



Computer/Online Use: Safety Activity Checkpoints



Using the Internet in Girl Scouting isn't solely for girls participating in a virtual manner; girls use the Web to communicate with other girls, research travel plans and activities, and create Web sites for events and series opportunities. In addition, a Girl Scout group working with an adult may wish to do such things as:

- Earn a technology award or other award found online
- Promote the Girl Scout Cookie sale using the online marketing tools offered on Girl Scout product vendor Web sites
- Search for other Girl Scout council or group Web sites
- Research a badge or community resource
- Visit the [World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts' \(WAGGGS\) Web site](#) or member countries' Web sites
- Create a static Web page on the Internet (a static Web page is one that looks the same each time users view it and does not allow guests to post to it)
- Set up a secure, password-protected Web site with a calendar and information for girls and families
- Use Girl Scout vendor Web sites to learn more about product activities
- Set up a social networking page (ages 13 and older)

Monitor Web sites that girls view, ensuring that they are safe and actively controlled. For online and product sales, refer to the Safety Activity Checkpoints called "Girl Scout Cookie/Council-Sponsored Product Sales." No girl or adult acting on behalf of girl members can collect money online for Girl Scout products or a money-earning activity online. The only exception to this is GSUA-approved magazine vendor programs.

Know where to use computers and go online. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions.

Include girls with disabilities. Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that [Independent Living Institute](#) provides to people with disabilities.

Prepare for Computer/Online Use

- ❑ **Communicate with council and parents.** Inform your Girl Scout council and girls' parents/guardians about the activity, including details about safety precautions and any appropriate clothing or supplies that may be necessary. Follow council procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and council guidelines about girls' general health examinations. Make arrangements in advance for all transportation and confirm plans before departure.
- ❑ **Girls plan the activity.** Keeping their grade-level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.
- ❑ **Arrange for transportation and adult supervision.** The adult-to-girl ratios are two non-related adults (at least one of whom is female) to every:
 - 12 Girl Scout Daisies
 - 20 Girl Scout Brownies
 - 25 Girl Scout Juniors
 - 25 Girl Scout Cadettes
 - 30 Girl Scout Seniors
 - 30 Girl Scout AmbassadorsPlus one adult to each additional:
 - 6 Girl Scout Daisies
 - 8 Girl Scout Brownies
 - 10 Girl Scout Juniors
 - 12 Girl Scout Cadettes
 - 15 Girl Scout Seniors
 - 15 Girl Scout Ambassadors
- ❑ **Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** Recruit a consultant with knowledge of computers if adults or girls need assistance with activities related to computers or the Internet.
- ❑ **Select a safe location to use computers and the Web.** Identify a location that provides group members with opportunities to use computers and access the Internet. Look for computers available for group use at a library, Girl Scout program center, school or college computer lab, computer rental store with training facility, or museum. Make sure that there are enough computers for each girl to learn by doing, even if there is some sharing (cooperative learning) taking place.
- ❑ **Understand the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge.** Before girls use the Internet, copy and distribute the safety pledge, which is available at the end of this document and in the footer of www.girlscouts.org. Discuss online safety issues with girls, so they know how to conduct themselves safely on the Internet. All girls must read, agree to, and sign the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge before going online; a parent/guardian also must sign.

On the Day of the Computer/Online Activity

- ❑ **Ensure girls' safety in Web site design.** A group that wants to design a Web site must understand that the Web is an open medium for anyone. An open site will attract more than the intended users. Documented instances of cyberstalkers make it imperative that any information that could jeopardize the safety and security of girls and adults is not disclosed on a Web site. The following measures ensure girls' safety:
 - Use only girls' first names online.
 - Never post girls' last names, addresses, phone numbers, or e-mail addresses.
 - Always have a parent's or guardian's permission when using pictures of girls on a Web site.
 - Do not post addresses of group meeting places or dates and times of meetings, events, or trips.
 - Do not allow automatic posting of messages to a Web site; all postings (such as message boards or guest books) should have adult oversight and be screened prior to posting live; ensure that the site does not show personal e-mail addresses (use a troop or group e-mail, or use an adult's e-mail).
 - An adult who wishes to communicate upcoming events with families of girls should use e-mail instead of posting details on a Web site, unless that site is password-protected.

