

# Highest Awards & Take Action

The Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards are the most prestigious awards in the Girl Scout organization. Girls reach their full potential and become agents of positive change.

**It is less about *the perfect final product* and more about the **questions and discoveries** along the way.**

As a parent or volunteer, you might start by asking yourself *Why might I encourage my Girl Scouts to pursue a Highest Awards project? What do I want them to get out of the experience?*

Leadership. Confidence. I want her to know that she can make a difference. Better organization. Critical thinking skills. Stronger friendships. Deeper connections to her communities. Career and college preparedness.

## ***What makes a Take Action project a Take Action project?***

Whether you're talking about Journeys or the Gold Award, all Take Action projects have three things in common:

- Targets the root cause or underlying factors of a problem
  - Goes deeper than a band-aid to prevent the problem **from occurring again** in the future, involves asking "why is this problem happening in the first place?"
- Sustainable over time
  - Creates long term positive change, working with the community to be part of the solution, allows others to benefit for years to come and **creates opportunities for other people to volunteer or be part of the solution going forward**
- Measurable using numbers
  - Involves **goal setting**, includes tools to measure the results of the project using numbers, facts, figures, surveys, etc.
  - Goals should demonstrate the impact the project had on the root cause of the problem.

## ***What's this about girl-led?***

To successfully lead girls through the Highest Awards, you might have to **set aside what you know about "doing it right."** To put it simply, the Take Action process builds girls into thoughtful leaders. Take Action enables each girl to speak her mind, forge healthy relationships, and develop career readiness skills (such as time management, cooperative decision-making, and problem solving). That means that the girls have to be the ones taking the lead. And that means sometimes things will be messy and mistakes will be made. (Watching the girls regroup after a misstep is one of the most powerful ways to see their leadership expanding!)

## What's the difference between Take Action and Community Service?

Community service and Take Action projects are both important in Girl Scouts and both make valuable contributions to the community. The difference is that community service projects address an immediate need and are done *for* a community. Examples include: weeding a garden, painting a public sign, picking up litter and collecting/donating pet food. **Take Action projects**—what we're doing with Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards—involve working *with* a community to figure out what is causing a problem...and then designing a solution that will reduce or prevent that problem from happening in the future. Check out the chart below for some examples.

Project Description	Targets the Root of a Problem	Sustainable	Measurable
Bronze Award Girl Scouts worked with a park staff member to create a story hike. To make a story hike, you paint each page of a short story onto large boards or signs. You install the signs, in order, spread out along the trail. When people walk from one end of the trail to another, they can read the story bit by bit.	The Juniors noticed many of their peers do not spend a lot of time outside. Many health problems can occur when families are not active. One reason that people don't go outside is that it might not be very fun. This project provides a fun and safe way for people to get into better shape and enjoy nature.	This project is sustainable because the girls asked the naturalists and rangers who work at the park to encourage visitors to utilize the story hike. The girls gave the park staff information about the benefits of the story hike and info about how to maintain the signs.	This project is measurable because there is a sign-in sheet at the beginning of the trail, so there is a record to count how many people go on the story hike each day. The Bronze Award earners set a goal of 30 hikers in the first month and were able to track their progress towards the goal!
A Silver Award Girl Scout partnered with local veterinarians, animal shelters and dog trainers to host a series of dog agility workshops.	This project is focused on reducing unwanted dogs in shelters. Many families give their pets to animal shelters because of bad/wild behavior. Dog agility courses provide a chance for dog owners to establish a better partnership with their dog and teach the dog how to behave well. When dogs are well trained, they are less likely to be discarded at animal shelters.	This project is sustainable because she offered a series of workshops where people were able to build new skills over a longer period of time. She partnered with other organizations who may be able to offer workshops in the future and connected dog owners with new resources that they will be able to access again in the future.	The goal was to have 10 owners and their dogs participate in the workshop...and to have each pair improve their dog agility by the end. She kept track of attendance at each workshop. She also designed a simple agility test and scored pairs at the beginning of the series and during the final workshop to measure skills.
A Gold Award Girl Scout worked with voter rights groups to create a public service announcement, brochures, and a website to teach others about the importance of voting and how to register to vote. She also offered voter registration drives at local high schools to get young people involved in voting.	This Gold Award earned discovered that many young people do not vote and are not involved in political decisions that impact their daily lives. She researched and discovered that many teens are uninformed or unaware of their rights as citizens. Also, registering to vote may be inconvenient for some. The project educates people and connects them to important community resources.	This project is sustainable because she is created print and online resources to teach people new skills <b>and</b> she is partnered with community organizations that can distribute and update the materials each year. She has a plan to make sure the pamphlets don't sit on a shelf unused. Various groups have agreed to continue her efforts.	The goal was to share brochures with at least 1,000 teens, have at least 300 views on the website and get at least 75 teenagers to register as new voters. This was tracked using spreadsheets and other charts to measure progress.

