

Chapter 7: Managing Group Finances

Every Girl Scout group is responsible for planning and financing its own activities. This puts girls in charge, giving them the opportunity (with your oversight) to cooperatively set goals, manage a budget, spend responsibly, maintain records, and develop good math and finance skills.

Girl Scout groups are funded by a share of money earned through council-sponsored product sale activities (such as Girl Scout Cookie sales), group money-earning activities (council-approved, of course!), and any dues your group may charge. (This is in addition to the \$12 annual membership dues that goes to the national organization.) This chapter gives you the ins and outs of helping girls manage their group finances, practice successful product-sales techniques, and develop additional group money-earning ideas, if needed.

Establishing an Account

If you're taking over an existing group, you'll likely inherit a checking account, but if you're starting a new group, you'll want to open a new account. This usually happens when there is money to deposit, such as from group dues, product sales, or group money-earning activities.

Follow your council's financial policies and procedures for setting up an account. Most council-sponsored produce sales have specific banking procedures, as well.

[Council: You may want to insert local financial policies and procedures here]

Closing a Bank Account

Girl Scout funds do not become the property of any individual girl or adult. Instead, the group may decide to donate any unused funds to a worthwhile organization, to another group, or for girl activities. As when closing a personal account, be sure all checks and other debits have cleared the account before you close it, and realize that you may have to close the account in person. Turn all remaining funds over to a council staff member.

Money-Earning Basics

Girls earn money in two distinct ways:

- “Council-sponsored product sales” are council wide sales of Girl Scout–authorized products (such as Girl Scout Cookies, calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy), in which members participate.

- “Group money-earning” refers to activities organized by the group (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with adults) and that earn money for the group. These activities must be approved by the council.

Girls’ participation in both council-sponsored product sale activities and group money-earning projects is based upon the following:

- Voluntary participation
- Written permission of each girl’s parent or guardian
- An understanding of (and ability to explain clearly to others) why the money is needed
- An understanding that money-earning should not exceed what the group needs to support its activities.
- Observance of local ordinances related to involvement of children in money-earning activities, as well as health and safety laws
- Vigilance in protecting the personal safety of each girl
- Arrangements for safeguarding the money

In addition, consider the following reminders or cautions:

- Girl Scout Daisies (in kindergarten and first grades) may be involved in council-sponsored product sale activities, but they cannot collect money in any other way except through group dues or parental contributions.
- Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the age and abilities of the girls and consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- Money raised is for Girl Scout activities and is not to be retained by individuals. Girls can, however, be awarded sales incentives and/or may earn credits from their Girl Scout product sales.
- Girl Scouts forbids use of games of chance, the direct solicitation of cash, and product-demonstration parties.
- Obtain written approval from your council before a group money-earning event; most councils ask that you submit a request for approval of a group money-earning event form.
- Girls can market cookies and other products by sending e-mails to friends, family members, and former customers, as long as they use a group e-mail address, the address of a parent/guardian or adult volunteer, a blind e-mail address (in which the recipients cannot see the sender’s e-mail address), or the online e-mail tools provided by cookie vendors. Girls 13 and older can also use a parent’s/guardian’s or adult volunteer’s social networking site (such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn) to do the same.
- Sales may not be transacted on the Internet (for example, through a site that has an electronic shopping cart), except for magazine sales. Girls can, however, receive order commitments for

cookies sales via e-mail or the Internet. In other words, potential customers can relay (via e-mail or a Facebook post, for example) that, “Yes! I’d like four boxes of Thin Mints and three boxes of Shortbread cookies.”

- Groups are encouraged to participate in council product sales as their primary money-earning activity; any group money-earning shouldn’t compete with the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council product sales.
- Funds acquired through group money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the group, while following council procedures.

The best way to earn money for your group is to start with Girl Scout Cookie sales and other council-sponsored product sales. From there, your group may decide to earn additional funds on its own.

Helping Girls with Financial Planning

One of your opportunities as a volunteer is to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps.

