

Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona

Camp
Culture
Code



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The Camp Culture Code is intended to set expectations for campers, camp staff, and families ahead of their time at camp. Together, we can create a welcoming and inclusive environment that celebrates who we are as individuals. In an effort to help us all come to camp informed and empowered, we've included the following content in the Culture Code:

01 Disabilities, Neurodivergence, Exceptionalities, and Accessibility

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Introduction

Camp is a place where everyone should feel comfortable being their authentic self. As the youth mental health crisis grows increasingly prevalent, GSSOAZ dedicates ourselves to making all Girl Scouts feel seen, heard, and respected. In the space of camp, this culture is especially empowering. Our campers develop the confidence to love who they are, feel valued, and experience the warmth and kindness of peers and mentors. This document is not intended to be political, divisive, or serve any agenda aside from empowering our Girl Scouts and caring for their overall well-being, mental, emotional, and physical health. The Culture Code intends to help all campers and staff feel valued and respected at camp.

How does the Culture Code affect me and my camper?

At Girl Scout Camp, we all commit to actively building a sense of belonging for all of our community members. We ask all staff, volunteers, parents, caregivers, and youth to commit to working towards the practices of allyship for marginalized groups, antiracism, and anti-oppression. The Girl Scout Movement strives to be a safe place to stand against hate and respectfully discuss issues dividing our nation. We recognize that people are in different places in this journey, and may hold different viewpoints on this work- however, we honor our position and affirm our stance in this work. If you have any questions or concerns about what this commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging means, please do not hesitate to reach out. We welcome your questions via this linked [form](#) and are happy to discuss this document and its application.

Section 1: Disabilities, Neurodivergence, Exceptionalities, and Accessibility

What accommodations are available?

We are here to support your Girl Scout and create the best environment for your child during their camp experience. We don't know what we don't know- so share specific needs with us to help create that environment! Our Camp Directors work directly with families to identify accommodations that can be made in order to meet the needs of every camper, focusing on their strengths, gifts, and assets. We are dedicated to meeting each child's needs without excluding or stigmatizing anyone for their differences.

What is an accommodation?

Accommodations are modifications or adjustments made for an individual with a disability or specific needs on an as-needed basis.

We strive to be an inclusive community - one that provides equitable access for all, including those who require additional physical, mental, social, dietary, or emotional support. Providing access is our ultimate goal, and we use a combination of accommodations and accessibility to create a culture of inclusion.

What is the camp environment like?

We have two council-run campsites- one in Tucson and one on Mount Lemmon. All locations are in rustic environments, and while some parts of the camp are ADA accessible, not all parts currently are.

In addition to the physical environment, camp is often busy, bright, and loud. At times, it may be overwhelming for kids who are neurodivergent or have sensory issues. We will gladly talk through what to expect at camp with you and your child and can discuss accommodations to set them up for success.

If you have any questions or concerns about the accessibility of our camp properties due to your camper's physical, mental, social, or emotional needs, please contact the respective Camp Director.

Section 2: Spirituality and Faith

What if religious topics come up at camp?

Campers and staff are welcome to express themselves in ways that respect our camp community. For some, religion may be a big part of their personal identity. All personal identities are welcomed and celebrated at camp. While we invite every camper and staff member to respectfully share their feelings about the world around them, religion is only discussed at camp if the topic comes up organically by campers.

Staff are trained to supervise these conversations between campers and ensure they remain respectful. It is an expectation of everyone in the camp community to respect one another. Respecting one another's beliefs means allowing them to believe what they do without judgement. It does not mean someone else needs to adjust their lifestyle or beliefs to align with someone else's.

What are GSSOAZ's guidelines for respecting one another at camp?

We embrace the goodness in humanity and recognize that differences make us stronger as a community. It's okay to disagree- however, diminishing another's values is not accepted at our camps. Invalidating one's experience or identity causes harm, which is not conducive to a positive community culture. Regardless of a camper's belief system, we do not tolerate superiority or hate speech. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Passing any judgement about another's religious or spiritual beliefs.
- Telling anyone their beliefs, gender identity, sexual orientation, pronouns, etc., are "wrong."
- Failing to acknowledge one another's pronouns or chosen name.
- Using personal beliefs as a reason to exclude or bully one another.

Section 3: Identity

Who will be at camp?

We welcome Girl Scouts from all walks of life at our camps. We center the voices and experiences of girls and women and welcome all campers and staff who find the female space affirming.

Are GSSOAZ camps for “girls” only?

