



New Troop Leader

Guide to Success



Girl Scouts prepares girls for a lifetime of leadership, success, and adventure.

The Girl Scout Program

No matter what excited your girls, they'll find engaging and fun activities in the four areas that make up the core of the Girl Scout Program:



STEM

Computer science, engineering, robotics, outdoor STEM, and more.



outdoors

Adventure and skill building, from the backyard to the backcountry, including through camping experiences for all ages.



life skills

Civic engagement, healthy living, global citizenship, communication skills—to name a few.



entrepreneurship

The Girl Scout Cookie Program—the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world—teaches goal setting, decision making, money management, business ethics, and people skills



Table of Contents

Welcome	4
Getting Started	5
Girl Scout Levels	6
Organizational Structure	7
The Girl Scout Program	8
Keeping Girls Safe	9-10
Your Role	11
Your Troop Volunteers	12
Guiding your Troop Experience	13
Family Connections	14
The Troop Planning Meeting	15
Your First Troop Meeting	16-17
Troop Finances	18-23
Girl Scout Trainings	24
Volunteer Resources	25

The 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.

The 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.

Our Mission

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

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

Social Media Info

✉ info@gsbadgerland.org
 📷 [instagram.com/gsbadgerland](https://www.instagram.com/gsbadgerland)
 📘 [facebook.com/gsbadgerland](https://www.facebook.com/gsbadgerland)
 🐦 twitter.com/GSWIBadgerland
 ☎ 800-236-2710

Welcome to Girl Scouts

The world's premier Movement dedicated to girls.

Girl Scouts empowers girls everywhere to stand up and make a difference. By nurturing innovation and developing leadership skills, we prepare girls to overcome challenges and advocate for their ideas now and later. With an emphasis on self-discovery, character building, and community impact, Girl Scouts helps girls become a powerful force for good in the world.

Badgerland Council spans a 23-county region in south-central and southwest Wisconsin, as well as Iowa's Allamakee County and Minnesota's Houston County. Badgerland serves thousands of girls and adult volunteers, like yourself!

No matter where or how you volunteer, you'll make a difference in girls' lives. This go-to guide will prepare you to effectively lead during your first year as a Girl Scout volunteer. Need help along the way? Let us know! We have tools, training resources, and people to help support you through each step.

You're now a part of our team. We can't wait to see the impact you'll make this year!





MyGS:

Managing Your Member Experience Online

After your background check process is completed and you're approved to serve as a volunteer, you'll receive an email confirmation prompting you to log into MyGS, your Girl Scout member community, for the first time. MyGS allows you to manage your member experience online. Go to gsbadgerland.org and click 'SIGN IN' in the upper right corner of the site.

On the Troop tab in MyGS, you can see any girls and adults who have signed up for your troop and add new girls to your troop.

Next Steps

You will receive a "Welcome New Troop Leader" email with details on leader training and resources available to you as a troop leader. If you have not received the Hello email, check your junk email folder. See page 24 of this Guide for more details on required trainings.

Girl Scout Levels

DAISIES

K & 1ST

Girl Scout Daisies sparkle with that “first time ever” newness in everything they do. They go on trips, learn about nature and science and explore the arts and their communities—and so much more. Girl Scout Daisies can also earn Learning Petals and receive participation patches.

BROWNIES

2ND & 3RD

Girl Scout Brownies work together, earn badges, and explore their community. Friendship, fun, and age-appropriate activities begin at the Girl Scout Brownie meeting and move out to the community and wider world. While earning badges, they build skills, learn hobbies, and have fun!

JUNIORS

4TH & 5TH

Girl Scout Juniors are big-idea thinkers. They’re explorers at camp and product designers when they earn their Innovation and Storytelling badges, or even their Bronze Award. Every day, they wake up ready to play a new role.

CADETTES

6TH - 8TH

Girl Scout Cadettes chart their own course and let their curiosity and imagination lead the way. They learn about the power of being a good friend, gain confidence mentoring younger girls, and can earn the Silver Award.

SENIORS

9TH & 10TH

Girl Scout Seniors are ready to take the world by storm, and Girl Scouts gives them millions of ways to do it. Their experiences help to shape their world, while giving them a safe space to be themselves and explore their interests. Girl Scout Seniors can earn their Gold Award (which, by the way, adds something “extra” to college applications).

AMBASSADORS

11TH & 12TH

Girl Scout Ambassadors know that small acts create big change. While they get ready for life beyond high school, Girl Scouts helps them take flight. They also earn the Gold Award (which, by the way, adds something “extra” to college applications).

The Girl Scout Uniform



How Girl Scouts is Organized

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA)

A national organization supporting the work of more than 100 councils across the U.S. for more than 100 years. Headquartered in New York, New York.

Girl Scouts of Wisconsin - Badgerland

Independent 501(c) 3 nonprofit chartered by GSUSA operating under the direction of a local board of directors and overseeing all membership areas and troops within a given geographic area.

Service Unit (SU)

Comprised of volunteers who support the work of troop volunteers within a given geographic area. YOUR TROOP is part of a Service Unit or SU, for short. Within your SU, you will get to do community-based events including parades and camps with all the troops in your SU coming together for special activities.

Troops

This is you! Troops are Volunteer-supervised groups of girls who participate in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.



What's the Girl Scout Program?

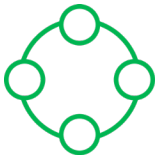
At Girl Scouts, girls have tons of fun, make new friends, and go on fantastic new adventures. Our program centers on something called the Girl Scout Leadership Experience—a collection of activities and experiences girls have as they complete Journeys, earn badges, sell cookies, go on exciting trips, explore the outdoors and do Take Action projects that make a difference.

In Girl Scouts, girls will...



Discover

Find out who they are, what they care about, and what their talents are.



Connect

Collaborate with other people, locally and globally, to make a difference in the world.



Take Action

Do something to make the world a better place.

Journeys

Identify a problem, come up with a creative solution, create a team plan to make the solution a reality, put a plan into action, and talk about what they have learned. As girls go on Journeys, they'll earn awards to put on their uniforms.

The Volunteer Toolkit and Journey books are your resources for the requirements to earning awards.

