

Girl Scout Leadership Development Program Frequently Asked Questions

Girl Scouts of the USA adopted an updated mission statement at our National Council Session in 2005: *Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.*

To fulfill this mission and our commitment to girls, we are renewing the Girl Scout experience by making it compelling, relevant and impact-driven for 21st-century girls. Thousands of members around the country have contributed ideas and perspectives, culminating in decisions by the National Board of Directors in August 2006.

Girl Scouts of the USA will phase in some exciting program changes beginning fall of 2008. With changes, come questions! Here are answers to some of the most Frequently Asked Questions.

Frequently Asked Questions and Suggested Responses

1. What is the Girl Scout philosophy of leadership?

The Girl Scout philosophy of leadership is for girls to become leaders they need to:

- Understand their values, and use their knowledge and skills to explore their world (Discover)
- Care about, inspire and team with others locally and globally (Connect)
- Act to make the world a better place (Take Action)

Discover, Connect and Take Action are the three Girl Scout keys to leadership.

2. What is the Girl Scout Leadership Development Model?

The leadership model is the new design for what girls do in Girl Scouting and how adult support can strengthen their experiences. It is the road map for determining what a girl will learn and how she will be impacted.

3. What are the elements of the leadership model?

The elements of the leadership model are *activities, processes, short-term and intermediate outcomes, and long-term outcomes.*

Activities

Program activities are organized around the Girl Scout three keys to leadership and are based on the values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

Discover activities engage girls in exploring their values, skills and world.

Connect activities engage girls in teaming up and relating with others in a multicultural world.



Take Action activities engage girls in making a difference in the world.

Processes

The processes of *girl-driven*, *learning by doing* and *cooperative learning* are integrated into the activities (what girls do). The processes (how girls do it) create an environment of fun and friendship for girls, determine the quality of the experience and make Girl Scouting unique, thus further enabling the development of leadership skills.

Short-term and Intermediate Outcomes

Discover, Connect and Take Action Outcomes represent short-term and intermediate *benefits to girls* as a result of their participation in the Girl Scout Leadership Development Program. All activities are tied to short-term and intermediate outcomes.

Discover Outcomes

- Girls develop a strong sense of self
- Girls develop positive values
- Girls gain practical life skills
- Girls seek challenges in the world
- Girls develop critical thinking

Connect Outcomes

- Girls develop healthy relationships
- Girls promote cooperation and team building
- Girls can resolve conflicts
- Girls advance diversity in a multicultural world
- Girls feel connected to their communities, locally and globally

Take Action Outcomes

- Girls can identify community needs
- Girls are resourceful problem solvers
- Girls advocate for themselves and others, locally and globally
- Girls educate and inspire others to act
- Girls feel empowered to make a difference in the world

Long-term Outcomes

Over time, the measurable short-term and intermediate outcomes will set girls on a life-long path to...

lead with *courage* when they speak out on issues they care about and take active roles in their communities;

lead with *confidence* when they make the most of their strengths and feel empowered to make a difference in their lives and beyond;

lead with *character* when they act with integrity and compassion, making decisions that promote the well-being of themselves and others;

...as they continue to *make the world a better place*.



4. Why is the Girl Scout Leadership Development Model so important?

The leadership model ensures that everyone speaks in one, powerful, national voice about the benefits of Girl Scouts to girls: leadership development. It provides the design for what girls do in Girl Scouting, illustrates how adult support strengthens girls' experiences, and defines and displays all of the elements that must be in place to positively impact girls' lives.

5. What is the Girl Scout Leadership Development Program?

Since the leadership model defines and displays all of the elements that must be in place to positively impact girls' lives, the Girl Scout Leadership Development Program, then, is the model in action.

6. How will the changes impact the volunteer experience?

Over the next several years, Girl Scouts of the USA will strive to improve the volunteer experience by:

- Making it easier for busy volunteers to join, stay involved and serve in flexible ways.
- Providing user-friendly new materials, resources and training that make it easier for volunteers to deliver a fun and impact-driven Girl Scout experience.
- Helping volunteers to better see (and show others) the difference they are making in girls' lives.

7. Why is Girl Scouts of the USA changing now?

Since 1912, Girl Scouts has risen to the challenge of meeting the unique needs of each generation of girls. Girls today are asking for compelling, relevant and impact-driven experiences. This change is part of the next-steps in the Core Business Strategy as expected since 2004. Imagining the power of the Girl Scout Movement speaking in one, consistent, national voice about what we do: leadership development for girls!

