

Troop Management Tips



Troop Management Tips

A Girl Scout leader must coordinate many things: paperwork, supplies, parents, training, meetings, transportation, and – most importantly – the girls. Here are a few Girl Scout troop management tips to make the job a little easier!

Let's Get Organized

A few simple tools will help you organize all the paperwork and information a Girl Scout troop generates. Begin by creating a Troop notebook or binder. Forms such as permission slips and health forms are available in the forms and documents section of our website www.gswcf.org

Girl Scout Troop Binder:

1. Girl Scout Troop Girl & Adult Roster
 - A. Phone list and e-mail addresses of girls and guardians (Including an emergency contact or two)

2. Meeting Notes/Plans
 - A. Calendar
 - B. Results of girl/adult planning sessions

3. Individual Records
 - A. *Badge & other insignia records*
 - B. *Health History forms* (one per girl and adult). Keep updated as needed.
 - C. *Authorization for Medication forms* (as needed)
 - D. *Volunteer trainings needed and obtained*

4. Information
 - A. *Troop Start up Guide*
 - B. *Safety Activity Checkpoints*
 - C. *Volunteer Essentials (update yearly at gswcf.org)*
 - D. *Accident/Incident Report form*

5. Financial Records
 - A. *Group Dues and Attendance Record form*
 - B. *Detailed Financial Record form*

6. Parent/Guardian Information
 - A. Parent Newsletters

Create a Girl Scout Troop File Box:

1. One file folder for each Girl Scout
 - A. Girls should check their folders at the end of the meeting for information that needs to go home.

2. File folder for Girl Scout leaders
 - A. Girls and/or parents put signed permission forms, notes, etc. in leaders' folder.
 - B. Include a small envelopes area so that parents can leave money and checks. (The parents should seal the envelope and write their daughter's name on the front.)

Teach your girls to check their file in the troop file box at each meeting. This simple tool can help girls and leaders get the information they need.

Survival Kit for Girl Scout Leaders

Despite all your hard work, some plans may go awry at the very last minute. Success as a Girl Scout leader requires any number of intangibles –for example, a sense of humor, patience, and loads of caring. But there are some tangible items that will make your experience more relaxed and enjoyable. Put the following items in an old backpack or tote bag and take them to every Girl Scout meeting and event. If girls finish their activities early, they can start something new rather than just sit around idly. Also, if an activity falls through at the last minute, you will be able to create a new one using the materials in your kit.

- A basic first aid kit
- Pencils, crayons, markers
- Large tablet, ruled paper, construction paper, index cards, self-stick note pads
- Scissors, glue sticks, transparent tape, low-tack painter's tape
- String, ribbons, cardboard, postcards, used greeting cards, and other collage materials
- Balls
- Jump ropes
- Card games
- A book of quick no-prop activities

The Talking Stick

Whoever holds the *talking stick* has within her hands the sacred power of words. Only she can speak while she holds the stick; the other troop members must remain silent.

The *talking stick* has been used for centuries by many American Indian tribes as a means of just and impartial hearing. The *talking stick* was commonly used in council circles to designate who had the right to speak. When matters of great concern came before the council, the leading elder would hold the *talking stick* and begin the discussion. When he finished what he had to say he would hold out the *talking stick*, and whoever wished to speak after him would take it. In this manner the stick was passed from one individual to another until all who wished to speak had done so. Some tribes used a *talking feather* instead of a *talking stick*. Whatever the object, it carries respect for free speech and assures that the speaker has the freedom and power to say anything without fear of reprisal or humiliation.

Top Five Tips for Girl Scout Leaders and Advisors

1. Know *Safety Activity Checkpoints* and consult the activity sections and safety guidelines for activities you plan to do.
2. Encourage the girls to partner with you. Girls should be growing in decision-making and planning skills. The more invested they become in their activities, the happier they – and you – will be.
3. Ask for help and advice from other leaders, parents, and council staff and take advantage of training opportunities.
4. Keep in mind that the Girl Scout Promise and Law and the Girl Scout Leadership experience are the foundation of all Girl Scout activities.
5. Have fun – and do your best to ensure that the girls are having fun, too.

How to Structure a Girl Scout Meeting

Whether you are leading a troop of brand-new Girl Scout Daisies or advising an Ambassador group, all meetings benefit by having some structure – and the following is a tried-and-true meeting plan that Girl Scouts have been perfecting for decades.

- **Pre-meeting** Ice breakers or activities to help meet-and-greet time go smoothly.
- **Opening** Songs, readings, or ceremonies to transition into the meeting. This is a good time to say the Girl Scout Promise.
- **Business** Announcements, collecting dues, planning trips, etc.
- **Activities** The primary purpose of the meeting – the activities from the Girl Scout resources or other sources.
- **Clean-up** Time for girls to put away craft materials, sports equipment, science experiments, etc. and wind down. Your Kaper Chart will help with this time.
- **Closing/Evaluation** Sharing goals, reminding girls of what's ahead, sharing a quick ceremony or song, and talking about next time.

