

Managing a Multi-level Troop

What is a Multi-level Troop?

A multi-level troop serves girls from two or more grade levels.

What are some reasons to start a Multi-level Troop?

Multi-level troops are started for many reasons. Most often, one of the troop leaders has daughters in different grade levels or the community/school is so small it can only support one troop. Older girl troops (Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors) sometimes combine into a multi-level troop because their individual troops are so small.

Multi-level Troop Benefits

- Younger girls typically look up to older girls and bringing them together in a multi-level troop setting can provide younger girls with positive role models.
- Older girls have an opportunity to put their leadership skills into action as they mentor younger girls. Many badge and *Journey* activities suggest that older girls (even Brownies) assist younger girls with service projects, teach them new skills, lead songs and games, and more.
- Girls are grouped by grade level nearly everywhere – school, sports, after school programs – so a multi-level environment allows girls to interact with a diverse group of girls and make new friends!
- If guardians or volunteers have daughters of different levels, this allows them all to spend time together (as well as simplify their schedule).

Strategies to Make Your Multi-level Troop a Success

There are some great benefits to having a multi-level troop for girls and volunteers, but there are also some unique challenges. Here are some best practices and tips on how best to overcome any challenges you may face to not only make your multi-level troop a success, but to have a great Girl Scout year.

Make a plan to ensure activities are appropriate for each age level.

- The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) has multi-level meeting and year plans that provide activities for multi-level troops. This allows you to do activities together without the need to break out into age level groups.
- Badge and age-level Journey activities can be adapted for the different ages or facilitated separately. Use the Volunteer Toolkit to help plan troop meetings with activities appropriate for each age level.
- Allow older girls to teach or assist the younger ones. This is a great leadership opportunity for all involved.
- If safety is a concern or there is no way to adapt the activity in an appropriate way, leverage the help of other troop volunteers and ask that they physically separate the group for that portion of the meeting. Remember, there must always be two adults with any group of girls.

Support friendships within age levels and encourage girls to make new friends of different ages.

- Incorporate activities that bring all girls together, such as opening and closing ceremonies, songs, games, and outings.
- Remind girls that although they may be at different levels, they are all part of the sisterhood of Girl Scouting.

Ask for help to balance the additional responsibilities of managing a multi-level troop.

- With multi-level resources available in the Volunteer Toolkit, managing and leading a multi-level troop is easier than ever.
- Ask for help! If you are responsible for the troop's overall organization and planning, other parents/volunteers* may be willing to step up and assist in facilitating activities. Download meeting plans from the Volunteer Toolkit to aid troop helpers in leading activities with the girls.
- At the start of the year, secure two or more parent/troop helpers* for each grade level so they can witness the girl-planning process. This way, all volunteers will understand what the troop would like to achieve as a whole and can work with individual grade levels toward that end to these accomplishments.

**Please note that all volunteers must complete the volunteer process through GSGWM: member registration, background check, and any required trainings.*

Utilize the National Program Portfolio materials for each age level.

The National Program Portfolio materials

- Multi-level troop leaders should become familiar with the materials for each level represented in the troop. Use the multi-level resources available in the Volunteer Toolkit to plan meetings and activities accordingly.
- Ask one or two parent volunteers to become your resident “experts” in the materials for a particular grade level. Make sure they are approved troop leaders so they can access Volunteer Toolkit resources.
- When planning activities, include volunteers so that they can discuss the similarities and differences for each level’s activities. For example, Juniors and Cadettes may both earn a Digital Arts badge; Juniors earn Digital Photography, and Cadettes try out digital moviemaking.
- Encourage all parents to visit GirlScouts.org to learn more about the Girl Scout program.

Ways to work together with the Program Portfolio

With a little creativity and imagination, you can provide fun and challenging activities that allow girls of all ages to learn and grow together, earning awards and badges along the way.

Examples:

Cadettes can earn their *Leader in Action (LIA) Award* while assisting Brownies in completing badges from their grade level.

A Daisy-Brownie troop could go camping and complete activities for their outdoor badges. As Brownies lead the way through trails following a map, Daisies can identify flora and fauna that line the trail.

During a fitness class, Juniors could work on their *Staying Fit* badge while Brownies work on the *My Best Self* badge. Perhaps there is one step where the Juniors can teach the Brownies new exercises and vice versa? Is there a step where the Brownies can prepare healthy snacks with the Juniors and vice versa? There are many ways to incorporate girls of all ages into activities.

The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) has meeting plans prepared just for K-5 and 6-12 multi-level Troops. It also has a wealth of uploaded badges that you can search by topic to find similar activities your girls can work on together. You can also find the Girls Guide to Girl Scouting badge chart under the resources tab to help you tie different age level awards together. Need help using the VTK? Reach out to Volunteer Support at 888-474-9686 for a workshop!

