

Frequently Asked Questions Brownie Program Levels

(★Stars indicate “Must Reads”)

Awards/Program

1. ★How do I plan for my first meetings?

Girl Scout meetings usually contain the following: opening, business, activity, clean-up, closing. You can find out more about these parts in the *First Four Meetings* booklet. The Journey adult guides also provide ideas.

2. ★How do girls earn badges?

Girls earn badges by completing the guidelines set forth in the *Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*. Remember that they do not need to be earned in any particular order.

3. ★How do I work with Journeys?

Read through the adult guide! They are much easier than they look at first glance. Just remember that Journeys are flexible. They can take as long as a year to complete or can be completed during an overnight at camp. You can also attend a Journey Jumpstart event with your troop. Check the council website for upcoming dates.

4. Do we have to do Journey and badge activities?

Yes. Using Journeys and badges as the core program resource ensures that Girl Scouts is the premiere leadership development organization for girls. The Journey adult guides and the *Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* contain easy to follow instructions. They both offer activities on a large variety of topics, providing girls with a consistent, meaningful and fun leadership experience. Girls decide which badges to earn and which Journeys to use. And, within these resources there is lots of flexibility. Girls can pick which activities to complete when earning badges. Journeys don't have to be completed in any particular order; use the activities that the girls like.

5. Where can I find program ideas?

In a multitude of places! Resources include:

- online training or in person training for your program level
- the *For Volunteers* section of the www.gswise.org website
- the *Events and Activities* section of the www.gswise.org website
- the *Program Information* section of the www.girlscouts.org website
- service area meetings

You can also search online for resources from other Girl Scout councils and volunteers. Just remember that these websites may not have been vetted by GSWISE or GSUSA.

6. What are the requirements for bridging to Juniors?

To earn their bridging award, regardless of level, girls will need to “Pass It On!” by sharing with Daisies and “Look Ahead!” by finding out what Juniors do. To celebrate, they should plan a bridging ceremony. Remember that girls do not need to earn their bridging award to move to the next level and all Brownies automatically “fly up” to the Junior level and receive their Brownie wings to wear on their Junior uniform. Refer to the *Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* for information specific to your level.



7. How do I plan a bridging (or other) ceremony?

Plan ahead! Every ceremony consists of three parts: the opening, main part, and closing. Talk about what the girls want to incorporate into the opening and closing parts. Do they want to recite the promise and law, do the friendship squeeze, sing a favorite song, or read a short poem or story? Discuss what supplies will be needed for the main part – a bridge (which can be as simple as a paper version on the floor), candles, awards the girls have earned, etc. Have girls practice their parts ahead of time and help make invitations to give to their family members. You can find more information about ceremonies in the Journey books, *Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*, *Volunteer Essentials* and online. Additionally, your service area is a great place to find information and may even offer a bridging ceremony for all levels.

8. What is the difference between this level and Daisies/Juniors?

Each program level has new and exciting opportunities. For example, Brownies have more opportunities to earn badges than Daisies but Juniors can earn the Junior Aide and Bronze awards. Remember that progression is an important part of Girl Scouting. Each year girls should take on more responsibility, even if not every activity is new. Check out our website for more information about the opportunities available for your program level.

9. How do I take trips/go camping with Brownies?

First, an adult volunteer will want to take the appropriate classes—either planning the overnight experience or outdoor skills. If girls have not taken trips or gone camping before, start out slowly, exploring the outdoors, holding a cookout, and eventually having a sleepover. Once Brownies are comfortable with the outdoors and/or overnights, consider camping or take longer trips. Just remember that you want to progress at an appropriate pace; giving girls things to look forward to as they get older.

Working with Brownies

10. What is a Brownie ring?

A Brownie ring is a time during a meeting when the troop gathers in a circle to have discussions and make decisions. This is the Brownie form of troop government and allows the girls to take turns leading the group. It is a learning process and an organized time for girls to express their ideas and become a part of the formal group decision making process. While Brownies may not be ready to plan entire meetings, they can certainly help decide main events and plan specific activities.

11. What is the Brownie uniform? Where does everything go?

Brownies have lots of uniform options. They may wear khaki pants or a skirt with a white shirt or the full uniform ensemble available at the resource centers. They may choose to wear either a brown sash or vest to display their official pins and awards. Many Girl Scouts enjoy wearing their vest or sash to all gatherings, but it is only required when participating in events that officially represent the Girl Scout movement (not troop or service area events). Financial assistance is available for the purchase of some uniform pieces. A flyer showing where uniform pieces go can be found in the Junior *Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* or at your local resource center.

