

# TROOP START-UP GUIDE ESPECIALLY FOR TROOP LEADERS



girlscouts   
of the commonwealth  
of virginia



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## MY GSCV SUPPORT CONTACTS

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Service Unit Name/Number                      | Service Unit Volunteer Coordinator                  |
| Service Unit Director                         | Service Unit Product Program Manager (Fall Product) |
| Service Unit Meeting Dates/Times              | Service Unit Product Program Manager (Cookie)       |
| Service Unit Meeting Location                 | Fellow Volunteers                                   |
| GSCV Community Engagement Manager Name        | Fellow Volunteers                                   |
| GSCV Community Engagement Manager Email/Phone | GSCV Placement Specialist                           |

# WELCOME!

This guide is intended to help you get started with your Girl Scout troop. Read on for great tips, resources, and information to help you on your journey.

***We're glad you're here.***

## About Girl Scouts

Girl Scouts is about sharing the fun, friendship, and power of girls and women together. Any girl—from kindergarten through 12th grade—can join Girl Scouts.

Girl Scout volunteers are also a diverse group—you may be a college volunteer working on a community-action project, a parent volunteer ready for an outdoor adventure with your girl's troop, or any responsible adult (female or male, who have passed the necessary screening process) looking to help prepare girls for the day when they'll lead—however and wherever they choose.

What all members share, both girls and adults, are the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Each member also agrees to follow safety guidelines and pay the annual membership dues. (Adults have the option to purchase a lifetime membership).

## Girl Scout 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.

## Program Levels

Girl Scout Daisy (grades K–1)  
Girl Scout Brownie (grades 2–3)  
Girl Scout Junior (grades 4–5)  
Girl Scout Cadette (grades 6–8)  
Girl Scout Senior (grades 9–10)  
Girl Scout Ambassador (grades 11–12)



# THE GIRL SCOUT STRUCTURE

When you join Girl Scouts, you're not just signing up for a weekly troop meeting, you're stepping into a network – an entire movement- that spans the globe.

## Troops

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

## Service Unit/Community/Membership Area

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

## Girl Scouts of the Commonwealth of Virginia

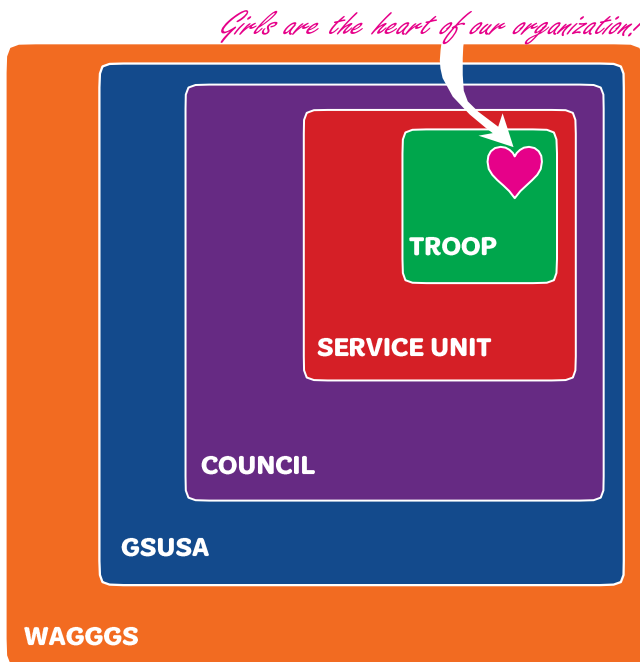
Independent 501(c)3 nonprofit chartered by GSUSA operating under the direction of a local board of directors and overseeing all service units and troops within a given geographic area.

## 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.

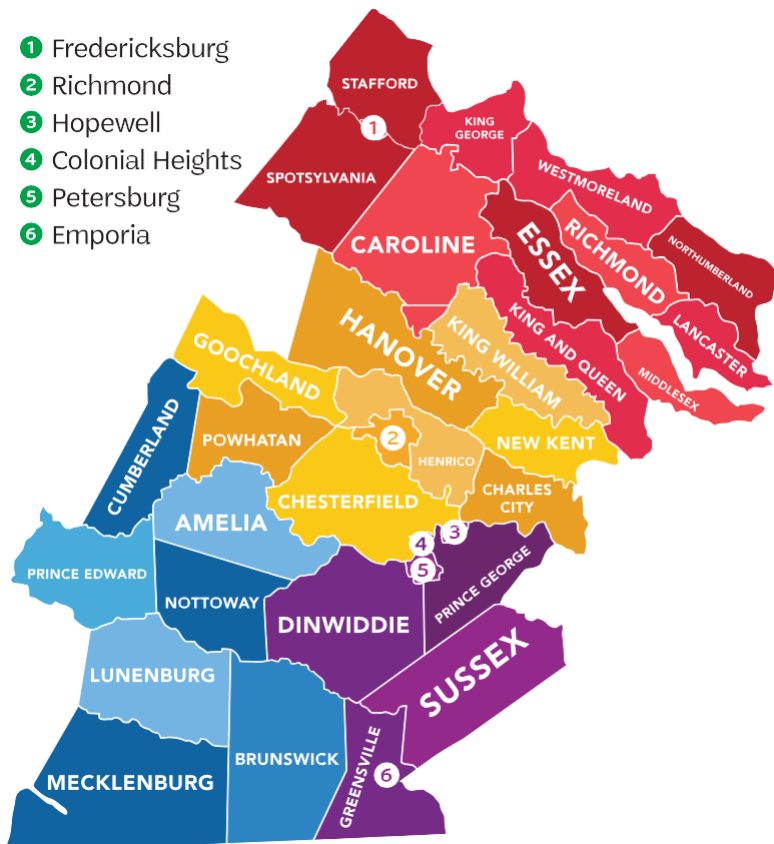
## World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)

A worldwide organization that connects Girl Scouts to a global sisterhood.



