

Style Guide for Volunteers

Girl Scouts across the country are working together to speak with one voice! Join the movement by following specific style guidelines and using the resources below when creating Girl Scout materials.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Use of acronyms should be avoided in all communications.*

Do Not Use GSDSW or GS

While it may feel easier to write GSDSW or GS, please spell them out. GSDSW is an internal reference, and shouldn't be used for an outside audience. Always spell out Girl Scout, and don't use GS. If "Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest" is too long, please use Girl Scouts.

GSUSA is OK to Use

It is acceptable to use GSUSA. The first reference should be written as follows: Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). Example: "The headquarters for Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) is in New York City."

* Except online channels, where the use of GSDSWGirlscouts is acceptable. See *Exceptions for Social Media* on page 4.

Addresses

When writing out addresses, spell out Street, Road, Drive, Boulevard, etc.

Don't Use Title Acronyms like SUM, CEO

Acronyms for positions such as CEO, COO or CFO should also be spelled out in the first reference, and should only be abbreviated if they are accompanied by a name. For communications with anyone other than volunteers or staff, no other staff or volunteer position should be used as an acronym, including SUM, SUCM, etc.

Time

Always use a.m. or p.m., eliminating the :00. Use figures except for noon and midnight.

- "The programs run 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m."
- "The programs run 9 a.m.-noon."

Capitalization and Titles

Awards, Badges, Patches and Petals

Always capitalize the full names of Girl Scout awards, badges, patches, petals, etc. These words should not be capitalized unless part of the full name. Examples:

- "I earned my Gold Award last year."
- "More information is on the website about many of these awards."

Campaigns, Taglines or Special Initiatives

Titles of campaigns, resources, taglines or special initiatives are capitalized. For instance, always use initial caps for Girl Scout Cookies or the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Additional examples:

- "The volunteers were eager to use the new Journey books. They plan to pay for their books using proceeds from the Girl Scout Cookie Program."
- "The Girl Scout Leadership Journeys were developed based on what girls said they wanted from their Girl Scout experience."

Events or Programs

Only the exact titles of events or programs should be capitalized.

- "The Power Up Bully Prevent event was a success."
- "Girl Scout volunteers attended the Annual Meeting."

Publications

Titles of publications should be italicized.

Seasons

Do not capitalize spring, summer, fall or winter except when part of a formal title.

Troops and Service Units

Troops and service units should **only** be capitalized when a number is included.

- "Girl Scout Troop 123 stayed up later than the other troops at the sleepover."
- "Did anyone from the service unit call?"
- "Service Unit 34 does a lot of community service projects."

Symbols and Punctuation

Numbers

Spell out whole numbers below 10, but use figures for 10 and above.

- “They had 10 dogs and six cats.”
- “Four four-room houses, 10 three-room houses, and 12 10-room houses.”
- “First-grade girls are full of energy.”

Except at the beginning of a sentence, when every number should be spelled out:

- “Fifty people showed up for training last night.”

Periods

Use only one space after a period, not two.

Commas

Always insert a comma before the “and” or “or” in a series.

- Girls learned goal setting, decision-making, money management, people skills, and business ethics during the Girl Scout Cookie Program.
- Girls from Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona attended the event.

Telephone Numbers

Use dashes between numbers, and always put the area code in parentheses.

- Call (915) 566-9433 to speak to Amanda.
- Toll-free: (800) 895-7390

Superscript

In general, do not use superscript. Examples:

- Girls in grade 8, NOT 8th grade girls.
- June 8, 2012, NOT June 8th, 2017.

Quotation Marks

Periods and commas always go within quotation marks. Dashes, semicolons, question marks, and exclamation points go within the quotation marks when they apply to quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

- She said she was “very impressed with their service project.”
- What did she mean when she said she “handled the situation”?

Other Symbols

Write out percent, rather than using the % sign.

Write out the word “and” rather than using the “&” symbol, unless it’s part of a slogan or title.

Technical Words

Don’t use a dash in the words online or email. Write website, not Web site, and internet, not Internet.

Website

The Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest website should be used on all promotional materials as www.gsdsww.org.

