

General Guidelines for Community and Troop Websites*

Your website, social media page or web page should be reviewed before it is published to ensure that it complies with GSUSA and council standards. If there is a site already published, email us with the URL so that we can review the site.

The Basics:

Online Safety

Information posted to the Internet on a Web page can be read by people all over the world. Therefore, safety and how you represent yourselves as Girl Scouts should be the guiding principle of any Web-based endeavor, even if your information is password-protected. This includes issues of privacy, language use, sponsorship, links, and use of any kind of copyrighted material (writing, music, brand images, and pictures).

If you have links to other areas that you do not maintain personally, you should have a place for girls to take the Online Safety Pledge before having access to these links. These links should be monitored closely for inappropriate messages, advertisements, and so on. Do not include links blindly on your site without thoroughly browsing the site to which they refer.

Be very careful when listing event details. You should not put directions or specific times on the page unless it is password-protected. You don't want strangers to know where there will be groups of girls together. When in doubt, list a contact email or number (of an adult) for more information.

No personal girl information should be included at any time, including phone numbers, email addresses, street addresses, hometowns, last names, and so on.

Never use a messaging system that allows anyone to post information without it first being reviewed. This includes guest books and chat rooms.

Do not use last names with photos, and make sure you blur out any names and addresses that may appear on nametags, swim caps, t-shirts, etc. in the photo.

If your website is hosted by Facebook, MySpace or another social networking site, exercise caution in placing other users on your "friend list." Just as with external website links, you must examine the profiles of other users before permitting the "friend" connection and make sure to avoid any questionable or controversial content on the other users' sites. Do not add users to your "friend list" if you do not know them.

Whenever possible, set your profile to “private” so that only those on your “friend list” may view it.

Starting with a Goal in Mind:

Why am I creating this site? – websites generally fall into one or more categories – information, awareness, or promotion.

How do I measure success? Is it having a large number of visitors, having them download or submit a form, attend a real-life event, or read a certain number of pages, important?

Consider the time needed for site upkeep. Who will be responsible for posting changes? How often do you want to change the site — weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly?

You will have to assign a site content manager – an adult that will be responsible to ensuring guidelines are followed.

You will also need someone to update the website – possibly two individuals if possible, so you have a backup.

Copyright, Trademark, Pictures, Association & Legal Concerns:

The copyright code of conduct is the same with websites as it is for publications. A basic principle for graphics and other design is, "If it's not yours, don't use it," even if it is easily downloadable. If you would really like to use something that you did not create yourself, you must obtain written permission to do so from the owner.

Using music or sound on your site (or the printed words to songs) follows the same copyright rules. Make sure you have permission!

Girl Scout Trademarks, Use of Logos

You should not alter the trefoil logo in any way other than changing the color or size. The "Girl Scouts" under or next to it must never be separated from the trefoil part and may never be typed in separately. The tagline "Where Girls Grow Strong" is now no longer being used. Please do not include it on your site.

The GS logo may not be incorporated into another graphic or used as wallpaper or

Online Safety Checklist

- Have you used first names only of all girls?
- Do you have parent/guardian permission to use girl pictures?
- Do you have permission to use pictures of adults?
- Have you used a group e-mail overseen by an adult as your contact address?
- Have you followed guidelines in the Online Safety Pledge and *Safety-Wise*?
http://www.girlscouts.org/internet_safety_pledge.asp
- Do you screen all postings to guest books before posting on your site?
- Have you discussed the importance of keeping a “secret” password secret, and set up a plan for changing the password periodically?
- Do you have a statement on your site ensuring visitor privacy?
- Have you checked all your links to make sure they comply with GSUSA guidelines?
- Do you have a plan in place for updating your Web page?

buttons.

The GS logo must be kept in the correct proportions and color and be placed against a solid colored background.

You should have a copyright notice on the bottom of each page that reads "Copyright 2010. Girl Scouts of the USA. All rights reserved." (Use current year.)

Girl Scouts of the USA is a not-for-profit organization and cannot, therefore, endorse any commercial or profit-making product or service. We generally do not link to commercial websites, since to do so may imply endorsement.

Associations

If you choose to offer links to outside sites, please make it clear that the link leads off of your site. Also, you will be responsible for monitoring those links frequently to make sure that they are operable.

Avoid using trademarks, banners, icons, graphics, or logos from other sites, if possible. Any advertisements or links that come with free Web pages (like freepages, geocities etc.) should have a disclaimer below it that states: "Neither GSUSA nor its councils are responsible for the content of any other site linked to this site. The inclusion of any link to such a site does not create or imply any approval or endorsement of that site by GSUSA or its councils. GSUSA and its councils make no representations whatsoever as to any other website that you may access through this one." (You can make this text very small.)

It is also the policy of GSUSA that only councils, and other licensed agents, may engage in online sales of Girl Scout merchandise.

Do not sell advertising on your site, either in text or graphic format. This includes banner ads, skyscraper ads, sponsored links, etc. The sale of advertising creates an implied relationship between Girl Scouts and the goods or services advertised and cannot be permitted.

Branding and Messaging

Make sure that you follow all GSHH and GSUSA branding and messaging guidelines when creating the content of your website, and observe copyright restrictions and guidelines for use of the Girl Scout service mark and other materials.

You should have photo permission for any recognizable people in photos placed on the site. Photo permission can be found on each individual's registration form.

You can also download free graphics from the GSUSA Web site. Visit their graphics gallery at http://girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/graphics/

If GSHH or GSUSA contacts you and requests that any content or links on your website be removed or altered in accordance with their guidelines, it is required that you comply with the request.

If you find that a Girl Scout website is in violation of any of the Girl Scout Website Guidelines, email GSHH at webmaster@girlscoutshh.org. Please describe the violation in detail in the email and include the URL of the website in question.

Getting Started What You Need:

Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson does not host individual troop, community, special groups, or member websites at this time. There are many free and low-cost hosting solutions available – we suggest you look at those options and choose the best option for your needs.

What you will need:

Hosting	An online location where the content and structure of the site will live.
Domain Name *	If you have a free hosting solution, this may be included – i.e. youname.geocities.com otherwise you will have to purchase a domain name -- girlscoutshh.org , for example -- through a domain register.
Site Design	A framework of graphics and images into which the page content can be built.
Content	The information and images you want to share.

Usability and accessibility:

Please keep graphics within a reasonable size. Visitors get frustrated if pages take too long to download. Have someone test your site to see if graphics or other things are taking too long.

Usually, you should save graphics as .gif files and photos as .jpg files. Resolution for images should be set to 72 dpi.

If you provide something on your website that requires a plug-in, such as Adobe Acrobat Reader, always provide a link to obtain it.

You should not have any dead-end pages. Every page should at least have a link to your home page and a link to the page that linked to it.

Always include an email contact for whoever manages the site. Visitors like to be able to tell you if there are problems.

Remember that underlining is reserved for hyperlinks. Use bold or large fonts for emphasis. Use contrasting colors or the default colors for hyperlinks so they stand out.

Limit backgrounds and watermarks as they make text very difficult to read.

Colors for the background should be high-contrast, i.e., black text on a white or light-colored background is easiest to read.

Every page should have a distinct name, both on the page, in the html and also in the title tag.

Try to keep information current. Visitors will appreciate this!

There are many great sites that will help you learn. A good place to start is <http://www.w3.org/> an organization that develops standards for web technologies.

**These guidelines are subject to change, as new issues arise and new safety concerns are addressed.*