



Volunteer Essentials 2011 - 2012

QUICK START GUIDE

Quick-Start Guide

Welcome to the great adventure of Girl Scouting! Thanks to volunteers like you, generations of girls have learned to be leaders in their own lives and in the world.

We know you're busy and need to be efficient with your time. For that reason, this Quick-Start Guide to *Volunteer Essentials* gives you the nitty-gritty . . . what you need to know now, as you plan for your first meeting with girls. We encourage you to read through these tips as soon as you can, and then feel free to put down this guidebook, for the time-being.

When you have a question, simply look up the topic in the Table of Contents, and you'll find your answer. Think of it as your encyclopedia to Girl Scout volunteering that's there when you need it. But, rest assured, there's no need for you to read this entire book from cover to cover today.

Ready to get started? Then read the following handy tips, and you'll be well on your way!

Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois (GSNI) Service Centers:

Elgin Service Center	Freeport Service Center	Rockford Service Center	Sugar Grove Service Center
12N124 Coombs Rd.	5040 Bus. Rt. 20 West	2820 McFarland Road	200 New Bond Street
Elgin, IL 60124	Freeport, Il 61032	Rockford, IL 61107	Sugar Grove, IL 60554
(P) 847-741-5521	(P) 815-235-8777	(P) 815-962-5591	(P) 630-897-1565
(F) 847-741-5667	(F) 815-235-2468	(F) 815-962-5658	(F) 630-466-7018

Website: www.girlscoutsni.org

Check out our [GSNI Facebook](#) page!

Why Girl Scouts?

When [Juliette “Daisy” Gordon Low](#) assembled 18 girls from Savannah, Georgia, for a local Girl Scout meeting on March 12, 1912, her goal was to bring all girls out of isolated home environments and into community service and the open air. Girl Scouts hiked, played basketball, went on camping trips, learned how to tell time by the stars, and studied first aid.

Today, Girl Scouts has a membership of more than 3.3 million girls and adults, and over 50 million women in the United States are Girl Scout alumnae. You belong to this powerful network!

Girls and women have made remarkable progress since Juliette Low founded the first Girl Scout troop, but inequalities persist:

- Women earn 77 cents for every dollar their male counterparts earn; for every dollar a white man earns, African American women earn 67 cents and Hispanic women earn approximately 58 cents.
- Women represent more than 50 percent of the workforce, but only 10% are CEOs of *Fortune* 500 companies.
- Women are granted fewer than 27 percent of Ph.D.s in physics, 20 percent in computer science, and 17 percent in engineering.
- Women only hold 87 of the 535 seats (16.3%) in the U.S. Congress and 75 of the 315 elected executive offices (24 percent) across the country.
- Since the end of World War II, a woman has served as president or prime minister only 42 times throughout the world.

Why Girl Scouts? Precisely because these inequalities persist. Girl Scouts understands that girls have unique needs that are best met in a program designed specifically for them and delivered in an all-girl setting. Research tells us that a girl’s leadership blooms when she’s among other girls, away from school pressures, social cliques, and boys—in a place where she can be herself and take on new challenges. Where activities are girl-led. Where each girl learns by doing, and the learning is cooperative, not competitive. Where adults mentor girls and model skills, behaviors, relationships, and careers that girls can emulate.

Girl Scouts has developed an exciting model that meets every one of these needs—it’s called the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). Everything girls do in Girl Scouting is infused with the GSLE, which shows girls how to discover who they are and what they stand for, connect with vibrant and diverse peers in their own neighborhoods and around the globe, and together take action to make a difference in the world. Even better, they inspire and advocate for others along the way! The GSLE identifies 15 exciting outcomes/benefits for girls, all of which propel girls toward becoming the exceptional women they were born to be. [View the outcomes here.](#)

In order for your community—indeed, for the world—to be at peace and work cooperatively, you recognize that tomorrow’s leaders require mentoring. Girl Scouts, and the powerful model that is the GSLE, offers girls the tools they need to be successful leaders now and throughout their lives. And you’re the critical link, as you learn about, understand, and deliver the GSLE to the girls in your group. [View the Transforming Leadership video here.](#)

Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law

You belong to this powerful organization of—and *for*—girls. The Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law speak to the vision we all share for girls and inspire each of us to work on behalf of tomorrow’s leaders.

