

# Council Style Sheet

In response to the recognized need for a unified style for council documents and correspondence, the following guidelines have been compiled. They are based on *The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage*, *The Associated Press Stylebook*, GSUSA standards, and *Woe is I: The Grammarphobes Guide to Better English*.

## Abbreviations

1. For meeting times, use a.m. and p.m. (not am/pm or AM/PM)
  - 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (space, hyphen, space between the times)
2. Abbreviations such as GSUSA should not have periods after the letters. P.A.W.S. does have periods after the abbreviation.

## Apostrophes

1. Apostrophes are only used to show possession or in a contraction. Do not use an apostrophe when referring to a group of people.
  - The Smiths (not The Smith's) are hosting the party.
  - It is warm outside. It's warm outside. (contraction)
  - The Smith's house is on First Street. (possessive)
2. "Its" as a possessive has no apostrophe. Hint: If the word you want could be replaced by "it is," you want "it's." If not, use "its." Sometimes "it's" can be short for "it has."
  - The troop earned its Super Troop award.
  - The dog chewed its bone.
  - It's been hours since he ate.

## Bullet Points and Number Outlines

1. Capitalize the first word of the bullet point.
2. Use appropriate punctuation at the end of the bullet point or numbered outline if it is a complete sentence, or finishes a sentence.

The girls in the troop brought the following items to camp:

- Sleeping bag
- Raincoat
- Flashlights

Things to remember when selling cookies:

- Girls should keep accurate records.
- Always say "thank you" when someone makes a purchase.
- Turn in your money on time.

A Girl Scout leader:

- Instructs girls in basic skills.
- Is aware of each girl's ability.
- Provides a safe environment.

## Capitals — Following GSUSA standards

1. Capitalize proper names and titles when used before a proper name:
  - Juliette Low
  - Chief Operating Officer Juliette Low; Juliette Low, adult development specialist
  - NOT: Juliette Low, EVP — Marketing & Communications
2. Do not capitalize words like council, service unit, registrar, marketing staff, etc. unless they are used to designate a specific person/group.
  - Please return your forms to the association registrar by May 12, 2009.
  - The council office is at 7700 Edgewater Drive.
3. Do not capitalize board of directors in text, unless it is the full title.
  - Girl Scouts of Northern California Board of Directors announced its next meeting today.
4. Do not capitalize the different groups/task forces/committees within the council when used in text.
  - Send your application to the community development department.
  - The nominating committee met last night.
5. If the groups, committees, task forces or the Girl Scout Cookie Sale are used in the full title, then they are capitalized:
  - Girl Scouts of Northern California Board of Directors meet on Monday.
  - Girl Scouts of Northern California Fall Sale begins next month.
  - Selling Girl Scout Cookies is a great way to teach girls how manage money.
6. Capitalize the word "Form"
  - Employee Agreement Form
  - Financial Assistance Form

## Commas

1. Use a comma to separate big chunks (clauses) of a sentence with **and** between them.
  - Tina hadn't left the city in months, and by Friday she was climbing the walls.
2. If there's no **and** in between, use a semicolon instead.
  - Tina hadn't left the city in months; by Friday she was climbing the walls.
3. Use commas to separate a series of actions.
  - She packed a toothbrush, a blowdryer, her swimsuit, and her teddy bear. She finished packing, paid some bills, ate a few Oreos, and watered the plants.
  - **Note:** The final comma in those two series, the one just before and, can be left out. It's a matter of taste. But since its absence can sometimes change your meaning, and since there's no harm in leaving it in, our advice is to stick with using the final comma.
4. Use commas before and after the names of people you're talking to. You can skip the comma before the name if all that precedes it is **and** ("And Mom, don't worry") or **but** ("But Dad, you promised").
  - "Good-bye, Mom. Dad, be good," she said, and hung up the phone.
5. Use commas before or after a quotation. But don't use a comma after a quotation that ends with an explanation point or a question mark.
  - "Let's see," Tina said.
  - "Have I forgotten anything?" she wondered.
  - "Sunscreen!" she exclaimed.
6. Use a comma after an introductory phrase if a pause is intended.
  - As usual, she checked to make sure the stove was turned off. Of course, it always was. You see, Tina was a bit compulsive.
7. Use commas around an aside — information could just as well go in parentheses.
  - Her upstairs neighbor, the one with the tattoos, promised to collect her mail.
8. Use commas around **which** clauses.
  - The airport bus, which was usually on time, never came.
9. Don't use commas around **that** clauses.
  - The bus that she had planned to take never came, so she grabbed the first taxi that she saw.

