

A great way to practice leadership—plus, it opens the path to earn the Gold Award



# Volunteer's Guide to the Volunteer in Training Award\*

Find tips and ideas to help guide Girl Scouts through this award program.

**Facilitator Overview:** This guide will help you support Senior and Ambassador Girl Scouts in earning the Volunteer in Training award. You may be supporting just one Girl Scout, a few, or a larger group—adjust your delivery and language accordingly.

Much of the work of this award will take place outside of your direct supervision, but you still play an essential role! You'll assist by:

- Helping Girl Scouts find a younger troop or other youth group to work with; facilitating introductions; working with caregivers or guiding Girl Scouts to do so, to arrange logistics such as transportation, supplies, etc.
- Preparing Girl Scouts to perform activities on their own, without your active participation
- Setting up the award framework and making sure Girl Scouts have the information and tools they need. This may include:
  - Facilitating an initial review of each step alongside the **Volunteer in Training Plan** so Girl Scouts have an idea of what to expect; asking whether Girl Scouts have any questions or need clarification
  - Reminding Girl Scouts to review the **Volunteer in Training Plan** for helpful guidance and prompts prior to each step, while emphasizing that you're always available for guidance and/or support
  - Asking Girl Scouts to identify how they'll be stretching (trying new things, taking on a new role?) through this award. Where do they feel confident? Where do they feel uncomfortable? Are there any areas where they feel they need or would like help?
  - Checking in after each step to see how things are going and to provide any needed support, and reminding Girl Scouts to fill out the relevant parts of the **Volunteer in Training Plan**
  - Guiding Girl Scouts to reflect on their experience, their personal growth, and their thoughts on leadership once all steps are complete

Overall, prioritize making yourself available throughout the process for mentoring and advising. Some Girl Scouts will be able to manage most of the award steps independently, but others may need more support. Meet Girl Scouts where they are and provide assistance as needed, but encourage them to take the lead whenever possible.

Before any award work begins, encourage your Girl Scout to talk with the younger group's leader to make sure they understand the purpose of the Volunteer in Training award. Encourage them to give a copy of the award overview to the leader so they know what to expect.

Next, guide a discussion with Girl Scouts about the importance of leading others. Have them think about the leaders in their lives, like teachers, coaches, or yourself. Ask questions such as:

- What do you notice or admire about these leaders?
- What differences in leadership styles do you see?
- What methods would you like to adopt, and what would you do differently?
- How do you think leaders make a difference?

Below you'll find high-level summaries of each step's purpose, followed by ways for the facilitator to support each activity. (See the Girl Scout-facing award overview for activity details.) This guidance isn't meant to be comprehensive—you may find that other help is needed—but it addresses some of the most common issues you may encounter. Use these suggestions as needed to help Girl Scouts understand and prepare for their role, every step of the way.

## Step 1: Explore how you'd like to lead

Girl Scouts get to know the group they'll be working with, think about meeting organization techniques, and consider what kind of leader they want to be.

**To Do** (and how you might help):

1. **Get to know the GSLE.** Have Girl Scouts review the GSLE material in the award overview; they can also

\*Detailed choice activities, meeting tools, and additional resources and materials can be found within the Volunteer Toolkit on [my.girlscouts.org](https://my.girlscouts.org).

read about the [Girl Scout Leadership Experience](#) online for a more comprehensive understanding.

2. **Talk to the group's leader before the meeting.** Guide Girl Scouts in setting up this conversation, if needed. Have them review the award overview and the **Volunteer in Training Plan** ahead of time to get ideas for what they might ask.
3. **Observe the group.** Help Girl Scouts brainstorm what they should look for in terms of group dynamics and function.

## Step 2: Lead an activity

Girl Scouts choose an activity they think will be fun for the younger group, make the needed preparations, and then use their leadership skills to do it, working within the framework of the GSLE.

**To Do** (and how you might help):

1. **Develop two different activity ideas.** Help Girl Scouts brainstorm activities, if needed.
2. **Share your ideas with the group's leader.** Help Girl Scouts set up a conversation or meeting with the younger group's leader, if needed. Prepare them to accept feedback gracefully and with an open mind, emphasizing that making tweaks is normal!
3. **Practice and lead your activity.** Offer the opportunity for Girl Scouts to practice their activity ahead of time with your group, if possible and practical. Remind them to keep the GSLE principles in mind when directing a group. Discuss the upcoming meeting and make sure Girl Scouts feel comfortable and confident. If they don't, talk it through with them. Remind them that success isn't about being perfect; it's about helping everyone feel like they belong. They've got this!

## Step 3: Lead your first meeting

Girl Scouts plan and lead a full meeting, focusing on guiding the group to learn new skills through hands-on participation (learning by doing).

**To Do** (and how you might help):

1. **Create your meeting plan.** Have Girl Scouts refer to the **Volunteer in Training Plan** for the meeting plan framework and tips. Remember that Girl Scouts may vary in their planning experience and abilities. Help as needed, but encourage Girl Scouts to take as much initiative as possible.
2. **Prepare for your meeting.** Offer yourself as a source of information, tips, and tricks for leading a great

Girl Scout meeting—after all, you've done it many times!

3. **Lead your meeting.** Check in with Girl Scouts before the meeting to make sure they feel prepared and confident. If they don't, provide whatever support they need.

## Step 4: Reflect and prepare

Girl Scouts draw on their experience from the last three meetings as they prepare to lead their own full meeting.

**To Do** (and how you might help):

1. **Reflect on your experience.** Encourage Girl Scouts to journal or practice other forms of active reflection as they consider their first two meetings. Have their ideas about leadership changed? How can they target their group better, now that they've gotten to know everyone?
2. **Create your meeting plan and prepare.** Have Girl Scouts refer to the **Volunteer in Training Plan** for the meeting plan framework and tips. Help as needed, but encourage Girl Scouts to do as much of the work as possible. Remind them to intentionally incorporate the GSLE principles as they make their plans.

## Step 5: Lead your second meeting

Girl Scouts lead a second full meeting, focusing primarily on keeping the meeting girl-led but also on applying the GSLE more broadly.

**To Do** (and how you might help):

1. **Lead the meeting.** Check in with Girl Scouts before the meeting to make sure they feel prepared and confident. If they don't, provide whatever support they need.
2. **Reflect as a group.** Have Girl Scouts refer to the **Volunteer in Training Plan** for ideas for leading group reflections. Prepare them to accept feedback gracefully and with an open mind. Remind them to end the session on a positive note—EVERYONE did great work, and now it's time to celebrate!

### Award Overview: Reflect and grow

After all steps are complete, guide Girl Scouts to think about their Volunteer in Training experience as a whole and ask themselves how they've grown as a leader. Use the questions in the award guide to facilitate this conversation. Girl Scouts receive the Volunteer in Training award once the award overview process is complete.

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