What to Do Instead of Yelling

Sometimes things can get a little out of hand during Girl Scout troop meetings and activities. Here are some active and quiet games to help re-focus the group and expend some excess energy.

Active Tranquilizers

Laugh In Throw a handkerchief in the air (or another object that will float down). Players must laugh loudly as long as it is in the air, and become totally quiet the instant it touches the ground.

Wiggle Bug Players stand in a circle. A small object is passed around the circle from hand-to-hand as music plays. The leader starts the object saying, "This is a Wiggle Bug. If you get caught with it, it bites – and it gives you the wiggles." When the music stops, the girl caught with the Wiggle Bug must choose some kind of motion, and must continue doing that motion for the duration of the game. If she is caught another time, she chooses a new motion and adds it to the first one. (If no music is available, let someone close her eyes and call "stop!").

Quiet Tranquilizers

Collective Art Have each girl fold a sheet of paper from top to bottom enough times to make eight sections between fold lines. Each girl draws her portion, folds the paper over, then passes the paper to the next girl. In order, they draw: 1) a hat, 2) top part of a face with eyes, 3) lower face with nose and mouth, 4) neck and shoulders, 5) waist, 6) hips, 7) legs, 8) feet. When everyone is finished drawing, unfold the paper and see the results.

Murals Unroll a large piece of newsprint or butcher paper. Let the girls each draw a part of a large mural scene. They might want to draw themselves at camp, marching in a parade, or other Girl Scout activity.

Identification Game Put mysterious items (from outdoors, the room, your pocket, or your purse) in a bag. Have girls in turn close their eyes and try to identify the items by feel.

Word Association Each girl takes a sheet of paper and numbers from 1 to 20. The leader calls out a category, such as a color, a food, a girl's name, a flavor of ice cream, an amusement park ride, a TV program, a foreign country, etc. For each category, the girls write the first thing that comes to mind. After all the categories are finished, the leader calls them out one-by-one and each girl reads her answers. Girls enjoy seeing how long one answer is given, who breaks the chain, etc. There is no judging of answers, just a lot of fun in sharing.

Leader-Daughter Survival Strategies

How do you balance being a Girl Scout leader and having your own daughter(s) in your troop? You have some challenges as well as many opportunities to strengthen your mother-daughter bond and watch her grow into a strong young woman. Use the survival strategies below to discover ways to make the leader-daughter relationship a powerful and positive one.

1. Let the assistant leader be in charge of your daughter and you are in charge of her daughter.
2. Have your daughter call you what the other girls are calling you. "Ms. H" or a camp name could be used instead of "Mom."
3. Try to give your daughter the same amount attention as other girls.
4. Don't make your daughter set up or cleanup for meetings. Use some of the other girls that are there early to help set up. Use a kaper chart for clean up so everyone helps before meeting is over.
5. Refrain let your daughter know all of the surprises that will take place in the troop meeting. Let her be just as surprised as the other girls.
6. Don't have your daughter make the project before the meeting even if you want to know how long it will take or need a sample. Samples make the girls want to do it all the same way so it is best to just give guidelines to allow for creativity.
7. Don't discuss problems in the troop in front of your daughter (including on the phone).
8. Remember that girl-adult planning helps solve some problems. The girls make decisions together with some guidance from adults. Sometimes the leaders daughters can think they should make a lot of the decisions.
9. Have a baggie with names on craft sticks so you can randomly pick a girl to help with something. You won't favor or ignore your daughter this way.
10. Don't personalize daughter's behavior. She may be trying to get a rise out of you (she knows all the buttons to push!). Testing limits (like refusing to do something) is expected. Pull daughter aside and explain choices.
11. Disagreements often arise over privacy and space: Don't make your daughter share her things if she doesn't want to.
12. Spend time alone with your daughter outside of Girl Scouting. This will help her share you with the troop more if this is not the only time she has you to herself. Let her know she is special to you-outside of meetings.

Tips for Girl Scout Leaders

Have a backup plan. Even the best of plans are interrupted by life. Don't worry about the little things; those will take care of themselves. Your job is to ensure that the girls are safe, having fun, and hopefully learning something along the way.

Be a friend to the girls; listen to them; sing with them; join in the games. The girls have more fun when the leader participates instead of just supervising.

Opening and Closing a Girl Scout Meeting

Girl Scout meetings should have an opening and a closing. An opening signals to the girls that the meeting has begun and it is time to get down to business. The closing allows the girls a special moment to end the meeting and say good-bye. It also helps keep girls from leaving early with their parents.

