

OPTIONS

Girl Scout Leaders today are usually juggling some combination of family, career, volunteer commitments and leisure activities. Finding the time for all of these could, at best, be described as difficult. Planning time is even more precious. Here, then, to help get you started, are OPTIONS for the busy Girl Scout Leader.

This OPTIONS guide will offer suggestions for developing a troop calendar for Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors. To implement OPTIONS, certain resources are necessary. OPTIONS identify those resources considered primary (used at nearly every meeting) and secondary (used at certain specific meetings). Resources listed on pages 5 -7 are supportive to leaders and girls and are available for purchase at the G.S. Shop or check out at the Emerson or Hannibal Resource Centers at the St. Louis and Hannibal Girl Scout Service Centers.

OPTIONS is here to help you – do not think your troop meetings should be planned around what is written here. The girl/adult partnership always has been a fundamental concept in Girl Scouting; it is one of our unique strengths and values. In Girl Scouting, a girl can learn to make decisions, accept the consequences of those decisions, and help plan activities for her troop. Through your efforts, girls will Discover (themselves and their values) Connect (with others) and Take Action (to improve their communities and the world).

So feel free to use OPTIONS in helping to get you started in planning for your troop year. You are encouraged to use the Girl Scout Journey Publications and resources, which invite girls to “Take Action” on an issue they care about. The books contain stories, inspirational material, Girl Scout History, traditions and values, facts and games, and open spaces for girls to fill in their own ideas and memories. There are currently three different Leadership Journey’s available for each level of Senior and Ambassador Girl Scouts. Each Leadership Journey Set includes a girl book and a *How to partner with Senior or Ambassador Troop leader/facilitator guide*. The *Senior Girls Guide to Girl Scouting* and *Ambassador Girls Guide to Girl Scouting* (available in the fall of 2011) will include a handbook section and an awards section featuring 7 different Legacy Badges, financial literacy badges, cookie business badges and religious awards as well as newly updated Counselor In Training I and II Awards. There is also a new Volunteer in Training Award available to Seniors and Ambassadors who will be mentoring girls other than at camp. Community Service Bars are also available.

Additional Ideas and options for troop meetings and activities can be found online at www.girlscoutsem.org, the Emerson and Hannibal Resource Centers, *Pep Session Packets* and in each issue of *Inspire: Leader Program Bulletin*. Your Neighborhood Chair will also serve as a resource in finding out about Neighborhood, District and Council sponsored events offered to Senior/Ambassador Girl Scouts in your area.

Training is the most important tip we can offer to first time and returning Girl Scout Leaders.

Senior/Ambassador Leaders responded that Introduction to Girl Scouting (ITGS) and Senior/Ambassador Essentials courses gave them a great start. The GSUSA Online Volunteer Orientation (<http://training.girlscouts.org/>, password: Discover) is required and provides an introduction to the organization. GSEM’s ITGS is required and provides essential troop start up information for new Leaders. Leadership Essentials and Senior/Ambassador Essentials offer additional ideas and information for working with a troop. Check www.girlscoutsem.org for a link to online ITGS and the current issue of the *GSEM Course Catalog*, which lists course dates, times, and locations. Additionally the *Adult How to Partner with Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassador Guides for the Journeys* offers Leaders information regarding meeting ideas, ceremonies and Girl Scout traditions.

Girl Scout programs change and update to keep girls interested and involved. Check www.girlscoutsem.org for a link to online courses and the current issue of the GSEM Course Catalog, also available online, which lists course dates, times, and locations.

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Girl Scout Seniors are in the ninth and tenth grades. Girl Scout Ambassadors are in the eleventh and twelfth grades. The Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador Troop offers girls an opportunity to experience decision making and different forms of troop government (Patrol System, Executive Board or Town Meeting).

As they advance through the Girl Scout grade levels, girls are offered more responsibilities and new opportunities. Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors can take trips of three or more nights – they can even travel internationally. As a whole new world of opportunity opens for these girls, you will find that your role is increasingly one of advisor, and less and less that of Leader. Your role is no less important – just different.

Some things to take into consideration when working with Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors are:

- ✓ Ask the girls how often they want to meet, and let them know your availability.
- ✓ Ask the girls what kinds of things they think would be meaningful and fun to do.
- ✓ The girls will want to decide for themselves what they would like to do, but you will play an important role by sharing suggestions and options for guest speakers, activities, and earning awards.
- ✓ Look for opportunities to include families in activities. Family members can be troop helpers or resource people.
- ✓ Consider holding the meeting at a favorite hang out like Starbucks or McDonalds, or a pizza place.
- ✓ Let the girls plan. Encouraging girls to select activities is the key to well attended meetings. Your role is to ask: What about cost, transportation, time involved, materials needed, safety checkpoints, GSUSA and GSEM policies, standards and practices.
- ✓ Allowing girls to make and learn from mistakes is essential for girls to build skill, responsibility and self confidence.

