-level, how will we make sure they each get an age-appropriate experience?
- ✓ **How are we going to work with girls to decide on activities that are what they want to do, are age appropriate, and help them discover, connect, and take action?** You can utilize the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) to help you through this process by exploring options for activities and reviewing the meeting plans and resources lists.
- ✓ **How and how often are we going to communicate to parents/guardians?** Keep everyone in the loop to make sure they know when, where, and what the activities will be and that girls are prepared for the activity. Effective communication will help set expectations and clarify parent/guardian responsibilities.
- ✓ **How will we fund the fun.** What our troop dues will be, Product program proceeds, that the troop will we need dues and product proceeds to cover supplies and activities. Troop dues should not exceed \$1 to \$3 a meeting.



Remember, Girl Scouts is designed to be girl-led. Talk to the girls about what they'd like to get out of Girl Scouts this year and make sure you're having fun!



LET'S GO — YOUR FIRST TROOP MEETING!

The first troop meeting is always exciting! It is really where you will see the adventure of being a Girl Scout Troop Leader start to unfold. Remember to have fun! As you help the girls on their journey to discover, connect and take action in the world around them, those experiences will be a part of your Girl Scout journey too. Enjoy it!

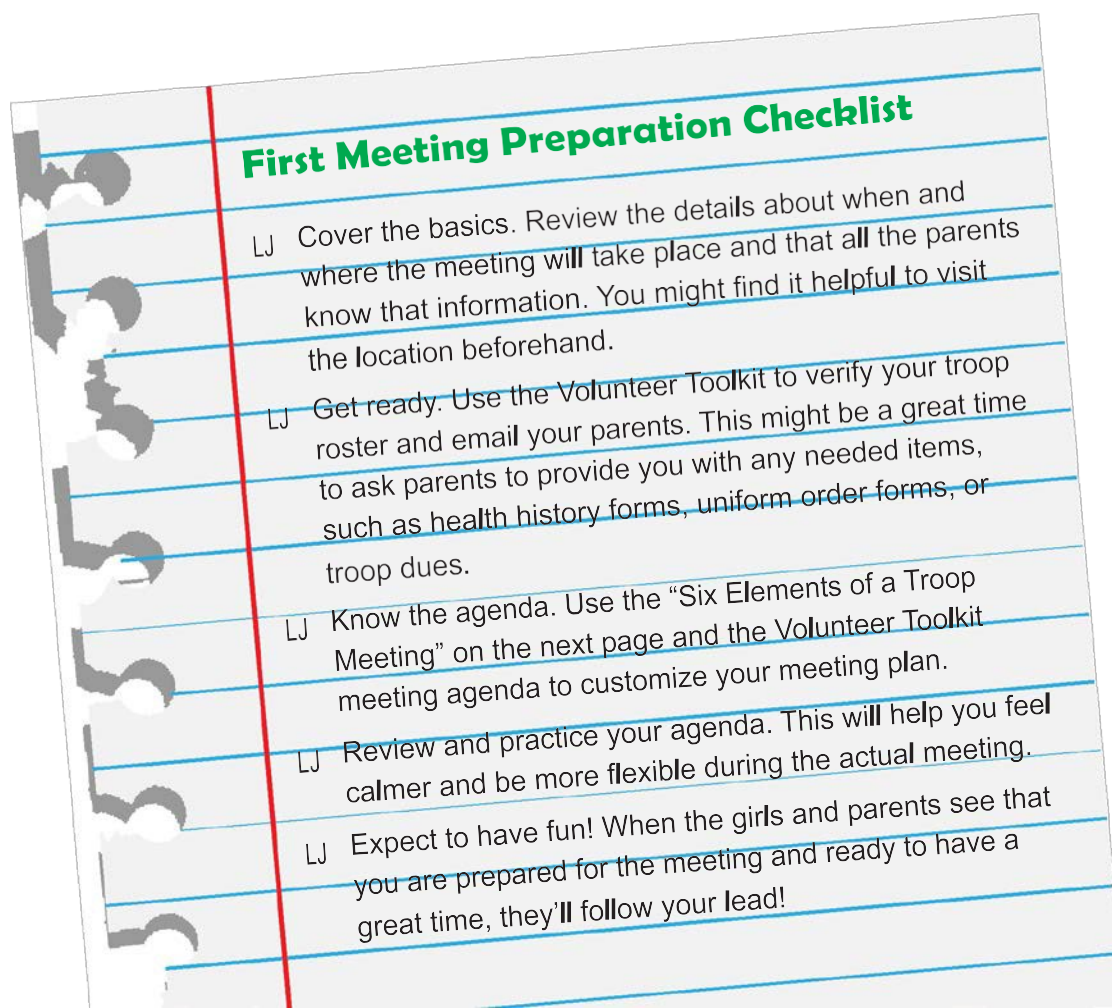
Your first troop meeting is a great chance to:

- get to know the girls!
- brainstorm all of the exciting things the girls want to do this year.
- introduce girls to Girl Scout traditions.
- Introduce the whole troop volunteer team to the girls and their parents/guardians.

If you are feeling a little nervous about leading troop meetings and experiences with your girls – that's ok! Working directly with girls can be challenging at times but it is always rewarding and can be a lot of fun. As a Girl Scout Troop Leader you are encouraged to listen to the girls with an open-mind and lead them with your heart.

Many adults feel that, when working with kids, they have to be the expert and have everything perfect. But this is not the case in Girl Scouts. When preparing for your first (or any) troop meeting, keep these things in mind:

- **It doesn't need to be perfect.** There are lots of resources with information and guidance to help you facilitate great troop meetings and experiences but you are encouraged to be creative. And, if you forget a part of the troop meeting or the field trip doesn't go the way you planned or you run out of time – that's ok! The girls aren't expecting perfection from you; your time, attention and guidance are the best part of your leadership.
- **Learn with your girls!** As you use the girl-led process in the development of your troop's meetings and experiences, the girls will, at some point, want to earn a badge or complete a project in a subject unfamiliar to you. Be open with the girls when you don't know something but don't use that as a reason to keep them from exploring the topic or doing the project. Instead, become their partner in figuring out how to learn more. When they see you learning alongside them, their confidence in their current knowledge and skills as well as their ability to learn will rise. It will also help them to understand that learning is a lifelong process.



6 ELEMENTS OF A GREAT TROOP MEETING

Most important – your meetings should be fun! Girls come to Girl Scouts to learn how to be leaders, make decisions, and have fun in the activities they choose.

1 Start Up—Plan activities for girls as they arrive at the meeting so they have something to do until the meeting begins. It could be as simple as puzzles, journaling, or card games. (5 minutes)

2 Opening—Each troop decides how to open their meeting—most begin with the Girl Scout Promise and Law, a simple flag ceremony, song, game, story, or other activity designed by the girls. (5-10 minutes)

3 Activities— Collect dues and make announcements, or plan an upcoming event or trip. Use the meeting plans found in the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK). Activities are already designed to fit easily into this part of your meeting as you help your troop earn badges and complete Journeys. (30-45 minutes)

4 Clean Up—Girl Scouts should always leave a place cleaner than they found it! (5 minutes)

5 Closing—Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close—with a song, a game, a story, Girl Scout friendship circle and squeeze. (5-10 minutes)

6 Business— This is a good time, while parents/guardians are present to keep them informed, hand them permission slips and reminder information. (5 minutes)



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TROOP FINANCES

Open a Bank Account — As Troop Leader, you and two more approved volunteer need to establish a bank account for collection of troop dues, payment of troop supplies and activities and product sales revenue (Fall Product Program & Cookie programs). This account needs be opened by following the “How To Open or Change a Bank Account” form which can be found <http://www.gscwm.org/en/resources/forms.html>.