Email

Please do not use GSDSW.org with caps in email addresses – use lowercase. Example:

imartinez@gsdsww.org NOT

imartinez@GSDSW.org

Girl Scout Titles and Specialty Words

Scouting

Please do not say Scouts or Scouting when referring to Girl Scouts. Always say Girl Scouts or Girl Scouting. The word “Scouting” has been copyrighted by Boy Scouts, and can’t be used.

Camps

Always use Girl Scout before the name of the camp, such as Girl Scout Camp Mitre Peak, unless a Girl Scout logo or the name “Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest” is prominent in the same document/communication.

Population Groups

Refer to U.S. Census designations for population groups: Hispanic, African-American, Caucasian, Asian, Native American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

Specialty Words

- Fundraising is what the council does. Girl Scout troops do money-earning activities.
- Volunteer Learning Opportunities, not training.

Job titles

Job titles or volunteer position descriptions should only use initial caps when used before a person's name. Use all lowercase otherwise. Examples:

- Our chief operating officer met with Membership Manager John Smith.
- The troop program manager spoke with Pat Travis, chief executive officer.

Exceptions: the sitting U.S. President and the Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest of Directors.

Graphics and Branding

Colors

Use the three Girl Scout colors only! Black, white and green (PMS 355/c94 m0 y100 k0/r0 g174 b88/#00ae58) only.

Font

Use Arial. Girl Scout councils across the country use the GSUSA branded font, Trefoil, on marketing and promotional materials. This font is used in graphics and templates for volunteer use, as well as approved council vendors for product and merchandising purposes. Arial is the only other acceptable font.

Photos

Use close-up photos on your materials. Focus on the action!

Clip art

Avoid clip art whenever possible. Add "pop" via photography or illustration (such as handmade doodles or cartoons.) Do not "borrow" any licensed or copyrighted art.

Servicemark (or Logo)



Put the Girl Scouts of Western Washington servicemark (logo) at the top left of every document/communication. Make sure it has at least the same amount of white space around it as the "g". The logo text should be larger than any other text except the title.

When using the two color logo, it should contrast with the background:



The Trefoil

The trefoil should not be made into a character, made to hold photography or re-rendered in any way. Do not use it metaphorically. The trefoil should always be a trefoil – not a flower, a leaf, or a snowflake. Green and white color combinations are preferred. That said, the trefoil icon can be used to emphasize words or phrases, such as the following:



Additional branding information can be found at on the [Media, PR and Brand Guidelines](#) page.

Exceptions for Social Media

Social media faces unique challenges around brevity and text/character limitations. The exceptions below apply only to social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. and do not apply to email communications, the newsletter or the blog. The exceptions to the rules outlined above include:

Aliases/Username:

The preferred username for social media accounts is @GSDSWGirlScouts. For uniformity's sake this has been carried across all our social media properties and should be applied to any new accounts. Unless authorized by the marketing department, **do not create any social media account on behalf of the organization.**

When referencing our Twitter presence, it is appropriate to say @GSDSWGirlScouts. (e.g. "I love following @GSDSWGirlScouts on Twitter!") In this use case, the @ symbol should come immediately before the alias without a space between. Please maintain the capitalization structure outlined here.

Shortened links

Use shortened links when possible by copy/pasting a link into one of the free web-based link-shorteners. The preferred link-shortener is Bit.ly: <https://bitly.com/>

Numbers

Unless necessary to ensure message understanding, do not spell out numbers in social media. Use numerals.

Acronyms and abbreviations

If in common language use, acronyms can and should be used on social media posts to save space. (Common popular acronyms include CEO, TX, TXDOT, etc.) Even in social media, do not use acronyms that apply to Girl Scout jargon unless communicating only with internal staff or volunteers. (SUM, SUCM, TPM, etc.)

Use good judgment in deciding when to abbreviate other words, as each will be a case-by-case challenge to balance clarity and brevity. Common sense abbreviations (e.g. changing "Director" to "Dir." or "Association" to "Assoc.") are appropriate in these platforms.

Organization name

Though GirlScoutsGSDSW is acceptable for social media usernames, it should not be used anywhere else. The preferred name is Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest; if you face additional character limitations you may also say Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest, but this should only be used when facing severe text restrictions. Under no circumstances should you use "GSDSW" in any social media communications.