My First Year

Cadette, Senior & Ambassador

A complete guide for your first year of leading a Girl Scout troop

girl scouts of northeast texas

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

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Checklist for New Troop Leaders

Starting a New Girl Scout Troop

Week 1

- [ ] Register as a Girl Scout troop leader
- [ ] Complete a **background check**. You will receive an email invite from **theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers**
- [ ] Meet your placement specialist and **set-up your troop meeting details**
- [ ] Join the New Leader Academy Facebook Group & the New Leader Rallyhood
- [ ] Find a co-leader and invite girls to join your troop – printable invite
- [ ] Complete required training: TR100: New Leader Training; TR402: Protecting Our Girs; & GSUSA Grade Level Essentials in gsLearn
- [ ] Meet your Troop Support Coordinator your main point of contact for support

Week 2

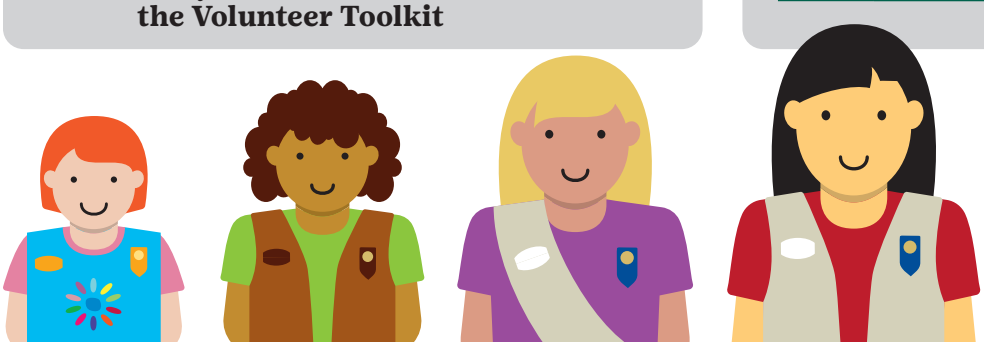
- [ ] Complete new leader training (complete within first 60 days)
- [ ] Discover the ins and outs of the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)
- [ ] Find a bank for your troop account and submit the opening a bank account form – GSNETX Bank Account Process Request to Open a Bank Account
- [ ] Meet with your co-leader and plan a parent meeting using the **Sample Family Meeting Agenda from your New Leader Kit**
- [ ] Find your troop roster in the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK). Email, text, or call troop parents to introduce yourself
- [ ] Hold the parent meeting (remember to use your parent meeting agenda)

Week 3

- [ ] Complete your bank account set-up and make your first deposit
- [ ] Request a free Rallyhood rally site for your troop. The Rallyhood platform combines the functionality of tools like Evenbrite, SignUp Genius, Facebook, Google, and Calendar/Forms in one place. Troops can customize their sites with photos and information, creating a space for volunteers and parents to communicate
- [ ] Plan and hold your first troop meeting - **Use your New Leader Handbook & the Volunteer Toolkit**

Week 4

- [ ] Attend a leader meeting (in your service unit or council-led).
- [ ] Reach out to get help planning your year in Girl Scouts! Email NewTroop@gsnetx.org
- [ ] Take the **Volunteer Toolkit Challenge** in gsLearn
- [ ] Paricipate in our Best New Troop Year Ever Patch Program
- [ ] Find out about the GSNETX Cookie Program



girl scouts

Welcome to Girl Scouts!

Our Mission

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

Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:
To serve God* and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,
and to
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place,
and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.

"Welcome to Girl Scouts and a great new adventure! Thanks to volunteers like you, a new generation of girls will get the courage, confidence and character they need to lead their lives and our world in the future. The Girl Scout team is here to support you, but YOU are enough—we couldn't do this without YOU!"

Jennifer Bartkowski, CEO GSNETX

Thank you!

Troop Co-Leaders

Help girls reach their potential as creative, courageous leaders
Create a space where girls try new things without worrying about failing
Teach lessons girls will use for decades to come
Try new things along with their girls
Develop leaders' own organizational and leadership skills
Join a global community of sisterhood

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

Getting Started

New leaders often spend the first few weeks getting started and setting up their troop. Be sure to use your **CHECKLIST** on page 3 of this handbook!

Setting up your Troop

Your placement specialist will reach out to you to set up this information in the membership system.

The number of girls to expect in your troop

Research has found that 10-12 girls is the "sweet spot" for a successful Girl Scout troop. Most CSA troops see a decrease as the girls age and become involved in activities at a greater level. To combat this make sure your girls know the benefits of graduating with Girl Scouts on their resumes. Asking girls to recruit a friend is also a great way to keep girls involved. A great way to ensure you have enough girls to have a great experience is to keep your troop open to adding new girls throughout the year.

Looking to grow your troop more?

As a troop leader, you can make sure your troop is available in the opportunity catalog for new members to register at will, and you can also share a direct link for new families to register directly in your troop through your MY GS account. Adults and girls alike can join your troop this way. If you would like help growing your troop, contact your placement specialist at any time throughout the year.

Meeting Location and Times

Remember, set meeting times that work with your schedule! You will need to choose a location for regular meetings (e.g. a local park, library, private homes). The troop can meet anywhere that follows the GS safety guidelines. When it comes to Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors, meeting times and even locations is going to depend on the schedules of everyone in the troop. Flexibility is going to be your best friend. You may meet at a different location and different time for each meeting and that is perfectly okay! Do what works best for the majority of the troop. Consider having your girls own the meetings – choose the meeting topic, time & place – just make sure troop communication is clear and everyone responds! At this age the girls should also be driving the decision on how long meetings should last. Listen to your girls and make sure that above all else, meetings are fun and engaging! Some troops host regular meetings at a favorite local restaurant and that's great!

Troop Interests/Goals/Personality

Also, think about what your troop will want to accomplish this year. What are some goals? Will the troop focus on one theme for the year? We want to know what type of activities you will plan to do throughout your first year. Every troop has a unique "personality." Let us know anything that is special about your troop! Will the girls speak a different language? Include girls with disabilities or learning differences? Do all the girls enjoy a specific sport or activity?

