



Troop Web Page Guidelines

These guidelines are written for adult volunteers, older girls, and others considering developing a Web page or “home page” for a troop or group in Girl Scouts. Although there is some “how to do it” information, the guidelines are not meant to lead you through the construction process. We leave that to the experts. We suggest that you find someone who knows the technical and legal aspects of Web construction, and someone who is capable of making it a learning experience for girls.

Information posted to the Internet on a Web page can be read by people all over the world. Therefore, safety and how you represent yourselves as Girl Scouts should be the guiding principal of any Web-based endeavor, even if your information is password protected. This includes issues of privacy, language use, sponsorship, links, and use of any kind of copyrighted material (writing, music, brand images, and pictures).

Is a Web Page Right for Your Troop or Group?

Developing a Web site for a group can be a great learning activity for girls. Unless you have expertise within your group, such as parents, or are using a Web development template supplied by your service provider, consider recruiting technical expertise. You might approach a community college computer lab, a professional in Web development, or someone who develops Web sites for a hobby. Girls can be involved in the process at all levels—decision-making, research, writing, graphics, and the Web page creation.

Consider the following when deciding whether or not to develop a troop or group Web page:

- Poll your members regarding Internet access. Family Internet access will determine whether a Web page will be limited to advertising your group, or used as a communication vehicle. If most families don't have Web access, you will have to communicate information in a different manner.
- As a group, determine why you want a Web page. Is it to post important dates and notices? Is it a scrapbook record for girls and their families to share? Is it a place to keep track of girls' work?
- How much will it cost? Are you part of someone else's site, or are you purchasing your rights to your own Web address? Will there be additional costs for a password protected site? Does that site provide a way to keep individual files and downloads? Does it have a calendar function? Does it have e-mail and bulletin board features?
- Consider the time needed for site upkeep. Who will be responsible for posting changes? How often do you want to change the site—weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly?
- Discuss whether your site will remain an information-only site, or whether you want additional functions, such as an interactive component, which will require password protection. Below is a chart comparing the features of public pages to password-protected pages on the Internet.

Comparison between Public and Password-Protected Web Page Features

Possible features for your Web pages obtained through	Public Internet pages... OR	Password-protected pages and community collaboration space
Space for description of group	YES	YES—this can be your entry page for group members to sign in
Downloads for permission slips	NO—unless they are generic, not listing specific information	YES.
Group e-mail address for public and other Girl Scouts	YES	YES—if you place on the sign-in page
Individual pictures and pages for each girl	Not recommended for security purposes	YES—each girl can have her own page and/or file
Links to council and GSUSA Web sites	YES	YES
Links to other Web sites	YES—with qualifications.	YES—with qualifications.
Listing on search engines	YES. Meta-tags can be placed on the page.	YES, meta-tags can be placed on sign-in page.
List-serve of individual e-mails or phone list	NO. This is against all safety guidelines.	YES— with permission.
Meeting notes	Possibly—with edits. No descriptions of where girls will be meeting or going.	YES—protected with password.
Picture of group for public; pictures of group activities	Yes—if have parental permission. Use of first names only.	Yes—if have parental permission. Recommended first names only.
Records of girls' work	NO—not recommended.	YES- if folders are an option.
Troop calendar	NO—unless very general as to dates, not including place and time.	YES- if calendar function is an option.
Use of GSUSA trademarks (e.g. badges)	NO	NO
Use of GSUSA Logo (e.g. GS "three faces" logo)	With permission only.	With permission only.
Use of copyrighted music	NO— unless you have permission to use from music company and/or owner.	NO— unless you have permission to use from music company and/or owner.
Use of artwork from books or Web	NO— unless you have permission to use from owner.	NO— unless you have permission to use from owner.

Getting Started

If your troop or group decides to post a Web page, begin with the following:

Spend time looking at other Web sites. Note what you like about them. Search for other "Girl Scout troop" or group sites, as well as "Girl Scout Council" sites. Note any safety or copyright issues you encounter when looking at other Girl Scout sites after you have reviewed the sections on safety and copyrights.

Research hosts for your site on the Internet. This is where your technical person can be of great help.

Consider learning simple html or other Web language, or utilizing a more sophisticated program, such as DreamWeaver or FrontPage, which writes the code. Girls can also learn how to prepare photos and graphics for the Web, as well as video and music posting. Be prepared to scale back your graphics or to break your content into separate pages (files) so that your audience will not have to wait a long time to see your Web page. Learn how to create versions of graphics that require less time to download.

Create an outline of the information of your site. It can be very simple on one page, or it can take the form of more than one page, with links between. The kind of hosting you decide upon will either limit or broaden your options.

