

Girl Scout Silver Award

Guidelines for Girl Scout Cadettes

Have you ever looked around your neighborhood or school and wondered how you could make a change for the better? Going for the Girl Scout Silver Award—the highest award a Girl Scout Cadette can earn—gives you the chance to show that you are a leader who is organized, determined, and dedicated to improving your community. Earning the award puts you among an exceptional group of girls who have used their knowledge and leadership skills to make a difference in the world.

Here are the steps you'll take to earn your Girl Scout Silver Award:

1. Go on a Cadette journey.
2. Identify issues you care about.
3. Build your Girl Scout Silver Award team *or decide to go solo*.
4. Explore your community.
5. Pick your Take Action project.
6. Develop your project.
7. Make a plan and put it into motion.
8. Reflect, share your story, and celebrate.

Once you complete your journey, the suggested minimum time for earning your Girl Scout Silver Award is 50 hours. These suggested hours are a guide. You can start by planning the time in chunks, dividing it up by the steps.

As a Girl Scout, you are committed to doing your very best with each step, but how much time per step is different for every Girl Scout, so the hours aren't a rule. Remember, too, that the hours include the fun and challenges you'll share with your Silver Award team. Each step you take toward making a difference in the world around you gives you a great chance to learn and grow, and that will make your award project an amazing one!

Step 1: Go on a Cadette Journey

The first requirement for earning your Girl Scout Silver Award is completing one Cadette journey. Choose either *It's Your World—Change It!* or *It's Your Planet—Love It!* This important step helps you build the skills you need to take on your award project and understand how to show leadership through the discover, connect, and take action keys.

Once you've finished your journey, celebrate your accomplishment and get ready to move forward toward your goal: earning a Girl Scout Silver Award! (**Tip:** Keep your journey(s) handy as you work toward your award—you might find yourself going back to it for ideas.)

Step 2: Identify Issues You Care About

To solve any problem, you must first identify it. Start by asking yourself what matters most to you.

- Do you find yourself reading articles about endangered species?
- Do you worry about where homeless children sleep at night?
- Do you wish that younger students had a cheerful place to stay after school while waiting for their parents to pick them up?

If so, what connections can you make between the issues that you care about and the issues in your own community?

Start by jotting down some issues that concern you in the following Issues Chart. You're not choosing your project yet, just tuning in to the topics you care about.

Issues Chart

Issue that Concerns You	Why Is it Important to You?	How Does this Issue Affect Your Community?

Step 3: Build your Girl Scout Silver Award Team

There are two ways to earn your Girl Scout Silver Award: You can work with a small team of three to four girls, or you can create and implement your own project.

•**Small team model:** The girls you work with can be Girl Scouts, non-Girl Scouts, or a combination of both. If the other Girl Scout Cadettes on your team also wish to earn the Girl Scout Silver Award, each girl must play an active role in choosing, planning, and developing the team's Take Action project. Keeping your team small ensures that everyone can participate fully. You and your team will also partner with others in the community to complete your project.

•**Solo model:** You can create and implement a project on your own. However, if you choose the solo option, you will still want to partner with others in your community (friends, neighbors, and business owners) in order to earn your award. After all, leaders like you know how to team up with others, even when they're in charge.

If you've decided to work independently, you can skip to step 4. If you're working with other Girl Scout Cadettes who also wish to earn the Girl Scout Silver Award, use the following tips to create a great team.

Build a team whose members all commit to:

- Respecting different points of view and ways of work
- Contributing to the project—everyone needs to help out!
- Accepting constructive suggestions
- Working together to create and develop a plan
- Resolving conflicts

Team members don't always agree, but leaders know how to help others get along. When disagreements arise, remember:

- To be considerate and respectful of your fellow teammates
- To be a sister to every Girl Scout on your team
- That cooperation is very important when working with others

After you've built your team, hold your first meeting! If you don't know each other well—or even if you do!—play a team game to get better acquainted. Spend some time discussing what makes a great team and how you'd like your team to work together. Write everyone's suggestions on a large piece of paper and post that paper on the wall every time you have team meetings. Before the end of your first meeting, discuss how often you want to get together and where you'll meet.

Step 4: Explore Your Community

Now that you have begun to think about issues that concern you, it's time to do some exploring to find out what your community needs are and where your areas of interest and the community needs may overlap.

Communities are groups of people who have something in common. You belong to many communities: Your school is a community, for example. So is your math class or your debate team. Even kids who ride the same bus every day are a community. Other communities include your neighborhood, your place of worship, your town, and so on. Think about what communities you belong to.

After you've listed your communities, think of ways to “map” them. A community map is a drawing that shows the community's needs and resources, including contacts who might help you when you start working on your Take Action project.