Troop meetings can consist of opening and closing ceremonies. The business portion of the meeting should involve new and old business. A democratic system of governance will allow all members to express their interests and feelings. Girls will partner with Leaders and other adults to facilitate, act as a sounding board and ask and answer questions. Girls gain confidence and leadership skills when given the opportunity to lead their activities, learn cooperatively as a group, and learn by doing instead of by observing. Use of self-government allows girls to learn from their mistakes and take on more responsibility when they are ready.

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Girls at the Senior and Ambassador level often use one of the three types of governance below. Leadership Journeys and the new *Senior Girls Guide to Girl Scouting* and *Ambassador Girls Guide to Girl Scouting* offer additional examples of team decision making. Groups may change systems if one system is not working.

- ❖ **Patrol System:** Girls are divided into smaller groups in which every girl has a role. Girls in the group will elect a Patrol Leader and Assistant Patrol leader who will be representing the patrol to the larger group. Positions of responsibility for other girls might include: Secretary, Treasurer, Crafts Manager, Activity Manager or Equipment Manager. Girls may wish to come up with a patrol name.
- ❖ **Executive Board:** One Leadership Team makes decisions for the entire troop. The Leadership Team usually includes a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.
- ❖ **Town Meeting:** Business is discussed and decisions are made at meetings attended by all girls in the troop. Leader serves as a moderator, ensuring everyone gets a chance to talk and all ideas are considered.

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Girl Scout Senior/Ambassador Troop Finances

- **While there is always the temptation to do so, DO NOT SUBSIDIZE TROOP ACTIVITIES YOURSELF!!** Check the GSEM Troop Money Earning Monograph for planning troop budget, troop checking account, and other troop money related topics. This publication is available from your Neighborhood Chair or council resource centers. Additionally, refer to the *Volunteer Essentials* (available online from the GSEM website) and the newly updated *GSEM Essentials* also available from your Neighborhood Chair for information regarding specific issues relating to troop funds for Seniors and Ambassadors.
- After girls have chosen their activities, they will need to determine how best to finance them. Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors have several opportunities to earn money to support troop activities.
- When budgeting for the year, it is important that girls know the total cost of recognitions for the entire year. Please take inflation into consideration when determining the amount your troop will need to set aside for recognitions. Be sure to include the Girl Scout Pin and World Association pins (if not already acquired as Junior or Cadette Girl Scouts), new badges offered in the new *Senior Girls Guide to Girl Scouting* and *Ambassador Girls Guide to Girl Scouting* (available fall, 2011), Journey Awards, membership star and red disk for Seniors or Navy disk for Ambassadors, fun or participation patches, general activity supplies, etc. and for girls bridging to Girl Scout Ambassador, Bridge to Girl Scout Ambassador patch. For girls bridging to Girl Scout Adult, there is a Bridge to Adult Pin. Current prices of these items can be found in the Girl Scout Shop in St. Louis and Hannibal and online at www.girlscoutsem.org.
- The Girl Scout Cadette/Senior/Ambassador sash or vest (including the insignia tab, USA flag, council ID set, and troop numbers), the *Senior Girls Guide to Girl Scouting* and *Ambassador Girls Guide to Girl Scouting* available in the fall of 2011 and the Senior or Ambassador level Leadership Journey books are all optional purchases and are the responsibility of each girl's family. Refer to the *Senior or Ambassador Girls Guide to Girl Scouting* or online for uniform insignia placement guides.
- Troop Dues may be charged yearly, monthly, or at each meeting. Some troops choose to "charge by the event," collecting money to cover whatever activity they are doing. Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors have many troop money earning opportunities available to them, including Fall Product and Cookie Sale Activities and cookie booths. Consult the *Troop Money Earning Monograph* available online for additional troop money earning activity ideas as well as guidelines to be followed for each project.
- Girls may want to consider money-earning events over several years to finance more expensive activities.
- Have a parent meeting early in the year to review plans and costs. The meeting will afford you the opportunity to organize the troop committee (i.e. assistant leaders, cookie manager, fall sale manager, etc.) and to get acquainted with the parents/guardians and other family members. It will give you the opportunity to find out what the parents/guardians expect for their daughters and what interests they may have regarding the Girl Scout program. You will be able to tell the parents/guardians about the troop's plans and let them know how they can help. This is your opportunity to collect registration money and gather information.
- Go to your Neighborhood meetings. You'll get great ideas, meet experienced leaders, and learn about exciting neighborhood events and council wide opportunities to enhance your troop activities.

