



Girl Scouts for All:

A Guide to Inclusive Girl Scouting
for Troop Leaders & Volunteers



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Welcoming All Girl Scouts

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience is built on inclusivity. Girl Scouts of all abilities—regardless of medical condition, disability, or impairment—deserve the opportunity to fully participate, grow, and thrive. Most activities can be adapted with creativity, flexibility, and collaboration. As a leader, your openness, patience, and willingness to learn go a long way in helping every Girl Scout feel welcomed and supported.

While each troop belongs to the Girl Scouts themselves, the culture of the troop is shaped by its leaders. You can create a space rooted in empathy, belonging, and acceptance—where girls are encouraged to try new things and care for one another. Building an inclusive troop takes intention and teamwork, but it’s one of the most rewarding parts of being a Girl Scout leader. With your guidance, your troop can become a place where everyone contributes, everyone adapts, and no one is left out.

What an Inclusive Troop Looks Like:

- Everyone helps each other succeed. ✓
- Everyone makes accommodations for each other’s needs and differences. ✓
- There’s no pressure to “keep up”—Girl Scouts grow at their own pace. ✓
- Every Girl Scout has something to look forward to, whether it’s singing songs, exploring nature, or just spending time with friends. ✓



Fostering an Inclusive Troop Environment

Partner with caregivers.

Caregivers know their Girl Scout best. Ask about strengths, needs, and how to set her up for success. They may also be open to sharing helpful information with the troop—always with their permission.

Respect privacy and autonomy.

Never share personal or medical information without written consent. Speak directly to the Girl Scout and include her in decisions whenever possible.

Normalize differences.

Reinforce that everyone learns, moves, and communicates differently—and that Girl Scouts support one another.

Model inclusion.

When a Girl Scout needs extra time or adaptations, treat it as a normal part of troop life—not an exception.



Use age-appropriate conversations.

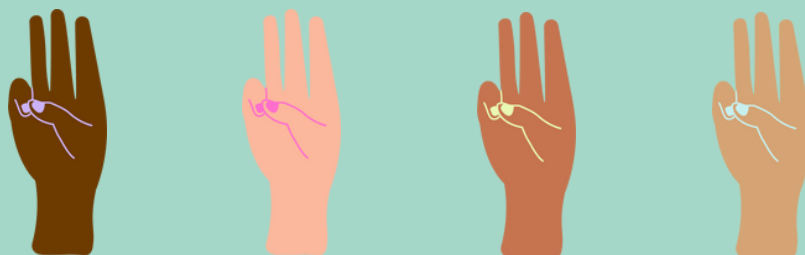
With caregiver input, help your troop understand and accept differences.

Lead with empathy.

Stay calm, flexible, and supportive when Girl Scouts struggle.

Ask for help.

Reach out to experienced leaders or your Service Unit for ideas and support.



Tips for Strengthening Troop Culture

Reflection Circle

Use when someone's feelings are hurt or there's a conflict. Sit in a circle and invite open, respectful conversation.

Sample script:

"Today's activity was great for many reasons. However, it was brought to our attention that someone's feelings were hurt."

Let the affected Girl Scout speak if she'd like to, then allow others to apologize and repair the moment together.



Closing Circle

End meetings with a unifying moment.

Sample script:

"We've had some important conversations about respect. But remember—respecting yourself is just as important."

Finish with the Friendship Squeeze, and say:

"Let's send around a wish that we all continue to show respect for ourselves and others through our words and actions."



Adapting Badges, Journeys, and Highest Award Requirements



One of the most common concerns leaders have when welcoming Girl Scouts with disabilities is how to adapt badge work, Journeys, or Highest Awards requirements. The good news? Flexibility is built into the Girl Scout program. With thoughtful planning and open communication, every Girl Scout can participate meaningfully and successfully.

Consulting Girl Scouts and Caregivers

Girl Scouts and caregivers should guide the adaptation process. Some girls may complete requirements exactly as written, while others may need modifications—and that’s okay. If a Girl Scout wants to try the standard version of an activity, let her! It’s important to encourage growth, while ensuring every experience feels positive and supportive.

If a Girl Scout leaves a meeting feeling discouraged or unsuccessful, she may be less motivated to continue in Girl Scouting—so always aim to celebrate effort and create a sense of accomplishment.

Badge & Journey Flexibility

The beauty of Girl Scout programming is its adaptability. Requirements are intentionally open-ended to meet the needs and interests of every troop.