Girl Scout Mission

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

Every opportunity in Girl Scouting—from every group meeting to field trips to earning badges—encourages girls to become courageous, self-confident, and people of character who take action to make a difference in the world. Just think of what can happen when:

- Girl Scout Ambassadors advocate for girls around the world to have the opportunity to learn to read?
- Seniors launch a region-wide art show or online exhibit to display artwork that depicts what GIRLtopia looks like to them?
- Cadettes *amaze* every middle school in the county—or in the country—with Peace Kits?
- Juniors use storytelling to share the Power of One, Team, and Community with everyone in their classrooms?
- Brownies spread the news about the three leadership keys they learned about on their Quest?
- Daisies introduce everyone in town to their flower friends—and what they stand for?

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 Scouts makes no attempt to define or interpret the word “God” in the Girl Scout Promise. We look to individual members to establish for themselves the nature of their spiritual beliefs. When making the Girl Scout Promise, individuals may substitute wording appropriate to their own spiritual beliefs for the word “God.”)*

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.

Who Can Join Girl Scouts—and How?

Any girl—from kindergarten through 12th grade—can join Girl Scouts. Girl Scouts is about sharing the fun, friendship, and power of girls and women together, whether she’s a girl in the United States or an American girl living overseas. Volunteers are also a diverse group, and may be college volunteers working on community action projects, parent volunteers ready for an outdoor adventure with their daughters’ groups, or any responsible adults (female or male, who have passed the necessary screening process) looking to make a difference in a girl’s life.

What all members share, whether girls or adults, are the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Each member also agrees to follow safety guidelines and pay the annual membership dues of \$12 (or you can purchase a lifetime membership for \$300; girls who are graduating seniors may purchase a lifetime membership for \$156 as long as they pay by September 1 of their graduating year).

Girls at Every Grade Level

After girls join, they team up in the following grade 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

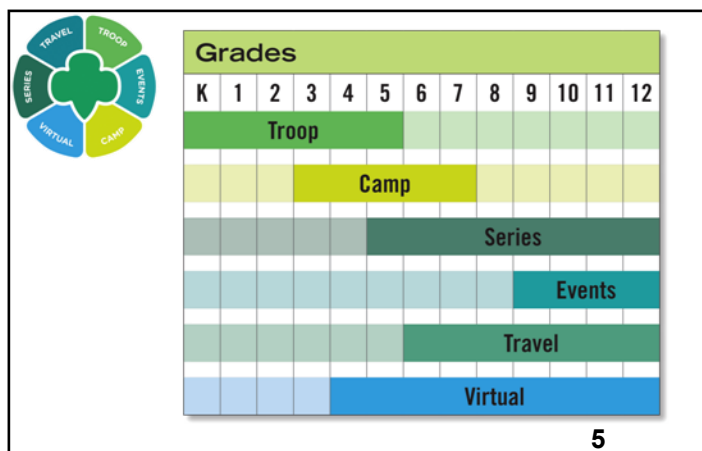
Girl Scout Senior, grades 9–10

Girl Scout Ambassador, grades 11–12

Flexible Ways to Participate

Across the country, the Girl Scout community is hard at work on a whole new approach to making sure that everyone can participate in Girl Scouting in the ways they want to. Both girls and adult volunteers can choose from flexible ways to participate that offer the freedom to tailor your level of involvement to fit your schedule and lifestyle. You can also volunteer behind the scenes, working in your council office, instead of volunteering directly with girls.

Girls can choose any one, all, or some of the options—camp, events, series, troop, travel, and virtual*— within a single membership year, while you have the option of partnering with girls throughout a membership year or committing to an opportunity for only a few weeks or months. Based on external independent research and extensive surveys with thousands of council staff members from around the country, we have a good sense of which options will interest girls, based on their grade levels (see the chart at right).



