

Self Study Guide

Service Unit Communications Representative

Updated 7/2/08

WELCOME!

We are excited that you are joining us as the communications representative for your service unit. By applying the Girl Scout brand voice to your work, you are help to deliver Girl Scout messages, increase public awareness about Girl Scouting, establish new associations, encounter new opportunities for personal growth, and engage in experiential learning. Through your involvement with the communities you represent, you will discover that your efforts will draw added support for Girl Scouting. You will employ creative thinking skills, while seeking opportunities for news releases. You will find an assortment of media resources, and you'll work closely with the council's marketing and communications departments.

Thank you for assuming this position. We hope that you find great satisfaction in applying your skills as you represent volunteers, members, and their families, while spreading the word about Girl Scouts. We look forward to working with you, and hope that you gain valuable knowledge from this experience. We also hope you will apply the knowledge you will gain from this communications experience, to both personal and future business communications.

Introduction

The purpose of this independent study is designed to prepare you for your role with Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys. For your review and reference, you will find the following materials:

- Independent study materials
- Independent study quiz
- Independent study evaluation

Instructions

This independent study is designed with consideration of you and your busy schedule. We anticipate that you should be able to complete this training, and review the materials listed below within approximately one hour. Begin by reviewing the following information:

- Service Unit communications representative position description
- Service unit public relations: An overview
- Anatomy of a Press Release
- Making press releases shine
- Newsletters
- Other communications strategies
- The Girl Scout brand voice
- Symbol and logotype use
- Service unit & troop website guidelines
- Written communications tips
- We're here to help/who to contact list
- Online resources

Please return the independent study quiz to the public relations specialist, listed on the "We're Here to Help" sheet. Returning your completed quiz will provide confirmation of your completed independent study training, and will document your appointment as the Communications Representative for your service unit. An evaluation is also enclosed. We hope that you will take the time to provide feedback. Your feedback will assist us to improve future training materials.

SERVICE UNIT COMMUNICATIONS REPRESENTATIVE

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Reports to: Service Unit Manager
Supports: River Valleys' Marketing and Communications Department
Term: Two years, with option for renewal
Purpose: To enhance public awareness and support of Girl Scouting through regular two-way communication with local media and community contacts. Communications representatives are the vital link between the community and the council communications department.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Actively seek opportunities to submit news releases and photos (featuring troop and service unit activities and events) to your local newspaper, community education bulletin, cable television station, and/or other local communications vehicles.
2. Submit news items/photos to the council's marketing and communications department for internal use (i.e. newsletters, press releases, collateral marketing materials); ensure photo releases and interview consent forms are completed by parents/guardians of minors included in news items/photos.
3. Work with the council's marketing and communications department on any service material that could be suitable for submitting to major media (television, radio and newspapers).
4. Take photographs and write brief articles regarding service unit events for publication in area newspapers, council newsletters, websites, or other public relations possibilities.
5. Inform troop leaders how to submit stories and photos to area newspapers or council publications.
6. Develop a system of communication or newsletter for sharing information within the service unit. This might include promoting and supporting the service unit website.
7. Participate as an active member of the service unit team by attending regular service unit team and leader meetings, and participating in the creation of the annual service unit plan of work.
8. Complete training offered by River Valleys' marketing and communications department in a timely manner.
9. Follow all GSUSA and River Valleys policies, standards, and procedures.
10. Promote and support River Valleys' family partnership campaign and product sale program activities.

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Be a currently registered member of Girl Scouts of the USA through River Valleys.
2. Be at least 18 years old and complete our volunteer application process.
3. Behave in a manner consistent with the Girl Scout Mission and Promise and Law.
4. Have basic knowledge about your community and its resources.
5. Be committed to highlighting the activities and contributions of Girl Scouts in their Service Unit by developing contacts with the news media and others involved with public relations.
6. Demonstrate excellent group and interpersonal communication skills
7. Able to speak and write clearly, accurately, and enthusiastically.

BENEFITS:

1. Help girls become confident leaders who discover, connect and take action in their community.
2. Share your knowledge, experience, and skills with girls and volunteers.
3. Gain and develop skills for personal and professional growth, including valuable experience in writing, reporting, and public/media relations
4. Free training in areas of responsibility, plus enrichment training.
5. Increase the visibility of Girl Scouts in your community.

