



Girl Scout Gold Award

Guidelines for Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors

Since 1916, Girl Scout’s highest award has stood for excellence and leadership for girls everywhere. Soon, you will be joining the ranks of generations of young women who have made a difference in their communities and beyond.

As a Girl Scout, you are part of the sisterhood of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, a global movement comprised of more than ten million girls worldwide who are using their talents to positively impact their communities. With your talent and passion, you, too, can make changes in your community that can reach people around the world.

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest and most prestigious award that Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors can earn. Fulfilling the requirements for the Girl Scout Gold Award starts with completing two Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador journeys or having earned the Silver Award and completing one Senior or Ambassador journey. Each journey you complete gives you the skills you need to plan and implement your Take Action project.

After you have fulfilled the journey(s) requirement, 80 hours is the suggested minimum hours for the steps: identifying an issue, investigating it thoroughly, getting help and building a team, creating a plan, presenting your plan, gathering feedback, taking action, and educating and inspiring others. The suggested minimum hours are not a rule; they are a guide for you to plan your time in achieving your goal.

Standards of Excellence

When you decide to earn the Girl Scout Gold Award, you are on your honor to uphold the Standards of Excellence. These standards set a high benchmark for everything you do and invite you to think deeply, explore opportunities, and challenge yourself. Following the Standards of Excellence challenges you to develop yourself as a leader, achieve the Girl Scout Leadership Outcomes and make a mark on your community that creates a lasting impact on the lives of others.

Girl Scout Gold Award Steps and Standards of Excellence

Girl Scout Gold Award Steps	Standards of Excellence
<p>1. Choose an issue: Use your values and skills to identify a community issue you care about.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Live the Girl Scout Promise and Law. ▪ Demonstrate civic responsibility.
<p>2. Investigate: Research everything you can about the issue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use a variety of sources: interview people, read books and articles, find professional organizations online. Remember to evaluate each source’s reliability and accuracy. ▪ Demonstrate courage as you investigate your issue, knowing that what you learn may challenge your own and others’ beliefs. ▪ Identify national and/or global links to your community issue.
<p>3. Get help: Invite others to support and take action with you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek out and recognize the value of the skills and strengths of others. ▪ Respect different points of view and ways of working.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build a team and recruit a project advisor who will bring special skills to your Take Action project.
<p>4. Create a plan: Create a project plan that achieves sustainable and measurable impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lead the planning of your Take Action project. ▪ Work collaboratively to develop a plan for your project that creates lasting change.
<p>5. Present your plan and get feedback: Sum up your project plan for your Girl Scout council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit a Project Proposal to your council that is concise, comprehensive, and clear. ▪ Describe your plan including the Girl Scout Leadership Outcomes you want to achieve and the impact you plan to make on yourself and the community. ▪ Articulate your issue clearly and explain why it matters to you. ▪ Accept constructive suggestions that will help refine your project.
<p>6. Take action: Take the lead to carry out your plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take action to address the root cause of an issue, so that your solution has measurable and sustainable impact. ▪ Actively seek partnerships to achieve greater community participation and impact for your Take Action project. ▪ Challenge yourself to try different ways to solve problems. ▪ Use resources wisely. ▪ Speak out and act on behalf of yourself and others.
<p>7. Educate and inspire: Share what you have experienced with others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflect on what you have learned when you present your Girl Scout Gold Award Final Report to your council. ▪ Summarize the effectiveness of your project and the impact it has had on you and your community. ▪ Share the project beyond your local community and inspire others to take action in their own communities.

Girl Scout Gold Award Toolkit

Stay organized and keep track of your ideas, contact information, appointments, and plans with the Girl Scout Gold Award Toolkit. This toolkit includes a standards of excellence tracking sheet, tips, planning guides, and advice to help with each step of your Take Action project. Use these tools as you need them—and don't forget that your journey(s) include tools and ideas, too!