## ABOUT GIRL SCOUTS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA (GSCV)

- 1 Fredericksburg
- 2 Richmond
- 3 Hopewell
- 4 Colonial Heights
- 5 Petersburg
- 6 Emporia



With support from dedicated adult volunteers, parents and staff, we deliver the best girl leadership experience to over 15,000 members: over 10,000 girls and over 5,000 adult volunteers in 30 counties and 6 cities within the Central, Northern, Southern and Eastern (Northern Neck) regions of Virginia.

Our council's headquarters is located in the City of Richmond. Our Girl Scout Shop is also located at our headquarters.

We offer outdoor programming at two camp properties: Pamunkey Ridge Girl Scout Camp in Hanover County and Camp Kittamaqund in Northumberland County.



# 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).

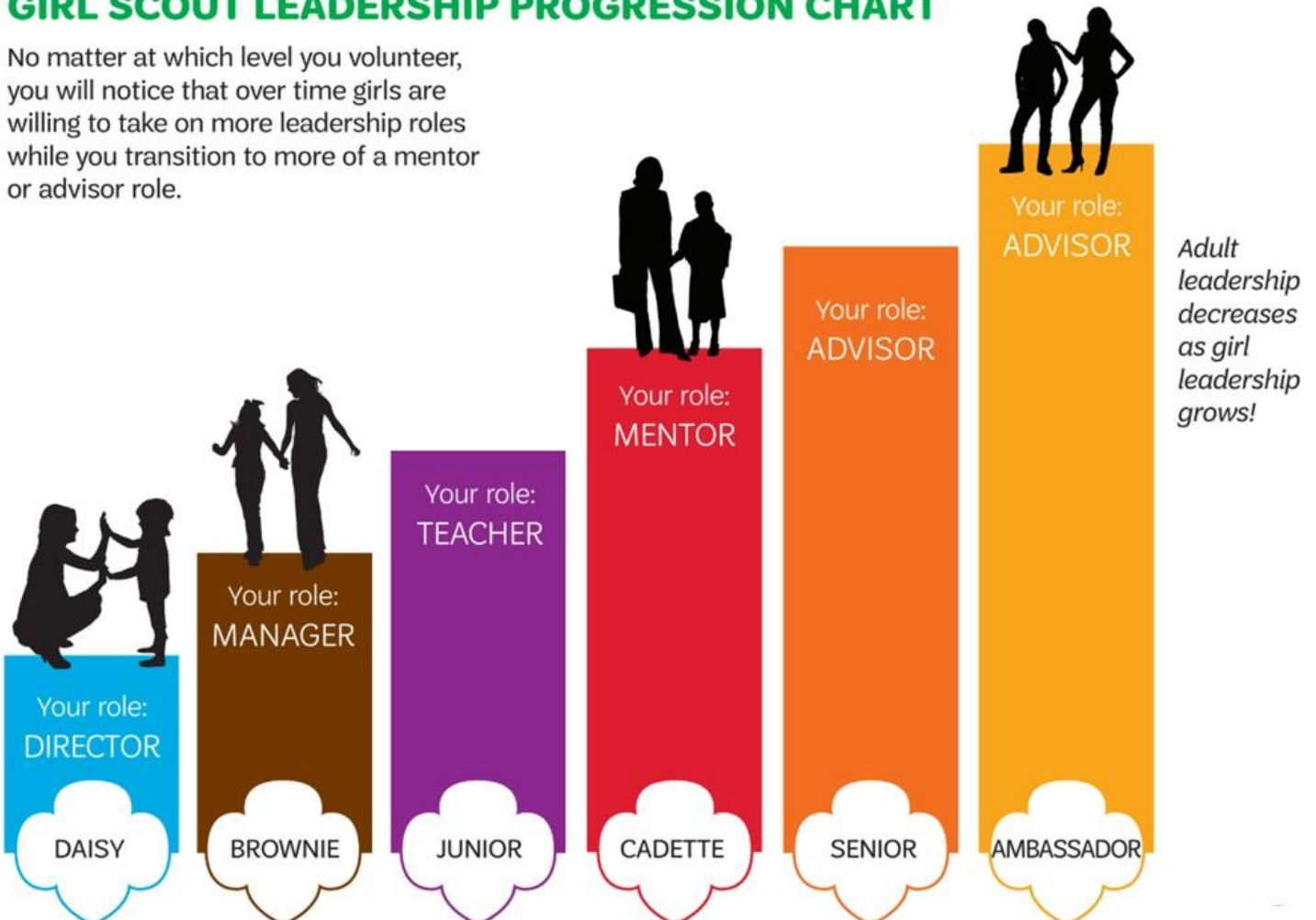


**AMBASSADORS**  
11TH & 12TH

**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).

## GIRL SCOUT LEADERSHIP PROGRESSION CHART

No matter at which level you volunteer, you will notice that over time girls are willing to take on more leadership roles while you transition to more of a mentor or advisor role.



