

# Chapter 3: Program—What Girl Scouts Do!

The Girl Scout program—that is, what girls do in Girl Scouting—offers incredible opportunities for girls to grow in their leadership skills, develop lifelong friendships, and earn awards along each step of their leadership journeys, no matter what their grade levels, experiences with Girl Scouting, or background.

The Girl Scout program is centered around the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, and the best way to deliver the GSLE to girls is through journeys—powerful, exciting books and awards that are the core of the Girl Scout program offering. Each journey offers opportunities to earn prestigious awards, and at the Junior grade level and above, girls then have a chance to go on and earn the highest awards in Girl Scouting: the Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. Of course, earning and collecting a variety of badges, patches, and pins is also an important Girl Scout tradition that lives on, because doing so encourages girls to learn and demonstrate important skills. A variety of badge activities allow girls to focus on particular interest areas, like financial literacy, healthy living, science and technology, and outdoors and the environment. And Girl Scout ceremonies and songs continue to link girls with not only Girl Scouts peers today but also the lineage of Girl Scouts past. This chapter shares details on each of these exciting elements of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

## The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

Today’s effective leaders stress collaboration, inclusion, and a commitment to improving the world around them. Girls themselves tell us that a leader is defined not only by the qualities and skills she hones but also by how she uses those skills and qualities to make a difference in the world—to achieve transformational change! For this reason, the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)—the framework for defining *what* girls do in Girl Scouting, *how* they do it, and *who* will benefit that was borne out of years of research and development—engages girls in three key activities: discovering who they are and what they value; connecting with others; and taking action to make the world a better place.

### *Three Keys to Leadership*

In Girl Scouting, Discover + Connect + Take Action = Leadership. The entire Girl Scout program, regardless of the exact topic, is designed to lead to leadership outcomes (or benefits) that stem from these three keys.

#### *Discover Key*

Girls understand themselves and their values and use their knowledge and skills to explore the world. The benefits intended for girls from the discover key include:

- Developing a strong sense of self
- Developing positive values

- Gaining practical life skills and practicing healthy living
- Seeking challenges in the world
- Developing critical thinking skills

## Connect Key

Girls care about, inspire, and team with others locally and globally. Benefits for girls include:

- Developing healthy relationships
- Promoting cooperation and team-building
- Resolving conflicts
- Advancing diversity in a multicultural world
- Feeling connected to their local and global communities

## Take Action Key

Girls act to make the world a better place. Benefits intended for girls include:

- Identifying community needs
- Working as resourceful problem-solvers
- Educating and inspiring others to act
- Advocating for themselves and others, at home and around the world
- Feeling empowered to make a difference

The most powerful component of the take action key is, not only do Girl Scouts themselves benefit as they grow in their leadership skills, but communities, the nation, and the world benefit as well. Taking action translates to making the world a better place.

**Please note:** After years of research, the three keys to leadership were introduced in 2008, replacing Girl Scouting’s “four program goals” and the “4Bs” from STUDIO 2B. Publications and Web content that were produced before the introduction of the GSLE continue to offer valuable information and ideas for you, but anytime you see four program goals or 4Bs in older materials, think three keys, instead!

## Girl Scout Processes

All activities in the GSLE build on three processes (that is, *how* girls go about doing their activities and how they interact with each other) that make Girl Scouting unique from school and other extracurricular activities.

- **Activities are Girl-Led:** Girls of every grade-level take an active role in determining what, where, when, why, and how they'll structure activities. As part of the adult-girl partnership fostered by Girl Scouts, you use this process to strengthen and support girls' empowerment and decision-making roles in activities. Your role is to provide grade-level-appropriate guidance while ensuring that girls lead as much as possible in the planning, organization, set-up, and evaluation of their activities. The older the girl, the more you serve as a resource and support.
- **Girls Learn by Doing:** Girls use hands-on learning to engage in an ongoing cycle of action and reflection, deepening their understanding of concepts and mastering practical skills. As girls take part in meaningful activities—instead of simply watching them—and then later evaluate what they have learned, learning is far more meaningful, memorable, and long-lasting. You assist girls in this process by facilitating grade-level-appropriate experiences through which girls can learn, and leading discussions that reflect on those experiences. When girls learn by doing, they can better connect their experiences to their own lives, applying their learning experiences to their lives both in and out of Girl Scouting.
- **Girls engage in Cooperative Learning:** Girls share knowledge, skills, and experiences in an atmosphere of respect and cooperation, working together on a common goal that engages each individual girl's diverse talents. In cooperative learning environments, people learn faster, process information more efficiently, and are better able to retain the information learned. This idea, also known as “positive interdependence,” engages girls in meaningful ways, encourages and appreciates differences in outlook and skills, and creates a sense of belonging. In your role as a volunteer, you want to structure cooperative-learning activities that will nurture healthy, diverse relationships, and also give continuous feedback to girls on those learning experiences.