1. **Choose an issue:** Use your values and skills to choose a community issue that you care about. Check out the Decision-Making Tips in your toolkit. If you have more than one issue that you are passionate about, interview others to help you decide. Practice making your pitch and see how it feels. You can also make a 15-second video, write a bumper-sticker slogan, or come up with another fun way to sum up why this issue is important to you.

Tools:

- **Decision-Making Tips**
- **Interview Tips**
- **Making-Your-Pitch Tips**

2. **Investigate:** Use your sleuthing skills to learn everything you can about the issue you've identified. Zoom in on your issue to identify a specific aspect of it that you would like to address, because focused effort has more impact than a big idea that's scattered.

- **Log on:** Check news sites and the sites of organizations related to your issue. Explore how the media in other countries cover your issue. **Note:** Before doing your online research, take the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge at www.girlscouts.org/internet_safety_pledge.asp.
- **Go to the library:** Find books that offer in-depth analysis about your issue, read your local newspaper, and look for magazine articles that offer different perspectives on your issue.
- **Interview people:** Talk to your friends, neighbors, teachers, business owners, and others who can offer information or insights about the issue you've chosen.

Knowing the various causes of a problem enables you to figure out unique ways to solve it. Use the Mind-Mapping Tool in your toolkit to create a diagram that tracks a problem and its possible causes.

Tool:

- **Mind-Mapping Tool**

3. **Get help:** Invite other people to join your team to support your efforts and help you take action. Consider reaching out to classmates, teachers, friends, and experts from organizations and businesses. Networking with people can make you a more effective leader. Also, the more people you have behind you, the more likely you will positively influence your community. You are the leader of your team – plan your project, motivate your team, learn from others.

Choose a project advisor, a person with expertise in the topic of your Gold Award project. An advisor can help you identify resources, provide insights, solve problems, and provide additional background information on your chosen issue.

Tools:

- **Teaming Tips**
- **Project Advisor Tips**

4. **Create a plan:** Going for the Girl Scout Gold Award requires you to address the root cause of an issue and, thus, make a lasting impact in your community—take a look at the Sustainability Tips in your toolkit for ideas. Create a plan that outlines the best use of your time and talent, your resources, and your team's talents, making the most with what you have- that's your challenge!

Tools:

- **Project Planner**
- **Planning and Budgeting Tips**
- **Sustainability Tips**

5. **Present your plan and get feedback:** Fill out the Project Planning Checklist in your toolkit to organize your thoughts and make sure you have everything you need before you hand in your Project Proposal Form to your Girl Scout council for approval. Include what you've learned, why your project idea matters, with whom you're teaming, and your plan for making your project sustainable.

Girl Scout Council approval is required before you can continue working on your project. Once your project is approved, take a look at your Project Planner from step 4. Do you have everything you need?

Tools:

- **Project Planning Checklist**
- **Project Proposal Form**

6. **Take action:** Lead your team, carry out your plan. Use the tools you have developed in the previous steps and remember to check your journey(s) for tips. If you hit a speed bump along the way, learn from it and find ways to adjust your plan.

7. **Educate and inspire:** Tell your story and share your results. You can inspire someone who has never before considered taking action to do something! Use the Reflection Tool in your toolkit to identify how this experience has affected you and how your views may have changed. Finally, complete your Girl Scout Gold Award Final Report, which is a comprehensive account of what you've done, with whom you've connected, the lasting impact you've made, and what this experience has meant to you.

Tools:

- **Sharing Tips**
- **Reflection Tool**
- **Girl Scout Gold Award Final Report**

Congratulations! Celebrate! Be sure to thank your project advisor, your team, and all the other people who helped you along the way.



Girl Scout Gold Award Toolkit

Standards of Excellence Tracking Sheet

Girl Scout Gold Award Steps	Notes Regarding Your Progress and Significant Dates	Standards of Excellence
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2. Investigate.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use a variety of sources: interview people, read books and articles, find professional organizations online. Remember to evaluate each source’s reliability and accuracy. ▪ Demonstrate courage as you investigate your issue, knowing that what you learn may challenge your own and others’ beliefs. ▪ Identify national and/or global links to your community issue.
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		<p>explain why it matters to you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accept constructive suggestions that will help refine your project.
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Decision-Making Tips

You are about to make a big decision that will have a significant impact on your life and may even change it forever. Take some time to reflect and get inspired. Start with yourself.

