



**girl scouts**   
western pennsylvania



# Leader's Guide to Success

# LEADER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

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## 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

Girl Scouting builds girls of  
courage, confidence, and character,  
who make the world a better place.

 Follow us on  
social media!

-  [customercare@gswpa.org](mailto:customercare@gswpa.org)
-  [facebook.com/gswpa](https://facebook.com/gswpa)
-  [girlscoutswpa](https://www.instagram.com/girlscoutswpa)
-  [GirlScoutsWPA](https://twitter.com/GirlScoutsWPA)
-  800-248-3355

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

# 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!

## 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 City.

### Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania

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 specific geographic area.

### Service Units

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

### Troops

Volunteer-supervised groups of girls.



# YOU—A GIRL SCOUT LEADER!

Being a Girl Scout leader is an incredible journey along which you'll shape the future by working with girls today. With your guidance, encouragement, and go-getting spirit, your Girl Scouts will be ready to embark on a lifetime of leadership, success, and adventure. And along the way, you'll hone your own leadership style and discover that you'll achieve more than you thought possible!

In Girl Scouting, leadership is about more than “being in charge” or having a title; it's recognizing that you're part of a team and understanding that team's needs and interests.



## **Leadership is teaching girls:**

- That they can do and be anything!
- That they are decision-makers and should own their decisions
- How to live the Girl Scout Law by modeling it for them

## **As a leader, see yourself as a coach who:**

- Guides and instructs, not as a teacher providing rote lessons and activities
- Advises and discusses
- Ensures each girl can carry out her responsibilities within the troop
- Encourages girls to build their skills and their ethics
- Assigns more responsibilities to the girls as they grow and develop

## **It's important to remember that:**

- You can't expect to know everything the girls want to learn
- You'll explore and learn alongside your girls and grow your confidence in the process
- You're not expected to know everything about Girl Scouting, but you should know where to go for information—and to ask for help when you need it

# LET'S GET STARTED!

## Managing Your Member Experience Online

As an adult member, you'll have access to MyGS, your Girl Scout member community. MyGS allows you to manage your member experience online including updating any member contact information and accessing gsLearn. Once your background check is completed and you're approved to serve as a troop leader, you'll also have access to the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) and the Troop Tab.

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. You can manage your troop's meeting information, location, time, and available opening for girl and/or volunteers by completing the [Troop Catalog Update Form](#) found on the Forms page at [gswpa.org](http://gswpa.org).

## Next Steps

Look out for a welcome email with details on required trainings and information on how to connect with your service unit and council staff.

## Troop Leader Training Path



If you have questions as you go through your first year, you can drop into a Volunteer Open House. These optional, monthly sessions will highlight activities and programs coming up that month, review Volunteer Toolkit tips, and provide time to connect with staff for support. Registration is posted on the [Activities page](#).

# 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. The Volunteer Toolkit lets troop leaders:

- Explore meeting topics and program activities with their girls
- Print step-by-step activity guides and shopping lists
- Manage girl attendance and track achievements
- Add local events
- Edit the troop roster and update contact information
- Renew members
- Message and share meeting activities with troop families

... plus so much more! Learn more and access the Volunteer Toolkit by logging into myGS [gswpa.org/VTK](https://gswpa.org/VTK)

## **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 volunteer resources section of [gswpa.org](https://gswpa.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 [gswpa.org/ve](https://gswpa.org/ve).

## **Volunteer Communications (VolComms)**

This communication portal is your one, central location for volunteer updates that impact your role. It includes content channels for council updates, new leaders, and Product Program newsletters. To better serve you, a subscription feature is available. Enter your email to receive volunteer updates directly in your inbox. You can visit the resource at [gswpa.org/volcomms](https://gswpa.org/volcomms).

## **Troop Year Plans**

These age-appropriate troop year plans are the best tool for first year troop leaders to get started with Girl Scouts without getting overwhelmed. The entire year is mapped out—just follow along to help your Girl Scouts complete badge activities, improve their communities, and explore the world around them. Find them at [gswpa.org/yearplans](https://gswpa.org/yearplans).

## **New Troop Leaders Webpage**

This webpage contains resources for new leaders so you can launch into your first year of Girl Scouting. Visit [gswpa.org/newtroopleader](https://gswpa.org/newtroopleader).

