

### Meeting Place Considerations

When and how often to meet is up to you, your co-volunteers, parents, and girls: it may just be one time for this particular group of girls. Or, if you meet regularly, what day and time work best for the girls, for you, for your co-volunteers, and for other adults who will be presenting or mentoring? Once per week, twice a month, once a month? Most troops meet bi-weekly. Is after-school best? Can your co-volunteers meet at that time, or will meetings work better in the evenings or on the weekends?

Where to meet can be a bit trickier: a meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all girls. You might consider using meeting rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places girls enjoy spending time.

If you need to sign a contract or use permit or obtain a certificate of insurance for your site, you'll need to have council staff sign that for you. [\[MONEY: Contracts & Certificates of Insurance\]](#)

**Troops, service units, and committees are NOT legal entities, and therefore, cannot legally enter into contracts.** [Click for more info about having council staff review and sign your contract, facility agreement, use permit, or memorandum of understanding \(MOU\), or to request a Certificate of Insurance \[Money: Contracts & Certificates of Insurance\]](#)

### ONLINE RESERVATIONS, such as Civic Permits, Facilitron, and SchoolDude

Though it does not appear like a contract, there is one woven into all these online reservation systems. This means that whoever creates the account with the online reservation system and makes the reservation may be made liable for any damages made on the property during the Girl Scout meeting, activity or event.



**If you already have an online account with your school district**, email [insurance@gsnorcal.org](mailto:insurance@gsnorcal.org) to inform Council that you already have an account so some adjustments can be made to your account to meet compliance.



**If you are a New User**, email [insurance@gsnorcal.org](mailto:insurance@gsnorcal.org) with the following information:

- Your Name and role in your Troop
- Troop Number
- The email address you would like associated with your online account
- Your mobile number
- Name of your school district
- Name of school you would like to use

Here are a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations:

- **Cost:** The space should be free to use if at all possible. Contact your VDM (GSNorCal staff member) or service unit for help in locating a suitable space.
- **Size:** Make sure the space is large enough to accommodate the whole group and all planned activities.
- **Availability:** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.
- **Resources:** Determine what types of furnishings (table? chairs?) come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby of some sort, where you can store supplies or a safe outdoor space for activities.
- **Safety:** Ensure that the space is safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and has at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also, be sure first-aid equipment, smoke detectors and fire extinguisher are on hand.
- **Facilities:** Sanitary and accessible toilets are critical.
- **Communication-friendly:** Be sure your cell phone works in the meeting space.
- **Allergen-free:** Ensure that pet dander and other common allergens won't bother susceptible girls during meetings.
- **Accessibility:** Be sure the space can accommodate girls with disabilities, as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.

If this is your first time asking for a Girl Scout meeting place, here are a few speaking points to get you started:

"I'm a Girl Scout volunteer, with a group of \_\_\_\_\_ girls. We're doing lots of great things for girls and for the community, like \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. We're all about leadership—the kind that girls use in their daily lives and the kind that makes our community better. We'd love to hold our meetings here because \_\_\_\_\_."

Here are some questions to consider when deciding if your possible meeting place is suitable:

**Can we meet in a private home?** It is not recommended to hold troop meetings in a private home. Please remember to ensure these standards are in place:

- The private home must be the home of a registered and background checked adult volunteer.
- Girls may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender lives.
- Girls must not be left alone with an adult who is not registered and background checked.
- The troop needs to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members.
- Animals should be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space.
- Homeowners should have adequate Homeowners' Insurance or Renters' Insurance if they are conducting meetings in their home.

- Weapons must be out of view and in a locked space. Weapons and ammunition should be stored separately.
- Medication, cleaning products, or any poisonous substance must be stored in a secure space out of sight, out of the reach of children, preferably locked.

### **Meeting Place Safety Guide**

Whether meeting at a private residence or elsewhere, use the following checklist before each meeting to think about how to make your meeting place safer to prevent accidents or injuries. The safest possible meeting places should be chosen, and steps should be taken wherever possible to minimize potential risks listed in this guide.

Property owners and renters have legal liability if any person (invited or not) is injured while on their property. To protect your liability, adequate homeowners or renters' insurance is a must if Girl Scout meetings or other activities will be held at your place of residence. If you choose to hold Girl Scout meetings at your residence, you carry the same legal liability as when any other visitor is on your property or at your place of residence.

### **Outside Around the Meeting Place**

- Does the lighting system illuminate entrances, walkways, and parking?
- Are facility access points located in open, well-traveled areas?
- Are sidewalks and exterior stairs clear of snow, ice, and obstructions?
- Is playground equipment anchored so that it does not tip, slide, or move in an unintended manner?
- Are there pinch, crush or tearing points on individual pieces of playground equipment that could injure a girl?
- Do surface materials in fall zones under playground equipment absorb shock (materials such as rubber-like padding, sand, gravel; shredded wood products)?
- If the property has a pool, is the pool access locked so that girls cannot enter the pool area unless swimming activities are to be conducted? Please note that swimming (or being in a swimming pool) is considered a [high-adventure activity](#), which requires [approval](#) before your troop goes swimming.
- Are pool chemicals stored, secured, and out of reach from children?

### **Physical Hazards**

- Are the following kept out of reach and properly stored to prevent access to children?
  - All cleaning solutions
  - All prescription medications
  - All weapons
  - All tools and power equipment

- Is the area reasonably free of biting, and stinging insects?
- Is access restricted to recreational equipment, such as ATVs, archery equipment, trampolines, and other sports equipment, unless as part of the planned and supervised activity when allowed?

### **Inside the Meeting Place**

- Are there two or more separate, usable exits available?
- Are exits ever blocked?
- Are exits available clearly marked with emergency lighting?
- Are steps clear of trip and fall hazards?
- Are handrails and railings on stairs present and secure?
- Are floors and walking areas free of trip and fall hazards?
- Is floor space adequate for the desired activities?
- Are working toilets and sanitary facilities accessible?
- Are facilities adaptable for persons with special needs?
- Are electrical outlets protected with outlet covers?
- Are extension cords tucked away so that they will not be walked on or tripped over?
- Are barriers or warnings provided for hot surfaces like fireplaces, heaters, radiators, and wood stoves?
- Are fire extinguishers available?
- Is first aid equipment readily available?
- Is telephone service available and operational?
- Are emergency phone numbers provided for fire, ambulance, police, and poison control center?

### **Before the Girls Arrive**

- Look around to see if there is anything you can do to lessen the chance of an accident.
- Ensure that you have consulted the Safety Activity Checkpoints for all of the activities the girls will participate in.