RIVER VALLEYS' RESPONSIBILITIES TO OUR VOLUNTEERS:

1. Provide a clear volunteer position description and orientation to your role, River Valleys, and GSUSA.
2. Strive to match your skills and talents with an appropriate volunteer position.
3. Provide position specific training and document completion of all required volunteer training.
4. Provide opportunities to communicate and be heard.
5. Provide an extensive network of resources and programming ideas and ensure services, materials, and resources are available and accessible.
6. Provide River Valley resources.
7. Provide current information on upcoming events and activities through newsletters, meetings and online resources.
8. As a member of GSUSA, receive limited accident coverage while carrying out Girl Scout responsibilities.
9. Maintain contacts and methods for connecting volunteers to experts, resources, opportunities, activities, and events.
10. Provide ongoing support, guidance, and evaluation of your volunteer service.
11. Recognize your volunteer service.

SERVICE UNIT PUBLIC RELATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

There are numerous ways to deliver the word out about Girl Scouts in your community, and to reinforce the Girl Scout brand voice, including public relations. Think of public relations as a toolbox full of approaches and strategies to promote the contemporary reality of Girl Scouts.

Why public relations?

At the service unit level, successful public relations efforts:

- Educate internal and external audiences about the value of Girl Scouting and its benefits to individuals and communities;
- Promote events and opportunities to attract and retain girl members and adult volunteers;
- Motivate people to support Girl Scouting through volunteerism and charitable gifts; and
- Provide girls with expanded leadership opportunities.

Target audiences

Internal

Girl members

Volunteers

Families/parents

Alumnae

External

Community/school partners (i.e. places of worship)

Business/civic/government/youth leaders

Media representatives

“General public”

What makes news?

What makes news is largely up to editors and producers. While there’s no precise formula for determining how to give something a “hook,” consider the following criteria when you’re trying to generate coverage:

- Human interest – in other words, a “good story” about a person or people
- Local event or people (this is critical to community news coverage)
- Timeliness – how current is the story?
- Surprise – something people didn’t know or wouldn’t think
- Trends – how does your story exemplify or illustrate a trend?
- Something useful for the audience – news people can use
- Evidence and solid facts – cite studies, reports, statistics, etc.
- Experts
- Diversity

How to deliver the Girl Scout message

The strategies you may wish to employ are virtually unlimited in communicating the message out about Girl Scouting. In fact, available time and money are usually the more limits are usually those imposed by available time and money, rather than a lack of creative ideas. Given that time and money are always limited, make sure to answer the following questions before you begin any public relations effort:

- Who am I trying to reach (communicate with)?
- What do I want them to know, understand, believe, or do?
- What are my key messages?
- What is the best and most efficient way to reach my intended audience with my key messages?

Suggested channels for delivery

- Cable TV
- Community radio stations
- Community service events
- Council newsletters
- Displays and posters
- Media advisory
- Newsletters
- Newspapers
- Oral presentations
- Posters and flyers
- Press releases
- Service unit websites

Media Relations

Newspapers – Weekly community newspapers are interested in local stories submitted by local people. You can use them to get the word out about recent or upcoming Girl Scout activities: service unit events, troop/group service projects, and human interest stories to name a few. There are many ways to generate coverage in newspapers, including:

- Write and submit a press release. For more information on how to write a press release, see the “Anatomy of a Press Release” handout in this packet.
- Call the newspaper and ask if a reporter and/or photographer can attend an upcoming event or activity.
- Write and submit a media advisory. An advisory is slightly different from a release; it’s basically a written form of the call mentioned above. It covers the “who, what, where, when, and why” in an effort to attract a reporter and/or photographer to an event.

Examples of press releases and media advisories can be found under the training section of our website.

Cable TV – Some local cable stations offer community members an opportunity to post announcements, and some will even work with volunteers and young people to produce a short segment for broadcast. Check to see what is available in your area. If you need assistance, contact the council’s public relations specialist.

Community Radio Stations – Community radio stations may also offer some opportunities for public service announcements (recorded by local Girl Scouts) and/or interviews on local interest talk shows. Please contact the council’s director of marketing and communications if you are interested in exploring these opportunities in your community.

Don’t forget about newsletters – Send press releases to editors of worship bulletins, employee newsletters, etc.

A note on follow-up calls – Making follow-up calls is a good practice. When you call, don't ask the editor if s/he received your material. Offer a new piece of information, and ask if they have any questions. Your goal is to make their job easier in communicating your messages.

An Important Note on Media – If you have a story idea for the *Pioneer Press*, *Star Tribune*, *Rochester Post-Bulletin*, and *Mankato Free Press* or any other major publications (e.g. *City Pages*, *Minnesota Parent*, etc.); or network TV or radio, **please call** the council's public relations specialist or director of marketing and communications **before you proceed**. It is important that such stories present a united voice from the council and service units.

