

2018 Membership Dues Increase Frequently Asked Questions and the answers

Overview

Girl Scouts is the first and largest girl-led organization in the world, and for over a century has been preparing girls in grades K–12 for every day leadership by providing rich experiences for them to explore new interests, face challenges, form new friendships, and make lasting community contributions.

Now in our second century, as we continue the Girl Scout mission, it is important that we keep pace with an ever-changing world. To ensure we have the resources to support our mission, Girl Scouts of the USA's National Board has decided to increase the annual membership fee to \$25, starting on October 1, 2017, for both girl and adult members.

Every dollar of membership dues is sent to Girl Scouts of the USA to cover the cost of fundamental services supporting the Girl Scout Movement. This includes, but is not limited to, accident insurance for members participating in approved Girl Scout activities, program development, research, resources, training, technology, services to councils, and protection of the Girl Scout brand. Membership dues also help fund the implementation of new technologies to improve the Girl Scout experience for girls, volunteers, and parents.

Why are dues increasing? What is the money being used for?

As a youth-serving organization, Girl Scouts must constantly examine how it is meeting the needs of its customers. With the extra funding received from additional membership dues, we will be able to sustain and develop exceptional leadership programs, implement digital innovations and technology to enhance the girl and volunteer experience nationwide, maintain services for our 2.7 million members (1.9 million girls and 800,000 adults), and engage our 59 million alumnae around the world. It will also enable Girl Scouts of the USA to continue to deliver best-in-class services and support for our Movement's 112 councils and to provide thousands of volunteers with the relevant resources, tools, and training they need to best serve today's girls.

Girl Scouts of the USA has taken many measures to reduce operational expenses, and is collaborating with councils to focus on developing new revenue streams to support our Movement. The increase in membership dues, along with other efforts to secure external funding, will help Girl Scouts of the USA make important investments in our programming and technology and maintain a strong financial position in order to grow our Movement and continue to deliver on our mission for future generations.

Does the increase in membership dues apply to girls and adults?

Yes. The annual membership dues will increase from \$15 to \$25 for both girl and adult members.

When will the increase take effect?

The increase in membership dues will be implemented for the 2018 membership year, effective October 1, 2017. It will begin to be collected during early-bird registration starting in March 2017.

How will this increase help girls?

The additional funding received through membership dues will support our vision to serve as many girls who want to be Girl Scouts as possible—regardless of their means, neighborhood, or family backgrounds. This increase reflects the value of the unique and meaningful 21st century Girl Scout experience we have envisioned delivering to all girls.

Through our enhanced program experiences in STEM, entrepreneurship, outdoor, and life skills, girls are empowered with the skills and entrepreneurial know-how to lead and succeed in the industries of tomorrow. At the same time, they also help improve their communities, develop their own advocacy and service projects, and tackle local and global issues such as poverty, illiteracy, and pollution.

It will also enable us to develop and implement digital innovations and technology—like our Digital Cookie Program—to enhance the girl experience and provide a safe digital space for girls to share, explore, connect, and learn.

How will this increase help volunteers?

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of Girl Scouts and are critical to the success of our mission in reaching girls and changing lives. The additional funding received through membership dues will help us ensure that volunteers receive the support and resources they need to deliver a high quality Girl Scout experience and will assist us in bringing Girl Scouting to even more girls.

We are making significant investments to advance the resources, training, and technology needed to deliver an exceptional girl and volunteer experience. Volunteers are now able to complete the recruitment process in a matter of days instead of weeks or months and the number of girls on waiting lists has been significantly reduced. Our digital Volunteer Toolkit makes forming and maintaining a troop easier than ever before, which means more time spent with girls and less time on administrative tasks. Volunteers can plan a whole year of impactful activities to ensure their girls receive the best Girl Scout experience possible.

Nearly half our members are already experiencing the benefits of a more advanced online system, and with the additional funding from membership dues, we hope to equip the majority of our membership with these digital resources by 2017.

Is Girl Scouting still a good value?

As the first and largest girl-led organization in the world, a Girl Scout membership is one of the most valuable investments anyone can make in a girl's life. This dues increase brings the cost of joining Girl Scouts into line with the value of its programming and the unique leadership opportunities for girls not available through any other organization.

The Girl Scout DNA—Girl Scouts are more likely than non-Girl Scouts to:

- Set ambitious goals and think about the future.
- Be more financially literate and negotiate for themselves.
- Advocate for herself and others.
- Self-identify as leaders and take on leadership roles.
- Practice empathy and emotional intelligence.
- Care about (and take action against) social injustices.
- Be more solution oriented and less likely to be a bystander.
- Embrace new experiences and overcome failure.

Girl Scouts can earn badges, join a troop, hike, camp, and participate in the entrepreneurial skill-building cookie program, as well as explore careers in science and technology, travel the world, and take on projects that transform their community. From a young age, girls not only learn to take the lead in their everyday lives, but also to build a strong female network that will help them create their own career paths.

With this membership increase, Girl Scouts is keeping pace with the marketplace. The following are examples of costs associated with other youth activities around the country:

The annual membership fee for Boy Scouts of America is \$24.

The joining fee for teens ages 12–18 at the YMCA in Edwardsville, Illinois, is \$40, plus a \$30 monthly fee. At the Park Slope, New York YMCA, the joining fee for youth up to 11 is \$32, plus a \$165 annual fee.

Membership for the orchestral performance groups at Douglas County Youth Orchestra in Castle Rock, Colorado, is \$150 for each season, fall and spring.

Boys & Girls Club annual membership in Austin, Texas, is \$30.

Weekly 30-minute Music Fun Time classes at the Omaha School of Music & Dance in Nebraska, which help children under age seven develop a lifelong love for music, and also help children develop language, social, emotional, and physical skills, cost \$89 a month.

An after-school coding program for kids in grades two through five costs \$190 for ten one-hour weekly classes at Washington Elementary in Tacoma, Washington.

On average, nationwide, dance classes cost anywhere from \$40 to \$160 per month. Some studios also charge a registration fee.

According to the International New York Times, the cost of youth sports is up to 10.5 percent of a family's gross income, meaning that a family with an income of \$50,000 a year could be spending \$5,500.

Will the membership dues change each year?

The annual membership dues are determined by Girl Scouts of the USA's National Board of Directors. The last increase occurred in Fiscal Year 2014. Girl Scouts of the USA has not yet made a determination for future years.

Will financial assistance be available?

We believe that Girl Scouting should be accessible to all girls and, therefore, financial assistance will continue to be available to qualifying families. Financial assistance is determined independently by local Girl Scout councils.

Will the increase affect the membership dues for lifetime members?

Lifetime membership dues are currently \$375.00 and a special lifetime membership, at the current reduced cost of \$195.00, is offered to girls who are registered Girl Scouts at the time of their high school graduation. In accordance with Girl Scouts of the USA's Blue Book of Basic Documents, lifetime members pay 25 times the annual membership dues at the time they become lifetime members and girls who are registered Girl Scouts at the time of their high school graduation pay 13 times the annual dues, provided they apply for lifetime membership before their current annual membership expires.

At this time, the National Board is considering the effect the increase on annual membership dues will have on the cost to become a lifetime member, and Girl Scouts of the USA will make an announcement as soon as a decision is made.

Do I have to be a member to participate in Girl Scouts?

Every participant (girl or adult) in Girl Scouting must register and become a member of Girl Scouts of the USA. GSUSA membership dues are valid for one year. Membership dues are sent by the council to GSUSA; no portion of the dues stays with the council. Membership dues may not be transferred to another member and are not refundable.