# A Snapshot of Award Requirements

At each age level, girls learn more about Take Action and can participate in more challenging and complex projects. So, what is considered sustainable for a Gold Award is more rigorous than what is appropriate for a Bronze Award. This chart is a brief overview of the requirements and differences between each award. Please check out **comprehensive resources** for the specific award you're working on to get all the details.

	Bronze Award	Silver Award	Gold Award
Grade Level	Girls must be registered Juniors in grades 4-5.	Girls must be registered Cadettes in grades 6-8.	Girls must be registered Seniors or Ambassadors in grades 9-12.
Pre-requisites	<b>Prior to starting</b> complete at least one Junior Journey ( <i>Get Moving, Agent of Change, aMuse, STEM, Outdoor</i> )	<b>Prior to starting</b> complete at least one Cadette Journey ( <i>aMaze, Breathe, Media, STEM, Outdoor</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prior to starting</b> complete at least 2 Senior or Ambassador Journeys</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earn Silver Award and at least 1 Senior or Ambassador Journey</li> </ul>
Timeline & Final Deadline	We recommend finishing your Bronze Award project by spring of grade 5. <b>The Final Deadline is Sept. 30 after grade 5 is completed (beginning of grade 6).</b>	We recommend finishing your Silver Award project by spring of grade 8. <b>The Final Deadline is Sept. 30 after grade 8 is completed (beginning of grade 9).</b>	The Gold Award often takes more than one school year to complete—get started sooner rather than later. Please read Gold Award timelines carefully. <b>Gold Award Proposal Form must be submitted no later than May 1 of the year a Girl Scout graduates from High School. Gold Award Final Report Form MUST be submitted by mid-August after grade 12 is completed to allow enough time for review/approval.</b>
What does the team look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually completed as a troop or group</li> <li>• All Girl Scouts share equal responsibilities and focus on team work and group decision-making</li> <li>• Help and guidance provided by troop/group volunteer and families</li> <li>• Individuals and experts from other community groups may volunteer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be completed by an individual girl or earned by a small team of 2-4 Cadettes</li> <li>• Girls take the lead on all aspects of the project</li> <li>• Moral/Girl Scout support provided by troop volunteers/families</li> <li>• Recommended, but optional to have a project advisor who is an expert in a field related to the project (<b>not a troop volunteer or parent/guardian</b>)</li> <li>• Individuals and experts from other community groups may volunteer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earned by an individual girl who takes the lead as project manager</li> <li>• Moral/Girl Scout support provided by troop volunteers/families</li> <li>• Project advisor must be an expert in a field related to the project (<b>cannot be troop volunteer or parent/guardian</b>)</li> <li>• Individuals and experts from other community groups may participate as volunteers</li> </ul>
Project Focus & Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take Action project can focus within Girl Scouts or should be related to a local community.</li> <li>• Puts the Promise and Law into action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take Action project <b>must</b> primarily benefit a community outside of Girl Scouts.</li> <li>• Take Action project <b>CANNOT</b> raise money directly for another organization</li> <li>• Puts the Promise and Law into action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take Action project must focus primarily on a community outside of Girl Scouts.</li> <li>• Take Action project <b>CANNOT</b> raise money directly for another organization</li> <li>• Must demonstrate a link to regional, national or global issue.</li> <li>• Puts the Promise and Law into action</li> </ul>
Sustainable	By the time the project is complete, girls develop a better understanding of sustainability by talking with each other about how solutions can be lasting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls demonstrate an understanding of sustainability in the project plan and implementation.</li> <li>• Girls demonstrate an attempt to connect with community groups or other volunteers to establish partnerships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project proposal includes specific ideas about how to sustain the project beyond the Gold earner's involvement.</li> <li>• Sustainability plan includes partnerships with other volunteers or community organizations.</li> <li>• Final Report shows specific evidence and includes a detailed plan of how the project will be sustained by others.</li> </ul>

