



Girl Scouts of Nassau County Getting Started With Your Troop

Top Ten Pieces of Advice from a Girl Scout Leader

1. There is not just one way of doing things, and there are no Girl Scout Police. You don't need to be a great outdoorswoman/ man or a life-long Girl Scout to be an effective Leader!
2. Being a Girl Scout Leader is not a competitive sport. If you hear of something neat that another troop is doing, think of all the great things your troop is doing, too. Maybe you'd like to borrow that idea sometime for your troop!
3. Network. One part of the Girl Scout Law is to use resources wisely. Don't re- invent the wheel! Talk to other leaders and volunteers, and people you know. Look at the recommended web sites for resources, attend Leader meetings when you can and call Council if you need assistance.
4. Plan some joint activities with other troops. Invite some girls from older troops to come help you and make your meetings girl – led!
5. Remember that all those Girl Scout rules and regulations are there to help and protect you, not to be punitive or restrictive.
6. Get the girls to be as self-sufficient as they can by building leadership skills (especially planning and decision-making) as you go. Ultimately, this will be better for them and better for you, and is an investment you'll make in the earlier years that will pay off big!
7. Attend Association meetings and take courses, workshops and networking sessions that are offered. You'll get some great ideas and meet terrific people.
8. Don't worry if now and then a meeting sounds like an amusement park fun house. Sometimes 'fun' can be a little chaotic!
9. Delegate and ask parents to help! There are lots of jobs to be done, large and small, that will fit every schedule. Make it clear that you are not baby-sitting. Remember to also delegate tasks to the girls so your meetings are girl –led whenever possible.
10. Being a Girl Scout Leader is one of the best things you'll ever do for yourself, your daughter, and all the other girls in the Troop.

How much dues?



Troop Dues

Experience with troop finances can make girls aware that belonging to a troop means more than just attending meetings. It means that each member shares in the expenses, that she gives as well as receives, that, together a group can do many more things than a girl might be able to do by herself. Since the money for troop activities comes from troop dues, the money belongs to the troop. Members decide, with their leader's help, how much the dues should be and how their money is to be used.

- Be aware of the economic situation of the girls' families. Make sure dues are set at a figure everyone can afford. If the need arises for financial assistance, contact Membership Services. When a girl is unable to pay dues, make sure she is not penalized. Handle any decision with tact so that she is not embarrassed or shamed.
- Explain annual GSUSA membership fees of \$12.00 and make a clear distinction between these fees and troop dues to both girls and their parents.
- Make it clear to the girls that some troop activities cost money, while others do not, and discuss costs in relation to plans when the troop is making decisions.
- Discuss troop plans and equipment needs with the parents so they understand and support them.

Troop dues should be decided by the troop and parents. Dues cover the cost of awards, badges, patches, program supplies and other small items. It can also cover snacks; however you might consider asking parents to take turns bringing in a healthy snack for your meetings. Dues can be collected weekly, monthly or twice a year. The amount and the collection schedule is determined by each troop. Many troops have dues of \$5-7 per month, dues should not be excessive and families should not be expected to pay for the year's dues in one lump sum. It is important to consider the financial status of members of your troop, the validity of spending money on crafts when recycled materials might be more meaningful, and the potential for earning troop money through product and cookie sales

- Families can request financial assistance from their council for dues, uniform components, and books - even field trips. These awards are need-based and remain confidential.
- Participate in the Fall Product sales (nut and magazines) and the Cookie Program. There are often incentives for the girls and troops beyond prizes and income. Participating in the Girl Scout recognized fund raisers will increase your chances of having additional fund raisers approved by council.
- Fund raisers only work if your Girl Scouts are excited about what they are doing, or have a goal to reach. Remember, Girl Scouts cannot sell any products that are not Girl Scout cookies or Girl Scout Fall Product items...no pizza coupon booklets, no Dunkin Donuts, etc...The exception here would be bake sale items, or jewelry the girls made themselves, however, these sales may not coincide with the Fall Product or Cookie sales! You will find the troop Money earning application on your Association web page, Completion of the form and signature approval is required prior to fundraising.

Additional Information can be found in Girl Scouts of Nassau County Volunteer Essentials 2011. Chapter 5 of Volunteer Essentials contains detailed explanations about Managing Group Finances. This document is intended to be used as an on line resource whenever you need it! [Girl Scouts of Nassau County Volunteer Essentials](#)

Tag Along Insurance – Tag- Along insurance provides coverage for all non-registered children and adults who may attend Girl Scouts of Nassau County Troop activities. Tag-Along insurance payments must be submitted at the time of Troop registration. The fee for this insurance is \$5.00 and should be paid by a Troop check so that the Troop has a record.



