

Pen Pal Program

This guide is meant for troops, groups, and individually-registered Girl Scouts (Juliettes) who would like to share their experiences and connect with other girls through writing letters with a pen pal. Based on your group size and grade level, your pen pal may be a girl within Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa or a Girl Scout in another state (see below for more information).

WHAT IS A GIRL SCOUT PEN PAL?

A pen pal is a friend you get to know through letters! She usually lives in another place and will write about her hometown, school, family, pets, customs and traditions, special interests, or talents. Pen pals share things like games, recipes, memories, and photos.

Please note: due to safety concerns, only fill out a pen pal request form if you are a member of Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa. GSgi troops should NOT contact other councils directly. Have questions? GSgi troops may contact the Girl Experience team at info@gsiowa.org (groups from other councils should reach out to their respective council for assistance).

PEN PAL GUIDELINES:

- ★ Troops/Groups are matched by program level and troop size. All troops/groups matches are expected to maintain correspondence for at least one school year. This doesn't mean that after a year, you have to stop corresponding. Many Girl Scouts keep writing to their pen pals for as long as 25 years!
- ★ Pen pal troops are not currently available through the network in Hawaii or Alaska.
- ★ Matches will only be made between August 15 and December 15.
- ★ **Daisy Troops (Grades K-1):** For safety, Daisy grade level girls are only able to connect with other Daisies within Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa (GSgi). Fill out your [Daisy Pen Pal Request Form](#).
- ★ **Brownies, Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors (Grades 2-12):** You can request to connect with Girl Scouts in other states OR within GSgi. Fill out your [Brownie-Ambassador Pen Pal Request Form](#).
- ★ **Juliette Girl Scouts (individually-registered girls):** are able to connect with other Juliettes within GSgi only, to foster connections between individuals across our council. Fill out your [Juliette Pen Pal Request Form](#).

HOW CAN MY TROOP/GROUP/JULIETTE PARTICIPATE?

To participate, members of Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa (GSgi) can fill out a request form (found at girlscoutsiowa.org/forms). There are three separate forms: one for Daisy troops (grades K-1), one for Brownie-Ambassador troops (grades 2-12), and one for Juliettes (individually-registered Girl Scouts).

1. Decide with your troop (or your family if you are a Juliette) if you want to be a pen pal with another troop locally or within the U.S.
2. Complete the request form online for your grade-level/troop status (see links above).
3. Wait while the council finds a troop/group that is looking for a pen pal locally or within the US. This could take up to a month. Matches will only be made between August 15 and December 15.

4. You will receive a notification email from GSGL that includes to how to contact the pen pal's troop or group volunteer. For Juliette Girl Scouts, you will receive information on how to contact the girl's parent/guardian.
5. You can choose to write a letter from the whole troop/group OR each girl and volunteer can write her own. Do not encourage the exchange of phone numbers. Check out the next page for some ideas on what to send.
6. Make sure your envelopes have the correct postage before mailing. A visit to the post office can be a fun and educational experience for girls!

As we're working with many individuals across the country, it can take a little bit of time to make sure that GSGL matches you correctly, to ensure that you have the best possible pen pal experience. Though a pen pal opportunity can be used to fulfill certain badge steps (considering adaptations), please note that it could take longer for that badge to be completed.

BADGE/PROJECT EXAMPLES:

- ★ Daisy Petals: Gloria petal, Vi petal
- ★ Brownie: Girl Scout Way, Making Friends, My Family Story
- ★ Junior: Girl Scout Way, Scribe, Social Butterfly, Bronze Award idea sharing
- ★ Cadette: Girl Scout Way, Netiquette, Silver Award idea sharing
- ★ Senior: Girl Scout Way, Collage Artist, Gold Award Idea Sharing
- ★ Ambassador: Girl Scout Way, Gold Award Idea Sharing

Hey volunteers! Did you know your pen pal troop volunteer can be your pen pal, too?

Learn about your pen pal troop's volunteer by asking about her experiences, her interests, and her Girl Scout activities.

Send your volunteer pen pal interesting information you pick up at trainings or events.

Keep in touch with your volunteer pen pal and keep her up to date with your troop's progress.

Help! What should I send to my pen pal?

Not sure what to talk about with your pen pal? Here are some ideas!

You can tell your pen pal about:

- ★ Yourself, your family, your friends
- ★ Your neighborhood and town, and any special holidays you celebrate
- ★ Your Girl Scout troop, community activities, volunteer and other adult friends
- ★ Your school and school friends
- ★ You can even include special items with the letters! We recommend things like:
 - Snapshots/sketches
 - Magazine articles
 - Maps
 - Recipes
 - Games/songs
- ★ Find out more about your troop/Girl Scout's pen pal
- ★ Ask questions about the pen pal's special interests, her school, her Girl Scout activities, and her state, local town, or neighborhood.
- ★ Learn about her town/city or state by visiting the local library, or asking a parent/guardian to help with an internet search.
- ★ Ask for snapshots, newspaper headlines, maps, games, and songs