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	Bronze Award	Silver Award	Gold Award
Measurable	By the time the project is complete, girls develop a better understanding of measurability by talking with each other about aspects of the project that can be counted or tracked. Some conversation about goals and goal-setting occurs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Girls demonstrate an understanding of measurability in the project plan and implementation.</li> <li>Girls set at least one number-based goal</li> <li>Girls use at least one tool to measure progress towards their goal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project proposal includes specific goals measuring something with numbers that demonstrate the effectiveness the project had on the root cause of the problem and a plan for tracking progress.</li> <li>Measurement processes include quantitative and/or qualitative tools/data.</li> <li>Final report describes measurement tools that were used and includes numbers, facts or figures to show successes of project.</li> </ul>
Global & Cultural Dimension	By the time the project is complete, girls develop an understanding of the wider world by talking with each other about how others may experience the same problem that their project helped resolve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During planning and implementation, girls connect with new friends outside their immediate community</li> <li>Girls learn about and practice various communication styles appropriate for different situations</li> <li>Girls learn how others have solved similar problems in the past or in a different communities, and determine if the ideas of others can help with their plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must demonstrate a link to regional, national or global issue.</li> <li>Girls identify ways in which her project is connected to national or global problems. Might be a local solution for a nation/ international problem. OR Might be a solution based in another country.</li> <li>Project planning and implementation demonstrates some awareness of cultural and/or socio-economic differences that may be related to project topic.</li> <li>Girls connect practice various communication styles and connect with diverse communities</li> </ul>
Approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Money-earning approval from Girls Scouts of Western Washington staff before any money-earning activities can proceed</li> <li>Not required from Girl Scouts staff</li> <li>Troop/group volunteer okays</li> <li>Share about the project using the form on the Girl Scouts of Western Washington Bronze Award Page: <a href="https://www.girlscoutsww.org/en/events/highest-awards/bronze-award.html">https://www.girlscoutsww.org/en/events/highest-awards/bronze-award.html</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-approval not required from GSWW staff before project is started</li> <li>Project Advisor should work with Cadettes to review all Girl Scouts of Western Washington Silver Award resources to ensure plan meets requirements</li> <li><b>Each</b> Silver Award earner completes a Final Report Form</li> <li>Project Advisor signs Final Reports based on guidelines</li> <li>Girl Scouts of Western Washington staff looks at Final Reports before sending recognition certificates</li> <li>Girl Scouts of Western Washington staff approval is required for all money earning activities; insurance guidelines and <i>Volunteer Essentials</i> must be followed at all times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-approval required from Girl Scouts of Western Washington Highest Awards Review Committee <b>before implementation</b></li> <li>Please see the "Gold Award Proposal Review Rubric" (enter that in the search bar on <a href="http://www.girlscoutsww.org">www.girlscoutsww.org</a>)</li> <li>Final report approval/awarded by Girl Scouts of Western Washington Highest Awards Review Committee</li> <li>Please see the Final Report Review Rubric</li> <li>Girl Scouts of Western Washington staff approval is required for all money earning activities; insurance guidelines and <i>Volunteer Essentials</i> must be followed at all times.</li> </ul>
What about hours?	Hours are <b>not</b> a Highest Awards requirement, but to give you a guideline, each Junior should spend approximately 20 hours on the process	Hours are <b>not</b> a Highest Awards requirement, but to give you a guideline, each Cadette should spend approximately 50 hours on the process	Hours are <b>not</b> a Highest Awards requirement, but to give you a guideline, each Gold Award earner should spend approximately 80 hours on the process
Questions?	<a href="mailto:bronzeawards@girlscoutsww.org">bronzeawards@girlscoutsww.org</a>	<a href="mailto:silverawards@girlscoutsww.org">silverawards@girlscoutsww.org</a>	<a href="mailto:goldawards@girlscoutsww.org">goldawards@girlscoutsww.org</a>

## Benefits of earning the Gold Award:

- Improve position for college admissions and college scholarships
- Enter the military at a higher pay-grade
- Master time management skills, be seen as a role model and distinguished leader
- Make the world a better place while creating a legacy in the community through a sustainable solution to a problem