Building an Inclusive Troop

Establishing an inclusive environment that welcomes every girl, fosters a sense of belonging, and provides a safe space for everyone should be a top priority. Girls have a better experience when they are warmly welcomed into a troop.
www.gsnetx.org/newleader

New Leader Training

Required Training is Virtual, Free & in **gsLearn**!
(Located in your MY GS account) Plan to complete both within 3 months.

1. **TR100 - New Leader Training** (required)
2. **TR402 - Protecting Our Girls** (required)

Additional Training you need to know about:

Take the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) Challenge in gsLearn and get the exclusive GSNETX VTK Challenge patch! The VTK Challenge is designed to give troop leaders a self-paced hands-on keyboard learning experience to better understand, navigate, and use this online tool for your troop.

These courses include a fee and registration is in **gsEvents**

- When your troop is ready to go on outings/field trips outside the regular meeting place, at least one registered/background checked adult will need to take a qualifying **CPR/First Aid Training**. (Required for field trips & camping)

- Once your troop is ready for an outdoor overnight or camping trip, you will need to have a registered/background checked adult take **TR301 - GSNETX Camping**
(Required for camping OR activities involving fire)

- TR101: Meetings 101 Make & Take features tried, tested, and true best practices and techniques to help you build confidence in your ability to run successful troop meetings.



Check these out at **www.gsnetx.org/volunteertraining**.

A New Leader's Support System

New Leader Rallyhood The New Leader Rallyhood has all the resources you need to get your troop up and running. This one stop resource hub contains resources designed to help new leaders implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. You will find resources to help you plan your troop year, gain parent support, ideas for troop activities, field trips, community service projects and more!

Getting Connected, Socially

Also on **Facebook**, you will find:

GSNETX Learning Channel – facebook.com/learningchannelgsnetx

Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas – facebook.com/gsnetx

New Leader Academy – facebook.com/groups/GSNETXNewLeaderAcademy
A group of volunteer mentors and GSNETX staff moderate the New Leader Academy Facebook making it a great place to reach out and ask questions at any time.

Your Support System
Girl Scouts is all about sisterhood. As a leader, you are not alone! Your troop co-leader(s) and parents are your primary team. Get to know them and allow them to help!

Check out page 10, the 4Her resources for more ideas!

Your Service Unit
What is a service unit? It is a geographically defined area that consists of Girl Scout troops that are in the same community or school district. These troops are supported by a service unit team.

Service unit teams consist of experienced Girl Scout volunteers who are there to support one another through the Girl Scout year. The team includes a manager, treasurer, product coordinator, and more.

These volunteers work together to support you by providing activities and event opportunities in your area throughout the year. They also hold monthly meetings for leaders.

Service Unit Meetings
These meetings are usually held monthly and can be in person or virtual.

- Meet and network with fellow volunteers
- Learn about upcoming events and trainings, etc
- Share resources and materials

Your Troop Support Coordinator can get you connected to the volunteers in your service unit.

Your GSNETX Council Staff
We are here for you! Your troop support Coordinator will be here reaching out to you throughout your first year as a troop leader. You will receive a 10-part email series to help guide you through your first two months. If you have a private matter, a conflict to discuss, issues with registration or any other needs, GSNETX can help! Contact your troop support coordinator, Customer Care at 972-349-2403, or email newtroop@gnsetx.org.

Co-Leaders, Leading Together

Each troop needs two unrelated adults who are Girl Scout members and have completed a background check to be able to meet. A friend, neighbor, co-worker, or another parent are all great people to lead a troop with. If you need assistance recruiting a co-leader, talk to your placement specialist or troop support coordinator.

Before meeting with parents or the girls, you will want to get together and make some decisions about your troop. Once you have your parent/caregiver meeting you will include them in these decisions.

- Meeting logistics: When, where, how frequently and how long will the troop meet?
- Will the troop consists of girls in the same grade, different grades in the same program grade level, or different grades and mutltiple program grade levels?
- What kind of help will the troop need from parents?
- How will you handle your own daughter during troop activities?
- What type of communication will you use with the troop families?
- Troop finances: Will you have regular troop dues, a troop start-up fee? Who will be on the troop bank account?
- What would you like the troop uniform components to include? Will the leaders purchase for everyone with troop funds or will parents need to get this on their own?
- Plan out the parent/caregiver meeting.



For more information, check for the Co-leader Discussion Questions in the Getting Started Section of the New Leader Rallyhood - **rallyhood.com/160989**.

Working with Parents/Caregivers

Parent/Caregiver Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and introductions to one another and to the Girl Scouts. Ask about each girl and get to know her a little.
- Share how important each family will be to the troop.
- Discuss meeting location, day and times, uniforms and troop dues (you may want to collect at the meeting).
- Set expectations for communication and response times and how parents can get involved to help the troop (4Her program).
- Have parents complete health history forms, annual permission forms. Share contact info for all troop members.
- Discuss the types of activities the troop will participate this year (regular meetings, field trips, events, camping trips).
- Answer any questions the parents may have.
- If you have girls 16 years and old with a driver's license discuss driving rules for GS activities. Per Policies & Procedures and Safety Activity Checkpoints girls may drive themselves to and from activities but not other girls. Due to GS insurance policies, even if a troop member is 18, she may only transport herself to GS events, even with parent permission.
- Mobile Phones – talk about troop rules on phone usage during meetings/activities. She should be actively engaged in their meetings.

Helpful Tips!

- Don't try to do this alone! Ask parents directly to help with the troop and list out specific needs (4HER program).
- Invite a member of your service unit team to attend if you need help with this meeting.
- Have an "All about Me" info sheet that girls can fill out and share with about themselves with leaders and the other girls in the troop
- Get to know the parents in your troop, even though you may be communicating directly with the girls over text, etc.
- You can find a list of troop duties for parent participation and a girl info sheet in the New Leader Rallyhood - **rallyhood.com/160989**



Parents and other family members can take an active role in supporting their Girl Scout's experience. Use this chart to engage parents at your parent meeting.

The list below explains a number of roles your troop can use throughout the year.
4Her – make a commitment to volunteer 4 hours 4 her this year!