Financial Assistance — Finances shouldn't stand in the way of a Girl Scout's participation. Any girl needing financial assistance for membership can request it as part of the online membership registration process. Other financial assistance is available for uniform components (subsidized). Forms can be found at <http://www.gscwm.org/en/resources/forms.html>

Tax Exemption — As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, volunteers can use the GSCWM tax exempt form when purchasing supplies and materials for Girl Scout troop use. Please ask you Membership Services Specialist for a copy of the form.

Funding the Fun!

Girls have some big ideas about what they want to do in Girls Scouts – and as a Troop Leader, you will guide them on how to plan and budget for those ideas. How do you do this?

Troop Dues — Troops collect troop dues as a way to help provide funds for troop activities and supplies. These could range from \$1-\$3 per meeting. Dues can be paid at each meeting, monthly or quarterly. It's completely up to family to decide what works best for their budget as to how they will pay troops dues to support the troop and what they want to do.

Money-earning Activities — The Fall Product and Cookie programs are the primary money-earning activities for a troop. You will learn all about these fantastic programs in a separate training when the time is right. If an older girl troop participates in these programs, they may also decide to plan an additional fundraising activities. These additional fundraisers must be approved by completing the Request for Troop Money Earning Form at <http://www.gscwm.org/en/resources/forms.html>.

Daisies may only earn money through the Fall Product and Cookie programs.



Managing Your Troop's Funds

Remember, Girl Scout funds are girl-earned and girl-spent. How the funds are used is a decision made by the entire troop, not just the leaders, parents, or a few select girls from the troop. It is also important to know that troop funds belong to the entire troop and cannot be earmarked for individual girl use. Funds can be used to purchase badges and patches, Journey and guide books, uniform components, pay for celebrations and ceremonies, community service projects, field trips, and more. Let the girls come up with some ideas and then have the troop vote.

As the girls begin to spend their troop's funds, you or the volunteer responsible for the troop finances has a responsibility to keep track of the receipts and expenses. All income and expenses must be reported by June 15 . Use the Annual report of troops funds and ACH authorization found at <http://www.gscwm.org/en/resources/forms.html> or the Finance tab on your Volunteer Toolkit

Copies or originals of bank statements and receipts need to be kept, so be sure to save them throughout the year. Girl Scout Troop Leaders should report out to troop parents about finances at least three times per year.

GIRL SCOUT VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

The Volunteer Toolkit is a digital planning tool that gives you resources and program content to get your year started—and keep it going smoothly with organization and communication tools! Fully customizable, Troop Leaders can:

- Explore meeting topics and program activities with their girls
- Add local events their girls choose
- Print step-by-step activity guides and shopping lists
- View and edit troop roster
- Update contact information
- Renew members
- Manage girl attendance and track achievements
- Share troop meeting activities with parents/guardians
- Email parents/guardians with a single click
- Track and share financial information

Learn more and access the VTK at <http://www.gscwm.org/> - My GS/VTK



Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting

This easy-to-use binder (one for each grade level) is full of great info on being a Girl Scout, activities and awards. It's part handbook, part badge book, and all fun!

<http://www.girlscoutshop.com/CENTRAL-AND-WESTERN-MASSACHUSETTS-COUNCIL>

Safety Activity Checkpoints

These are online lists containing everything you need to know to be prepared and keep your girls safe during a number of different kinds of activities outside of the normal Girl Scout troop meeting. These can be found in the Volunteer Resources section of the Volunteer Toolkit <http://www.gscwm.org/> - My GS/VTK

Volunteer Essentials

This resource contains information, policies and procedures to guide our volunteers and staff and to ensure that the Girl Scout program is delivered in a safe, consistent manner for girls across our council. By agreeing to be a Girl Scout volunteer, you're agreeing to follow the items laid out in this resource. The policies and procedures document is updated on a regular basis and the newest version can always be found on the **Volunteer Toolkit** <http://www.gscwm.org/> - **My GS/VTK**

GSCWM Social Media

Want to know what other troops are doing? Interested in new activities for your girls? Like sharing photos and videos? Stay connected and help us share the Girl Scout love on social media! Be sure to like us on Facebook, and follow us on Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram. Find all the links at <http://www.gscwm.org/> at the bottom of each page.

