

All About Progression

Progression is a concept we love to talk about here at Girl Scouts—it’s a huge component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, after all. But...what does it actually mean? And how do you make sure you’re doing it right? Let’s break it down.

What We Mean When We Talk About Progression

The main feature of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience is that it’s girl-led. That means that girls should have a say in everything they do, whether that’s picking which badge to earn or planning the entire itinerary for an international troop trip. Will your newly formed Daisy troop be able to research activities, budget for supplies, and lead the meeting themselves from the get-go? It’s pretty unlikely, but that’s exactly where progression comes into play.

Progression enables girls to acquire the necessary skills to become competent leaders, fearless outdoor enthusiasts, and adventurous travelers. Girls start at a baseline (What can they do now?) and practice the skills they need to get to the next level (What do they want to be able to do?). As girls progress towards higher levels of complexity and difficulty, they’ll also take on more and more responsibilities.

Progression and a Troop Leader’s Role

As a troop leader, your role is to consider your girls’ individual abilities as you explore, plan, and guide your troop’s activities. For younger girls, that means you’ll play more of an active role in presenting choices and helping girls discover their interests. For older girls, you’ll step back to allow girls to take the lead and provide guidance and coaching when needed.

By the time they bridge to Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors, your girls will be the primary decision-makers and assume the majority of responsibility for their troop. (You’ll never leave completely, but you’ll be sitting back and marveling at the extraordinary leaders you’ve helped nurture!

Progression in Practice

Because progression can sometimes seem fuzzy in practice, here’s an example of how it could look at each program grade level. You’ll notice what girls are able to do, and what role you can play.

Choosing and earning a badge:

Program Grade Level	Girls' Role	Troop Leader's Role
Daisy/Brownie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express their interest areas Vote on this or that choices Carry out assigned kapers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering girls' interests, come up with a list of two or three badges Plan activities for girls to do Identify where girls can take the lead
Junior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Break out into small groups to brainstorm ideas, present their ideas to the larger group, decide how they want to make a final vote Decide which activities they'll do to earn the badge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask questions to guide the decision-making process: Does the troop have enough money? Do we have enough time? Does everyone feel comfortable doing this activity? Help girls generate ideas for activities they could do
Cadette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research badge options Use resources like the Troop Year Planner, Volunteer Toolkit, or Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting to plan troop meeting activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe the planning process and direct girls to resources
Senior/Ambassador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on badges and badge activities Consider troop budget as they plan Plan and lead troop meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide input when asked Pose open-ended questions to deepen girls' involvement and engagement

But how exactly do you go from girls expressing their ideas to them then taking those ideas and coming up with a fully fleshing meeting plan? Well, let's go through the framework:

1. In the beginning, you'll be doing the majority of the planning and work (with girl input, of course).

2. Then, work your way to planning alongside your girls. Show them *how* you go about planning a meeting. Incorporate questions so they get a sense of how you think through problems. So, you could say, “We agreed to set aside \$25 for this activity. Would we have enough to go to the museum to earn the Space Science badge? How much does going to the museum cost? If we don’t have enough money, what could we do instead?”
3. With that scaffolding in place (i.e. here’s what we need to consider when planning), step back and let girls take the reins. Be ready (but not *too* ready, since you want to give them space to try out different things and make mistakes) to step in to support if they need assistance.
4. Finally, step *all* the way back and let girls do it by themselves.

So, while your Daisies might not be able to balance the troop budget and reach out to a potential guest speaker for your troop meeting now, there’s a clear pathway to get them there. And when your Girl Scouts reach that pinnacle of doing it all by themselves, know that you were instrumental to their success. Way to go, troop leader!

Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Ask girls about their interests and pick activities around those ideas 2 Provide girls with this or that choices like, do we want to play a game or sing a song? When you have multiple activities, ask what they want to do first 3 Assign Kapers or jobs in your troop meetings 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Girls vote between a short list of badges or activities 2 Girls choose which game they want to play or which movie they want to watch 3 Learn about troop finances by looking up activity costs from a set list. Girls decide which activities they will spend troop funds on. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Girls look through different activities offered and pick what they want to do 2 Ask each girl to facilitate a game or activity for the group 3 Let girls plan the meals and shopping lists for a trip 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Girls plan meetings using resources like the Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting and Safety Activity Checkpoints 2 Girls set a troop budget and determine how much of their troop funds are spent on each activity 3 Girls research, book, and plan activities for a trip 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Girls should fully plan meetings and activities, researching and making reservations 2 Girls should work together to make a troop budget and balance the troop expenses 3 Girls should work together to facilitate badges and activities as a group 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Girls should fully plan meetings and activities, researching and making reservations 2 Girls should work together to make a troop budget and balance the troop expenses 3 Girls should work together to facilitate badges and activities as a group