These three processes promote the fun and friendship that, for nearly 100 years, have been integral to Girl Scouting. But they do even more: When girls lead, when they learn by doing, and when they engage in cooperative learning, the fifteen leadership outcomes (or benefits) discussed in the preceding section are far more likely to be understood and achieved.

## A Journey Awaits

The core component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience is the leadership journeys, 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 fun, challenging, and purposeful experiences spread over a series of sessions (which you can expand over several group meetings), and each is tied to some or all of the fifteen national outcomes/benefits for girls. In other words, the GSLE is sewn right into the journeys for you!

Each girls' book immerses Girl Scouts in the topics that make up the journey, while the adult guide features enriching activities for a group of girls, coaching tips, and sample session outlines that you can customize to fit the needs of your group, whether you facilitate a troop, volunteer at a Girl Scout camp, mentor girls on a travel

adventure, or engage with girls in a special-interest series or other event. Together, the girls' books and adult guides ensure that every Girl Scout in every pathway receives a consistent, high-quality experience that ties to the GSLE and engages girls in realizing specific leadership outcomes/benefits.

As you work through a grade-level-specific journey book, you'll have your own learning-by-doing experience, as you come to understand the GSLE even more deeply. As girls work toward and earn the awards that accompany each journey, you'll be sure the girls are receiving the benefits Girl Scouts promises—and you'll be able to apply your understanding of the GSLE to everything else girls go on to do in Girl Scouting.

You can share the GSLE with girls in your group through two sets of journey books. Both invite girls to explore a specific leadership theme for their level, provide meaningful experiences centered on the three keys to leadership for all girls, and each marks their achievements by earning prestigious journey awards.

## *It's Your World—Change It!*

The first series of journey books invites girls to develop a deep understanding of themselves, understand how powerfully they can act when they team up with others who share a vision, and make a difference in their communities by inspiring, educating, and advocating. Books in the first series of journey books include the following:

- ***Welcome to the Daisy Flower Garden:*** When flowers talk, what do they say? Something wonderful? Something wise? Listen close, and then plant a seed—maybe even two or three. In this garden, as in all of Girl Scouts, good things are bound to sprout.
- ***Brownie Quest:*** Pack a bag and join the quest! You'll find trails with friends and fun and all sorts of...well, we can't say what! After all, there's a mystery to solve! And did we mention that special something Girl Scouts have always loved—a bright and shining Brownie Elf?
- ***Agent of Change (for Juniors):*** Power. Everyone's got it—individual power, team power, community power. There's a whole spiral of power waiting, just for you. Toss in some power stories (and a chatty, power-loving spider) and you've got yourself one powerful adventure. Power on!
- ***aMAZE! (for Cadettes):*** Life is a maze. Navigate its twists and turns and you'll find true friendships, meaningful relationships, and lots of confidence to boot. So go ahead, enter the maze. The goal is peace—for you, your world, and the planet, too.
- ***GIRLtopia (for Seniors):*** Imagine a perfect world for girls. Imagining is the first step to creating. Make your vision a reality. That's what leadership is all about.
- ***Your Voice Your World—The Power of Advocacy (for Ambassadors):*** How often have you seen something that really needed to be changed and wondered, “Why isn't someone doing something about that?” Guess what? You can be that someone! All it takes is your voice joining with other voices and pretty soon, you'll see just how powerful advocacy can really be. So go ahead, start the winds of change with your own little flutter—be a Girl Scout Ambassador and an advocate.

## *It's Your Planet—Love It!*

The second series of journey books issues a call for action to the environment, inviting Girl Scouts of every grade level to explore the natural wonders of the world, become stewards of our fragile planet, and investigate the science that keeps our Earth spinning. Books in the second exciting series include:

- ***Between Earth and Sky (for Daisies)***: Sunshine, fresh air, new places to see. When flower friends travel, they enjoy all of these. So come along for the trip. Meet new friends and old. You'll taste, touch, and smell what fun travel can hold!
- ***WOW! Wonders of Water (for Brownies)***: Water does so much for you! Can you return the favor? On this Wonders of Water journey, you will love water, save water, and share water! That's a really big WOW!
- ***GET MOVING! (for Juniors)***: Energy puts the sparkle in fireworks, the giddy up in a pony, and the oomph in the everyday. So get moving! Energize, investigate, innovate. Get all the energy in your life flowing in the wisest ways.
- ***Breathe (for Cadettes)***: Take a deep breath. How do you feel? What do you see? Hear? Smell? Get set to focus all your senses on air. This is one airy journey and it's full of flair!
- ***Sow What? (for Seniors)***: So, what do you hope for from your food? Great taste? Pleasing smell? Good looks, too? As you dig into *Sow What?* and get down to the roots, you'll crave a whole lot more. You'll see how your food network can serve up what's best for Earth—and best for you!
- ***Justice (for Ambassadors)***: We all know what it is. Why is it so hard to achieve? Maybe it needs a brand-new equation—your equation. On this journey, doing the math + some very sage ways = real hope for inspiring justice—for all of Earth and her inhabitants.

## *Getting Started with Journey Books*

Please keep the following tips in mind as you review the journey adult guides:

- **You and the girls you work with are encouraged to customize the sample sessions.** The journey adult guides provide you with ideas, examples, and encouragement, along with ideas about sequencing experiences, facilitating discussions, and assisting as girls earn awards. But neither the girls' books nor the adult guides are meant to provide hard-and-fast, unchangeable, lock-step sessions. Have fun creating new activities surrounding each topic. The journey will be much more fun and relevant as girls make it their own!
- **Take your time.** Sample sessions in the journeys have been created to show how it is possible to have a Girl Scout Leadership Experience in six to eight gatherings. Many girls and adults quickly find there is

more they want to do, which is why the journey books are filled with tips for you to customize the experience. As their imaginations take hold, girls will have many more ideas about how to extend the journey with guidance from volunteers.

- **Capture girls' imagination and motivate them to take action by sharing stories.** The journey series engage girls in stories—real and fictional—of girls and women taking action in the world. Make use of these stories and expand upon them whenever you can—in any way that you and girls will enjoy. Stories, after all, capture the imagination and motivate. Ultimately, girls will create their own stories on the journey, meeting new people and taking action in the world. What other stories are going on in the region, and how can girls connect to them? What can girls find in stories—in art or life—that add to the feelings and ideas along this adventure?
- **Connect to the three keys.** As a volunteer in Girl Scouts, your experiences—and your view of leadership—will influence and inspire girls. Use the reflection exercises in the adult guide to think about the three keys to leadership (Discover, Connect and Take Action) and how you can best apply them as you team up with Girl Scouts on their leadership journey.

## The Highest Awards in Girl Scouting: The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards

The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards are Girl Scouting's highest awards. As a Girl Scout volunteer, encourage girls to “go for it” by earning these awards at the Junior through Ambassador levels.

The steps toward achieving Girl Scouting's most prestigious leadership awards offer wonderful learning and growth opportunities to girls. Check out some of the award projects girls are doing at your council. Better yet, talk to a few past recipients of the Girl Scout Gold Award. You'll quickly be inspired when you see and hear what girls can accomplish right now as leaders—and by the confidence, values, and team-building expertise that girls gain as a result of going after Girl Scouting's top awards. And imagine the impact girls have on their communities, country, and even the world as they identify problems they care about, team with others, and act to make change happen!

To help girls receive the benefits Girl Scouting promises through our leadership outcomes, the steps toward earning the highest awards have been undergoing an update. Lots of input has been gathered from around the country, and the new guidelines for the awards are debuting in summer 2009. Talk to your Girl Scout council support team for information about transitioning between new and old guidelines, so that no girls lose out on efforts begun using existing standards. Nationally, the goal is to have all girls using the new guidelines by October 2011, so that girls can truly experience the power of girls together as they take action, using consistent guidelines.

Like everything girls do in Girl Scouting, the steps to earning the awards are rooted in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and its three keys to leadership: girls discover themselves and their values and explore the world, connect with others locally and globally, and take action to make the world a better place.

Going forward, to earn each of these awards, girls first complete a grade-level journey (two journeys for the Gold Award). Journeys provide girls with experience with all three keys to leadership and prepare them to identify community needs, work in partnership with their communities, and create take-action projects that make a lasting difference.

After completing journeys, girls apply their insights and skills to plan and carry out action projects based on their unique visions. The Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards offer girls relevant, -grade-level-appropriate challenges related to teamwork, goal setting, and opportunities to build community networks.