Customer Care

Serving our volunteers is a top priority. Reach out anytime at info@gscwm.org or **413-584-2602**.

(508-365-0115) Our business hours are Monday-Friday 9:00am -5:00pm

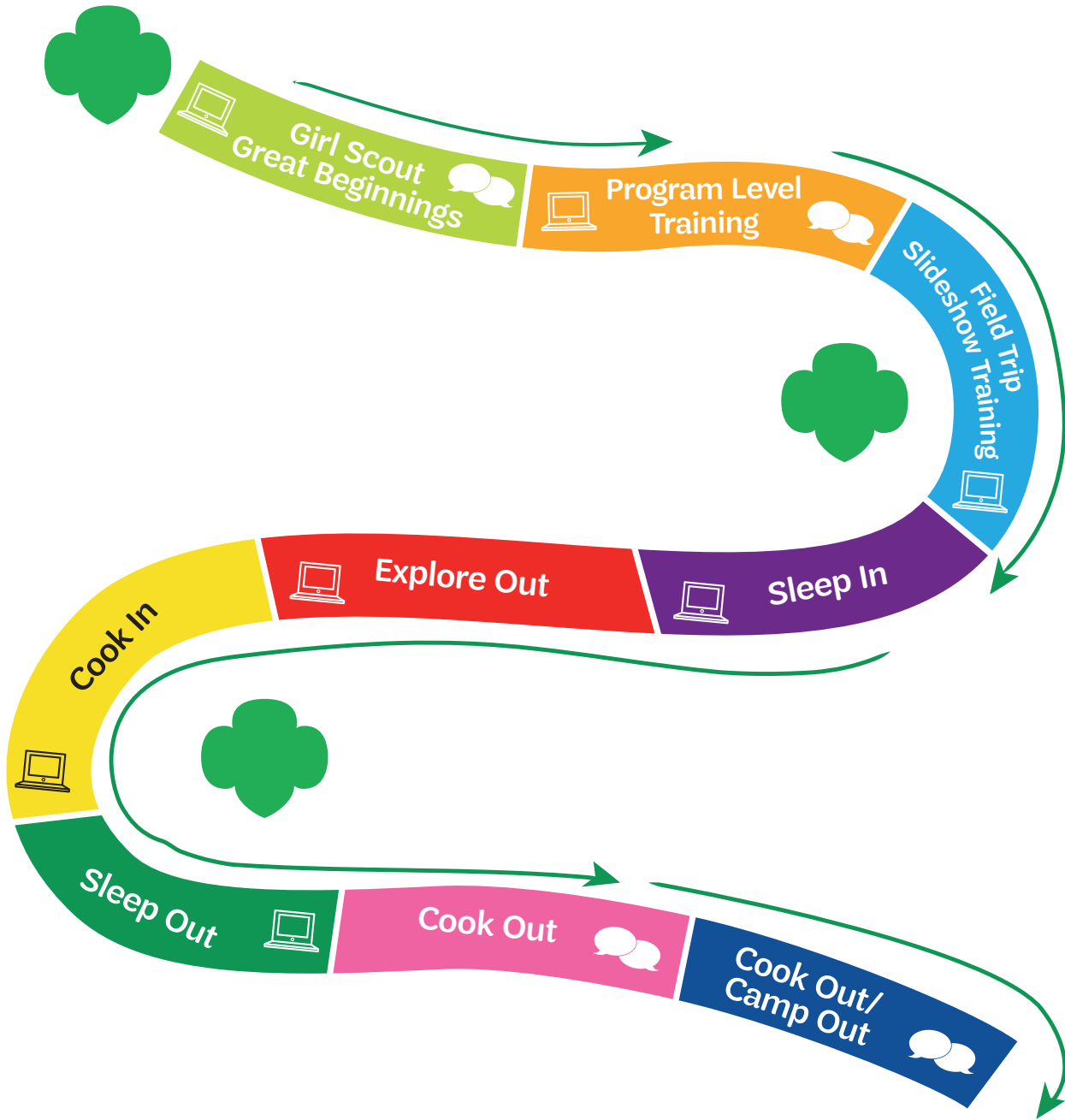
We look forward to serving you.

