

Congratulations! **You've officially volunteered to be a Girl Scout leader.** You will be guiding girls into becoming skilled leaders for their future. Parents and girls alike are excited for the fun year ahead...and you should be too! Everything is going to awesome.

As most leaders will tell you, there may be a brief thought of, "Am I prepared to do this?" It's completely normal. Don't worry. **Take a deep breath, you can do this!** Because we've all been there, **here are some tips from experienced leaders to help you grow in your new role and enjoy the journey!**

Utilize Your Resources and Do Research – Never been a Girl Scout, or worried you don't know enough about Girl Scouts? It's okay. You aren't expected to know everything right away. **We have resources to help** you learn everything you need to know to have a successful year. Check out the MyGS website on GSSEF.org for everything from planning tools to re-registering girls for your troop. Required training information as well as enrichment training classes can be found at <https://www.gssef.org/en/for-volunteers/training.html>. We also have friendly, experienced leaders and Service Unit Team Members, willing to lend a helping hand in everything Girl Scouts. Stay up-to-date on Blazing Star events by checking out our website <http://blazingstarsu.weebly.com/>. Council-sponsored events can be found at <http://www.gssef.org/en/activities/event-list.html>.

Parent Meeting – Everything you do during as a Girl Scout leader may revolve around the girls, but they come attached to families who have expectations and resources. **Communicate** and don't forget about them when you're just starting out. **Schedule a parent meeting.** During this meeting you can find out if the parents of your scouts have any special skills or trainings that would be valuable to your troop. Maybe they will be willing to attend training for specific things your troop needs like camping or archery. Perhaps someone works at (or knows of) an interesting place that would be a great field trip or has a connection for the perfect meeting location. The better you get to know your parents the more you will learn about resources available to you and the involvement level the family expects to have in the troop. It will also help you better understand your individual girls. Make sure to **make your requests specific**, for example "I need help with snack at our next meeting" or "I need chaperones and drivers for our field trip to the zoo". It's much easier to get people to volunteer if they know what they're volunteering to do. Take the opportunity to set up a volunteer schedule.

Don't Feel Guilty – As a leader you will be making the tough decisions regarding the direction you want to take your troop. You may have to choose parents who will be able to attend a trip based on capacity limits set by Girl Scout council. You may have to cancel a meeting or trip. You may have a multi-level troop and have to break it to your girls that only one level can attend an event. You may decide to close your meetings (when you only have girls and specific volunteers instead of girls and all parents) because sometimes the girls focus better without their parents there. **That is okay.** **Don't feel guilty** for decisions you and your coleader make for the better of the troop and its progress. Remember, **the best decisions may not always be the most popular one.**

Try Not to Compare – There will always be another volunteer or troop who look like they have it together all the time. Don't make the mistake of comparing your troop to theirs. **Girl Scouts is not a competition** and each troop (and leader) has great moments and epic fails. **Nobody is perfect**, so embrace your imperfections, learn from mistakes, and **keep moving forward.**

Involve the Girls – Our organization is based on the concept of being **girl-led** because when girls are given the opportunity to lead amazing things can happen. **Get the girls involved in the planning** from the beginning in age appropriate ways. You will notice as they grow from a Daisy to an Ambassador, they are capable of handling more and more of the troop responsibilities from planning meetings to helping with finances. You'll be surprised what they can accomplish when given opportunities by a leader who believes in them.

Always Have Fun – Remember that **Girl Scouts should be fun for both the girls, leaders, and the volunteers.** While we are always advocates for having fun with a purpose and building leadership, it's okay to plan an activity that is just plain fun. Chances are whatever game, craft, or activity the girls take part in they're going to come out of it with their relationships strengthened and their confidence in themselves boosted.