1. **Set goals for money-earning activities.** What do girls hope to accomplish through this activity? In addition to earning money, what skills do they hope to build? What leadership opportunities present themselves?
2. **Create a budget.** Use a budget worksheet that includes both expenses (the cost of supplies, admission to events, travel, and so on) and available income (the group’s account balance, projected Cookie sale proceeds, and so on).
3. **Determine how much the group needs to earn.** Subtract expenses from available income to determine how much money your group needs to earn.
4. **Make a plan.** The group can brainstorm and make decisions about their financial plans. Will Cookie and other product sales—if approached proactively and energetically—earn enough money to meet the groups goals? If not, which group money-earning activities might offset the difference in anticipated expense and anticipated income? Will more than one group money-earning activity be necessary to achieve the group’s financial goal? In this planning stage, engage the girls through the Girl Scout processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) and consider the value of any potential activity. Have them weigh feasibility, implementation, and safety factors.
5. **Write it out.** Once the group has decided on its financial plan, describe it in writing. If the plan involves a group money-earning activity, fill out an application for approval from your council and submit it along with the budget worksheet the girls created.

Remember: It's great for girls to have opportunities, like the Girl Scout Cookie sale, to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals. As a volunteer, try to help girls balance the money-earning they do with opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on earning and spending money. Take-action projects, for example, may not always require girls to spend a lot of money!

Understanding Financial and Sales Abilities by Grade Level

As with other activities, girls progress in their financial and sales abilities as they get older. This section gives you some examples of the abilities of girls at each grade level.

Girl Scout Daisies

At the Daisy level (kindergarten and 1st grade),

- The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.
- Parents/guardians may decide they will contribute to the cost of activities.
- Girls can participate in Girl Scout Cookie sales and other council-sponsored product sales.
- Daisies are always paired with an adult when selling anything. Girls do the asking and deliver the product, but adults handle the money and keep the girls secure.

Girl Scout Brownies

At the Brownie level (2nd and 3rd grades),

- The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and shares some of the group-budgeting responsibilities.
- Girls discuss the cost of activities (supplies, fees, transportation, rentals, and so on).
- Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.
- Girls may decide to pay dues.

Girl Scout Juniors

At the Junior level (4th and 5th grades)

- The group volunteer retains overall responsibility for long-term budgeting and record-keeping, but shares or delegates all other financial responsibilities.
- Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.
- Girls decide on group dues, if any. Dues are collected by girls and recorded by a group treasurer (selected by the girls).

- Girls budget for the short-term needs of the group, on the basis on plans and income from the group dues.
- Girls budget for more long-term activities, such as overnight trips, group camping, and special events.
- Girls budget for take-action projects, including the Girl Scout Bronze Award, if they are pursuing it.

Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

At the Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador levels (Grades 6 through 12),

- Girls estimate costs based on plans.
- Girls determine the amount of group dues (if any) and the scope of money-earning projects.
- Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.
- Girls carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning projects.
- Girls budget for extended travel, take-action projects, and leadership projects.
- Girls may be involved in seeking donations for take-action project, with council approval.
- Girls keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.
- Girls budget for take-action projects, including the Girl Scout Silver or Gold Awards, if they are pursuing them.

One critical task for each group, no matter what age, is to keep excellent records and establish a clear money trail. As the group volunteer, you're in charge of making sure money is spent wisely and that excellent records are kept (keeping copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and tracking all income, too. For older girls, your job is to oversee their work, as *they* learn to keep impeccable records.

Selling Cookies (and Other Great Stuff): Continuing a Time-Honored Girl Scout Tradition

The selling of Girl Scout Cookies and other council-sponsored products is an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, focusing particularly on financial literacy. In fact, Girl Scout Cookie and other product sales is the leading entrepreneurial program for girls: Many successful business women today say they got their start selling Girl Scout Cookies. Girls practice life skills like goal setting, money management, and teamwork, all while having a lot of fun! During cookie activities, girls are members of a team working toward a common goal, with each girl striving to do her best.

A Sweet Tradition

It has been 90 years since Girl Scouts began selling home-baked cookies to raise money. The idea was so popular that, in 1936, Girl Scouts enlisted bakers to handle the growing demand!

Two commercial bakers are licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies— Little Brownie Bakers and ABC/Interbake Foods—and each council selects the baker of its choice. Each baker gets to name its own cookies (which is why some cookies have two names) and gets to decide which flavors it will offer in a given year, besides the three mandatory flavors (Thin Mints®, Do-Si-Dos®/Peanut Butter Sandwich®, and Trefoils®/Shortbread®).