Highest Awards

Bronze. Silver. Gold. These represent the highest honors a Girl Scout can earn.

All three awards give girls the chance to do big things while working on an issue they care about. Whether they want to plant a community garden and inspire others to eat healthy for their Bronze, advocate for animal rights for their Silver, or build a career network that encourages girls to become scientists and engineers for their Gold, they'll inspire others (and you!).

Badges

Girls earn official badges by mastering a skill.

Want to make a movie, go geocaching, plant a garden? Great news! They can learn to do all these things and more while earning Girl Scout badges. Badges are worn on the front of the vest or sash.

The Volunteer Toolkit and Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting are your resources for the requirements to earning badges.

Girl Scout Patches

Think of patches like collecting memories in Girl Scouts. They're often a part of the fun activities you can do in Girl Scouts without the requirements of badges. Patches are always worn on the back of the vest or sash while badges are worn on the front.

Keeping Girls Safe

While working with girls and learning new skills is fun and rewarding, assuming responsibility for other people's children means that some level of risk management and due diligence is involved. There are several resources we use to help you minimize risk and keep girls safe.

Understanding How Many Volunteers You Need

Girl Scout groups are large enough to provide a cooperative learning environment and small enough to allow development of individual girls. Girl Scouts' volunteer-to-girl ratios show the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of girls. These supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of girls.

Your group must have at least two unrelated, approved volunteers present at all times, plus additional volunteers as necessary, depending on the size of the group and the ages and abilities of girls. Any adult that is supervising girls must be an approved volunteer. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old and must be screened before volunteering. One Troop Leader in every group must be female. Please refer to the ratio chart below.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	<i>Two</i> unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of girls:	<i>One</i> additional volunteer to each additional:	<i>Two</i> unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of girls:	<i>One</i> additional volunteer to each additional:
Girl Scout Daisies (grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12

Planning Safe Activities

When preparing for any activity with girls, start by reading the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints for that particular activity. Find these on the resources tab of the Volunteer Toolkit and in the Volunteer Resources section of gsbadgerland.org. Each Safety Activity Checkpoint lists required guidelines on where to do the activity, how to include girls with disabilities, where to find basic and specialized gear for the activity, how to prepare for the activity, and the steps to follow on the day of the activity. Safety Activity Checkpoints will note if a First Aider is required.



NOTE: If Safety Activity Checkpoints do not exist for an activity your girls want to do, contact us before making any definite plans: info@gsbadgerland.org or call 800.236.2710.

What to do in an Emergency

At the scene of an incident, safety is the first priority. Provide care for the injured person or obtain medical assistance by calling 911, and then report the emergency to Badgerland.

Make sure a general first aid kit is available at your meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity. You may need to provide the kit if one is not already available at your meeting location. You must always have on hand the names and numbers of our council office, parents/guardians and emergency services such as the police, fire department, or hospital.

Girl Scout Crisis Action Steps

- Call 911 as appropriate
- Provide care to the injured
- Assign an adult to stay with the uninjured girls
- Call parents; abide by their decisions for medical treatment. If parent is unavailable, consent to treat is implied.
- Await arrival of emergency responders; Do not disturb scene of accident/crisis.
- Notify Badgerland (contact info on this page)

Call if there's a Girl Scout Emergency

In the event of an emergency, call these Girl Scout numbers number you reach someone,

- 800-236-2710 - Badgerland Office
Call the office if the emergency is during weekday business hours
- 608-630-0595
- 608-630-3281
- 608-250-0491

COVID-19 Guidelines

As the COVID-19 pandemic is constantly evolving, we will be providing updated guidelines on our website under the “Our Council” tab. Always abide by local county guidelines. It is also a best practice to look at your school districts policies when deciding what is best for your troop. MOST IMPORTANTLY each Girl Scout family must determine what is right for them. Not all recommendations will be appropriate and comfortable for everyone; families will decide what is right for their girl. Troop Leaders will want to connect with families to understand engagement levels as activities are being planned.

Troop Meetings. The current Girl Scout suggested maximum is ten people (eight girls and two unrelated adult volunteers). However, check your local restrictions for small gatherings. If more restrictive, follow the local restrictions. If your troop is larger, you can break into smaller groups to meet. Use the helpful information in the CDC’s How to Protect Yourself & Others guide to minimize risk and exposure.

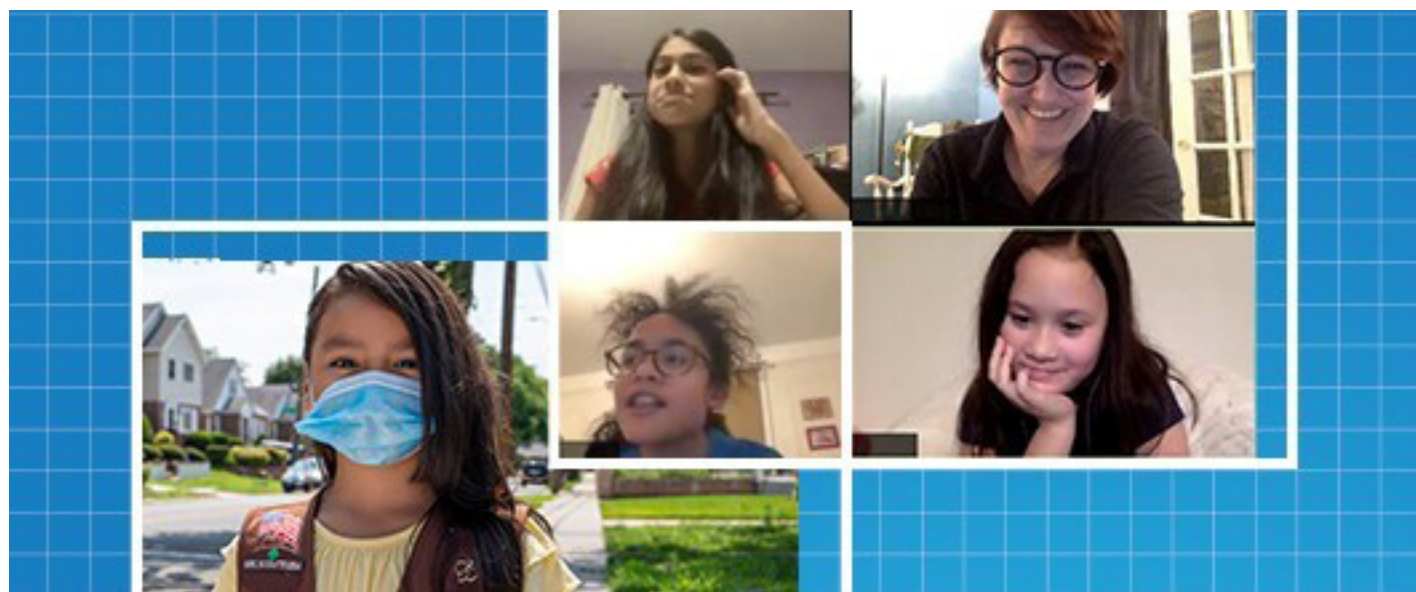
A virtual Troop Meeting is an option for larger troops and troops that prefer not to meet in person at this time.

