



girl scouts 
heart of the south

hooray! you're planning a court of awards. now what?

Ceremonies are an important and exciting part of Girl Scouting.

Ceremonies reinforce values, pass on traditions, recognize accomplishments, strengthen friendships, and give life to the beliefs established by the Girl Scout Promise and Law. They are a means for girls to express their feelings, friendship, patriotism and service.

A Court of Awards is a great way to bring girls and their families together to acknowledge the accomplishments of the past year and recommit to a new year of Girl Scouting and all that it has to offer.

In this packet you will find everything you need to plan a fun and memorable Court of Awards. From sample scripts, to a time line checklist - we have you covered in your planning.

before you send invitations

Planning your Court of Awards is really exciting! But, before you send out those invitation check to see if the event is following Girl Scout guidelines.

- Check in with Volunteer Care to ensure that your event meets all event guidelines and safety checkpoints.
- You will need to prepare for this event in advance. Please read this guide thoroughly and note the advance preparations you will need to make and materials you will need to obtain.

learn more about 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 simply make the beginning or end of a group's meeting special. Girls can plan a ceremony around a theme, such as friendship or nature, and express themselves in thought, words, or song.

Whatever its purpose, every Girl Scout ceremony enables girls to share Girl Scout history and traditions and create their own special memories.



elements of a good ceremony

ceremony program content

Structure. A ceremony will typically have three parts: the opening, the main part and the closing.

Girl-led planning! To create a ceremony that is extra special to the girls and unique to the group, involving them in the planning process is imperative. As a way to personalize ceremonies, encourage girls to include songs, poems, readings, quotes and skits.

Imagination. Make each ceremony different.

Simplicity. The ceremony should be simple enough for all participants and everyone in attendance to understand.

Intent. Good ceremonies have a clear purpose.

Tradition. While a great ceremony should reflect the ideas of the girls, it's important to make sure that there are still traditional parts included.

Inclusiveness. Ceremonies should be inclusive, involving all girls in both the planning process and the ceremony itself. A good ceremony will make everyone a participant.

troop involvement ideas

It is important to involve troops in as much of the ceremony as possible.

- Involve girls in the planning and implementation of the court of awards ceremony.
- Create a PowerPoint photo presentation and ask each troop to submit photos from their year.
- Ask troops to make a display board representing their year.
 - After the ceremony, girls can hold informal fair presentations of special events from the year.
- Recognize girls that have earned the Girl Scout Bronze, Silver and Gold
 - Girls that earned the awards last year can help in recognizing this year's recipients.
- Troops can each present a song, poem, skit, etc., if time permits
- Each troop makes a centerpiece for refreshment tables symbolizing a memorable Girl Scout activity.

The ceremony program will help girls and guests know what to expect from the event. Include the following items in the ceremony program:

- Program order (agenda)
- Troop(s) doing flag ceremony
- Troop numbers with program grade level
 - Optional: List girl and adult names for each troop.
- If listing girls' names put an asterisk to designate girls who are bridging
- Girl Scout Bronze, Silver and Gold Award recipients
- Words for the Girl Scout Promise and Law, Taps, and any group songs being sung . (Note: words can also be projected on screen)

ceremony adaptations

It is important that the Court of Awards Ceremony meets the needs of the girls and families in your area. Consider the following adaptations:

- Change the order of ceremony to work with your area
- Times can be adjusted to fit your program
- For larger service units/areas
 - Have more than one ceremony for your service unit. Divide by school, area, or grade level
 - Only invite bridging girls, award recipients and adults on stage
 - Have each troop give a brief summary of what they have accomplished
- For smaller service units/areas
 - Each troop can be responsible for planning one part of the ceremony. (ex. Decorate bridge, emcee the event, create and print programs, flag ceremony)
 - Include a family potluck before or after the ceremony

additional roles for girl scout troops

In addition to the ways you ask all troops to participate, there are additional roles that troops can take on. Consider having different roles available for girls of different ages, such as:

- Help with decorations
- Conduct Flag Ceremonies
- Pass out programs to guests as they arrive
- Assist with serving refreshments
- Serve as emcees for parts of the event

Girl Scout Awards and Insignia

Girl Scout insignia and awards are traditionally presented to girls as they fly-up or bridge—moving up to the next program grade level.