Up to eight varieties are offered each year, including three mandatory flavors:

- **Thin Mints®:** Round dark-chocolate mint-flavored cookies.
- **Do-Si-Dos®/Peanut Butter Sandwich®:** Two oatmeal cookies with a layer of peanut butter sandwiched in between
- **Trefoils®/Shortbread®:** Shortbread cookies shaped like the Girl Scout trefoil

Other varieties have included:

- **Samoas® (Caramel deLites®):** Caramel, coconut, and chocolate doughnut-shaped cookies
- **Tagalongs® (Peanut Butter Patties®):** Round cookies with a layer of peanut butter that's covered in chocolate
- **Dulce de Leche®:** Rich cookies with caramel chips and stripes
- **Thanks-A-Lot®:** Shortbread cookies with a layer of fudge on the bottom
- **Lemonades®:** Shortbread cookies with lemon icing
- **Lemon Chalet Cremes®:** A sandwich cookie with a cinnamon-spice flavor
- **Daisy Go Rounds®:** Reduced-fat cinnamony cookies
- **Thank U Berry Munch®:** Crispy vanilla cookie with cranberries and white chocolate flakes

Note that all cookies are kosher and have zero transfat per serving (at the minimum serving, based on FDA guidelines); several varieties are also nut-free. Complete nutritional information and descriptions of each year's varieties are available online at www.girlscoutcookies.org and on your baker's Web site.

In addition, council product sales may include nuts, candies, and magazines. Check with your local council for exact products and sales dates.

[Council: You may want to customize here]

Tying Product Sales to the GSLE

Selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products gives girls a chance to run a business and practice leadership skills they can use in their lives. Girls will enjoy all the benefits this important component of the GSLE has to offer: They'll engage in planning and goal-setting (aiming to achieve their personal best), teamwork, marketing, money management (including the importance of saving for future needs), and the enduring skill of customer service. As girls grow, they will get to know their product (ingredients and calories, for example) and design innovative and creative marketing strategies and tools. Girls will also be encouraged to share with customers how product sales help their council and their community.

Volunteers can help girls develop leadership skills while they engage in Girl Scout Cookie activities by using the Girl Scout processes of girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning. And as they participate in product sales, girls will:

- **Discover** a strong sense of self and gain practical life skills when they create personal goals, deliver presentations, and find ways to customize a marketing plan, for example. A girl can discover a lot about herself and her values as she makes decisions about money-earning, customer-management, and so on.
- **Connect** with their group members as they set group goals and develop a list of positions related to cookie activities such as accounting manager, event planner, public relations specialist, and graphic designer. Girls can learn about their communities as they meet families, mentors, and business owners who have worked in these roles. Girls can also use the Cookie Program as an opportunity to talk to customers about ways to improve the community or to solicit ideas for a local take-action idea bank.
- **Take action** as they learn to map neighborhood business and other resources that can help them consider community service needs. Girls use product sale money to make a difference in their communities, whether through a take-action project or a philanthropic donation. And don't forget: Money that goes to the council from product sales allows councils to take action by serving all Girl Scouts!

Determining Who Can Participate

All girl members (including Daisies)—in any pathway (travel, camp, series, or troop)—may participate in council-sponsored product sales activities, under volunteer supervision. Your council provides training on the procedures to follow during each sale through a cascading staff and volunteer effort. Your council also establishes guidelines and procedures for conducting the sale and determines how the proceeds and recognition system will be managed.

Knowing Where the Proceeds Go

Your council will provide a breakdown of “how the cookie crumbles” in your council. Share this information with girls and their parents/guardians! Proceeds resulting from product sales support program activities—in fact, council-sponsored product sales are a primary way in which your council funds itself. The percentage of money to be allocated to participating groups (like yours) is determined by the council and explained to girls and adults as part of the product sale activity orientation.

The income from product sales does not become the property of individual girl members. Girls are, however, eligible for incentives and credits that they put toward Girl Scout activities, such as camp. Girls may earn official Girl Scout grade-appropriate awards related to product sale activities, and each council may choose to provide items such as participation patches, sales awards, and council credit for event fees, camp fees, grants for travel and take-action projects, as well as materials and supplies for program

activities. The council plan for recognition applies equally to all girls participating in the product sale activity. Where at all possible, councils try to involve girls in the selection of awards and administration of money given to girls from product sales.

