

Frequently Asked Questions: Boy Scouts of America

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In October 2017, Boy Scouts of America (BSA) announced that it will allow girls to join the Boy Scouts.

The BSA Board of Directors voted in October 2017 to welcome girls into its Cub Scout program and to deliver a scouting program for older girls that will enable them to advance and earn the highest rank of Eagle Scout. Basically, with the 2018 program year, the Boy Scouts will allow girls to join Cub Scouts, with Cub Scout dens (the smallest groups) being single gender. Cub Scout packs (groups of dens) will have the option to remain single gender, or welcome both genders. A program for older girls is projected to be available beginning in the 2019 program year, enabling them to earn the rank of Eagle Scout.

On May 2, Boy Scouts launched a new marketing campaign and announced that it had decided to change the name of one of their programs for older children ages 11 to 17 to Scouts BSA.

Below is a compilation of answers to questions and comments Girl Scouts – Diamonds staff and volunteers have encountered in response to the actions of the Boy Scouts. These are addressed from the Girl Scout point of view, because we, like many others, do not fully understand why the Boy Scouts are making these changes and/or how they will work.

Why is Girl Scouts best for girls?

- Girl Scouts is the *best* leadership experience for girls in the world because only we bring the history, expertise, and data-backed, time-tested, and safe programming designed specifically to meet the unique needs and interests of girls and the way they learn best.
- Girl Scouts is about having a one-of-a-kind leadership experience through which girls learn, grow and take the lead in an environment that is safe, nurturing, and encouraging.
- At Girl Scouts, we know girls. Our mission, programming and objectives revolve around their healthy development. And we are actively helping today's girls tap into their potential; unlock new skills; and develop the courage, confidence and character they need to be tomorrow's leaders.
- Everything we do at Girl Scouts—from holding troop meetings to selling cookies to camping to exploring STEM—is safe, girl-led, and girl-focused. No other program in the world can do what we do for girls.
- Our exciting, challenging programs allow girls to take the lead in a range of activities—from kayaking, canoeing, archery, and camping to STEM, robotics, and financial literacy training—in a supportive, encouraging environment where they feel safe.
- At Girl Scouts, we know that girls are the future of U.S. leadership. We see their potential. Girl Scouts is the *best* leadership experience for girls in the world because girls are at the center of everything we do.

- As the authority on girls' leadership and healthy development, we offer parents and caregivers expert guidance on raising girls today, including easy everyday ways they can help their girls build the leadership, values, and skills promoted through Girl Scouts.
- Boy Scouts' membership approach to include girls appears to treat them as tagalongs and would create an environment unable to cater to girls' unique needs, learning styles, and interests—Boy Scouts doesn't have the expertise in developing girls' potential.

If Boy Scouts dropped the name Boys, does that mean Girl Scouts will do the same and allow boys to join?

- Girl Scouts will always be for girls only. Research shows that a girl learns best in an all-girl, girl-led, and girl-friendly environment. Girl Scouts pro-girl environment is now more important than ever—and the proof is in the research. Compared to their peers, Girl Scouts are more likely than non-Girl Scouts to be leaders because they: Develop a strong sense of self; seek challenges and learn from setbacks; display positive values; form and maintain healthy relationships and identify and solve problems in their communities.
- We remain as committed and focused as ever on our mission to serve girls and girls only.

But the Boy Scouts say their model is more convenient for busy families, allowing both boys and girls to be involved in the same organization.

- No matter how the Boy Scouts may try to structure their programming to include girls, the fact is, Girl Scouts doesn't just *include* girls, it was developed specifically *FOR* girls. Girl Scouts meets a girl's unique needs and helps her discover innate qualities of strength and leadership to be successful in their lives by factoring in a girl-led component in everything she does.
- What Girl Scouts offers can't be replicated, especially by an organization that touts girls' participation as a convenience for the family. A daughter is not a convenience. Research shows that girls want and thrive in all-girl, girl-led and girl-friendly environments where their specific needs are addressed, not where they are a tagalong.
- It is so beneficial for girls to have opportunities to lead, speak up and take risks in a supportive, all-girl environment. And that's not just anecdotal—research shows that same gender environments let girls reach their full potential, uninhibited by gender stereotyping or complexities of incompatible learning styles and behaviors of boys their age.