Help Needed	Description
Co-Leader	Partner with leader to provide regular support for all troop activities. Must be a member, background check and training required. Select "Troop Leader" when registering.
Meeting Helper/ Drivers	Assist leaders at meetings with activities. Drivers help drive girls to meetings and activities. Membership and background check required. Select "Troop Volunteer" when registering.
Troop Treasurer	Help leaders with all money matters, budgets, deposits, etc. Membership and background check required. Select "Troop Treasurer or Troop Volunteer".
Camp Trained Volunteer	Coordinate and attend troop camp outs. Membership, background check and training required. Select "Troop Volunteer".
CPR/First Aider	Attend outings outside regular meeting place. Membership, background check and certified training required. Select "Troop Volunteer".
Troop Cookie Manager	Promote and run the cookie program for troop members. Membership, background check and training required. Select "Troop Volunteer".
Supplies or Snack Coordinator	Provide assistance by providing or selecting snacks for troop meetings as needed. Collect/purchase troop supplies to be paid for by the troop for activities.
Communications Support	Create a Troop Rallyhood and be the go to person for troop communication. gsnetx.formstack.com/forms/trooprally

The help and engagement of every parent is important to the growth of the troop!
Invite your parents to share their talents and skills beyond what's included in the chart above.
Their is a place for every parent to volunteer in the troop.

How Many Volunteers Do You Need?

Troop co-leaders are responsible for arranging and maintaining proper adult supervision for meetings and activities. Each troop meeting or Girl Scout group must have at least two unrelated adult members and a background check on file present at all times, plus additional adult volunteers as necessary. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old and one adult in every group must be female.

Use the table to identify how many adults you need based on the number of girls participating:

	TROOP MEETING		FIELD TRIP	
	The adult-to-girl ratio is **two unrelated** volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:	There should be one extra adult for every additional:	The adult-to-girl ratio is **two unrelated** volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:	There should be one extra adult for every additional:
Daisies K-grade 1	**12 Girl Scouts**	**1–6 Girl Scouts**	**6 Girl Scouts**	**1–4 Girl Scouts**
Brownies grades 2-3	**20 Girl Scouts**	**1–8 Girl Scouts**	**12 Girl Scouts**	**1–6 Girl Scouts**
Juniors grades 4-5	**25 Girl Scouts**	**1–10 Girl Scouts**	**16 Girl Scouts**	**1–8 Girl Scouts**
Cadettes grades 6-8	**25 Girl Scouts**	**1–12 Girl Scouts**	**20 Girl Scouts**	**1–10 Girl Scouts**
Seniors grades 9-10	**30 Girl Scouts**	**1–15 Girl Scouts**	**24 Girl Scouts**	**1–12 Girl Scouts**
Ambassadors grades 11-12	**30 Girl Scouts**	**1–15 Girl Scouts**	**24 Girl Scouts**	**1–12 Girl Scouts**

Safety Responsibilities for Girls

Girls who learn about and practice safe and healthy behaviors are likely to establish lifelong habits of safety consciousness. For that reason, each Girl Scout is expected to:

- Assist you and other volunteers in safety planning.
- Listen to and follow your safety instructions and suggestions.
- Learn and practice safety skills.
- Learn to "think safety" at all times and to be prepared.
- Identify and evaluate an unsafe situation.
- Know how, when, and where to get help when needed.
- Practice the buddy method when participating in troop activities.

Girl Scout Troop Finances

Bank Accounts

- Two volunteers must be on the bank account.
- Find a bank with free accounts for GS Troops.
- Complete and submit the Request to Open a Bank Account form.
- Get approval and go to the bank together to complete the process.
- Register the account with GSNETX.

Suggested Banks that welcome Girl Scouts

Origin	Landmark
Capitol One Bank	Local Credit Unions
Prosperity	American National Bank
Point Bank	Veritex Community Bank

Troop Budgets – Keeping good financial records is a must! Keep receipts and track troop activity costs. Troops should share financial information with parents 2-3 times a year. When planning make sure to keep the troop budget in mind and to save money to help fund next year's activities, too.

Troop Dues – Most troops have troop dues and/or troop start-up fees. Make sure to be flexible with families when collecting troop monies. Troop dues/fees should be just enough to cover the cost of supplies, activity fees and badges/patches. Dues average $3-5/meeting. Start-up fees range between $5 and $30 depending on the troop needs.



Tax Exempt Status – Girl Scout purchases are exempt from taxation in Texas. Always take an exemption form with you when making Girl Scout purchases. The form can be found at **www.gsnetx.org/forms**

Fund Raising – A troop's primary money earning should come from the GSNETX fall product sale and Cookie Program. Once a troop has participated in the annual cookie program, they are able to participate in other troop money earning activities such as garage sales or car washes.

Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance is made available to all members and is intended to ensure the cost of membership never keeps a girl from experiencing Girl Scouts. For more information: **www.gsnetx.org/en/members/for-parents-and-families/financial-assistance.html**

For more information about finances check out Volunteer Essentials **www.gsnetx.org/volunteeressentials**.

Girl Scout Traditions

Hand Sign – Raise three fingers of the right hand with the thumb holding down the pinky. The 3 fingers represent the three parts of the Promise.

Handshake – Shaking hands with the left hand and make the GS sign with the right hand. The left hand is nearest to the heart and signifies friendship.

Friendship Circle – The unbroken chain of friendship. Girl Scouts stand in a circle crossing their right arms over their left, and clasping hands with their friends on both sides.

Girl Scout Out – fun way to end a meeting, girls are in the friendship circle, the girls spell Girl Scout with each girl saying one letter, the girl who says "O" is the out. That girl in turn raises her arms still clasping hands, turning to the right and out of the circle. The next girl begins again with the G until the last girl is left as the winner.

SWAPS – Small tokens of friendship that girls often make and take to events or while traveling to swap with other Girl Scouts – "Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere".

Kaper Charts – A chart dividing up troop responsibilities. Indicates all the jobs available and who is responsible during a meeting or a camp-out.

Keeping Girls Safe and First Aid Kits

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. Purchase a Girl Scout first-aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the girls can assemble a kit.



Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms, and health histories may be included as well. Check the kit regularly. Make sure the flashlight batteries work. Check expiration dates and replace any used or out-of-date contents.

Items to include:

- Adhesive bandages
- Sterile gauze pads
- Antibiotic ointment packets
- Hydrocortisone ointment packets
- Antiseptic wipe packets
- Non-latex gloves
- Instant cold compress

Always keep your kit and your emergency card with the troop at all times.

