

Girl-Led & Cadette/Senior/Ambassador Year Planning

Fast Fundamentals



Overview

Ready to help your girls plan an exciting year ahead in Girl Scouts? This guide takes a step back to explore one of the key elements of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience: Girl-Led. You'll learn how to best support your girls as they plan their troop year. After we review Girl-Led, you'll find helpful resources to guide a successful year-planning session including creating a troop agreement!

Girl-Led & Progression

One of the main features of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) is that Girl Scouting is girl-led. Actually, it's the secret sauce of Girl Scouting, and it's easy to see why. When girls step up and take ownership of their decisions, they grow into confident leaders who can make informed and empowered decisions, a valuable skill they'll carry throughout their lives.

When a Girl Scout troop is girl-led, it means the girls should be in control of all aspects of their Girl Scout experience. For new troop leaders, stepping aside and letting the girls take charge might seem counterintuitive, especially if you lead a troop of energetic Daisies or Brownies. And because girl-led activities start with you, how can you create a space where girls feel empowered to speak their minds and pursue their interests? Girls of different age levels are capable of different levels of leadership, which is where progression comes into play.

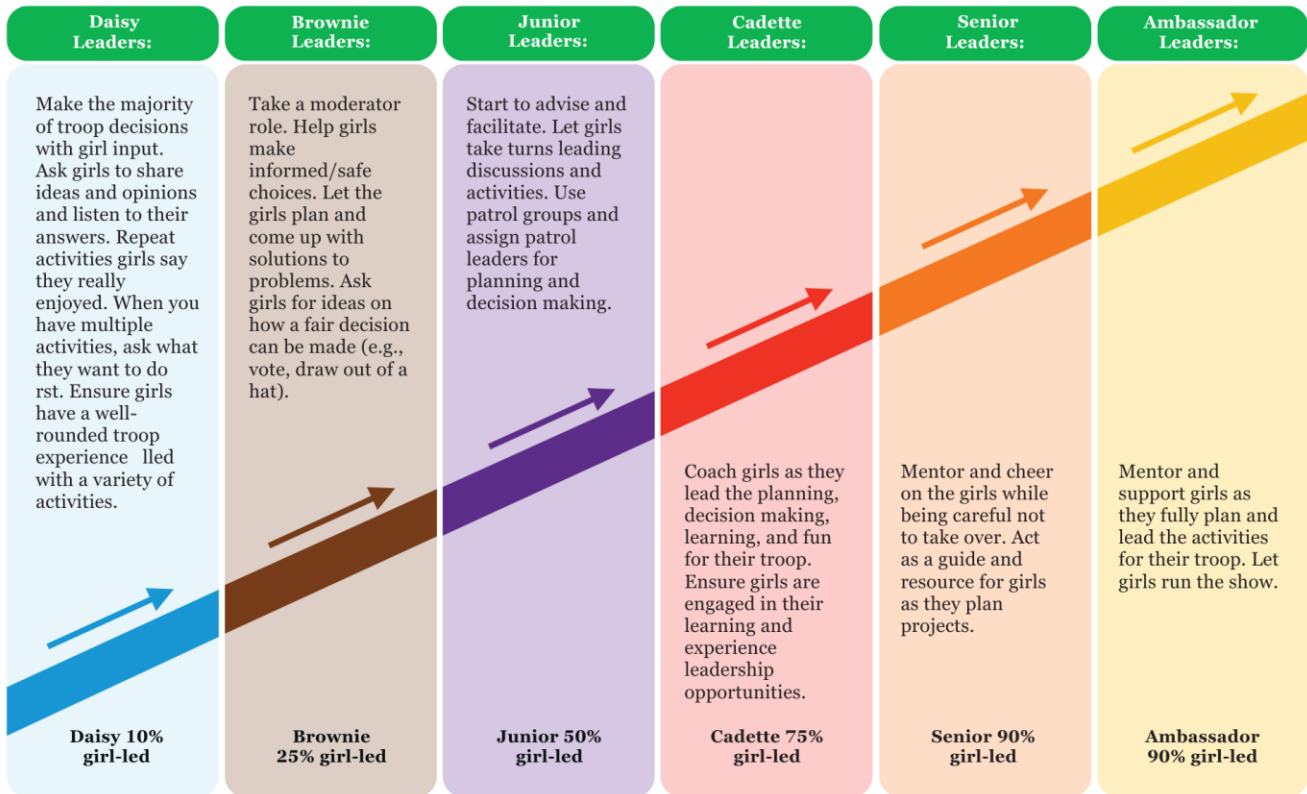
For a new Daisy troop, girls participate and have a voice in decision making, but the adult volunteer takes the lead in guiding those decisions. As girls get older, they begin to take a more active role in leading the troop, while the adult volunteer gradually steps back to let them lead. By the time girls are teenagers, they become the primary decision makers. The adult volunteer never steps away completely, but their role shifts further into the background to support the girls as they take responsibility for their troop.