The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards offer girls incredible opportunities for personal development and community leadership. These awards also engage girls in building networks that will not only support them in their award projects, but also lead them to new educational and career opportunities. All this, of course, starts with you—a Girl Scout volunteer! Encourage girls to go after the highest awards. More information is available at [http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs\\_central/insignia/highest\\_awards/gold\\_award.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/insignia/highest_awards/gold_award.asp).

Did you know that a Girl Scout who has earned her Gold Award immediately rises one rank in all four branches of the U.S. Military? A number of college-scholarship opportunities also await Gold Award designees. A girl does not, however, have to earn a Bronze or Silver Award before earning the Girl Scout Gold Award. She is eligible to earn any recognition at the age level in which she is registered.

### ***A Tradition of Honoring Girls***

From the beginning of Girl Scouts, one prestigious award has recognized the girls who make a difference in their communities and in their own lives. The first, in 1916, was the Golden Eagle of Merit. In 1919, the name changed The Golden Eaglet, and in 1920, the requirements for The Golden Eaglet were updated. The First Class Award existed for only two years, from 1938–1940, and was replaced in 1940 with The Curved Bar Award, the requirements for which were updated in 1947. In 1963, GSUSA re-introduced the First Class Award, for a girl who was an “all-around” person, with skills in many fields and a proficiency in one. Today’s highest award, the Girl Scout Gold Award, was introduced in 1980 and remains today.

## **Badges, Try-Its, Pins, and More!**

Emblems, awards, and patches refer to items that girls wear on their vests or sashes, each of which records a girl’s adventures and accomplishments as a Girl Scout. The following list describes the differences among them:

- **Emblems** show membership in Girl Scouts, a particular council, a particular troop, or in some other Girl Scout group.
- **Awards** are earned by completing requirements or by demonstrating understanding of a concept. The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold awards, as well as the journey awards are two prestigious ways girls can earn awards. But girls also earn Daisy Petals, Brownie Try-Its, Junior badges, and Interest Project awards and STUDIO 2B charms (as Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors). Some earned awards take the shape of pins. Additional awards are earned through Girl Scouts requirements or are determined by partner organizations. Examples include religious awards and the President’s Award for Community Service.

**Note:** Over the next several years, Girl Scouts will be updating the skill-building badge activities for girls,

in order to tie them to the GSLE. Stay tuned for updates! Until then, continue to dip into the existing offering to supplement the journey experience—remember, once you’ve done a journey, you can apply the GSLE to everything else you and the girls choose to do!

- **Participation patches** are developed at the national or council level with a focus on participation. Some come with companion activity booklets, while others are given out at events. Some examples include uniquely ME! patches, EarthPACT patch, and World Thinking Day patch.

Purchase emblems, patches, pins, and earned awards at your council’s Girl Scout shop or by visiting [www.girlscoutshop.com](http://www.girlscoutshop.com). To see the array of Girl Scout emblems, earned awards, patches, and pins, check out [www.girlscouts.org/program/gs\\_central/insignia/list](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/insignia/list). There, you not only find a cool list of the earned awards for each grade level but also can click on a link that shows you exactly *where* girls can place all their emblems, awards, pins, and patches on vests and sashes!

## Other Initiatives and Opportunities

Other exciting initiatives and opportunities exist to support the GSLE. A few examples are listed here, and you can find out how to engage your group in opportunities like these by contacting your local council or by visiting [http://www.girlscouts.org/program/program\\_opportunities](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/program_opportunities). Note that councils may offer different experiences, based on availability of resources and partners in your area.

- **uniquely ME!:** A joint venture between Girl Scouts and Dove/Unilever that helps girls discover the importance of challenging themselves, develop healthy coping skills, evaluate media influences, know what to look for in a friend, and find ways to make a difference in the lives of others.
- **Elliott Wildlife Values Project (EWVP):** Launched more than ten years ago, the EWVP provides girls with resources, collaborations, and opportunities that enable girls to explore nature, protect the environment, and develop a lifelong commitment to wildlife conservation.
- **First LEGO League (FLL):** FLL introduces girls to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) using LEGO MINDSTORMS, programmable robotics that both test girls’ technical skills and expose them to leadership skills.
- **NASA collaboration:** Girl Scouts and NASA collaborated more than fifteen years ago, with a shared goal of exposing girls to science careers, creating summer internships for girls, hosting field trips relating to Earth and solar exploration, creating community outreach programs, and providing adult volunteers with training opportunities. To date, more than 100,000 girls have engaged in this program.

## Girl Scout Traditions: Pass it On!

Throughout the long history of Girl Scouts, certain traditions remain meaningful and important, and are still practiced today. This section describes the most revered Girl Scout traditions.