## **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](https://girlscouts.org/tipsfortroopleaders).

## **Patched In**

Every month, we send parents an email called *Patched In*. It lets parents know important council information as well as new activities and opportunities for their Girl Scouts. Find previous issues at [gswpa.org/publications](https://gswpa.org/publications).

## **Adventure Guide**

Stay up-to-date on new programs and activities as they're added to our website and get notified of upcoming registration deadlines by subscribing to the Adventure Guide. You'll be notified when new opportunities are available, so your Girl Scouts won't miss a minute of the fun! A quarterly Adventure Guide is emailed to parents promoting upcoming Girl Scout activities, sorted by grade level.

## **Award and Badge Explorer**

Explore this resource to see pictures of awards and badges and check out what girls learn while earning each badge! You can filter by program level or topic and create a PDF to share with girls, troop volunteers, and parents/guardians. Find the link under Awards and Badges on the Our Program tab at [girlscouts.org](https://girlscouts.org).

## **Troop Mentor Network**

We've assembled a team of seasoned volunteers to provide you with firsthand knowledge, guidance, and support as a Girl Scout volunteer. Get to know them, discover their areas of expertise, and connect directly with them through their request form right from our website. Find a Troop Mentor on our website at [gswpa.org/troopmentor](https://gswpa.org/troopmentor).

# WHAT'S THE GIRL SCOUT PROGRAM?

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 and hone the skills they’ll need to power a lifetime of success—whatever that looks like for them.

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 awards 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 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.

# WHERE GIRL SCOUTS CAN TAKE YOUR GIRLS

As your girls progress through Girl Scouts, they'll learn to take the reins and make their Girl Scout experiences their own—it's what being girl-led is all about! And as a leader, you'll encourage them to dream big and challenge themselves as they take their newfound passions to the next level.

While program elements—like outdoor expeditions and entrepreneurial ventures—align across all grade levels, Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies won't be doing the same activities as seasoned Seniors and Ambassadors. But by building on the knowledge and skills they gain year after year, your girls' confidence will grow exponentially and they'll be eager to take those next steps.

So what can you expect as they grow through each level of Girl Scouting?



## Girl Scout Daisies

Daisies sparkle with that first-time 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. Daisies can also earn learning petals.



## Girl Scout Brownies

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



## Girl Scout Juniors

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.



## Girl Scout Cadettes

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



## Girl Scout Seniors

Seniors are ready to take the world by storm, and Girl Scouts gives them countless ways to do it. Their experiences shape their world, while giving them a safe space to be themselves and explore their interests. Seniors can earn their Gold Award and change the world in a tangible, lasting way.



## Girl Scout Ambassadors

Ambassadors know that small acts produce big change. While they get ready for life beyond high school, Girl Scouts helps them take flight. They can also earn their Gold Award and drive lasting impact in their communities.

All of the skills and experiences girls gain throughout their time in Girl Scouts set them up for special recognition through the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. Through their award projects, your girls will tackle issues close to their hearts and make a real difference—and if they decide to pursue their Gold Award, they'll also be eligible for unique college scholarships and open doors to promising career opportunities. The longer your girls are in Girl Scouts, the brighter their futures will be—and they'll have you to thank for it!



# WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL TROOP EXPERIENCE?

A successful troop experience has a few key parts, and as troop leader, you play a critical role in bringing the pieces together. We know that when leaders support girls by building positive relationships with them, providing a variety of activities throughout the year and guiding them using the three Girl Scout processes, the troop is likely to have a successful experience that will be unique to your girls.

## Variety of Activities

Meeting regularly, working on badges, performing community service, getting outdoors, taking field trips, and participating in the cookie program are all ways troops can explore and learn together. Girls who experience a variety of activities during the Girl Scout year are more likely to stay involved with Girl Scouts.

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## Supportive Relationships

Girls have great experiences with their troop when they feel that their troop leaders care about them as a person, make them feel part of the group, and provide mentorship. Leaders also play an important role in helping girls to form lasting friendships with each other.

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## 3 Processes

Girl-led activities, incorporating cooperative learning and creating opportunities for learning by doing are some of the ways leaders can keep girls engaged in Girl Scouts. Resources to help leaders with these include the Award and Badge Explorer, Volunteer Toolkit and council-sponsored activities for troops and families.

