

New Troop Leadership Tip: First Troop Meetings!

Girl Scouting is girl led right from the start.

The first meeting or two give the girls the opportunity to get to know Girl Scouts and make plans for their troop year.

Each Girl Scout meeting provides an opportunity to explore the world and learn new skills. As a troop volunteer, you can customize your year and the activities in each meeting with your girls. Flexibility is key and is based on the needs and interests of your girls. You might have a meeting where you do just one activity, and then your next meeting may consist of three activities. As long as the girls are engaged in a girl led environment, learning by doing, and learning cooperatively, your troop is on the right track to discovering, connecting, and taking action!

Components of a Typical Troop Meeting:

Pre-Meeting: This is the period before the meeting officially begins and is a great idea for girls and adults to chat and greet one another. It can also be a time that gets a bit chaotic, so having an easy, self-directed activity to engage in can help settle everyone in.

Opening: The official start of the meeting. Often includes the Girl Scout Promise and Law, a simple flag ceremony, song, game, or story.

Business Meeting: Time for special announcements, dues, attendance, making plans, and other troop business and gives girls the chance to practice leadership skills like communication and responsibility.

Activities: Girls build skills, try new things, explore interests, and work cooperatively with others. These could be ideas from Leadership Journeys, badge activities, physical activities, or outdoor activities and field trips.

Snack Time: Depending on the age range of your girls, troops may need to take a break and eat a quick snack. This is a good opportunity to get other caregivers involved by having the caregivers/girls take turns bringing in snacks.

Clean-Up: Clean-up teaches girls to be responsible and allows girls to practice the Girl Scout tenant: "Leave things better than you found them." Use a *Kaper Chart* to split the tasks up fairly among the troop.

Closing: This is the official end of the meeting. During this time, you can remind the girls of what you reviewed during the meeting, what's coming up in the next meeting or activity, and end on a positive note. Many troops like to close the meeting with a traditional *Friendship Circle* and maybe a *Friendship Squeeze* too!

Friendship Circle: Girl Scouts, both girls and adults, stand in a circle holding hands, right arm over left arm, which stands for the unbroken chain of friendship with Girl Scouts and Girl Guides around the world.

Kaper Chart: A chart that divides the jobs within the troop/group. The chart typically rotates or can easily be changed so that everyone experiences each job and has the opportunity for leadership. There are lots of fun ideas online!

Friendship Squeeze: Within a friendship circle, one person gently squeezes the hand of the next person and the squeeze is silently passed around the circle.

For your first meetings, you might:

Review the Meeting Plans and Activity Guides in the Volunteer Toolkit. This will help you know what supplies you may need, what preparations you may want to do in advance, or what volunteers you may need to have joining you at the meeting.

You may also want to prepare a sampling of the Journeys and Badges available for your troop's grade level so that they can make an informed decision about what they may want to work on throughout their troop year. It is important to let the girls decide which adventure they would like to go on this year!

In your first meetings, girls might:

- Learn the Girl Scout Promise
- Learn the Girl Scout Law
- Play games to get to know each other
- Start planning their girl Scout Year

The Girl Scout Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

The Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:
To serve God and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

The Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,
and to,
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the work a better place, and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.