There are specific insignia that are given to girls automatically when they move onto the next level and a bridging award that must be earned by completing different requirements.

Use the chart below to assist in determining what awards to give to girls at the ceremony.

Program Grade Level	Insignia Automatically given	Earned Awards
Girl Scout Daisy	Membership Star with blue disc Ending Certificate Girl Scout Brownie Membership Pin (optional)	Bridge to Girl Scout Brownie
Girl Scout Brownie	Membership Star with green disc Girl Scout Brownie Wings Girl Scout Membership Pin (optional)	Bridge to Girl Scout Junior
Girl Scout Junior	Membership Star with yellow disc	Bridge to Girl Scout Cadette
Girl Scout Cadette	Membership Star with white disc	Bridge to Girl Scout Senior
Girl Scout Senior	Membership Star with red disc	Bridge to Girl Scout Ambassador
Girl Scout Ambassador	Membership Star with navy disc	Bridge to Adult Girl Scout





Adult Recognition Award Ideas

Every person likes to feel appreciated for her or his volunteer service. Whether in the form of a simple thank-you for a small job well done or a formal commendation for years of faithful service in a key position of an organization, such acknowledgment is a signal to the recipient that she or he is noticed and appreciated—that she or he is recognized.

Some ways to recognize volunteers during the ceremony could include:

- A framed photograph of the Girl Scouts who participated in a particular project or event (can be a blown-up snapshot)
- Flowers
- Specific awards such as “Rookie of the Year”, Most Valuable Team Member, Green Angel, Green Knight, etc. as developed by your service unit team, committee, or group
- Fun awards such as breath mints (‘you take my breath away’), note cards (‘for a noteworthy achievement’), or batteries (‘you’ve added energy to our group’)
- Certificate
- Small trinket



Girl Scouts Heart of the South and GSUSA Adult Awards
 In addition to general adult recognition, consider nominating exceptional adult volunteers for one of the adult awards listed below.

More details about these awards can be found on the council website at: <https://www.girlscoutshs.org/en/members/for-volunteers/volunteer-recognitions.html>

GSUSA Awards

Appreciation Pin: Recognizes outstanding service to at least one geographic area, service unit, or program delivery audience

Honor Pin: Recognizes outstanding service to at least two geographic areas, service units, or program delivery audiences

Thanks Badge I: One of the highest adult awards in Girl Scouting, for service above and beyond that benefits the entire council

Thanks Badge II: Nominee has received Thanks Badge I and has taken a leadership role in developing a model that has been replicated at the national level

Years of Service Pin: Recognizes an adult member for years of active volunteer service at five-year intervals.

Membership Numerals: Recognizes tenure in Girl Scouting. Girl member and adult member years recognized in five-year intervals. These can be purchased through the council shop.

Volunteer of Excellence: Recognizes those volunteers who have contributed outstanding service while partnering directly with girls or who have contributed outstanding service in support of the council’s mission delivery to girl and adult members.

President’s Award: Recognizes the efforts of a service-delivery team or committee whose exemplary service in support of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience surpassed team goals and resulted in significant, measurable impact toward reaching the council’s overall goals.

court of awards checklist

Adjustments can be made to this schedule to accommodate larger or smaller service units as well as individual troops.

3-6 Months before ceremony

- Decide who will be invited and if multiple events are needed.
- Set Your Budget – some Service Units cover the expenses of their Court of Awards Ceremony, others divide expenses by troop
- Contact nearby troops/Service Units that might partner for joint Court of Awards if group size is small
- Choose date(s) and confirm with troops
- Reserve venue
 - If an outside location is selected, have a rain date or back-up location
 - Ensure that the location of your event is accessible to persons with disabilities. Ask families in advance if any special accommodations need to be made. If you have questions regarding specific adaptations, please contact the council at 800-624-4185 or info@girlscoutshs.org.
- Secure screen and projector for PowerPoint, if needed (may be available from venue)
- Reserve flags, sashes, candle logs from the council
- Locate, create or reserve a bridge from the council
- Design program (if a troop has not signed up to assist with this)
- Go through the flow of the program (where will everyone sit, stand, direction they walk on and off stage, etc.)
- Mail, or deliver, invitations to make sure that recipients get them well enough in advance to make plans to attend