- **Take care in posting links.** Be careful when selecting links to other Web sites that show on your site. The contents of potential links should be in keeping with Girl Scout principles and activities. Avoid linking to commercial sites selling merchandise to avoid implied Girl Scout endorsement of the products they offer. Seek out sites that enhance girls' participation in Girl Scouting; are tasteful; are grade-level-appropriate; show diversity; are beneficial for girls, adults, and families; and are in keeping with the Girl Scout organization's purpose. Fully explore each Web site link to determine that its content is appropriate to a Girl Scout audience. As a courtesy, e-mail the site's Webmaster, requesting permission to link to the site. Use similar criteria to determine what sites link to your group's Web site.
- **Respect copyrighted material.** A group Web site may not use copyrighted designs, text, graphics, or trademarked symbols without specific permission from the copyright or trademark holder. The basic principle is that, if it is not yours, don't use it. Girls may use trademarks owned by GSUSA, which include the trefoil shape; Girl Scout Daisy Pin and Girl Scout Brownie Pin; contemporary and traditional Girl Scout pins; the words Girl Scout Daisy, Girl Scout Brownie, Girl Scout Junior, Girl Scout Cadette, Girl Scout Senior, Girl Scout Ambassador, Girl Scouting, Girl Scouts, and Girl Scout Cookies; Girl Scout Brownie Try-its, Girl Scout Junior Badges, and all Girl Scout Cadette-Ambassador Interest Project awards, their names and symbols, as well as all Girl Scout journey insignia. Information on use of GSUSA graphics and trademarks can be found at www.girlscouts.org under Girl Scout Central: Graphics Gallery, and under the link for Terms and Conditions on each www.girlscouts.org footer. Girl Scout trademarks can be used only in accordance with guidelines for their use. The Girl Scout trefoil, for example, may not be animated or used as wallpaper for a Web site. Check with your council's Web site for complete graphics guidelines and approvals. Some names (such as commercial products and cartoon characters) are also trademarked and cannot be incorporated into Web site addresses. Permission is also required from the author or publisher for Web use of videos and music. Do not post words to copyrighted songs, poems, or book content, as permission must be granted from the record label, publisher, artist, poet, or author, and is nearly impossible to obtain.
- **Choose social-networking sites with care.** Groups whose girls are at least 13 years old and obtain parental permission may set up a troop or group social-networking site. This site must be approved by the council. Any Girl Scout use of a social networking site (such as Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace) for communication must have parental permission and must meet age limits set by the provider, which is 13 and older in most cases, as per the United States Child Online Privacy and Protection Act (COPPA) and the Child Online Protection Act (COPA). Any online marketing using social networking tools must follow guidelines outlined in the "Managing Group Finances" chapter of *Volunteer Essentials*. Any appearance in a Girl Scout-related video or picture online must have permission from each girl's parent or guardian, using the GSUSA girl/adult permission form. These forms should be held by the adult and/or council.

Computer and Online Safety Links

- **Girl Scouts of the USA:** www.girlscouts.org
- **Go Girls Only** (for girls grades 1–6): www.gogirlsonly.org
- **The Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace** in Savannah, Georgia: www.juliettegordonlowbirthplace.org
- **Girl Scout Cookies** (for information on Girl Scout Cookies): www.girlscoutcookies.org
- **Girl Scout council Finder:** www.girlscouts.org/councilfinder

Computer and Online Safety Know-How for Girls

- **Blog about Girl Scouting.** Planning a take-action project, road trip, or camping adventure? Consider documenting your plans and experiences on a council or national blog and divvy up the documentation duties (photography, writing, editing, and so on) among the group.

Computer and Internet Jargon

- **HTML:** The acronym for HyperText Markup Language, the language or code used to create Web pages; learn HTML basics at www.htmlgoodies.com

- **Search engine optimization (SEO):** The practice of designing Web pages so that they rank as high as possible in search results from search engines, such as Google and Yahoo!; this process often involves incorporating commonly searched keywords into static text, headlines, and body text