Troop Communication

Good communication is essential to a well-run troop. Today's girls are in control of their channels for communication. At the Cadette level, GSNETX encourages communications to go directly to both the girls and their parents by email and/or text. Seniors and Ambassadors may be your direct points of contact but parents should be kept in the loop about large scale plans. It's also important to keep a honest and open line of communication in place with parents regarding updates to troop activites, behavior, and/or special needs of the girls in the troop. A good idea is to always provide a deadline for communication responses.



Commonly Used Forms

gsnetx.org/forms

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

Girl Health History Forms – To be completed by care givers each year

Permission Forms – To be completed by care givers each year

Activity Approval Forms – This form is required for Girl Scout events or activities that may require extra levels of safety, care or permission. It is also required for any money-earning activity beyond the Girl Scout cookie program or fall product sales.

Opening or changing a Girl Scout bank account and ACH registration – See finances section on page 12.

Tax Exemption Form – Whenever purchasing troop supplies, etc.

Troop Changes Form – Making changes to volunteer roles and transferring girls in/out of the troop.

Troop Info Update Form – Updating meeting information and troop description

Your Year in Girl Scouts

AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
 National S'more Day  Recruit New Girls to Your Troop Back to Girl Scouts Plan Your Year GSNETX Leader Kick-Off	Hispanic History Month Back to Girl Scouts Investiture Ceremonies Fall Product Begins Recruit New Girls to Your Troop	Girl Scout Membership Year Begins  Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday	Thanksgiving
DECEMBER	**JANUARY**	**FEBRUARY**	**MARCH**
	Happy New Year!  Cookie Sale	Black History Month  World Thinking Day Engineering Week	Women's History Month  Girl Scout Week Girl Scouts Celebrate Faith
APRIL	**MAY**	**JUNE**	**JULY**
Earth Day National Volunteer Month  Girl Scout Leader Day	Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month  National Bridging Week Mental Health Awareness Month Early Bird Renewal/ Extended Year	National Get Outdoors Day Day/Twilight Camps Resident Camps	Independence Day Resident Camps

Visit **gsnetx.org/events** to learn more about our events and find the most up-to-date information. All events are subject to change without notice.

Product Sales Program
5 Skills + Financial Literacy

Each year, troops have two opportunities to participate in council sponsored money earning activities: the Fall Product Program and the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Each of these programs offer girls and troops the opportunity to earn funds to power their Girl Scout adventures, as well as rewards to keep girls engaged and motivated.

Through their participation in product sales programs, girls are able to launch their very own businesses while learning important life skills along the way:

Goal Setting

Decision Making

Money Management

People Skills

Business Ethics

There are also Cookie Business Badges and curriculum that help troop volunteers guide girls on this journey to developing their confidence in having a voice to set their goals, decide what they want to do with the money earned and understanding how to successfully run their Cookie Program.

- With the support of a volunteer in your Service Unit and the council Product Sales team, you will be connected to resources and support to ensure that you and your troop have everything that you need to have a successful experience.
- It's important to remember that any funds earned through money earning activities become property of the troop as a whole to further the Girl Scout experience.
- It must also be a girl-led decision on how these funds should be spent. Troop funds can be used towards meeting supplies, badges, field trips and activities, camping, experiences and more.

Fall Product Program | September – October
This is a great way to get girls and families comfortable with participating in council sponsored money earning activities.

- **What:** Girls sell nuts, candy and magazines online to family and friends.
- **How:** Customers can select to have their order delivered by the Girl Scout or shipped directly to them. Products to be delivered by girls will be shipped directly to the troop in November for distribution to girls and families.
- **Why:** Troops earn 20% of total sales that will be deposited into troop bank accounts in December.

Cookie Program | December – February
The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world! The bulk of the troop's funds are earned through girls' participation in the Cookie Program and it's where they truly get to put the 5 Skills they have learned into action.

- **What:** Girls sell cookies to customers near and far online, in-person, and at booth sales.
- **How:** Family and friends support their favorite Girl Scout by purchasing cookies to help her reach her goal. With the support of parents/caregivers and troop volunteers, girls can also participate in booth sales at local grocery stores, restaurants and more.
- **Why:** Troops earn proceeds on each package of cookies sold and girls earn rewards based on the number of packages they sell.

Ready, Set, Take Action

Community Service and Take Action Projects

Make the world a better place. For over 100 years, Girl Scouts have been encouraged to do anything they set their sights on and as a result, Girl Scouts continue to make an impact locally and globally.

Community Service Projects

Community service projects address an immediate need in the community and are appropriate for every Girl Scout – Junior through Ambassador! A great definition of community service is, "Community service makes the world a better place for some people right now."

Take Action Projects

Take Action projects transform a community service project into a long-term, lasting impact for the community. With Take Action projects, girls are challenged and encouraged to research, plan, and lead projects that tackle the root of a local, national, or global problem. Girls think bigger and are encouraged to solve and address the problem in a way that will prohibit the problem from reoccurring. Take Action projects aim for long-term benefits that change the world in a meaningful, measurable, and sustainable way!

What is Take Action?

Girls will create and carry out a Take Action project with every Journey they complete. The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards all require the completion of a Take Action project.

Overview of Take Action

A Take Action project is a chance for girls to partner with others in their community to solve a problem. They learn about getting to the root causes of issues, mobilizing and engaging community members and volunteers, and striving toward creating a lasting change in their world. An important component is to understand and address the cause of a problem.

Girls must also make sure each project is sustainable and that the impact is measurable.

- **Sustainable:** Girls must make arrangements to ensure that the project creates lasting change and is not a one-time event. (Collaborate with community leaders and/or organization; creating relationships with mentors)
- **Measurable:** The success of the project can be determined based on the number of people the project helped, the number of people who were involved, any reduction in the community's need, and other concrete numbers.

Steps of a Good Take Action Project

1. Girls identify assets and needs in a community.
2. Girls reach out beyond their circle to meet others. Try to meet people affected by your issue and people who are trying to solve it.
3. Girls make a decision about what they will take action on.
4. Girls learn the steps needed to carry out an action plan.
5. Girls assist with project logistics.
6. Girls take action alongside community members.
7. Girls reflect on their action and assess what they gained from it. Girls celebrate their community accomplishments.

Girl Scout Camping

When Girl Scouts get outside and connect with nature in a girl-led setting, they grown in self-confidence, develop their leadership skills, and foster a passion for environmental stewardship. Many Girl Scouts will tell you that camping trips and summer camp are some of the best things about their Girl Scout experience.

