

The Girl Scout Gold Award: A Guide for Leaders

How can Girl Scouts earn the Gold Award?

The first step is to check in with your council's Gold Award staff. You'll want to find out if they require any type of training (e.g., an informational session) before Girl Scouts can begin the Gold Award application process. These staff members will also be invaluable partners to both you and your Girl Scouts throughout the process. When Girl Scouts are ready to get started, they can complete an online application through *GoGold Online*—our national web app that guides them through the seven steps to earning the Gold Award.

What are the core components of earning the Gold Award?

A Girl Scout first identifies the root cause of a community issue they're passionate about. They then design and implement a Take Action project that addresses a significant need in the community and has long-term benefits. The Girl Scout must show leadership by guiding a team of volunteers who support the project, which must be sustainable and measurable with a national and/or global link.

Here's more on that:

- **Sustainable** projects continue to have an impact after the Girl Scout has completed their part.
- **Measurable** projects enable a Girl Scout to demonstrate their impact through data and other information. They can use numbers to say, "Here's how I know I made a change."
- A Gold Award project has a **national and/or global link** when a Girl Scout can explain how their project connects to an issue that is relevant beyond their own community. Examples: poverty, literacy, women's rights, environmental sustainability.

What resources are available to help Girl Scouts and caregivers understand the Gold Award?

Check out GSUSA's *Gold Award webpage* for the fundamentals—and visit your council's website as well, because each council has a unique process that supports Girl Scouts through their Gold Award journeys! Your council may also offer sharable resources aimed at both Girl Scouts and adults.

GSUSA also releases brief coaching videos on its *YouTube channel*. These videos will help Girl Scouts understand the core components of going Gold.

Pro-tip: Help your troop parents learn about the Gold Award! When they understand the process and see the value, they can help their Girl Scouts prioritize it among their other commitments.

What is the time commitment behind earning the Gold Award?

Gold Award projects require a commitment of at least 80 hours from Girl Scouts, though the Girl Scouts themselves design the timelines. In some cases, the work is completed over the course of a summer, and in others, over a year.

When are Girl Scouts eligible to begin working toward their Gold Award?

Girl Scouts should be a registered Senior or Ambassador in grades 9–12. In order to be eligible, they must have completed two Senior or Ambassador Journeys or have completed a Silver Award and completed one Senior or Ambassador Journey.

What are some ways that leaders can support Girl Scouts as they become Gold Award Girl Scouts?

- **Help Girl Scouts understand the value of going Gold.** It's the chance to build resume-worthy leadership skills while making a lasting impact in their communities! The Gold Award can help Girl Scouts strengthen college and job applications and give them access to scholarship opportunities. And for Girl Scouts who plan to enlist in the armed forces, it may mean an increase in rank.

Pro-tip: The Bronze and Silver Awards aren't required prerequisites for the Gold; however, the skills Girl Scouts develop in earning these awards will help prepare them to become Gold Award Girl Scouts. The Bronze and Silver help Girl Scouts discover how to plan and lead projects, connect with their communities, and drive intentional change.

- **Provide encouragement, but not pressure.** The Gold Award is a major time commitment. It's not for everyone, and that's OK! A Girl Scout's decision to become a Gold Award Girl Scout should be entirely their own.
- **Help Girl Scouts understand the prerequisites** as early on as possible. You might help them identify Leadership Journeys that align with their interests, or even complete a Journey as a troop.
- **Get to know the safety and fundraising guidelines.** Reach out to your council's Gold Award staff for info about the council's specific requirements.
- **Introduce parents/caregivers to the Gold Award.** Your council may offer a guide for parents/caregivers that you can distribute as you see fit. You might also encourage these folks to attend an info session with you and/or your troop.
- **Offer the opportunity to attend an information session as a troop** if your council offers one. You might also consider organizing a carpool. Make it as easy as possible for your Girl Scouts to opt in!
- **Dedicate a few minutes of meeting time to updates on Gold Award projects.** This gives Girl Scouts the opportunity to talk through challenges, celebrate successes, and find support in brainstorming. And keep in mind that any decisions about a Girl Scout's project should ultimately be their own.

Troop profile: If and how you dedicate meeting time to the Gold Award during your troop meetings is up to you.

You could survey your troop and if you find that all members want to become Gold Award Girl Scouts, you can dedicate some of your meetings to the Gold Award in addition to short check-ins during regular meetings. If you find that only a few members want to become Gold Award Girl Scouts, you could schedule separate meetings, outside of your regular troop meetings, to the Gold Award to provide support to your Girl Scouts.

In your Gold Award meetings, you could talk about community issues in your area, provide Girl Scouts assistance in GoGold, brainstorm general tips for moving forward, troubleshoot obstacles, etc.

- **Help Girl Scouts make community connections.** Girl Scouts will seek experts to speak with about their chosen issues. Are there any other volunteers or caregivers who can help or introduce them to a potential community partner?
- **Brainstorm ways your troop members can support one another.** Girl Scouts might join forces to fundraise for their projects. They might volunteer on one another's projects, or help recruit volunteers from their schools, teams, and clubs. Assisting with another Girl Scout's project may help fulfill community service requirements for school or religious organizations.

Some Girl Scouts might need additional support in going Gold or may have other special factors that GSWISE's Highest Awards Team should be aware of as Girl Scouts pursue the Gold Award. If this applies to your Girl Scout, please reach out to us at 800-565-4475 or customercare@gswise.org to let us know and we will work with you and your Girl Scout to make appropriate accommodations as necessary.