8. What about the Girl Scout history and traditions?

"The work of today is the history of tomorrow, and we are its makers."

– Juliette Gordon Low

Change is perhaps the oldest tradition in Girl Scouts. Ever since Juliette Gordon Low returned from England in 1912 and changed "Guide" to "Scout" in response to the preference of American girls, those in the Girl Scout Movement have prided themselves on their ability to make timely adjustments to fulfill the evolving concerns of modern girls. Girl Scouts has a long history of updating clothing, awards, age groupings and so on to meet the needs of girls. While continuing to maintain the values that have been at our core for 95 years, this renewal allows Girl Scouts to remain relevant.

9. How will we still know we're Girl Scouts?



The values of the Girl Scout Movement, as expressed in the Girl Scout Promise and Law, remain the cornerstone of the Girl Scout experience. In fact, the renewed Girl Scout leadership development experience places increased emphasis on teaching girls to live out the commitments expressed in the Promise and Law. The leadership development program will do this through Discover, Connect and Take Action activities.

Outwardly, the revitalized program also retains many of our important Girl Scout symbols. Girls will continue the practice of earning official awards to display proudly on a tunic, vest or sash, culminating with the Girl Scout Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards. Additionally, Girl Scouts will remain united by a national dress code.

10. Who had input into the changes and decisions?

Thousands of girls and adults from across the Girl Scout Movement have been part of an open and honest dialogue for the last 18 months. Following our tradition of participation, members responded to questions and contributed ideas through forums such as a specially designed e-mail address; strategy cafés held at the 2005 National Council Session in Atlanta; focus groups with volunteers and girls within and outside of Girl Scouts; online surveys; and work sessions held at Girl Scout councils. A panel of experts in the youth development field also weighed in and gave their seal of approval to the new Girl Scout leadership model.

The information gathered through all of these sources was reviewed and summarized by teams of Girl Scout councils and national staff members. The National Board of Directors made the final decisions in August 2006.

11. How will the national focus on leadership incorporate girls' varied interests?

Leadership skill-building can be incorporated into everything a Girl Scout already enjoys—from rock climbing to collaborating on a puppet show to volunteering at a soup kitchen.

12. What if I like things the way they are?

So much remains the same! Continue celebrating everything that girls love about Girl Scouting—troops, camping, the Promise and Law, badges, uniforms, a girl-driven approach and much more. In fact, when girls strive to live out the Girl Scout Promise and Law, they're already on their way to becoming confident, courageous leaders. As Girl Scouts of the USA continues to honor the traditions that have always made Girl Scouting such a positive experience, join the national effort to move forward and make that experience even better.

13. When will the changes become effective?

Not right away. The most important thing we can do right now is to continue using all current available resources—the web sections, awards, books and clothing. Changes will *begin* to be phased in October 2008, and girls and volunteers will have time to transition.

14. How will this affect what girls are doing now?

It won't. Girls in all age groups will continue enjoying the experiences they are already engaged in, earning awards and badges as they exist right now. Materials will continue to be available in



Girl Scout council shops and online. When the transition timeframe is put into place, girls will have time to complete projects or awards they have already begun at their current age levels, using existing materials.

15. Why change age groups?

Girls have told us that it's important to be with other girls their age, and currently, they get bored by too much repetition. As one 13-year old Girl Scout wrote in, "It makes us more comfortable to be with the same age group as ourselves."

Our research found that girls learn best and have the most fun when they are with the right developmental/social grouping. The new grade-level groups are:

- Grades K-1
- Grades 2-3
- Grades 4-5
- Grades 6-8
- Grades 9-10
- Grades 11-12

Major Changes

Kindergarten and grade 1 girls will have the opportunity to share fun experiences and learn from each other. Girl Scouts of the USA will be designing new program resources especially for this level.

Middle School (6th to 8th grade in many parts of the country) can be a difficult time in girls' lives. New program resources will address their progression through the early stages of adolescence, ultimately preparing them for the next phase of life and Girl Scouting.

Girls in 9th and 10th grade will have their own unique program resources making leadership relevant to their lives as they seek healthy relationships, deal with the pressures of high school, and figure out who they are. While *girls in 11th and 12th grade* have expressed interest and focus more on preparing for their futures and demonstrating leadership skills.

16. Why group by grade? Can other grades still go together?

Girls identify with social groups based on grades. Grouping by grade allows girls to be with peers who share a closer level of emotional and social maturity.

Older and younger girls can continue to interact—in fact, that's a great way for girls to practice leadership! As the new Girl Scout Leadership Development Program materials begin rolling out in October 2008, Girl Scouts will establish a national curriculum offering age-appropriate, differentiated activities at each level.