# THE GIRL SCOUT LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE (GSLE)

In Girl Scouts, girls follow a path to discover who they are and what they care about, connect by collaborating with other people and take action to do something to make the world a better place.

This is called the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). Girl Scouts of the Commonwealth of Virginia program activities center around four pillars: STEM, Outdoors, Life Skills, and Entrepreneurship.



## The 3 Keys

**Discover:** A strong sense of self and positive values, practical life skills and critical thinking.

**Connect:** With healthy relationships, teamwork, and conflict resolution within the community.

**Take Action:** To advocate for self or others, be inspired to educate others to act and feel empowered to make a difference in the world.

## The 3 Processes

**Girl Led:** Girls of every grade level take an active role in determining what, where, why, and how they'll structure activities.

**Learning by Doing:** This means that girls have active, hands-on experiences.

**Cooperative Learning:** Girls learn about themselves and each other when they team up on common goals.

## What is the Girl Scout Program?

No matter what excites your girls, they'll find engaging and fun activities in the four areas that make up the core of the Girl Scout program:



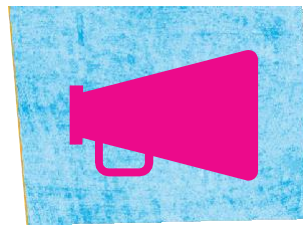
### STEM

Computer science, engineering, robotics, outdoor STEM, and more



### OUTDOORS

Adventure and skill building, from the backyard to the backcountry, including through camping experiences for all ages



### LIFE SKILLS

Civic engagement, healthy living, global citizenship, communication skills—to name a few



### ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Girl Scout Cookie Program—the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world—teaches goal setting, decision making, money management, business ethics, and people skills

Whether they complete Girl Scout Leadership Journeys, earn badges, unleash their inner entrepreneur through the Girl Scout Cookie Program, pack for their first hike, change the world through “Take Action” projects, or any combination of these activities, at Girl Scouts, every girl has countless ways to explore our four program areas and hone the skills they'll need to power a lifetime of success—whatever that looks like for them.

Explore the many exciting possibilities with the Award and Badge Explorer at [https://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/badges/badge\\_explorer.html](https://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/badges/badge_explorer.html)



# 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.

## 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!).



## 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.

# 8 STEPS TO GET YOUR TROOP STARTED

*We're excited you have decided to become a Girl Scout Troop Leader!*  
This Troop Start-Up Guide is intended to help you get started with your new Girl Scout troop! Below you'll find a basic checklist which walks you through starting your Girl Scout Troop. Let's get started!

1

**Congratulations for completing the first step to become a leader!** You have completed the registration process for your leadership role; submitted your information for a background check; and been assigned a troop number. You have created an online account through the My GS tab at the GSCV website, [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org). The MyGS portal is your gateway to manage your personal profile; troop membership; on-line training; event registration; and meeting plans.

3

**Access the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK).** This is the primary resource for Leaders to plan meetings and activities. The year plan tab provides pre-set meeting plans to complete Journey and badge activities. To access the VTK, go to the GSCV website and log in at the My GS tab. Click on Volunteer Toolkit in the left-hand column. Find more information on page 11 of this guide.

5

**Get to know your resources.**

- Start at - [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org) to access:
  - Volunteer Essentials
  - Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC)
  - Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)
  - gsLearn
  - gsEvents

7

**Prepare for Troop Meetings.** Secure a meeting place and time. Request a copy of a Certificate of Liability Insurance for your meeting space if necessary. Refer to the VTK to help plan your troop meetings.

2

**Start your Training.** Both leaders are required to Complete the GSUSA Foundation Series on gsLearn\* prior to meeting with your troop. Both leaders are required to attend complete Troop Basics and Age-level courses within 30 days of registration. Online courses are available on gsLearn and in-person courses are available by emailing [gsHelper@comgirlscouts.org](mailto:gsHelper@comgirlscouts.org). \*gsLearn is accessed through your My GS portal and offers stop and start functionality to complete training with ease.

4

**Connect with Service Unit Leaders and Other Volunteers.** Your Service Unit Team are volunteers who provide you with local support and advice. They are the best sources of information for you as a leader. At the Service Unit meetings, you will meet experienced leaders who will answer your questions about activities, money-earning, traditions, and much more. You will also meet new leaders like yourself.

6

**Hold your Parent/Caregiver Meeting.** Refer to the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) for tips and suggestions under the resources tab. Also, find advice on pages 16-20 of this guide. Your community engagement manager and your local service unit are an excellent resource too.

8

**Troop Finance Information.** All Girl Scout troops must have a bank account with two unrelated registered adults as authorized signatories who have completed the required background check. See page 19 in this guide for more details.