ANATOMY OF A PRESS RELEASE

Writing a good press release doesn't have to be a complex undertaking. Here are the basic components:

1. A strong headline – Summarize the release for the editor, and if possible, try to create something that will spark the readers' interest.
2. A good opening sentence or two – Ask an interesting question, summarize a brief anecdote, or state a statistic or fact that's not widely known. Here are some examples:

“Ask any of the thirteen Girl Scouts in New Brighton area Troops 50749 and 52749 about the highlights of their summer, and you won't hear about the beach, the pool, or a concert. After visiting eight European countries between them, the girls are more likely to mention the Eiffel Tower, the Swiss Alps, and Amsterdam's Anne Frank House.”

“Thirteen employees from 3M Legal Affairs traded their telephones and computers for chain saws and wood splitters for a special service project on June 6.”

“How do women define success? A new study, conducted by Louis Harris & Associates, Inc., finds that feeling good about themselves, good health, and personal relationships are critical components of success for women.”

3. Another first sentence option – Use date, time, and event specifics or a clear, concise statement to quickly convey the information you need to get across. Sentences that follow this pattern include:

“The community of River Falls is now seeking caring adult volunteers to help girls grow strong through Girl Scouting.”

“All girls aged 5-17 and adults aged 18 and up are invited to a Girl Scout recruitment event on September 14 from 6-9 p.m. at Humboldt Elementary School.”

4. Use quotes from girls and volunteers – The ideal place for the first quote is after your opening sentence or paragraph.

The first time you quote someone, use her/his first and last name, and title. Thereafter, use the last name only. How often you quote in your release depends on the length and type of article.

5. Get factual information out early in the release – Right after your opening sentence and a short quote (if you're using one), get the “who, what, where, when, and why” details out of the way. Think of a press release as a triangle – Δ . The specifics are the narrow part (the top of the triangle), and the contextual and supporting information are the broader part at the bottom.
6. Look for opportunities to include the new brand voice key messages in your release – The key messages are listed in the Girl Scout Brand Voice section of this communications representative resource kit.

7. Use the council's standard closing paragraph (below) to end all releases – It won't necessarily be printed, but its important background information to include.

About Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys

In partnership with 18,000 adult volunteers, the Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys helps 49,000 girls each year—in all or portions of 49 counties in southern Minnesota and western Wisconsin—to discover new abilities, connect with new friends, and take action to improve their communities. Girl Scouts is the world's preeminent leadership development organization for girls, building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

8. Include a good quality photo if you have one – Community newspapers are much more likely to print your release if you can include a good photo. Make sure to label the photo with first and last names and a brief description of the activity. Make sure that all girls pictured have signed permission slips for the activity that include permission for photos to be taken and distributed for public relations purposes.

Stylistic Conventions

- Label your document prominently as a press release.
- Use standard page margins, Times New Roman font, and 1.5 line spacing.
- Print or email your release on Girl Scout letterhead.
- At the top of your first page, clearly indicate the date, and contact information with a name and phone number.
- If your release is more than one page, include the word “more” centered at the bottom of the first page/s.
- Center the number -30- or #### at the bottom of the last page.

MAKING PRESS RELEASES SHINE

News and copy editors struggle daily with an overwhelming number of press releases. In addition to the large volume, it is often challenging for them regarding the method and timing they get submitted and are written or organized. While a press release should speak the language of the organization it represents, it is imperative that it can be easily used by the editors for publishing.

Each newspaper varies how they handle press releases; however, most reserve the right to edit for space, grammar, and content. A well-written and concise press release will be more readily used and published, compared to one that is long and full of repetitive information.

Here are some tips to help editors and set your press release apart from the rest.

- Take a few moments to call the editors in your area, before you have information to submit. Doing this puts a name and face on your press releases and helps build a relationship with the editor that will help put your information on the top of his or her list.
- Remember, you are promoting an event or piece of news that you believe should receive coverage. Only submit newsworthy items.
- Keep the information basic and straightforward. Stay away from controversial or opinionated writing.
- Know your audience. Beware of the geographic area the publication covers the publication deadlines, and the general readership.

A good rule of thumb is to write press releases in Associated Press Style, to ensure minimal editing by the publication's representative. List event, times, day of week, date, location, address, and city.

NEWSLETTERS

The council communications department produces two print newsletters and two e-newsletters to inform our many audiences about the great things happening in Girl Scouts. Details on those publications are provided below. Submissions from all staff, volunteers, troops and service units are welcome!

How to submit articles, information, photos, and other items for consideration

- Provide your text on disk or via e-mail to the Print and Electronic Media Specialist at 400 Robert Street South, St. Paul, MN 55107 or communications@girlscoutsrv.org. (We can accept Microsoft Word documents for PCs.)
- If you wish to submit a photograph: provide the names of everyone pictured as well as a short description of what is happening/why the photograph was taken. If you want your picture returned, please print your name and address on the back of the photograph.