The key to making a community map is *observation*. Because a community is made up of people, you'll be looking for what people *need*—that is, what will improve their lives, help them out, or make them happier. To get started, try walking through your school, biking around your neighborhood, or taking a bus ride through your town. During the course of your travels, you'll naturally see different aspects of your community as you shop at stores, gather at your Girl Scout meeting place, go to school, and so on.

You can also visit places (such as the library, town hall, or community center, or your church, synagogue, or mosque) where there are people and resources who can help you identify community needs. You might even attend one or more town meetings to find out what concerns people in your area.

Continue to draw your map by writing down the things you see that could be improved or places where your special talents and skills could be used. (**Tip:** Go back to your journey(s) for more ideas about spotting community needs.) When you meet people who might be able to help you with your project, jot down their names and contact information in the following Community Contact List.

Community Contact List

Community Contact	Organization	Contact information	How They Can Help

Now it's time to talk to people to get in-depth information about community issues. As you conduct interviews, you'll improve your communication skills, begin to see how your time and talents can make an impact, and build a network of contacts you may need when you do your Take Action project.

Start by talking to people you know, such as neighbors or teachers, and then asking them to introduce you to other people in your community, such as business owners, neighbors, teachers or school officials, religious leaders, council members, police officers, and staff members at community centers.

Note: Always be safe when you talk to new people! Discuss safety tips with your troop/group volunteer and family, and always go with a friend or team member. Also, before going online, remember to take the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge at www.girlscouts.org/internet_safety_pledge.asp. And of course never give out your address, or any other personal information when you're on the Internet.

Prepare your questions ahead of time so you can use your interview time wisely. Here are some questions to get you started:

- I'm interested in doing a project that will help the community. What are some of the issues affecting our community? Do you know about how people have tried to work on these issues in the past? What worked? What didn't work?
- Can you suggest a project I could do to address one of these issues?

Step 5: Pick Your Take Action Project

You've come a long way to get to this point! Now that you've thought about the issues you care about and explored your community, it's time to choose a project based on what you've learned.

Before you pick your project:

- Review your Issues Chart, community map, and interview notes. If you are working with a team, do this together, of course! If you are on your own, pull a few people together (such as your troop/group volunteer, friends, sisters or brothers, a teacher, and so on) to help you sort through all you have gathered.
- Choose a project based on what matters most to you or where you think you can create some positive change. If you have a hard time deciding, write a pro/con list for each choice. If you are

working on this part solo, ask your troop/group volunteer for help.

- Many issues are big and complicated—and hard to fix! It might be a good idea to narrow your focus. Pick just one aspect of your issue, and then develop a solution to that specific problem. (Imagine focusing a camera lens in order to get a clear picture. The process of focusing an idea so that it's simple and clear is just like that.)
- Remember, you can always go back to your journeys for project ideas and examples.

After you've chosen your project, make sure everyone is clear about what you want to do and why. As a team, answer these questions:

- What is our project?
- Why does it matter?
- Who will it help?

Think about the following:

- Which of your leadership skills do you think you'll use as you work on your Take Action project?
- How will these skills help you better understand who you are and what you can do?
- How will you live the Girl Scout Promise and Law while earning your Girl Scout Silver Award?

Step 6: Develop Your Project

Now that you've chosen a project, it's time to make a plan.

Before You Start

The following questions will help you think through your project before you get started:

- What steps do we need to take to reach our goal?
- What special talents can each girl use to help make the project a success?
- What did we learn when we earned our Girl Scout Cadette journey awards that will help us make sure this project runs smoothly?
- Do we know enough to get started or do we need more background information? Where can we get that information?
- Which groups or organizations can we work with? Who can we ask for help?
- How can we get other people involved?
- What supplies will we need?
- How will we earn money for our project, if necessary? Your troop/group volunteer can help you come up with money-earning ideas that follow Girl Scout policies. You can also ask for donations—for example, if you want to create a mural, the owner of the local hardware store may give you paint. And remember, your time and talents are often more important than money. For example, one girl was worried about food waste at her school. She could have raised money to buy compost bins. Instead, she used her advocacy skills to persuade school and town officials to set up a composting system. So be creative! You may realize you don't need that much money after all.
- How much time do we need to finish our project? Is that timeline realistic?

Make It Last

You'll be investing a lot of yourself in your project, so of course you'll want to develop it in such a way that it keeps going even after you're done. After all, this is a chance for you to make your mark in your community!

For example, if you think the kids at your local elementary school need more interesting stuff to do at recess, you might plan a week of special activities. But then what? Well, how about planning team games that the fourth-graders can do with the second graders all the time! Your Take Action project keeps going and going and going. . . .

Remember to keep it simple! A clear, focused, and well-thought-out plan can often be more sustainable than taking on a huge project. Here are some examples of Take Action projects that will last:

Take Action Project #1

Problem: Kids can't walk to school safely because there aren't any sidewalks.

