



Girl Scout 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 add something special to the beginning or end of a group's meeting. Girls can plan a ceremony around a theme, such as friendship or nature, and express themselves in words or song. Whatever its purpose, every Girl Scout ceremony helps girls share in Girl Scout history and traditions—and create their own special memories.



Important Ceremonies in Girl Scouting

- **Bridging ceremonies** mark a girl's move from one level of Girl Scouting to another.
- **Flag ceremonies** can be part of any activity that honors the American flag.
- A **Fly-Up** is a bridging ceremony for Girl Scout Brownies bridging to Girl Scout Juniors. Girls receive the Girl Scout pin along with their Brownie wings.
- **Founder's Day or Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday, October 31**, is a time to remember the important role Juliette Low played in the growth of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States.
- **Girl Scout Birthday ceremonies** can be held on or near March 12, the date Juliette Gordon Low started Girl Scouting in the United States.
- A **Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award ceremony** honors Girl Scouts who have earned these special awards and is usually held at the troop/group level or combined with council recognition.
- **Girl Scouts' Own** is a girl-planned program that lets girls explore their feelings around a topic, such as friendship or the Girl Scout Promise and Law, using spoken word, favorite songs, poetry, or other forms of expression. It is never a religious ceremony.
- **Investiture** welcomes new members—girls and adults—into the Girl Scout family for the first time. Girls receive their Girl Scout, Girl Scout Brownie, or Girl Scout Daisy pin at this time.
- **Journey ceremonies** honor Girl Scouts who have earned the final award along a Journey. The ceremonies are usually held at the troop/group level and invite girls to develop a themed celebration of their Journey, often including friends and family.
- **Court of Awards** is a special ceremony recognizing girls' accomplishments. Girls are presented with their badges, year pins, and other recognitions earned during the year. Volunteers may also be recognized during the ceremony. The Court of Awards can be held anytime during the year, at any location, and as often as the troop wants.
- **Opening ceremonies** start the Girl Scout meeting.
- **Pinning ceremonies** help celebrate when girls receive grade-level Girl Scout pins.
- **Rededication ceremonies** are an opportunity for girls and adults to renew their commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law.



Tips for Holding Ceremonies

- Devote sufficient time for planning the ceremony. Good ceremonies have a clear purpose and enrich the meaning and mood of the event.
 - Use Journey adult guides and *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* to help girls plan their ceremonies.
 - Take safety precautions when using candles or fire, or when the girls construct bridges or platforms. Refer to *Volunteer Essentials* and the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* (available through your council) for specific advice.
 - Add personal elements to traditional ceremonies. Use favorite poems, songs, stories, and sayings, or have the girls write something new.
 - Consider the role of colors and symbols that the girls might use in their ceremony.
 - Observe flag etiquette during flag ceremonies.
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Bridging Ceremonies

Moving On to New Adventures

Bridging is an important transition in a Girl Scout's life. It's a defining moment when a girl becomes aware of her achievements and is ready for new adventures and responsibilities. Celebrating this change should be fun, personalized, and memorable for everyone involved. And most of all, it should be designed by the girls in true partnership with adults.

Bridging ceremonies usually take place at the beginning or end of the Girl Scout year and can have three parts:

- **Opening:** Guests are welcomed and the tone is set.
- **Main section:** The ceremony is explained and the girls celebrate moving from one level to the next.
- **Closing:** Girls can participate in friendship circles and thank their guests.

Each of the ceremony's parts offers plenty of room for the girls' creativity and individuality. The ceremony should always focus on paying tribute to Girl Scouts as they move forward.



Flag Ceremony

A flag ceremony honors the American flag as the symbol of our country and all the hopes, dreams, and people it represents. If your group includes girls from other countries, invite them to honor their flags too, and together conduct an international flag ceremony. Flag ceremonies may be used for:

- Opening or closing meetings
- Opening or closing special events
- Beginning or closing a day
- Honoring a special occasion or special person
- Retiring a worn flag

Flag ceremonies may take place in meeting rooms, outdoor settings, large auditoriums, onstage, or even on horseback. The American flag is carried by a color guard for protection during a flag ceremony. All flag ceremonies share one thing—respect for the flag.



Flag Ceremony Guidelines

Keep it simple. Emphasis needs to be on respect for the flag rather than on the commands or techniques. Adults can ask girls these questions when planning:

- Who will carry the flag?
 - Who will the color guards be?
 - Who will give the directions for the ceremony?
 - What song will you sing? Who will sound the pitch and start the song?
 - Will a poem or quotation be included? Who will say or read it?
 - After the Pledge of Allegiance, will the Girl Scout Promise and Law be said?
 - What order will the ceremony follow?
 - When will the group practice?
 - Where will the flags be placed at the end of the ceremony?
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Terms Used in a Flag Ceremony

The **color bearer** (or flag bearer) is the person who carries the flag. There is one color bearer for each flag used in the ceremony.

The **color guard** is a team that guards the flags. Any even number of guards may be used, but usually four or six girls are sufficient.

The **Girl Scout in charge** (or caller) is a designated Girl Scout who announces or calls each part of the ceremony.



Possible Commands for a Flag Ceremony

"**Girl Scouts, attention.**" Used to announce that the flag ceremony is to begin.

"**Color guard, advance.**" Signals the color guard to advance with the flags or advance to pick up the flags.

"**Color guard, post the colors.**" Directs the color guard to place the flag in flag standards or to attach the grommets to a flag pole rope.

"**Color guard, honor your flag.**" Signals the color guard to salute the American flag.

"**Please join us in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.**" Followed by an appropriate song, quotation, or poem, if so desired.

"Color guard, retire the colors." Prompts the color guard to remove the flag from standards or to lower the flag, detach it from the rope, and fold it prior to being dismissed.

"Color guard, dismissed." Prompts the color guard to leave in formation, with or without the flag.

"Girl Scouts, dismissed." Indicates girls may leave in formation or be at ease where they have been standing.



Handling the Flag of the United States of America

Display of the American flag is governed by law to ensure that it will be treated with the respect due the flag of a great nation. This is known as the United States Flag Code. Some of the rules most useful for Girl Scouts are:

- The flag of the United States of America should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when a number of flags of states (or localities or pennants of societies) are grouped and displayed from staffs.
- When the flags are posted in stands or raised on a pole, the American flag is always kept higher than other flags, so it is placed in its stand after other flags are lowered into their standards, or it is raised up a pole first. When it's time to retire the colors, the American flag is taken out of its stand first so it remains the highest flag at all times.
- The flag, when carried in a procession with other flags, should be either on the marching right or, if there is a line of other flags, in front of the center of that line.
- When you display the flag on a wall or in a window where people can see it from the street, it should appear flat with the blue part at the top and on the flag's own right (which is the observer's left).
- When displayed after dark, the flag should be illuminated.
- The flag is to be hoisted briskly and lowered slowly, with dignity.
- The flag should never be allowed to touch anything beneath it, nor should it ever be carried flat or horizontally—always aloft and free.
- Never use the flag as a cover or place anything on top of it.
- No disrespect of any kind should be shown to the flag of the United States. It should be kept clean.



Retiring a Worn American Flag

Retiring a flag is a special ceremony that ends with burning the flag and disposing of the ashes in a respectful manner. For further information, check with council program staff.

For more information about flag ceremonies, see *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*.