12. How do I keep the girls on task?

While Brownies have better self control and a longer attention span than Daisies, their activities should still be fairly short and varied. Make sure they have opportunities to both sit still and move around, make noise and listen. Don't forget, Brownies are much more likely to stay on task if they have helped plan their activities. You should always have something handy (such as some markers and paper) to give to those girls that might not want to participate in a certain activity.



13. What if the girls want to do different things?

Sit with girls at the beginning of the year to find out what kinds of things they want to do. Try to incorporate different types of activities into your troop calendar for the year. This allows all girls to feel heard, do something they love and also try new things.

14. ★What does progression/Girl-Adult Partnership/Girl Led mean?

Girls of every grade level should take an active role in determining what, where, when, why and how they will structure activities. Your role is to provide grade level appropriate guidance while ensuring that girls lead as much as possible. Brownies will need some guidance. But by letting them lead the decision making, you're helping to develop a team relationship, making space for the development of leadership skills and allowing girls to benefit from the guidance of caring adults.

15. Can Brownies really make decisions and be leaders?

Of course! Brownies can offer ideas, make choices, plan events, lead discussions and help resolve conflicts. All they need is space and encouragement. Make the Brownie ring a regular part of your meetings and make sure girls know this is a time that they can help make decisions. Encourage older Brownies to help lead the younger ones. Establish routines and keep a kaper chart so that girls can take some responsibility for leading activities, taking roles in ceremonies, passing out snacks, cleaning up, and otherwise helping out.

16. How to I deal with girls who have busy schedules or are overcommitted?

First, lower your expectations. They don't need to do everything. Encourage girls who missed earning an award at a meeting to earn it at home by doing the same or similar activity. Try to plan dates for major events (field trips and ceremonies) with parents to ensure maximum participation.

17. ★What if I suspect abuse?

Check out the guidelines in *Volunteer Essentials*. Contact your membership manager if necessary. Remember that you should be proactive about creating a safe space and a close relationship with girls so they feel free to share important life happenings with you—whether exciting or scary.

18. How do I deal with bullying?

Be proactive about this kind of behavior by including it in a behavior contract at the beginning of each year. If girls within the group are bullying each other, remind them of the Girl Scout promise and law. The anti-bullying workshops (When Words Hurt) offered to leaders are a great resource. Check out the website www.gswise.org for upcoming workshop dates.

Troop Management

19. ★How can my troop finance their activities?

Girl Scouts have a variety of options for financing any activity they wish to do. First troops need to work with girls and parents to make a budget and plan for earning money. For activities that require money or supplies, parents can pay dues or contribute materials. Brownies can also participate in the fall nut sale and cookie program activity to earn money. Above all, keep girl safety in mind. Brownies can certainly ask, sell, and even handle money but they should never do so alone.

20. ★How do I get started with parents?

Hold a parent meeting at the beginning of the year and be very clear about your expectations. The *World of Girls Journey* has information on creating a support network and using Cadettes to help lead the troop. Many troop leaders have parents sign a parent agreement stating they will bring snacks one week, help with a specific task during a meeting, or offer help in some other way. A parent meeting outline and example of how parents can help the troop is provided at Council 101 training. This handout can also be found online.



21. How do I deal with parents who want the girls to do something they don't want to do? How do I deal with over involved parents?

The best way to deal with these parents is at the beginning of the year with parent contracts. Explain that Girl Scouting is about creating leaders and that girls should be making decisions for the troop as much as possible. You may also encourage parents to take training so they can help in a constructive way. If the problem arises later in the year, talk to all parents again, or on an individual basis as needed. Feel empowered to be firm and ask parents to leave a troop meeting if they are detracting instead of contributing. Talk to your service area manager and/or membership manager if you need further help.

22. How do I deal with under involved parents?

The best way to deal with these parents is at the beginning of the year with parent agreements. Survey parents to find out what resources or knowledge they can provide. Be sure to ask people for specific things (coordinating transportation for a trip, helping with a particular program or serving as a First Aider on a camping trip). If the problem arises later in the year, talk to parents again, or on an individual basis as needed. Remind them that you need their support to keep the troop going. Keep in mind that some parents cannot or should not be expected to volunteer with the troop and these may be parents of girls who need Girl Scouting the most. Give everyone opportunities, but don't expect every parent to be equally involved.

23. How do I deal with questions or topics that I haven't learned about yet if parents are asking me?

Don't be afraid to say you don't know! Being a Girl Scout volunteer is a continual learning process. Let the parents know you will try to find the answer to their question. Or use it as an opportunity to get your parents involved!

24. What training do I need? Is there additional training I should/could take?

Every leader needs to take *Council 101: Welcome to GSWISE* online or in person. It is strongly recommended that you take the online or in person *Junior Leadership Essentials* training course. There are other courses you can take such as *Planning the Overnight Experience*, *Camp Skills for Outdoors* and *First Aid and CPR*. Some courses are required for troops to do activities such as camp and travel.

25. A girl in our troop was held back. Is she still a Brownie even though she is 9?

Girl Scout program level is determined by grade, not age. If you feel an exception needs to be made, talk to her parents, school organizer, or membership manager.

Girl Scout Basics

26. What are the critical dates in the Girl Scout year?

The Girl Scout year runs from **October 1–September 30**.

October through November–Fall Nut Sale

October 31–Founder's Day (Juliette Low's Birthday)

January–Cookie Program Activity begins

February 22–Thinking Day

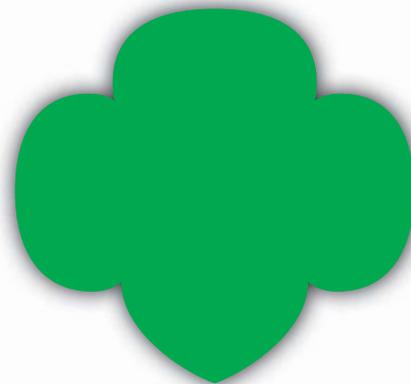
March 12–Girl Scout Birthday

Week of March 12–Girl Scout week (Girl Scout Sunday to Girl Scout Sabbath)

April 22–Girl Scout Leader's Day

Third week in April–Volunteer Appreciation Week

Check out *Volunteer Essentials*, the Journey books, *Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*, www.gswise.org or www.girlscouts.org to find out more about these events. You can also find information about important religious and cultural holidays throughout the year online.



27. Who are my important staff/volunteer contacts?

Your service area manager (SAM) and team are your most important contacts. They are the volunteers who are in place to help support you! Be sure to attend service area meetings so you can get to know them as well as other leaders. If your SAM is unable to help you with a problem or answer a question you have, they may direct you to your membership manager, the staff person responsible for membership in your area. You may also contact staff in volunteer development (for questions on training and adult recognitions), event pathways, program pathways or camp pathways (for information on girl programs and council events), information services (for assistance with membership registration online), and product sales. See the "About Us" section of the GSWISE website for staff contact information.

28. What are the important forms that I need?

Not many! Membership registration can now be done online so no form is needed to register. However, new members will need to fill out a paper registration form. An Annual Troop Cash Report is due each year in June.

Other forms you may need are:

- Girl Health History Card—provides a health history for girls and includes emergency medical authorization.
- Parent Permission Form— informs and receives permission from guardians for activities outside of the normal meeting place and time.
- Financial Assistance Dues and Uniform Form—needed to apply for financial support for membership registration fees, dues and/or uniform components.

You can find current versions of these forms on the GSWISE website.

29. What publications/books/resources do I need?

Volunteer Essentials is necessary for every leader, as are the *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. You will also want the *Journeys* (with adult guide) and/or *Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*. The shop offers lots of resources on ceremonies, songs and other Girl Scout topics. The resources you need can be purchased with troop funds if they will remain the property of the troop. The GSUSA and GSWISE websites will always offer the most up-to-date materials.

30. What is a Service Area?

A service area is a name for your neighborhood grouping of troops, girls and volunteers. Service area meetings are a great place to meet other leaders and get support from experienced volunteers.

31. Where can I translate some of this Girl Scout Jargon (What does ____ mean)?

Check out the girlscouts.org website, under *Program*, then *Girl Scout Central* for a handy Girl Scout glossary!



Most of all,
learn with the girls,
laugh with them, and
have **fun**!