## Dates

1. When writing the date, a comma is needed between the date numeral and the year. If you use the month and the date, abbreviate the month. The shorter months (March, April, May, June, July) are not abbreviated.
  - The regional forum is Feb. 4, 2009.
2. No punctuation is needed if the reference is to the month and year.
  - The new class will start in May 2009.
3. Dates should be written as cardinal numbers, not ordinal numbers.
  - The meeting is January 12.
  - NOT: The meeting is January 12th.

## Membership Database - Personify

1. The company's name is TMA Resources; the product is called Personify. Please use the term "membership database" instead of "Personify" when referring to this system in general terms; "Personify" is ok when referring specifically to the name of the system.
  - Once we receive your adult screening forms we will update your record in our membership database.
  - We use a system called "Personify" to keep track of membership information.
  - NOT: Once we receive your adult screening forms we will update your record in Personify.

## E-mail, Telephone, and Web

1. Individual e-mail addresses should not be broken into two lines, if at all possible.
  - JLow@GirlScoutsNorCal.org
  - NOT: JLow@GirlScouts-NorCal.org
2. In publications, reference the staff person's name, phone number with extension, and e-mail address.
  - To sign up for a tour, contact Juliette Low at (510) 562-8470, ext. 1923 or e-mail JLow@GirlScoutsNorCal.org.
3. The official web site for Girl Scouts of Northern California is [www.GirlScoutsNorCal.org](http://www.GirlScoutsNorCal.org) and should be written with a capital "G", capital "S", capital "N", and a capital "C".

## Girl Scout and Girl Scouts of Northern California – Correct Use of Term

1. Write out “Girl Scouts of Northern California” for the first reference in a document. Other references in the same document can be council. The abbreviation GSNC should be reserved for internal use only, as other councils in the nation may have the same abbreviation.
2. We are “Girl Scouts,” not “Scouts.”
3. Documents should have the Girl Scout logo, the council’s full name, phone number, and web address and address and zip code for the nearest office location.
4. The style for Girl Scouts of the USA is to spell out the complete name on first reference and use GSUSA in second references. Please note that there are no periods in GSUSA.

## Correct Use of “Region” and “Area”

1. The term “**Area**” refers to the geographical organization of service units, events, trainings, offices and staff support. These areas are:
  - Greater Bay Area**  
Offices: Oakland, San Jose  
Counties: Solano, Marin, San Francisco, Contra Costa, Alameda, San Mateo, Santa Clara
  - North Central Area**  
Offices: Chico, Redding, Red Bluff  
Counties: Siskiyou, Shasta, Tehama, Trinity, Glenn, Butte
  - North Coast Area**  
Offices: Eureka, Santa Rosa, Ukiah  
Counties: Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Lake, Sonoma, Napa

**Note:** In the Greater Bay Area we have defined 2 service areas, East Bay/Marin and South Bay/Penninsula. These are not “Areas” as defined above.

2. The term “**Region**” denotes the voting regions defined in the Girl Scouts of Northern California By Laws.

## Letters and Letterhead Stationery

1. Capitalize any noun in a salutation.
  - Dear Friends
  - Dear Friends of Girl Scouting
  - To Whom It May Concern
2. In the complimentary closing, capitalize only the first word.
  - Yours truly,
  - Sincerely,

## Money

1. If there are no cents in the amount, omit the decimal point and zeros.
  - \$125
  - NOT: \$125.00
2. Write out cent figures if there are no dollar amounts.
  - The patch costs 45 cents.