Bank Accounts

Troop funds must be deposited in a bank account in the name of Girl Scouts of Nassau County Inc.

Troop # _____.

Ask the Service Team if there is already an existing account for your Troop. If there is not, then here are the steps you need to follow:

1. Select a bank that is convenient for you and your Troop. Make sure that the bank will not be charging the Troop bank fees that will quickly deplete the account.
2. Go to the GSNC web site and complete a request form for a bank letter. This letter is prepared by the Finance Department and provides the bank with the Council Tax ID # that is required for processing your request.
3. Obtain signature cards from the bank.
4. The signature cards require a minimum of two signatures – one of the Leaders **AND** an Association Service Team Member (Treasurer or Association designee). You can find the Service Team Members on your Association web page, at a Leader Meeting or ask your Field Director at the Service Center (741-2550).
5. **Be sure to put your address as the mailing address for the statements etc.**

Tracking Expenses:

All purchases for the Troop are Tax Exempt. You will need a copy of the Tax Exempt form to present to the store/vendor. You can

obtain this from the Receptionist at the Service Center or from your Association web page. Each purchase should be recorded on the ***Summary of Troop Finances and Detailed Cash Record of Troop Treasury***. At the end of the year, you will submit a copy of this to your Association Treasurer

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Meetings

Parent meeting

Your first meeting should be a parent meeting. This is a wonderful opportunity to get to know your girls and their parents. Introduce yourself to the girls and their parents. Discuss the meeting dates and times. Have the parents register the girls and fill in other necessary forms such as e-mail information and emergency contact information. This is an excellent opportunity to ask for help! Discuss dues, what is included and not included in dues, expectations for behavior of troop members, sign up forms for parent support. (snacks, transportation, meeting supplies and participation, help with trips...)

The Girl Scout Meeting Outline

Consistency in the format of a meeting will help girls feel comfortable and engaged. Using the six parts of meeting will allow girls to be comfortable knowing what comes next. Offering a variety of activities and including girls in making decisions within the structured meeting format is essential to keeping girls interested and having fun. They will look forward to coming to meetings when they are included in troop planning and responsibilities. The meeting should be scheduled to run for one hour unless a field trip or special event is planned. Remember to focus on one action at a time and keep directions, expectations, and activities short and simple.

Troop Meetings

In order to get things started during the first weeks, meetings of a new troop may be adult-inspired, with the planning and ideas selected by you and your co-leader. However, after this get-acquainted period, leadership should be shared with the girls. This is how the girl/adult partnership works. The girls plan with the adults what they want to accomplish: events, activities, and trips in which they would like to participate. The adults direct and support the girls' goals, using the Journey books, the Girls Guide to Girl Scouting book, Promise and Law, and Safety and Security guidelines for direction.

Welcoming Girls

It is important that as girls arrive at the meeting a caring volunteer greets them individually by name and evaluates how each girl is feeling that day. Is she excited and easily leaves her adult's side or is she apprehensive and clinging to her adult? By greeting each girl with a warm, friendly and positive attitude each girl will transition into the troop meeting smoothly. It is important she feels she will be in a welcoming and safe space.



Six Suggested parts of a Girl Scout Troop Meeting

1. Pre-meeting Activity
 2. Opening
 3. Daisy Circle-Business
 4. Activity
 5. Clean-Up
 6. Closing
- Snack (optional)



Pre-Meeting Activity (10-15 minutes)

Have something for the girls to do when they first arrive that does not require too much volunteer direction. Girls seldom arrive at meetings all at the same time. This activity gives them something to do with their energy (rather than run around). Some troops like to have a snack as a pre-meeting activity, especially troops that meet right after school. Other examples are; jump rope, puzzles, word games, coloring or making scrapbook pages.

Pre-Meeting Activity Ideas:

- Work on creating individual scrapbooks based on troop meetings and activities. Girls can decorate individual pages each week.
- Do an on-going service project. Make greeting cards each week, for nursing homes , thank you cards after a field trip, get well cards for a children's hospital etc.

Opening (5-10 minutes)

The opening to the Girl Scout meeting should gather the girls from the loose pre-meeting activities into a group. Give the girls a basic format to start with such as standing in a circle. The opening can be a flag ceremony and/or Girl Scout song that makes them feel they are now focusing on their group and starting something structured. One or two girls can carry a small, hand-held flag into the circle and the Girl Scout Promise can be recited by the troop. As the girls grow and learn they may want to add their own special touches, such as a patriotic song, a Girl Scout song, saying hello in other languages, or other special expressions.