Virtual Troop Meetings. Online meetings are a terrific alternative offering girls and troops lots of connections and benefits. Badge-earning programming and essential girl-to-girl connectivity can easily happen at Zoom meetings. Badgerland Council has Zoom accounts available for troops to purchase at a prorated cost. This information is also available on the COVID-19 section of our website, or you can contact customer care for more info.

Masks may still be required in some places due to federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance. Follow requirements posted at each location. All Badgerland Council volunteers, Girls, and staff are required to wear face masks when interacting with or leading meetings and programs where unvaccinated Girl and adult members are present.

Troop Leader Blueprint

The Troop Leader Blueprint is an online guide with specially adapted badges, Journeys, and activities for virtual and safe in-person meetings, as well as current COVID-19 guidelines and resources. This is a great place to start when planning COVID-19 safe activities for your troop year with handouts, step-by-step guides, videos, and more. Find it at gsbadgerland.org under the Volunteer tab.



YOU - A Girl Scout Leader!

Your Role

What does it mean to be a Girl Scout leader? It's the amazing journey of helping girls build courage, confidence, and character through Girl Scouts. As a leader, it's important to remember that leadership can bring many joys, including developing a personal relationship with each girl in the troop, building adult friendships through the sisterhood of Girl Scouts, receiving sincere appreciation and thanks from parents, and most importantly, knowing you are shaping the future by working with a girl today.

What does it mean to you to be a Girl Scout leader? That's something you'll discover throughout your time with the girls and adults in your troop, as well as through relationships you make with fellow volunteers and families. It's an exciting adventure!

Building relationships...

- will develop as you get to know each girl and adult troop member.
- means communicating with parents and co-leaders.
- includes understanding the needs and interests of the girls, helping them plan activities and excursions beyond the troop meeting, and guiding them as they discover new interests.

As a leader, it's important to remember that...

- you cannot know everything the girls might ever want to learn.
- you'll explore and learn things along with the girls.
- you are expected to know where to go for information and resources (this guide is a great start!). At the same time, we get it - there's lots of stuff here and you don't need to know everything about Girl Scouts to be a great leader. Get your own resources lined up and reach out to us for help.

Leadership is teaching girls...

- that they can do and be anything.
- that they are decision makers.
- not only for the sake of knowing things, but also for the sake of development and growth.
- through being a good role model.

See yourself as a coach...

- not as a teacher with a canned lesson or activity or as someone who has to perform for the girls each meeting.
- who guides and instructs.
- who advises and discusses.
- and work so each girl can carry out responsibilities within the troop.
- as the girls build their skills and ethics.
- and give more responsibilities to the girls as they grow and develop.

“Belonging” in leadership means...

- understanding you are part of a troop and a team.
- listening, providing suggestions, and contributing ideas.

New Leader Checklist

Use the list below to guide you through the process of starting your new troop.

Within the first week of receiving this checklist:

☐ **Complete New Leader Trainings**

- Go to gsbadgerland.org and login to MyGS using your email address. Click on gsLearn to see the training courses that have been assigned to you.

☐ **Connect with your Co-Leader**

- Reach out to your new Co-Leader and start discussing how you would like share the responsibilities of leading your new troop. For helpful tips regarding this discussion, check out the New Leader's Guide to Success. Want more help? Contact Badgerland at 800-236-2710 or info@gsbadgerland.org.

Within 2 weeks of receiving this checklist:

☐ **Find a location to hold your troop planning meeting and future troop meetings**

- When selecting a meeting place, try to find a location that will be free to use and easy to book month by month. Meeting rooms in libraries, churches, community centers and other municipal buildings are popular choices.

☐ **Contact all families in the troop to let them know of the meeting**

- Your troop roster can be found on gsbadgerland.org. Simply login using your email address and click on MyGS. Go to the 'Troops' tab to see the girls in your troop and their family contact info.

Within the first month of receiving this checklist:

☐ **Hold the troop planning meeting**

- Review your New Leader's Guide to Success for tips to hosting a successful troop planning meeting.

☐ **Schedule your troop meetings for the year**

- Once you have met with your troop families, find a day and time that works best for everyone and schedule your meetings for the year. Book your meeting space and communicate the dates and location with your troop families.

☐ **Open a troop bank account**

- Refer to the Finance Guide for helpful tips for setting up your account

☐ **Familiarize yourself with Volunteer Toolkit**

- Login to gsbadgerland.org and access Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) and begin planning your meetings for the year. For VTK assistance contact Badgerland at 800-236-2710

Your Troop Volunteers

On my honor, I will NOT do this alone!

Before you hold your first troop meeting with girls, consider the support and resources you'll need throughout the year. Parents, friends, family, and other members of the community can provide time, experience, and ideas to a troop, so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your volunteer troop team. This team is made up of Troop Leaders (like you) and other adult volunteers.

All of these adults must be screened and approved. They commit to these roles based on the amount of time the volunteer has to give and interest in specific areas on the team. Interested individuals should be guided to the Join or Volunteer buttons at gsbadgerland.org.

The Troop volunteers play a big role in making your troop run smoothly and in supporting the girls' plans. They're an extra set of eyes, ears and hands whose skill sets are leveraged to help the troop safely explore the world around them.