# 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. New Troop Leaders are required to complete the New Leader Training Path. Leaders can choose between in-person training or online training. Either path you choose you will meet with a Girl Scout expert after your training path is completed to ensure all your questions are answered and you are ready to begin your Girl Scout Troop Leader career.



The online training is found on gsLearn. gsLearn is accessed through your MyGS login and offers on demand training. The trainings in gsLearn offer stop and start functionality so can pause and come back to where you were without any worry.

**Start with GSUSA Foundation Series/New Leader Onboarding series online then you will complete Troop Basics & Age-level courses (**online**)**

OR

**Start with GSUSA Foundation Series/New Leader Onboarding online then you will complete Troop Basics & Age-level (**in-person**)**



Find more details about the training path at [www.comgirlscouts.org/volunteer](http://www.comgirlscouts.org/volunteer)



# Volunteer Resources

## The Volunteer Toolkit

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is your official source for delivering easy, fun troop meetings year-round! This fully customizable digital planning tool provides you with Girl Scout program content, award requirements, and other resources, so you can keep your Girl Scout year running smoothly. Accessible on any computer, tablet, or mobile device, the Volunteer Toolkit lets troop leaders:

- Explore meeting topics and program activities with their girls
  - Print step-by-step activity guides and shopping list
  - Manage girl attendance and track achievements
  - Add local events
  - Edit the troop roster and update contact information
  - Renew members
  - Track and share financial information
  - Message and share meeting activities with troop families
- ... plus so much more! Learn more and access the Volunteer Toolkit by logging into myGS  
[www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org)

## Successful Leader Learning Series (GSUSA Foundation Series)

Confident leaders are prepared leaders, and this online learning series will give all the info you need to get started as a troop leader. [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org)

## Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting Binder (available for purchase in the Girl Scout shop)

What does it mean to be a go-getting Girl Scout? These grade level-specific binders will help you break it down for your girls. It's part handbook, part badge book, and 100% fun! [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org)

## Safety Activity Checkpoints

This guide has everything you need to know to be prepared and keep your girls safe during a range of activities outside the normal Girl Scout troop meeting. It can be found in the [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org)

## Volunteer Essentials

With key information, policies, and procedures that support the safe and consistent delivery of Girl Scout programming to girls across the council, *Volunteer Essentials* is just that—essential. By agreeing to be a Girl Scout volunteer, you agree to follow the items outlined in this resource. *Volunteer Essentials* is updated annually, and the newest version can always be found on our website. Find it at [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org).

## Tips for Troop Leaders

When you're looking for real-world advice from fellow troop leaders who've been there, this volunteer- to-volunteer resource on the Girl Scouts of the USA website has the tips you need for a successful troop year. Find it at [girlscouts.org/tipsfortroopleaders](http://girlscouts.org/tipsfortroopleaders)

## DIGITAL

### [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org)

The official website of Girl Scouts of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### S'more News -

weekly eNewsletter Stocked with tips and tricks for Girl Scout troop leaders.

### [facebook.com/](https://facebook.com/comgirlscouts)

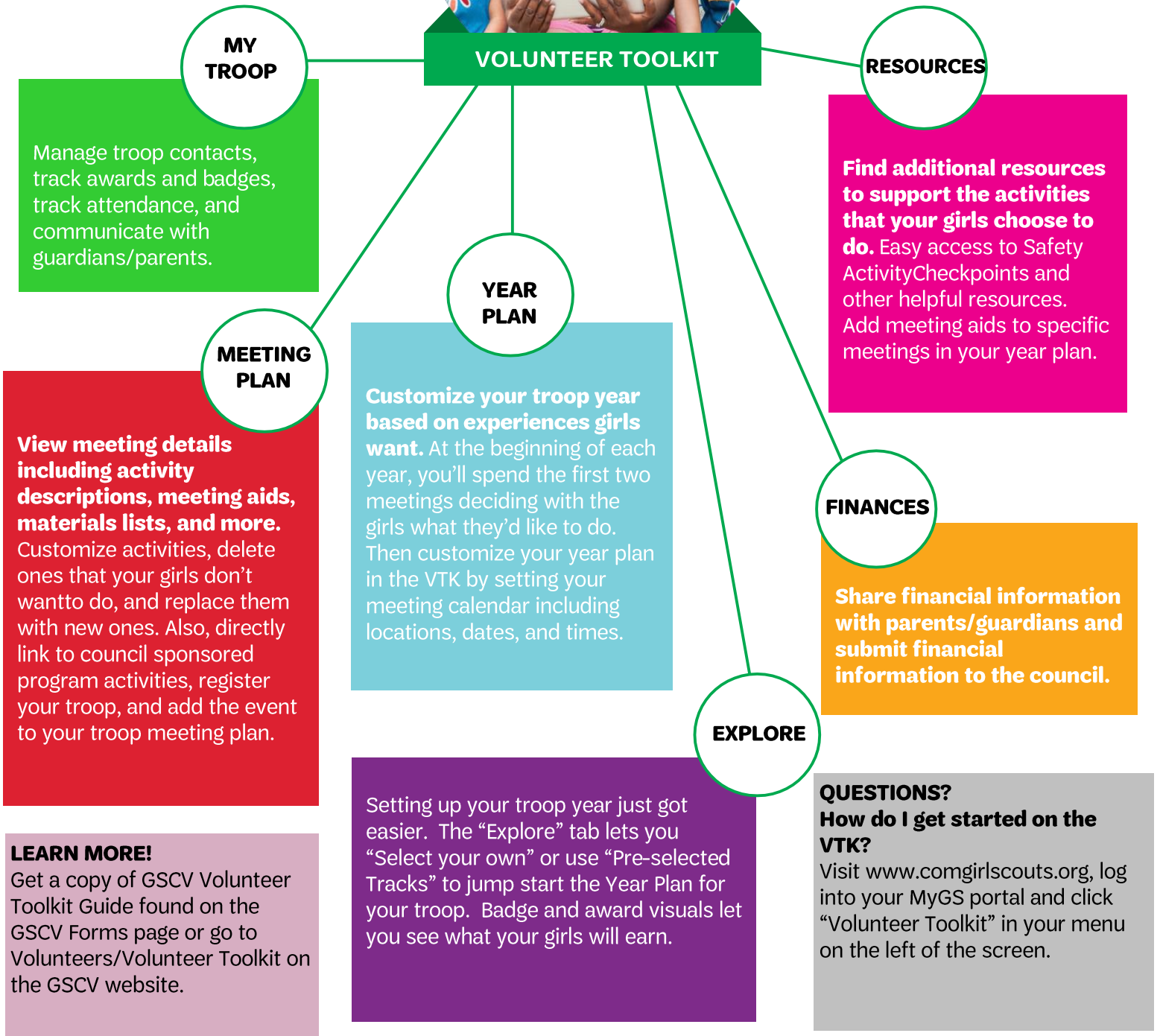
**comgirlscouts**  
The official Facebook page of Girl Scouts of the Commonwealth of Virginia.