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Resources

Please always refer to the current versions of both primary and secondary resources.

Primary:

Girl Scout Leadership Journey for Senior resources and publications:

GIRLtopia: Girl Scouts know the world is not ideal. This journey is their chance to imagine a perfect world – for girls. They're invited to create their vision as an art project – in any medium they choose. Then they'll take action to make their vision a reality. Leaders, after all, are visionaries!

Sow What?: Seniors investigate the food network that gets each piece of food to the table. As they ponder the dirt on land use around the world (corn's a big issue!), girls get down to the science and roots of complex and global food issues. Girls plan and conduct a local "food forage" to scope out their "food print" choices, and talk to scientists, local growers, and business owners – and even global hunger experts. Using what they learn, girls consider their "leader prints" as they decide who and what they can cultivate en route to a Take Action Project that positively impacts their food network.

Mission: Sisterhood: Seniors widen their networks and ignite the energy of sisterhood to create real change in the world. As Seniors expand their friendship borders, they boost their own confidence and make the most of their leadership skills.

Girl Scout Leadership Journey for Ambassador resources and publications:

Your Voice, Your World: The Power of Advocacy: How often have you seen something that really needed to be changed and wondered, "Why isn't someone doing something about that?" This journey gives Girl Scout Ambassadors a way to be that someone – an advocate with the power to start the first flutter of real and lasting change. While creating their own "butterfly effect," they'll gain an array of skills – such as networking, planning and learning to speak up for what they believe – that will benefit them as they prepare for life beyond high school.

Justice: By "Doing the Math" with even the simplest of acts, deciphering how decisions get made, and exploring how to use scientific evidence, Ambassadors will create and then present their own unique equation for what justice asks of us. Along the way, they will find they are also networking and gathering new ideas for college and careers. When they add the Sage Award to their list of accomplishments, Ambassadors will be confident that they are the wise and healing leaders Earth years for!

BLISS Live It! Give It!: In this journey Ambassadors dream big, now and for the future, while encouraging others to dream big, too. They explore their values, strengths, and passions as a way to open doors to wonderful new adventures. Designed as a flip-book, *BLISS: Live It!* Inspires girls to pursue their dreams while *BLISS Give It!* encourages girls to assist others in pursuing theirs.

The Senior Girls Guide to Girl Scouting (available fall, 2011)

The Ambassador Girls Guide to Girl Scouting (available fall, 2011)

Inspire: Leader Program Bulletin (online at www.girlscoutsem.org)

Volunteer Essentials (online at www.girlscoutsem.org): Contains content that impacts the entire volunteer membership of the GSUSA, with current GSEM specific information. Online only

GSEM Essentials (available from your Neighborhood Chair): Minimizes content from *Volunteer Essentials* and current GSEM specific information. Printed Document

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Safety Checkpoint: Guidelines and checkpoints regarding safety issues by specific activity (<http://www.girlscoutsem.org/content/822/safety-activity-checkpoints.aspx>)

Secondary:

Perfectly Effortless Program (PEP Session Packets) – activities to enhance troop program (Topics include *Ceremonies in Girl Scouting; Celebrate!; Fun in the Out-of-Doors; Helping Others; People Near and Far; Do-Re-Mi and Swaps and Bridging*) available at the Emerson and Hannibal Resource Centers or online at www.girlscoutsem.org.

Trips and Tours – A resource designed for Girl Scout Leaders to explore the many outstanding venues in and around our community. *Trips and Tours* is available online at www.girlscoutsem.org. Note: for troops taking overnight trips, leaders must get Neighborhood Chair and council approval by completing a Troop Trip Application (P-10) available online at www.girlscoutsem.org.

Troop Money Earning Monograph – Information about troop checking accounts, planning budgets, etc. available from your Neighborhood Chair, council resource centers or online at www.girlscoutsem.org.

It's Your Journey – Customize It! – GSUSA Publication. This publication is available for purchase at the Girl Scout Shop or to borrow from the Emerson and Hannibal Resource Centers.