Business (10-15 Minutes)

The Daisy Circle, Brownie Ring or business part of the meeting is a forum to allow girls to have sharing time and participate in making troop decisions. It gives the girls a chance to feel comfortable and confident to talk about their interests, feelings, recent troop experiences, and get to know each other. Sitting in a circle also allows everyone to feel equally involved. Volunteers should introduce the idea of a talking object (it can be a stone, stick, or even a stuffed animal). After trying the method out, let the girls choose what they want the troop talking object to be. Only the person who has the talking object may talk, everyone else is silent. After 30 seconds or so, the object is passed to the next person.

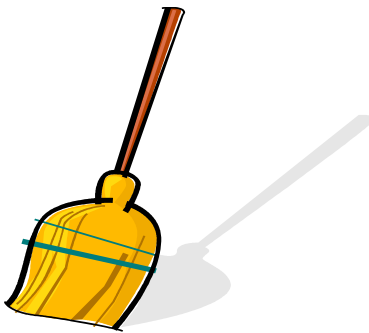
Activity (20-25 minutes)

During this section of the Girl Scout meeting, girls get a chance to build skills, try new things, explore their interests, and work cooperatively with others. As the girls progress, you will begin to get

insight into their interests. Make sure that you are always asking for their ideas and input.

Meeting activities should be Learning-By-Doing

- _ Using their hands making or fixing
- _ Supervised, but offer help only when needed
- _ Ask girls to talk about what happened during the activity and predict what might happen next
- _ Promote observation, exploration and experimentation



Clean-up (5 minutes)

Girl Scouts leave a place better than they found it. It is the responsibility of the girls, not the troop volunteer team, to clean up after themselves. Tidying up helps girls take pride in their meeting place and instills a sense of self discipline, respect, and

responsibility. A Kaper chart for clean-up ensures that everything is done by the girls as much as possible.

Closing (10 minutes)

The closing ceremony is part of every Girl Scout meeting, from Daisies through Ambassador. A closing can be a favorite troop song and a Friendship Circle. It is also a great time to check in with the girls and reflect on their Girl Scout experience. You can ask them questions like, “What did you like best about the meeting? Or, “What would you like to do again?” After they answer, thank the girls for sharing and then explain the Friendship Circle which is a simple Girl Scout Ceremony to say goodbye for today.. Thank the girls for coming and let them know you cannot wait to see them again at the next meeting.

What is a Kaper chart?

It is the Girl Scout way of saying a **responsibility**. A Kaper Chart is an organized way of making sure GIRLS are taking some responsibility for the Troop meeting, not just the Leader or other

adults. Google Kaper chart for some creative ideas about how to make one for your Troop!



Having Your Daughter in Your Troop (some useful strategies)

1. Let your co-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.
3. Try not to give your daughter more attention than the other girls (or less).
4. Don't assign your daughter the job of getting the meeting place ready. Use some of the girls that are there early to help set up.
5. If you see that your troop is having problems with you or your assistant showing partiality to your daughter, you might want to set aside a time for them to discuss it. Let the girls talk about what is bothering them and have an honest discussion as a group.
6. Don't let your daughter know all the surprises that will take place in the troop meeting. Let her be surprised as the others girls will be.
7. Don't discuss problems in the troop in front of your daughter.
8. Remember Girl-Leader planning helps solve some problems. The girls are responsible for some of the decision-making. Girls assume responsibility for decision-making.

Tips for Teaching Ceremonies

Ceremonies are a long standing tradition in Girl Scouting. They are used to recognize girls' accomplishments, pass on traditions, welcome new members, and reinforce the values of Girl Scouting. Ceremonies can be as simple as opening and closing troop meetings by reciting the Girl Scout Promise and Law, to a candle lighting ceremony with awards that the parents are invited to attend. There are many Girl Scout ceremonies already developed, but troops can also make a ceremony of their own. Below are a few tips when conducting a ceremony:

- Always have a purpose for the ceremony (i.e. new troop, bridging, special awards, etc.)
- Pick a good setting for the ceremony.
- If assigning parts, be sure all girls have some sort of role in the ceremony.
- Always have an opening, main part, and closing to the ceremony.
- Be sure to prepare ahead of time in getting supplies, developing the girl's lines, invitations etc.
- Always do a practice run before the actual ceremony.

Tips for Teaching Crafts

It is fun to have craft time during the Troop meeting. Whether it is a craft that needs many Troop meetings to finish or one that is simple enough to complete and take home the same day; crafts offer girls a sense of accomplishment and gives them a keepsake of Girl Scouting that will stay with them forever. Below are a few tips when completing crafts:



- *Be sure to include any safety instructions* that are necessary for the activity. If you are working with young Brownie or Daisy Girl Scouts, don't assume too much. They may not know how to hold the scissors or the fact that they shouldn't run with them.
- *Give adequate instructions for the activity.* Keep these instructions simple. If the activity is simple, little instruction

may be necessary; however, if it is very involved or is a new activity, give the instructions twice and then ask if there are any questions. For extremely complicated activities it may be necessary to break the instructions into sections and teach one section at a time.