Using Online Resources to Market Cookies and Other Products

Girls are texting, calling, e-mailing, Tweeting, and Facebooking—and those are all effective ways that girls can promote cookie and other product sales! The following sections detail how girls can use electronic marketing, social networking, and troop or group Web sites to gather sale commitments from family, friends, and previous customers. But first, please keep in mind that girls:

- **Can market to and collect indications of interest from customers within their councils' Zip codes.** Refer prospects that come from outside council jurisdiction to the council finder at www.girlscoutcookies.org. Family members are the exception to this rule.
- **Cannot have customers pay online (such as through a shopping cart function on a Web site the girls create).** Girl Scout magazine sales are the exception to this rule.
- **Must sign the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge** (available at www.gsusa.org) before doing any online activities, and all online activities must be under the supervision of adults.
- **Cannot expose a girl's e-mail address, physical address, or phone number to the public.** When writing e-mail messages or online announcements, girls should sign with their first name only, along with their troop/group number or name and their council name.

For girls in fifth grade and above, have your group visit Let Me Know (<http://lmk.girlscouts.org>), a site addressing Internet safety for teens and tweens. Girls can even earn an online award for completing activities on this site!

Daisies: Stay Especially Safe!

Girl Scout Daisies are too young to be marketing online through their troop or group, parent or guardian Web sites, or social networking sites. For this reason, Girl Scout Daisies are allowed to send out e-mails only when working directly with an adult, and should use blind e-mails or the online marketing tools provided by GSUSA product vendors on their Web sites.

Contacting Prospects Electronically

Girls are encouraged to use phone calls, text messages, IMs, and e-mails as online marketing tools to let family, friends, and former customers know about the sale and collect indications of interest. Product-related e-mail is not intended to be spam (unwanted texts or e-mails), however, so remind girls to be sure that their messages will be welcome by the receiver.

When girls are marketing cookies online, remind them to always use a group e-mail address (such as troop457@yahoo.com), an adult's personal e-mail address, or a blind address (one that does not reveal the

address to the recipient). In addition, be sure to discuss with girls the need to treat customer e-mail addresses from current and past years with respect; they are private and must be kept so.

Utilizing Social Networks

A girl or group over 13 may work in partnership with an adult to market cookies and other products online, using the social networking site (such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, or LinkedIn) of the adult. Social networking sites are fun, fast ways to get out an urgent message, such as, “It’s Girl Scout Cookie time—let my daughter know if you’re interested.” Posting or tweeting such a message will get the attention of friends and family!

Before girls use social networks as a marketing tool, keep the following in mind:

- Girls must have parental permission to use their social networks; girls should not be using their own social networks, but those of an adult.
- Girls must meet age limits set by the provider, which is 13 and above in most cases, as per the United States Child Online Privacy and Protection Act (COPPA) and the Child Online Protection Act (COPA).
- Any use of photos require a photo release form signed by parents/guardians of any girls pictured and the signature of any adults pictured.
- Any use of online video sharing sites (such as YouTube), where the video is representing Girl Scouts or Girl Scout product, must follow specific age and requirements for that site, as well as have council approval and Girl Scout photo release forms signed by parents/guardians and any adults pictured. (In other words, this is not an easy venture, but if you and the girls are willing, it’s worth the investment.)

Setting Up a Group Web Site

Groups whose girls meet age criteria (13 years or older) and have parental permission may set up a troop Web site or group social networking site. This site must be approved by the council, yes, but it can be a fantastic way for girls to share information, market Girl Scout products, and talk about their Take Action projects.

Before you and the girls design a Web site, do remember that the Web is an open forum for anyone, including potential predators. 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. To ensure the girls’ safety:

- Use girls’ first names only.
- Never post girls’ addresses, phone numbers, or e-mail addresses.