Ideally, your troop volunteers will include:

- Troop Cookie Coordinator
- Fall Product Sale Coordinator
- Troop Co-Treasurers
- One or more Chaperones and Drivers

Some Troop volunteers are not able to volunteer on a regular basis but are ready to help out when you need an extra set of hands to manage an activity station, provide a snack, lead songs, and keep the activity on track and fun. Often parents start in this role if they aren't sure they can commit to a troop volunteer or leader role. Once they see how fun it is, they may sign up for more!

As a Troop Co-leader, you will guide the structure and experiences of your troop; from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, from steering activities to setting financial expectations. These decisions will be made collaboratively with your volunteer team, as well as with input from the girls and their parents/guardians.

Troop Co-leader Responsibilities

- Liaison with volunteers and council staff
- Troop financial management
- Communication with parents
- Girl safety
- Guiding the troop's Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

Troop Volunteer Responsibilities

- Assist Troop Co-leaders
- Girl safety
- May drive girls, coordinate finances, and/or chaperone troop activities
- Provide extra help at troop meetings

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Communicate with Troop Leadership
- Provide permission and information needed for participation in activities
- Ensure current membership for their girl
- Provide transportation to and from meetings
- Complete and submit the Health History form

Girl Responsibilities

- Be ready to learn and have fun
- Use your imagination and creativity
- Always stay with the group and be safe
- Clean up after yourself
- Listen when others are speaking
- Have fun!

All Girl Scouts live by the Girl Scout Law.

NEW TROOP VOLUNTEERS GET FREE GIRL SCOUT MEMBERSHIP!

Invite all your troop adults to sign up for a free membership so they can assist you with troop outings, cookie sales, the troop bank account, chaperoning, and meetings.

They can sign-up on their own or contact Badgerland to help.

info@gsbadgerland.org | 800.236.2710

Guiding Your Troop Experience

Use these questions to talk with your fellow co-leader and troop volunteers to outline your troop's structure before discussing these topics with parents/guardians at the Troop Planning Meeting.

Let's Talk Expectations

- What do you, as a troop volunteer, want from this experience?
- What do you want for your girl to experience during the Troop year?
- What strengths do you bring to the table? (use their strengths and interests to slot into volunteer roles)

Let's Talk Details

✓ **How often, when will we meet, and for how long (length of each meeting and until what part of year)?**

✓ **Where will we meet?** Your meeting space should be somewhere safe, clean, and secure that allows all girls to participate. Some great meeting space ideas include:

- schools
- places of worship
- libraries
- community centers

✓ **Which components of the uniform will families need to purchase?**

✓ **How are we going to work with girls to decide on activities that are what they want to do, are age appropriate, and help them discover, connect, and take action?** You can utilize the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) to help you through this process by exploring options for activities and reviewing the meeting plans and resources lists.

✓ **How and how often are we going to communicate to parents/guardians?** Keep everyone in the loop to make sure they know when, where, and what the activities will be and that girls are prepared for the activity. Effective communication will help set expectations and clarify parent/guardian responsibilities

✓ **How will we fund the fun?** Will our troop charge dues, use product program proceeds, and/or charge per activity? How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? Outline a financial plan, and then fill in the details once girls determine what they want to do this year.



The secret ingredient of successful Girl Scout troops...

Family Connections

Obviously, you want the girls in your troop to have fun, be inspired, take risks, and learn about themselves and the world this year—that’s why you’re a Girl Scout troop leader! The thing is, parents and caregivers want the same thing for their girls, but getting families to pitch in and play an active role in the troop, while also enhancing the experience for their own daughter, can be tricky for many volunteers. It doesn’t have to be this way! After your troop’s initial Troop Planning Meeting (page 17), here’s how you can best keep parents and caregivers on board.

Make the ask(s)

The main reason people don’t take action is because they were never asked to in the first place. That’s why hearing one out of three Girl Scout parents say no one had communicated expectations around involvement with their girl’s troop is so troubling. Parents may have many talents, but they’re certainly not mind readers! If you’re nervous about getting turned down, don’t be. Sure, a few parents might be unable to lend a hand, but the helpers you do get will be worth their weight in gold. And just because someone wasn’t available a month or two ago doesn’t mean they won’t be free to help now. Loop back, follow up, ask again!

Make sense of “why”

Explain that not only does the whole troop benefit with extra help from parents and caregivers, but also girls feel a special sense of pride in seeing their own family member step up and take a leadership role. Getting involved can strengthen the caregiver/girl bond and is a meaningful way to show daughters they are a priority in their parents’ lives.

Make it quick and easy

Everybody’s got a full plate these days, so instead of starting parent conversations with a list of tasks or responsibilities they could take on (which can be intimidating!), ask caregivers how much time each week they might be able to dedicate to the troop, then go from there. For instance, if a troop mom or dad has 15 minutes each week to spare, they could organize and manage the calendar for troop snacks and carpools. If a grandparent has one to two hours, they could assist with leading the troop through a specific badge on a topic they’re already comfortable with. For more ways parents and other caregivers can help out when faced with a tricky schedule, check out the Family Resources tab in the Volunteer Toolkit.

Make family part of the formula

While Girl Scouts programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it’s important and helpful to open up a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting a whole crew to celebrate her accomplishments in Girl Scouting—whether at a holiday open house, a bridging ceremony, or a fun “reverse meeting” where girls take the role of leaders and guide the adults, including caregivers, through an activity—will help parents better understand the value of Girl Scouts and be more likely to invest their time and talents with the troop. That said, there’s no need to wait for one of these special events to engage parents in their girls’ Girl Scout lives. Keep communication lines open throughout the year—whether it’s through your troop’s social media page, personal emails, or in-person chats—to keep parents in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting, and encourage them to let their daughters “be the expert” at home, such as explaining or teaching a new skill she’s learned to the rest of the family.

Girl Scouts is designed to be girl-led. Talk to the girls about what they’d like to get out of Girl Scouts this year and make sure you’re having fun, too!

The Troop Planning Meeting

Kick the year off right by engaging ALL troop parents.

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls when families step up and play an active part in the troop.