Currents is a quarterly tabloid newsletter which is printed and mailed to the homes of all current registered girl and adult members. Its inaugural issue was published in early November 2007. The newsletter contains information about the council, program picks, troop activity and volunteer highlights, etc.

Publication dates: November 1, February 1, May 1, July 1 (e-blast)

Connections is an e-newsletter for service unit team members, leaders and trainers, which provides helpful council updates and announcements. This newsletter is designed to keep our volunteers informed, so they can provide girls with the best possible Girl Scout experience.

Publication dates: Last business day of each month

Reflections is printed and mailed to donors, alumnae and community partners three times per year. The newsletter contains information that helps alumnae stay connected and helps donors better understand what Girl Scouts is all about.

Publication dates: December 17, April 1, July 1

The Edge is an e-newsletter designed just for girls. This e-newsletter is full of fun facts, girl contributions, and inspirational girl stories.

Publication dates: November 17, December 17, January 15, February 15, March 17, April 15

Deadlines: Generally, plan to submit stories for print five weeks before publication date.

Please note: While Connections and The Edge are e-newsletters, copies can be printed and mailed those without email access upon request.

OTHER COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

Service Unit Websites

Some service units may determine that a website is an effective way to keep in contact with volunteers and families within the service unit. Please see the Service Unit & Troop Website Guidelines section included in this packet for more information. Remember that websites can be exclusive if the information available there is difficult to access by people who don't have computers or Internet access at home.

Speaking Opportunities

Seek opportunities to make a presentation about Girl Scouting to local civic groups, chambers of commerce, school, school groups (PTAs and PTOs), and communities of faith. A sample speech is included in this packet, and it can be tailored to have a volunteer recruitment focus, a girl recruitment focus, etc. Are you afraid of public speaking but willing to line up some presentations? Call the council's media relations specialist to request a speaker from the council speaker's bureau.

Displays and Posters

Displays and posters are great during Girl Scout Week, at peak recruitment times, and any other time when you want to promote an event or activity to the community. The list of locations is virtually endless.

Consider:

- Banks, savings and loan associations
- Bloodmobiles/high blood pressure detection units
- Business and professional organizations
- Cafeterias, restaurants, company lunch rooms
- Chambers of commerce
- Cultural/ethnic centers, clubs, and agencies
- Daycare centers
- Doctors' and dentists' offices
- Dry cleaners, Laundromats, laundries - services that can also deliver your brochures
- Estate planners, attorneys' offices, insurance agencies
- Grocery stores and supermarkets
- Hospitals
- Libraries
- Local clubs and groups
- Movie theaters
- Naturalization ceremonies
- Other voluntary agencies (like the YWCA)
- Places of worship
- Police/fire stations
- Realty companies
- Senior citizens' centers
- Skating rinks
- Speakers' bureaus
- Sporting goods stores
- Volunteer centers
- Women's clubs and centers
- Schools, colleges, junior colleges, universities, community colleges, technical schools, adult education centers, secretarial schools, beauty schools, etc.

THE GIRL SCOUT BRAND VOICE

WHAT IS A BRAND?

Brand management is the application of marketing techniques to a specific product, product line, or brand.

Great brands are built on simple propositions. Not easy or unsophisticated ones, but on ideas so bold a few short words will make them clear.

WHAT IS A POSITIONING STATEMENT?

A statement that describes the “place” that a brand should occupy in the minds of the target customers. It serves as an internal touchstone that guides most of a company’s marketing communications strategies, programs, and tactics.

Girl Scouts’ positioning statement: *Girl Scouts is a magnetic, irresistible place that is an essential part of girl culture and of being a girl today.*

BRAND CHALLENGES

Our challenge is not merely to create awareness but to create excitement and most importantly, understanding of our brand.

MESSAGES

- Girl Scouts builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.
- Discover, Connect, Take Action = Leadership
- Girl led, learning by doing, cooperative learning
- Girl Scouts = Leadership

SYMBOL AND LOGOTYPE USE

The Girl Scout service mark is composed of two parts: the symbol (the Trefoil) and the logotype (the words “Girl Scouts,” along with the registration mark). Both parts of the service mark must be used together. See the figures to the right for specific details about use and limitations.

Pulling the symbol apart from the logotype and using it as a design element is not acceptable.

Do not shade or screen the service mark or place the mark over a complicated pattern or photograph.

The preferred color for the service mark is the Girl Scout green (Pantone 334). A black service mark is also acceptable.

When placing the service mark near another logo, be sure to use the version, which is closest in size and shape to that of the other logo. The service marks should be placed side by side and not one above the other.

When using the logo in association with Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys, only use the style seen in Figure 6.

The preferred version of the Girl Scout logo on a website is the horizontal logo.