The Girl Scout Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is a comprehensive digital tool accessible on your computer, smartphone or tablet. It is the primary support resource for troop leaders who have access to the exciting features of the VTK.



For volunteers, this resource will replace the adult leader's guide for Journeys and the Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting. Girls will still use their books to enhance their experience and serve as a Memento of their fun experiences.



Need more assistance? Contact our Help Desk at [gshelper@comgirlscouts.org](mailto:gshelper@comgirlscouts.org) or 804-746-0590 x316

## TROOP SAFETY

The safety and well-being of girl and adult members is our highest priority. As a volunteer, it is imperative to know and understand the safety policies and procedures in place, where to look, or who to ask for more information when necessary. Listed below are some of the main resources where safety policies are listed:



### VOLUNTEER ESSENTIALS

A guide to important policies and procedures including safety.

### SAFETY ACTIVITY CHECKPOINTS

Activity specific safety guidelines for activities including camping, participating in a parade, and even the fall product and cookie program participation.

### COUNCIL WEBSITE

Check out [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org) for more information from Girl Scouts of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### INSURANCE INFORMATION

Registered Girl Scout members are covered by basic accident insurance when participating in Girl Scout activities. If an accident occurs, inquire with the Help Desk for resources.

## General Safety Guidelines



**Keep guardians informed!** Communicate regularly about troop meetings and activities. Use permission slips anytime the troop is doing anything outside your normal meeting place and time.



**Girls are never alone!** Girls should always use the buddy system and be accompanied by two approved adults at all times.



**Adults are never alone with girls!** At least one troop leader and either another troop leader or a troop adult volunteer should be present any time girls are together.



**Be prepared!** Have a first aid kit, non-emergency number of local law enforcement, and charged cell phone on hand, just in case you need it.



**Know your surroundings!** This goes for both the regular meeting place and when venturing out with the troop and applies to both people and places. Assess any risks that might be present and take appropriate action. See Volunteer Essentials for more information.



**Follow all safety policies and procedures** as outlined in Volunteer Essentials! Contact a member of your support team or the GSCV Help Desk with any questions you may have.



## 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 (registered and background check) volunteers present at all times, plus additional 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 <i>one</i> 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 <i>one</i> 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 our website under Volunteer > Volunteer Resources. 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. Note that a First Aider should be present for all activities.



#### 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 Girl Scouts of the Commonwealth of VA staff by calling 804-254-3292. Be prepared with troop information and who was involved in the incident.

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.

# Family Connections: The Key Ingredient to Successful Girl Scout Troops!

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!

## Kick the Year Off Right With a Parents and Caregivers Meeting

A parent and caregiver meeting should be the first meeting you hold to start each troop year—it sets up both new and returning troops for success!



### Why? Because it helps:

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

Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging families in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When families are involved, leaders have support, and when the troop has a plan, girls benefit!

Check out our step-by-step guide and parent meeting outline in the Volunteer Toolkit. (Remember, you can access the Volunteer Toolkit via MyGS!) This hour-long meeting will make all the difference in the year ahead: **100% of troops with the most satisfied parents and troop leaders report they hold parent meetings.** You'll also want to hold an additional family meeting ahead of cookie season to introduce parents and caregivers to the program and how they can pitch in.