The Troop Planning Meeting is the first meeting to start each troop year—whether you are a new or returning troop. *It's valuable for all troops.*

Why? Because it helps:

- parents and leaders identify ways they will work as a team to support the troop
- parents and leaders agree on what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually
- fill key troop volunteer positions—you never know which parent will make an awesome Chaperone/Driver, Troop Cookie Coordinator, etc.
- parents know how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events, schedule changes, etc.
- parents learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics

Troop Parent Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Co-leaders introduce themselves and any other troop volunteers. Invite all parents to make an introduction and name of their girl along with what their hopes are for their daughter's Girl Scout year.

2. Ask for Help

Explain the volunteer roles available: chaperone/driver, troop cookie coordinator, fall product sale coordinator and treasurer. Requirements to volunteer: agree to become a Girl Scout member and complete a background check. FACT: The more involved parents get in the troop, the greater the experience is for all the girls (and grown-ups).

3. Get the Girls Registered

Make sure all your Girl Scouts have a membership (not sure? ask us). Set up a laptop where adults can register their daughters on the spot if they haven't already. Problems registering? We're here to help: 800-236-2710.

4. Health Histories

Have parents complete their girl's health history form. If you need more, the form is available to print on our website. Continuing troops should have parents review and update these forms annually.

5. Troop Year Schedule

Present a calendar outlining your troop's year including when and where to meet along with any badges (petals), patches or activities you are planning. Be open to flexibility around the activities since you'll need help.

6. Troop Communications

Explain how you will keep in touch between meetings. Volunteer Toolkit is one option since it has troop emails pre-loaded. Other ideas: a private Facebook page or Shutterfly account, texts, phone trees, printed newsletters.

7. Uniforms and More

Tell parents about the uniform components she will need and other program pieces you may want them to provide. Alert parents to My Girl Scout Kits, great for new and bridging girls, and available in all Badgerland's shops.

8. Financial Assistance

Assistance is available to families meeting the National School Lunch criteria. Aid is available for membership fees, uniforms and program attendance. Tell families to complete the form on our website or to call us: 800-236-2710.

9. Permission Forms

Parents will be required to complete Girl Scout Permission Forms for activities outside normal meeting times. The form is available to print on our website

10. Badgerland Fall Fundraiser and Girl Scout Cookie Program

Explain that both events are fundraisers for the troop and will pay for outings and activities and, next year, could pay girl membership fees. Give them the dates for these sales now! If you don't have one already, now is the time to emphasize the importance of having a troop cookie coordinator.

Let's Go - Your First Troop Meeting!

The first troop meeting is always exciting! It is really where you will see the adventure of being a Girl Scout Troop Co-leader start to unfold. Remember to have fun! As you help the girls on their journey to discover, connect and take action in the world around them, those experiences will be a part of your Girl Scout journey too. Enjoy it!

Your first troop meeting is a great chance to:

- Get to know the girls!
- Brainstorm all of the exciting things the girls want to do this year.
- Introduce girls to Girl Scout traditions.
- Introduce the whole troop volunteer team to the girls and their parents/guardians.

If you are feeling a little nervous about leading troop meetings and experiences with your girls – that's ok! Working directly with girls can be challenging at times but it is always rewarding and can be a lot of fun. As a Girl Scout Troop Co-leader you are encouraged to listen to the girls with an open-mind and lead them with your heart.

Many adults feel that, when working with kids, they have to be the expert and have everything perfect. But this is not the case in Girl Scouts. When preparing for your first (or any) troop meeting, keep these things in mind:

- **It doesn't need to be perfect.** There are lots of resources with information and guidance to help you facilitate great troop meetings and experiences but you are encouraged to be creative. And, if you forget a part of the troop meeting or the field trip doesn't go the way you planned or you run out of time – that's ok! The girls aren't expecting perfection from you; your time, attention and guidance are the best part of your leadership.
- **Learn with your girls!** As you use the girl-led process in the development of your troop's meetings and experiences, the girls will, at some point, want to earn a badge or complete a project in a subject unfamiliar to you. Be open with the girls when you don't know something but don't use that as a reason to keep them from exploring the topic or doing the project. Instead, become their partner in figuring out how to learn more. When they see you learning alongside them, their confidence in their current knowledge and skills as well as their ability to learn will rise. It will also help them to understand that learning is a lifelong process.

First Meeting Preparation Checklist

Cover the basics. Review the details about when and where the meeting will take place and that all the parents know that information. You might find it helpful to visit the location beforehand.

Get ready. Use the Volunteer Toolkit to verify your troop roster and email your parents. This might be a great time to ask parents to provide you with any needed items, such as health history forms, uniform order forms, or troop dues.

Know the agenda. Use the "Six Elements of a Troop Meeting" on the next page and the Volunteer Toolkit meeting agenda to customize your meeting plan.

Review and practice your agenda. This will help you feel calmer and be more flexible during the actual meeting.

Expect to have fun! When the girls and parents see that you are prepared for the meeting and ready to have a great time, they'll follow your lead!

6 Elements of a Great Troop Meeting

Most important - your meetings should be fun! Girls come to Girl Scouts to learn how to be leaders, make decisions, and have fun in the activities they choose.

1. Opening Activity—Plan activities for girls as they arrive at the meeting so they have something to do until the meeting begins. It could be as simple as coloring pages, journaling, or talking with each other. (5 minutes)

2. Opening—Each troop decides how to open their meeting—most begin with the Girl Scout Promise and Law, a simple flag ceremony, song, game, story, or other activity designed by the girls. (5-10 minutes)

3. Business—Announcement and updates, make group decisions, reinforce troop norms and appropriate behavior that reflect the Girl Scout Promise and Law (5 minutes)

4. Activities—Use the meeting plans found in the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK). Activities are already designed to fit easily into this part of your meeting as you help your troop earn badges and complete Journeys. (30-45 minutes)

5. Clean Up—Girl Scouts should always leave a place cleaner than they found it! (5 minutes)

6. Closing—Just like the opening, each troop can decide how to close. Badgerland recommends the “Friendship Circle” (a Girl Scout tradition) be part of your closing. (5-10 minutes)



What You Need to Know About Troop Finances

Financial Assistance — Girl Scouts is open to all girls and adults regardless of their ability to pay. To encourage participation, Girl Scouts of Wisconsin–Badgerland Council has budgeted money to help girls and adults who need financial assistance.