The charts on the next page help illustrate this concept from both the leader's perspective and the girl's perspective.



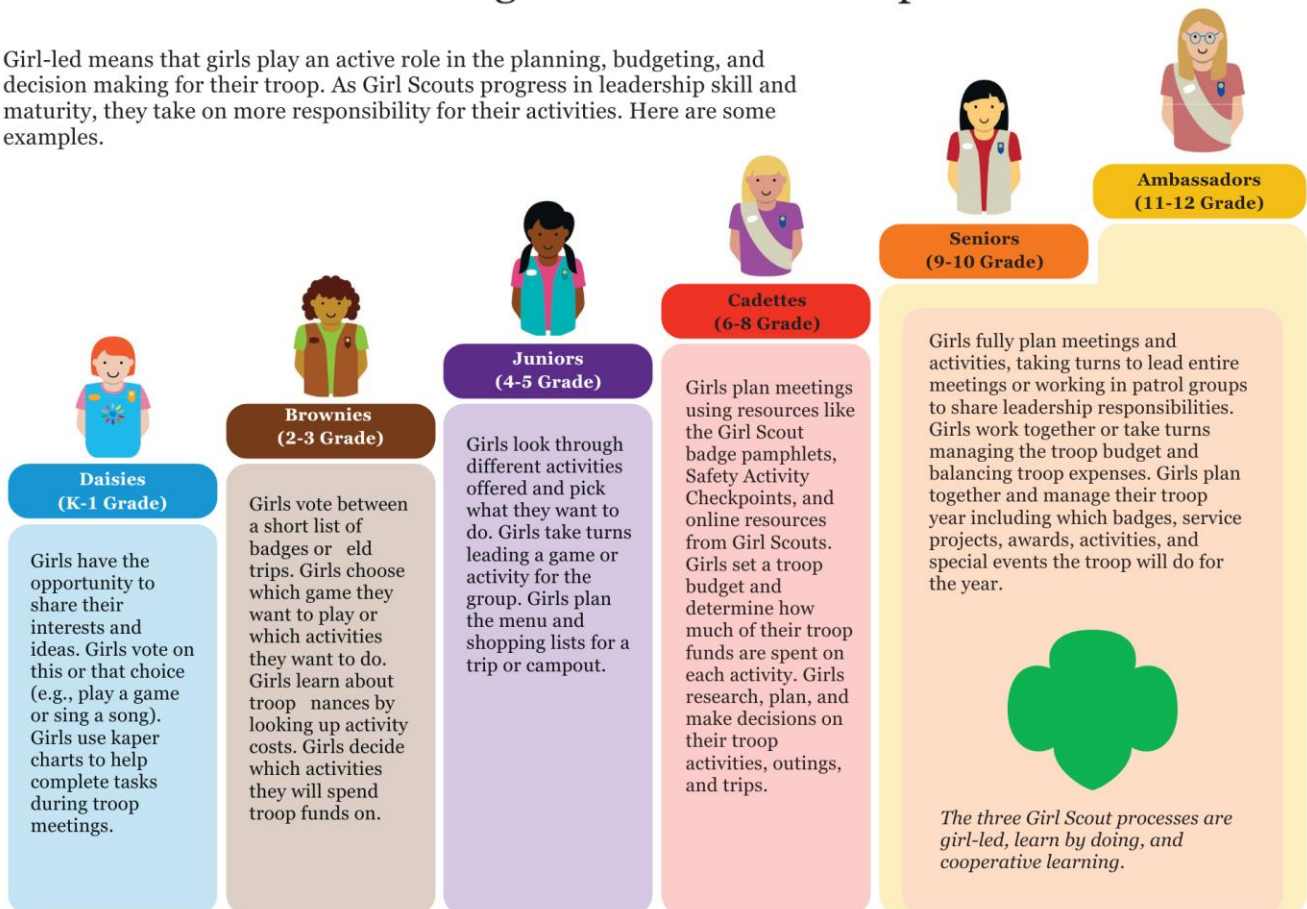
Girl-Led Progression: The Leader Experience