- What inspires you? Is it something in your school, community, country, or the world?
- What motivates you into action? Is it people, events, activities, places?
- What skills, talents, and strengths do you have to offer?
- How do you want to make a difference? As an advocate for justice? A promoter of environmental awareness? As a trainer, mentor, or coach? As an artist, actor, or musician? As an organizer of petitions or campaigns? As an entrepreneur? Can you think of another role?
- What motivates, inspires, and interests others? Can you build a team to support your idea?
- What would benefit the community both immediately and long-term?
- Check back through your Girl Scout leadership journey(s). What interested you that you might be able to translate into an award project?

Need some inspiration? Search through these sites to see what others are doing to address issues in their community.

- **The Corporation for National and Community Service:** www.serve.gov
- **Global Citizens Corps:** www.globalcitizencorps.org
- **Global Youth Action Network:** www.youthlink.org
- **Global Youth Service Day:** <http://gysd.org/share>
- **Learn and Serve America:** www.learnandserve.gov
- **Prudential:** www.spirit.prudential.com
- **Taking IT Global:** www.tigweb.org
- **United Nations Millennium Development Goals:** www.un.org/millenniumgoals
- **World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts:** www.waggs.org
- **Youth Venture:** www.genv.net

Interview Tips

Find out what you need to prepare and conduct an interview.

1. **Making arrangements:** Deciding who you would like to interview, contacting the person, and setting up a date and time.
2. **Preparation:** Gathering research and background information to help you formulate questions to ask the interview subject(s). Use these sample interview questions to get you started, and then add some of your own. If you need help choosing an issue, you'll want to ask the following types of questions:
 - What are the biggest challenges/problems that you have faced or are facing?
 - What do you think is the root cause of these issues?
 - What will it take to address these issues?
 - Are there any resources available to do that?
 - What do you consider to be the strengths of the community?

If, on the other hand, you've already chosen an issue, move ahead to the interview.

3. **Conducting the interview:** Bring a notebook to take notes. Here are some tips:
 - Find a quiet place where you'll have each others' full attention, and agree to turn off your cell phones.
 - Start by thanking the interviewee for her/his time, and then briefly describe your project.
 - Keep questions simple and related to the issue at hand. Do your research. Preparation is key!
 - Ask the person you interview if she or he would like to hear more about your project as it develops.
 - Send a thank-you note to everyone you interview within a week of the interview. Mention the possibility of a follow-up interview.
4. **Reviewing information and setting up a possible follow up interview:** Your interview is over. Now what? You have to sift through to find the information that's relevant to what you are working on. If there are some gaps that you need to fill, contact your interview subject(s) to get more information and to find out whether or not you have your facts correct. Remember to check and recheck your facts!

Making Your Pitch

You've seen the advertisements and most times you even remember the slogans. What makes them memorable? It could be because they're clever or catchy or funny. Now that you've chosen your issue, think of a way that you can let people know about it. You should be able to describe the issue you've chosen in about 15 seconds. Here are some tips to help you do that.