## Numbers

1. Numbers and (percentages) under 10 should be written out.
  - Of the nine girls in the troop, seven sold more than 500 boxes of cookies.
  - The first annual Amazing Bay Day was on September 30, 2006.
  - Approximately 95 percent of the girls attend meetings. Five percent of adult women travel abroad.
2. When referring to the fact that we serve girls ages 5-17, follow GSUSA guidelines and use numerals.
3. When a sentence begins with a number, write it out.
  - Four thousand people participated in the Golden Gate Bridging.

## Publication Titles

1. The names of all publications are italicized, not bold.
  - Camp ROCKS!*
  - Choices*
  - Council Resource Guide*

## Punctuation

1. Commas and periods should be placed within the quotation marks:
  - The theme is “Celebrating 90 Years of Service.”
2. Commas are placed outside parentheses, if part of the sentence:
  - All team members (including service unit managers), trainers, and staff should attend the meeting.
3. Use em dashes (—) instead of a double dash (--). Insert one space before and one space after the dash.
  - The girls — who have been together since kindergarten — are excited about their senior trip.
4. Periods are placed within the parentheses if it contains a complete sentence:
  - (If you have a question, call your association chair. She will know the answer.)

5. Avoid writing with slashes.
  - Bring your coat, boots, hats and mittens.
  - NOT: Bring your coat/boots/hats and mittens.

### Service Units and Troops

1. "Service unit", and "troop" are capitalized only if it is used as a title.
  - Ten service units attended the meeting.
  - Junior Girl Scout Troop 30634 organized the community's first One Warm Coat project.
2. When writing service unit numbers and troop numbers, omit the # sign.
  - Troop 01234
3. When referring to a service unit, use the full name or community served first. It is acceptable to write the community name only, but never use the service unit number, without designating the community name.
  - Deerfield Service Unit 307
  - Deerfield Service Unit
  - NOT: Service Unit 307

### Spelling – common errors

- Bylaws (not by-laws)
- Underserved (not low income) — Be careful! Spell check won't catch it if you accidentally write "undeserved".
- Part-time staff (not part time)
- Self-image, self-esteem, self-expression (not self image, self esteem, self expression)
- African-American

### Technology references

1. Use the following spelling and capitalization when citing technology terms:
  - Web site
  - Web page
  - e-mail (Write "e-mail someone," not "e-mail to someone.")
  - Internet
  - online (When used as a verb, write as two words. "Go on line and explore this Web site.")
  - Web
  - World Wide Web
2. Omit the http:// from Web site addresses.
  - www.GirlScoutsNorCal.org

### Telephone numbers

1. Use the following style:
  - (510) 562-8470, ext. 000
  - (800) 447-4475, ext. 000
  - Do not use "x" for extension.

# Checklist for New GSNC Forms

When creating new forms or revising existing forms for Girl Scouts of Northern California, use the following check-list to ensure consistency across all forms.

## Content

- All legacy council names have been removed.**
- Instructions have been **checked for accuracy with regard to new council procedures.**
- Deadlines** for submitting the form are included (if necessary).
- Contact information** for the person or office where members can call with questions is included.
- Form has been proofread** for typos, spelling, and grammar in accordance with the *GSNC Style Sheet*.

## Formatting

- Form **displays the Girl Scout logo** in accordance with the logo usage guidelines from GSUSA
- Form **displays the words “Girl Scouts of Northern California”**.
- Format is consistent** with other forms with regard to style, font family, font size, margins, etc. (see template)
- Graphics are high resolution** (> 250 dpi) for print.
- Lists use bullets and steps or fields are labeled 1, 2, 3... OR I, II, III... etc.**

## Usability

- Instructions for submitting the form** are included – where to mail, fax, or turn-in.
- Instructions and labels are simple, clear, easy to read, and coherent.**
- Fields for **handwritten entries are large enough for handwriting.**

- Instructions match the options in the field. For example:**

**Correct**

**Please circle one:**

Visa   Master Card   Discover Card

**Incorrect**

~~**Please circle one:**~~

~~Visa    Master Card    Discover Card~~

- Fields used to add or subtract columns of numbers** (ie # attendees, fees etc.) **include the correct mathematical sign (+ - x = etc.).**
- Form has been filled out by hand** to ensure usability.