

Support from the Heart

Thousands of American military personnel are serving on active duty in defense of our country. These men and women have voluntarily joined the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or the Coast Guard and have stepped up to the challenge of helping to preserve the peace and freedom in which all people deserve to live. There are many Internet sites listed to help you earn this patch. If you do not have Internet access, ask someone in your troop to provide Internet support for this program. Check Safety-Wise for Internet safety guidelines.

Girl Scouts from all program levels can show support of our brave military personnel by completing their choice of activities from this patch, including the three starred activities.

Requirements

Girl Scout Daisy: two starred activities plus one additional activity

Girl Scout Brownies: two starred activities plus two additional activities

Girl Scout Juniors and Cadettes: two starred activities plus three additional activities

Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors: two starred activities plus four additional activities

** 1. Talk about the meaning of the word freedom. Talk about what freedoms people have in the United States that they would not have if they lived in a country where the government does not allow these freedoms. The website www.civicallyspeaking.org gives a simplified explanation of the United States' documents of freedom: the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Constitutional amendments. Draw a picture, write a story, create a poem, or put on a skit about the freedoms that are the most important to you.

2. Learn about Minnesota's National Guard training base Camp Ripley. Go to www.minnesotanationalguard.org/camp_ripley/ and learn how Camp Ripley is comprised, the area it covers, and all that it offers to the military.

3. Learn about Wisconsin's Army training base Fort McCoy. Go to <http://www.mccoy.army.mil/> and learn how Fort McCoy is comprised, the area it covers, and all that it offers to the military.

4. Show support of our active duty troops. Many troops are stationed at military bases around the United States while others have been deployed to serve in other countries. There are several ways to provide military personnel with some treats to help make them feel special while they are serving our country. Participate in a local "Adopt-A-Platoon" program or visit one of the following websites. Discuss the options, then choose one or more to support. Find out if anyone in your troop or Service Unit knows someone who has been deployed outside of this country. Obtain permission from her or his family or the individual to send care packages to them.

www.oconus.com – gives a list of online stores that will ship overseas

www.homefronthq.com – offers services to military personnel overseas

www.pocketflagproject.com – make small flags that military personnel on the front lines can carry in their pockets

www.usometrodc.org – make a donation to Operation USO Care Package

www.redcross.org – contact your local American Red Cross to see how you can help

www.operationmilitarypride.org/packages.html - suggested items to send in a Care Package

www.operationshoobox.com – find out how you can donate old cell phones and ink cartridges

5. Visit http://www.ourmilitary.mil/letters_messages.shtml for a list of links on how you can send a message of thanks.

6. Write to individuals serving in the military who do not receive mail by visiting www.operationmilitarysupport.com and requesting a soldier.

7. Send postcards to our troops through the Blue Star Moms' Operation Postcard. For details visit www.bluestarmoms.org/index.php?page=postcard.

8. Show support of our troops by publicly displaying the American flag. For information on properly displaying our country's flag go to http://www.connecticutsar.org/flag_etiquette.htm. You can also ask someone from your local chapter of the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars to visit your group and teach flag etiquette.

9. Receive and display free flag decals by going to http://www.usa-traffic-signs.com/Free_s/56.htm. You could use the decals to create patriotic posters encouraging support of our troops and post them in public places.

10. While our brave men and women are serving our country, families wait for them at home. Show your support for them by befriending a military family. Contact your local American Legion, Reserves, or National Guard Center to find out how to find a family to support. Examples of how to support them are:

- Write a thank-you note for having someone in their family serving our country.
- Offer to help with chores, make a meal, babysit, etc.
- Some troops may be able to support elderly parents of service men and women.
- Act as a surrogate family by surrounding a family with love and support.
- Give a gift certificate to a military family.

11. Tie yellow ribbons around trees, poles, etc. to demonstrate military support while we wait for our troops to come home. Encourage families in your troop, and in your community, to do the same. Using appropriate Safety-Wise guidelines stand in public places and hand out yellow ribbons for people to wear to show their support. Directions to make them are:

- Cut a ¼" yellow ribbon into 2" pieces.
- Fold the ribbon over itself to create a lapel ribbon. Secure with a pin.

**12. What is the story behind the yellow ribbons? Go to www.loc.gov/folklife/ribbons to find out.

13. Show your respect and honor for those who have fought for freedom in years gone by. Contact a veteran's hospital or home to see how your group could help. Your troop may want to make care packages for them (shoeboxes filled with toiletries and other personal care items). You could also contact your local American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars. There are many veterans who would be willing to share their stories with your troop. Also, many veterans are homebound and could use a cheerful note or visit.

