

What Does It Mean to Be a Day Camp Volunteer?

Girl Scout day camps rely on adult volunteers to provide a fun, educational program for girls. Each day camp has an administrative team that includes the director, assistant director (or co-directors), business manager, first aider, program aide coordinator, and CampDoc manager. This team helps to recruit and train the volunteers who will serve as unit leaders and program facilitators for the multiple units of girls, as well as the boys' unit and the preschoolers (if included at camp). To place the best possible candidates for each position, it is important that you know what volunteering for day camp really means. We hope that this information will help you to make an informed decision about volunteering. Please realize that we cannot possibly cover every aspect of day camp but here are some important key factors.

Benefits of Volunteering

- Each adult who volunteers for all five days of camp is entitled to one full fee waiver for a girl-relative Girl Scout. Placement for Girl Scouts is guaranteed. This cannot be used for boys or preschoolers.
- Only adult volunteers have the option of bringing their boys (K-5 grade) and potty-trained preschoolers with them to camp. There is a minimal fee for these children. All boys and preschoolers will be placed in the appropriate units with adult supervision. Most, but not all, camps offer this option.
- All volunteers receive a thank you gift for your time and commitment to the day camp program.
- Volunteers at day camp experience the satisfaction of helping girls learn and have fun outdoors.

Responsibilities

Ultimately every volunteer is responsible for every child's safety. Most volunteers are needed as unit leaders. In this role, you are responsible for working with at least one other volunteer to supervise a group of girls (or boys) throughout the day.

- Be prepared to be the type of volunteer that you would like watching your child.
- Be a currently registered Girl Scout adult member.
- Complete the required online council trainings and background check information on a timely basis.
- Take training offered by the day camp administrative team. Work with them to understand the schedule for the week and the activities that are being offered.
- Work with the other unit staff and the girls to plan activities to fill the "free time" in the unit. Girl Scouting is girl-led so girls must have a voice in planning their day. Activities may include leading girls on a hike, playing games, singing songs, creating art, making snacks, teaching outdoor skills, exploring nature, earning recognitions, and other creative ideas.
- Be committed to showing up every day, the girls are counting on you to be there. Most camps do not have extra volunteers to "sub" when someone fails to show up.
- Unplug from your electronics so that your attention is on the activities and the safety of the girls in your care.

Daily Schedule

Each camp's daily schedule varies but they all should include a full day of activities for the campers. We want the girls to be actively learning new skills, making new friends, exploring the outdoors, and having fun.

- All volunteers, except those riding a bus to camp, need to arrive before the campers and be prepared to stay after the girls get picked up.
- Before the campers arrive, there are plans to review, procedures to go over, weather reports to verify, activities to set up, and rosters to check.
- A typical day includes arrival; singing; flag up and announcements; scheduled activities such as crafts, slingshots or archery, themed programming, unit skits, etc.; sack lunch or cookouts; unit "free time" activities; special programming; flag down and departure.
- After the campers leave, there may be equipment to store, cleanup to do, paperwork to complete, or incidents to review.

Sites

Day camps are held on council-owned properties, state parks, city parks, private campgrounds, and county fairgrounds. These sites range from the rustic to the not so rustic. They are nice facilities but certainly not glamorous.

- Physical structures on many sites are limited to picnic shelters or small buildings. A variety of canopies are used to provide shelter and shade.
- Many sites have flush toilets, but you should be ready to use latrines or portable toilets.
- Water stations are available, but having hand sanitizer is a good idea.

Physical Demands

All day camps are in the outdoors and may encompass large areas. Volunteers do not have to be in supreme condition, but should be prepared for physical activity that may be more than an average work day.

- Walking around camp facilities is a requirement of volunteers. Although some accommodations can be made for those individuals who are less mobile, those positions are few since most sites are not handicap-accessible due to the size and terrain.
- Overseeing a group of girls for 6 hours is a tiring task; just ask a teacher.
- Day camp is rarely cancelled due to weather. This requires volunteers to stand up to the summer heat, tromp through the puddles and mud, comfort girls during the thunder, and encourage girls to watch for the rainbow.

Camp Rules

Volunteers need to abide by the rules that are in place at each camp. They need to be positive role models for the girls.

- The dress code for camps require that all participants wear closed-toed shoes and socks. Shorts should be of a respectable length and spaghetti-strap tops, tank tops and t-shirts with inappropriate logos are not permitted.

- Cell phones should only be used in an emergency. Focus needs to be on the campers.
- Smoking is not permitted in front of the campers.
- Illegal drugs and alcohol are not permitted.
- All firearms, including those covered by concealed carry permits, need to be left at home.

Why Volunteer?

- Camps need adults to provide programming for the girls and to meet safety ratios.
- You have an opportunity to lead girls and watch them become the go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders of tomorrow.
- Day camp is fun!

So, you have decided to volunteer; here is one last thing to think about before filling out your paperwork.

Do I want to be in my daughter's unit?

The initial thought of most adults is to volunteer to be the unit leader for the age level of the child that has inspired them to volunteer. Although this is often a good fit, we would also like to encourage you to think about working with another unit. A goal of day camp is to help girls grow in self-esteem and confidence. When girls are away from their caregivers, they may thrive more since they will not have the adult there to lean on in challenging situations. Consider giving your child a little space at camp to become her own person. Think about the stories you can share at the end of each day.