

**Just
-in-
Time**



Managing a Multi-level Troop

What is a Multi-level Troop?

A multi-level troop serves youth members from two or more grade levels and potentially multiple program levels (depending on the grades).

What are some reasons to start a Multi-level Troop?

Multi-level troops are started for many reasons. Most often, one of the troop leaders has girl members in different grade levels or the community/school isn't large enough to support multiple troops. When older troops (Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors) are too small to provide a cooperative learning environment, they may decide to combine into a single, multi-level troop, or join a separate, town wide multi-level troop for additional participation options.

Benefits of a Multi-level Troop

- Younger members typically look up to older members and bringing them together in a multi-level troop setting can provide younger members with positive role models.
- Older members have an opportunity to put their leadership skills into action as they mentor younger members. Many badge and Journey activities suggest that older members (even Girl Scout Brownies) assist younger members with service projects, teach them new skills, lead songs, games, and more.
- Girl members are grouped by grade level nearly everywhere – school, sports, after school programs – so a multi-level environment allows members to interact with a more diverse group of peers and make new friends!
- If parents, caregivers, or volunteers have children in different levels, this allows them all to spend time together (as well as simplify their schedule).
- In communities with fewer troop options and/or minimal interest, this can be a great way to welcome more members (youth and adult volunteers) and keep a troop active and more engaging.
- Some multi-level troops (particularly for older members) may focus on a theme such as travel or outdoors. This troop option could be a member's primary troop but could also be a second troop that a member participates in along with their "traditional" troop.

Important Considerations When Managing a Multi-level Troop

- Always follow the girl/adult ratio based on the youngest members in your troop. This means if you have a troop of 12 Girl Scout Daisy/Brownie members, you should meet the required Daisy ratios.
- Troops should only have one bank account per troop number.
- When registering members for council programs, be mindful of grade level requirements. There may be some programs that are not open to all troop members.

Strategies to Make Your Multi-level Troop a Success

There are some great benefits to having a multi-level troop for youth members and volunteers, but there are also some unique challenges. Here are some best practices and tips on how best to overcome any challenges you may face to not only make your multi-level troop a success, but to have a great Girl Scout year.

- Check out the [Multi-level Troop Year Plans](#) for a fun and blended experience for your multi-level troop. These year plan makes it easy for you and your girls to bond as a troop as you explore common themes through age-appropriate badges.
- The [Volunteer Toolkit \(VTK\)](#) has multi-level year plans and resources that provide activities for multi-level troops. This allows you to do activities together without the need to break out into age level groups.
- Refer to the [Badge & Award Charts](#) for all age groups to view all badges and awards available by category and find more common themes.
- Badge and age-level Journey activities can be adapted for the different ages or facilitated separately. Use the Volunteer Toolkit to help plan troop meetings with activities appropriate for each age level.
- Allow older members to teach or assist the younger ones. This is a great leadership opportunity for all involved. However, the older members should have their own experience as well and not just be used to “baby sit” the younger members.
- If safety is a concern or there is no way to adapt the activity in an appropriate way, leverage the help of other troop volunteers and ask that they physically separate the group for that portion of the meeting.
- Remember, the girl to adult safety ratio defaults to the youngest aged members!

Support friendships within age levels and encourage members to make new friends of different ages.

- We recommend that your start up, opening and troop business be done together as a group. The troop can then break out as needed to complete age-appropriate activities in the meeting. They can then meet back together again for clean-up and closing.
- Remind members that although they may be at different levels, they are all part of the sisterhood of Girl Scouting.

Ask for help to balance the additional responsibilities of managing a multi-level troop.

Enlist parents/caregivers to help you with planning and make sure all parents/caregivers are involved in supporting their Girl Scout in some capacity.