17. We heard that level names were changing? Why didn't they?

Throughout work on the Girl Scout leadership development model, GSUSA continually asked members of the Girl Scout community about changing level names—and if so, to what? GSUSA received thousands of ideas ranging from names that sound more current to names that speak



more clearly to leadership to names that honor tradition in Girl Scout history. As GSUSA tested many of these possibilities, a common theme arose to place emphasis on strengthening the existing Girl Scout brand rather than focusing energy on new level names.

The level names effective October 2008 are:

- Girl Scout Daisy
- Girl Scout Brownie
- Girl Scout Junior
- Girl Scout Cadette
- Girl Scout Senior
- Girl Scout Ambassador*

*The grade-level name Girl Scout Ambassador was added to adjust the newly-separated 11th -12th grade level. The word ambassador represents young women leaders, paving the way in a global world.

18. Will Girl Scout Daisies be able to participate in the cookie program?

Beginning in October 2008, GSUSA will provide age-appropriate guidelines for girls in K-1st grade on participating in the Girl Scout cookie program activities.

19. What about girls with special needs?

GSUSA will continue to serve all girls, including those with special needs. Please contact your local council for guidance on meeting the needs of the girls you support.

20. What do girls say about the changes?

Girls want a more contemporary image and have requested activities that better reflect their current interests. Some girl members worry about how the changes will affect the Girl Scout experience they know and love. Many girls in Girl Scouts wanted to keep traditions, like current age level names, wearing of awards on vests, etc., so these are still with us. And the transition process will enable girls to complete the experiences they have already begun. Girls will also continue to have opportunities to contribute ideas as new books, awards and Web content are created.

21. What about the four program goals?

The values underlying the four program goals are integrated into the new Girl Scout Leadership Development Program and its activity cycles of Discover, Connect and Take Action. The four program goals, however, did not tie to a compelling end result for girls. The Girl Scout Leadership Model clearly defines the impact of Girl Scouting on girls' lives: leadership!

22. What about the Girl Scout Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards?

Don't worry! The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards remain vital awards in Girl Scouting, and they are great awards to teach girls how to Discover, Connect and Take Action as leaders. The Girl Scout Gold Award will remain the highest award. Over the next few years, as the new program materials are developed, the awards will be updated based on the leadership model.



23. Will patches, badges and charms still exist?

Yes! They will remain important symbols of achievement in Girl Scouting. We will also add other fun items as girls say they want them.

24. What about the uniforms?

Girl Scouts will balance our tradition of unity with practicality to meet the needs of today's girls and their families.

- Girls at each age level will have one official uniform item (e.g. tunic, vest and sash) for the display of official pins and awards. Girls will be required to wear this item with their own white shirts and khaki pants or skirts when they participate in ceremonies or officially represent the Girl Scout Movement.
- Teen girls will also have the option of wearing a scarf connecting us to our global sisterhood, WAGGGS.
- The adult uniform will be the membership pins worn with a scarf for women and a tie for men coordinated with navy blue business attire.
- Girl Scouts of the USA will continue to evolve and offer a range of appealing casual wear for girls and adults.

25. What do we do with our current uniforms?

Continue using them! Tunics, vests and sashes for the display of official pins and awards will still be a part of the Girl Scout uniform.

26. What about STUDIO 2B?

Girl Scouts of the USA has received many comments and suggestions about STUDIO 2B. Many girls, especially those at the pre-teen level, love aspects of the approach—from tone and graphics of the books, to options for the awards, like badges or charms, the ability to set and learn from their own goals, and the renewed commitment to the *girl-driven* approach.

Other girls want a clear, strong emphasis on the Girl Scout brand, image and leadership experience. So, we'll use the aspects of STUDIO 2B which are most well-received and valued and incorporate them into the Girl Scout Leadership Development Program.

27. How can we help?

Thanks for asking! Here's how:

- Talk it up! Share your enthusiasm about the changes we're making to better serve girls.
- Find ways to emphasize leadership using existing Girl Scout materials.
- Encourage girls to select existing Girl Scout activities, books and awards that give them the opportunity to *discover* their personal best and prepare for a positive future, *connect* with others in an increasingly diverse world, and *take action* to solve problems and improve their communities.
- Get involved. In November, councils will receive the fall 2006 resource kit, which will communicate the decisions of the National Board to the Girl Scout community.
- Stay tuned for tips throughout the year with suggestions for using the existing materials to carry out the renewed leadership development approach.