Newsletters

Every other week we send out a newsletters. Volunteer Express and Program Express. Make sure to open and read these for the latest news and to have the most up-to-date information.

TROOP LEADER TRAINING PATH

In order to build our girls into great leaders, we have to start with ourselves. We offer a variety of in-person workshops and online training courses to meet your needs as a new or experienced troop leader.




girl scouts
of central and western
massachusetts

**For more information about
our training path, go to**
www.gscwm.org/en/resources.html

Ready For More?





Girl Scouts Great Beginnings

New leader training that will answer the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How of Girl Scouts. How you can ensure troop safety: What are your next steps: Where to go for support.



Program Level Trainings

These level trainings offer the opportunity to learn how to run your specific troop level. How to run a Girl Scout meeting. Delve into the Journeys, awards, petals, leaves, badges and how to earn them.



Field Trips Slideshow Training

This course is a review of safety information, paperwork and how to include the girls for planning field trips.



Explore Out

Learn to prepare your troop for outdoor activities before they venture out. Introduce your girls to the 8 Basic Outdoor Skills.



Cook In

Learn to pack, store and prepare food safely, as well as clean-up after a meal per council guidelines.



Sleep In

Learn to walk your troop through the process of planning and preparing for an indoor overnight adventure of up to two nights and three days in buildings.



Cook Out

Learn essential outdoor cooking-related skills including fire building methods. Enjoy the hands-on experience of cooking a meal using different fuel sources and equipment.



Sleep Out

This course is to prepare you for your first outdoor overnight experience at a Service Unit or council sponsored encampment/camporee event.



Cook Out/Camp Out

This training includes Cook Out and Sleep Out trainings. Plus learn how to guide girls in planning an overnight adventure of up to two nights and three days, sleeping in platform tents or non-winterized buildings.

Five meetings all troops should have

1: Leadership team meeting

The first meeting you should have is with your leadership team. The leadership team can be anything from a leader and co-leader to a co-op model where each parent of a girl in the troop is responsible for leading a set number of meetings throughout the year. Whatever model you decide on, in your first meeting with your leadership team, here is a rough outline of the things you will want to discuss. Nb: this may take more than one meeting

Troop responsibilities.

- Making a list of things that need to get done in your troop, you will have a better sense of which responsibilities need to be divided.
- Tasks range from large tasks (cookie parent, troop leader) to much smaller tasks (responsibility for scheduling snacks, making the caper chart).
 - Don't be afraid to divide tasks up into smaller units to make them more manageable.
 - Think of some of the things a leader might do in order to have an average troop meeting run smoothly. This includes planning the meeting out ahead of time, running the meeting itself, managing the group to make sure everyone is listening, making sure all the necessary materials are available for projects, etc.
- There is no reason that one person needs to do all of these things. One person could be responsible for the practical details of the meeting (planning the meeting, procuring the materials) and one person could be responsible for running the meeting and helping the girls focus.
- Dividing responsibilities into smaller chunks both makes it more manageable for everyone and ensures that people can take charge of activities they're interested in and that play to their strengths.

How to divide responsibilities

Once you have an understanding of all the things that will need to get done in your troop, you can divide responsibilities appropriately. Remember, not everyone on the leadership team needs to be responsible for every piece of troop leadership. Many tasks can be delegated out to parent helpers as well. Having an understanding early on of what troop parents are responsible for keeps the troop leadership team from getting overwhelmed and helps set the expectation of parental assistance from the very beginning.

Troop Communication

You'll be working closely with your leadership team, so it's important to set expectations for communication early on. Agreeing on a set of norms for communication with your leadership team will set a solid groundwork for your work together.

