

Girl Scout Meetings

When and how often to meet is up to you, your co-volunteers, parents, and girls. When planning regular meetings, consider what day and time and how often works out the best for girls and adults. Some troops meet weekly, others meet monthly. Some troops prefer meeting right after school, yet others find that weekends work best for them. For meeting place considerations [[SAFETY-WISE: Meeting Place Considerations](#)]

The sample sessions in the Leadership Journey adult guides will give you ideas about how to plan and hold successful troop meetings that allow girls to Discover, Connect, and Take Action as they have fun with a purpose. (See [[PROGRAM: The Girl Scout Leadership Experience](#)] for more on the three processes.) Many volunteers find it helpful to think of meetings having six parts, as outlined below, but feel free to structure the meeting in a way that makes sense for you and the girls.

As Girls Arrive Start-up activities are planned so that when girls arrive at the meeting they have something to do until the meeting begins. For younger girls, it could be coloring pages; teen girls might jot down a journal entry or just enjoy a little time to talk.

Opening The opening focuses the meeting and allows girls to start the meeting. Each troop decides how to open their own meeting—most begin with the Girl Scout Promise and Law, and then add a simple flag ceremony, song, game, story, or other ceremony designed by the girls. Girl Scout Brownies, for example, might create a new tradition by skipping in a circle while singing a song. Ceremonies, even when brief or humorous, make Girl Scout time special. Allow but don't require girls to say the Pledge of Allegiance, or Girl Scout Promise and Law, at meetings. We must understand if girls feel uncomfortable reciting pledges or participating in another tradition for any personal reason. We allow girls to refrain in participating and modify to meet their needs. The Journey adult guides contain ideas about openings that correspond to Journey themes.

Business Troop business may include taking attendance, collecting dues, making announcements, and planning an upcoming event or trip. This is a good time for girls to take turns leading, especially as they grow up! Some troops may move the business portion of the meeting to an earlier or later slot.

Activities Activities will depend on what the girls want to do in their troop and how they want to spend their collective time. Outdoor time is important, so encourage the girls to do an activity in a park or forest. If girls are interested in animals, encourage the girls to plan a visit to a zoo or animal shelter. As you engage in

one of the three National Leadership Journeys, review the "Sample Sessions at a Glance" in the adult guide for Journey activity ideas.

Fun Treats

Treats are an option some troops decide to include in their meetings and range from a food snack to having fun with a bottle of soap bubbles or a jump rope. If girls choose to include snacks, guide them to consider the health of a potential snack, as well as possible food allergies. Enlist the help of parents or guardians by asking them to sign up and bring a treat. You'll also find plenty of snack ideas and signup forms in the adult guide of most Leadership Journeys.

Clean-up

Clean-up is a great way for girls to get their meeting space back to the way it was when they arrived—maybe even cleaner! Girls can also take leadership of the cleaning themselves, deciding who does what. They might even enjoy the tradition of a kaper chart (a chore chart that lists all the chores and assigns girls' names to each), so that everyone takes turns at each responsibility.

Closing

The closing lets the girls know that the troop meeting is ending. Many girls close with the friendship circle, in which each girl stands in a circle, puts her right arm over her left, and holds the hand of the girl standing next to her. The friendship squeeze is started by one girl, and then passed around the circle until it comes back to the girl who started it. When the squeeze is finished, girls twist clockwise out of the circle lifting their arms and turning around and out of the circle. In addition, you may find some helpful, Journey-related closing ceremony ideas in the Journey's adult guide.

First Troop Meeting

When you first get together with girls (and this meeting may also include parents/guardians, or you may decide to hold a separate meeting for the adults), you'll want to get to know the girls, and give them a chance to get to know one another.

Icebreaker games that let girls share simple details about themselves are a great way to start off your first gathering. Journeys often start with such an icebreaker, so if you're digging into a Journey right away, you'll be all set. You can also check GSNorCal's resources or search the Internet for "icebreakers for kids" to find more ideas.

If you already know which Journey the girls want to do, you'll find it useful to accomplish some of the following during this meeting. (Note that all of these points are detailed in the adult guide for each Journey, too). If your girls haven't chosen a Journey yet, you can spend time during the first meeting talking about the themes of the three Journeys that are available for their grade level and find out which one the group would like to do. You can then discuss these points in the next meeting, if you run out of time.