- Leaders have the discretion to determine when a Girl Scout has completed a requirement to the best of her ability.
- Badge and Journey work can be personalized without losing the spirit of the activity.
- Use clear, one- or two-step directions and make sure your questions and explanations are inclusive of all ability levels.
- If a Girl Scout misses a meeting, collaborate with her caregivers to find meaningful alternatives—such as exploring a topic online or doing a related activity at home.



Adapting Highest Award Requirements

All Girl Scouts—regardless of ability—are eligible to earn the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. As with badges and Journeys, projects can and should be adapted to reflect each Girl Scout's unique abilities and strengths.

Bronze Award

- Most troops complete the Bronze Award project as a group.
- Leaders are responsible for determining when each Girl Scout has met the requirements to the best of her ability.
- Ensure that all Girl Scouts feel ownership and pride in their contributions.



Silver Award

- Silver Award projects may be completed individually or in small teams.
- Leaders help assess whether the Girl Scout has been challenged and has done her best.
- Flexibility is allowed in project design and execution. Contact the Highest Awards team if you need support or guidance.



Gold Award

- All candidates must participate in an initial interview, but accommodations are allowed and encouraged.
- On the Gold Award application, caregivers can indicate any support or adjustments their Girl Scout may need for the process.
- Project evaluation will be based on the criteria set in the interview, not on a one-size-fits-all standard.
- Mentors can support task breakdown, note-taking, and motivation.
- Extensions may be granted if needed; medical conditions do not have to be disclosed to qualify for flexibility.



Disabilities & Impairments

Every Girl Scout deserves the chance to fully participate, learn, and lead. By focusing on what each Girl Scout can do—and working together to make adjustments when needed—you can create an inclusive troop experience where everyone belongs and thrives.

Intellectual Disabilities & Processing Delays

Girl Scouts with intellectual disabilities or processing delays may have diagnoses such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Down syndrome, or other developmental conditions. Girl Scouts with intellectual disabilities are welcome to continue participating through age 21.



A processing delay means it may take more time to understand and respond to information. Speak at a slower pace when needed and pause to allow time for processing. It may take up to 30 seconds for a Girl Scout to respond—be patient and give her the time and support she needs.

Adapting Games & Activities

- Give instructions one or two steps at a time to avoid overwhelming Girl Scouts.
- Distribute materials gradually and guide each step with clear, simple directions.
- Use visual examples of crafts or games to help Girl Scouts understand the goal.
- Choose quieter, low-stimulation environments for activities whenever possible. If noise can't be reduced, consider sound-muffling tools like headphones or earplugs (not full blockers for safety).
- Ask Girl Scouts to repeat instructions—but vary who repeats each step to avoid singling anyone out.
- Provide extra support by pairing Girl Scouts with buddies or assigning an adult helper for 1-on-1 guidance.
- Use buddy systems thoughtfully to build inclusion and connection among all Girl Scouts.



Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts with Intellectual Disabilities & Processing Delays

- Partner with caregivers. They can offer valuable insights into what strategies, supports, or communication styles work best for their Girl Scout.
- Be patient and flexible—processing may take time, so allow up to 30 seconds for a response before repeating or rephrasing.
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- Be patient and flexible—processing may take time, so allow up to 30 seconds for a response before repeating or rephrasing.
- Use clear, simple language, and break instructions into small, manageable steps.
- Speak at a moderate pace and pause to give time for understanding.
- Use visuals, demonstrations, and repetition to reinforce key information.
- Establish predictable routines to build comfort and confidence.
- Celebrate all progress—participation matters more than perfection.
- Use peer support through buddy systems to build connection and prevent isolation.
- If a Girl Scout is being left out, try:
 - Forming teams by counting off to avoid cliques.
 - Pairing her with a buddy or mentor.
 - Inviting older Girl Scouts to model inclusive behavior.
 - Leading a troop conversation about the Girl Scout Promise and Law, encouraging real-life examples of inclusion and kindness.



Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that affects how a person communicates, interacts socially, and processes sensory information. Each Girl Scout with ASD is unique—some may have strong verbal skills, others may use limited or no speech. Many experience sensory sensitivities, benefit from routine, or need extra time to process instructions. With a supportive environment and simple adaptations, Girl Scouts with ASD can fully participate and thrive in troop activities.

Caregivers can be valuable partners—especially during the first few meetings. Work with families to find the best approach, and ask about comfort items or strategies that help the Girl Scout feel safe and focused.



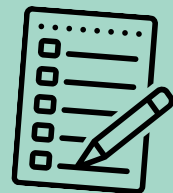
Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts with ASD

- **Create structure & routine.**

Predictable formats and consistent meeting patterns are calming for many Girl Scouts with ASD.

- **Consider sharing the meeting agenda in advance.**

Emailing the meeting agenda to families ahead of time can ease anxiety and help with preparation.