One thing to discuss is preferred methods of communication--do you prefer to have a text chain relevant to troop business? Is email better, or is a Facebook group just for leaders of the troop the preference? Discussing how quickly people respond to communication is also important to prevent miscommunication later on. Knowing that one member of the team can take several days to respond to an email or a text whereas someone else responds immediately can prevent people from feeling ignored or rushed in their communication.

In this conversation it's also important to discuss how to address problems should there be a miscommunication or misunderstanding between members of the leadership team. Is direct communication the norm? What are some ways to facilitate this? If there is a failure of communication, how can that be rectified?

Leadership styles and preferences

What are people's strengths and weaknesses? Does one person love to manage data, but hate speaking in front of groups? Is one person great at planning meetings, but prefers not having to send emails? Delegating tasks based on the relative strengths and interests of members of the leadership team can help ensure that everyone is engaged and playing to their strengths.

Volunteer Toolkit

The Volunteer toolkit offers online tools for all your troop planning needs. In it you will find fully customizable templates for journeys, badges/petals and more. Information on navigating the volunteer toolkit can be found here:

<http://www.gscwm.org/en/resources/online-support-for-volunteers.html>

Journey Planning

Once you have familiarized yourselves with the Volunteer Toolkit, it's time to start planning your first meeting. At your first meeting you're going to want to start the girls off with choosing a Journey to work on. Since Girl Scouts is Girl-led, you're going to want to leave this choice up to them. There are a number of ways to aid girls in choosing which Journey they want to work on, with age appropriate options for each level discussed in the relevant level training, so you should feel free to choose whatever option you think will be ideal.

In this packet, we've chosen a model where girls try a short (10-15 minute) activity from each of the Journeys they have to choose between and vote on the one they like the best. In order for this activity to work successfully, you as the leaders should familiarize yourselves with each Journey and choose a suitable activity from each. Feel free to modify it as necessary to be engaging/fit the time constraints.

Note: with the Journeys there may not be enough time to try activities from all the Journeys in a single session. Feel free, especially with the younger girls to give them a choice from among three of the journeys, rather than from all of them. Alternatively, you can find an activity from each of the Journeys, have the girls vote on the top three they're interested in (based on your description of them) and then try out one activity from each of the top three.

2: First Parent meeting

This gives everyone a chance to meet each other, for the leaders to set their expectations for the year and for the parents to ask any questions they may have.

Introductions

Remember that at the first meeting parents will be dropping their girls off with relative strangers. Giving a chance for them to get to you know you and for you to get to know them can help ease the anxiety on both your parts. Telling them a little bit about yourselves and getting to hear about them can help pave a strong relationship for the future.

Expectations for Parent Participation

- Parents should come into the meetings to drop off and pick up their daughter.
- You need a parent volunteer to assist with ratios for field trips
- Parents need to be sure to check their email regularly for updates from the troop leaders
- If your troop is doing snack they will be expected to bring in snacks on a rotating basis.
- All families are expected to contribute to the financial stability of the troop, to the best of their ability (troops dues, Fall product sales, Cookie program)
- Permission slips for field trips
- Authorization and medical information forms need to be filled out for each girl.

Setting expectations for parent participation early on will ensure a solid framework for the rest of the Girl Scout year.

Things leaders will do | Things parents will do

It can be helpful to draw up a chart at the first meeting of things leaders agree to do, and things parents agree to do. For example: leaders agree to be timely, communicate with the parents ahead of time about anything additional the girls may need to bring to the meeting, and plan engaging activities for the girls. Parents agree to bring their daughter so she is ready to go at the start of the meeting, help her bring anything that she might need for the meeting and help make ratios so that the meeting can be a success.

Another facet of this is making clear what the leadership team is doing themselves and what they need to delegate out to the parents in the troop.

CORIs and registrations

Getting parents CORIed and registered as adult members to the troop at the first meeting will ensure that if they wish to volunteer with the troop in the future (chaperone a field trip, act as a backup at a troop meeting, etc.) they will be all set to do so.

How to resolve problems

If parents have a concern about something that happened in a troop meeting, who should they go to? The first person they should always discuss it with is the troop leader, but if they feel as though their concerns have still not been addressed, they can discuss it with the leadership team, the service unit manager, the membership specialist or the director of membership.