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## Successful Troop Experience

The Council provides all girl spaces, safety guidelines, staff, and program materials to support you. Your service unit, a network of fellow GS volunteers in your community, is also an important source of support to help you in building a successful troop. More details are offered throughout this guide and during your training.

# GUIDING YOUR TROOP EXPERIENCE

In leading a new troop, you'll want to guide the structure and experiences of your troop—from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, and from steering girl-led activities to setting financial expectations. You'll make these decisions collaboratively with your volunteer team or co-leader, as well as with input from the girls and their parents/caregivers.

Use these questions to guide your conversation with troop volunteers or co-leader before discussing the topics with parents and caregivers.

## Meeting logistics:

- When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?
- Where/how will we meet? In person, virtually, or a blend of the two? (**Troop leader pro tip:** Great meeting spaces include schools, places of worship, libraries, and community centers. If working with teens, consider meeting at coffee shops, bookstores, or another place they enjoy.)

## Your troop:

- Will our troop consist of girls in a single grade level or facilitated as a multi-level troop with girls of many grade levels?

## Troop communication:

- How often will we communicate with troop families?
- How will we keep families in the loop? The Volunteer Toolkit? Emails? Group texts?

## Money matters:

- Will our troop charge dues?
- How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? What should our financial plan look like?
- Which components of the uniform—the tunic, sash, or vest—will troop families need to purchase? (**Troop leader pro tip:** get the full rundown on uniforms and insignia at [girlscouts.org](https://www.girlscouts.org).)

## Your Troop Volunteer Team

It takes a village to lift up the next generation of leaders; you don't have to embark on your troop leader journey alone! Set the stage for a successful troop year by tapping into the people resources already at your fingertips. Caregivers and other family members, friends, and members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide troops with time, experience, and ideas—so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your troop volunteer team!

Some members of your volunteer team might play more active roles than others—and that's OK! All of these adults must be screened and approved by council. 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 [gswpa.org](https://www.gswpa.org).

### Troop Leader Responsibilities

- Connect with service unit volunteers and council staff
- Manage troop finances
- Communicate and connect with parents and families
- Ensure girl safety
- Come alongside girls and seek girl input in order to help guide their Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

### Troop Committee Responsibilities

- Support and assist your girl's troop leadership
- Help ensure girl safety
- Potentially provide girl transportation, coordinate some components of troop finances, and/or chaperone activities

### Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Support and communicate with troop leadership
- Provide timely girl permission for all the fun troop activities and events
- Keep your girl's GS membership active
- Provide transportation to and from meetings
- Complete and turn in your girl's 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!

# FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls, but when families play an active role in the troop, the experience becomes even more amazing! A girl will feel a special sense of pride when her family takes part and shows interest in the things she's doing with her troop!

**Share with families how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events or schedule changes.** Don't try to juggle multiple ways of communicating, like texting information to parents, managing an email thread, and updating the troop Facebook page. Find a solution that works best for you, and let parents know how they will receive information and how best to reach you—then stick to the plan as much as possible to make a consistent and simple communication stream from the troop volunteers to the families. Utilizing the Volunteer Toolkit to share the year plan and send regular communication via email is a great way to do this!

**Talk to parents and caregivers to identify ways they will work as a team to support the troop—you never know which parent will make an awesome additional leader or troop cookie manager!**

If parents/guardians will be helping with the troop on a regular basis, they must complete the volunteer approval process, which includes obtaining proper clearances and registering as a volunteer (reference page 10 for roles and responsibilities). It is important to explain that non-registered parents, tag-a-longs (brothers, sisters and friends), and other individuals are not covered by the basic insurance plan for meetings and activities. Additional insurance must be purchased to cover any non-registered attendees participating in age-appropriate activities.

**Help families understand what she'll do as a Girl Scout, and how you guide her along the way.**

Explain the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and how activities could range from earning badges, to Journeys, to field trips, to community service projects. Remind parents/guardians that your role is to work with and guide the girls, but the girls' troop and activities are based on what girls choose. Let them know that girls can complete badge requirements and earn patches outside of the Girl Scout meeting space, and attend events and resident camp, too, if they wish. There are plenty of activities and camp options for a Girl Scout to enjoy with her family, so be sure to show them where to find this information on [gswpa.org/activities](https://gswpa.org/activities).