- **Use visual schedules or agendas.**

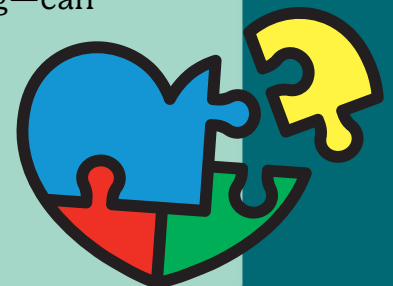
Display the meeting plan on a board or chart so Girl Scouts know what to expect.

- **Start with movement.**

Gentle physical activities—like walking in a circle or stretching—can help focus energy before seated tasks.

- **Allow breaks.**

Provide a quiet space where Girl Scouts can go if they need to regulate their emotions or step away from the group.



- **Prepare for emotional moments.**

Have calming strategies or alternative activities ready in case a Girl Scout becomes overwhelmed.

- **Use social stories.**

Simple stories can help explain expectations or social dynamics in a way that's easier to understand.

- **Avoid last-minute changes when possible.**

Changes to leaders, locations, or routines can be stressful—give as much notice as you can.



Adapting Games & Activities

- **Keep instructions short and clear.**

Break tasks into steps and repeat directions if needed.

- **Explain expectations before starting.**

Clarify rules and roles so everyone understands what's happening.

- **Give transition warnings.**

Use countdowns or verbal cues to help Girl Scouts shift between activities smoothly.

- **Reduce distractions.**

Limit loud noises or chaotic settings that may overwhelm or make it hard to focus.

- **Offer flexibility.**

Allow Girl Scouts to take breaks, use comfort items, or choose alternate ways to participate.

- **Have a quiet place nearby.**

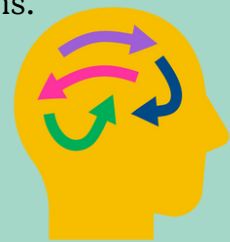
Identify a quiet area where Girl Scouts can take a sensory break or cool down.



Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most commonly diagnosed neurodevelopmental conditions in childhood. Some Girl Scouts may be diagnosed with ADHD (which includes symptoms of inattentiveness, impulsivity, and hyperactivity), while others may have an inattentive presentation often referred to as ADD. Every Girl Scout experiences ADHD differently, but many benefit from structured routines, engaging activities, and clear expectations.

ADHD is not a lack of interest or ability—it's a different way of processing and responding to the world. With thoughtful planning and flexibility, Girl Scouts with ADHD can thrive in troop settings and take on leadership with enthusiasm.



Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts with ADHD

- **Minimize distractions.**

Reduce background noise and visual clutter when possible, especially during group discussions or instructions.

- **Provide structure and routines.**

Consistent meeting formats and clear expectations help Girl Scouts stay on track.

- **Use visual schedules or agendas.**

Tools like written agendas, adaptive kaper charts, and visual reminders help reinforce instructions.

- **Offer frequent redirection.**

Gentle cues and reminders can help Girl Scouts refocus without feeling singled out.

- **Be patient with interruptions or restlessness.**

These behaviors aren't intentional—allow space for movement and breaks when needed.



- **Encourage movement.**

Physical activity between seated tasks helps manage energy and improves focus.

- **Celebrate strengths.**

Many Girl Scouts with ADHD are energetic, creative, and full of ideas—create opportunities to shine.

Adapting Games & Activities

- **Alternate activity types.**

Switch between calm, seated activities and active, energetic ones to maintain engagement.

- **Use tools to guide participation.**

Try a “speaking object” (like a bean bag) to support turn-taking during group discussions.

- **Make expectations visible.**

Incorporate written instructions, checklists, or visual cues into crafts and group tasks.

- **Use calming practices.**

Begin or end meetings with grounding activities like yoga, deep breathing, or quiet reflection.

- **Break tasks into steps.**

Keep instructions short, and offer help staying organized.

- **Build in movement.**

Let Girl Scouts stand, stretch, dance, or walk between transitions when needed—structured movement helps focus.



Emotional & Behavioral Disorders

Emotional and behavioral disorders can include conditions such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and bipolar disorder. Each Girl Scout's experience is different—some may seem withdrawn, while others may have sudden emotional reactions or difficulty managing frustration. These behaviors may not always have an obvious cause, which can be confusing for peers.

Patience, flexibility, and empathy go a long way. When you understand a Girl Scout's needs and triggers, you can help create an environment where she feels supported and safe. Partnering with caregivers is key to developing strategies that work for her.



Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders

- **Speak with caregivers.**

They can help you understand triggers, calming strategies, and what to avoid.

