Appendix: For Troop Volunteers

Girls and adults participating in troops can meet once a week, once a month, or twice a month for several months—how often is up to you and the girls. Troops can meet just about anywhere, as long as the location is safe, easily accessible to girls and adults, and within a reasonable commute ("reasonable" having different definitions in different areas: In rural areas, a two-hour drive may be acceptable; in an urban area, a 30-minute subway ride may be too long). In each meeting, girls participate in fun activities that engage them in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE).

Troops provide a flexible way for girls to meet. Some ideas include:

- Fourteen Girl Scout Brownies who meet twice a month from November through March at a local community center
- Seven girls who are homeschooled and meet weekly as a Girl Scout Cadette troop
- Girls who meet together once a week at their juvenile detention center to participate in Girl Scout activities

Forming a Troop Committee

You'll want to involve other adults in the troop—there's no need to go it alone or depend on too few adults! Many hands make light work, and the role is more fun when it's shared. Think about the people you know whom you admire, who can connect with girls, who are dependable and responsible, and who realistically have time to spend volunteering. (Remember that these adults will need to register as Girl Scout members, fill out volunteer application forms, take online learning sessions, and review written resources.) Consider business associates, neighbors, former classmates, friends, and so on. If you have trouble finding reliable, quality volunteers to assist, talk to your volunteer support team for advice and support. And feel free to use the sample welcome letter and friends/family checklist in the Girl Scout Daisy, Brownie, and Junior Leadership Journeys to assist you in expanding your troop's adult network.

Remember: Be sure every volunteer reviews and follows the 12 Girl Scout Safety Guidelines, available both in the Quick-Start Guide to this handbook and in the "Safety-Wise" chapter.

Your troop committee members might help by:

- Filling in for you
- Arranging meeting places
- Locating adults with expertise on a topic of special interest to girls
- Assisting with trips and chaperoning
- Managing troop records

A troop committee may be made up of general members or may include specific positions, such as:

- **Cookie Manager:** A volunteer who would manage all aspects of Girl Scout cookie activities
- **Transportation Coordinator:** The volunteer you'd look to whenever you need to transport girls for any reason; this person would have volunteers available to drive and chaperone
- **Record Keeper:** A treasurer/secretary rolled into one person—someone to keep track of the money and keep the books

Set up roles that work for you, and draw on other volunteers who possess skill sets that you may lack. When you're ready to invite parents, neighbors, friends, colleagues, and other respected adults to partner with you, send them a letter and invite them to their first troop committee meeting. **See pg 26 in the Forms Chapter for the Troop Committee Sign-Up form.**

Holding Troop Meetings

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 the "Girl Scouting as a National Experience" chapter of this handbook 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. 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. Treats are an option some troops decide to include in their meetings and range from a bottle of soap bubbles or a jump rope to a food snack. 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 habit 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.

You 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!

Letting Girls Lead

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.

The following are some traditions troops have used for girl-led governance, but these are just examples. National Leadership Journeys offer examples of team decision-making, too.

- **Daisy/Brownie Circle:** While sitting in a circle (sometimes called a ring), 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, such as 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; girls may even enjoy coming up with names for their teams.
- **Junior/Cadette/Senior/Ambassador Executive Board:** In the executive board system (also called a steering committee), one leadership team makes decisions for the entire troop. The board's 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.

Transporting Girls

How parents decide to transport girls between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent's decision and responsibility.

For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities—outside the normal time and place—in which a group will be transported in private vehicles:

- Every driver must be an approved adult* volunteer and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle.
- **Girls never drive other girls**.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers in the vehicle, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in *Volunteer Essentials* must be followed.
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in *Volunteer Essentials* must be followed. Care should be taken so that a single car (with a single adult driver) is not separated from the group for an extended length of time.

*"Adult" is defined by the age of majority in each state.

For more about driving, see the "Transporting Girls" section of the "Safety-Wise" chapter of this handbook.

Looking at a Sample Troop Year

Here is just one example of how you and the girls could set up your troop year.

- Hold a parent/guardian meeting.
- Open a checking account, if needed.
- Register all the girls in the troop.
- Meet together for the first time, allowing the girls to decide how they can learn each others' names and find out more about each other.
- Kick off a Leadership Journey with the opening ceremony recommended in the first sample session, or a trip or special event that fits the theme. Have the girls brainstorm and plan any trip or event.
- Enjoy the full Journey, including its Take Action project.
- Along the way, add in related badge activities that girls will enjoy and that will give them a well-rounded year.
- Have the girls plan, budget for, and "earn and learn" in the Girl Scout Cookie Program.
- Help girls plan a field trip or other travel opportunity.
- Encourage girls to plan a culminating ceremony for the Journey, including awards presentations, using ideas in the Journey girls' book and/or adult guide.
- Pre-register girls for next year.
- Camp out!
- Participate in a council-wide event with girls from around your region.
- Have the girls plan and hold a bridging ceremony for girls continuing on to the next Girl Scout grade level.

Reengaging Girls

The end of the troop year doesn't have to be the end of a girls' time with Girl Scouting, or the end of your time with girls. Some girls may no longer have time for a full-year commitment and will be unsure what's next for them. Others won't be able to imagine their lives without this same group of girls. Here's how you can best reengage your troop:

- Some girls may want other options besides troops. That's okay—Girl Scouts offers many ways to participate. Talk to girls about day and residence camp, travel opportunities, series offerings, and events your council may offer. Older girls, especially, enjoy these shorter-term, flexible ways to be Girl Scouts.
- Some girls will be excited to bridge to the next grade level in Girl Scouting, and will look to you for guidance on how to hold a bridging ceremony. Even if you're not sure of your continued participation with Girl Scouts (and we hope you will find lots of exciting ways to be involved, even if leading a troop no longer fits your life), be sure to capture their excitement and work with them to a plan a meaningful bridging ceremony.
- If you plan to stay with this troop, but some girls are bridging to the next grade level, talk to your council about helping them decide how they'd like to continue in Girl Scouting—perhaps in series, events, or travel!
- Talk to girls about earning their Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, or Gold Awards, which are opportunities for them to make a dramatic difference in their communities—and to have plenty to brag about with college admissions officers, too.

And what about you? If you want to stay with this troop, start working with them to plan their group activities next year. And if you're a little worn out but are interested in staying with Girl Scouts in other, flexible ways, be sure to let your council know how you'd like to be a part of girls' lives in the future. Are you ready to volunteer at camp? help organize a series or event? take a trip? The possibilities are endless.