Our Camp and Outdoor Program

With a troop camp-trained adult along, girls can go troop camping at one of our five beautiful camps throughout the school year. Summer brings day/twilight camps, sleep away camping, and fun summer day camps for our girls to enjoy. Summer opportunities are announced in February /March each year. For more information about out camps check our website: **gsnetx.org/camp**

Camp Properties

STEM Center of Excellence Located in South Dallas, this camp is the perfect mix of hands-on STEM exploration and traditional camp activities. Workshops, trail hiking, and swimming is just some of the fun to be found here. Don't forget the s'mores!

Camp Bette Perot in Palestine is home to our Equestrian Leadership Center. Camp in a platform tent, cabin, or lodge. Swim in a sparkling pool, go for a horseback ride, go finishing, challenge yourself on the ropes course and so much more!

Camp Gambill is a tranquil camp retreat outside of Paris, Texas. This beautiful property features air conditioned cabins, a calming lake, Goosey Golf and a mascot, Kippy the Goose. Activities include swimming, hiking, kayaking, laser tag and paddle boating.

Camp K (Kadohadocho) is 150 rustic acres outside Pottsboro on Lake Texoma. This property is for our most adventurous, primitive campers.



Travel with Girl Scouts

Some of the most memorable moments in a Girl Scout's life happen while taking trips. As girls get older there are more opportunities to travel and explore new places. For detailed information about trips and travel as a troop check **GSNETX Safety Activity Checkpoints, pages 192 – 198** available on our website.

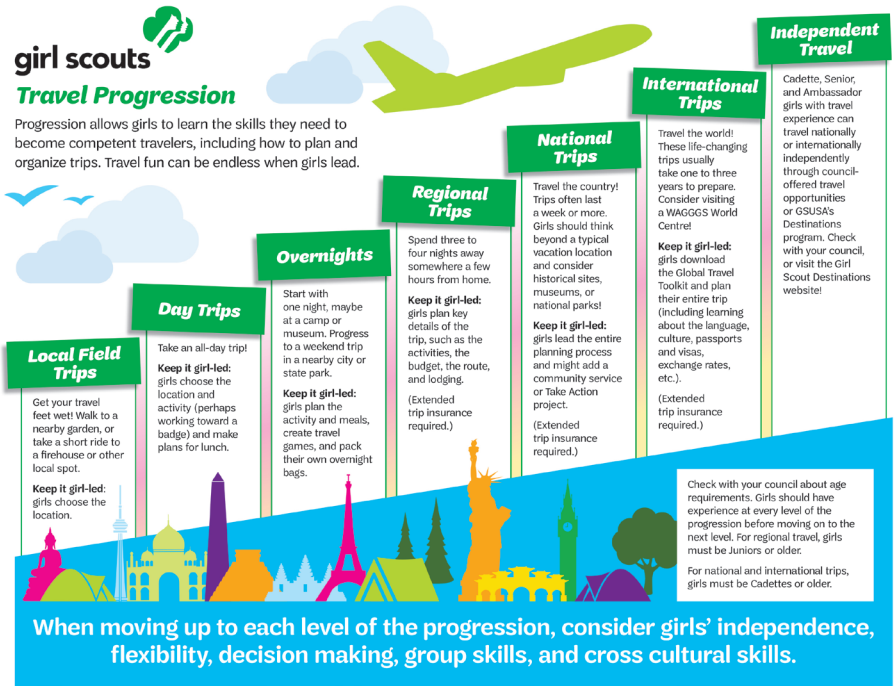
Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors love a fun weekend camp out, especially at Camp Bette Perot in Bette's Treehouse! As they become more independent girls also enjoy a girl planned extended trip beyond our council's borders. Girls should have the opportunity to plan trips within Texas, across the U.S. and beyond as a troop. Many graduating Ambassador troops plan big exotic trips to celebrate their Girl Scout sisterhood! Leaders may need additional training courses before planning a trip begins! Be sure to check

Other Girl Scout opportunities: Destinations, Getaways, and International Event ideas can be found at **girlscouts.org/travel**

Destinations – The ultimate adventure for individual CSA Girl Scouts. Travel to different states to have a unique, life-changing experience for every girl. By far the most popular experience for girls ages 11+. Girls apply for different trips each year.

Getaways – Short travel programs designed specifically for Girl Scout Troops

International Events - GS Troops go global! Find out about international events for troops hosted by global scouting organizations.



Graduating Ambassadors

Girl Scouts who are 18 years old and graduating high school are eligible to become Lifetime members each summer at a discounted price. This is a great gift for a troop to award to members as they graduate. If troop funds don't allow for this type of gift, make sure to inform your troop families of this opportunity. Girl Scouts today make wonderful Girl Scout Alums of the future who return to share their experiences and help empower tomorrow's girls to become the leaders of the next generation!

GSLI – Girl Scout Leadership Institute *sponsored by Amazon*

The Girl Scout Leadership Institute helps high school girls build their resumes for higher education and careers. These are opportunities for girls to apply to participate through GSNETX.

College Preparation – Throughout the year events are offered for high school girls to help prepare for college, applications, choosing a college that is the right fit, scholarship opportunities and more.

Career Exploration – These events give girls an opportunity to leader about various occupations that match a girl's skills, interests, and values.

Job Shadowing – Girls have a chance to learn about a particular occupation or profession as she accompanies employees throughout their day-to-day work schedule.

Each year GSNETX offers a number of different Clubs or special interest groups that are year-long programs that are open to Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors only.

For more information about GSLI visit **gsnetx.org/gsli**



Girl Scout Highest Awards – Silver Award & Gold Award

The **Silver Award** is the highest award a Cadette may earn. Girls choose an issue in their community so that they can make a change for the better. Girls are required to earn a Cadette Journey before starting their project. The Silver Award is a leadership project that addresses an issue at its root cause and makes a long-term impact in the community. Make sure to use the report forms at gsnetx.org.

The **Gold Award** is the highest award a Senior or Ambassador can earn. Projects are based on an individual girl's passion for an issue and desire to make a difference in a big way! This award requires completion of the silver award plus one Journey or the completion of two Journeys to hone the skills a girl will need to earn the Gold Award. This award is difficult to earn, but the long-term results are definitely worth it! Colleges, employers, peers, and the community know what a go-getter and leader a Gold Award Girl Scout is and value her contribution. Before starting this project, make sure to visit our website or attend a Gold Award Round Table to learn more.