If you need a copy of the logo, contact our graphic specialist. Make sure to follow all the guidelines for the use of the Girl Scout logo; they are described in the “Symbol and Logotype” use handout in this resource kit. In addition to those guidelines, there are a couple of logos oriented just to the Web (check with the webmaster if you have questions).

Figure 1



Preferred use

Figure 2



Girl Scouts®

Use when there are space limitations.

Figure 3



1 11/16 inch

Minimal horizontal size.

Figure 4



Girl Scouts®

3/4 inch

Minimal stacked version size

Figure 5



Leave space around service mark.

Figure 6



Service mark with River Valleys application.

SERVICE UNIT & TROOP WEBSITE GUIDELINES

The Internet is becoming an increasingly important communications tool for everyone – Girl Scouts included. In order to present a clear picture of our organization, it is necessary for all service units and troops to comply with some fundamental guidelines when developing a website. Following these guidelines will help establish a level of consistency and professionalism, strengthening the Girl Scout brand voice, and ensuring that we're in compliance with legal and safety requirements. These guidelines are intended as a general overview for Girl Scout website development.

Logo use on the Web

- Do not reproduce a bitmapped or otherwise distorted version of the logo.
- Do not use the logo as an icon or button.
- Do not make the logo flash, blink, or turn or change colors.
- Do not use the logo in a step-and-repeat “wallpaper” pattern.

Page Format

It is recommended that a design format be established for Web pages and that the logo be positioned and repeated uniformly on each page to maximize its impact and create a “running head” that will tie together all the pages of the site. If you have questions on how to do this, contact the council's graphic designer.

General Web Design Procedures

Your website should be attractive, informative, and kept current. The following tips will help you create a successful site.

Keep diverting or unnecessary graphics to a minimum. The appearance of your Web pages should serve to enhance the delivery of information, not detract from it.

Plain, light-colored backgrounds work best and make your information easier to read. Avoid patterned backgrounds.

Large files (pictures and graphics) take longer to load; the wait time often distracts from the flow of your message. The optimum page size should not exceed 30K.

Navigating your site should be kept easy and consistent for users.

Too many links can be confusing—and potentially harmful (see legal guidelines). Check links you do maintain on a regular basis to make sure they work.

Legal and Safety Guidelines for Websites

All of the symbols owned by GSUSA are protected by trademarks and must be identified as such. The following copyright line should appear at the bottom of main menu pages, home pages, and utility pages:



© 2001 Girl Scouts of the USA. All rights reserved.

Check to see whether drawings, photographs, or other graphics are copyrighted; you must obtain permission from the copyright owners before incorporating these images in your website. There are many copyright-free graphics available for free on the Web and on disk for purchase.

As with photos used for printed material, you must have a consent form signed by parents/guardians (a copy of this is available at www.girlscoutsrv.org or can sent to you if needed) for girls who appear in images on your site. Written permission must also be obtained for all pictures of adults used on your site. Visit the resource page for communications representatives for a copy of the consent form.

Use only the first names of girls on your website. Never post addresses, phone numbers, or e-mail addresses of girls.

Do not publish troop meeting times, locations, or addresses.

Links to other sites should be checked and monitored very carefully for material and/or advertising that may be unsafe or inappropriate for the visitors of your site.

Your site should not request names, addresses, e-mail addresses, or other information from people visiting it, nor should it automatically post messages that have not been carefully screened by a responsible adult. Never use a messaging system that allows girls or adults to post their e-mail addresses.

Links to Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys and GSUSA

Please include a link on your website to the council's site, www.girlscoutsrv.org. We also recommend a link to GSUSA, which is www.girlscouts.org.

Would you like a link to your site from ours? The council will provide links to service unit websites that meet all of the above guidelines. Call the council's graphic designer for more information.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TIPS

General Reminders

- Our organization's name is Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys, not Girl Scout Council of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys.
 - Avoid use of the word "council" in our proper name.
 - Use the word "and" between Minnesota and Wisconsin rather than an "&."
 - Always spell out Minnesota and Wisconsin rather than abbreviating the state names, i.e. MN and WI.
 - Do not abbreviate as GSMWRV on any external or public materials.
 - References using River Valleys or River Valleys Girl Scouts are acceptable only after the formal name - Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys – has been used once in your correspondence.
- Avoid Girl Scout jargon, abbreviations, and acronyms. If you reference something throughout a long document, you can use an acronym as long as you provide its full name first, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Example: when writing about the national organization, use "Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA)" as your first reference, then "GSUSA" in subsequent sentences.
- Always say and write, "Girl Scout Daisy," "Girl Scout Brownie," "Girl Scout Junior," etc., not "Daisy," "Brownie," "Junior," etc. Per new guidelines, we now also have Girl Scout Cadettes, Girl Scout Seniors, and Girl Scout Ambassador.
- Always use the words "Girl Scouts." Do not say or write, "Scouts." When communicating about the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, use that phrasing, not "Girl and Boy Scouts."