1. **Introduce the Journey**, its theme, and its ties to leadership. Each Journey's adult guide gives you ideas for talking with girls and their parents/guardians about the Journey's theme and the Three Keys to Leadership (Discover, Connect, Take Action). Just follow Sample Session 1 and you'll be all set!
2. **Find out what interests the group** (and be sure to include the other adult volunteers), so that you and the girls can begin to customize the Journey. Do the girls want to dig deeper into a particular aspect of the Journey? Without promising anything (yet!), ask the girls to talk about what they're passionate about, what they've always wanted to do, and how they would spend their time if money and other barriers were no object. Remind the girls they can do activities inside or outside. Build off the ideas shared, but be sure to include opinions from all the girls. Ask direct questions of those who seem to be holding back or are unsure about answering, so everyone is included.
3. **Get the girls talking about how they want to schedule their time together.** Use the planning pages from their Journey (referring to your draft calendar only as needed, so that the girls lead). **Consider questions like these:**
 - Can girls organize and plan a field trip or longer travel opportunity that will allow them to learn more about a particular Journey topic or theme?
 - Is there an event that meshes with this topic or area of interest?
 - Can the girls locate and communicate with an expert in the field via email or social media?
 - Can they invite a guest speaker to answer questions or demonstrate particular skills?
 - Which badges can the group choose to work on that will deepen their skills in this particular area?
 - If they are Juniors or older, are they interested in pursuing their Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, or Gold Awards?
 - Do they have ideas for activities that will involve younger or older girls?

Volunteer Toolkit

For all troop levels, Daisy through Ambassador and multi-level troops, you can log into your [Volunteer Toolkit](#) to find meeting plans, and lots of other tools to help manage the troop.

Planning in a Girl-Led Environment

It's important to start planning your time with girls. You should consider the following questions and begin to map out your Girl Scout year:

How many times each month will you meet? When do you plan to break for holidays?

How many weeks do you need to allocate for the Girl Scout Cookie Program?

Will you have time in your schedule for guest speakers and other visitors?

If you've worked with this troop before, what are their preferences: badge work? field trips? other activities? For specific ideas on how to incorporate badges, trips, and other Girl Scout traditions

into a Journey, check out the online [Journey Guide](#) for the grade level of the girls you're partnering with.

If your troop will be meeting for less than a year (such as at a resident camp or during a series), you'll be able to adjust the calendar to suit your needs. In the same way, if you're planning a multi-year event (such as a travel excursion), add one or two more years to the framework.

After you've drafted a loose framework, ask the girls what they think. Or, create the online calendar together! Remember that you want girls to lead, but younger girls will need more guidance, while older girls will require much less. Seniors and Ambassadors may not even want you to draft a calendar in advance, so if they balk at what you've done, let them take the reins. (Journeys for older girls include planning pages specifically designed to help them customize their Journey.) Daisies and Brownies, on the other hand, may enjoy your calendar and just fill in a few ideas here and there, which will clue you in to their interests.

As your troop starts its Journey, get a discussion (or debate!) going on the Journey's theme and what it means to the girls. Probe to find out what they're most interested in accomplishing during their time together, and then help them connect those interests to their Journey.

Letting Girls Lead

Involving Girls in Meeting & Activity Planning

Help each troop member do her part to ensure the meeting and activities are enriching and fun. Based on their grade levels and abilities, girls may decide and plan opening and closing activities, bring and prepare treats, teach songs or games, and clean up. As girls grow, they can show and teach younger members about Girl Scouting. They can also assist you in preparing materials for activities. For trips, campouts, parent meetings, and multi-troop events, girls may be responsible for shopping, packing equipment, handing out programs, cleaning up, gathering wood, and so on. As long as you pay attention to grade level and maturity, what girls can do is endless! What better way to prepare them for life after high school?

Yearly Approach: In the spring the girls make lists of ideas for activities the following year. A "draft" calendar is then created for the last meeting and parents sign up to help with the activities. Over the summer, a tentative yearly calendar is put together with the meeting info and schedule along with the roster and calendar. Girls receive their information at the first meeting and then they can lead the meetings following the calendar that they set up.