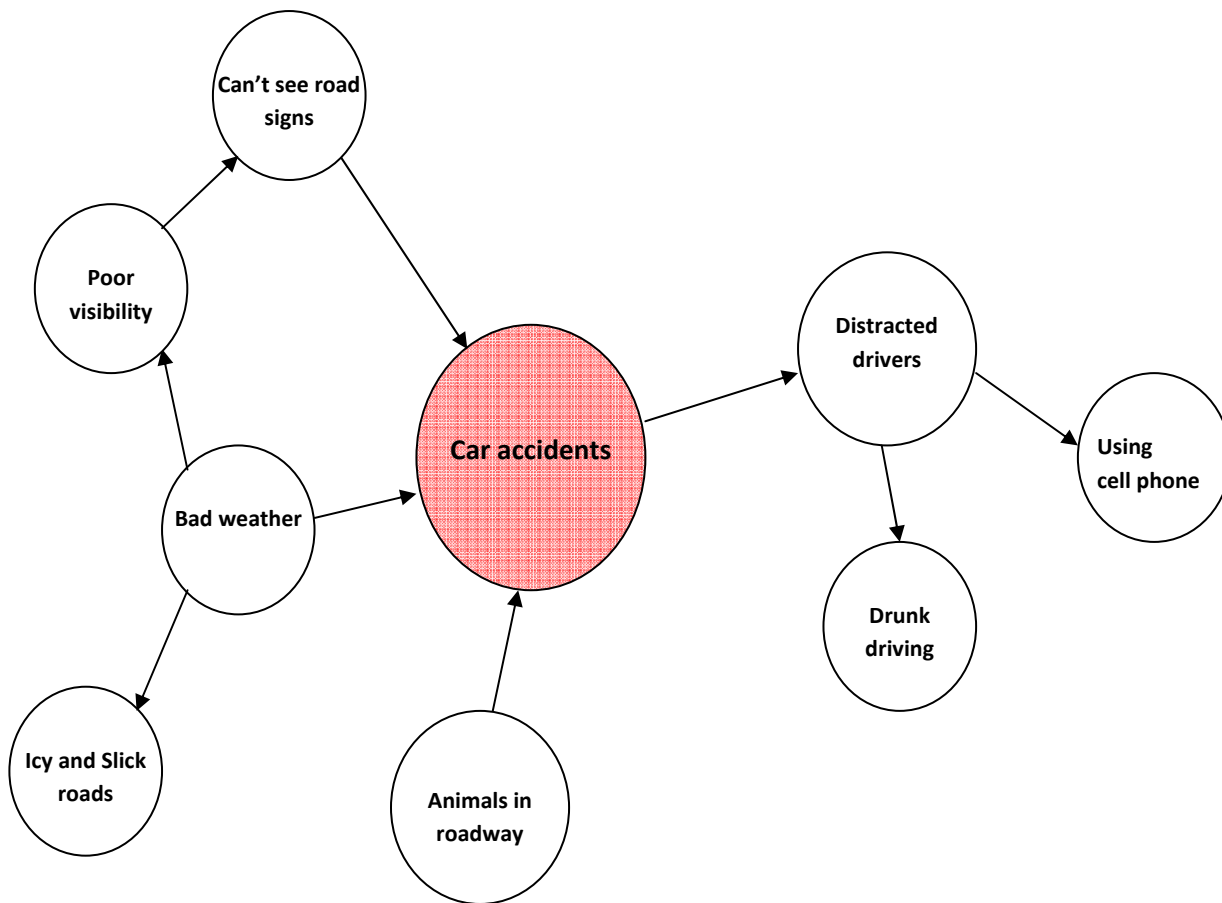
- **Make it memorable:** Develop a slogan. What makes you remember the slogan in those commercials on TV? How can you incorporate that into your pitch?
- **Target your audience:** Who are you trying to reach? If you are aiming for kids, think of a story or riddle that would relate this to them. Young kids love to rhyme. If you're reaching out to adults, no cute stories! Think about your audience and try to tailor your pitch so that it connects with them.
- **How you will help:** You've gotten their attention with your story. Now tell them what your project will do to make their lives better.
- **Personalize it:** Why this project? Why this target audience? How will doing this make you a better person?
- **Do it:** Put it all together. Explain your idea in a short and motivating way that clarifies for you, your potential team, target audience, and supporters. Remember, 15 seconds. Go!

Mind-Mapping Tool

Create your own mind-mapping diagram like the one shown here, using one of the issues facing your community. Follow these instructions.

- Write the community issue in the middle of the paper or any where that works for you.
- Think about what some of the causes of this issue could be. In this example, one of the main causes of car accidents is bad weather. Notice how many different causes connect from bad weather.
- Now, try connecting the different causes you come up with to each other and to the main issue. How do the causes connect to each other?
- Do you see a pattern?

