

Planning the Family Meeting: Kick off the Year Right!

What do the most successful troops have in common? Family meetings! Whether welcoming new families or seeing familiar faces, it's helpful to discuss goals, manage expectations, and get to know each other better.

Before the Meeting: Your Ultimate Checklist

TWO TO THREE WEEKS BEFORE

- Set a date and time (one hour to 90 minutes) –after work or on a weekend might be best – then send invites via email, text, or social media.
- Try to meet in the same location you will hold troop meetings, or somewhere familiar to everyone, if possible. The local school or community center is often a good bet.
- Remember to include the Girl Membership Online Registration link in your communications to ensure all girls are registered online.

ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Make enough packets of the following printed documents for each family or caregiver:
 - Girl Health History Forms
 - Annual Permission Form
 - Make Her Experience Memorable, from the Volunteer Toolkit
- Secure a tablet or laptop you can bring to the meeting should families need to register their girl or want to register themselves as volunteers
- Decide on an activity to keep girls and siblings who may attend busy while adults meet. Asking an older Girl Scout to lend a hand leading the activity can be helpful.

DAY BEFORE

- Create a sign-in sheet or use the New Troop Decisions resources for adults to fill in their names, their girls' names and contact information
- Gather name tags and plenty of pens.
- Pick up or arrange for any snacks or refreshments you wish to provide.

Meeting Agenda

While you're welcome to put your own unique spin on this meeting, following this format will ensure the most relevant information is communicated clearly and that everyone's on the same page.

➤ **Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)**

- Introduce yourself and your co-leader. Share why you volunteer your time with Girl Scouts, and go over the dates, times, frequency, and locations of upcoming meetings.
- Have caregivers introduce themselves and share expectations for this year of Girl Scouting.

➤ **Discover the Girl Scout Difference (15-20 minutes)**

- Explain our mission as well as the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
- Discuss how our girl-led, hands-on, collaborative program helps girls take risks, dream bigger, and gain important skills—all while having fun and making friends.
- Share overview of your year plan—including which badges, Journeys, special trips, and outdoor adventures the troop may participate in.

➤ **Family as Part of the Formula (10 minutes)**

- Explain how you'll be engaging family's in their Girl Scouts' lives by keeping them in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting.
- Encourage them to let their daughters "be the expert" at home, explaining or teaching the new skill they've learned to the rest of the family—the [Growth and Support for Your Girl](#) resource can help!
- Let them know there will be special events throughout the year for families to share with their girl and celebrate all they're achieving with their troop.

➤ **Get them Hooked on Helping (10 minutes)**

- Using the [Family Tips and Volunteer Opportunities](#) guide from the Volunteer Toolkit, point out that spending just a little time to help can make a big impact.
- Secure adults to help with organizing and managing the calendar for troop snacks, the carpool schedule, and the troop phone tree or social media page—all activities that can take as little as 15 minutes per week.
- Encourage caregivers to consider other leadership opportunities listed—emphasize they're not just welcome to lend a hand, they're *wanted*.

➤ **Money Matters (10 minutes)**

- Outline costs to families, such as sashes or vests, and other supplies needed for the year.
- Explain dues expectations, and how they'll be used to support the troop.
- If participating in the Girl Scout Cookie or the Fall Product Program, explain how money raised benefits the troop, and briefly go over the five critical skills girls will develop in the process.

➤ **Wrap It Up (10-15 minutes)**

- Make sure everyone has your phone and email, knows the troop number, and has all the information about the next troop meeting, such as date, time, location and any supplies the girls will need to bring.
- Collect forms then leave time for questions, concerns, and simply to get to know people better.
- If girls are present; form a circle, cross arms, and then join hands. Then, close the meeting with a Friendship Squeeze. First, ask for a volunteer to start the Squeeze. If needed, use the Quiet Sign to get everyone settled.

After the Meeting (all year)

Follow up with a thank you and keep the conversation going all year via email, in-person chats, and/or social media. Updating caregivers on troop activities helps them feel more invested and gives them a chance to build their girls' experiences at home.