Month-to-Month Approach: After the girls make some decisions about what they'd like to do, make a general calendar for the year with the big things they've planned, and then prepare a calendar each month with the regular meeting activities which are scheduled. That way, the girls can be planning as they go, and have more flexibility to plan in additional activities doing something they are enjoying. As well, there is less 'pressure' to finish projects since they can just keep going with them at the next meeting if they want to.

Getting the Girls' Ideas

Discussions and decision-making should be fun! Along with the fun techniques in the Journey sample sessions, here are some other fun ideas. It's a good idea to use many different ways to get the girls' ideas and engage them in their planning. Here are fun ways to bring out their ideas.

- **Brainstorm Graffiti Sheet:** Hang a large sheet of paper on the wall at each meeting. Let girls write ideas or add to other ones already written.
- **Brainstorm Session:** This immediately gives girls the feeling that anything is possible, and ideas will flow.
- **Checklists or Surveys:** Provide a list of possible activities that could be done. Leave space at the bottom of the sheet for them to write in suggestions.
- **Fives:** Everyone gives five ideas in each of the categories they agree on: crafts, outings, outdoor activities, service projects, awards, etc.
- **Idea or Dream Box:** Girls suggest activities.
- **Jelly Bean Game:** Each girl gets a certain number of jelly beans (or Cheerios, grapes, raisins, M&Ms, etc.). As you go around a circle, each girl gives an idea or answers a question (such as "What do I like to do?" or "Where would I like to go?") and eats her jelly bean. You can't eat a jelly bean unless you answer or speak up, and you can't answer/speak up unless you have a jelly bean.
- **Sticky Notes:** Have girls draw or write things they like to do on separate sticky notes to post on a large piece of paper for all to see.
- **"Taster" activities:** Try sample activities and ask for girls' reactions. They won't hide their enthusiasm (or lack of it!)
- **"What we like to do collage":** Have girls cut pictures from magazines or draw pictures of things they'd like to do.

Narrowing Choices:

First, allow girls to advocate for some of their choices. Here are some ways to find out the girls' feelings about the ideas.

- **Now, Soon, Later:** Three corners of the room are designated "Now, Soon, or Later". As each idea is said, have girls run to the area that corresponds with how they feel.
- **Pep 'N Flash:** Ideas are written down on separate index cards and passed out evenly to the girls. Each girl reads a card, all girls say Yea or Boo. If there are any Boos, the card is put in the center of the circle. Keep going around until the only cards left are the ones without any Boos. Narrow choices from there by having everyone only vote three times, etc.
- **Spectrum:** Have a line with one end for "My favorite idea ever" and the other end for "I'm not interested". For each idea, have the girls arrange themselves on the line according to their feelings.
- **Stickers:** Write the ideas on a large piece of paper. Have each girl place a sticker next to the ones she likes. Or, give each girl a specific number of stickers—e.g. "you can only vote five times."

Troop Government

Many troops employ a democratic system of governance so that all members have the opportunity to express their interests and feelings and share in the planning and coordination of activities. Girls partner with you and other adults, and you facilitate, act as a sounding board, and ask and answer questions. Girls from Daisies through Ambassadors will gain confidence and leadership skills when given the opportunity to lead their activities, learn cooperatively as a group, and learn by doing instead of by observing.

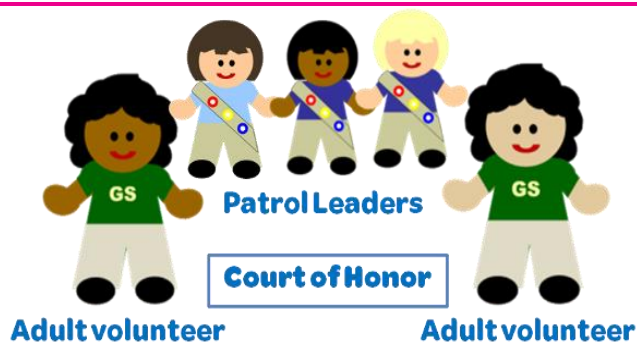
Girls may choose any form of troop government (or combination) that works for them. They may need to experiment with different things until the troop is running the way they would like it to. The aim is to find a way for every girl to express her ideas and be part of the decisions. The following are some traditions troops have used for girl-led governance, but these are just examples. Journeys offer examples of team decision-making too. View the [Troop Government](#) Resources for more details.