Each spring, GSNETX holds a special Gold Award event for girls who have become Gold Award Girl Scouts. Be sure to watch for this event if any girl in your troop has earned this distinction.

For more information and report forms for the Silver and Gold Award visit **gsnetx.org/higherawards**



The Girl Scout Program
Badges

Badges are the most traditional way of showcasing individual skill-building accomplishments of a Girl Scout. For each badge, a girl completes 5 activities related to a specific subject and demonstrates proficiency at each. Life Skills, Outdoors, Entrepreneurship, Science, Math, Technology, Engineering are the 7 areas the girls concentrate upon as skill-builders. Seven legacy badges are also available for each level of Girl Scouting, from Brownie to Ambassador. Over the course of the year, girls should be encouraged to choose badges across the different focuses to create a well-rounded experience that engages everyone in the troop and sparks new areas of interest. Badges can usually be earned in a single meeting or two.

Badges for Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors can be found in the Volunteer Toolkit or can be purchased through our GS shop. Legacy badges are included in the Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting. Be sure to share access with the girls in your troop so that they can choose which badges to earn and have the requirements to lead the badges themselves.



The Girl Scout Program
Journeys

A Journey is another way for girls to build leadership skills while learning about themselves and their world. Each journey focuses on a theme and is made of the three Keys to Leadership - Discover, Connect and Take Action. At each program grade level (Cadette, Senior, Ambassador) there are different Journeys to explore that include a sustainable Take Action project and all the exploration, discovery, and adventure to power a lifetime of leadership and success.

As a troop, the girls will want to decide how they will work on Journeys – individually or as a group. Girls may choose to closely follow the Journey books and complete all activities within over the course of a semester, at a camp out or the troop may choose to attend an organized event there the different parts of a journey are earned at a one day event. In that day, they might complete the take action project or that might be completed at a later time. There's no right way, girls should choose the option that works best for them. You will be able to purchase Journey books for girls and leaders or use the plans in the Volunteer Toolkit.

JOURNEY SERIES	CADETTE	SENIOR	AMBASSADOR
It's Your World - Change it!	aMAZE!	GIRLtopia	Your Voice, Your World
It's Your Planet - Love it!	Breathe	Sow What?	Justice
It's Your Story - Tell it!	Media	Mission: Sisterhood	Bliss: Live it! Give it!
Citizen Science	Think Like a Citizen Scientist	Think Like a Citizen Scientist	Think Like a Citizen Scientist
Engineering	Think Like an Engineer	Think Like an Engineer	Think Like an Engineer
Outdoors	Cadette Outdoor Journey	Senior Outdoor Journey	Ambassador Outdoor Journey
Programming	Think Like a Programmer	Think Like a Programmer	Think Like a Programmer

Meeting as a Troop

Your Troop Year at a Glance

You troop meeting frequency is going to be determined by the schedules of the girls in the troop. Most girls have pretty busy schedules so be prepared to be flexible and work with all families. Make sure you mix it up and that meetings and outings capture the interests of the girls in your troop! In the rest of your handbook we have provided a simple set of meeting plans for you to use. More information on leading these badges can be found in your **Volunteer Toolkit**.

This is a great starting place for a troop to get started, but a troop isn't just about earning badges or Journeys, it's really about making sure that the girls are making age appropriate decisions and having fun. To that end, you will want to weave a variety of activities into your Girl Scout year. Girls will enjoy getting outdoors, performing community service, going on field trips and just hanging out together having fun and having new experiences. Two pieces of advice: keep it girl-led and keep it fun!

To help you create a well-rounded year in Girl Scouting, set up your troop calendar in the Volunteer Toolkit. Take the Volunteer Toolkit Challenge in gsLearn and see how easy it is to create a year plan based on the badges your Girl Scouts want to earn!

Resources For Planning Meetings

Virtual Meetings

In today's world many troops are finding the need to offer virtual meetings. Troops can meet virtually, -in-person, or a hybrid of the two. It's a great idea to discuss this with your co-leader(s) and your troop families. You can find tips, tools, and ideas for virtual troop meetings at **https://www.girlscouts.org/en/members/for-volunteers/virtual-meeting-planning.html**.

For Volunteers – Find resources, guides, and more that are essential to volunteers. The resources on this webpage will help you along the way in your volunteer journey. Whether you're looking for guidance on managing troop finances or need help planning your first year of meetings, you'll find everything you need.

Jumpstart – Unsure how to lead STEM badges? This is your easy to use, on-the-go digital assistant helping leaders deliver empowering, enjoyable, STEM programming to girls! Just create an account on our website at **gsnetx.org/jumpstart**



Planning your Girl Scout year

- Choose your dates – be sure to consider holidays and schedules.
- Decide how many Girl Scout meetings/ activities a month the troop will do.
- We recommend you start with the badges included in your *My First Year Handbook* and let the girls vote on the order.
- Decide how the troop will choose meeting topics and activities. Remember to keep it girl-led.
- Have a list of ideas for the girls to vote on doing and when to do each, or have the girls bring ideas to your meeting for a vote.
- Alternate regular meetings with fun outings, field trips or events.
- Include a wide variety of activities for the girls to participate in throughout the year.
- Keep it age appropriate.
- Consider what the troop will do during inclement weather, illness, etc. Is virtual an option for your troop?
- Will the troop do one activity each month during the summer or be on a break?
- Remember to be flexible – be prepared for a meeting plan to run askew and adjust – keep it fun! If girls miss a meeting, it's okay. Making up a badge is voluntary.
- Take time to get to know the girls and their interests – make sure at least one meeting meets each girl's individual interests.
- As you plan your year, engage the parents with the girls – have each girl sign up to lead a meeting with her caregiver, she chooses the badge/activity and you serve as their mentor.