Consider sharing the Family Connection Guide as another great family resource! Find it at [gswpa.org/familyconnection](https://gswpa.org/familyconnection).

It is important for families and leaders to agree on what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually. This can be done during a family meeting, and topics include:

- ☆ **Girl Scout Membership:** This fee is paid to Girl Scouts of the USA to cover the cost of fundamental services supporting the Girl Scout Movement. This includes things like accident insurance for members participating in activities, program development, research, resources, training, technology, and so much more to improve the Girl Scout experience! Share that financial assistance may be available for the girl membership fee, if needed.
- ☆ **Potential for troop dues:** Let parents know that an amount and a payment schedule (every meeting, once a month, or once a year) will be discussed at a future meeting. This provides time to refine your financial plan with girl input on the year's activities. Encourage parents/guardians who are unable to pay troop dues to discuss concerns with troop leadership. Explain that troop funds benefit the entire troop, not individual girls.
- ☆ **Uniforms, books, and other important basics**
- ☆ **Financial reports:** Let parents know financial reports will be available and how often—at each meeting, once a month, etc.

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!

# LET'S GO—YOUR FIRST TROOP MEETING!

Your first troop meeting is a great chance to get to know the girls and brainstorm all the exciting things they want to do in the year to come. If you're feeling a little nervous about leading troop meetings and experiences with your girls, that's OK!

Just remember that:

**It doesn't need to be perfect.** Did an activity run over time? Or maybe a field trip didn't go according to plan? Take a deep breath, roll with the changes, and have fun! The girls aren't expecting perfection from you. Your time, attention, and guidance are the best part of your leadership.

**Learn with your girls.** Keeping activities girl-led also means that at some point, the girls will want to earn a badge or complete a project in a subject unfamiliar to you. But don't let that hold you back! Be open with the girls when you don't know something and become their partner in learning more. You'll show them that learning is a lifelong process and that with an open mind, they can overcome any challenges that come their way.

## First meeting checklist:

1. **Cover the basics.** Review the details about when and where the meeting will take place and make sure parents/caregivers are aware.
2. **Get ready.** Use the Volunteer Toolkit to verify your troop roster and email parents. This might be a great time to ask parents to provide you with any needed items, such as health history forms or uniform order forms.
3. **Know the agenda.** Refer to our "Six Elements of a Troop Meeting" list and the intro meeting in the Volunteer Toolkit.
4. **Review and practice your agenda.** You'll feel calmer during the actual meeting and ready to make adjustments as needed.
5. **Prepare for fun!** When the girls and parents see that you're prepared for the meeting and ready to have a great time, they'll follow your lead!

## Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

The only requirement for your meeting? That your girls are laughing, smiling, and having a fun time! That being said, many troop leaders use this basic structure for their meetings:

1. **Ramp up.** Plan activities for the girls on arrival at the meeting so they have something to do until the meeting begins. This could be as simple as coloring pages, journaling, or talking with one another. (5 minutes)
2. **Opening.** Each troop decides how to open its meetings—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. **Troop business.** Make announcements or plan an upcoming event or trip. This is a great time to gather girl input on future troop activities! (5 minutes)
4. **Main Activity.** Use the meeting plans found in the Volunteer Toolkit! 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)
5. **Clean up.** Because Girl Scouts should always leave a place cleaner than they found it! (5 minutes)
6. **Closing.** Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close—with a song, a game, a story, or a friendship circle. (5–10 minutes)

# 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, as shown in the chart below, indicate the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of girls at each grade level. These supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of girls.

Any adult that is supervising girls must be an approved Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania volunteer. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old, have a current membership, and be screened by council in accordance with PA State Law before volunteering. One volunteer in every group activity must be female and any volunteer driving girls must be at least 21.