Have all the contact information available to give parents.

Communication from leaders

How will leaders communicate with parents? Is there a Facebook group that parents should join? An email address they need to make sure isn't going into their junk email file? Whatever it is, make sure parents know how communication will occur and that they need to regularly check in.

Other Important information

Further items that should be addressed at the parent meeting, including troop dues, Girl registrations and uniforms can be found here: <http://www.gscwm.org/content/dam/girlscouts-gscwm/documents/First%20Parent%20Meeting.pdf> or on the forms page of our website. Enter, "First Parent Meeting" in the keyword search

Initial Parent Email

A template for an initial email to be sent out to parents can be found here:

<http://www.gscwm.org/content/dam/girlscouts-gscwm/documents/First%20Parent%20Meeting%20invitation%20email%20template%20sample%202016.pdf> or on the forms page of our website. Enter "First Parent Meeting Invitation" in the keyboard search.

3: First meeting with girls

This is a sample first meeting with the girls that includes making a group agreement, getting to know you games, an intro to Girl Scouts and choosing a journey. It takes approximately 1.5 hours but can be modified for a longer or shorter meeting period. After this, you can use the volunteer toolkit to plan the rest of your meetings.

Name tag making on table as girls gather

- Have girls' names already written on name tags in big lettering. Have them decorate the name tags as they arrive. You can also put stickers on the name tags to denote allergies and no photograph, etc.

Group agreement

- Have girls suggest rules for the group to abide by (eg: listen when other people talk, be respectful, hands to yourself, etc.) Write them on a large sheet of paper, and have every girl sign it. Feel free to suggest rules you feel they may have neglected to mention.
- One good one to suggest is raising a hand to request quiet from the group. When they see you raising your hand, they should all be quiet and raise their own hand. You can then hang this paper up on the wall at each of your meetings.

Introduction to GS promise and law

- Go around and have girls share what they think Girl Scouts do. This is a good way to gauge their expectations, what they're looking forward to, etc.
- After this, introduce the GS promise (especially with the younger girls, you'll probably want to start with the promise and then add in the law after a few meetings).
- Ask girls what it means to promise something. Explain that just like a promise to your friend, the Girl Scout promise is something that all Girl Scouts agree to do.
- Show girls how to place their hands in the Girl Scout sign
- Then ask for a volunteer who is comfortable reading out loud in front of the group. Have her read one line of the promise, pause, and have the rest of the group repeat after her. (if time: ask the girls if they have any questions, let them know if there's anything they're uncomfortable with, they don't need to agree to it)

Intro to Caper Chart

Explain the caper chart and the layout of how it works to the girls:

Internet search the words Girl Scout Caper Chart

Getting to know you games

- Getting to know you games—have girls go around the circle and say their name and their favorite (animal, ice cream flavor, color etc—I usually have them choose this). Then, have the girls throw a ball around the circle saying the name of the person they're throwing to. Tell them that they need to remember the name of the person they're throwing to and the name of the person who throws to them. Once everyone has gone once, have them try to do it faster, backwards, throwing two balls, etc. always throwing/receiving to/from the same person.

Intro to Journeys

Explain to the girls that a Journey is a fun way to spend several weeks exploring a new topic and learning something new. (at this point, if you are going to narrow down your Journey activities to three, you can introduce all of them and then vote on the three most interesting).

- Do the activity from the first Journey
- Do the activity from the second Journey
- Do the activity from the third Journey
- **Vote on favorite activity, choose Journey accordingly**

Some ways of voting, beyond having the girls close their eyes and having a private vote

1. Putting up sheets of paper with the options written in big letters. Give each girl a bunch of stickers. Instruct them to place as many stickers on each sheet as they want. Then at the end, the option with the most stickers is the first choice, the one with the next most is the second choice, etc.
2. Have three bags, each with a choice written on it. Give each girl an object and instruct her to come up and put it in the bag of her choice.
3. Put choices around the room. Have girls go to the appropriate side.