"The basic guideline is to use common sense. If punctuation does not help make clear what is being said, it should not be there. Clarity, clarity, clarity."

–Associated Press (AP) Stylebook

Capitalization

In general, avoid unnecessary capitalization.

Proper names:

- Capitalize when they are an integral part of a person, place or thing (Marsh Lake Service Unit, Brooklyn Center Service Center, Girl Scout New Member Night).
- Lowercase when they stand alone in subsequent reference (service unit, service center, new member night).
- Lowercase the common nouns of names in all plural uses (Brooklyn Center and Northfield service centers; Dan Patch and River Hills service units; Brownie and Junior Girl Scout troops).
- Don't capitalize seasons. (I like the fall, but I don't like winter.)

Titles:

- Capitalize someone's title when it's used before their name only (Field Manager Jane Doe).
- Lower case when a title is used after a name (Jane Doe, field manager).
- Lower case for terms that are job descriptions rather than formal titles (vice president, field manager, program director).
- Lower case titles when they're not used with an individual's name. (The outreach coordinator spoke to Hmong girls.)

Troop references:

- Capitalize when referring to a specific troop. (Troop 31234 sold Girl Scout cookies at the mall.)
- Lower case in a general reference (The troop sold cookies at the mall).

Other:

- Capitalize proper titles (the Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys, Board of Directors, Pope John Paul, and President Bush).
- Lowercase when it stands alone in subsequent reference. (The board consists of 10 members. The board consists of many community leaders. The pope lives in the Vatican. The president lives in Washington, D.C.)

Commas

In a series:

- Use a comma with a complex series of phrases: (I'm going camping whether it's raining, whether the camp is open, or whether no one else will be there).
- Use a comma when two clauses are used and each has a subject. (We are going to a meeting, and we're going to have fun.)
- Use a comma to introduce a one-sentence quote. (Phyllis said, "Everyone gets a casual day.")
- Don't use at the start of an indirect or partial quote. (Phyllis says that employees "are the cream of the crop.")

Hyphens

"Hyphens are joiners. Use them to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words."

–AP Stylebook

- For example, The president will speak to small-business men. NOT: The president will speak to small businessmen.
- Use when two or more modifiers precede a noun. (She has a full-time job. He is an eight-year-old student.)
- If these modifiers follow a noun, however, they are usually not hyphenated. (She works full time. The student is eight years old.)
- If the modifiers end in "ly" or include the word "very," don't hyphenate. (It was an easily remembered party. We had a very good time).

Hyphens with Prefixes:

- When in doubt, AP says: Follow Webster's New World Dictionary.
- In general, use a hyphen if a prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel (pre-election, pre-eminent, pre-exist).
- Don't hyphenate, however, when a prefix precedes a word starting with a consonant (preflight, preheat, predate, prenatal, premarital).

Italics

Italicize the following:

- *Program Bulletin, GirlSports, All titles of books/publications/songs.*

Numerals

- Spell out numbers 1 through 9 (one to nine); use numerals above 9 (10 and above). This does not include dates of the year or time of the day.
- Avoid starting sentences with a number. (Wrong: 30 employees gave to United Way last year; Right: Last year 30 employees gave to United Way.)
- If you must start with a number, write it out: (Thirty employees gave to United Way).
- When writing out large numbers: Use a hyphen only to connect a word ending in y (twenty-one, forty-six; one hundred twenty-one; one thousand one hundred forty-six).
- For large numbers, include commas: 1,300 not 1300.
- When writing out page numbers: Use figures and capitalize page when used with a figure. When a letter is appended to the figure, capitalize it but do not use a hyphen: Page 1, Page 10, Page 20A. One exception: It's a page one story.
- When writing out years, a century should be noted with the century, then an "s" following it, i.e.: the 1900s, while when referring to a decade, put an apostrophe before the decade and an "s" following the 0, i.e. the '90s.

Periods

- Use periods to separate timeframes (a.m., p.m., B.C., A.D.).
- Periods do not need to be used for well-known acronyms. (CIA, FBI, CEO, JFK, LBJ).
- Use two spaces following a period.

Parenthesis

- If parenthetical items falls within a sentence or at the end of a sentence:
 - Ending punctuation should fall outside the closing parentheses.
 - Only capitalize the first word inside parenthetical items if it is an abbreviation or proper noun.
 - Do not use a period before the closing parenthesis except with an abbreviation.
- If the parenthetical item is to be treated as a separate sentence:
 - The preceding sentence should be closed with a punctuation mark of its own.
 - Follow basic sentence rules for punctuation and capitalization.
 - No other punctuation should follow the closing parenthesis.