If girls are going to grow up to be able to compete with boys, wouldn't a co-ed program be best?

- Girls and boys are in co-ed environments in most of their lives so it's pretty great that there is still a same gender option available for everyone.
- There is ample, respected research that shows that girls feel more comfortable expressing their ideas, moving out of their comfort zone, trying new things and stepping up to lead in single gender environments. The all-girl environment that Girl Scouts offers is a safe space where girls can develop and practice these leadership skills and use them to flex their personal power in co-ed spaces.
- It's unclear if Boy Scouts have any plans to offer programming for girls specifically suited to their learning style, experiences or challenges unique to their gender. Simply

participating in a program with boys does not better prepare girls for life success. In fact, Girl Scouts is the only organization that helps girls discover and apply true leadership skills which translate to life success.

What about those who say Boy Scouts have more high adventure opportunities, or that Girl Scouts don't get to do the same things Boy Scouts do?

- Actually, Girl Scout programming has a lot of identical or comparable outdoor and high adventure opportunities! Even the much-mentioned whittling and jack knife skills – and they're adding more all the time.
- What's cool about Girl Scouts is that we were founded by a woman who wanted to give girls the opportunity to master things that were typically only available to boys at the time (like archery, riflery, outdoor survival) and we as an organization have continued that trajectory as we've introduced more advanced opportunities with outdoor programming and survival/adventure skills. Even after a century, we are still on the cutting edge of opportunity for girls in areas typically reserved for boys.

What is Girl Scouts doing to get girls outdoors?

- From hiking, swimming, camping, kayaking, archery and horseback riding, outdoor adventure is a fundamental part of the Girl Scout experience. In fact, these experiences are so fundamental that many of our most advanced, modern and cutting-edge programs take place outdoors – including STEM/STEAM and civic engagement activities. Through girl-led outdoor activities, the Girl Scout experience truly comes to life. Girls seek challenges, become resourceful problem-solvers, work cooperatively and develop a strong sense of self.

Does Girl Scouts have an award equivalent to the Eagle Scout?

- Yes! The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest award a Girl Scout can earn and comes after earning the Bronze Award and the Silver Award.
- Being a Gold Award Girl Scout is not about building benches or cleaning parks. Earned by fewer than 6 percent of Girl Scouts annually, the Gold Award requires girls to demonstrate their leadership skills by addressing a local or global community issue. Girls typically spend one to two years on their project and must establish sustainability that benefits the chosen community in the long term. Girls' projects range from ones that address poverty to illiteracy to environmentalism.
- Gold Award Girl Scouts earn college scholarships, enter the military at a higher rank, and—most importantly—are committed to creating a better future for their entire community. The benefits of earning a Gold Award are the same benefits afforded Eagle Scouts.
- Because the Boy Scouts program for older girls is not scheduled to begin until early 2019, we do not know what the process will be for girls interested in pursuing the Eagle Scout rank. If you are interested in that process, we urge you to do your homework and ask questions, so you fully understand how it will work.

I still think Boy Scouts would be a better option for my girl.

- In the end, it is important for families to do what is in the best interest for their child/children and based on their particular situation. We encourage you to make that decision based on research.

- Take the time to look at what both organizations offer, and specifically, what they offer today. Don't base your decision on your neighbor's experience 30 years ago. Check out girlscouts.org for overall information; check your local Girl Scout council's Facebook page, which will give you a visual representation of the programs and activities that Girl Scouts do, and probably dispel that common misconception that girls don't do the same things boys do (rock-climbing, archery, building robots anyone?).

How can I take action to support Girl Scouts?

- Our volunteers, parents, Girl Scouts and Girl Scout supporters are the lifeblood of our organization. We need you to share the value of Girl Scouts, through your stories and experiences, with your family, friends and community. Tell others what you or your girl have gained through Girl Scouts and why girl Scouts matters to you.
- Clear up misconceptions when you hear them. One of the most common ones is that Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts are merging – and that's an easy one to address – Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts have always been two separate organizations and they are not merging.
- On social media, share content, such as other posts, news articles and other information that promote the importance and impact of Girl Scouting. Word of mouth is one of the top two reasons girls/parents choose to join Girl Scouts.
- Share your Girl Scout story or your troop's or daughter's experiences with people in your community.