Closing ceremony

- Have each girl say one thing they enjoyed about the meeting and one thing they are looking forward to for the next meeting.
- Then have them all stand in a circle, crossing their right hand over their left, and holding hands with friends on both sides. Choose one person to begin--she squeezes the hand of the person to her left who squeezes the hand of the person to her left, until the 'friendship squeeze' has been passed around the whole circle.
- Then as a groups turn outward and the meeting is over.

4 : Cookie meeting with girls/cookie meeting with parents

These two meetings should occur at the advent of the cookie program. It's good to frame the cookie program for both girls and parents so they can understand that it's about far more than just selling cookies. With the parents, this also offers an opportunity to set the expectation for their involvement and assistance.

With girls:

Introduce the cookie program to girls

Ask them what they think they will be doing in the cookie program.

Ask them why we as a troop will be selling cookies.

Then talk about goal setting and the fact that they are using the cookie money to do something that they as a troop want to do. They will be setting a goal and trying to achieve it. Some goal setting activities to run with your troop can be found in the packets that you will be given from Little Brownie Bakers

Cookie pledges

These can be found in the packets that you will be given from Little Brownie Bakers

With parents:

Reasons for the cookie program

Helping parents understand the cookie program is critical in receiving their involvement and support.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program helps power new and valuable experiences for girls, and it teaches them these five essential leadership skills:

- **Goal Setting:** Girls set cookie sales goals and make a plan to reach them.
- **Decision-Making:** Girls get to decide how her team will spend the cookie money.
- **Money Management:** Girls learn how to run their own cookie business by taking orders, handling money and creating budgets.
- **People Skills:** Every new customer a girl meets is an exciting opportunity to gain experience working with all kinds of people.
- **Business Ethics:** Girls are encouraged to be responsible and honest at every step of the cookie-selling journey.

The cookie program supports all of the girls in the local council and makes it possible to provide girl programs, low-cost council events, training, resources and support for adult programs.

Parent volunteering expectations

You need a parent or someone else to step up to be the cookie manager for the troop.

All volunteers need to be registered and CORI-ed in order to take shifts at cookie booths.

Does each girl have an individual goal that their parents can help them meet?

Will the troop be doing cookie booth?

5 : Field trips and end of year

Having a final parent meeting towards the end of the year helps end the year strong and create a solid start for the upcoming year.

End of the year activity

As a leader, please don't forget to fill out the **activity and travel form** for any trips your group may be taking: All forms can be found by clicking the word **Forms** at the top of any of GSCWMs website pages and typing in the name of the form in the Keyword search.

How is your troop going to spend whatever money it has earned for the big end of the year activity?

Plans for next year

A last parent meeting is a great time to bring your laptops and have parents renew early then and there.

- It's also a good time to discuss plans for the upcoming year (changes in meeting day, time, etc.)
 - If one or both leaders are not returning, it's also a time to let parents know that someone needs to step up in order for the troop to continue.
 - If the troop is looking to expand, but needs more volunteers to meet ratios, now is a good time to recruit volunteers for that as well.
 - If girls are bridging to the next level, let parents know that someone needs to step up in order for the girls to have a troop for the next level.

Feedback

This is optional, but it can be helpful to submit feedback from parents on particular issues. For example: how do they think the cookie program went? The journeys? Badges? Any concerns to share? How can we make this better for next year?

Bridging

If the troop will be bridging this year, let them know the significance of the bridging ceremony. Briefly let them know anything that will be different at the new Girl Scout level.

WHERE WE'RE LOCATED AND HOW TO CONNECT



Telephone: 413-584-2602 and

508-365-0115

info@gscwm.org

Office Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Store Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday 9:00am - 4:30pm

**Girl Scout Leadership Center -
Holyoke**

**Crossroads Business Park
301 Kelly Way**

Holyoke, MA 01040

Fax: 413-536-1383

**Girl Scout Leadership Center -
Worcester**

**115 Century Drive,
Worcester, MA 01606**