And remember to make family part of the formula! While Girl Scout programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it's important and helpful to open 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 on the role of leader 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 Girl Scouts' troop 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 Girl Scout “be the expert” at home, by, for example, explaining or teaching a new skill she's learned to the rest of the family.



# IMPORTANCE OF THE PARENT/CAREGIVER MEETING

All parents/guardians are encouraged to play an active role with their girl's troop. If they will be working directly with girls, they need to complete the approval process and register for one of the positions.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

- Get caregivers involved early
- Communicate troop dues, troop funds and money earning plans
- Determine meeting date, time and location
- Register girls and adults as Girl Scouts
- Complete paperwork (Health History, Code of Conduct)
- Form a troop committee with parents to help with Fall Product Program, Girl Scout Cookie Program, manage finances, and driving.
- Get to know each other
- Identify how to communicate to parents
- Discuss expectations
- Ask for supply donation
  - Art Supplies: yarn, glue sticks, crayon, markers, construction paper
  - Meeting Supplies: paper, pens, pencils, tape, napkins, plates, cups, wet wipes, hand sanitizer

## PLANNING THE MEETING

- \* Get a list of interested girls from the GSCV Placement Specialist.
- \* Set up the meeting site.
- \* If a contract signature is required at the meeting site, contact your Community Engagement Manager.
- \* Contact parents with meeting information.
- \* Include information to register online.
- \* Prepare sign-up sheets for adult help.
- \* If girls are going to be present, arrange for an older girl troop to help or have your fellow leader run an activity with the girls.

## THE DAY OF THE MEETING

- Arrange tables and chairs for adults, and an activity area for girls if they are attending.
- Introductions, perhaps find a fun ice breaker.
- Troop management positions—Discuss responsibilities such as troop leader, troop treasurer, cookie program coordinator, troop support I, troop support II, etc.
- Ask adults if they have any skills, knowledge, or special contacts they can share.
- Discuss troop meeting times and locations.
- Explain, discuss, and collect troop dues (if required).
- Explain uniforms and books. Discuss options for purchasing through the GSCV shop.
- Share with adults how you are going to communicate with them (i.e., email, newsletter, phone tree).
- Direct adults to the council's website, [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org), for more resources.
- Direct adults to login to My GS to see the Year Plan on Volunteer Tool Kit (VTK).



## AFTER THE MEETING

- Follow up with a thank you and recap of the meeting.
- Send rosters out with adult information and contact information.
- Remind adults to register as a Girl Scout member by going to [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org).

## MANAGING THE TROOP

*Volunteer Essentials, Quick Reference Guide*

Every troop leader's management style is different and often changes over time. Be flexible. Be informed. And don't be afraid to divide and conquer—delegating tasks to girls as well as adults will help ease the leader's work load. This section describes tasks to be completed over the course of the troop year.

### REGISTER TROOP MEMBERS

- All girls and adult volunteers involved in the troop need to be registered before meeting.
- Two leaders are needed per troop.
- Financial assistance is available for membership fees, uniform, starter kits and GSCV programming.

### SEEK ADULT SUPPORT

- Any adult volunteers who want to help support the troop by working directly with girls are required to be a registered member and complete a background check.
- Adult to girl ratios need to be met, see Volunteer Essentials, Chapter 4: Being Safety-Wise

## WHERE WILL THE TROOP MEET?

*Refer to Volunteer Essentials, Chapter 1: Sharing Your Unique Gifts.*

The safety of our girls is of paramount importance to Girl Scouts of the Commonwealth of Virginia. GSCV strives to maintain a balance as a safety-conscious organization that challenges all girls to take risks in a safe environment. Troop interaction is critical to our girls' social and organizational development.

Troop meetings should be held in facilities that are designed to meet the unique needs associated with public use and should be ADA-compliant to ensure the troop meeting is accessible for all girls. Examples of commonly used meeting locations are schools, government buildings, places of worship, libraries, YMCA locations, and office space.

### THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN FINDING A MEETING LOCATION

- Cost
- Size
- Availability
- Resources
- Safety
- Facilities
- Communication-Friendly
- Allergen-Free
- Accessibility

### CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE

When reserving troop meeting space, volunteers may be asked to provide a certificate of insurance to verify Girl Scout liability insurance coverage. Please contact [gshelper@comgirlscouts.org](mailto:gshelper@comgirlscouts.org) if a certificate of insurance is needed.

### MANAGING TROOP MEETING TIME

Here is a suggested time line for an average one hour meeting.

Adjust the times based on length of meeting and program level.

1. Pre-meeting (time varies)
2. Opening (5 minutes)
3. Girl Scout circle (5 minutes)
4. Program activity (20 minutes)
5. Clean up (5 minutes)
6. Sharing time (5 minutes)
7. Snack time (10 minutes)
8. Closing (3 minutes)



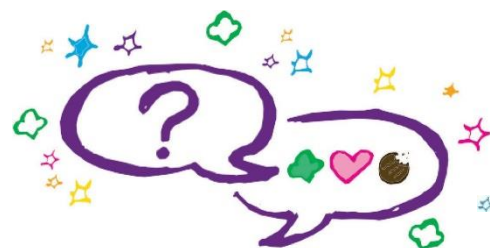
*Find more detailed information including meeting plans and year plans in the Volunteer Toolkit located in the My GS tab on the website.*



# 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/caregivers.

- ✓ **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
- ✓ **Which 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, 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/caregiver responsibilities.
- ✓ **How will we fund the fun?** Will our troop charge dues, use product program proceeds, and/or charge per activity? How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? Outline a financial plan, and then fill in the details once girls determine what they want to do this year.