- Never, ever, ever post addresses of group meeting places or dates and times of meetings, events, or trips! (An adult volunteer 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.)
- Always have a parent's or guardian's signature on a photo release form before using pictures of girls on a Web site.
- Make yours a static site that does not allow outsiders to post messages to the site, or make sure all postings (such as message boards or guest books) have adult oversight and are screened prior to posting live.
- Don't violate copyright law by using designs, text from magazines or books, poetry, music, lyrics, videos, graphics, or trademarked symbols without specific permission from the copyright or trademark holder (and, generally, this permission is pretty tough to get!). Girl Scout trademarks (such as the trefoil shape, Girl Scout pins, and badges and patches) 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.

Safely Selling Girl Scout Cookies and Other Products

A few other considerations will help keep girls safe:

- Girl Scout councils do not sell cookies and other products; girls sell them.
- Parents and guardians must grant permission for girls to participate and are informed about the girls' whereabouts when they are engaged in product sale activities. Specific permission must be obtained when a girl intends to use the Internet for product marketing. A parent, guardian, or other adult must know each girl's whereabouts when she is engaged in product sales, and if and when she is involved on the Internet.
- Girl should be identifiable as Girl Scouts by wearing a Membership Pin, official uniform, tunic, sash or vest, or other Girl Scout clothing.
- Adult volunteers must monitor, supervise, and guide the sale activities of all age levels.
- Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors who participate in door-to-door sales must be supervised by (but do not need to be directly accompanied by) an adult. Girls must *always* use the buddy system.
- Money due for sold products is collected when the products are delivered to the customer (or as directed by your council). Girls will need to know whether they can accept checks and to whom customers should write checks—find out from your council staff.

- Personal customer information should remain private. Customer credit-card information should not be collected by girls and should not be asked for on any form collected by girls.
- Girls can participate in no more than two council-sponsored product sale activities each year and only one of these may be a cookie sale.
- A girl's physical address, social networking page address, IM name, Skype name or number, or cell number should never be revealed to anyone outside her immediate circle of family and friends. You've heard it before, but it bears repeating!
- Before beginning any Cookies or other product sales with your group, refer to the Girl Scout Central section of www.girlscouts.org, under "Cookies."

Additional Group Money-Earning

If the girls in your group find that, after cookie and other product sales results are in, they need additional money to meet their goals, they have other options available to them. The following sections help you understand both the opportunities and a few guidelines you need to be aware of.

Building upon the following list of ideas, facilitate a group brainstorming session to determine how your group will earn money:

- Washing cars, raking leaves, and doing other lawn work
- Holding a garage or tag sale
- Recycling items
- Hosting an event, such as a games or badge workshop for your council
- Making and selling craft items
- Ushering or helping in other ways at special events in the community
- Sponsoring dances, talent shows, fashion shows, or other forms of entertainment
- Group babysitting, such as at a service unit meeting, council function, or community organization's event or meeting
- Putting on parties or story hours for children
- Hosting a face-painting booth at a special event

Once an idea or two starts to gel, use the tips in the "Helping Girls with Financial Planning" section earlier in this chapter to facilitate a girl-led planning session. Have them plan all details of the event, and be sure to review with them the safety guidelines for any event in which they participate.

Collaborating with Sponsors and Other Organizations

Sponsors help Girl Scout councils ensure that all girls in the community have an opportunity to participate in Girl Scouting. Community organizations, businesses, and individuals may be sponsors and may provide group meeting places, volunteer their time, provide activity materials, loan equipment, or give financial support to Girl Scout groups. The sponsor's contribution can then be recognized by arranging for the girls to send thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a take-action project.

For information on working with a sponsor, consult your local council staff, who can give you guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting responsibility, and any council policies or practices that must be followed.

When collaborating with any other organization, keep two additional guidelines in mind:

- **Avoiding fundraising for other organizations:** Girl Scouts are not allowed, when identifying ourselves as Girl Scouts (such as wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, and so on), to solicit money on behalf of another organization. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. You and your group can, however, support another organization through take-action projects or by making a donation from your group's account. And Girl Scouts as individuals are able to participate in whatever events they choose, so long as they're not wearing anything that officially identifies them as "Girl Scouts."
- **Steering clear of political fundraisers:** When in an official Girl Scout capacity or in any way identifying yourselves as Girl Scouts, your group may not participate (directly or indirectly) in any political campaign or work on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. Letter-writing campaigns are not allowed, nor is participating in a political rally, circulating a petition, or carrying a political banner.