Quotation marks

- Use quotes around only the EXACT words of others.
- Use quotes around words that express irony. The "healthy lunch" added up to 3,500 calories.
- Use with a word introduced the first time: Broadcast frequencies are measured in "kilohertz."

Punctuation with Quotes

- Periods and commas always go inside the quotation marks. (He said, "I am tired.")
- Other punctuation falls inside quotation marks when it pertains to the quote.
- Punctuation falls outside the quotation marks when it pertains to the entire sentence. (Isn't that "just plain confusing"?)
- So do the dash, semicolon, question mark and exclamation point when they apply to the quoted matter. (Bill said, "I am tired!")

Times/Months/Days

- List times this way: 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m. Not 3:00 A.M.
- Write out noon and midnight (not 12 p.m. or 12 a.m.).
- Spell out months when used alone. (January was a cold month.)
- Days: Never abbreviate them unless they're tabulated; then use three letters and no periods (*Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu*).
- Years: Don't use current year in articles. (Thanksgiving falls on November 28.)
- Use it, however, if the date refers to multiple years. (*Thanksgiving falls on November 28, 2002, and November 26, 2003.*)
- When writing out the day of the month, do not use th, rd, or nd, i.e. November 6, 1999.
- When referring only to the month and year, do not add a comma, i.e. August 1999.

Website guidelines:

- *website*: one word, lowercase; same with *webpage*.
- Capitalize: *Web, Internet, Intranet*.
- *e-mail*: include the hyphen between the lowercase e & m.
- *online* does not have a hyphen.

Money

- Dollars: Always lowercase. Use figures and the dollar sign in all cases except casual references or amounts without a figure: "The book cost \$4." "Dad, please give me a dollar." For amounts of more than \$1 million, use the \$ and numerals up to two decimal places. "It is worth \$4.35 million." Or: "It is worth exactly \$4,351,242." For amounts less than \$1 million, use figures this way \$4, \$25, \$500, \$1,000, \$650,000. Also: Don't link the numerals and the word by a hyphen (e.g. it should be \$4 million, not \$4-million).
- Cents: It should be spelled out in lowercase and used for amounts less than a dollar: 5 cents, 12 cents. For amounts more than a dollar, use \$ and the decimal system: \$1.01, \$2.50.

Lists

- If you have introductory sentence, end it with a colon (:), then begin your list with numbers, dashes, or bullet points.
 - If the list is a series of consecutive bullet points that complete an introductory sentence, each bullet point should begin with lowercase letter (unless it's a proper noun) and end with a semi-colon. The last bullet point should end with a period.
 - If the bullet point is a complete sentence, then be sure to end each bullet point with a period.

Colons

- Use in all business/formal letter salutations (Dear Margo:). A comma is only acceptable in the salutation of a personal letter.
- Use to introduce a list (this report has many sections: an introduction, body, conclusion...). It is not necessary to use a colon if your sentence uses "include, including, included, etc. (My report included an introduction, body, conclusion...).

Semicolons

- Use to achieve a stronger break between clauses than a comma provides, or to link two separate but closely related sentences. (The package was due last week; it arrived today).

- Use between clauses in a series with commas. (People at the party included Jane, John, and Beth from Moose Lake; Sarah, Maria, and Betsy from Northfield; and Ben from St. Paul.)

The “— dash”

- Remember that the dash or long dash is a dramatic pause and should always be the “thinner-looking” – sign, not the - sign dash.
- Example: You can use the dash like this – between dates or times, or you can use it like this—in sentences, if you so choose.

Reduce Passive Voice

- Use action words whenever possible, it’s more active, engaging and exciting to read.
- In most cases a writer can take out the word “will” and change the tense of the verb.
 - A passive example: This patch program will help girls discover that science is fun with activities...
 - Active statement: Girls discover science is fun through hands-on activities that challenge...

Questioning the Question Mark!?

It seems fun and common to start a flyer, e-mail, or paragraph off with an engaging question and then give our readers the answer. (For example) Do we ask it for our purpose, or theirs? We don’t need to do this! Simply make an active statement. Our girls and volunteers are bright, creative individuals – let’s craft our messages that let them know that. It doesn’t mean that we can’t use a question every now and then for a dramatic effect, but if we use it on a regular basis, it loses the effect and can become condescending.

Exclamation Points!!!

Much like asking questions, we don’t need to end several sentences with exclamation points. AP (*Associated Press*) style guide argues that you avoid overuse and “only use the mark to express a high degree of surprise, incredulity, or other strong emotion.” Also, never use more than one exclamation point (as seen in the header of this section).

