

# Girl Scout Traditions

Traditions give Girl Scouts a sense of history—and inspire them to be the best they can be. Sharing traditions with millions of Girl Scouts—and the huge network of Girl Scout alumnae who came before them—helps remind girls they belong to a big, powerful sisterhood.



## Badges

A cornerstone of Girl Scouting, the seven legacy badges build on over 100 years of Girl Scout history. Each of these badges (Artist, Athlete, Citizen, Cook, First Aid, Girl Scout Way, and Naturalist) is available at five levels of Girl Scouting, from Brownie to Ambassador.



## Meetings

- **Girl Scout Sign:** Girl Scouts make the Girl Scout sign—raising three fingers of the right hand with the thumb holding down the pinky—when they say the Girl Scout Promise. The three fingers represent the three parts of the Promise.
- **Motto:** The Girl Scout motto is "Be prepared." In the 1947 *Girl Scout Handbook*, the motto was explained this way: "A Girl Scout is ready to help out wherever she is needed. Willingness to serve is not enough; you must know how to do the job well, even in an emergency." The same holds true today.
- **Slogan:** The Girl Scout slogan, which has been used since 1912, is "Do a good turn daily." The slogan is a reminder of the many ways girls can contribute positively to the lives of others.
- **Greeting:** Girl Scouts can greet one another with the Girl Scout handshake, used by Girl Scouts and Girl Guides all over the world. The handshake is made by shaking hands with the left hand and making the Girl Scout sign with the right. The left hand is nearest to the heart and signifies friendship.
- **Friendship Circle:** Representing the unbroken chain of friendship among Girl Scouts and Girl Guides around the world, the Friendship Circle involves Girl Scouts standing in a circle, crossing their right arms over their left, and clasping hands with their friends on both sides. Everyone then makes a silent wish as a friendship squeeze is passed from hand to hand around the circle.
- **SWAPS:** Girl Scouts often make small tokens of friendship to exchange with the Girl Scouts they meet while traveling. These little gifts are called "SWAPS," which stands for "Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere."

# Girl Scout Days

## Special Days in Girl Scouting—All Year Long!

Throughout the year, girls and adults celebrate some very special days in Girl Scouting.

- **Juliette Gordon Low's birthday or Founder's Day, October 31**, marks the birth in 1860 of Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low in Savannah, Georgia.
- **World Thinking Day, February 22**, celebrates the birthdays of Girl Guide/Girl Scout founder Robert, Lord Baden-Powell (1857–1941) and World Chief Guide Olave, Lady Baden-Powell (1889–1977). The day is also a time to donate funds to the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund.
- **Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12**, commemorates the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first 18 girl members in Savannah, Georgia.
- **Girl Scout Week is celebrated each March**, starting with Girl Scout Sunday and ending with Girl Scout Sabbath on a Saturday, and it always includes Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12.
- **Girl Scout Sunday and Girl Scout Sabbath** give girls an opportunity to attend their place of worship and be recognized as a Girl Scout.
- **Girl Scout Leader's Day, April 22**, honors all the volunteers who work as leaders and mentors in partnership with girls. On this day, girls, their families, and communities find special ways to thank their adult Girl Scout volunteers.
- **Girl Scouts' national convention** is celebrated every three years, and will be held in October, 2017 in Columbus, Ohio. Open to all, we're calling it G.I.R.L. 2017 and it will be the largest gathering of girls and women in the world. See you there!



## Girl Scout SWAPS

### Building Friendships One Gift at a Time

SWAPS, the tradition of Girl Scouts exchanging keepsakes, started long ago when Girl Scouts and Girl Guides first gathered for fun, song, and making new friends.

SWAPS were first widely exchanged at national Girl Scout Senior Roundups in the 1950s and 1960s. Today, SWAPS are still the perfect way for Girl Scouts to meet one another and promote friendship. Each one reflects a memory of a special event or Girl Scout sister.

### SWAPS Basics

SWAPS should:

- Tell something about the givers or their group. (Girls may include their address or email information so others can write to them.)
- Represent the givers' country, community, or local Girl Scout council.

### Tips for SWAPS Givers

Girls should:

- Think about the kind of SWAPS they would like to receive from someone else.
- Try not to spend a lot of money. Consider making something from donated or recycled material.
- Be creative, and take time to make hand-crafted SWAPS. (Include directions for making them if it is a craft project that can be replicated.)
- Try to have one for each event participant and staff member.
- Plan ahead so there's time to make them.
- Make SWAPS that can be worn, used, or displayed.
- Ask their group or service unit for help, if needed, in putting SWAPS together.

- Make them portable. Remember, they must be carried or shipped ahead to the event, where other girls will be carrying them away.

### **What to Do with SWAPS**

Girls can:

- Include them with thank-you letters to sponsors and those who helped with a travel event.
- Keep them in a scrapbook, memory box, or shadow box.
- Use them to make a quilt or other textile project.
- Put pins and patches on a hat or jacket.
- Start a council best-of-SWAPS collection.