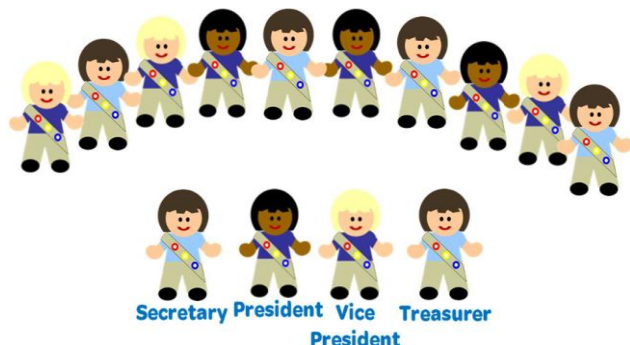
Daisy Circle/Brownie Ring: While sitting in a circle, girls create a formal group decision-making body. The circle is an organized time for girls to express their ideas and talk about activities they enjoy, and you play an active role in facilitating discussion and helping them plan. Girls often vote to finalize decisions. If girls are talking over each other, consider passing an object like a talking stick that entitles one girl to speak at a time.



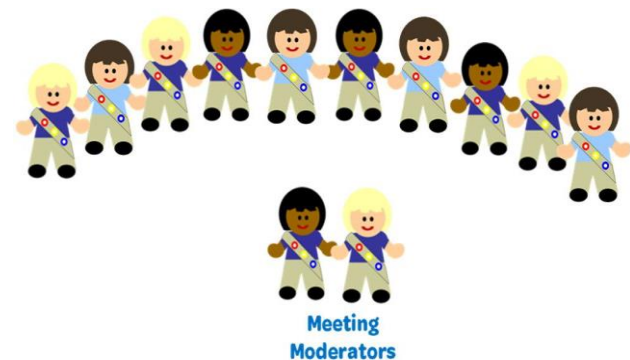
Junior/Cadette/Senior/Ambassador Patrol or Team System: In this system, large troops divide into small groups, with every member playing a role. Teams of four to six girls are recommended so that each girl gets a chance to participate and express her opinions. Patrols may be organized by interests or activities that feed into a take-action project, with each team taking responsibility for some part of the total project, and girls may even enjoy coming up with names for their teams.



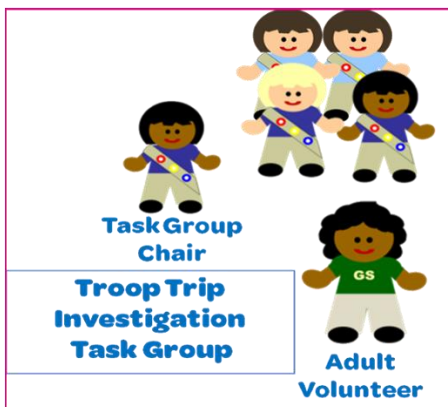
Patrol leaders meet with adults periodically in what is called a Court of Honor, where patrol leaders bring forward the ideas and plans their patrols are working on.



Junior/Cadette/Senior/Ambassador Executive Board: In the executive board system (also called steering committee), one leadership team makes decisions for the entire troop. This is similar to student government systems that girls may be familiar with. The boards' (elected officers) responsibility is to plan activities and assign jobs based on interests and needs, and the rest of the troop decides how to pass their ideas and suggestions to the executive board throughout the year. The executive board usually has a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer and holds its own meetings to discuss troop matters. Limit the length of time each girl serves on the executive board so all troop members can participate during the year.



Junior/Cadette/Senior/Ambassador Town Meeting: Under the town meeting system, business is discussed and decisions are made at meetings attended by all the girls in the troop. As in the patrol and executive board systems, everyone gets the chance to participate in decision-making and leadership. Your role is to act as a moderator, who makes sure everyone gets a chance to talk and that all ideas are considered.



Task Groups/Committees: Small troops are formed for specific tasks. Task troops may be used to investigate information on a particular question, plan and/or carry out parts of a troop project, or carry out routine and/or special tasks.