

A GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL PARENT MEETING



PARENT MEETING OUTLINE

Parent meetings are a great tool for leaders to communicate with parents and get the families involved! We recommend that Troops host a parent meeting at the beginning of each Girl Scout year. If your Troop participates in any Girl Scout Product Sales program, we recommend having parent meetings to discuss these programs. Here is an outline for running a great parent meeting!

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

Kick off your meeting by introducing yourself and any co-leaders you'll be working with, and have each parent/caregiver introduce themselves. Depending on the size of your group, you might also have the parents say what they hope their girl will gain through Girl Scouting. It's an opportunity for you to not only get to know the adults in your troop, but to also get a sense of the kinds of activities that excite the larger group. One of the best parts about Girl Scouting is the inclusive, welcoming environment, and as the troop's leader, you can set that tone for parents.

MEETING TIMES AND LOCATIONS

At your very first meeting, have parents bring their calendars, their daughter's calendar, and any other activity schedules. Getting all the possible conflicts and plans on the table at once ensures that your meeting schedule won't be derailed by other important events. If you have a family who can't attend, ask them to let you know ahead of time what their open/free days are for meetings. You definitely want to do your best to accommodate everyone, but most parents understand that scheduling is the most complicated game of Tetris ever devised, and the biggest challenge we face as leaders.



TROOP PARENT MEETING

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN YOU'RE PLANNING YOUR MEETING SCHEDULE:

How often you will meet? Is every week reasonable, or will you do more events on weekends? How old are your girls, and how long can meetings to ensure maximum engagement? What frequency is the best balance between what the girls want and the parents can manage?

Where you will meet? Will you have one meeting location during the year? Has the location been reserved? Do you meet at homes? Should you schedule that out ahead of time?

How will you handle snacks and share resources? Will you have snacks at your meetings? Who will bring them, and how often? Has this been added to your troop calendar so people can remember? Will you send reminders?

PRIORITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

As troop leader, it's easy to get focused on Girl Scouts and only Girl Scouts, but girls have so many other activities and extracurriculars these days. Knowing each girl and family's priorities will allow you to better support and plan their involvement in Girl Scouts. Not only do you want the opportunity to support her at a play, a basketball game, a swim meet, or recital, but you also want to understand the entire family's goals and needs. Are they all about that Girl Scout life, or is it one of their many activities?

You'll also want to discuss troop expectations. Do you have policies on pick up, meeting attendance, emergency procedures? You can use the parent meet as a space to create or adapt these policies or remind guardians of current troop policies.

COMMUNICATION

Being clear and thorough about your communication methods is a great start. Discuss and decide how you will communicate with parents and how they can communicate with you. Will there be a shared calendar? Do you want to have a group chat, facebook page, communication app (like GroupMe or Band), or email? You can utilize just one communication tool or multiple! Make sure the communication method you choose is something you as the leader are comfortable with and is accessible to all leaders!

Above all, your best communication tool is your relationship with each family. Building rapport with parents and making sure they are happy with the Girl Scout experience means that they feel comfortable talking with you and telling you what's working and what's not.

TROOP PARENT MEETING

GET DOWN TO BUSINESS

FINANCES

Money is a necessary resource in running a troop; paying memberships, planning events, and even attending camp or travel programs are all part of an amazing Girl Scout experience. Discuss the financial ability of parents to contribute, and the financial needs of the troop. Will you collect dues? What kind of activities do the girls want to do? How much will dues be? How often will you collect them? How much do you want the Troop to be responsible for compared to families? Think of as many possible needs and issues ahead of time, and try to answer as many as possible. Leave no stone unturned at this meeting, and encourage open conversation and dialogue so families don't feel pressured or overburdened financially by their participation.

PAPERWORK

This is a great time to check in with the families to make sure that Girls are registered for the year, have a laptop handy or membership instructions so the caregivers can complete their Girl's membership. You'll want to have enough copies of the Yearly Permission Slip & Health History Form and photo releases for caregivers to complete at the meeting. Some troop leaders have also found success in sharing a "troop contract" or "troop year charter" that tells parents exactly what to expect during the year.

CREATE A TEAM-LIKE ATMOSPHERE

GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

Teamwork makes the dream work, and your parent volunteers can help your troop dream big. Be prepared to share a list of specific tasks that you'll need help with throughout the year—troop snacks, carpooling, managing the troop's social media and communications—and note the time required for each so parent know what to expect. Some may be surprised that some recurring tasks will only take about 15 minutes of their time each week! You can utilize the Ways Adults Can Help Form for guardian sign ups!

You can also take this opportunity to specify how parents can use their unique skills and strengths to pitch in. Everyone brings their gift to the troop; the leader can't do everything and that's OK. Remember, rotating volunteer tasks eases the burden on specific people and spreads the work evenly, just like Kaper Charts with the Girls.

Remember to discuss Adult membership and background checks for volunteer that are working with Girls or keeping track of Girl Scout money.

CLOSING WITH INTENTION

Leave time for any questions before you officially close the meeting and remind the families how you'll stay in touch. Let the group know that by actively sharing in troop life, they're also modeling what leadership looks like for their girls!

TROOP PARENT MEETING



NEW TROOP TIPS & TRICKS FOR YOUR PARENT MEETINGS

IF YOUR TROOP HAS JUST FORMED A PARENT MEETING IS A GREAT WAY TO KICK OFF YOUR YEAR! HERE ARE SOME ITEMS TO ADD INTO YOUR PARENT MEETING.

INTRODUCE GIRL SCOUTS

Explaining the Girl Scout mission and the breadth of experiences the girls will enjoy is a great way to get all adults on the same page. Some ways to do this include showing a short video by from GSUSA or GSNEYNY about Girl Scouting, explain what badges and patches are, and review some of the Girl Scout rules. Share with the families some of the Girl Scout Traditions they can expect to see at the troop. Share when the Girls will want to wear their Girl Scout uniform and how to set up all of the badges and patches to showcase your Girl Scout pride!

DISCUSS MEETING PLANS

Review with the parents what will happen at your Girl Scout meetings. This is all new to them and you may not be someone they know well. Make sure to cover your meeting structure, what Girls will work on, and some of the topics you plan to cover.

WHEN TO HOLD YOUR PARENT MEETING

You'll have to decide when to hold your parent meeting. Some leaders prefer to have the meeting before the Girls meet to get families on the same page, some run it at the same time as the first Girl Meeting – if they have enough Leaders, while other prefer to meet after the Girls have met first to give time for Girl-led choices.

VIRTUAL PARENT MEETING



If your troop is meeting virtually for part or all of the year, or if your families are busy and find it hard to meet in person, running your parent meeting virtually is a great option! Here are some tips to adapt your meeting virtually:

SHARE YOUR SCREEN

Utilize your screen share feature during your meeting to share the meeting agenda, Girl Scout website, information videos, or anything else you want to highlight to the parents. Since you're not able to hand out material ahead of time this can be a great substitution.

SET EXPECTATIONS

Just like you would with a virtual troop meeting, set the expectations for guardians during the call. Do you want videos on? Should the chat be used for questions or do you want them to unmute? How should they follow up if they have questions after the meeting?

GET MATERIAL OUT IN ADVANCE

You can mail out paperwork or do porch drop offs before the meeting so parents have copies of material you would traditionally hand out during the meeting. You can also add something fun in the material – people always like a treat, like candy!

IF YOUR TROOP MEETINGS ARE VIRTUAL

If you are meeting as a troop in a virtual setting, make sure to discuss this at your Virtual Parent Meeting. Review the safety around virtual meetings, how materials will be shared with the Girls, and what additional parent help may be needed.