This activity will help you come up with different ways to approach a problem, as well as different ways you might go about addressing it.



Teaming Tips

Think about the people who might be able to help you put your project into action. Choose people who will stick it out until the project is complete. You don't have to limit your team to people your age or just Girl Scouts.

Working in a group will help you make a bigger impact and cover more ground than you would on your own. It might be challenging at times, but remember to always be honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, and responsible for what you say and do. Here are a few tips to keep in mind as you build your team:

- Promote a sense of trust and belonging
- Share ownership
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Communicate regularly and openly
- Respect diversity
- Have fun and be creative
- Be open to new ideas and different ways of working
- Keep learning and growing

Project Advisor Tips

Here you'll find tips for selecting and working with your project advisor.

- **Reach out:** You've figured out the issue you're going to address with your project. Now it's time to find an expert to help along the way and give you advice and suggestions. Ask your troop/group volunteer or your council for suggestions. Then, select a few people who are related to your issue area with whom you'd like to work.
- **Safety first:** Before you meet with new people, talk to your troop/group volunteer for some safety tips and do's and don'ts. Make sure your family knows who you're talking to and meeting with.
- **Ask:** Start with your first choice, and if she or he can't help, go to your next choice. (**Hint:** There may be many others who are willing to help!) Approach the people you selected one at a time. Introduce yourself by sending a brief letter or e-mail, explaining what you're working on and the advice you would like. Give some background. Give an estimate, asking about time commitments and which way would be best to communicate.
- **Say thanks:** When an individual accepts, send her or him a thank-you note, along with a brief description of your project and a list of areas where you think you'll need the most help.
- **Think ahead when asking for help:** Before you compose an e-mail or call your project advisor, think about how you can simplify a problem you're having, so that she or he can offer quick suggestions.
- **Share your progress:** Make sure to tell your project advisor (in a quick e-mail or phone call) about your progress and how her or his help is making your project better, easier, and so on.
- **Celebrate together:** After your project is completed, invite her or him to your Gold Award ceremony and/or your own celebration. Don't forget to send a thank-you note!

Project Planner

A Girl Scout Gold Award Take Action project addresses the root cause of an issue, produces impact that is measurable and sustainable, and is a local project that links to a national and/or global issue. Here are a few tips to help you lay out your project plan:

- **Set project goals:**

What is your project? _____

Why does it matter? _____

Who will it help? _____

The difference I intend to make in the world is _____

- **Steps to meet the goals:** List step-by-step what it will take to reach your goal. Be as specific as possible so that you can put together a timeline and draw on your team to help you reach your goals.
- **Develop a timeline:** This will help you determine how much time should be allotted to each part of your project.
- **Think about money-earning:** Brainstorm ways to finance your project, if needed, speak with your Girl Scout troop/group volunteer to make sure that your ideas are in line with the Girl Scout policies. Check with your council. Remember, you can make an impact without spending money by influencing policy and so on.
- **Establish a global link:** Consider how to connect your project to an issue that affects people in other parts of the country or the world.

Use the following questions to help you determine what you need and what you need to do.

- What is the goal that you would you like to achieve with your project?
- How do you plan to achieve this project goal?
- What are the foreseeable obstacles?
- Aside from your team, troop/group volunteer, and project advisor, do you need any one else to help with your project?
- What supplies will you need?
- If necessary, how will you earn money or fundraise?
- How will you measure your success as you go?
- How will your project create lasting change?

Planning and Budgeting Tips

It's budget time! Start by figuring out what you need and where you can get it for little or no cost, if possible. If it's not possible, think about how much it is going to cost and how you can cover those expenses. Many projects are possible when you concentrate on the issue at hand. Use your influence and leadership skills to come up with ways that you can make a difference that might not include earning money.

List the Steps to Achieve Your Goal	What Resources and Materials Will You Need?	Where Can You Get the Resources and Materials?	How Much Will They Cost?	How Do You Plan to Cover These Costs?