Supportive adults like you help girls move through a progression of skills, abilities, and activities. Younger girls need your supportive direction in making decisions and discovering new interests. Older girls need your guidance and coaching. Here are some age-appropriate examples, but take into account that a newly-formed older girl troop will probably need more leader guidance at the start.



Girl-Led Progression: The Girl Experience

Girl-led means that girls play an active role in the planning, budgeting, and decision making for their troop. As Girl Scouts progress in leadership skill and maturity, they take on more responsibility for their activities. Here are some examples.



“Girl-Led” for Older Girls

Whether your girls are planning a service project, organizing a trip, or choosing awards to pursue, they still benefit from your support as they grow as leaders. For older Girl Scouts, “girl-led” means taking ownership — leading meetings, making decisions as a team, and following through on their ideas. Your role becomes more of a mentor or advisor, offering guidance when needed while stepping back to let them lead. Encourage use of tools like Safety Activity Checkpoints and the Volunteer Toolkit.

Things to remember:

- Older girls may have strong opinions but still value support and perspective.
- As decisions become more complex, they may need help balancing priorities.
- Encouragement, trust, and honest feedback empower them, even when things don’t go as planned.

There’s no rule about earning a specific number of badges, holding a set number of meetings, or meeting any checklist. What matters most is that your girls are making age-appropriate decisions for their troop and having fun along the way!

Decision-Making Tools for Girls

While the girls in your troop might be around the same age or in the same grade, that doesn’t mean they all have the same abilities or experiences. Each girl brings her own background, home life, and culture, which can shape how she makes decisions. Here are some tools you can introduce to help older girls learn to make thoughtful decisions:

The 6 Step Decision-Making Process

1. **Identify the Decision** – Pinpoint the problem or opportunity that requires a choice.
2. **Gather Information** – Collect facts, opinions, and consider the possible consequences. Encourage girls to ask questions, seek advice from trusted adults, and explore different sources to gain a broader perspective.
3. **Evaluate Options** – With the information gathered, review the possible choices. Help girls think about both short-term and long-term impacts of each option.
4. **Make a Decision** – Choose the option that best aligns with what’s been learned and discussed.
5. **Take Action** – Put the choice into practice. Remind girls to honor the group’s decision, understand it’s okay if the majority vote leads to trying something new, and support their Girl Scout sisters in activities they’re excited about.
6. **Reflect on the Outcome** – After carrying out the decision, review how it went. Did it meet expectations? What could be done differently next time?

By guiding girls through these steps, you’re helping them build confidence and learn how to make thoughtful, age-appropriate decisions together.

Decision-Making Strategies – The strategies below will help the girls consider the options before bringing the choices to a group vote.

- **Pro/Con Lists** – A classic strategy that encourages deeper thinking.
 - **How it Works:** Present the two (or more) options being considered. As a group or in small teams, have the girls discuss the pros and cons of each. Rather than just making a list, encourage them to talk through the impact, effort, cost, and overall value of each choice. This approach helps them practice evaluating trade-offs and thinking critically.
- **Scenario Planning** – Helps girls think ahead and assess possible outcomes.
 - **How it works:** Walk through each option and discuss “what if” scenarios. What would this choice require? How would it affect our time, budget, or group dynamics? This method encourages forward-thinking and helps girls feel confident in more complex decisions.

Decision-Making Tools for Girls (Con't)

- **Ranking and Prioritizing** – A great method when there are several good ideas on the table.
 - How it works: Ask each girl to rank the options from most to least preferred. You can do this silently on paper or through a shared group discussion. This helps highlight group trends and surfaces the ideas with the most overall support — even if they aren't everyone's top pick.
- **SWOT Analysis** – A helpful tool for evaluating more complex ideas.
 - How it works: Girls assess an idea by listing its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This strategy helps older girls think critically, anticipate challenges, and make informed decisions, especially for big projects or leadership opportunities.