Developing Your Web Page

Write the text for your page(s). Check for spelling and grammar carefully. Ask other people to help you proofread as well.

Create or find graphics on the World Wide Web for your page. Be sure not to use graphics that are copyrighted by someone else without their permission. Read and follow the rules below about use of Girl Scout symbols.

Consider any links you want to create between your site and other sites carefully. Each linked site should contain only material that is safe and suitable for children and appropriate for Girl Scouts using the Web. Avoid sites that contain inappropriate advertising or lack of educational value. Ads change frequently, sometimes every few seconds, so it may be impossible to keep track of these links from your site!

Publishing Your Web Page

There are many ways to post the pages you create on the Internet. You may have to pay a monthly fee, especially if you go over allotted space for free services, or if you want extras, like chat, file sharing, etc. Most Internet service providers or search engine sites, such as AOL, Yahoo, or Google have publishing options. They also provide a list of suggested hosting options, as well as many helpful hints about Web site development and establishing "user communities". Look for security features, privacy features, amount of space available, and cost from a provider. If you are offered space on a Web site that is a private business or owned by an individual, be very cautious. You become associated with that person's domain name (Internet address).

Online Safety Checklist

- Have you used first names only of all girls?
- Do you have parent/guardian permission to use girl pictures?
- Do you have permission to use pictures of adults?
- Have you used a group e-mail overseen by an adult as your contact address?
- Have you followed guidelines in the Online Safety Pledge?
- Do you screen all postings to guest books before posting on your site?
- Have you discussed the importance of keeping a "secret" password secret, and set up a plan for changing the password periodically?
- Do you have a statement on your site ensuring visitor privacy?
- Have you checked all your links to make sure they comply with GSUSA guidelines?
- Do you have a plan in place for updating your Web page?

You should NOT be associated with a commercial business unless it is clear that they are sponsoring space only, and you should check out the site content and its links, as well as the business to see whether you are in appropriate company for a Girl Scout group. For example, it might not be appropriate to be sponsored by a winery or a gun shop, but it would be OK to be on the site of your local library or your public newspaper with other non-profit youth groups. A site that has links to sex shops would not be appropriate.

- Create an e-mail account specifically for your Web site. It should be monitored by an adult. Never use a personal e-mail account for your troop/group Web site.
- Never post full names of girls, girl e-mail addresses, family e-mail addresses, or troop or group meeting places on a public Web page.
- Have only one or two adults as the administrators, or a girl/adult in partnership. Rotate the responsibilities if girls are interested in learning how to administer a site.
- Determine a schedule for updating your site before it is posted. Some sites will only need to be updated quarterly, or when something is meant to be shared, such as pictures from a camping trip or service activity. Ideally, sites that are password protected should be updated after each meeting or event in preparation for the next meeting or event. Be sure to remove old sites from free hosting services.
- If you choose a service that has password-protected space, you must set up ways to protect the password for the users. Limit it to girls and parents or guardians and use a tier of different user rights.
- Determine a schedule for changing the passwords and discuss the importance of keeping the password within the member group.

Corresponding with the Public

Never post live messages from other people on your Web site, in a guest book, or on a bulletin board. Every message should be read by someone (usually an adult), edited where necessary, and then posted. Do not post full names and addresses or e-mails of individuals posting to guest books or bulletin boards. You may post first name, troop/group and city or state. You do not have to post every message sent to you. Rules or “netiquette” should be discussed and posted on the site. (e.g., no full names; no putdowns, bad language, etc.)

Do not offer to act as a broker for girls or groups wanting pen-pals.

If you ask people to leave e-mail addresses, you must have a privacy statement. You want to write back to someone. If you do write back, it must be through the group e-mail, not a personal e-mail, with adult oversight. You must promise not to share e-mail addresses with others.

Never correspond on any topic not related to your Web site or Girl Scouts on your Girl Scout e-mail. For example, you should never respond to ads, a “cool boy” wanting a date, requests for money, or questions about where your group meets. (If someone wants to join your group, have an adult request a local phone number via the group e-mail address.)

FAQ's About Girl Scout Symbols and Clip-Art

Q: What are Girl Scout symbols?

A: GSUSA symbols are trademarked graphics, such as the Girl Scout logo, Girl Scout badges, official pins and awards.

Q: Are there guidelines for use of these symbols?

A: Yes. Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. symbols cannot be used without authorization from Girl Scouts of the USA. Permission may be granted to Girl Scout groups wishing to use the Girl Scout logo on their Web page only after a written request has been submitted. There are rules for use of the GSUSA logo. For example, the logo must appear on a solid colored background, it may not be put into another graphic or used as background “wallpaper” or watermark, or be made into buttons.