- **Be patient and flexible.**

Some Girl Scouts may need more time or space to process emotions and reset.

- **Normalize taking breaks.**

Allow any Girl Scout to take time to rest or self-regulate without drawing attention.

- **Be mindful of social dynamics.**

Some Girl Scouts may struggle with social skills, so support friendship-building with inclusive group activities.



- **Watch for signs of frustration.**

These might include heavy breathing, clenched fists, shouting, or crying—gently redirect when possible.

- **Stay calm and steady.**

Your calm demeanor helps Girl Scouts feel more secure, especially during moments of distress.

- **Focus on progress, not perfection.**

Participation and effort should be celebrated.



Adapting Games & Activities

- **Display and review rules frequently.**

This reinforces expectations and provides consistency.



- **Include physical activities.**

Movement-heavy games (running, jumping, spinning) help Girl Scouts release energy and reset focus.

- **Offer choices in difficult moments.**

If a Girl Scout is triggered or overwhelmed, allow her to rejoin the activity later or take a break in a quiet “relaxation corner.”

- **Use lighthearted transitions.**

Tongue twisters, songs, or jokes can help redirect attention and bring energy back to the group.



- **Build in movement breaks.**

Give Girl Scouts opportunities to stand up, stretch, dance, or walk if seated tasks become challenging.



Physical Disabilities

Physical disabilities affect a person's mobility, coordination, or physical stamina, and can result from a variety of causes including birth conditions, illness, injury, or aging. Every Girl Scout with a physical disability has different strengths and support needs, so it's important to ask—not assume—what accommodations might be helpful.



Work closely with caregivers to understand what supports will best enable full participation. While all Girl Scout meeting spaces should be accessible, double-check that your location is suitable for any Girl Scout using a wheelchair, walker, leg braces, or other mobility devices.

Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts with Physical Disabilities

- **Partner with caregivers.**

They can share insights about accessibility needs and helpful accommodations.

- **Respect independence.**

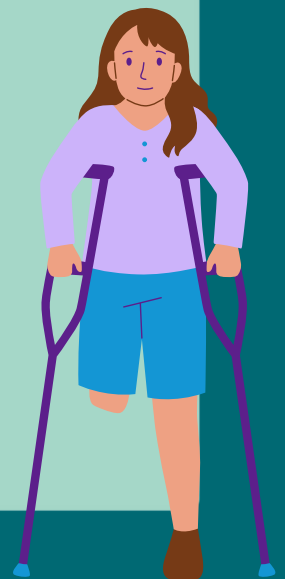
Always offer help—but wait for the Girl Scout to accept before assisting.

- **Be mindful of personal space.**

Avoid leaning on or touching mobility devices like wheelchairs or walkers.

- **Communicate at eye level.**

When talking to a Girl Scout using a wheelchair, kneel or sit so you're face-to-face.



- **Ensure full accessibility.** Check that your space:
 - Has a ramp or elevator access.
 - Has a large, accessible bathroom.
 - Has wide, clear walkways and smooth floors.
 - Allows tables and chairs to be moved as needed.

Adapting Games & Activities

- **Use inclusive formats.**

Play games in teams or pairs so everyone can participate, regardless of mobility.

- **Choose accessible outdoor spaces.**

Use flat, open areas for games and activities.

- **Allow extra time.**

A Girl Scout using braces or crutches may need additional time to complete tasks—build this into your schedule

- **Choose adaptable crafts.**

Activities like tie-dye, modeling clay, or soap-making allow for participation at different ability levels.

- **Offer adaptive tools.**

Provide loop scissors, glue sticks, or triangular crayons and pencils to support easier gripping.

- **Simplify cutting tasks.**

Use straight lines instead of curves, or pre-cut complex pieces ahead of time.

- **Focus on participation.**

Prioritize fun and inclusion over speed or competition.



Deafness

There's a wide range of identities within the Deaf community. People may describe themselves as Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, Hard of Hearing, or Late-Deafened, depending on how and when they lost their hearing, how much they hear, and how they communicate.

Some Deaf or hard of hearing Girl Scouts may use an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter to support communication. Interpreters translate between spoken English and ASL, helping everyone stay engaged.



When interacting, speak directly to the Girl Scout—not the interpreter—and make eye contact with her. You can check for understanding by asking follow-up questions or inviting her to summarize. Focusing on the girl, not the interpreter, helps create a respectful, inclusive environment.



Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- When speaking with a Girl Scout who uses an interpreter, be sure to address the Girl Scout directly.
- Support independence by offering help only if it's requested.
- Some girls may use speechreading (also called lipreading), but even skilled speechreaders typically understand only about 30% of spoken words through lip movements alone—the rest comes from context.
- Factors like facial hair, accents, rapid speech, or poor lighting can make speechreading more difficult.
- Keep in mind, too, that hearing aids amplify sound but don't necessarily improve clarity.
- Background noise or multiple people speaking at once can make it harder to follow the conversation.



Adapting Games & Activities

- Small groups work best so she can easily see and engage with others.
- Use clear instructions and encourage questions to support understanding.
- Get her attention before speaking by using visual cues like hand signals or lights.
- Incorporate visual aids and demonstrations to reinforce key information.
- Send home written instructions or summaries in case any information was missed.
- Use extra caution during water activities—hearing aids or cochlear implants may need to be removed, which can leave the Girl Scout without access to sound.

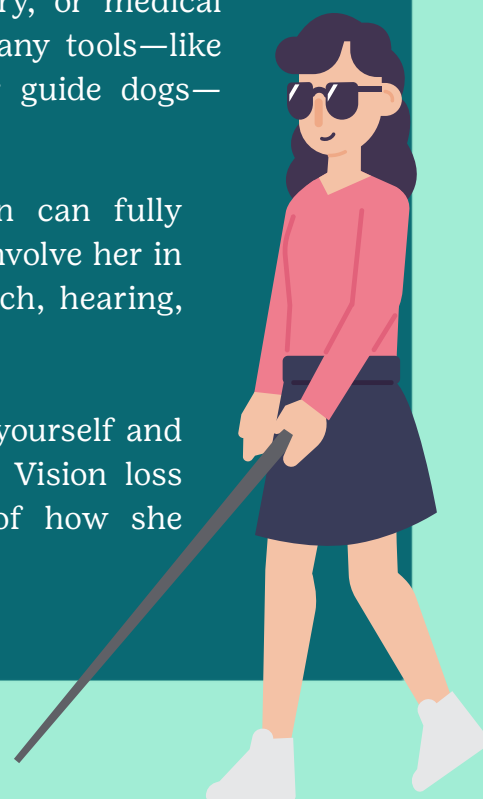


Blindness

Blindness and visual impairments range from partial to complete vision loss and may result from genetics, injury, or medical conditions. Vision loss can't be reversed, but many tools—like magnifiers, large print, Braille, white canes, or guide dogs—support independence.

Girl Scouts who are blind or have low vision can fully participate in activities with some adaptations. Involve her in deciding what works best. She may rely on touch, hearing, and smell to navigate the world.

Speak directly to her in a natural voice, identify yourself and others, and let her know when you're leaving. Vision loss doesn't affect personality—it's just one part of how she experiences the world.



Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts who are Blind or Have Low Vision



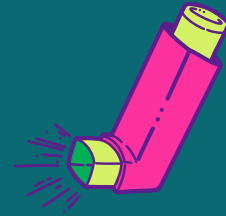
- Be yourself and engage with her naturally—don't be afraid to say hello or start a conversation.
- If she uses a guide dog, remember the dog is working. Don't pet, feed, or distract the dog unless she gives you permission.
- If she uses a cane, remind others to watch for it and avoid pulling on it—she can't see to help them avoid it, and the cane is essential for her mobility.
- When giving directions, use clear landmarks or the clock face method (e.g., "The chair is at 3 o'clock").
- Avoid moving her personal items or rearranging the space without telling her, as she may rely on memory and touch to navigate.
- Keep cabinet and closet doors closed to prevent accidents and maintain a predictable environment.
- If you're unsure whether she needs help, just ask. If she accepts, let her take your arm just above the elbow and walk slightly ahead of her. Mention any upcoming steps, doors, or obstacles. When seating her, guide her hand to the back of the chair.

Adapting Games & Activities

- Choose games that incorporate sound, like clapping games (e.g., Miss Mary Mack), musical chairs, or freeze games with music.
- For traditional games, adapt by adding sound cues, using a larger or slower-moving ball, or enlarging targets.
- Ask the Girl Scout or her caregiver if she has a favorite game or activity.
 - Prioritize hands-on, tactile activities—like beading, modeling clay, sand art, or 3D crafts—that engage the sense of touch.



Medical Conditions & Chronic Health Needs



Some Girl Scouts live with chronic medical conditions such as allergies, asthma, diabetes, or seizure disorders. These conditions are typically managed—not cured—through medication, routines, and avoiding triggers. With clear communication and preparation, Girl Scouts with medical needs can safely and fully participate in all troop activities.



Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts with Chronic Health Needs

- Ensure that you have a first aid kit present during all troop meetings and field trips.
- Caregivers must complete all relevant medication permission forms for over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription medications.
- Medications must be in their original packaging, clearly labeled with the Girl Scout's name, instructions, and expiration date.
- Ask caregivers if the Girl Scout has used the medication before, and who should administer it (some younger Girl Scouts may need help).
- If a caregiver permits the use of OTC medications (like Benadryl or ointment), keep them in your troop first aid kit.
- Always call 911 in an emergency.



Allergies



Allergies are common among Girl Scouts and can range from mild to life-threatening. With a few simple precautions and clear communication, you can help keep everyone safe and included.



Common Allergies

Food: citrus, dairy, eggs, fish, melon, peanuts, shellfish, soy, strawberries, tree nuts, wheat

Animals: cats, bees, dogs, hornets, wasps

Medication: aspirin, ibuprofen, penicillin

Latex: adhesive bandages, balloons, disposable gloves



Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts with Allergies

- **Treat allergies with care—but not as a big deal.**

Quietly set aside safe alternatives so everyone feels included.

- **Avoid cross-contamination.**

Use separate serving areas for allergen-containing foods and clean all surfaces and hands before and after eating.

- **Check ingredients.**

Read labels carefully and ask caregivers to provide snacks or approved alternatives if needed.

- **Include all Girl Scouts.**

Offer allergy-friendly versions of popular treats (e.g., marshmallows and graham crackers without chocolate for s'mores).



Anaphylaxis Awareness

Anaphylaxis is a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction that can affect breathing and circulation. It can occur suddenly—even if a previous reaction was mild.



Common causes of anaphylaxis include food, insect stings, medication, and latex. Always follow caregiver instructions and ensure that you know where epinephrine (EpiPen®) is stored and how to use it.

Call 911 immediately if symptoms of anaphylaxis occur.

Asthma

Asthma is a chronic condition that affects the lungs and can cause wheezing, coughing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. Triggers vary but may include allergens, exercise, cold air, or air pollution. Symptoms often worsen at night or in the early morning.

Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts with Asthma

- **Learn about asthma medications.**

Medications are divided into quick-relief and long-term control. Some Girl Scouts may also use a nebulizer. Inhalers should only be used by the Girl Scout to whom they're prescribed.

- **Ask caregivers about asthma triggers and emergency plans.**

Make sure you know where the inhaler is and when to use it.

- **Avoid triggers when possible.**

This might include intense outdoor activity during poor air quality or exposure to allergens.



Diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects how the body processes blood sugar (glucose). Management requires balance—between food, physical activity, and sometimes medication. With caregiver communication and simple planning, Girl Scouts with diabetes can safely participate in all activities.



Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts with Diabetes

- **Partner with caregivers.**

They will provide instructions for blood sugar monitoring, insulin (if needed), and what to do in an emergency.



- **Keep routines consistent.**

Eating on time and planning for regular meals or snacks is key.

- **Monitor for symptoms.**

Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) can happen quickly and needs immediate attention. High blood sugar (hyperglycemia) develops more slowly.

- **Know that blood sugar checks may happen during meetings.**

Some Girl Scouts may need to test their blood or use medication at certain times.

- **Ensure medical forms are completed.**

Caregivers must provide written consent for administering medications or conducting blood sugar checks.



Signs of High or Low Blood Sugar

- Shakiness/tremors
- Lightheadedness
- Headache or nausea
- Fatigue/drowsiness
- Restlessness/irritability
- Blurred vision
- Excessive thirst (high)
- Frequent urination (high)

Always treat symptoms seriously and follow the emergency plan provided by caregivers. Call 911 if needed.

Seizure Disorders

Seizure disorders are typically caused by abnormal brain activity, though the exact cause is often unknown. Seizures can range from brief, subtle episodes to more intense, full-body shaking. Some are triggered by fever, infection, or head injury, and in rare cases, they may result in physical injury.

Tips for Supporting Girl Scouts with Seizure Disorders



- Most seizures are controlled with medication, and not all cases are lifelong.
- Talk with caregivers about the Girl Scout's specific condition, what to expect, and what to do in an emergency.
- Have a written emergency plan in place, and ensure medical forms are complete.
- If a seizure occurs:
 - Ease the Girl Scout to the floor to prevent falling.
 - Gently roll her onto her left side with her mouth facing downward.
 - Loosen clothing around her neck or head.
 - Do not restrain her—clear nearby objects to prevent injury.
 - Know what to expect after a seizure. Confusion, tiredness, difficulty speaking, or loss of bodily control are common and may last from a few minutes to longer.
- Call 911 if:
 - it's the Girl Scout's first seizure.
 - the seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes.
 - she is injured or having trouble breathing.





