River Valleys' Guidelines for Creating Troop or Service Unit Website

These guidelines are for adult volunteers, or older Girl Scouts considering developing a website for a troop or service unit within Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys. Although some "how-to" information is included, these guidelines are not meant to lead you step-by-step through the construction process - we leave that to the experts. We suggest that you find someone who knows the technical and legal aspects of website construction, and someone who is capable of making it a great learning experience for girls. You should also check with the council's communications department for additional guidelines regarding the use of photos, logos, and/or electronic documents.

Information posted to the Internet on a website can be accessed and viewed by people all over the world. Therefore, safety and how you represent Girl Scouts should be the guiding principal of any web-based endeavor even if your information is password protected. Consider issues of privacy, personal information, language used, sponsorships, links, and use of copyrighted material (writing, music, brand images, pictures, etc.) when developing your website.

Is a website right for your troop or service unit?

Developing a website can be a great learning activity for girls. Unless you have expertise within your group or are using a Web development template supplied by your Internet service provider, consider recruiting a volunteer with website expertise. First look within the troop or service unit for a parent or relative of a girl member who would be willing to develop your website. You may consider approaching a community college computer lab, a professional in web development, or someone who develops websites for a hobby. Girls can be involved in the process at all levels - decision-making, research, writing, graphics, and even building and maintaining the website.

Consider the following when deciding to develop a troop or service unit website:

- Internet access is important in determining whether a website will work as a communication vehicle. If most families in your area do not have Internet access, a website would not be the primary way to communicate information.

- As a troop or service unit, determine why a website is needed. Is it because you have a need to regularly post information about girl-related activities or awards for your group? Is it to post important dates and notices? Is it an electronic scrapbook record for girls and their families to share? Is it a place to keep track of girls' work?

- Websites require both a commitment of time and financial resources. There are often additional costs for a password protected site, hosting a website, and maybe other desirable features: storing, individual files and downloads, calendar function, e-mail and bulletin boards, etc.

- Consider the time needed for site maintenance. Who will be responsible for posting changes? How often do you want to update the site - weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly?

- Discuss whether the website will remain an information-only site, or if you will need more advanced interactive components that will require password protection.

Getting Started on Your Troop or Service Unit Website

- Spend time looking at other websites. Take notes on what you like and dislike. Search other Girl Scout websites by going to GSUSA at www.girlscouts.org/councilfinder, note any safety or copyright issues you encounter.

- Research companies or virtual sites that would be a good place to have your site hosted. This is where a technical person/volunteer can be helpful.

- Consider learning simple HTML or other Web language, or utilizing a Web development program, such as DreamWeaver or FrontPage. Girls also can learn how to write in a Web language as well as how to prepare photos and graphics for the website.

- Create an outline of the information for the website, called a sitemap. It can be very simple on one page, or it can take up more than one page, with links between. The choice of web-host will determine how limited or how broad the options can be.

Developing Your Web Page

- Write out the text for your page(s) in a word processing program, using spelling and grammar checks. Ask other people to help you proof-read as well.

- Create or find graphics on the Internet for your page. Be sure not to use graphics that are copyrighted by someone else without their permission. Read about the proper use of Girl Scout symbols.

- Carefully consider and plan any links you want to create between your website and other websites. Each linked site should contain only materials that are safe and suitable for children and appropriate for Girl Scouts. Avoid sites that contain inappropriate advertising or lack educational value. Websites with ads that change frequently (sometimes every few seconds) are an indication that that website may display inappropriate advertising.

Online Safety Checklist

❑ Only use first names of all girls.

❑ Need parent/guardian permission to use girl photos.

❑ Need permission to use photos of adults.

❑ Use a generic group e-mail, overseen by an adult, as your contact address.

❑ Follow the guidelines in the Online Safety Pledge and *Safety-Wise* found at www.girlscoutsrv.org.

❑ Screen all postings to guest books, blogs, or forums before posting them on your site.

❑ Keep passwords secret, and plan on periodically changing the password for security.

❑ Post a statement on your site ensuring visitor privacy.

❑ Check all links to make sure they are appropriate for girls to view.

❑ Make a plan for regularly updating the website.

❑ Do not collect any personal information, contact info, Social Security number, credit card over e-mail or the web unless you have a proper SSL certificate set-up.

Publishing Your Web Page

There are many ways to post the pages you create on the Internet. You may have to pay a monthly fee, especially if you go over allotted space for free services, or if you want extras, like chat, file sharing, etc. Most Internet service providers or search engine sites, such as AOL, Yahoo, or Google, have publishing options. They also provide a list of suggested hosting options, as well as many helpful hints about Website development and establishing "user communities." Look for security features, privacy features, amount of space available, and cost.