4 Girl Scout Pillars and The Girl Scout Promise & Law

- STEM
- Outdoors
- Life Skills
- Entrepreneurship

Other ideas to include

- Field Trips
- Service Unit Events
- Community Service
- Council-led Events
- GSNETX Patch Programs

Resources to help you plan

- Volunteer Toolkit
- GSNETX New Leader Rallyhood
- Service Unit leader meetings
- Get ideas from experienced Troop Leaders
- GSUSA Badge booklets & Journeys GSUSA & GSNETX Patch Programs

Example of how to plan your calendar

For meeting 1 & 2 each month – rotate badges/activities based on the 4 pillars

Month 1 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	**Month 2** Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	**Month 3** Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	**Month 4** Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	**Month 5** Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	**Month 6** Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?
Month 7 Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	**Month 8** Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	**Month 9** Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	**Month 10** Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	**Month 11** Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?	**Month 12** Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Additional?

*GSNETX – Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas Council

*GSUSA – Girl Scouts of the United States of America

Working with CSA Girls

From 6th grade through 12th grades, girls are going through a lot of changes – physically, emotionally, intellectually and societally. Peers are extremely important and peer pressure is real. Keep in tune with your girls and their personality/moods. Leaders want to always ensure that the emotional/mental health of the girls is a priority. Acceptance and encouragement are important during these years.



Working with Cadettes

As a Cadette Leader, you will be the coach who mentors the girls as they lead the planning, decision-making, learning and fun for their troop. When girls guide their experience, they add to their skill set and are more engaged.

As the girls become teens and continue to develop, they are beginning to form peer groups based on similar interests. During this time, leaders will observe a lot of growth and friendship changes. Continue to encourage friendship and acceptance among troop members by following the Girl Scout promise and law.

Cadettes enjoy engaging in their community and providing service to others. Encourage the girls to plan challenging and new activities. As a leader, you will be there to encourage, direct and guide from the sidelines.

Girl Scouts is girl-led!

Working with Seniors

Senior Leaders mentor and cheer on the girls being careful not to take over. Girls should be active in all parts of troop activities: goal setting, planning, budgeting and implementation. Leaders will act as a guide and resource for girls as they plan their own complex projects.

It's important that as a leader you help the girls break down tasks into smaller steps and keep on track and schedule.

Girls at this age are used to responsibility and stepping into leadership roles gradually. Help them make time to reflect and learn from their experiences as they grow. Seniors benefit from working in teams and in an environment where they can speak openly and often about how responsibility and implementation are working.

Help Seniors identify topics that matter to them and let them explore in a natural direction. Engage girls in new activities that spark their imagination and encourage trips to discover new horizons. Girls should be engaged in the scheduling of meetings – where, when and how often. Encourage girls to mentor younger girls and share their new adventures with their peers and family.

Working with Ambassadors

As an Ambassador leader, your success will be measured by how your girls take control of their Girl Scout experience. At this stage girls are confident leaders who should be in charge of all planning, goal setting and execution of activities – especially with higher awards. Girls at this age really enjoy the conversation and making the decisions. Your job will is to be their biggest advocate.

Ambassadors should make the final decisions on meeting logistics and conducting full meetings. Remember to let the girls decide how they want to team up on projects and identify challenges in their communities and the world. Assist your girls in developing connections with individuals and organizations on national/international levels; let them research policy making processes, and make calls, emails and interview their own potential project partners. Encourage girls to research their interests and find out how to turn those interests into future careers.

Helpful Tips!

- Let the girls establish troop rules with you.
- Give girls the opportunity to express themselves.
- Give girls the responsibility for tasks.
- Vary troop activities.
- Use secret ballots to vote.
- Teach girls how to build consensus.
- Have girls take turns partnering with each troop member.
- Consider creating secret sister opportunities during the year.
- Allow the girls more independence while keeping them safe at the same time.

The Volunteer Toolkit:
Your Digital Troop Assistant

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

This web-based program allows you more time to focus on your girls. It makes managing your troop and planning your meetings smooth and easy all year long. Inside, you'll find meeting overviews, activity plans, badge and journey outlines, meeting aids, Girl Scout resources and more!

Plan and Customize Your Year

At Girl Scouts, we know that when girls take part in shaping their Girl Scouts experience and adventures, they will be more engaged and will have more fun! The VTK makes it easy for troop co-leaders and girls explore meeting topics and ideas available for their grade level together and select what they want to include in their year. Co-leaders can take this information to plan and customize the troop's year using the VTK's pre-populated meeting plans, agendas, supply lists, and activity instructions.

Manage Troop Rosters, Attendance, and Accomplishments

With the VTK you will be able to view your troop roster, update contact information, record attendance at meetings, track girls' badge and Journey achievements, and renew memberships.

One-Click Communication

The VTK is not just for co-leaders, it's for parents, too! With its unique parent-view, parents can keep up with troop activities, meeting information, and what badges and Journeys their girls are working on. You can also email upcoming meeting agendas and troop plan to them with just one click.

Learn more about the VTK

For more information about the Volunteer Toolkit, including how to set-up a troop year plan, take the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) Challenge in gsLearn

Easy Navigation at your Fingertips!

Here are just a few of the many features you'll find inside the VTK. We strongly encourage troop co-leaders to utilize the VTK to streamline their troop management and planning. GSUSA continues to update and enhance the VTK with additional resources, features and functions.

MY TROOP

- View, edit, download and print rosters.
- Edit contact info.
- View achievements and attendance.
- Email families.
- Renew memberships.

YEAR PLANS

- Specify meeting dates and locations.
- Preview and choose pre-populated year plans.
- Add and/or combine meeting plans to customize your year.
- Add custom troop activities like celebrations, field trips, camping trips, etc.

MEETING PLANS

- View, download, or print individual meeting summaries, activity plans and supply lists.
- Track attendance and achievements.
- Search and print meeting aids such as name tags, handouts, and more.

RESOURCES

- Access award logs, badge charts, meeting plans, and more.
- Access council specific resources on troop leadership, safety, training, GS traditions and awards, trips and travel, GS product sale, and camp and outdoor programs.

FINANCES

- Submit the annual troop finance report.

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. Don't let that hold you back. Be open with the girls and when you don't know something and that you will be learning together. You'll show them that learning is a lifelong process and that with an open mind, they can overcome any challenge that comes their way.

Six Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

The only requirement for your troop meetings is that your girls are engaged and having fun! Many leaders use this basic structure for troop meetings:

1. **Ramp Up** – plan an opening activity for girls upon arrival at the meeting so that have something to do before the meeting begins. Plan about five minutes for this, it could be snack, or creating a thank you card, coloring a page to donate, etc.