- *Have enough equipment and supplies on hand.* At most, two people can share supplies. More than that and the girls tend to get frustrated at having to wait and the activity is less enjoyable.
- *Be sure that the craft is suitable for the age of the girls you are working with.* If the project is too difficult, the child will become frustrated. If it is too simple, the child may become bored.
- *Allow enough time for the activity.* Remember that girls work at different speeds and most girls will take longer to make a craft than you can make it yourself. Having something extra to do for those who finish early is also a good idea or you could have them help the girls who have not finished yet.
- If necessary, *prepare your meeting space for the craft activity.* Covering surfaces for messy projects will make clean-up much easier. If supplies can be divided in advance it is easier to hand them out.
- *Do the activity yourself* before you give it to the girls to complete. This way, you will be able to identify the pitfalls and problems that may occur with a particular craft. You can also adjust, if necessary, the directions to make the project easier.
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Tips for Swaps

The word SWAP stands for "Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere" . SWAPS are little keepsake crafts that girls make to give to other Girl Scouts at large events and activities. SWAP's should say something about the girl or Troop when passed along to others. SWAPS can be pinned anywhere a girl chooses to keep it. Some troops use t-shirts, or a hat; others use a large sheet or banner that is hung during troop meetings.

- Think about the kind of swap someone would like to receive.
- Try not to spend a lot of money. Consider making something from donated or recycled material.

- Be creative, and take time to make hand-crafted swaps. (Include directions for making the swap if it is a craft project that can be replicated.)
- When trading swaps at an event, try to have one swap for each event participant and staff member.
- Plan ahead so there's time to make the swaps.
- Make swaps that can be worn, used, or displayed.

Trip Information

A Trip Application is required for each activity held beyond the troop meeting place. A Trip Application is necessary to ensure that the activity is consistent with *GSNC's Policies, Standards and Guidelines*, and *with Safety Activity Checkpoint that can be found on our web site..* Girl Scout insurance is in effect only for activities that meet these requirements. This form should be filled out at least two weeks prior to the trip or event. Trip Applications are done on line at the Girl Scouts of Nassau County web site or by using the following link;
<http://www.gsnc.org/program/TripApp.asp>

Please note: a permission form signed by the parent / guardian is required for all trips. This form can be found on our web site under Volunteer / forms.

For Association events, Troop/Individual attendance information goes to the Event Chair and a Trip Application is not required.

Trip Applications for Extended Trips (3 sleepover nights or more) require the purchase of additional insurance through Council, and must be submitted one month prior to departure.



ADULT COVERAGE FOR GIRL SCOUT TRIPS AND EVENTS		
GIRL SCOUT GRADE LEVEL	TWO (2) ADULTS FOR THE FIRST	ONE (1) ADULT FOR ANY ADDITIONAL
Girl Scout Daisy (K-1)	6	4 or fewer
Girl Scout Brownie (2-3)	12	6 or fewer
Girl Scout Junior (4-5)	16	8 or fewer
Girl Scout Cadette (6-8)	20	10 or fewer
Girl Scout Senior (9-10)	24	12 or fewer
Girl Scout Ambassador (11-12)	24	12 or fewer



Camping

In order for a troop to camp there must be a Camp trained Adult and a Red Cross Certified First Aider or a nurse or EMT certified adult. The same person can't fill both roles. The Camp Trained Adult must take Trip Training, Outdoor Pre-Plan and the Mandatory Overnight OR All in One Outdoor Training. For course dates please refer to our web site under Adult Training / Outdoor Training.

Useful Links

In addition to the material found in the Journey guide for Leaders, try some of the following websites for other great ideas for your troop.

- <http://www.girlscouts.org/> - is the official website for Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. It contains information about Girl Scouting.
- <http://www.scoutingweb.com/> - is a great site for Girl Scout Leaders. The site contains information for Girl Scout ceremonies, traditions, stories, poems, skits and songs.
- <http://www.familyfun.go.com/> - is sponsored by Disney Online magazine. It contains crafts, games, and recipes.
- <http://www.makingfriends.com/> - is a great site for craft ideas; it even has a Girl Scout area.
- <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/> - is an educational site with crafts, world flags, maps, and much more. It contains teacher-styled learning material and printouts.
- <http://www.wagggsworld.org/> - is the World Association site. It contains information on Thinking Day and links to international sites.
- <http://www.scoutinglinks.com/> - contains many helpful links to other Girl Scout sites.
- <http://www.gsnc.org> – our own site! You can access your own Association pages once you get a log on password from your Association or Field Director. Information from our Resource Room including electronic submission of Trip Application, SWAPS, scheduled events and programs plus much more!