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!

# What Makes a Successful Troop Experience?

No matter where your girls live, a universal Girl Scout experience connects them to their Girl Scout sisters around the country. And there are so many ways to make sure your girls get the full Girl Scout experience in a way that excites and inspires them!



# TROOP FINANCES

**Open a Bank Account** — As Troop Leader, you and one more approved volunteer should establish a bank account for collection of troop dues (optional), payment of troop supplies and activities and product sales revenue (Fall Product Program & Cookie programs).

- Any troop that is managing money is required to maintain an active account at one of GSCV's identified banking institutions: Benchmark, Primis, Truist. Once a bank is chosen, email [gshelper@comgirlscouts.org](mailto:gshelper@comgirlscouts.org) to obtain the needed forms.
- Troop financial status should be fully transparent to troop members. Any adult in the troop can ask to see the account information at any time.
- The troop must complete and submit a troop financial report at the end of the troop year.

**Financial Assistance** — Finances shouldn't stand in the way of a Girl Scout's participation. Caregivers can apply for financial assistance to offset the costs of purchasing girl membership, uniform pieces, starter kit, or council programming as well as adult membership and background check fees. Girl membership assistance may be requested online at [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org). Contact [gshelper@comgirlscouts.org](mailto:gshelper@comgirlscouts.org) for all other financial assistance.

**Tax Exemption** — As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, volunteers can use the GSCV sales tax-exempt form when purchasing supplies and materials for Girl Scout troop use. The tax-exempt form can be obtained from [gshelper@comgirlscouts.org](mailto:gshelper@comgirlscouts.org).

## 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** — Many troops decide to collect troop dues as a way to help provide start-up funds for troop activities and supplies. These could range from \$1-\$2 per meeting to \$30-\$40 for the entire school year paid all at one time. It's completely up to each troop to decide what works best for them to support the activities they want to do.

**Money-Earning Activities** — The Fall Product Program & Cookie Program are the primary money earning activities for troop. You'll learn all about these program activities in a separate training within your Service Unit. If the troop anticipates needing more funds, they may also host their own money-earning activities within the guidelines outlined in Chapter 5 of Volunteer Essentials.

## 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, caregivers, 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, eld 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 of each Girl Scout year using the Finance tab in the Volunteer Toolkit.



## FORMS AND DOCUMENTS FOR NEW TROOPS

The following are primary forms that new troops will use to get started and have a successful troop year. **Access forms at [www.comgirlscouts.org/forms](http://www.comgirlscouts.org/forms).**

| Form   | Purpose   | Who Completes It         | Where It Goes |
|--|---|--------------------------|---------------|
| Code of Conduct *                                  | A code of conduct for the Troop. Signed by caregivers and Girl Scouts. Also provides an opportunity for parents to pledge their support.  | Parent / Guardian & Girl | Troop Leader  |
| Driver *   | A form filled out by any adult volunteer who plans to drive Girl Scouts. The driver must be a member and background checked.  | Adult volunteers over 21 | Troop Leader  |
| Girl/Adult Health History Record *                 | An updated record of a girl's past and present health status (for example, of allergies, chronic illnesses, and injuries), which her guardian completes for Girl Scouts. The organization requires a health history form every three years. | Parent / Guardian        | Troop Leader  |
| Parent/Guardian Permission & Responsibility Form * | Permission form for Girl Scout to participate in the Fall Product and/or Cookie Program with GSCV.  | Parent / Guardian        | Troop Leader  |

| Form                                 | Purpose  | Who Completes It               | Where It Goes |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------|
| ACH                                  | Automatic Clearing House Authorization form is required of troops to participate in the Fall Product or Cookie Program. It authorizes GSCV to automatically debit the Troop account.   | Troop Leader / Troop Treasurer | Help Desk     |
| Request for Certificate of Insurance | A form that shows venues hosting troops the level of liability insurance that GSCV holds. May be requested by your troop meetingplace.   | Troop Leader                   | Help Desk     |
| Medical Professional First Aid Form  | A form for a doctor, nurse, EMT who will serve as a troop First Aider. This form needs to be filled out yearly and submitted to GSCV.  | Adult volunteers over 21       | Help Desk     |
| Single Use Permission Slip           | When doing activities beyond the troop meeting, guardian permission is required. This form allows you to communicate to guardians the key information about the activity and receive permission from them to involve their girl. | Parent / Guardian              | Troop Leader  |

\*Forms required at the beginning of each year.

## STAY CONNECTED

### Help Desk

Serving our volunteers is a top priority. Reach out anytime by emailing [gshelper@comgirlscouts.org](mailto:gshelper@comgirlscouts.org). During business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.), you can reach a help desk specialist by calling 804-746-0590 ext. 316. The team looks forward to resolving your needs and inquiries quickly.