Girl members may apply for Financial Assistance for membership dues, uniforms, Girl's Guides, Journey books, summer camps and Badgerland council-sponsored activities and programs. Adult members may also apply for membership dues. Financial Assistance is approved on a case-by-case basis. Contact Customer Care for information or assistance: info@gsbadgerland.org or 800.236.2710.

Troops should budget for renewing membership dues, event registrations, uniforms and supplies. Troop co-leaders should work with girls to create a budget for troop activities and ensures the financial burden on families not be prohibitive, understanding all families' abilities to contribute financially will vary. Girls are strongly encouraged to earn all or part of their way to summer camp through council-sponsored product sales.

Tax Exemption — As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, volunteers can use the tax exempt form when purchasing supplies and materials for Girl Scout troop use—this will add up to tremendous savings for your troop! The form is in your New Leader Packet and also available to print from our website.

Funding the Fun

Girl Scout troops are financed by monies earned through council-sponsored product sales (the Girl Scout Cookie Program in the spring and the Badgerland Fall Fundraiser in October), through council-approved fundraising, and any dues your troop may charge. Girls have some big ideas about what they want to do in Girls Scouts – and as a Troop Co-leader, you will guide them on how to plan and budget for those ideas. How do you do this?

Money-earning Activities — The Fall Product and Cookie programs are the primary money-earning activities for a troop. You will learn all about these programs in a separate training when the time is right. Daises and Brownies may only participate in the council-sponsored product sales.

Troop Dues — Troop dues are for troop program activities and supplies. The amount of dues and frequency of payment should be determined by the girls, their families and the troop volunteers, and should reflect the troop's plans for the year, as well as the families' ability to pay. Consideration should be given to: product sales earnings, parents' financial situations and what activities the girls want to do.

Younger girl dues average \$.25-.50 per meeting and older girl dues may average \$1.50-\$2.00 per month. The troop and/or parents should decide whether these dues are collected at each meeting or if they will be paid in lump sums during the year. Troop dues are generally a first-year cost for new troops to establish a financial base for the troop. After the troop participates in the council-sponsored product sales, dues are not usually necessary.

Raising Additional Funds — Troops should budget for their activities based on the amount raised through council-sponsored product sales. IF an older-girl troop need to raise additional troop funds for a Take Action project or travel opportunity, troops must comply with Badgerland Council's fundraising guidelines as well as submit a completed Fundraising Application form that is available on our website.

Community Support — Community members, parents and sponsors can help ensure that all girls in the community have an opportunity to participate in Girl Scouting. Parents, community organizations, businesses, religious organizations and individuals maybe donors or sponsor, and may provide group meeting places, monetary donations, volunteer their time, offer in-kind donations, provide activity materials or loan equipment. For information on working with a sponsor or processing a donation, contact Badgerland Council and a staff member can give you guidance on any council policies or practices that must be followed.

Managing Your Troop's Funds

Remember, Girl Scout funds are girl-earned and girl-spent. How the funds are used is a decision made by the entire troop, not just the leaders, parents, or a few select girls from the troop. It is also important to know that troop funds belong to the entire troop and cannot be earmarked for individual girl use. Funds can be used to purchase badges and patches, Journey and Guide books, uniform components, pay for celebrations and ceremonies, community service projects, field trips, and more. Let the girls come up with some ideas and then have the troop vote.

As the girls begin to spend their troop's funds, you or the volunteer responsible for the troop finances has a responsibility to keep track of the receipts and expenses. Once a year, each troop must submit a Financial Report. This report details all troop income and expenses. Copies or originals of bank statements and receipts will be submitted, so be sure to save them throughout the year. Girl Scout Troop Co-leaders should report out to troop parents about finances at least three times per year.

Budgeting

Budgeting is a great way to facilitate girl-led financial planning. It's great for girls to have opportunities like the product sales to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals as part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. As a volunteer, try to help girls balance the money-earning they do with the opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on spending and earning money. Take Action projects, for example, may not always require girls to spend a lot of money.

If you're not sure where to start, check out the online badge explorer. The financial literacy badges have age-appropriate activities for learning about money and the cookie business badges also involve finances and goal setting around the cookie sale. Each level has these badges and they can be a great starting point for your troop planning.

Basic Budgeting Steps

- Brainstorm what the troop wants to do for the year, keeping in mind that troop funds must cover all needed activities and events.
 - What does the troop want to do?
 - What will cost money?
- Discuss what things the troop will need money for.
 - Membership Renewal
 - Pins, patches, badges & recognitions
 - Take Action projects
 - Activities
 - Field Trips
 - Ceremonies
- Estimate costs and compute a grand total.
- Discuss low-cost activities and ways to make the total smaller.
 - What can the troop do that will not cost money?
 - What can the troop do to save money or cut costs?
 - Where will the money come from?
 - Where will it be spent?
 - Will the troop have any funds carried over from last year?
- Set goals for council-sponsored product sales.
 - What did we sell last year?
 - What can we sell this year?
- Decide if the troop will collect dues to help supplement product sales profits, and if so, how much they will be and how often they will be collected.
- Reassess to see if your planned product sales and dues will cover the budget for the year.
 - Is there a big trip planned that will need a couple of years to save towards?
 - Does the troop need to do additional fundraising?

Opening a Troop Bank Account

As Troop Co-leader, you and one more approved volunteer should establish a bank account for collection of troop dues (optional), payment of troop supplies and activities and product sales revenue (Badgerland Fall Fundraiser & Cookie Program).

Find a Bank

Locate a bank in the community where you would like to do business. Items to consider include:

- Does the bank offer free checking? -No minimum balances. No service fees.
- Have other volunteers had a good experience with the bank?
- Can you get a debit card and checkbook?

If the bank you chose is unable to provide the services that are required of a Girl Scout account, you should consider a different bank.

