

10 Consistent Messages About Girl Scout Membership

1. **Girl Scouting is for girls**—Girl Scouting exists for girls and provides a unique setting for leadership development and girl decision-making opportunities. Girls, working in partnership with caring adults, can explore their potential in Girl Scouting without competition from boys. This opportunity to work and play in an all-girl setting is considered by educators to be essential to the encouragement of girls’ future aspirations. In a climate in which many youth organizations, schools, colleges, and other institutions have become coeducational, GSUSA chooses to continue to devote its total resources to the development of girls in order to prepare them to fulfill their potential as women.
2. **Girl Scouting is a membership organization**—Girl Scouting is open to all girls between the ages of 5 and 17 and to women and men 18 years of age and older who accept the Girl Scout Promise and Law and pay annual membership dues, except those adults who are lifetime members. These are the only requirements for membership. Each adult participating in the Girl Scout Movement shall be registered as a member with Girl Scout of the USA. The Girl Scout program, Girl Scout handbooks and other program resources, Girl Scout uniforms, and Girl Scout insignia are developed and produced by GSUSA for the exclusive use of its members.
3. **Individual spiritual beliefs are respected in Girl Scouting**—Every Girl Scout group shall respect the varying religious opinions and practices of its members in planning and conducting activities. Girls are encouraged and helped through the Girl Scout program to become better members of their own religious group, but every Girl Scout group must recognize that religious instruction is the responsibility of parents/guardians and religious leaders.
4. **Adults provide role models in Girl Scouting**—All Girl Scout adults—women and men—bring special talents and expertise that enrich Girl Scout program for girls. Every volunteer and staff position is open to men as well as women; however, the female role model is essential in carrying out the purpose of Girl Scouting. Interaction with women in leadership positions is of particular importance in the development of girls. Recognizing the value of positive female role models for girls as they develop the decision-making and planning abilities they will need as women, GSUSA recommends to councils that at least one member of the troop leadership team must be an adult female. See Program Standard 13 in Safety-Wise, pages 69-70.
5. **Girl Scouting is committed to inclusiveness**— All Girl Scout Councils and USA Girl Scouts Overseas committees shall be responsible for seeing that membership is reflective of the pluralistic nature of their populations and that membership is extended to all girls in all population segments and geographic areas in their jurisdictions. A girl who meets or can meet membership requirements shall not be denied admission or access to Girl Scout program because of race, color, ethnicity, creed, national origin, socioeconomic status, or disability. Reasonable accommodations shall be made for girls with disabilities to ensure that all girls have access to the Girl Scout program. The Girl Scout program will include pluralism, a system with individuals or groups differing in background, experiences, and

culture that allows for the development of a common tradition while preserving each group's right to maintain its cultural heritage.

6. **Girl Scout program is an informal educational program adapted to meet the developmental, emotional, and social needs and interests of girls in the program age levels**-Program experiences and activities are based on the Girl Scout Promise and Law, and enable girls to grow and develop. The Girl Scout program has four fundamental program goals: to enable each girl to develop to her full potential; to relate to others with increasing understanding, skill, and respect; to develop values to guide her actions and provide the foundation for sound decision-making; and to contribute to the improvement of society through the use of her abilities and leadership skills, working in cooperation with others. Young women who have mental developmental disabilities may retain their girl membership through their 21st year and then move into an adult membership category. See program Standard 13 in Safety-Wise, page 63
7. **A Girl Scout council is chartered by GSUSA**-A Girl Scout council has the authority and responsibility to provide and safeguard the Girl Scout program, build an organization to serve its membership, and extend membership opportunities to all girls within its jurisdiction. Girl Scout councils develop organizational structures to provide effective services to troops or groups in every community. Council resources are allocated to organize groups of girl members and to train and support their adult leadership. No one method can meet the needs of all geographic units or age groups in a council. Accordingly, methods for delivering program and support services need to be tailored to the distinct needs and resources of the group they are designed to serve. It is the responsibility of a council to provide girls who register as individuals with group experiences among peers that are carried out in partnership with adults.
8. **Girl Scout councils are community-based organizations**-A Girl Scout council seeks to be an integral and responsive part of the communities in its jurisdiction. For this reason, Girl Scout councils establish partnerships and collaborations with local agencies and businesses. The end result of these cooperative efforts will be better delivery of Girl Scout program and increased Girl Scout membership and retention.
9. **An effective Girl Scout council ensures that Girl Scout program is delivered to all girls ages 5-17 in all segments in its jurisdiction**-The Council Performance Assessment (CPA), which determines the degree of effectiveness in meeting charter obligations, provides a review of the council's progress toward fulfilling the criteria and standards of Girl Scouts of the USA every four years. The membership share (membership-to-population percentage) is used to measure a Girl Scout council's effectiveness in meeting its charter accountabilities. Membership share is defined as the number of girls a council serves in relation to the number of girls available.
10. **Membership growth is an interdependent responsibility of councils and GSUSA**-Girl Scout councils and GSUSA work in concert to achieve annual membership goals. The national organization provides a wide range of membership services and resources to councils. Councils recruit girls and adults as members; they deliver Girl Scout program to girls, and provide training for the adults who support them.