### **SWAPS Safety and Etiquette**

Girls should:

- Never refuse to swap with another person.
- Swap face-to-face, especially if exchanging addresses or email information.
- Avoid using glass or sharp objects in SWAPS.
- Follow all *Safety Activity Checkpoints* guidelines.
- Avoid using food products, unless they are individually wrapped.

# Girl Scout Ceremonies

Ceremonies help Girl Scouts mark special events throughout the year, such as bridging to another level, earning a National Leadership Journey award, or getting a Girl Scout pin.

Ceremonies can commemorate accomplishments or add something special to the beginning or end of a group's meeting. Girls can plan a ceremony around a theme, such as friendship or nature, and express themselves in words or song. Whatever its purpose, every Girl Scout ceremony helps girls share in Girl Scout history and traditions—and create their own special memories.



## Important Ceremonies in Girl Scouting

- **Bridging ceremonies** mark a girl's move from one level of Girl Scouting to another.
- **Flag ceremonies** can be part of any activity that honors the American flag.
- A **Fly-Up** is a bridging ceremony for Girl Scout Brownies bridging to Girl Scout Juniors. Girls receive the Girl Scout pin along with their Brownie wings.
- **Founder's Day or Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday, October 31**, is a time to remember the important role Juliette Low played in the growth of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States.
- **Girl Scout Birthday ceremonies** can be held on or near March 12, the date Juliette Gordon Low started Girl Scouting in the United States.
- A **Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award ceremony** honors Girl Scouts who have earned these special awards and is usually held at the troop/group level or combined with council recognition.
- **Girl Scouts' Own** is a girl-planned program that lets girls explore their feelings around a topic, such as friendship or the Girl Scout Promise and Law, using spoken word, favorite songs, poetry, or other forms of expression. It is never a religious ceremony.
- **Investiture** welcomes new members—girls and adults—into the Girl Scout family for the first time. Girls receive their Girl Scout, Girl Scout Brownie, or Girl Scout Daisy pin at this time.
- **Journey ceremonies** honor Girl Scouts who have earned the final award along a Journey. The ceremonies are usually held at the troop/group level and invite girls to develop a themed celebration of their Journey, often including friends and family.
- **Court of Awards** is a special ceremony recognizing girls' accomplishments. Girls are presented with their badges, year pins, and other recognitions earned during the year. Volunteers may also be recognized during the ceremony. The Court of Awards can be held anytime during the year, at any location, and as often as the troop wants.
- **Opening ceremonies** start the Girl Scout meeting.
- **Pinning ceremonies** help celebrate when girls receive grade-level Girl Scout pins.
- **Rededication ceremonies** are an opportunity for girls and adults to renew their commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

## Tips for Holding Ceremonies

- Devote sufficient time for planning the ceremony. Good ceremonies have a clear purpose and enrich the meaning and mood of the event.
- Use Journey adult guides and *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* to help girls plan their ceremonies.
- Take safety precautions when using candles or fire, or when the girls construct bridges or platforms. Refer to *Volunteer Essentials* and the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* (available through your council) for specific advice.
- Add personal elements to traditional ceremonies. Use favorite poems, songs, stories, and sayings, or have the girls write something new.
- Consider the role of colors and symbols that the girls might use in their ceremony.
- Observe flag etiquette during flag ceremonies.



## Bridging Ceremonies

### Moving On to New Adventures

Bridging is an important transition in a Girl Scout's life. It's a defining moment when a girl becomes aware of her achievements and is ready for new adventures and responsibilities. Celebrating this change should be fun, personalized, and memorable for everyone involved. And most of all, it should be designed by the girls in true partnership with adults.

Bridging ceremonies usually take place at the beginning or end of the Girl Scout year and can have three parts:

- **Opening:** Guests are welcomed and the tone is set.
- **Main section:** The ceremony is explained and the girls celebrate moving from one level to the next.
- **Closing:** Girls can participate in friendship circles and thank their guests.

Each of the ceremony's parts offers plenty of room for the girls' creativity and individuality. The ceremony should always focus on paying tribute to Girl Scouts as they move forward.



## Flag Ceremony

A flag ceremony honors the American flag as the symbol of our country and all the hopes, dreams, and people it represents. If your group includes girls from other countries, invite them to honor their flags too, and together conduct an international flag ceremony. Flag ceremonies may be used for:

- Opening or closing meetings
- Opening or closing special events
- Beginning or closing a day
- Honoring a special occasion or special person
- Retiring a worn flag

Flag ceremonies may take place in meeting rooms, outdoor settings, large auditoriums, onstage, or even on horseback. The American flag is carried by a color guard for protection during a flag ceremony. All flag ceremonies share one thing—respect for the flag.