Does your plan sound doable? If not, take a step back and refocus. Try to find a different angle to pursue. Work with your troop/group volunteer, project advisor, and Take Action team to find solutions to problems and obstacles that come up along the way.

Sustainability Tips

Girl Scout Gold Award projects are not “one shot”—they create lasting change. You can ensure a lasting project by setting clear timelines, collaborating with community organizations, building alliances with adults and mentors, and keeping good records. Sustainability often involves influencing others to pitch in. Here are some examples of sustainable projects.

Example #1

Community issue: Food waste from school lunches poses a danger to the environment.

Root cause: No community composting or recycling program.

Take action: Create a food-waste composting program for the school.

Making the solution sustainable:

- Work with school officials to find biodegradable plates and cups to use in the cafeteria.
- Work with town/state food waste officials to ensure the system is in place.
- Implement a plan in your school to separate their cafeteria waste into composting, recycling, and trash bins. (Farmers can use the compost to fertilize crops, improve the quality of the soil, decrease soil runoff, and so on.)
- Get a commitment from school administrators to carry on when your project is complete.

Making your project bigger (national and/or global link): Recruit students at schools in the area to develop the program for their schools and/or contact local and state officials about adopting the program.

Global link: Find out how people in other parts of the world deal with food waste in schools. What kinds of programs do they have in place? How can you learn from this?

Example #2

Community issue: Teen suicide.

Root cause: Lack of awareness and prevention.

Take action: Establish an awareness and prevention program.

Making the solution sustainable:

- Produce a short video that can be used in other communities with an online brochure outlining the steps to an awareness and prevention program.
- Share the video and online brochure with schools and community organizations.

Making your project bigger (national and/or global link): Share the program with local youth groups, health/human services agencies, community centers, church/synagogue/mosque community centers, or school district.

Project Planning Checklist

The answers to all of the questions below must be yes before you submit your plan for council approval.

- Will your project demonstrate your leadership skills?
- Have you set your project goal and identified what you would like to learn?
- Have you chosen your Take Action team? Have you discussed the project with them?
- Have you created a budget for the project?
- Have you created a plan to raise funds, if necessary?
- Have you made a timeline for your project?
- Does your project address a need in the local community and have you found national and/or global links?
- Can your project be sustainable?
- Does your project challenge your abilities and your interests?

Once you answer yes to all the items on this checklist, you're ready to submit your Girl Scout Gold Award Project Proposal.

Sharing Tips

It's time to tell others about what you did, what you have learned, and the impact you hope your project will have on its intended audience. Your story may inspire others to take action to do something to make their community better!

Here are a few suggestions for how you can demonstrate your project achievements and share what you learned:

- Create a Web site or blog or join a social networking site (Facebook, MySpace, and so on) to post updates and details about your project and its impact on the national and/or global community.
- Log on to some Web sites where you can share your story:
 - **World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts:** www.wagggg.org/en/projects
 - **Taking IT Global:** www.tigweb.org
 - **Global Youth Service Day:** www.globalyouthserviceday.org
- Create a campaign that showcases your cause. Make buttons, posters, and flyers to let people know about your cause.
- Present what you have learned and what your project will do for the community at a workshop for community members.
- Make a video about the effects of your project. Post it online. Invite friends, community leaders, and people from organizations who are tackling the same or a similar issue to take a look at it.
- Write an article for your local newspaper or create a newsletter about your project.

Reflection Tool

Reflection is more than talking about your feelings; it's about thinking critically, solving problems, and interpreting and analyzing the results of your experiences so you can gain a better understanding of who you are. After you complete your project, take some time to assess yourself.

1. Which values from the Girl Scout Promise and Law did you employ?
2. Which new leadership skills have you developed?
3. How are you better able to advocate for yourself and others?
4. How has your access to community resources and relationships with adults changed as a result of this experience?
5. How important has cooperation and team building been in developing your leadership skills?
6. What changes would you make if you were to do this project again?
7. Has this helped you get an idea of what your future career might be?

8. Now that you have planned, developed, and taken action on your project, how are you better equipped to pursue future/life goals?