Melinda Carroll Girl Scouts Greatest Hits – Pocket Songbook of Vols. 1 & 2 and CD's Vols. 1-11 (GSPSB): available to borrow from the Emerson and Hannibal Resource Centers.

The Girl Scout Gold Award Adult Volunteer Guide and Girl Guide: Available online at www.girlscoutsem.org >Programs and Events>Awards.

Destinations: GSUSA Publication offering travel experiences ranging from two days to three weeks for Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors. Destinations are facilitated by GSUSA and hosted by individual Girl Scout Councils, GSUSA, and contracted organizations. All the latest information on destinations including the application form can be found on the GSUSA web page – www.girlscouts.org/for girls/travel/destinations.

Gold Award Preview Kit: Pack containing all the information needed to work on the Girl Scout Gold Award including all three Senior Leadership Journeys and all three Ambassador Leadership Journeys and the Girl and Adult Guides for the Gold Award. This kit is available to borrow from the Emerson Resource Center.

On-Line:

www.girlscoutsem.org – GSEM news source, online courses, workshops, council program activities, Neighborhood Announcements and other council publications.

www.girlscouts.org – GSUSA's national organization Web site, go to Girl Scout Central section for awards, ceremonies and other information.

Additional Resources and Program Ideas:

Girl Scout Virtual Catalogs: Online at www.girlscoutsem.org : Girl Scout Shop

Girl Scout Promise and Law: Online at www.girlscoutsem.org

Girl Scout Fun Patches: Girl Scouts offers various patches for sale in the G.S. Shop or online at www.girlscoutsem.org. The variety of these patches is constantly changing. You can view the updated available patches on a virtual catalog through the Girl Scout Shop link on our website. Fun patches and participation patches may include: Manners, First Aid, Pet Care as well as Fire Station Visit, Ice Cream Party, Roller and Ice Skating etc. There are no requirements specifically for these patches. Girls may earn or be given them at your discretion.

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Living the Girl Scout Law: Individual level ideas for working with the girls about living the law are available online under the Resource Centers – Links section at www.girlscoutsem.org.

Religious Awards: Contact your religious organization directly to see if there is a program available for your level of girls to earn awards.

Resources for Volunteers: A listing of all resources available to borrow from the Emerson and Hannibal Resource Centers is available online at www.girlscoutsem.org; Resource Center; Links

A Girl Scout Summer: GSEM publication listing activities and programs for troops and individual girls during the summer.

GSEM Course Catalog: Current courses being offered are listed in this catalog available online at www.girlscoutsem.org.

The following Patch Programs are available at www.girlscoutsem.org: Programs and Events: Patch Programs or in the Emerson or Hannibal Resource Centers:

Juliette Low World Friendship Fund Patch Program (JLWFF)

Making CENTS in the City Patch Program - Girl Scouts of Missouri financial literacy program. Age level traveling trunks may be borrowed from the Emerson or Hannibal Resource Center.

Economize Energy (ECO-EN) Patch Program: Help girls learn to use resources wisely and to protect and improve the world around them.

Disability Awareness Award Programs: Our own council program promoting disability awareness for all levels of girls.

Meet Me in St. Louis Interest Project Program: Our own council patch program promoting local history.

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Getting Started.....Meeting Ideas

Developing a twelve month calendar for your troop can help organize activities, identify costs that will need to be met and facilitate scheduling assistance from parents or other volunteers.

Developing an extended (multi-year) calendar for your troop can help girls set longer term goals (i.e. Girl Scout Gold Award, Extended Trips, etc.). It will allow for planning on how they will earn their Girl Scout Gold Award, including when they will submit paperwork. A multi year calendar will encourage planning for money-earning events over several years to finance more expensive activities.

At these grade levels, girls should be taking the lead in developing a troop calendar while adults guide girls by asking questions. Remember, plans can always be revised as the year progresses.

The Girl Scout Gold Award: The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest award a Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador can earn. Girls will be meeting new people, learning great things about themselves and their capabilities put their leadership skills into action and make a mark in their community. The final project will make a lasting change for the better in the girl's community. All requirements for the Girl Scout Gold Award can be found online at www.girlscoutsem.org >Programs and Events>Awards.

Completing two Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador Journeys or completing one Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador Journey and earning the Cadette Girl Scout Silver Award is required for girls to earn the Girl Scout Gold Award per the requirements released for program year 2010.

Other Special Girl Scout Days and Activities Ideas:

September: Hold a parents meeting and make sure all the girls are registered. Kick off one of the Girl Scout Journeys with a trip or special event that fits the theme. Have the girls plan the event.