Transgender Girl Scouts

Some Girl Scouts are transgender, meaning their gender identity—who they know themselves to be—is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. When a transgender Girl Scout is affirmed by her family and supported in living as a girl, Girl Scouts can be a safe and empowering space where she is welcomed, respected, and able to thrive.

The well-being and safety of every Girl Scout is always the top priority. Troop leaders and volunteers should work closely with the Girl Scout and her caregivers to create an environment where she feels valued and included.



Tips for Supporting Transgender Girl Scouts

- **Respect privacy.**

Families may have different preferences about sharing their Girl Scout's transgender status. Some may be open and want to raise awareness; others may wish to keep this private. Both approaches are valid and must be respected.

- **Work with caregivers.**

Ask how the Girl Scout and her family would like to handle name, pronouns, privacy, and communication with others in the troop.

- **Keep safety in mind.**

It is recommended that the troop leader or primary adult volunteer is aware of a Girl Scout's transgender identity so they can provide appropriate support and ensure her emotional and physical safety.

- **Promote inclusion.**

Reinforce that Girl Scouts is a space where every girl belongs and is treated with dignity and kindness.





Self-Awareness Activities

Understanding who we are—and how our actions, thoughts, and words impact others—is an important part of growing as a leader and friend. When Girl Scouts build self-awareness, they gain insight into their own strengths and struggles, while developing greater empathy and appreciation for the differences in others.

The following activities are designed to help Girl Scouts explore self-reflection, celebrate individuality, and foster inclusive troop culture. As always, use your judgment to tailor these to the needs, ages, and dynamics of your troop.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: Celebrating Uniqueness



Purpose: To reflect on differences and build empathy

Supplies:

- Precut red paper circles
- Dark-colored markers

Instructions:

1. Sing “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” Ask the group: “Why do you think Rudolph had a shiny red nose?”
2. Share a silly or imaginative reason—like, “He’s allergic to snow!”—and explain that what makes someone different can also make them special.
3. Lead a discussion: “Have you ever felt left out or teased for something you couldn’t control? How did that feel?”
4. Hand out the red circles. Ask each Girl Scout to write one unique quality, interest, or talent on each side.
5. Invite them to share their “red noses” with the group and celebrate the diversity within the troop.
6. End with a Friendship Circle, reinforcing the importance of respect, kindness, and celebrating what makes each of us one-of-a-kind.



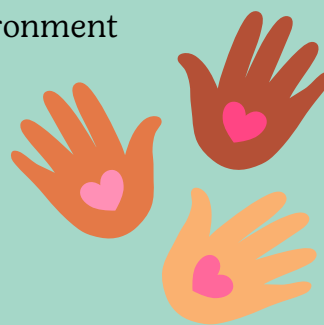
Self-Awareness Activities

Saying Goodbye to Put-Downs

Purpose: To build a respectful, caring troop environment

Supplies:

- Slips of paper
- Pencils or pens
- A box with a lid (or a trash bin, if preferred)



Instructions:

1. Ask Girl Scouts to think of a put-down or hurtful comment they've received—something they never want to hear again.
2. Have them write it on a slip of paper. Let girls who feel comfortable share what they wrote and why it hurt.
3. Place the slips in the box. Either “bury” the box (symbolically or outdoors), seal it shut, or rip up the slips and throw them away—marking the moment of letting go.
4. As a troop, create a No Put-Down Zone by agreeing on respectful behaviors and language.



No Put-Down Zone Pledge:

- We treat everyone with kindness and respect.
- We don't use teasing or name-calling.
- We include others, even if they look, act, or believe differently than we do.
- We use our words to lift people up—not tear them down.
- We handle disagreements peacefully and respectfully.



Disability Awareness Activities

Helping Girl Scouts understand what it might feel like to live with a disability is a powerful way to build empathy, encourage inclusion, and reduce stigma. These hands-on activities are not meant to mimic a person's lived experience, but to foster conversation about individuality, accessibility, and respect. Use your discretion to ensure the activities are age-appropriate and create a supportive, inclusive learning environment for everyone.



Hearing Awareness Activities

Experiencing Hearing Loss

Have Girl Scouts take turns wearing noise-canceling headphones or cotton balls (secured with a scarf) while holding a conversation.

Distorted Spelling Test

Play a muffled recording of 10 words. Have Girl Scouts write down what they hear—no repeats or clarifications.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What was frustrating or surprising about the experience?
- What helped or didn't help during communication?
- What are respectful ways to support someone who is deaf or hard of hearing?