Opening & Establishing an Account

You will need to establish a checking account for your new troop. Please consider these procedures when working with a troop account:

- Before opening a troop account, you need two background checked and registered signers.
- All receipts for troop purchases, including food and meeting supplies, should be kept for your records and annual financial reports.
- The checkbook should be held by one volunteer and the bank statements and debit card held by another. This allows both co-leaders flexibility when they need to purchase supplies, etc. for the troop. By using this method, both co-leaders should participate in balancing the account monthly.
- Under no circumstances should troop money be deposited into a personal bank account.
- Only Girl Scout income and expenses should be run through the troop checking account.
- Cash withdrawals are not recommended but if necessary, must be supported with receipts showing how the money was spent.
- No co-leader should ever reimburse themselves if they have made a purchase for the troop out of their personal funds. In the event that a co-leader needs to be reimbursed personally for a purchase, the second signer on the account must verify the receipts are on file, and can reimburse the co-leader.
- All cash and checks should be deposited within 24 hours of receipt.



Who are the Signers on the Account?

Each bank account must have a minimum of two signers. The signers **MUST** be non-related, background checked and registered volunteers of that troop or service unit. You do not need both signers to endorse every check that is written or deposited. Any adult handling troop money, checks or debit card must be a registered and background-checked member. All receipts for debit card transactions **MUST** be kept with bank statements and reconciled with the troop checkbook each month. This information will be required for your annual Troop Finance Report. It is important to remember that all volunteers listed on troop bank accounts are ultimately responsible for troop finances. Misuse of Girl Scout funds is a serious offense and will be treated as such, including but not limited to termination as a Girl Scout volunteer and criminal prosecution.

Consider these when working with a troop account:

- DO NOT print your name, address, school or Service Unit information on your checks or debit cards.
- DO have monthly statements mailed to your address and not to the Girl Scout Council. All statements need to be sent to one of the Troop Co-Leaders or Troop Treasurer for use when completing the annual Troop Finance Report.
- Order a debit card for the account, as debit cards are needed for online registration for activities, trainings and membership renewal.

Within 30 days of opening the account one signer should complete the Troop Bank Account Record and return it to Badgerland Council.

What to Know and Bring to the Bank

You may want to bring this portion of the guide with you as it contains the Badgerland Council Federal ID# and guidelines on how to set up your account. You DO NOT need to fill out an IRS W9 Form since the account is tax exempt. Some procedures may vary from one financial institution to another. Contact your specific financial institution for their requirements. If you need additional information, please contact Badgerland Council.

Your personal identification will be required. Please take your driver's license and Social Security card. The account will be listed under the council's Federal Tax ID number, but most institutions require your Social Security Number for identification purposes. **You will likely need a bank authorization letter to open a new bank account or change signers on an existing account. Please contact Badgerland Council for this document.**

Use this number when opening a Troop Account:

Council Federal ID #: 39-0806331

Troop bank accounts and checks MUST be titled:

Girl Scouts of Wisconsin -
Badgerland Council, Inc.
Troop # xxxx

Submitting Your Troop Finance Report

The Troop Finance Report is due to Badgerland Council annually, usually in the summer. Troop Finance Reports should be submitted electronically through the Volunteer Toolkit > Finance tab. To complete your TFR you'll need your checkbook registrar or list of expenses and incomes as well as bank statements from the past 12 months. Failure to turn in this information will result in an audit.

Troop Finance Tools & Tricks

- **Girl Scout Finance File Management**–You will need 12 months of bank statements for your Troop Finance Report, so save them when you receive them as an electronic copy. Designate a separate folder in your email in which to save your bank statements. Purchase receipts, deposit receipts and troop checks should be stored in a tote or box designated for troop finances.
- **Debit Card**–Obtain a debit card for you troop account to reduce the need to use your personal card for credit card purchases and online registrations. Your bank should provide one, but if they do not, or they charge to obtain or use it, consider a different financial institution that will provide your troop a debit card free of charge.
- **Tax Exempt Cards**–Use Badgerland’s Tax Exempt form, available on the website, to obtain tax-exempt cards at all stores you buy troop items from. Only troop supplies, not personal items, can be purchased using the Badgerland Council’s tax exempt number.
- **Receipt Book**–Get one with carbon copies and provide receipt slips for any money received. Receipt books can be purchased at any store selling office supplies. During product sales, co-leaders are provided product sale receipt books. Girls can be taught to fill these out, too.
- **Deposit Slips**–Use these as a learning opportunity to teach girls to work with partners or groups to count the funds and fill out the deposit slips for you.
- **Check-Off Troop Roster Sheets**–Have lists of troop members’ names to easily track when they pay dues and other financial matters. Keep in a handy place that you can quickly reference at any meeting.
- **Dues Container**–Keep the troop dues dollars in one safe place that’s easy to pass and transport. Hint: an empty Parmesan cheese can works well.
- **Safety**–Maintain vigilance to protect the personal safety of each girl when handling money. Make arrangements to safeguard money. Observe local ordinances in relation to the involvement of children in money-earning activities.

Troop Finance FAQs

Q. What documents do I need to present to open an account or change signers on an account?

One document you may need is an Authorized Bank letter, which can be obtained by request from your Leadership Development Specialist. The letter authorizes the bank to open a new not for profit troop account. However, some financial institutions may require other forms. It is a good idea to call ahead to the bank as to what documentation they require before you arrive.

Q. What do I need to return to Badgerland Council?

A completed Troop Bank Account Record form as well as avoided check and/or savings deposit ticket should be completed and turned into Badgerland Council within 30 days of opening a new account or changing signers on an existing account.

Q. The bank wants to put my Social Security Number on the account. What should I do?

The bank requires a taxpayer identification number to open an account. Because this is a troop and NOT a personal account, the taxpayer ID number will be the Council's Federal Tax ID number: 39-0806331. DO NOT put your Social Security Number on the bank account. Some banks may ask you for your Social Security Number for identification purposes, but it should not be put on the account. If the bank you chose is unable to set up the account according to our guide then you will need to choose one that can.

Q. Who will be responsible for any costs that may be involved in opening a new account?

There may be costs in opening your account due to the purchase of new checks or a minimum opening balance. It is our recommendation that any costs associated with opening a new account be included in your troop budgeting process and the troop dues you determine. If you have to cover the opening balance on the account out-of-pocket, be sure to document the amount and payment to later reimburse the person who paid it. If one co-leader is putting the deposit in, the other signatory on the account must make out the reimbursement check to comply with checks and balances. New troops will receive start-up funds and should use those to open the account and order checks.