For more about obtaining permission go to “Terms and Conditions,” on the Girl Scouts of the USA Web site (http://www.girlscouts.org/terms_conditions.asp).

Q: If I have used Girl Scout trademarked symbols and haven't followed the guidelines, what should I do?

A: Change your design.

Q: Why get excited about the misuse of Girl Scout symbols?

A: GSUSA must protect the integrity of its trademarked symbols and their use. If the symbols are misused, they no longer send a clear message about who we are. If Girl Scout symbols are used with a product, people may assume that GSUSA endorses that product. If they are used without permission, they may be used inappropriately.

Q: What about using art work from Girl Scout books?

A: Artwork is also protected by copyright laws. More important, it may be owned by the artist. Even Girl Scouts of the USA doesn't always have permission to reproduce it, once it has been used for a specific purpose.

Q: Where can we get graphics for use on our site?

A: Many sites on the Web, maintained by companies and individuals, offer free graphics for use by individuals and non-profit organizations. It is important to read the legal statements and special instructions for downloading from each site you visit. Make sure that the artwork is owned by the site giving permission for use.

Glossary

Browser—software and a “user friendly” interface that allows access to pages and sites on the World Wide Web, as well as a search function for finding pages related to specific topics. A browser has features that allow the user to do things once there, such as downloading files or saving pictures. Popular browsers include FireFox, MSN Explorer, and Yahoo.

Bulletin board—an electronic message center, where visitors can leave messages, which are either live or screened, then posted. Usually focused on specific topics.

Home page—a name for the first page of any collection of Web pages or a Web site, often referred to as the “front door” of a Web site.

html— abbreviation for hyper text mark-up language, which is the basic code-based language used with text to create Web pages.

Internet—a decentralized global system developed to link computer networks around the world using the TCP/IP Protocol (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol) that was developed and has evolved from the ARPANET (the original Internet) of the late 1960's. When referring to the global net, Internet is always capitalized. An “internet” or “intranet” refers to computers that are connected together for internal use. An intranet can be on the Internet or be found at a site where computers are hooked together.

List Serve—a collection or list of e-mail addresses that are kept together. When you send out an announcement, you place the name of the list serve in the address window and the e-mail goes to everyone on the list serve.

Pass word protection—ensures that unauthorized users do not access the computer or Web pages. A password is a secret combination of characters (letters and numbers) that allow the user to access a page or files online.

Search engine—this is a program, often included in or linked to by a browser or found at its own address, such as google.com, which allows you to search either a data base of Web pages or the World Wide Web.

Web server—a dedicated computer or system of computers that allows content to be served to a Web browser and sent to a user's Web browser. The browser and server communicate using HTTP language. There are different types of servers that provide different functions using different computer languages, such as Audio/Video servers that allow for streaming video; Chat Servers, which allow groups of people to talk with each other; Groupware Servers, which allow for people to work together online; and FTP or File Transfer Protocol Servers, which allow files to move through cyberspace.

URL— stands for Uniform Resource Locator, or the address used to locate a Web page. Girl Scouts of the USA's URL is <http://www.girlscouts.org>. The first section (http) says it is written in hypertext markup language, then that it is on the World Wide Web (www), under the name of “girlscouts” and that we live in the domain name of organization (org). You

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have to register to have your own unique URL; however, you can be hosted by a Web site, sharing their URL, with an extension that gives you a specific address.

Web host—provides server space, Web services, and file maintenance for Web sites created by individuals or other companies who do not have their own server. Subscribers to Internet Service Providers (ISPs) often are given limited Web space for their own Web site, or there is a fee charged, depending on the complexity.

Web page(s)—printable pages on the World Wide Web. Often used in place of “home page” when describing a personal site. Each page has its own URL or Universal Resource Locator.

Web site—a name for a collection of Web pages hosted on a Web site. Most individuals refer to their page or pages as “Home page” or “Web page” rather a Web site, which is usually much more extensive, expensive, and professional. GSUSA calls its collection of Web pages a Web site because of its size and complexity. It’s “Home page” is at www.girlscouts.org.

World Wide Web (WWW or Web)—a global system of linking documents, pictures, sounds and other kinds of files across the Internet. The WWW is graphics intensive, as compared to the initial Internet, which started out hosting documents and files.

Girl Scout Program Links and Resources for Creating Web Pages

- ▶ **Girl Scout Safety-Pledge** (online at www.girlscouts.org/internet_safety_pledge.asp)
- ▶ **Let Me Know Internet Safety Site** for Girl Scouts and their parents (online at <http://letmeknow.girlscouts.org/Home.aspx>)