

12+ Initiative

Have you heard about our new 12+ Initiative?

Studies have found that troops with at least 12 girls are more likely to have happier girls, parents, and leaders, as girls in troops with at least 12 members have more opportunities to connect with their peers and meet new girls, and leaders have a larger pool of potential parent volunteers. GSNI-M has also gotten feedback from parents of girls in smaller troops who have expressed they were disappointed that their daughter didn't have the opportunity to make as many friends or try as many activities as they had expected.



With this information in mind, starting this summer/fall, GSNI-M will be launching a new “12+” initiative. Please note the following:

- Beginning with the 2019-2020 troop year, all troops will be expected to have a maximum girl membership number that will be 12 girls or more.
- Any troops who do not have at least 12 girls currently will automatically be opened in the online troop finder on August 1, 2019 (if you are meeting over the summer, we will list you earlier).
- Please keep in mind, this does not mean ALL troops will automatically have 12 girls, just that troops will be available to accept new members until they either reach 12 girl members or your troop's maximum number of girls. Your troop may not get new members at all.

We know this could be a change for your troop, if your troop currently has less than 12 members. It is important to us that girls have the experience they signed up for when they joined Girl Scouts, and we believe striving to have more troops that have at least 12 girl members will help us have more satisfied girl members. We have received some questions from leaders about this initiative, so we've answered them for everyone to see.



FAQs

1. *Our troop has been saving for a trip for years, and now the trip is only a few months away. How could we take new girls at this time?*

- Clearly and honestly communicate with any new families who join your troop to let them know about your trip plans and that if their girl wants to go, the parent would be expected to pay for the trip. If there is still time for the girl to sell fall product or cookies in order to put money toward the trip, that's great too. The Council Office does not expect for troops to suddenly use funds they've been saving for years to pay for new members to attend...though if they can afford to do so, that's great! If your troop is participating in activities in which you can't adjust the number participating, let the parents know they would need to attend the trip with their daughter and spend time with her during those activities.



2. *Our troop is right in the middle of earning their Girl Scout Silver Award, and we don't have time to catch new members up so they can earn the award too. What are we supposed to do now?*

- Again, just let new girls and their families know the troop's status. It's possible a girl might not have any knowledge of what the award is and will be happy to help the other girls earn the award (maybe give the new member a "take action" related fun patch). You can also let girls know how they can earn the award on their own, if they are interested in doing so.

3. *Our troop only has 7 members. Can we still be a troop if don't have 12 girls?*

- Of course! Troops that have girls in grades K-5 need to have a minimum number of 5 girls to be a troop, troops that have girls in grades 6-12 only are officially a troop when they have 3 girl members. As long as you meet these minimum numbers, you're good.



4. *Our troop only has high school girls, and I know it can be hard to find more high school girls to join. Are you going to make our troop take Girl Scout Daisies so we have at least 12 girls in the troop?*

- Not at all! If your troop is a Girl Scout Senior and Ambassador troop, your troop will remain a Senior and Ambassador troop. We are not asking troops to take on additional Girl Scout grade levels.

5. *Our troop is all 8th grade girls. If a 6th grade girl joins, what will she do next year? We don't want to have a troop that is Girl Scout Cadettes and Seniors.*

- If your troop is all 8th grade girls, you would only show online as a troop that had 8th graders. A 6th grade girl would not be given the option to join your troop unless you ask us to open up your troop to 6th graders.

6. *Our troop loves to camp. What if a girl joins who is afraid of bugs and has no interest in camping?*
- If your troop has particular interests, contact the Answer Center and tell us this information. We would be happy to share your troop's interests in the online troop finder. The purpose of the online troop finder is to best match girls and troops so the more information we have, the better for everyone!
7. *Our troop has more than 12 girls but we would love new members. Are you going to fill up the troops that have less than 12 girls first?*
- No way! When parents contact us looking for a troop, we like to let them know all their options. Some girls are looking for a particular experience, some are looking to meet on a certain day or at a certain time...if a larger troop meets a girl's needs and you've let us know you would like to be in the online troop finder, we will definitely let parents know about your troop as one of their options.



8. *Our troop fits into two cars whenever we go on field trips. If we take one more girl, it will put us over. What should we do?*
- Communication with parents is key! Let your parents know you would love to have troop committee volunteers who are willing to drive for field trips. This is a great way for parents to help out with a troop that doesn't require them to do a lot of advanced planning.

If you have additional questions about this initiative, your troop support team is here to help. You can contact us at 800-283-4812 x2, or send an e-mail to frontdesk@gsnim.org.