Root cause: Lack of planning when the roads were built.

Solution with long-term impact: Create a petition asking that a sidewalk be built, get local residents to sign it, and present it to the city council.

Making the solution sustainable:

- Once the sidewalk is built, it will be in place for years, offering a safe route for future generations.
- You may need to encourage kids to change their habits and walk—that can be a fun group activity.

Take Action Project #2

Problem: Children in homeless shelters often struggle in school.

Root cause: Lack of stability and family resources, both financial and emotional.

Solution with long-term impact: Work with a local homeless shelter and school to establish an ongoing tutoring program that matches student volunteers with children in the shelter.

Making the solution sustainable:

- Work with the school and shelter to find adult staff members who will continue to coordinate the program.
- Establish a transition tradition, such as an end-of-school-year party, where potential new student volunteers can meet current volunteers and people in the homeless shelter.

Find a Project Advisor

Your project advisor is an expert who can answer specific questions about your issue. Look at your list of the people you met while researching issues. Is there someone who can serve as a project advisor? If you have not yet met anyone who is familiar with your issue, talk to your troop/group volunteer. She or he might be able to help you identify experts in your community.

Make a Global Connection

Think about others who may have worked on the same problem in the past, or check the Internet to see how others around the globe deal with your issue. What can you learn from their approach? Consider how you may be able to extend the reach of your project into other communities besides your own. Are there ways to share your plan with other communities who are facing the same issue? Can you create a plan that other people could use to replicate your project in their own communities?

Take One Last Look

By this point, you're probably anxious to get started. But before you get going, take a step back and look at your project one more time. You may need to narrow your focus a bit more or shift your approach slightly in order to make the project work. That's okay! Taking some time to fine-tune your project now will make it easier to actually get it done.

Ask other people for feedback, especially your troop/group volunteer. She or he will make sure your project idea is complete and meets all the requirements for a Girl Scout Silver Award Take Action project.

Even though you've done a lot of work already, remember to be open to new ideas and suggestions.

You may need to rethink certain parts of your project idea, but this will help you refine your project and make it better. Once your project idea meets the requirements, you'll be ready to get started!

Step 7: Make a Plan and Put It Into Motion

It's time to get started! Your project needs to involve action by you and your Silver Award Team (if you have one), from the planning stages all the way to earning the Girl Scout Silver Award.

Build a list of what you need to do and how it can be done, and then figure out who will be doing what. Remember that you're a team, so one or more girls can volunteer for each task. Also decide when each task needs to be finished. Then write all the information in a Make a Plan chart like the one the follows.

Make a Plan

What Is the Task?	Who Will Do It?	How Will the Task Be Done?	When Will It Be Done?
<i>Research how a petition is presented to the city council.</i>	<i>Monique</i>	<i>Talk to a council member or the mayor</i>	<i>September 7</i>

When your steps are identified and your plan is set . . . do it! Keep a record as you go by taking photos, shooting video, or making a scrapbook. Not only will it make it easier to share you story when you're finished, but it's lots of fun!

Step 8: Reflect, Share Your Story, and Celebrate

Congratulations, you have completed a project that makes a difference! Take some time to reflect on what you have accomplished. These questions may get you started:

- What did you **discover** about yourself?
- How did you **connect** with your local and global communities? Who do you know now that you didn't know before?
- What did you learn from others who worked to solve the same problem?
- How did that help you make your project better?
- What skills did you gain (such as public speaking, team building, advocacy, blogging, and so on) that help you as a person and a leader?
- What impact did your **Take Action** project have on your community? How will it go on past your involvement?
- How did you live the Girl Scout Promise and Law?

Demonstrating to an audience what you have learned sets the stage for even broader impact, and is sometimes the best way for you to recognize what you have accomplished and see how much you have grown. It will also help you get others inspired to act!

Here are some ideas for how you can share your story:

- Create a Web site or blog about what you have learned and how your project will help your community.
- Log on to some Web sites where you can share your story:
World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts: www.waggggs.org/en/projects
Taking it Global: www.tigweb.org
Global Youth Service Day: www.globalyouthserviceday.org
- At a workshop for community members, present what you have learned and what your project will do for the community. Or do a presentation for a group of younger Girl Scouts—you will definitely inspire them!
- Make a video about your project and post it online. Invite friends, community leaders, and people from organizations that are tackling a similar issue to watch and share your video with others.
- Write an essay or an article for your local or school newspaper.

As you wind down your project, remember to thank all the people who helped you along the way, from the people you interviewed to those who drove you around town! Not only is this good manners, but also an inspiration to people when they hear what you've done—and they'll be proud to know they helped make it happen.

Now celebrate your accomplishment! You took the challenge and made a difference in your world!

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