*Note that virtual is still in development.

Girl Scouts Organizational Structure

Girl Scouts is the world’s largest organization of and for girls, currently encompassing 2.4 million girl members and nearly one million volunteers! Three core structures support all these members: the national headquarters, your council, and your local support team. Today, there are **3.2 million Girl Scouts**—2.3 million girl members and 880,000 adult members working primarily as volunteers.

National Organization and Worldwide Sisterhood

The national office of [Girl Scouts of the USA \(GSUSA\)](#), located in New York City, employs roughly 400 employees. Visit their website where you’ll find a wealth of resources for both girls and volunteers. This nearly 100-year-old organization is now affiliated with a worldwide family of 10 million girls and adults in 145 countries through the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

As girls engage in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, [Global Girl Scouting](#) ensures that they have increased awareness about the world, cross-cultural learning opportunities, and education on relevant global issues that may inspire them to take action to make the world a better place. Visit their website for more information.

Since 1925, USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO; a division of Global Girl Scouting) has helped ease the transition for American families relocating overseas by offering the familiar traditions and exciting opportunities of Girl Scouting to girls abroad. USAGSO now serves thousands of American girls living overseas, as well as girls attending American or international schools. Through Global Girl Scouting, members participate in World Thinking Day on February 22, visit the four WAGGGS world centers (see the “For Travel Volunteers” appendix), participate in international travel, help promote global friendship and understanding by supporting the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund, and take action on global issues.

Your Local Council

Local Girl Scout councils are chartered by the national office to establish local responsibility for leadership, administration, and supervision of Girl Scout program, and to develop, manage, and maintain Girl Scouting in a geographic area. Through your council, the national office provides support materials, to ensure that what is delivered through the councils is nationally consistent for all volunteers across the country.

GSNI Service Centers

Elgin Service Center 12N124 Coombs Road Elgin, IL 60124 (P) 847-741-5521 (F) 847-741-5667	Freeport Service Center 5040 Business Rt. 20 W. Freeport, IL 61032 (P) 815-235-8777 (F) 815-235-2468	Rockford Service Center 2820 McFarland Road Rockford, IL 61107 (P) 815-962-5591 (F) 815-962-5658	Sugar Grove Service Center 200 New Bond Sugar Grove, IL 60554 (P) 630-897-1565 (F) 630-466-7018
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For council staff listing, and coaching opportunities visit www.girlscousni.org.

Your Support Team

Your geographically based team of volunteers and staff provides you with local support. As a volunteer, you will have the most contact with your Girl Scout support team, which is called a service unit. Each service unit is lead by a management level volunteer, a service unit manager (SUM). There is also a support team, who you can look to as experts in all things Girl Scouting. If you have questions about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, using journey books, participating in the Girl Scout Product Programs (Fall Product/Cookies), go to this team of volunteers for the answers and ongoing support you need.

You can find a complete listing of your Membership and Community Development Specialists on GSNI's website at <http://www.girlscoutsni.org/staff2.html>.

Getting Started with Journey Books

The core component of the Girl Scout program is the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), in which girls **Discover** themselves, **Connect** with others, and **Take Action** to make the world a better place. The most efficient—and fun—way to deliver the GSLE is to use journey books, which are a coordinated series of activities grouped around a theme, each with a clear starting point (an invitation to explore and take action) and an ending point (an opportunity to reflect, reward, and celebrate). Each journey includes exciting, challenging, and purposeful experiences spread over a series of sessions (which you can expand over a longer period, if you wish), and each is tied to the GSLE. In other words, the GSLE is sewn right into the journey books for you!