## Girl Scout Office & Shop

4900 Augusta Avenue, Richmond, VA 23230

## PUBLICATIONS

Program Event & Activities Guide  
 Summer Camp Book  
 Product Program Guides

# NEW GIRL SCOUT LEADER/TROOP START-UP CHECKLIST

## COMPLETE WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF REGISTRATION

- Complete registration
- Read Troop Start Up Guide
- Complete background check
- GSUSA Foundation Series – complete on gsLearn
- Troop Basics—in-person with SU Volunteer or Council Staff or virtual (60 minutes)
- Age-Level Training – in-person with SU Volunteer or Council Staff or virtual (60 minutes)

## COMPLETE WITHIN 30 DAYS OF REGISTRATION

- Identify meeting location, dates, and times
- Login to VTK\*– (Volunteer Toolkit)—Update meeting location, dates and times, and review year ideas
- Establish how you will communicate with parents/guardians (text, email, and/or Facebook)
- Hold a parent/caregiver meeting (45 minutes)
- Hold first troop meeting
- Setup Bank Account at GSCV partner approved bank (required prior to participation in Fall Product or Cookie Program)

## COMPLETE WITHIN THE FIRST YEAR

- Attend Service Unit meeting(s)
- Know who to contact for advice/questions/help  
Help Desk: 804.746.0590 ext. 316 or gshelper@comgirlscouts.org
- Use VTK\* to set-up Troop Year Plan
- Participate in Fall Product Program (Fall opportunity)
- Participate in Cookie Program
- Attend a council sponsored event (Reference Program & Events Guide)
- Attend a service unit event
- Visit the Council Shop (4900 Augusta Avenue, Lobby level)
- Use Volunteer Essentials for reference point of questions
- Use Safety Activity Checkpoints
- Early Bird registration for the next Girl Scout year

\*VTK (Volunteer Toolkit) can be accessed by going to [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org) then click on MyGS, login and on your left menu click “Volunteer Toolkit”



# GIRL SCOUT YEAR AT A GLANCE

The Volunteer Toolkit will show you year plan options. This sample troop year show ideas for trips, tradition and activities that you can customize based on the interests of the girls in your troop. Each troop is different since the plans, activities, money earning (and more) should be planned by the girls!

## FALL: SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER

- **Parent/Caregiver meeting.** A way to share Girl Scout traditions with parents and guardians and get them engaged as a volunteer.
- **Regular troop meetings** (weekly, bimonthly, or monthly depending on girl schedules), that focus on plans for the year.
- **Use the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)** to create a year plan.
- **Identify trips** to make Journey and badge work come to life.
- **Implement a service project** based on new skills.
- **Register to attend** community and council-sponsored Girl Scout events.
- **Refer to the VTK** or the Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting for badge information or individual books for information on Journeys.
- **Fall Product Program** is a great way to earn startup funds for your troop and build valuable skills.
- **Happy Birthday Juliette!** Celebrate at the Pamunkey Ridge Campfire in November

## WINTER: DECEMBER – FEBRUARY

- **Continue regular troop meetings** implementing the girl-led plans.
- **Attend the Girl Scout Cookie Program Training.** Troop leader and cookie coordinator attend cookie program training
- **Participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program.** It's a great way to earn money and develop financial skills. A few key parts:
  - > Order taking: early January
  - > Cookie delivery: mid February
  - > Booth sales: March
- **Participate in Girl Scout World Thinking Day** on February 22. Girls honor our sister Girl Guides and Girl Scouts by taking time to give thanks for their international friendships and remember that GSUSA is a part of a global community. Visit [www.girlscouts.org/worldthinkingday](http://www.girlscouts.org/worldthinkingday)
- **Register for Summer Camp!** There are lots of ways that girls experience the fun of camp including: resident camp at GSCV camp properties. For more info, visit [www.comgirlscouts.org](http://www.comgirlscouts.org) in January.

## SPRING: MARCH – MAY

- \***Continue with regular troop meetings**
- \***Girl Scout Week!** Celebrated each March, starting with Girl Scout Sunday and ending with Girl Scout Sabbath on a Saturday. It always includes the Girl Scout birthday (Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the first troop) on March 12.
- \***Girl Scout Sunday and Girl Scout Sabbath.** An opportunity to attend a place of worship and be recognized as Girl Scouts. Ask your service unit director for more information.
- \***Court of Awards Ceremony.** Celebrate awards with a girl-designed ceremony. (Some leaders prefer to give awards as the girls earn them.) Ending the troop year with a gathering is a great way to reengage parents and share the girls' successes.
- \***Renewal.** Late spring is a great time register for the coming year. There are often incentives associated with early registration.

## SUMMER: JUNE – AUGUST

- **Submit your Troop Finance Report** when you re-register your troop in June. Available for download on the forms page of the website.
- **Summer Camp begins!**
- **Change It Up!** Many troops take the summer off, but that doesn't mean you have to! Take advantage of the time off from school to go on trips. As girls get older, summer is often the perfect time for them to participate in short-term Girl Scout opportunities or check out Girl Scout Destinations.
- **Volunteer Kick Off!** Get connected again early to late summer. Attend one of these regional meetings to help you get your Girl Scout year off to a great start.