## Time-Honored Ceremonies

Ceremonies play an important part in Girl Scouts, and are used not only to celebrate accomplishments, experience time-honored traditions, and reinforce the values of the Promise and Law, but also to encourage girls to take a short pause in their busy lives and connect with their fellow Girl Scouts in fun and meaningful ways. Many examples of ceremonies—for awards, meeting openings and closings, and so on—are sewn right into the journey, including ideas for new ceremonies girls can create!

Girls use ceremonies for all sorts of reasons: to open or close meetings, give out awards, welcome new members, renew memberships, and honor special Girl Scout accomplishments. A brief list, in alphabetical order, follows, so that you can become familiar with the most common Girl Scout ceremonies:

- **Bridging** ceremonies mark a girl’s move from one grade-level of Girl Scouting to another, such as from Junior to Cadette. (Note that **Fly-Up** is a special bridging ceremony for Girl Scout Brownies who are bridging to Juniors.)
- **Closing** ceremonies finalize the meeting, with expectations for the next. A closing ceremony may be as simple as a hand squeeze while standing in a circle.
- **Court of Awards** is a time to recognize girls who have accomplished something spectacular during the Girl Scout year.
- **Flag** ceremonies can be part of any activity that honors the American flag.
- **Girl Scout Bronze (or Silver or Gold) Award** ceremony honors Girl Scout Juniors who have earned the Girl Scout Bronze Award (Cadettes who have earned the Silver Award; Seniors or Ambassadors who have earned the Gold Award), and is usually held for a group or combined with the council recognition.
- **Girl Scouts’ Own** is a girl-led program that allows girls to explore their feelings and beliefs around a topic (such as the importance of friendship or the personal meaning they get from Girl Scout Promise and Law) using the spoken word, favorite songs, poetry, or other methods of expression. It is never a religious ceremony.
- **Investiture** welcomes new members, girls or adults, into the Girl Scout family for the first time. Girls receive their Girl Scout, Brownie Girl Scout, or Daisy Girl Scout pin at this time.
- **Opening** ceremonies start troop meetings and can also begin other group meetings.
- **Pinning** ceremonies help celebrate when girls receive grade-level Girl Scout pins.
- **Rededication** ceremonies are opportunities for girls and adults to renew their commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

For more about ceremonies, visit [http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs\\_central/ceremonies](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/ceremonies).

## Signs, Songs, Handshake, and More!

Over the course of 97 years, any organization is going to develop a few common signals that everyone understands. Such is the case with Girl Scouts, an organization that has developed a few unique ways to greet, acknowledge, and communicate. Examples are listed in the following sections.

### Girl Scout Sign

The idea of the sign came from the days of chivalry, when armed knights greeted friendly knights by raising the right hand, palm open, as a sign of friendship. To give the sign yourself, raise the three middle fingers of the right hand palm forward and shoulder high (the three extended fingers represent the three parts of the Girl Scout Promise). Girls give the sign when they:

- Say the Promise or Law.
- Are welcomed in Girl Scouts at an investiture ceremony that welcomes new members.
- Receive an award, patch, pin, or other recognition.
- Greet other Girl Scouts and Girl Guides.

### Girl Scout Handshake

The handshake is a more formal way of greeting other Girl Scouts, and is also an appropriate way to receive an award. To do the handshake, shake left hands and give the Girl Scout Sign with your right hand.

### Quiet Sign

The quiet sign can be extremely useful to you as a volunteer—teach this to girls during your first meeting! The sign is made by raising your right hand high. As girls in the group see the sign, they stop talking and also raise their hands. Once everyone is silent, the meeting can begin.

### Girl Scout Slogan and Motto

The Girl Scout slogan is, “Do a good turn daily.” The Girl Scout motto is, “Be prepared.”

### Songs

Whether singing around a campfire or lifting a chorus of voices on the Mall in Washington, D.C., Girl Scouts have always enjoyed the fun and fellowship that music creates. In fact, the first *Girl Scout Song Book*, a collection of songs put together by girl members, was published in 1925. Since then, the organization’s love of music has grown along with the girls it has empowered.

Songs can be used to open or close meetings, enhance ceremonies, lighten a load while hiking, or just share a special moment with other Girl Scouts. For tips on choosing and leading songs, go to [http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs\\_central/activity\\_ideas/songleading.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/activity_ideas/songleading.asp). A variety of songbooks are also available for purchase. Check out your council's shop or visit <http://goshop.girlscouts.org/GSUSAOnline/GSBasicLandingPage.aspx?subCatId=Books-Other>.