Bringing it All Together

Strategies like Pro/Con Lists, Ranking and Prioritizing, and SWOT Analysis help older Girl Scouts evaluate options, think critically, and approach decisions with intention. These tools give girls space to express their ideas, consider multiple perspectives, and reflect on the potential impact of their choices.

As girls become more comfortable with using these methods, they build confidence in their leadership skills, from leading discussions to making informed group decisions. These strategies also encourage collaboration, thoughtful planning, and accountability. By practicing decision-making in meaningful ways, older Girl Scouts take greater ownership of their troop experience and are empowered to lead with purpose and clarity.

Signs of Girl-Led

Below are 12 signs you're encouraging girl-led opportunities in your troop:

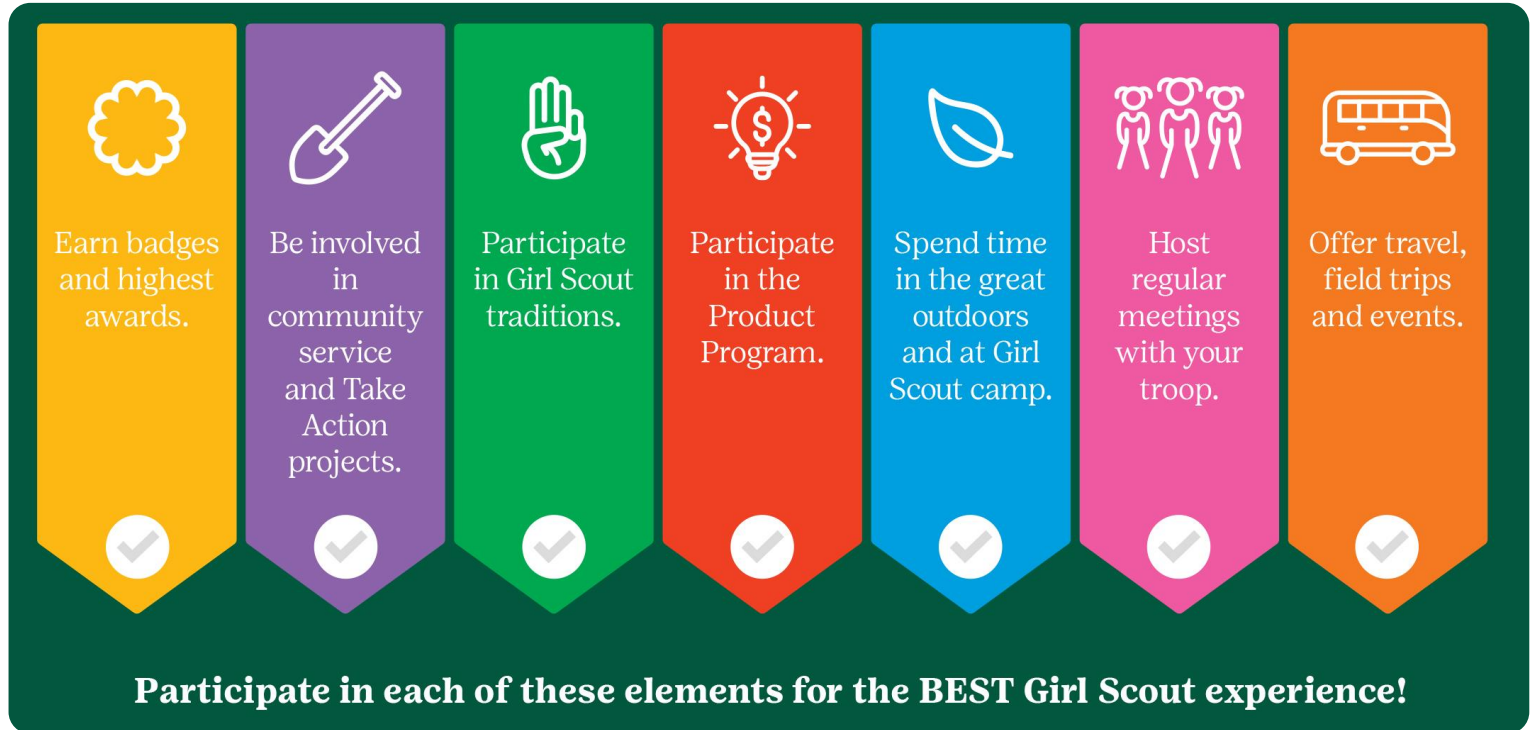
1. You encourage every girl to share her ideas and voice, valuing her opinion as she builds leadership skills.
2. You respect what girls say and recognize they are capable of making thoughtful, independent decisions.
3. You promote the Girl Scout Law, reminding girls that they grow through supporting one another.
4. When girls suggest activities, you ask, "How can we make that happen?" or "What's needed to move forward?"
5. Girls are comfortable disagreeing with your suggestions and openly share alternatives.
6. You explore ambitious ideas with curiosity, asking "Why is that important to you?" and helping find practical solutions.
7. If you're not comfortable with an activity, you help find another adult or resource to support it within Safety Activity Checkpoints.
8. You encourage reflection by asking, "What did you learn?" and "What would you do differently next time?"
9. You share your ideas, but don't expect instant excitement or agreement from the girls.
10. Girls feel comfortable giving honest feedback, knowing your suggestions are optional, not required.
11. Girls know they can come to you for guidance or support whenever they need it.
12. You provide consistent encouragement to help them grow as leaders and decision-makers.



