

Start of the Year Family Meeting Agenda

To allow the adults to focus, have an activity planned for the troop in another room. You might want to ask your service unit manager to connect you with an older troop that is willing to assist with this. If this is a new troop, try to have get-to-know-you games for them. This may be a good time to create a group agreement about behavior expectations to form a safe and supportive troop.

Be sure to warmly greet and welcome everyone as they come in. Have them create a name tag and pick up the Meet My Girl Scout handout (see below). This is something to do while everyone is arriving and getting settled.

Ice Breaker Activity: Have each person (including you) introduce themselves, share one of their responses to the “Meet My Girl Scout” prompts (encourage people to share different prompts), and share one of their own hopes for what the troop will do this year. It’s a good idea to write down these hopes and who shared them. Remind everyone that the youth will ultimately choose the year’s priorities.

Expectations for the Meeting:

- Give a brief overview of the agenda items.
- Explain that you will try to answer questions as you go, or if there is time, at the end, but may need to move things along to get to all the important topics. Encourage them to call or email with any further questions.
- If you are using a Family Handbook, pass it out.

Troop Communication:

- Troop website, social media group, paper newsletters, email, phone tree, texting, etc. (It’s your choice to either have the methods of communication already decided, or to agree as a group what the best methods will be. The latter is obviously more time-consuming but may result in greater cooperation later.)
- Guidelines for communication response times, and policies. (For example: attendance, tardiness in arrival/pick-up, and absences. These issues may come up later, so be sure you are clear now.)
- Emergency Communication Plan:** Highlight the importance of providing and updating the most current and accurate emergency contact information. (They will put that information on the Girl Permissions and Health History form later.)
- Group Agreement, Code of Conduct, Family Agreement, Girl Scout Promise and Law:** Explain that the troop will be creating a Group Agreement together, and it will be shared with families. Clarify that if there are behavior issues in violation of the Code of Conduct, families are expected to help their youth honor the Group Agreement. If using the Family Handbook, you may want to go over some of the expectations for families.
- Explain that if concerns or complaints come up, they should be discussed in private, not in the presence of the troop. A suggested solution should be offered, as well, in the spirit of cooperation.
- Calendar:** schedule of meetings, known events, or field trips
- Basic overview of meeting format. May also want to introduce the awards and badges, Journeys, and community service or Take Action projects.

Troop Support:

- Pass out the 4 Your Girl Scout Family Involvement Kit. Introduce the importance of whole family (parents/guardians, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) contributions to the success of the entire troop and explain that they can customize the way they engage. This is your chance to set the tone that the troop is a big family (not a babysitting service), and everyone is a part of the larger family of Girl Scouting (the world's largest organization focused on leadership for girls and non-binary youth).
- Go over volunteer options for at meetings, at home, and on the go.
- Answer questions and look at the FAQ. Be sure to clarify which roles require adults to complete membership registration and/or a background check, and how to do that (instructions and links are in the FAQ).
- Families fill out promise cards and turn them in. If someone needs to discuss the options with their family before making the promise, stress that they should have it ready by the next meeting.
- Briefly go over the tracking sheet.
- Really try to get the Troop Product Sales Manager and Troop Treasurer roles filled. You may also want to make a pitch for another Co-Leader. These folks will be giving more time, and should be made aware of that, but they are the big keys to lightening your load. If using the Family Handbook, there are more detailed position descriptions of these key roles there.
- You may want to share a list of troop supplies such as markers, poster paper, calculators, glue sticks, etc., and ask that families donate as many of the items on the list that they can.

Forms:

- Have Girl Scout and adult membership registration information available. If they need assistance completing their youth and adult membership online, have them contact the customer care team at customercare@girlscoutsww.org or 1(800) 541-9852. You can also have paper copies of the form available, just in case (Spanish versions are also on the website). Explain that the membership registration fee goes to Girl Scouts of the USA to cover insurance and administrative costs. That money does not go to the troop or the local council.
- Financial assistance (FA) information is also great to have on hand. Some people may not feel comfortable expressing a need for FA, so it might be best to leave information out and let them know where to find more info on the website. www.girlscoutsww.org/financialassistance
- Have the Girl Scout Permissions and Health History and Adult Health History forms available. These forms must be completed for any Girl Scout or adult to attend meetings and field trips. If time permits, try to have all relevant forms completed and turned in before you move on.
- **Optional:** Have the Parent Permission and Financial Responsibility Form. If you are planning to do product sales and the information is out.
- Explain that more forms may be required in the future, depending on activities, and it is important to complete and return them in a timely manner (“no slip, no trip”).

