Exploring the Net

Skill Builders

1. Learn about the options for accessing the World Wide Web. Can you use a computer through your school, library, community center, or Girl Scout council? Is one available through your local computer club or nonprofit organization? Perhaps you have a computer at home. In addition to the big-name commercial online services, there are many more local Internet providers. Find out what they are and compare costs and services offered. (Don't forget to include telephone costs as well.)

2. Develop family and personal guidelines for use of online services and exploration of the Internet. Discuss issues such as costs, amount of use that is reasonable, parental guidance, shopping by computer, and times to use the phone line, shared by other family members, and safety on the Internet.

3. Find out about URLs (Universal Resource Locators), the addresses by which you can access files, news groups, and Gopher sites through a Web browser. The three letters at the end of an address generally give a clue as to the type of site—com (commercial), gov (government), org (nonprofit organization), or edu (educational). For example, the Girl Scouts of the USA can be found at www.girlscouts.org.

4. Learn how to use key words in searching for information on a specific topic when using an Internet information browser or a search engine. Find out if there are shortcuts to narrow the field of inquiry. Do a search that will give you answers to specific questions, such as finding out about college scholarships, your favorite sport, a museum you would like to visit, or information for a school report. Visit several Web sites and explore related topics from those Web sites. Keep a log or use bookmarks to mark sites you wish to revisit.

5. Find information on "netiquette," "net ethics," and "Net jargon." Determine what the guidelines are for using materials you have access to (how to cite sources, what copyright means), sending e-mail, and participating in forums. Learn some of the jargon.

6. Learn how to send e-mail to someone. Find out how much it costs to send e-mail through the service you use, as compared to sending information by fax or calling directly. Learn to attach a document from a file and send it as part of your e-mail message, if your server and software will allow you to do this. Keep a list of favorite e-mail addresses.

Service Projects

1. Develop a scavenger hunt for peers or younger Girl Scouts that teaches them how to use the Internet. Include questions that take girls to different sites. Asking them to find out specific information about science, art, sports, music, and geography.

2. With an adult, host an online chat with Cadette and Senior Girl Scouts on issues facing older girls.

3. Help to develop a community service Web site for teens. Facilitate the linking of people who want to offer materials or their time to public or private agencies.

4. Volunteer your time with a "homework" help line or offer computer assistance at a community center or library dedicated to helping kids access resources for their homework.

5. Open some doors. Teach adults who have never been around a computer how to surf the Net. Learn about their interests so you can design a grand tour for them.

Career Exploration

1. Explore three careers you might be interested in and research how using the Internet might be valuable in these careers. If possible, interview people in these careers in person or by e-mail. Find out how they are using computers and the Internet in their work.

2. Use the Internet to access information about a career you are interested in. Find out what the educational requirements are for that field. Then locate two schools in two different parts of the country that meet those requirements.

3. Discover the many careers based on the Web: for example, Web designers, Web managers, e-mail postmasters, site writers, and publishers. Make a list and interview at least one person who is working on the Web.

4. Pin for later skills needed for Web-based careers such as Web site management, programing (HTML, Java, Cold Fusion, etc.), Web site design, Web research, and online publishing. Use the Internet to contact at least two businesses, schools, or universities, and find out what kinds of courses or experiences are available and/or recommended for people wanting to work in these areas.