Year-Planning for Cadette, Senior & Ambassador Girl Scouts

Planning your year ahead with your Cadette, Senior, or Ambassador Girl Scouts is an exciting opportunity for them to take charge, set meaningful goals, and further shape their Girl Scout experience. It's a time for the girls to explore their interests, plan impactful projects, and take on leadership roles. Below are a variety of topics and activities to ensure they have a well-rounded and rewarding Girl Scout experience.

Foundational Elements of Girl Scouting



Scan the QR code to visit the Badge Explorer!



Activity Ideas by Month

August

- Host a Year Planning Party
- Host a Parent Meeting
- Visit Girl Scout Camp
- Celebrate National S'mores Day (Aug 10)
- Earn the Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors patch

September

- Complete an Investiture or Rededication Ceremony
- Complete a Fall Bridging Ceremony
- Start Fall Product Sale
- Earn the Hispanic Heritage Month patch
- Renew by September 30 to receive On-Time Renewal patch
- Participate in Girl Scouts Love State Parks

October

- Celebrate Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday (Oct 31)
- International Day of the Girl
- Attend Spooky Science with GSHOM

Year-Planning for Daisy, Brownie & Junior Girl Scouts (Con't)

November

- Earn a Financial Literacy Badges
- Earn the Native American Heritage Month patch
- Celebrate Fall Harvest

December

- Start Girl Scout Cookie Program
- Host a holiday party

January

- Attend Girl Scout Cookie Kick-off with GSHOM
- Celebrate MLK Jr. Day (3rd Monday)

February

- Celebrate World Thinking Day (Feb 22)
- Earn the Black History Month patch
- Celebrate Valentines Day

March

- Celebrate Girl Scout Week
- Celebrate Women's History Month
- Attend the Girl Scout Birthday Bash with GSHOM

April

- Celebrate Girl Scout Leader Day (Apr 22)
- Celebrate Earth Day (Apr 22)
- Attend Girl Scout Camp Open House with GSHOM

May

- Participate in National Bridging Week
- Earn the Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage patch
- Host an end of year party
- Celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month

June

- Visit Girl Scout Camp
- Earn the LGBTQ+ patch
- Celebrate Juneteenth
- Earn the Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors patch
- Attend Girl Scout Jamboree with GSHOM

July

- Visit Girl Scout Camp
- Earn the Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors patch

*Be sure to check the GSHOM Event Calendar on our website for new and exciting council-hosted programs.

*Connect with your local Service Unit to include any event opportunities available to your girls.