To get started, all you need is a sense of adventure to guide girls on a great journey. Check out these five simple tips:

1. **Take a 10-minute walk through the bilingual Girl Scout Leadership Experience online resource** at www.girlscouts.org/gsle. A guide talks you through each component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and provides clear definitions, illustrating how each piece is part of a well-researched, powerful, and change-making experience for girls. Note, too, the summaries of each journey that pop up when you click on “Journeys.”
2. **Choose a journey.** Pick up one of the girl journey books for the grade level of the girls you’ll be working with. Read for the pleasure of it, just to get an overview of the journey’s theme.
3. **Review the sample sessions in the adult guide.** These samples show you how to bring the journeys to life.
4. **Now that you know what’s possible, invite the girls (and their parents/guardians) to use their imaginations** for how to make the journeys real in ways that excite them. You don’t have to do everything exactly as laid out in the books. The books are a great resource with lots of room for creativity and customization.
5. **Step back and watch** how the girls, with your knowledge, support, and guidance, have enormous fun and a rewarding experience. Celebrate with them as they earn their leadership journey awards, too!

Throughout your own journey—and even before—volunteers and staff members of your GSNI are here to offer support, learning opportunities, and advice. Never hesitate to contact them.

Planning in a Girl-Led Environment

To start planning your time with girls, first draw up a simple calendar.

If your group will be meeting for less than a year (such as resident camp or a series), adjust the calendar to suit your needs. In the same way, if you're planning a multi-year event (such as a travel excursion), add one or two more years to the framework. Then consider the following questions:

- How many meetings will you have each month? When do you plan to break for holidays?
- How many weeks do you need to allocate for the Fall Product and Girl Scout Cookie Programs?
- Will you have time in your schedule for guest speakers and other visitors?
- If you've worked with this group before, what are their preferences? Badge work? Field trips? Other activities? Can these also be tied to the journey theme? For more ideas, see the online [journey maps](#), and then choose the grade level of the girls you're working with.

Make sure to include all of these in your calendar as a starting point. Girls will fill in the details as they guide their own journey.

Once you've drafted a loose framework, it's time to ask the girls what they think. Remember: You want girls to lead, but younger girls will need more guidance, while older girls will require far less. Seniors and Ambassadors may not want you to draft any sort of calendar in advance, so if they balk at the work you've done, simply put it away and let them take the reins. Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies, on the other hand, may only be able to fill in a few ideas here and there, as you uncover their personalities and interests.

Before your group even opens a journey book, ask the girls what the journey and related theme mean to them. Maybe the theme ignites a discussion (or even debate!) that helps the girls chart their course for the year. In your discussions, probe to find out what the girls are most interested in accomplishing during their time together, and then help them connect those interests to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Meeting with Girls for the First Time

When you first get together with girls (and this may also be a meeting with parents/guardians, or you may decide to hold a separate meeting for the adults), you'll likely want to accomplish some or all of the following, depending on how much time you have and on the grade level (attention span) of the girls:

- **Get to know the girls, and give them a chance to get to know each other.** Ice-breaker games—in which girls share simple details about each other, or are charged with finding out about another girl with whom they are paired—are a simple way to start off your first meeting. Check your council resources or search the Internet on “ice-breakers for kids,” and a wide variety of options will open for you.
- **Introduce the journey books and the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.** You can start with something as simple as asking the girls to raise hands or shout out what “leadership” means to them, and then compiling a list that you tie to the GSLE—especially the three keys (discover, connect, and take action). Or you can do something more complex, like having the girls create masks of the characters in their journey book, and each choosing a character to play for the evening. The journey adult guide gives you additional ideas for having conversations about the GSLE and journey books with girls and their parents/guardians. See the appendices to this guidebook for ideas on opportunities to kick off and use the journey books.
- **Talk about the three processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) in a grade-level-appropriate way.** Consider dividing the girls into small groups or two-person teams to recall the activities they've led in the past, the times when they've learned by doing, and the ways in which they've learned cooperatively in groups. What was beneficial about those experiences? What was difficult about them?
- **Find out what interests the group, including other adult volunteers.** Do they want to dig deeper about the journey or a related theme? Without promising anything (yet!), ask the girls to talk about what they're passionate about, what they've always wanted to do, and how they would spend their time if money or other barriers were no object. Build off the ideas shared, but also ask direct questions of the girls who seem shy or unsure about answering, so that no one is left out.
- **Talk about how they want to schedule their time together, starting with the draft schedule you bring.** Can they organize and plan a field trip or longer travel opportunity that will allow them to learn more about a particular topic or theme? Is there an event that meshes with this topic or area of interest? Can the girls locate and communicate with an expert in the field via e-mail or social media? Can they invite a local guest speaker to answer specific questions or demonstrate particular skills? Which badges can the group choose to work on that will deepen their skills in this particular area? Are they interested in pursuing their Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, or Gold Awards?