Opening Ideas:

- Have a flag ceremony
- Recite the Girl Scout Promise and Law
- Sing a song
- Recite a poem
- Have a friendship circle with linked hands

Closing Ideas:

Clean-Up Song (good for young girls)

The children skip about the room arranging everything neatly, singing to the tune of "London Bridge."

Weave the magic in and out, in and out, in and out,
Weave the magic in and out, we are Girl Scouts.
We have tidied everything, everything, everything,
We have tidied everything, we are Girl Scouts.

Finally, the girls line up before the leader who asks, "Is everything finished?"

The children answer: "Everything."

The leader asks: "Is nothing left?"

The children answer: "Nothing!"

The leader says: "Then be gone!"

(Leader can wave a special "good-bye wand" as girls silently tiptoe out.)

Magic Tunnel

When hats and coats are on, the Girl Scouts stand in two lines facing each other, raising their arms and holding hands to make an arch. The two farthest from the door go under the arch, then the next two, etc. The tunnel diminishes until the last two go.

Good-Bye Song - Tune: *Good Night Ladies*

Good-Bye (name of age level...repeat 3 times)

It's sad to see you go.

Note: Can be sung while doing the Magic Tunnel (above).

Singing is a good way to use up excess energy
when the girls can't be physically active.

Friendship Circle with Friendship Wish

Girls stand in circle with arms crossed right over left and grasping the hands of the person on either side. A designated person starts the passing of the friendship wish by thinking a silent wish and then symbolically passing the wish to the person on her right by squeezing her hand. That girl then thinks her own silent wish and continues the "squeeze". This is repeated until the "squeeze" has gone around the entire circle. When the originator receives the "squeeze" she says, "Good Night, Girl Scouts." The girls drop their hands and leave in silence.

Hint: So that the location of the "squeeze" can be identified, have each girl extend her right foot as she passes on her wish.

Money Management for your Troop

Welcome to the world of money management in Girl Scouting. You are about to travel on a great journey of goal setting, planning and budgeting – all with your girls.

A basic belief of Girl Scouting is that every activity should help girls take another step along the road to becoming self-assured adults, enabling them to cope with whatever life brings. Dealing with money in a troop is no exception. Troops should be self-supporting.

The goal for the troop is to earn enough money to pay for anticipated program activities without repeatedly asking the parents for contributions.

As a necessary part of troop programs, money is often required to pay for activities, supplies and equipment. Troop money-earning activities help teach girls the value of money: how to earn it, spend it wisely and to keep activities within the financial means of the troop. Learning how to manage money is one of the most valuable life skills girls can gain in Girl Scouting. GSUSA Program standards on money earning/troop financing are in Volunteer Essentials.

FOUR STEPS TO GOOD MONEY MANAGEMENT

1. Goal Setting. At the beginning of every year in Girl Scouting, you should sit down with your girls and brainstorm about all the things they want to do that year. This would include field trips, camping, recognitions to work on, supplies needed and community service projects. Then help the girls to vote and choose what to put on their troop calendar as their activities for the year. The best troop program need not be the most expensive one. Troops who have limited budgets tend to be resourceful in their supplies and activities and often the better for it.

- How will this benefit the girls in the troop?
- Is this a good use of our money? Is there a better one?

2. **Girl Planning.** As girls handle the troop funds, it helps them practice sound financial procedures, understand the value of money and develop a sense of responsibility. Money management helps girls develop a responsible attitude about money and provides them sound practical experience.

Although troop adults are responsible for overseeing the troop funds, it is the girls' money. No adult should add to it or remove it without the girls' permission.

DO NOT MIX OR BORROW PERSONAL FUNDS WITH GIRL SCOUT TROOP MONIES.

3. **Skill Building for girls.** A girl who participates in the financial planning of the troop learns through practical experience the following.

- There is an expense to everything.
- An activity should not be planned until there is a way to pay for it.
- A troop working together to earn money helps every girl to participate more fully.

Tips on the progression of money handling.

Girl Scout Daisy

Adults associated with the Daisy Girl Scout troops handle the money of troop activities

- Parents can contribute to the cost of the troop activities
- Girls may participate in council sponsored sales
- Girls pay dues-leaders handle the money

Girl Scout Brownie

- Girls pay dues - leaders handle the money
- Girls discuss cost of supplies needed for activities
- Girls learn to set goals and participate in council sponsored product sale activities
- Leader handles troop budgeting and shares with parents

Girl Scout Junior

- Girls and leaders together decide on the amount of dues
- Dues are collected and records kept by the troop treasurer
- Girls set goals for the year and determine what their cost will be
- Girls do budgeting for the year based on their

projected income and expenses

- Girls participate in council sponsored product sale activities
- Leader retains overall responsibility for long-term budgeting

Girl Scout Cadettes

- All of the above plus:
- Girls estimate cost based on their goals and plans
- Girls determine how they will meet their budget

Girl Scout Seniors

- All of the above plus:
- Girls plan and administer short-term budgeting and work with an adult on long term budgeting

Girl Scout Ambassadors

- All of the above plus:
- Girls plan and administer long-term group budgeting incorporating separate interest groups
- Girls account for funds and report to the leaders and parents

How to BUDGET WITH THE GIRLS

All troop funds, including fall product and cookie sales, should be included in the total year's projected income budget. Although troops will not receive the funds until after the appropriate sale, it will help in planning your events for the spring as well as for the next program year.