Q. Can we use a debit card instead of checks?

Yes, you can use a debit card. We recommend that each troop has a debit card in order to process registrations online. As with all transactions, be sure you keep receipts for your debit card transactions, as this information will be asked for on your Troop Finance Report.

Notice: ALL DEBTS incurred in the name of Girl Scouts of Wisconsin-Badgerland Council are the responsibility of the adult who incurs them. Any adult volunteer may be removed from their volunteer positions in Badgerland Council if she/he has knowingly written a personal or troop check with insufficient funds (NSF) or on a closed account to Badgerland Council or to anyone else on behalf of a Girl Scout troop. Any volunteer with a past due account, who has used funds for personal or inappropriate reasons, and/or has uncollected non-sufficient funded checks will not be allowed to hold any volunteer position in which that individual is responsible for handling funds. After such debts are cleared, reappointment is at the discretion of the council. Any volunteer assuming responsibility or oversight of any Girl Scout monies within Badgerland Council is accountable to Badgerland Council for those funds. Any adult handling money must be a registered member of Girl Scouts of Wisconsin-Badgerland Council and have a current background check on file.

Girl Scout Trainings

Simple to do and easy to access. Connect with other Girl Scout volunteers.

Required Training for Badgerland Troop Co-leaders

Successful Leader Learning Series

All new troop co-leaders must complete the online training called Successful Leader Learning Series. It is accessible on gsLearn. Access gsLearn through your MyGS account.

Highly Recommended

iConnect Forums

Things are happier when we work together and are having fun. That's the foundation of our monthly leader/family meetings at Badgerland. Find the next iConnect Zoom meeting or read the latest newsletter at gsbadgerland.org/activities/iConnect

Required Trainings to Take Girls Camping or Traveling

Troop Overnight Certification 1 (TOC 1)

Home-study course. Required for overnights with your Girl Scouts at a property with indoor plumbing and electricity. Complete and submit the Course Completion in the home-study packet to earn certification.

Troop Overnight Certification 2 (TOC 2)

Home-study course. Required for overnights with your Girl Scouts at a property with primitive conditions such as no indoor plumbing or electricity. Complete and submit the test questions at the end of the home-study packet to earn certification. NOTE: Occasionally, TOC 2 is offered in-person.

Traveling Troops Guide

Use when planning any Girl Scout travel that will last 3 nights or longer. Find the Traveling Troops guide online at gsbadgerland.org

Highest Awards Trainings

For volunteers whose Girl Scouts are planning to earn the Bronze, Silver and Gold awards. Check our website for trainings to help you guide girls to earning these awards.

Volunteer Enrichment

Check the activities calendar at gsbadgerland.org for monthly virtual volunteer/adult enrichment events.

Where We're Located and How to Connect

Visit Service Centers & Shops

Each Service Center is staffed with Girl Scout professionals who can answer your GS questions and provide valuable resources. Additionally, all the offices are home to Girl Scout Shops where you can shop for GS uniforms, badges and tons of GS merch your girls will love.

We're Here to Help

Contact Badgerland Girl Scouts:

Call: 800.236.2710

Email: info@gsbadgerland.org

Madison

4801 S Biltmore Lane
Madison, WI 53718

La Crosse

2710 Quarry Road
La Crosse, WI 54601

Janesville

3000 Milton Avenue
Suite 113
Janesville, WI 53545

Girl Scout Volunteer Resources

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) is your official source for delivering easy, fun troop meetings year-round! This fully customizable digital planning tool provides you with Girl Scout program content, award requirements, and other resources, so you can keep your Girl Scout year running smoothly. Accessible on any computer, tablet, or mobile device, the Volunteer Toolkit lets troop leaders:

- Explore meeting topics and program activities with their girls
- Print step-by-step activity guides and shopping lists
- View, edit and update the troop roster and contact information
- Manage girl attendance and track achievements
- Message and share troop meeting activities with troop families
- Add local events their girls choose
- Renew members

**VTK is your #1
Resource as a
Troop Leader!**

Learn more and access the VTK at gsbadgerland.org.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

These are online lists containing everything you need to know to be prepared and keep your girls safe during a range of activities outside of the normal Girl Scout troop meeting. Safety Activity Checkpoints can be found at gsbadgerland.org in the Volunteer Resources section.

Volunteer Essentials

With key information, policies, and procedures that support the safe and consistent delivery of Girl Scout programming to girls across the council, Volunteer Essentials is just that—essential. By agreeing to be a Girl Scout volunteer, you agree to follow the items outlined in this resource. Volunteer Essentials is updated annually, and the newest version can always be found on our website. Find it in the Volunteer tab at gsbadgerland.org.

gsLearn

This online learning series will give all the info you need to get started as a troop leader. Access it by signing on at gsbadgerland.org. You will find the Successful Leader Learning Series at gsLearn.

Badgerland Social Media

Stay connected and see what other troops are up to - connect with Badgerland on social channels. Nearly every day we post photos and stories about Badgerland troops and Girl Scouts. We also use social media to share timely information including pop-up programs for girls around Badgerland.

Badgerland Customer Care

Serving our volunteers is a top priority. Reach out anytime by either clicking on the “Contact Us” form at gsbadgerland.org or connect with the team weekdays, 9-5: info@gsbadgerland.org or call 800.236.2710. Messages sent over the weekend will be addressed within 24 hours of regular business hours.

Badgerland News & Updates

Watch your email for monthly newsletters with important information for leaders and families. If you are not receiving newsletters, let us know. You can also access all the newsletters in the “News Room” tab at gsbadgerland.org.

Sashay!

Sashay Madison: 4801 S Biltmore Ln | Sashay La Crosse: 2710 Quarry Rd
Sashay Janesville: 3000 Milton Ave

Your first stop for Girl Scout uniforms, badges, patches, and apparel.

Madison & La Crosse Sashay! Shopping Hours

Tuesdays and Thursdays noon-6 / First Saturdays 9-2

{Janesville by appointment for now}

Curbside Pickup and Shipping Options



www.gsbadgerland.org
800.236.2710
info@gsbadgerland.org