If you are offered space on a website that is a private business or owned by an individual, **be very cautious.** You become associated with that person's domain name (Internet address). You should **NOT** be associated with a commercial business unless it is clear that they are sponsoring space only, and you should check out the site content and its links, as well as the business to see whether you are in an appropriate company for a Girl Scout group. For example, it might not be appropriate to be sponsored by a winery or a gun shop, but it would be OK to be on the site of the local library or newspaper with other non-profit youth groups.

A site that has links to sexual content, substance abuse, or other unsafe activities would not be appropriate. If your group's sponsor offers you space, you should check with communications/marketing department before accepting; and they can help you word a statement that needs to be placed on your site or the site of your sponsor to indicate that the sponsorship of the site does not indicate Girl Scout endorsement of the host site.

- Create a generic e-mail account specifically for your website. It should be monitored by an adult volunteer. Never use a personal e-mail account for your troop/service unit website.

- **Never** post full names of girls, girl e-mail addresses, family e-mail addresses, addresses, phone numbers, or troop or service unit meeting places on any public websites.

- Have only one or two adult volunteers or a girl/adult combination as the website administrators. Rotate the responsibilities if girls are interested in learning how to manage a website.

- Determine a schedule for updating your website. Some websites only need quarterly updates, or when something is meant to be shared, such as pictures from a camping trip or service activity. Ideally, websites that are password protected should be updated after each meeting or event in preparation for the next meeting or event.

- Be sure to remove old sites from free hosting services.

- If you choose an Internet service provider (ISP) that has password-protected space, you must set up ways to protect the password for the users. Limit it to those who need to use that specific section of the website (girls, leaders, parents or guardian, etc.)

- Determine a schedule for changing the passwords and discuss the importance of keeping the password within the secret group.

Corresponding with the Public

Never post live messages from other people on your Website, in a guest book, or on a bulletin board. Every message should be read by someone (usually an adult), edited where necessary (to edit for language and some content), and then posted. Do **not** post full names and addresses or e-mails of individuals posting to guest books or bulletin boards. You may post first name, troop/service unit, and

city or state. You do not have to post every message sent to you. Rules or "netiquette" should be discussed and posted on the site. (No full names, no putdowns, bad language, etc.)

Do not offer to act as a broker for anyone wanting pen-pals.

Never correspond on any topic not related to your website or Girl Scouts on your Girl Scout e-mail. For example, you should never respond to ads, a "cool boy" wanting a date, requests for money, or questions about where your troop or service unit meets. If someone wants to join your group, have an adult request a local phone number via the troop or service unit e-mail address.

FAQs About Girl Scout Symbols and Clip-Art

What are Girl Scout symbols?
Girl Scout symbols are trademarked graphics, such as the Girl Scout logo, Girl Scout Brownie Try-Its, Girl Scout badges, Girl Scout Journeys, and Girl Scout interest project patches, official pins and awards.

Are there guidelines for use of these symbols?
Yes. Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) symbols cannot be used without authorization from Girl Scouts of the USA. Permission may be granted to Girl Scout groups wishing to use the Girl Scouts logo on their website only after a written request has been submitted to council communications department. There are specific graphic guidelines and rules for use of the Girl Scouts logo. For example, the logo must appear on a solid colored background, it may not be put into another graphic or used as background "wallpaper" or watermark, or be made into buttons.

For more about how to obtain permission to use symbols, contact the communications/marketing department at communications@girlscoutsrv.org.

If I have used Girl Scout trademarked symbols and haven't followed the guidelines, what should I do?
Contact communications/ marketing. You will most likely need to change your designs.

Why get excited about the misuse of Girl Scout symbols?
Girl Scouts must protect the brand integrity of its trademarked symbols and their use. If the symbols are misused, they no longer sending a clear message about who we are. If Girl Scout symbols are used with a product or another business or organization, people may assume that Girl Scouts endorses that product. If they are used without permission, they may be used inappropriately. Contact communications/marketing department for any questions about the detailed Girl Scouts Graphics Guidelines.

What about using artwork from Girl Scout books?
Artwork is also protected by copyright laws. More important, it may be owned by the artist. Even Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys does not always have permission to reproduce it.

Where can we get graphics for use on our site?
Many sites on the Internet offer free graphics for use by individuals and non-profit organizations. It is important to read the legal statements and special instructions for downloading from each site you visit. Make sure the artwork is owned by the site giving permission for use. Read the terms of use before downloading to your own computer.

My Online Safety Pledge:

Travelling through cyberspace can be fun, but like any trip you take you have to "Be Prepared" for unforeseen things. So, read this before you go any further. Then print this page out and discuss it with your adult partner.

- I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number, parents'/guardians' work address/ telephone number, or the name and location of my school without my parents'/guardians' permission.

- I will tell an adult right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.

- I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents/guardians. If my parents/guardians agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring my parent or guardian along.

- I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parents/guardians.

- I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. It is not my fault if I get a message like that. If I do I will tell my parents/guardians right away so that they can contact the online service.

- I will talk with my parents/guardians so that we can set up rules for going online. We will decide upon the time of day that I can be online, the length of time I can be online, and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.