After setting the troops goal, you may want to have the girls work in smaller groups to gather budget information about the activities selected. Girls can look up prices, call for information, get on the internet with adult supervision and research specifics.

The girls then bring back the information to the group to share and make further decisions.

Tips:

1. Leader conducts parent meeting with girls present to talk about how the troop will be setting goals, voting on activities, planning their budget and then presenting their choices and information back to the parents for their support.
2. At the next troop meeting, have the girls brainstorm anything they might want to do this year. You may want to have a chart with columns for activities/crafts, field trips, camping, community service, etc. As the girls brainstorm, list their responses in the appropriate column.
3. After the brainstorming, go through the activities and use the democratic process to

guide the girls in narrowing their choices to something reasonable for the year .

4. Then divide the girls into small groups to do some information gathering, either at the meeting or before the next meeting. You should consider the age and experience of your girls in making the assignments.

5. At the next meeting, have the girls report their findings. Use this information to make more choices or to verify that everything on the list is feasible.

6. Using the budget information gained, do a simple budget for each activity, or if the girls are older, have them do this in small groups and share.

7. Determine how the troop will secure the funds that you have determined your troop will need for the year's activities.

8. Have the secretary record this information. You now have your goals and budget ideas for the year! Determine how you will share this information back with the parents.

9. Sit back and be proud of your girls for going through this life-skill process. This may be the first exposure for some of the girls in your troop to use these important life skills.

Why the Girls must be involved in the process?

Remember , It's the girls troop

Girl Scouting is about developing girls' potential, building their skills and helping them to become self-assured. We can't do that if they are not involved in all the stages of the goal setting, planning and budgeting processes.

Often it seems like it would be easier, and it would, to do all of the planning of the girls and just let them have fun. After all, they are just kids.

But what girls learn as kids is the foundation they have to work with as they become teenagers and adults. You can provide them a strong foundation in Girl Scouting as a mentor and role model.

There are many recognitions/awards girls can earn about Money Management.

How to Fund your Troop Program.

Fall Product Sale – This is a great way for the troop to earn money in the fall. A portion of the proceeds goes to the troop.

Cookie Sale – The cookie sale is the major money-earning project each year. This is also the first exposure many girls have to the world of business. Girls learn about sales, order taking, product knowledge, communication and ultimately planning the use of the proceeds.

Troop proceeds from the cookie sale will help to support the troop activities.

Ways Parents and Families Support the Troop

The more that you and the girls can share about what you are doing and how you are using your money, the more the families will be invested in your process and progress. Keep the parents and family in the loop and let the girls help. Girls can make a monthly newsletter, send a troop email, or create a flyer with information about each activity including cost and how the troop is funding the activity.

By identifying what the family's expectations of the troop are and sharing what your expectations for the troop are, you can build the support that is needed.

Troop leader money management accountabilities

As the troop leader you are accountable:

To the girls

- To help them plan and prepare
- To help them carry out their plans
- Help to keep their funds safe

To the parents

- To keep them informed on your plans
- To keep detailed records and receipts
- To share the financial state of the troop on a regular basis

To the council

- To know and follow council guidelines
- To provide the troop financial report on time

Delegate some of the work to the troop committee

Ways to Successfully Involve Parents:

Use the parents' natural talents/hobbies to benefit the troop, "Since you enjoy working with cars, would you show the girls how to change a tire for this badge?"

Be specific with requests for help, "The troop needs someone to transport four girls to the zoo on Nov. 3."

Encourage the parents to understand that you are a volunteer and have a busy life too-and that you don't have time to chase paperwork, permission slips, etc.

Involve not only moms-but dads, grandparents, brothers, and sisters as well.

Have a "Family Night with Girl Scouts" meeting or cookout. Sing, play games, do crafts, badge activities-anything to get the whole family interested in how important Girl Scouts is to their daughter.

Prep a responsible parent throughout the year to be your "Troop Cookie Mom/Dad"-you will be able to have more quality meetings with the girls if you don't have to do it all!!!

Require that the parents come into the meeting place to pick up their daughter (for safety's sake if nothing else!).

Invite them to attend Service Unit Meetings with you, and asking them to go in your place if you are unable to attend.

Inform parents that money earned during product sales is used for your troop program and is not the property of each girl.

Schedule regular (quarterly, twice a year, etc.) parent meetings so that everyone is informed and excited.