Using Safety Activity Checkpoints

When preparing for any activity with girls, always begin with the [Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints](#). Each Safety Activity Checkpoint includes the same format:

- Title of the checkpoint, a photo, and introductory text
- Information on where to do this activity and how to include girls with disabilities
- Basic and specialized gear required for the activity
- How you and the girls need to prepare yourselves in advance of the activity
- What specific steps to follow on the day of the activity
- Web links to help you and the girls learn more, plus ways to increase your know-how
- Activity-specific jargon

In addition to reading these checkpoints yourself, you can also e-mail or print them for co-volunteers, parents/guardians, and the girls themselves. The checkpoints are formatted as checklists, so that you, your co-volunteers, and the girls can go through and check off that each step has been followed.

In keeping with the three processes of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, be sure that all activities are girl-led, taking into account the age and abilities of the girls. Older girls can take the bulk of the responsibility for carefully planning and executing activities, while younger girls will require more of your guidance but should still be deeply involved in making decisions about their activities.

Also give the girls the chance to learn cooperatively, by having girls teach each other new skills they may need for activities, rather than hearing all that from you. And let girls learn by doing: If research or special equipment is needed, they'll learn better doing that research themselves than by having you do the legwork and report back to them. Even Girl Scout Daisies can do basic research and give reports or do show-and-tell for each other. And Girl Scout Ambassadors may need you only for moral support as they research, teach each other, and plan every detail of their excursions.

If Safety Activity Checkpoints do not exist for an activity you and the girls are interested in, be sure to check with your council before making any definite plans with the girls in your group. A few activities are allowed only with written council pre-approval and only for girls 12 and over, while some are off-limits completely:

- ⇒ **Caution:** You must get written pre-approval from your council for girls ages 12 and older who will operate motorized vehicles, such as go-carts and personal watercraft (driving or riding all-terrain vehicles and motor bikes is never allowed); use firearms (hunting is never allowed), take trips on waterways that are highly changeable or uncontrollable (Class V and higher watercraft trips are never allowed), or fly in noncommercial aircraft, such as small private planes, helicopters, sailplanes, untethered hot-air balloons, and blimps (hang gliding, parachuting, and parasailing are never allowed).
- ⇒ **Warning:** The following activities are never allowed for any girl: shooting a projectile at another person (such as paintball), potentially uncontrolled free-falling (bungee jumping, hang gliding, parachuting, parasailing, and trampoline), creating extreme variations of approved activities (such as high-altitude climbing and aerial tricks on bicycles, skis, snowboards, skateboards, water-skis, and wakeboards), hunting, riding all-terrain vehicles and motor bikes, and taking watercraft trips in Class V or higher whitewater.

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you are the person who brings the Girl Scout program to the girls of our council. Whether you are a leader, a series coordinator, a troop committee member or an administrative volunteer, you are important to the success of Girl Scouting. This signature form will certify that you have read and understand the Volunteer Essentials Quick Guide and the contents held within it.

I have read and understand the materials contained within the Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois Volunteer Essentials Quick Start Guide.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Please Circle Service Area:

Elgin Service Center

12N124 Coombs Road
Elgin, IL 60124
847-741-5521
Fax: 847-741-5667

Freeport Service Center

5040 Business Rt. 20
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Fax: 815-235-2468

Rockford Service Center

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