- Hold a [Parent/Caregiver Meeting](#) and have them fill in the [Parent/Caregiver Involvement Form](#).
- Once you get to know your troop caregivers, ask for help with product programs, chaperoning, driving, meetings, planning, etc.
- Share a volunteer sign-up list for upcoming meetings, trips, and other activities.
Note that all volunteers must be registered, background checked and approved volunteers.
- Ensure required Girl Scout volunteer-to-youth ratios are met for the youngest grade level in your troop. Follow the chart in [Volunteer Essentials](#) under Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need.

Leader Tips and Tricks for Multi-level Troops

- Use a Patrol System to run meetings by dividing the troop into smaller groups (patrols). Patrols choose a patrol name, symbol, leaders, and assistant leaders.
- Use a [Kaper Chart](#) to assign jobs. Members should rotate jobs.
- Give girls a chance to work both within their grade level and others.
- Although grade-level groups should select the badges and awards they wish to earn, the entire troop should decide on its trips and activities.
- Council patch programs are a great way to explore topics with specific activities for each grade level. Explore our [patch programs](#).
- Remember, it's not just about awards. Allow the girls to decide what they want to do, and how they want to do it. This allows programming to be girl-led and helps girls develop important leadership skills.
- Don't forget to check in with your [service unit team](#) and other experienced leaders in your area—they might have some great tips and tricks for you as well! If you're not sure how to connect with your service unit team or local leaders, please reach out to us at 800-666-2141 or help@gsdakotahorizons.org and we'll be happy to help!

Examples

- With a little creativity and imagination, you can provide fun and challenging activities that allow members of all ages to learn and grow together, earning Journeys and badges along the way.
- Girl Scout Cadettes can earn their Leader in Action (LIA) Journey while assisting Brownies in completing a Journey from their grade level.
- A Girl Scout Daisy/Brownie troop could go camping and complete activities for the Welcome to the Daisy Flower Garden and Brownie Quest Journeys. As Brownies lead the way through trails following a map, Daisies can identify flora and fauna that line the trail.
- During a fitness class, Girl Scout Juniors could work on their Staying Fit badge while Brownies work on the My Best Self badge. Perhaps there is one step where the Juniors can teach the Brownies new exercises and vice versa? Is there a step where the Brownies can prepare healthy snacks with the Juniors and vice versa? There are many ways to incorporate members of all ages into activities.

Managing a Multi-level Troop: FAQs

Below are some frequent “What if?” questions that will help guide you as you manage your multi-level troop throughout the Girl Scout year.

What if the troop decides to split into multiple troops?

The offshoot group would need to fulfill all of the necessary requirements for forming a new troop. This includes:

- Proper girl/volunteer ratios: At least two adult volunteers as part of the Troop Leadership Team and a minimum of 3 girls.
- Obtaining a troop number: The new troop leaders will need to contact the Member Services team to request a new troop number.
- Opening a separate bank account: The new troop will need to [open a separate bank account](#). The funds from the existing troop can be split as agreed upon by the original and new troops.
- Troops can continue to meet together if they wish.

What if girl members want to do specific activities for their grade/program level that require them to save funds?

- The troop needs to make decisions about how they are going to earn and spend their money at every grade/program level. Remember that funds cannot become the property of or be assigned to individual youth members.
- If you are planning grade level specific activities, be sure to communicate with all troop members (and caregivers if age appropriate). Activities should be planned for all specific grade levels to be sure all members have a chance to use the funds they’ve earned.

What if girl members want to participate in a council program but do not meet the grade-level requirements?

- Any currently registered member of Girl Scouts may participate in council-sponsored events offered to your current grade or age level. Girls may participate individually or as part of a troop.
- View individual event listings for information on participants welcome to attend and event pricing options. Be sure to check the program grade levels for each event.
- Discuss beforehand with the troop members (caregivers if age appropriate) what activities to attend. If an activity is exclusive to troop members based on grade, consider an alternative activity that everyone can participate in or an alternate activity for the other grade.

Still have questions or need more support? Contact Member Services at help@gsdakotahorizons.org.