Troop Funding & More:

- Cover reimbursement policies. For example: if the troop funds are used to pay for an activity/outing and a Girl Scout does not show, the family will be responsible for reimbursing the amount. Also, families may want to make a purchase for the troop. Explain they should discuss that with the troop leader and/or treasurer first.
- Troops pay for their supplies and activities through dues and product sales. Financial assistance covers up to a certain amount for dues. Some troops choose not to exceed this, but that is not a requirement. Activities and events, program materials, uniforms, and badges will be additional costs. Financial assistance is available to cover some these expenses as well. It is best to be clear about these costs and explain that there may be a delay in processing financial assistance requests. In that situation, the troop will do its best to share resources and give as much advanced notice of outing or event costs as possible. This can be a stressful topic for some families. Try to be as sensitive and accommodating as you can.
- Discuss product sales. Cookie time can put a strain on the entire troop family, or it can be a great opportunity for everyone to come together and bond. Setting clear expectations now helps when things get stressful later. Encourage families to check out the area for them on the Girl Scout Cookies webpage and to visit the Little Brownie Bakers site. Here are some basic guidelines. Families can support their Girl Scout involved in product sales by:
 - Giving permission to sell Girl Scout cookies by filling out the Parent Permission and Financial Responsibility Form.
 - Attending the cookie activity training for the troop. Helping them set and meet personal and troop goals.
 - Helping them observe all safety rules and guidelines outlined in materials provided by Girl Scouts of Western Washington.
 - Helping them understand that you will be working in a supportive role. Adults should not assume sole responsibility for selling cookies.
 - Helping to network with colleagues so your Girl Scout can contact co-workers and family members to purchase cookies.
 - Providing transportation to cookie events or special sales areas, like outside a grocery store.
 - Providing a safe place for collected money, as well as frequent deposits to the cookie manager.
 - Paying for any cookies eaten at home.
- Also, explain that the Girl Scouts will be involved in planning and budgeting the use of troop funds as part of their financial literacy skill building. Troop funds are not for individual expenses; if a Girl Scout leaves the troop, there should not be an expectation they can take 'their share.'

Q&A: If you have time, try to answer any questions that come up.

Closing Activity:

At this point get the Girl Scouts and adults in the room together, stand, and form a circle. If short on room, Girl Scouts can stand in front of their family members. Have all adults and Girl Scouts share one word that describes how they are feeling about being part of the troop family and the beginning of a new year together.

Be sure to genuinely thank everyone for their participation in the troop and the meeting.

Start of the Year Troop Code of Conduct

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.

Girl Scout Family Promise:

On my honor, I will try:
To support my Girl Scout and their troop,
To help Girl Scouts lead at all times,
And to always keep it fun!

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 world a better place,
and be a sister** to every Girl Scout.

* The word God may be substituted for one that aligns with the individual Girl Scout's beliefs.

** The word sister may be substituted for one that is gender inclusive.

1. I will follow the principles of the Girl Scout Promise and Law as listed on this Code of Conduct.
2. I will follow the rules and troop agreements that are made to protect others and myself and to help make sure program activities are safe, fun, and successful.
3. I will treat other people, myself, property, and equipment with respect.
4. I will be considerate of the feelings of others.
5. I will be respectful of my Girl Scout Leaders. I will not argue with my leaders or call them names while under their supervision. I will ask questions calmly, and if I am disappointed, I will express my opinion in a respectful manner.
6. I will not bully or abuse (hit, slap, spit, or any other unwanted touch) other Girl Scouts. I understand that violence will not be tolerated, and my family will be notified as well as the families of others involved.
7. I will remember that others have ideas and thoughts which may be different from mine, and that their ideas and thoughts are just as important as mine. I will not make fun of the ideas and thoughts of others. I will try not to offend anyone else with my thoughts and ideas.

Failure to follow our Code of Conduct will result in the following action:

- First Offense: Review of the Girl Scout Law/Promise and apology, if needed.
- Second Offense: Review of the Girl Scout Law/Promise and apology, if needed, and family will be notified of behavior.
- Third Offense: Review of the Girl Scout Law and Promise with Girl Scout and family, and discussion will be held between the family and leader regarding any requirement of family supervision at all future meetings.
- Fourth Offense: A discussion will be held between the family and leader regarding potential transition to another participation option.
- If there are any actions or behaviors that would potentially warrant more severe action, customer care will be contacted for support at 1(800)-541-9852.

Girl Scout's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Caregiver's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Start of the Year Meet My Girl Scout Form

This form is designed to give your Girl Scout's troop leader additional information that is not included on the health history form. Please give it to your troop leader when complete. We hope this will help make your Girl Scout's time in the troop happy, rewarding, and exciting!

Dear Troop Leader,

My Girl Scout _____, is excited about being a Girl Scout, and so am I. This is their first year in your troop, and I want you to know a little more about them.

My Girl Scout is most happy when:

They are unhappy when:

They get excited about:

They are afraid of:

My hopes for their experience with Girl Scouts are... and I want my Girl Scout to experience:

They are most looking forward to... in Girl Scouts. They are concerned about:

My Girl Scout's favorite activities at home, neighborhood, and school are:

I worry about... with this program:

A successful experience for us includes... and... helps my Girl Scout be successful.:

Their needs in this program include... (medical, safety, mobility, and social/communication)

They are motivated by... (How do you let them know they are doing a good job? What type of encouragement do you use—verbal, etc.?)

How would you like to participate in your Girl Scout's experience? What kind of help are you interested in providing?

Caregiver Name: _____ Date: _____