We are committed to serving all Girl Scouts. Our camps are staffed with youth development professionals and counselors of various identities who are committed to the Girl Scout experience.

Camp is a space where identities and pronouns are respected. Some Girl Scouts have been in the movement their entire lives and may have come to understand their gender identity does not align with female. Children should not have to keep their identity a secret to retain a place in our program and movement.

We are committed to providing brave spaces that empower girls and marginalized groups through a break from dominant culture. GSSOAZ does not enroll cisgender boys at our council-run camps. Cisgender boys may enroll in family camp programs.

Will camp staff ask my camper to share their pronouns?

No. However, campers may share if they choose to do so freely. Camp staff will ask your camper what their preferred name is, and they are welcome to share their pronouns if they are comfortable doing so. As with everything at camp, sharing pronouns is a personal decision; campers who prefer not to share will not be pushed to by staff. Counselors may choose to share their pronouns with groups. We ask campers and staff to respect and utilize the specified pronouns of other campers and staff members or refer to them by name.

Are all of the camp staff women?

No. Applicants are encouraged to apply without regard to identity and expression. Our staff reflect a spectrum of identities and have a wide range of lived experiences. It is important to us that our staff reflect the diverse groups of campers we serve. Unit Camp Counselors are not male.

What about bathrooms, showers, bunks, etc.?

Bathrooms and Showers: Privacy is an essential and fundamental right of everyone at camp. This includes toilet stalls, changing areas, and showers. Staff members have separate spaces to shower and restroom stalls that are not shared with campers. At no point are bathrooms utilized by staff and campers at the same time. Campers and staff members can also utilize lockable bathroom stalls as private changing spaces.

Bunks: There is only one body per bed at camp. Beds are considered private spaces that are not shared with others. Campers have separate sleeping spaces from staff members. If a camper needs the attention of a staff member during the night, they will have access to the staff member's bungee/ sleeping area. Campers are grouped in living units by age and not by identity.

Swimsuit Policy: For the emotional safety and equity of all our campers, our swimsuit policy includes both a top and a bottom covering for all campers and staff members, regardless of gender identity. Some examples of this may include a rash-guard and boardshorts, a bathing suit top and bottom (navels do not need to be covered, but chests do), one-piece swimsuits, or some combination of these. This policy is also extended to the camp staff.

What if gender identity topics are raised at camp?

If questions or issues about gender identity arise organically among campers, staff are trained to address the questions or issues with respect and in an age-appropriate manner. We do not discuss camper or staff bodies, sexual orientation, or sex assigned at birth.

Section 4: Sexual Orientation

Sometimes, families and campers may be confused about how gender identity and sexual orientation differ. It's important that this is clear to all because gender identity is a topic that may come up at camp, and sexual orientation is a topic we do not discuss.

Gender Identity is about how you feel about yourself. It doesn't involve anyone else and should be respected at all times.

Sexual orientation is about how you feel about others, referring to who someone feels romantically and/or emotionally attracted to. Unlike gender identity, it is a topic that is irrelevant to youth programming.

What if sexual orientation topics come up at camp?

There is no need to "out" or discuss a camper's (or staff member's) sexual orientation, and we do not initiate or participate in discussions about sexual orientation or sexuality at camp. Questions and conversations often arise organically at camp about "crushes" or attraction, and we are respectful and non-judgmental regarding everyone's romantic and sexual orientations.

Although sexual orientation can be a part of someone's identity, conversations surrounding romantic intimacy are not appropriate at camp, and staff is trained to intervene in these instances where these issues arise with respect and in an age-appropriate manner.

Section 5: Race and Ethnic Diversity

How does GSSOAZ practice anti-racism?

For over 110 years, Girl Scouts have been catalysts for change, promoting equitable outcomes for all members as they strive to make the world a better place. GSSOAZ strives to promote equity within our marginalized communities by creating welcoming and inclusive spaces.

GSSOAZ has made a continued commitment to becoming an antiracist organization. Systemic racism is everywhere and affects everyone, including our campers, and requires care and commitment to dismantle.

Section 6: Technology and Camp Culture

Promoting Girl Scout safety at our camps is our top priority, including digital safety. Technology provides access to many sites, people, and resources that may not be appropriate or safe for our campers. Due to the inability to control access to potential online harm, we ask that caregivers send their campers to camp without technology. Cellphones and other connective devices not used as assistive or medical devices will be held in the office for safekeeping until check-out.

Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to read our Camp Culture Code and discuss it with your camper. We sincerely hope this document reflects a community that you and your camper are excited about being a part of. We look forward to seeing your camper at camp this summer.