Percentages

Generally, it is AP style to write out the word percent. Use the symbol when creating charts and graphs only.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Is there anything you need to know or need help to do? Our Marketing and Communications staff is only a phone call away. Here's who we are (in a nutshell):

Public Relations Specialist, Barbara Boelk

651-251-1218 or barbara.boelk@girlscoutsrv.org

Barbara oversees Girl Scout media and community relations efforts, including working with service unit communications representatives and spokegirls. Contact Barbara with your stories and photos for major media, requests for community presentations, or any public relations questions.

Print and Electronic Media Specialist, Meghan Seawell

651-251-1215 or meghan.seawell@girlscoutsrv.org

Meghan oversees the creation of Girl Scout print and electronic publications. Contact Meghan if you have a cookie or community service story idea or photo for a publication.

Graphic Specialist, Brandon Kelley

651-251-1248 or brandon.kelley@girlscoutsrv.org

Brandon oversees all aspects of the Girl Scouts' graphic design work, including graphic guidelines, and how to access and use the Girl Scout logo.

Webmaster, Kate Abraham

651-251-1285 or kate.abraham@girlscoutsrv.org

Kate oversees the River Valleys website and Web-related issues.

Communications Specialist, Cynthia Child

651-379-4787, cynthia.child@girlscoutsrv.org

Project Specialist, Jane Stacy

763-971-4055 or jane.stacy@girlscoutsrv.org

Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, Charlene Klein

251-251-1259 or charlene.klein@girlscoutsrv.org

Director of Marketing and Communications, Lisa Hiebert

651-251-1275 or lisa.hiebert@girlscoutsrv.org

Charlene and Lisa are responsible for all planning, development and implementation of the organization's marketing and communications strategies. They direct the efforts of the Marketing and Communications Department and coordinate strategic planning and tactical execution, supporting all business operations. They also work directly with market research projects, crisis communications, and a variety of community relations projects.

You can reach all of us at:

Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys

800-845-0787 Fax 866-530-7533

communications@girlscoutsrv.org

ONLINE RESOURCES

On our website (www.girlscoutsrv.org) you will find additional tools and resources for communications representatives. If you do not have access to the Internet, these materials can be mailed to you by the public relations specialist.

Included on this site are the following:

- River Valleys' press room
- Examples press releases and media alerts
- Girl Scout facts and highlights
- How to take great photos
- Photo/interview consent form for minors
- Map
- Quarterly progress tracking form

Be sure to check the website periodically for additions to resources and items which may be of interest to you.

Please Note: Included in the tools and resources page on our website is the Quarterly progress tracking form. We ask that you complete the form at the close of each quarter, and send it to the public relations specialist, listed on the "We're Here to Help" sheet.

Independent Study Quiz - Communications Representatives

1. Your independent study guide lists responsibilities of communications representatives. They are located under the **Service Unit Communications Representative Position Description**. What are three of those responsibilities?
2. What are the eight elements in planning a press release, which are provided in **Anatomy of a Press Release**?
3. Of the eight elements you listed in question #2, which element requires a consent form to be signed by parents of Girl Scouts prior to implementing this component?
4. Give three examples of criteria that might create a “hook,” when attempting to generate news coverage?
5. What are some achievements which girls in your service unit might accomplish, that are newsworthy to your community? Provide three examples.
6. Who do you contact at Girl Scouts, with stories that you wish to have pitched to major publication, or network TV or radio?
7. Girl Scouts publishes four council newsletters. List the titles for each of the four newsletters.
8. Which of the four council newsletters from question #5, is an e-newsletter designed just for girls?
9. What are some topics you might consider submitting for this newsletter?
10. Of the four council newsletters, which newsletter is printed quarterly, and mailed to all current registered girl and adult members?
11. List five channels/media sources that you feel you will enjoy using in your own public relations work for your service unit?
12. Please write the new Girl Scout position statement here.
13. There are four messages listed in the brand voice section of this packet. What are they?
14. What is the recommended maximum page size when creating a website?
15. List five pieces of information which should not be published on a website?

EVALUATION FORM

Service Unit Communications Representative Independent Study Course

I have completed the Independent Study course for Communications Representative, and have dedicated _____ hours for completion of this course. My reported study hours include reading the supporting materials, and review of the information provided in the appendix.

Please rate your level of satisfaction with this Independent Study course.
(circle one)

Very Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Somewhat Dissatisfied Dissatisfied

The two most important things I learned:

1. _____
2. _____

Describe two highlights which contributed to your rating for the course?

1. _____
2. _____

Did this Independent Study meet your expectations? Please explain.

Upon participating in this course, what additional learning aids, activities, or training ideas might have further enhanced your learning experience?

Regarding this Independent Study, I would like help understanding:
