

GIRL SCOUT JOURNEY UPDATE



GIRL SCOUTS HEART OF CENTRAL CALIFORNIA 3005 GOLD CANAL DRIVE RANCHO CORDOVA, CA 95670

Summer Planning Guide

Whether you've recently taken the plunge to become a Girl Scout volunteer or have been working with girls for years, you know what works and what doesn't. You know what your group of girls likes and what they don't. You know their strengths and weaknesses, you know your own, and you know how to balance them.

You are...An expert on your group of girls, a role model, a Girl Scout volunteer.

Summertime Reflection

Right now it's summer. It's time to enjoy the weather, let the sun dance on your skin, let the cool breeze blow the cobwebs from your thoughts. It is time to relax, remember, and refresh. Why not use some of this time to start planning for how you might work the journeys into your next Girl Scout year?

Think back on your past year. What successes did you have? As you worked with girls, do you remember the look on their faces when you helped them discover a new experience, or supported them as they took the plunge and tried something new—and then discovered that they were good at it? From that moment, each girl developed a new passion, strove to prove her excellence, and was introduced to people who could help her explore, grow, and develop. Together, you embarked on a journey. Your memories are wonderful; theirs are life-changing. And there are so many more life-changing memories in the works!

Journeys Make Your Lives Bigger

Life is a journey, particularly for girls. On every journey, you start somewhere, perhaps with an invitation, a picture that inspires you, or words in a book. You make a decision to go somewhere new. And on the way, you might try foreign foods, visit new places, hear new ideas that spark your imagination, forge new friendships, and take home beautiful memories and perhaps a few keepsakes. Most importantly, you come home a little wiser...and your world is a little bigger.

Those same elements are part of each Girl Scout journey. The journey books take you and girls on new adventures, where you will discover, connect, and take action to make a difference in the world. Journey books are designed to take girls to new places, all under the umbrella of a particular theme, but it is your expertise, experience, and imagination that bring the books to life and make the journey unique for your girls.

Forget the Stress

Each journey adult guide has been created specifically for you, providing information that helps you facilitate discussions and activities with girls. Included in each adult guide are explanations of journey themes, sample sessions, tips for encouraging girls to choose and complete activities, and ideas for Take Action projects. Journey books give purpose and structure to the year as you and the girls define goals and choose activities related to a central theme. They also describe how to make sure the Girl Scout Leadership Experience is girl-led. Girls define their own goals and the activities they want to pursue, while you guide them and lend your expertise.

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Plan for the Year Ahead

To get started, first draw up a simple calendar and plot out what your year might look like:

January	February	March
April	May	June
July	August	September
October	November	December

Then consider the following questions:

- How many meetings will you have each month? When do you plan to break for holidays or other events?
- How many weeks should be set aside for camp or travel?
- How many weeks do you need to allocate for the Girl Scout Cookie Program?
- At the beginning of the year, how will you introduce the journeys and related books to the girls and their parents? Is there a kickoff event that can help bring the journey theme to life for the girls—what's a good day for this?
- Are there guest speakers you can introduce to the girls who will open up new opportunities for them?
- If you've worked with this group before, what are their preferences? Badge work? Field trips? Special events? Can these also be tied to the journey theme? Make sure to include these activities in your calendar as a starting point. Girls will fill in the details as they guide their own journey.

Once you've established a loose framework, the girls will be ready to lead their own exploration.

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Keep it Girl-Led

You've plotted out a framework for your year, but come fall, it'll be time to ask the girls what they think. Remember: You want girls to lead!

Before your group even opens journey books, ask the girls what the journey and related theme mean to them. Maybe the theme ignites a discussion (or even debate!) that helps the girls chart their course for the year. Use this information to help the girls plan a journey kickoff event for themselves and their families.

In your discussions, probe to find out what the girls are most interested in accomplishing over the year. Maybe one or more girls had a particular adventure over the summer that they can expand on as a group? Ask, too, how they'd like to incorporate these interests into their year.

For example, suppose girls are intrigued by the theme of the journey book or by a related theme that's a presence in their lives. This is your chance to encourage girls to dig deeper. Can they organize and plan a field trip or longer travel opportunity to find out more? Is there an event in another pathway that meshes with this topic or area of interest? Can the girls locate and communicate with an expert in the field via e-mail? Can they invite a local guest speaker to answer specific questions or demonstrate particular skills? And which badges can the group choose to work on that will deepen their skills in this particular area?

None of this will happen overnight, but by asking gentle questions, showing interest in their answers, and helping them take the next steps in their exploration, the girls will lead their own journeys as leaders of their communities—and the world!

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A JOURNEY SUCCESS STORY

Alicia is the troop volunteer for a group of Brownie Girl Scouts in Huntington Beach, California. Her troop has been working with the Brownie Quest book.

"When I first received the Brownie Quest book, I wasn't quite sure how to incorporate it into our established troop meeting protocol. We had very little time to figure it all out, so I decided to just go with the flow and figure it out as we went along. That was the beginning of our journey. The girls had no problems thinking of what to do. They just needed some guidance in shaping those ideas so that their projects and activities were attainable.

"To prepare for our first meeting, I read through the adult guide and Brownie Quest book. I decided to follow one of the sample sessions from the adult guide. At our first meeting, I spoke to the group about the journey theme, the Brownie Quest book, and some of the activities that we could do as a group. The girls loved the idea of the map and finding three hidden keys. Over the course of ten months, we had fifteen meetings and eighteen events/field trips. Of the fifteen meetings, nine were spent working on quest activities. The girls also voted to work on several Try-Its, so I wanted to make sure that they were earning those, too. Although the Brownie Quest ended up as our foundation for the year, we were also able to earn thirteen Try-Its—many of which were related to our quest.

"At the beginning of our troop year, we learned about ELF, and each girl completed her Family Star. The girls learned about cooperation, composed a Team Agreement, and made Family Activity Ideas jars (reusing nut cans). The girls filled in a Circle Map and read stories from the Brownie Quest book. We decided to write our own stories about helping others in our community, which inspired our Take Action project. The girls voted that helping animals was their area of interest and decided to raise money to purchase items for a local animal shelter. They also created a community recycling program to turn trash into cash!

"Along their journey, each girl discovered, connected, took action, and learned essential leadership skills. They might not understand or appreciate the details of their journey now, but this experience will shape them and prepare them for their next leadership opportunity.

"My role as the adult was similar to my previous experiences in Girl Scouting. I provided a structure in which the girls actively participated in Girl Scouting (not playing on the playground) and engaged them in activities that developed skills, interests, and abilities. The journey books broke down the planning and implementation process of a Take Action project. The outline made it easy for the troop to create a project that they planned from beginning to end. Volunteers still need to research, prepare materials, and plan out meeting strategies, but the adult guides are helpful tools and can be adapted to fit the needs of individual troops."