Pins & Additional Awards for Cadettes, Seniors & Ambassadors

Grade Level	Cadette (6-8)			Senior (9-10)	Ambassador (11-12)
Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin	 Year 1	 Year 2	 Year 3	 Year 1	 Year 2
My Promise, My Faith Pin	 Year 1	 Year 2	 Year 3	 Year 1	 Year 2
Safety Award Pin					
Community Service Bar					
Service to Girl Scouting Bar					
Peer Leadership (Same for Senior and Ambassador)	Silver Torch 				Gold Torch 
Personal Leadership True North					
Teaching Leadership (Same for Senior and Ambassador)					
Community Advocacy (Same for all three levels)	Take Action 				Global Action 
Adventure Troops (Same for all three levels)	Trailblazer 				Mariner 
Bridging Award	 Bridge to Senior Arc			 Bridge to Ambassador Arc	 Bridge to Adult Pin
Highest Awards (Same for Senior and Ambassador)	Silver Award 				Gold Award 

Preparing a Troop Agreement

Creating a troop agreement is a great way to establish clear expectations for your girls and to facilitate discussion about supporting appropriate conduct and behavior during Girl Scout activities. A troop agreement can be created each year, and is a great way to incorporate new members, and allow for growth and development. Complete the following steps with your troop to guide girls through the creation of your own troop agreement:

Step 1- What is a troop agreement?

- Share with the girls that a troop agreement is a document, created together by the troop, with guidelines for behavior that every troop member agrees to follow.
- Share that a troop agreement helps to make sure everyone can feel safe and have fun at Girl Scouts.

Step 2- Review the Girl Scout Promise & Law

- Review the Girl Scout Promise & Law with the girls
- Ask the girls what words or phrases stand out to them, or that they like. How does it feel to be friendly? Helpful? Etc. How does it feel when someone is friendly or helpful to you?

Step 3- Brainstorm topics to be included in the troop agreement

- Ask the girls to give examples on how they should behave at troop meetings.
- Share the golden rule “Treat others as you would like to be treated”. Ask the girls what they think that means. How should you treat others at troop meetings?
- Brainstorm ideas for your troop agreement. Topics could be related to materials, how to treat others, cell phone use, arriving/leaving, confidential communication, etc. Make sure each girl has a chance to share.
- As a troop, choose at least five items to be included on your final troop agreement. These can be words, short ideas, or detailed sentences depending on your troop. Some examples include:
 - Girl Scouts is a safe space, respect goes beyond the meeting
 - Treat adults and guests with respect
 - Leave the space cleaner than you found it
 - Live by the Girl Scout Law
 - Be a friend, not a bully
 - Be a good listener; don’t interrupt

Step 4- Brainstorm consequences for not following the troop agreement

- Brainstorm with the girls what they think the consequences should be, should someone not follow the agreed upon rules of the troop agreement.
- Make sure to reel the girls in, if necessary. Consequences should be stern without being too punitive. Examples of consequences might include:
 - Asked to review the Promise & Law
 - Asked to sit out of an activity
 - Asked to be picked up from a meeting
 - Request the Parent/Caregiver’s assistance

Step 5- Sign the troop agreement

- Once you and the girls come to a consensus on the items for your troop agreement, type it up.
- Have the girl and her parent/caregiver sign it, acknowledging they understand what is expected throughout the Girl Scout year.
- Once signed, collect for your records. Make sure the girl and her parent/caregiver have a copy as well.

Step 6- Create and Sign a troop agreement poster

- Use poster board, pencils, and markers to create a poster of your troop agreement. Girls can work as a group or take turns writing each item and decorating their poster. Have each girl sign the poster just like she signed her individual troop agreement.
- Display the poster at each troop meeting, to remind girls of the agreement they created together.

Sample Girl Scout Troop Agreement

Troop _____

The Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:
To serve God* and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

* Members may substitute for the word God in accordance with their own spiritual beliefs.

The Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,
and to
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place, and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.

I understand my attitude and behavior are important to my success as a Girl Scout. I also understand as a member of the Girl Scout community, it is my responsibility to do my best to adhere to the Girl Scout Promise and Law, and to abide by the following rules, decided upon by my troop:

I will:

- Work cooperatively
- Keep what happens at Girl Scouts private
- Be a friend, not a bully
- Treat adults and guests with respect
- Leave the space cleaner than you found it
- Be a good listener; don't interrupt

If I do not abide by these rules and the Girl Scout Promise and Law, troop leadership may:

- Ask me to review the Promise & Law
- Ask me to sit out of an activity
- Ask for me to be picked up from a meeting
- Request my Parent/Caregiver's assistance to resolve the issue



I have read, understand, and agree with the above responsibilities, decided upon by my troop.

(Girl Name)

(Girl Signature)

(Date)

I have read, understand, and agree with the above responsibilities of my daughter.

(Parent/Caregiver Name)

(Parent/Caregiver Signature)

(Date)