



Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana

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Girl Scout Troop Management Tips Mini-Training

A Girl Scout leader must deal with many things: paperwork, supplies, parents, training, meetings, transportation, and – most important – 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. Put dividers in your Girl Scout Troop Starter Kit notebook or something similar. Forms can be printed from the council's website, www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org / *Vernon Hills Regional Service Center*.

Girl Scout Troop Notebook with Dividers:

1. Girl Scout Troop Roster
 - A. Phone list and e-mail addresses
2. Meeting Notes
 - A. Calendar
 - B. Results of girl/adult planning sessions
3. Individual Records
 - A. *Individual Girl's Record* forms (one per girl)
 - B. Insignia Record forms (one per girl)
 - C. *Health History & HIPAA* cards (one per girl and adult)
 - D. *Authorization for Medication* forms (as needed)
 - E. *Individual Adult Record* form (one per leader)
4. Information
 - A. *Leader's Digest, Blue Book of Basic Documents*
 - B. *Panorama*
 - C. *Safety-Wise*
 - D. *Accident Report* form
 - E. *Trip Application* form
 - F. *Panorama Reservation* form
 - G. *Outdoor Equipment Request* form

5. Financial Records
 - A. *Group Dues and Attendance Record* form
 - B. *Detailed Cash Record* form
 - C. *Financial Aid Worksheet*
 - D. *Annual Finance Report* form
 - E. Envelope for receipts
6. Parent/Guardian Information
 - A. Parent Newsletters
 - B. Permission forms

Girl Scout Troop File Box:

1. One file folder for each Girl Scout
 - A. Emergency information card with contact information for parents and emergency contact person
 - B. Girls 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. Small envelopes area there so parents can leave money and checks. (They seal the envelope and write their daughter's name on the front.)

Teach your Girl Scouts 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 (see *Safety-Wise*)
- 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
- Age-appropriate books and magazines
- Balls and jacks
- Jump ropes
- Card games

Top Five Tips for Girl Scout Leaders and Advisors

1. Know *Safety-Wise* 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, the keys to leadership - **Discover, Connect, Take Action** - and the Girl Scout processes - **Girl Led, Learning by Doing, Cooperative Learning** - 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 Brownies or a seasoned troop of Girl Scout Seniors, 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.
- **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 to put away craft materials, sports equipment, science experiments, and wind down.
- **Closing/Evaluation** Sharing goals, reminding girls of what's ahead, sharing a quick ceremony or song, and talking about next time.

The Talking Stick

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.

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.

What to Do Instead of Screaming

from the book by Myra Nagel

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.

Panic! Everyone is seated in chairs in a circle. Everyone numbers off (including the girl who has chosen to be IT). IT stands in the center of the circle and is blindfolded. Everyone changes seats, but keeps the same number. IT calls out any three (3) numbers. The players whose numbers are called must switch places without being tagged by IT, who is guided by the sounds of their motion. All three must end up in a different chair. Anyone who is caught becomes IT. If IT hasn't caught anyone after several tries, she may call "Panic!" and EVERYONE must find a new seat.

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 Unfurl 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 clean up for meetings. Use some of the other girls that are there early to set up. Use kaper chart for clean up so everyone helps before meeting is over.
5. Don't let your daughter know all of the surprises that will take place in the troop meeting. Let her be surprised as the other girls will be.
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. Some daughters think they should make all decisions.
9. Have IT and OTHER bags 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!).
11. Testing limits (like refusing to do something) is expected. Pull daughter aside and explain choices.

12. Disagreements often arise over privacy and space: if meeting in own home, designate areas off-limits. Don't make your daughter share her things if she doesn't want to.
13. 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 - 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.

Tips for Girl Scout Leaders

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).

Girl Scout Out Game

Stand in circle with a girl in the center. Spell G-I-R-L-S-C-O-U-T. Girl in center touches the top of a head as each letter is said. The three girls that get the letters O, U, T leave the circle and line up by the door or are given permission to leave with their designated adult. The remaining girls close up the space and the spelling begins again. Keep repeating until all are eliminated.

Taps

Hand motions:

Day is done,	(Arms are held extended with palms down, shoulder level)
Gone the sun,	(Lower arms slightly)
From the lakes,	(Turn palms up, raise arms slightly)
From the hills,	(Raise arms higher)
From the sky.	(Raise arms level with top of head)
All is well,	(Lower arms to shoulder height, place right hand on left elbow)
Safely rest,	(Cross left hand to right elbow)
God is nigh.	(Bow head into crossed arms)

Daylight Taps: Thanks and praise, for our days
'Neath the sun, 'neath the trees, 'neath the sky,
As we go, this we know,
God is nigh.

Evening Taps: So good night, peaceful night
Till the light of the dawn shineth bright.
God is near, do not fear,
Friend, good night.

Spread Arm Good-bye Circle

Extend arms sideways at shoulder level, drop halfway to sides, step one pace in and hold hands not with the people on either side of you but with the person next to them.

Every other person will be holding hands and the arms will make an interesting zig zag pattern. Sing a good-bye song.

Girl Scout Good-Bye Song - Tune: *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*

Now our Girl Scout meeting ends,
Say good-bye to all our friends
To our homes we Girl Scouts go
Singing songs to let you know,
We are happy as can be,
Working, playing, merrily.

Tips for Girl Scout Leaders

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.