2. **Opening** – Each troop decides what they will do regularly. Most begin with the reciting the Girl Scout Promise & Law, a song, game, story, or other activity designed by the girls. Plan 5-10 minutes for this.

3. **Troop Business** – Collect dues, take attendance, make announcements or plan upcoming activities while parents may be present.

4. **Let the fun begin!** This is your activity for the meeting, work on a badge, journey, or complete other activities during this time plan 30 minutes to 1 hour according to your meeting time.

5. **Clean Up** – Girls clean up all supplies and always leave a place cleaner than they found it. Plan about five minutes.

6. **Closing** – As a troop, girls decide how they will end each meeting – a song, a game, a Girl Scout tradition. Plan 5-10 minutes for this.

Got Snacks?

Snacks are optional and girls should be aware of others food allergies/restrictions. Your troop may not need to plan snacks for meetings, but let the girls make that decision – snacking often allows girls to relax and connect with their peers more. Maybe the girls can take turns making snacks for meetings or everyone brings their own food.

First Meeting Checklist

- ❑ Cover the basics. Review the details about when and where the meeting will take place and make sure parents/caregivers are aware.
- ❑ Get ready. Use the VTK to verify your troop roster and email parents. This might be a great time to remind parents to send health history forms, uniform orders, and troop dues to the meeting.
- ❑ Know the agenda. Refer to the Six Elements of a Troop Meeting list and your meeting agenda/plans
- ❑ Review and practice your agenda. You'll feel calmer during the actual meeting and ready to make adjustments as needed.
- ❑ Prepare for Fun! When the girls and parents see that you're prepared for the meeting and ready to have a great time, they'll follow your lead!

Pin and Badge Placement for Cadette, Senior & Ambassador Uniforms

Girl Scout Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador Vest



If your awards and badges don't fit on the front of your vest or sash, you can wear them on the back.

Girl Scout Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador Sash



Place your Journey awards above your badges.

Girl Scout Glossary

- **CASC:** Collin Area Service Center
- **CIT:** Counselor in Training. An opportunity for High school girls at our summer camp locations.
- **DC:** Digital Cookie is an online platform that helps girls run and manage their Girl Scout Cookie business online.
- **DSC:** Denton Service Center
- **eBudde:** The online cookie software system volunteers use to manage the Cookie Program
- **ETRC:** East Texas Regional Center
- **FP:** Family Partnership – direct donation program from members to GSNETX
- **G.I.R.L.:** The spirit of Girl Scouts: Go-Getter, Innovator, Risk Taker, Leader
- **G.O.R.P.:** Good Old Raisins & Peanuts or Granola, Oats, Raisins & Peanuts; trail mix
- **GSE:** Girl Scout Entrepreneur-Loyalty program for girls that sold in the 2021 Cookie Program.
- **gsEvents:** GSUSA Events & Activities Platform
- **GSLE:** Girl Scout Leadership Experience - The experience identifies all the elements that need to be in place for Girl Scouting to achieve its mission; Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. When Discover, Connect, and Take Action activities are combined with the Girl Scout Processes of Girl-Led, Learning by Doing, and Cooperative Learning, girls achieve the desired and expected short-term leadership outcomes, ultimately resulting in Girl Scouting achieving its mission.
- **gsLearn:** GSUSA Training Course Platform
- **GSLI:** Girl Scout Leadership Institute – older girl career programs such as job shadowing and career exploration
- **GSNETX:** Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas
- **GSRI:** Girl Scout Research Institute – delivers customer-centric, data-driven insights across the GS Movement
- **GSUSA:** Girl Scouts of the United States of America – Girl Scout movement in the United States
- **IO:** Initial Pre-Season Order-The number of cookie packages, broken out by flavor, that you want to begin the cookie season with.
- **JAFSC:** JoAnn Fogg Service Center
- **JULIETTE/IRM:** Independently Registered Member; a member who participates without a troop
- **LIA:** Leader in Action. Cadette Girl Scouts show their leadership skills and assist Brownie sisters in completing their National Leadership Journey! They will actively assisting during Journey sessions, use organizational skills, help the Brownies complete their requirements, and—most importantly—helping them reflect on their experience.
- **LIT:** Leader in Training. The L.I.T. award is for Girl Scout Senior and Ambassadors who would like to mentor a Girl Scout Daisy, Brownie, Junior or Cadette group outside of the camp experience. A LIT project (working with a troop) needs to span a 3 to 6 month period.
- **LBB:** Little Brownie Bakers is the company that GSNETX partners with for the Girl Scout Cookie Program.
- **My GS:** Your Girl Scout Account Management System
- **NLA:** New Leader Academy – interactive, informational & digital support group for new leaders
- **OFR:** Outstanding Funds Report - form that is completed when a Girl Scout family has an unpaid cookie balance
- **PA:** Program Aide – Girl who has completed 6th grade, taken a specialized training to help troop leaders with activities for their girls
- **PGA:** Per Girl Average, is the total number of cookies assigned to the troop divided by the number of girls selling
- **PGL:** Program Grade Level. Daisies (K & 1st), Brownies (2nd & 3rd), Juniors (4th & 5th), Cadettes (6th-8th), Seniors (9th & 10th), and Ambassadors (11th & 12th)
- **PPF:** Parent Permission Form - allows participation in the Cookie Program.
- **RALLYHOOD:** Digital Communication Tool for GSNETX staff & volunteers
- **Safety-Wise:** the number of adult Girl Scout members with a background check needed to safely supervise a troop
- **SSSC:** Southern Sector Service Center
- **STEM COE:** Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics Center of Excellence; GSNETX Camp
- **SUM:** Service Unit Manager – administrative volunteer for a specific geographical area
- **SU:** Service Units support troops in their local communities and is comprised of a team of volunteers who serve as the first point of contact for troops and volunteers in their area.
- **SUCPC:** Service Unit Cookie Program Coordinator
- **SWAPS:** Some Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere; small tokens exchanged between Girl Scouts
- **TCM:** Troop Cookie Manager
- **TL:** Troop Leader
- **VTK:** Volunteer Toolkit – digital support for leaders – manage troop, communications & Girl Scout program materials
- **WAGGGS:** World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts – global association supporting female-only Guiding and Scouting Organizations in 150 countries.