September and January: Many courses offered by the adult education department are open to older girls as well as adults. Consult the GSEM Course Catalog online for current course offerings, dates times and locations.

October 31 – Juliette Low's Birthday. Consider helping a Daisy Troop with their Investiture. Start earning the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund (JLWFF) patch. Design and develop your own celebration. Visit the Emerson and Hannibal Resource Center or online at www.girlscoutsem.org for patch requirements and other ideas to celebrate Juliette's birthday.

October is the time for registered adults in your troop to look into certifications and trainings required to take your troop camping. Check the current issue of GSEM Course Catalog at www.girlscoutsem.org. Application deadlines may seem far away but by starting the process now your troop will be prepared for a great outdoor experience.

Fall Product Sales: If you choose to participate in this Council Fall Product Sale event, refer to the *Inspire: Leader Program Bulletin* and Fall Product Training materials for more information about this sale.

January: **Don't Forget!** Check for Troop Cookie Training dates in your Neighborhood! Refer to the current issues of *Inspire: Leader Program Bulletin* and Troop Cookie Training materials for more information about the sale.

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January: Look at the exciting council sponsored events being held this spring (see the current issue of *Inspire: Leader Program Bulletin* online at www.girlscoutsem.org for details and registration information). If part or all of your troop is planning to bridge to Girl Scout Ambassador this year, you may want to participate in a Girl Scout Ambassador activity as part of Bridging to Girl Scout Ambassador. (See the PEP Session – *Bridging*)

February: A *Girl Scout Summer* is usually published and distributed to each registered Girl Scout in late January or early February. Discuss the opportunities available for Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors such as LARKS, Day Camp or Resident Camp. Some opportunities will be individual girl and some will be troop. Seniors and Ambassadors have the opportunity to earn Counselor in Training I and II. Many of the camp registration deadlines are at the beginning of March, so be sure to have girls start thinking NOW about what they would like to sign up for.

February 22 – World Thinking Day: Visit www.girlscoutsem.org for theme and program ideas. On this day, the birthday of both Lord and Lady Baden-Powell, Girl Scouts and Girl Guides everywhere “think about” each other and their union through the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. Invite an international *Destinations* participant to tell about her experiences and serve refreshments typical of the country she visited. There are new Girl Scout Thinking Day patches available every year as well. Contact the GS Shop for purchase of the patches.

March 12 – Girl Scout Birthday. Celebration of the first Girl Scout troop meeting ever held. How about some cake? There is always a Girl Scout Patch available yearly for this event. Contact the GS Shop.

March: Tally up overall troop cookie sales. Decide through troop government system how to use the proceeds.

April – April Showers: Plan to participate in this council wide collection of personal care items. Discuss how April Showers benefits our community and spreads Girl Scout values throughout the area. Think about more service opportunities that your troop can participate in. This may spark some interest in earning the *Girls Scout Gold Award*. April Showers main patches and year segments are available to purchase through the Girl Scout Shop.

May: Finish plans and projects for the Bridging Ceremony/Court of Awards Ceremony.

May: Court of Awards and Bridging Ceremony: If there is no neighborhood bridging ceremony, check the PEP Session Packet – *Ceremonies in Girl Scouting, Celebrate! Or Bridging Packet* for ideas and tips for conducting ceremonies. Each Senior Girl Scout should receive a membership star with a red disk and if earned, the Bridge to Ambassador Girl Scouts. Each Ambassador Girl Scout should receive a membership star and navy disk, and if earned, her Bridging to Adult pin. Journey awards, participation or fun patches or other earned awards that have not already been presented during the year should be awarded at this time.

Additional Program Opportunities for Seniors/Ambassadors include:

- Reflections: Annual ceremony to recognize girls who have earned the Girl Scout Silver or Gold Award.
- Girl Scout Gold Award Workshop (required to earn the Girl Scout Gold Award).
- Outdoor Adventure Course
- Overnights

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- Extended and International Travel
- Reflections Task Force
- Girl Congress: Girl ages 14 and over, who are elected by their district as a council delegate or alternate. They serve one-year terms and the goal for the girls is to improve Girl Scouting for the girl membership.
- Additional Awards:
 - Ten Year Award
 - Graduating Senior Award (girls who are graduating from high school)

Additional information is available through the *Inspire: Leader Program Bulletin*, on line at www.girlscoutsem.org, or the resource centers in St. Louis and Hannibal.

LC/6/16/11