Troop Debrief Activity: Better Communication Brainstorm

As a group, create a short list of ways to be a better communicator—especially with someone who may not hear well. Include things like:

- Facing the person when speaking
- Using gestures or writing things down
- Being patient if something needs to be repeated

Write your list on poster paper and keep it posted in your meeting space.

Visual Awareness Activities

Wearing a Blindfold

Complete simple tasks like eating a snack or walking to the water fountain while blindfolded—with a partner’s assistance.



Puzzle Challenge with Blindfolds

In small groups, two Girl Scouts wear blindfolds while the third gives instructions to complete a simple puzzle. Rotate roles.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What felt frustrating, helpful, or empowering?
- What types of instructions worked best?
- What are respectful ways to support someone who is blind or has low vision?



Troop Debrief Activity: Inclusive Language Challenge

Sit in a circle. Ask:

*“What are some things we say every day that assume someone can see?”
(i.e. “Did you see that?” “Look over there!”)*

Now brainstorm alternatives.

Can we say “Did you notice that?” or
“Check it out” instead?

Make a troop goal to try more inclusive phrasing
this month!



Learning Awareness Activities

Reading Distorted Text

Have Girl Scouts read aloud from a distorted or altered passage of text.

Writing on Your Forehead

Ask Girl Scouts to write their name on paper held on their forehead—without looking.

Writing While Swinging Your Foot

Try writing while swinging one foot in circles.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What was hard to do or concentrate on?
- How did it feel to get something “wrong”?
- How might this relate to having a learning disability?



Troop Debrief Activity: Understanding Frustration

Pass out sticky notes and ask each Girl Scout to finish this sentence anonymously:

“I get frustrated when...”

Stick the notes on a board or poster. Read a few aloud and discuss:

- Do we all feel frustration sometimes?
- How can we show more patience—with ourselves and others?

Finish with a reminder:

“Everyone learns differently, and that’s okay!”



Physical Awareness Activities

Writing with Pliers

Hold a pencil using pliers to simulate limited grip or fine motor coordination.

Mobility Aid Challenge

Take turns using a wheelchair, cane, or crutches to complete simple daily tasks.

Buttoning a Shirt One-Handed

Try buttoning a shirt using only one hand.

Threading a Needle with Mittens On

Wear bulky mittens while trying to thread a needle.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Which task was the most difficult?
- What emotions came up—frustration, accomplishment, embarrassment?
- What would help make activities more accessible?



Troop Debrief Activity: What Would You Change?

Ask:

“If you could change one thing in this room (or our meeting space) to make it easier for someone with a physical disability, what would it be?”

Let Girl Scouts walk around the room and share their ideas. Make a list together—and consider making one of the changes if possible!

Tools & Resources for Inclusive Girl Scouting

Many national organizations offer free, up-to-date resources, community support, and guidance for specific conditions. When researching online, always prioritize reputable, official websites for the most accurate information.

Condition-Specific Organizations

- ADHD: [CHADD \(Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder\)](#)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder: [Autism Speaks](#)
- Blindness/Low Vision: [American Foundation for the Blind](#)
- Cerebral Palsy: [United Cerebral Palsy](#)
- Deafness/Hard of Hearing: [American Society for Deaf Children](#)
- Down Syndrome: [National Down Syndrome Society \(NDSS\)](#)
- Spina Bifida: [Spina Bifida Association](#)



Girl Scouts & Accessibility

- Adapted Physical Activities: [NCHPAD \(National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability\)](#)
- ADA Guidelines & Support: [ADA National Network](#)
- Girl Scout Promise in American Sign Language (ASL): [Watch here](#)
- Inclusive Youth Programming: [RespectAbility](#)

Tools & Resources for Inclusive Girl Scouting

Books to Build Empathy & Understanding

Reading together is a great way to introduce and normalize differences in a troop. Ask your local librarian or special education teacher for book suggestions or resources.

Parents or caregivers may also recommend books about their child's experiences.



Here are a few books to get you started:

- Different—A Great Thing to Be! by Heather Avis – A rhyming story that teaches the value of embracing everyone's differences.
- Don't Call Me Special by Pat Thomas – A broad, approachable introduction to disabilities for children ages 4–8.
- My Brother Charlie by Holly Robinson Peete – A sibling's perspective on life with a brother who has autism, co-authored by the author's daughter.
- My Friend Isabelle by Eliza Woloson – A gentle story about two friends, one of whom has Down syndrome, that celebrates both similarities and differences.
- Susan Laughs by Jeanne Willis – A joyful story that ends with a subtle reveal that Susan uses a wheelchair, showing that her disability doesn't define her.
- Taking Cerebral Palsy to School by Mary Elizabeth Anderson – Told from a child's perspective, this story explains CP in an age-appropriate, inclusive way.