Venue Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

2 weeks before ceremony

- Touch base with troops to confirm attendance
 - Confirm all tasks are being completed
- Rehearse your ceremony so that everyone is comfortable with their part
- Collect RSVPs so you can have an accurate head count
- Develop seating chart and signs for troops so they can sit together
- Make sure there is enough seating and that everything is set up before attendees start to arrive.
- Update ceremony program with troop information and proofread

1-3 Months before ceremony

- Send reminders to troops to invite girls and families
 - Invite girls to make invitations at troop meetings for their families
- Assign tasks to troops and volunteers
 - Conduct flag ceremony _____
 - Decorate bridge _____
 - Put together PowerPoint _____
 - Design and print program _____
 - Coordinate refreshments _____
 - Pass out programs _____

Confirm with venue

Remind troop leaders to purchase awards and other ceremonial items

week of ceremony

- Pick up refreshments
- Run through script
- Test A/V equipment
- Print programs

after ceremony

- Return flags, equipment, etc.
- Evaluate event and make notes for future ceremonies

sample program time line

Time Allotment	Activity	Description	Materials Needed
2 min	Welcome and Introduction	Welcome girls and guests to the ceremonies	Computer Projector PowerPoint slideshow of photos (can be shown at the beginning or end of ceremony) Bridge Podium / Microphone Ceremony programs Script
5 min	Flag Ceremony	Conduct opening flag ceremony	Flags Flag stands Sashes Flag ceremony commands
5 - 10 min	Girl Scout Daisies	Award membership stars/earned awards, bridging 1 st graders to Girl Scout Brownies	Script Each troop provides awards for girls in their troop and other ceremonial items
5 - 10 min	Girl Scout Brownies	Award membership stars/earned awards, bridging 3 rd graders to Girl Scout Juniors	Script Each troop provides awards for girls in their troop and other ceremonial items
5 - 10 min	Girl Scout Juniors	Award membership stars/earned awards, bridging 5 th graders to Girl Scout Cadettes and introduce the Bronze Award recipients	Script Each troop provides awards for girls in their troop and other ceremonial items
5 - 10 min	Girl Scout Cadettes	Award membership star/earned awards, bridging 8 th graders to Girl Scout Seniors and introduce the Silver Award recipients	Script Each troop provides awards for girls in their troop and other ceremonial items

Time Allotment	Activity	Description	Materials Needed
5 - 10 min	Girl Scout Seniors	Award membership star/earned awards, bridging 10 th graders to Girl Scout Ambassadors and introduce the Gold Award recipients	Script Each troop provides awards for girls in their troop and other ceremonial items
10 - 20 min	Girl Scout Ambassadors	Award membership star/earned awards, bridging to Adult Girl Scouts and lifetime Membership, if being awarded by the Service Unit or Troop, Graduating Seniors	Script Each troop provides awards for girls in their troop and other ceremonial items
10 - 15 min	Adult Recognition	Years of Service Awards, Service Unit Team Awards, Troop Leader and Adult Recognition	Script Service unit provides awards and recognition items *If any volunteers are receiving a council-level award, these will be provided and presented by a council representative
10 - 20 min	Council Presentation	A council representative will present council-level awards for Product Sales, Gold Award, Council Scholarships, Adult Awards, Service Unit Awards and make a summer camp presentation	All awards at this level will be provided by the council.
2 min	Closing Remarks	Thank you	Script PowerPoint slideshow of photos (if not done at beginning of ceremony)
5 min	Closing Flag Ceremony	Conduct a closing flag ceremony	Flags Flag stands Sashes
Based on activities selected	Rededication (optional)	<u>Rededication ideas</u> Recite the Girl Scout Promise and Law Sing "Make New Friends" Candle lighting (flashlights/glow sticks can be used) Read a poem (See troop presentation ideas for details)	Troops provide their own materials for their part of the ceremony. Ex. Candles, words for poem or song, awards or recognitions.
Based on activities selected	Early Bird Registration (optional)	This encourages parents to recommit to Girl Scouts and gives them the opportunity to re-register.	Forms Patches
	Refreshments (optional)		Refreshment items Hostesses