Girl Scout   _____   Date   _____

Adult Partner   _____   Date   _____

Source: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

Glossary

Web Browser - a software application that enables a user to display and interact with text, images, videos, music, and other information typically located on a Web page at a website on the World Wide Web or a LAN (local area network). Text and images on a Web page can contain hyperlinks to other Web pages at the same or different website. Web browsers allows users a quick and easy way to access information provided on many Web pages at many websites by traversing these links. Web browsers format HTML information for display, so the appearance of a Web page may differ between browsers.

Some of the Web browsers currently available for personal computers include Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Safari, Netscape, Opera, Avant Browser, Konqueror, Google Chrome, Flock, Arachne, Epiphany, K-Meleon and AOL Explorer. Although browsers are typically used to access the World Wide Web, they can also be used to access information provided by Web servers in private networks or content in file systems.

Internet forums - a bulletin board system in the form of a discussion site. From a technological stand point, *forums* or *boards* are web applications managing user-generated content. Forums allow anonymous visitors to view the contents and consist of a group of contributors registered in the system, becoming known as members. The members submit topics for discussion (known as threads) and communicate with each other using publicly visible messages (referred to as posts) or private messaging. People participating in an internet forum will usually build bonds with each other and interest groups may form around a discussion. The term *community* refers to the segment of the online community participating in the activities of the website, where they reside. It is also used to refer to the group interested in the topic on the Internet, rather then just the site.

Homepage - (often written as **home page** or **main page)** is the URL (see definition below) or local file that automatically loads when a web browser starts and when the browser's "home" button is pressed. The term also is used to refer to the front page, web server directory index, or main web page of a website of a group, company, organization, or individual.

HTML - Hyper Text Markup Language is the predominant language for Web pages. It provides a means to describe the structure of text-based information in a document - by denoting certain text as links, headings, paragraphs, lists, and so on — and to supplement that text with interactive forms, embedded images, and other objects. HTML is written in the form of tags, surrounded by angle brackets. HTML can also describe, to some degree, as the appearance and semantics of a document, and can include embedded scripting language code (such as JavaScript) which can affect the behavior of Web browsers and other HTML processors.

HTTP - Hypertext Transfer Protocol a communications protocol for the transfer of information on the Internet. Its use for retrieving inter-linked text documents (hypertext) led to the establishment of the World Wide Web. If the URL (see definition below) is lead by HTTPS, then the page is running through our security certificate (SSL-certificate) and is secure to put important and private information on.

Internet - is a global system of interconnected computer networks using the standardized Internet Protocol Suite (TCP/IP). It is a "network of networks" that consists of millions of private and public, academic, business, and government networks of local to global scope that are linked by copper wires, fiber-optic cables, wireless connections, and other technologies. The Internet carries various information resources and services, such as electronic mail, online chat, file transfer and file sharing, online gaming, and the inter-linked hypertext documents and other resources of the World Wide Web (www).

Password - a word or string of characters that is entered, often along with a user name, to login or to gain access to some resource. Passwords are a common form of authentication. Full security requires that the password be kept secret from those not allowed access. Despite the name, there is no need for passwords to be actual words; indeed passwords which are not actual words are harder to guess, a desirable property.

Search engine - is designed to search for information on the World Wide Web. Information may consist of web pages, images and other types of files. Some search engines also mine data available in news books, databases, or open directories. Unlike Web directories, which are maintained by human editors, search engines operate algorithmically or are a mixture of algorithmic and human input.

URL - Uniform Resource Locator specifies where the web pages being searched available and gives the protocol to retrieve it.

Web hosting - a type of service that allows individuals and organizations to provide their own website accessible via the World Wide Web. Web hosts are companies that provide space on a server they own for use by their clients as well as providing Internet connectivity, typically in a data center.

Webpage(s) - a place where information is located so it can be accessed by the World Wide Web through a web browser. This information is usually written in a HTML or XHTML format, and may provide navigation to other web pages via hypertext links. This format allow for users to interact with the Web pages, which may be retrieved from a local computer or from a remote web server.

Web server - can mean one of two things:
1. A computer program that is responsible for accepting HTTP (see above for definition) requests from web browsers and serving them HTTP responses along with optional data contents, usually web pages such as HTML (see above for definition) documents and linked objects (images, etc.).
2. A computer that runs a computer program as described above.

Website - a collection of Web pages, images, videos or other digital assets that is hosted on one or more web servers, usually accessible via the Internet.

World Wide Web (WWW or Web) - is a system of interlinked hypertext documents accessed via the Internet. With a Web browser, a user views Web pages that may contain text, images, videos, and other multimedia and navigates between them using hyperlinks. The World Wide Web was created in 1989 by British scientist Sir Tim Berners-Lee, working at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland, and released in 1992. Since then, Berners-Lee has played an active role in guiding the development of Web standards.

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all glossary definitions are found at www.wikipedia.com and www.dictionary.com