

Q. Of all the activities available to my child, why Girl Scouts?

Girl Scouts has it all! Girl Scouts have fun, play sports, go camping and swimming, learn about science, learn about animals, enjoy the arts, help in the community, and much, much more. The leadership opportunities and skills your girl develops in Girl Scouts will help her other extracurricular and academic activities as well as her relationships now and in the future.

Q. Who can be a Girl Scout?

Girl Scouts is open to all girls and adults who make the Girl Scout Promise, accept the Girl Scout Law and pay annual membership dues. These are the only requirements for membership. All girls are welcome regardless of socioeconomic status or racial, ethnic, cultural, or religious background. Girls in kindergarten through 12th grade can join – as a Girl Scout Daisy (grades K-1), Girl Scout Brownie (grades 2-3), Girl Scout Junior (grades 4-5); Girl Scout Cadette (grades 6-8), Girl Scout Senior (grades 9-10), or Girl Scout Ambassador (grades 11-12).

Q. How can my girl become a Girl Scout?

She registers through her local Girl Scout council. You can call a Girl Scouts of Greater Mississippi (GSGMS) Service Center or attend a recruitment event at your school or in your community.

Q. Is there a fee to join Girl Scouts?

Each girl and adult that joins Girl Scouts must pay an annual \$12 fee. The Girl Scout year runs from October 1-September 30, and members re-register each year. This entire amount goes to the national organization (GSUSA) and pays for accident insurance, program development and resources.

Q. Are there any other costs involved beyond the \$12 registration fee?

Troops may charge a small dues per girl to help cover the costs of activities, patches, and supplies for the troop. Typically, parents or guardians also pay for a girl's uniform (optional), Journey books and handbooks. There may be additional costs for special programs such as field trips, events, campouts and other activities. Financial assistance is available so that every girl can benefit from the Girl Scout experience. The Girl Scout Cookie Program and fall product sale of nuts, candies and magazines are designed to allow each troop to raise the money they need to help pay for troop activities. These programs also provide girls with valuable budgeting, money-handling and goal setting skills.

Q. What is a Girl Scout troop?

A Girl Scout troop is a group of girls who meet together on a regular basis. The troop decides on the meeting place and schedule – be it once a week, every other week or once a month.

Q. Can my girl be a Girl Scout without being part of a troop?

Yes! There are many ways girls can take part in Girl Scouting. The Girl Scout program is flexible by design. Depending on their free time and interests, girls can register in a troop, individually, or as members of interest groups that explore everything from camping to careers. Once a girl joins Girl Scouts, she can participate in national events and council-sponsored programs, events, activities and camps as she chooses.

Q. Should parents/guardians register too?

YES! It's a great idea to register with your girl. Girl Scouts offers adults a genuine and powerful way to connect with their girl. The majority of Girl Scout activities require adult supervision, so when you are a registered adult member, you have the flexibility to attend too. Volunteering as a family is not only fun, it's a great way to give back to your community and be a part of something that is important to your Girl Scout.

Q. Camping is DEFINITELY NOT our thing. Can my daughter and I enjoy Girl Scouts even if we're not "outdoorsy"?

YES! Camping is just one of the activities that Girl Scouts do. While developing an appreciation for nature and the environment is a big focus of the Girl Scout program, there are many, many activities available that even the "girliest" of Girl Scouts will enjoy.

Q. If my daughter is in a troop, can she participate in council events and activities, even if her troop doesn't?

YES! Girls get to choose the way they participate in Girl Scout opportunities. Council-sponsored programs are not only open to all current members but also to non-members as a way to join.

Q. How will I know what activities are available?

Visit the website (www.gsgms.org) for the latest council calendar information and sign up for our monthly Family eNewsletter to learn all the council happenings. GSGMS also produces a program book twice a year that lists all the council events, activities and opportunities. You can also visit the GSGMS page on Facebook to find out about upcoming activities.

Q. Is it true that if a girl does not join in the fall, she has to wait until next year to join?

NO! Girls participate in Girl Scouting in many different ways and at many different times during the year. Girls can join Girl Scouts at any time during the year.

Q. Does my daughter have to have a uniform?

We are proud of our Girl Scout identity and the sense of belonging that comes from wearing a Girl Scout uniform. However, uniforms are NOT required for members to participate in Girl Scout activities. An official item (e.g. tunic, vest, or sash) is only required when Girl Scouts participate in ceremonies or officially represent the council. The tunic, vest, or sash is also used to display council and troop insignia, official pins and earned awards. It can be combined with a solid white shirt and khaki pants or skirt for a unifying look.

Q. Where do I buy the uniform pieces, and how much do they cost?

You can purchase uniform pieces through GSGMS council shops. The cost, including council insignia, pins and troop numbers, varies from \$20.50 to \$39.00 +tax, depending on the age level and whether you purchase a tunic, vest or sash.

Q. Does my Girl Scout need books?

Girl Scouts recommends having books because they were designed to enhance the experience. A lot of the information needed to participate fully is included in the books. You can purchase books through GSGMS council shops.

Q. How do I help start a Girl Scout troop or become a Girl Scout leader?

The Girl Scout organization is 99% volunteer run, and that includes most Girl Scout troops. Typically, troop volunteers are parents, guardians, grandparents, aunts and uncles of the girls in the troop. All volunteers complete a required application process with a background check for their position. They are appointed on a yearly basis. The first step is to contact GSGMS and ask to speak to a volunteer development manager or membership specialist. She will help you arrange your orientation and explain the forms that need to be filled out. You do not need any prior Girl Scout experience to be a volunteer.

Q. Can adults participate in Girl Scouts even if they don't have a daughter?

YES!

Q. Can a man volunteer to be a troop leader?

In keeping with our values of diversity and inclusiveness, every volunteer position in Girl Scouting is open to qualified adult men and women over the age of 21. Because female role models are especially important to young girls, men generally serve as co-leaders, with at least one member of the leadership team being an adult female.

Q. I don't want to be the troop leader, but I do want to help. Can I?

ABSOLUTELY! Girl Scouts could not happen without adults just like you who serve girls through the different volunteer opportunities available at our council. You'll be surprised at how flexible Girl Scouting is today. You can choose how little or how much time and energy you can give. If you have a girl in a troop, talk with your girl's adult volunteer and see what type of help she needs. Extra adults are always needed for trips and special events, as well as for Girl Scout Cookie activities. A few of the many ways you can support your Girl Scout include: suggest a fun day trip, set up a phone tree, coordinate transportation for an outing, be a guest speaker, teach girls a new skill, design a troop photo album or scrapbook, join girls on a field trip, learn first aid, become an advocate for Girl Scouting in your community. If you don't have a girl in a troop, but want to help, contact your local GSGMS service center and ask to speak with a membership specialist or volunteer development manager.

Q. How can I learn more about Girl Scouts?

To learn about Girl Scouting in our local area, visit www.gsgms.org or call your local Girl Scout service center – Jackson – 1-800-898-4475; Hattiesburg – 1-888-524-9613; Laurel – 601-425-3726; Gulfport – 1-866-764-7215; and Meridian – 1-888-693-2904. To learn about Girl Scouting from a national perspective, visit www.gsusa.org