Important Considerations When Managing a Multi-level Troop

- Always follow the girl/adult ratio based on the *youngest* girls in your troop. This means if you have a troop of 12 Daisy/Brownie girls, you should meet the required Daisy ratios.
- You can only have one bank account per troop number. Therefore, you cannot create a separate account for your older girls who are raising money.

- When registering girls for council programs, be mindful of grade level requirements. There may be some programs that are not open to all troop members.

Leader Tips and Tricks for Multi-level Troops

- Use a Patrol System to run meetings by dividing the troop into smaller groups (patrols). Patrols choose a patrol name, symbol, leaders, and assistant leaders.
- Use a kaper chart to assign jobs. Members should rotate jobs.
- Give girls a chance to work both within their grade level and others.
- Although grade-level groups should select the activities they wish to work on, the entire troop should also have the opportunity to decide on the trips and activities they would like to do.
- Council patch programs are a great way to explore topics with specific activities for each grade level. Visit girlscoutsgwm.org to learn more about our patch programs or click [here](#).
- Remember, it's not just about awards. Allow the girls to decide what they want to do, and how they want to do it. This allows programming to be girl-led and helps girls develop important leadership skills.
- Plan ahead: Consider how your troop can accommodate other girls in your community who want to be Girl Scouts while adhering to girl/adult ratios established in *Volunteer Essentials*.
- Don't forget to check in with your community team and other experienced leaders in your area— they might have some great tips and tricks for you as well! If you're not sure how to connect with your community team or local leaders, please reach out to us at 888-474-9686 and we'll be happy to help!

Ask for Help and Delegate

Enlist parents to help you with planning and make sure all parents are involved in supporting their Girl Scout in some capacity.

- Hold a Parent/Guardian Meeting. Tell the families you are excited about getting to know them and ask how they can support their Girl Scout and her troop.
- Have parents/guardians complete a *Families Make it Happen!* form. This form is available in the [Troop Packet](#), as well as the forms section of council's website.
- Share a volunteer* sign-up list for upcoming meetings, trips, and other activities.
- Create a phone tree so parents and guardians can contact each other to help if they can't make it to a meeting or activity.

- Once you get to know your troop parents*, ask for help with product sales, chaperoning, driving, meetings, planning, etc.

**Please note that all volunteers must complete the volunteer process through GSGWM: member registration, background check, and any required trainings.*

Keep it Girl-Led

Girl Scouts should provide girls with a safe and nurturing setting to make decisions and learn from their mistakes. To make this possible, activities and meetings should be girl-led. This is the first step toward developing girls' leadership abilities.

Managing a Multi-level Troop: FAQs

Below are some frequent “what if” questions that will help guide you as you manage your multi-level troop throughout the Girl Scout year.

What if a parent who was scheduled to volunteer doesn't show up?

- Be prepared. Create a phone tree that parents/guardians can use to reach out to each other. Be sure to let them know the importance of their commitment and encourage parents to contact another person to help if they can't make it to the meeting or activity.
- Always have a *Plan B*. Keep a file of activities you can do if you have extra time or need something different to do. Look for additional resources on our website.

What if the troop decides to split into multiple troops?

The offshoot group would need to fulfill all of the necessary requirements for forming a new troop. This includes:

- Proper girl/volunteer ratios: There would need to be enough adult volunteers interested to fill the necessary positions to run a troop.
- Obtaining a troop number: The new troop leaders will need to follow up with the Service Unit's Volunteer Support Coordinator to get a troop number.
- Opening a separate bank account: The new troop will need to work with the Service Unit's Community Accounting Coordinator to open a bank account. The funds from the existing troop are to be evenly split between the girls.
- Troops can continue to meet together if they wish.

What if girls want to do specific activities for their grade level that require them to save funds?

- The troop needs to make decisions about how they are going to earn and spend their money at every grade level. Remember that funds cannot become the property of or be assigned to individual girls.
- If you are planning grade level specific activities, be sure to communicate with all Troop members (and parents if age appropriate). Activities should be planned for all specific grade levels to be sure all Troop members have a chance to use the funds they've worked toward.
- Remember— Troop funds cannot be used to pay for camp. If girls would like to use their cookie dough towards camp, they are welcome to host additional cookie booths just for their grade level.

What if girls want to participate in a council program but do not meet the grade-level requirements?

- First, always check *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- If it is a location that girls want to visit, encourage them to contact the business directly and find out what kinds of programs are offered. Find out the cost, times/dates available, and maximum and minimum number of participants. Consider inviting other troops in your Service Unit to join you to lower the cost.

Still have questions or need more support? Please contact customercare@girlscoutsgwm.org.