Volunteer-to-Girl Ratio Chart	Troop Meeting		Travel & Camping		Council-Sponsored Events & Product Sales Booths	
	<i>Two unrelated troop leaders (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:</i>	<i>Plus one additional approved volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:</i>	<i>One troop leader and one unrelated approved volunteer (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:</i>	<i>Plus one additional troop leader or approved volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:</i>	<i>Two unrelated approved volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:</i>	<i>Plus one additional approved volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:</i>
<b>Girl Scout Daisies</b> (grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4	12	1-6
<b>Girl Scout Brownies</b> (grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6	20	1-8
<b>Girl Scout Juniors</b> (grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8	25	1-10
<b>Girl Scout Cadettes</b> (grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10	25	1-12
<b>Girl Scout Seniors</b> (grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12	30	1-15
<b>Girl Scout Ambassadors</b> (grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12	30	1-15

Approved volunteers must have membership purchased and appropriate clearances submitted to Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania as required by PA State Law. For mixed-grade level troops, use the ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop. For example, if Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy ratio should be followed.



## 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 at [gswpa.org](https://www.gswpa.org). 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 [customercare@gswpa.org](mailto:customercare@gswpa.org) or 800-248-3355 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 council staff. Call our office at 800-248-3355 or after business hours on our emergency line at 877-359-7878.

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.

# TROOP FUNDS

## Funding the Fun

Your girls probably have some big ideas about what they want to do in Girl Scouts—and that's awesome! As a troop leader, you'll coach them as they learn to earn and manage troop funds. But where do you start?

Troop activities are powered in two main ways:

**Troop dues:** Many troops decide to collect troop dues to help provide startup funds for troop activities and supplies. These could range from a few dollars per meeting to a lump sum for the entire school year. 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 and cookie programs are the primary money-earning activities for a troop—and they're a hands-on way for girls to learn money management skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives. You'll learn the ins-and-outs of these programs in a separate training.

Funds earned by the troop belong to entire troop and must be used to benefit all girls in the troop. Troop funds can be used in a variety of ways such as paying for activity fees for girls, to purchase program supplies, support a community service project or the troop's Take Action project.

## Managing Your Troop's Funds

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 Scouting year using the online form found on our website at [gswpa.org/forms](https://gswpa.org/forms). Copies or originals of bank statements and receipts will be submitted, 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.

We know you have more questions about troop finances, and we've got answers! One of the courses for new leaders in gsLearn focuses on financial best practices—including opening a bank account purchasing guidelines, financial planning, and transparency in reporting. You can also check out *Volunteer Essentials* for the details you'll need to keep troop business running smoothly. All trainings to help you plan and manage girl's activities outside of troop meetings, like *Let's Go Travel Training*, contain a section on financial management, too.

### Prepping for the Product Programs

Once you've opened your troop's bank account, there are two things to do so your troop's finances are ready for the MagNut and Cookie Programs:

1. Submit your troop's bank account information using the online form so council can debit the account for products that your troop has sold. Find the form at [gswpa.org/bank](https://gswpa.org/bank).
2. Get a few checks from the bank for your account. You may need checks to pay for products to fulfill late orders that come in after council has debited your account.

## Money FAQs

Our three most frequently asked about troop finance topics:

**Opening a bank account:** New troops will need to set up a bank account to collect dues, pay for troop supplies and activities, and collect product sales revenue. The [Opening and Managing a Girl Scout Bank Account](#) procedure breaks down the process for you.

**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 member registration process. Other financial assistance is available for uniform components, events, and camps, and can be requested. [Learn more at gswpa.org](https://gswpa.org).

**Tax exemption:** Councils are 501(c)(3) nonprofits, so take advantage of your council's tax-exempt form when purchasing supplies and materials for Girl Scout troop use. Our tax exemption form can be found at [gswpa.org](https://gswpa.org).



# CONNECTING WITH US



**girl scouts**   
western pennsylvania

gswpa.org  
Contact us at 800-248-3355  
or CustomerCare@gswpa.org

## Offices

**Pittsburgh**  
(Council Headquarters)\*  
503 Martindale St. Suite 500  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

**Edinboro Office\***  
5681 Route 6N  
Edinboro, PA 16412

**Greensburg Office\***  
126 East Otterman St.  
Greensburg, PA 15601

**Johnstown Office**  
612 Locust St.  
Johnstown, PA 15901

## Office & Shop Hours:

### Offices:

Mon.-Thurs. 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

### Shops:

Mon.-Thurs. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Closed Friday  
Open the 2nd Saturday of each  
month, Sept.-May, from  
9 a.m.-noon.

See [gswpa.org/shop](https://gswpa.org/shop) for other  
extended hours.

Or shop online 24/7 at  
[shop.gswpa.org](https://shop.gswpa.org)