Short & Snappy—Learning Opportunity for Volunteers

What Should My Troop Meeting Look Like?
For some new troop leaders, starting out the first meeting can be scary or intimidating. They wonder, am I doing it right? What should I be doing during the meeting? Is there a structure I should follow?

Having a routine for troop meetings can also be a key component of good girl behavior. Girls know what is expected of them.

Discuss with your leaders the Six Parts of a Troop Meeting, Troop Government and the resource planning sheet on the following pages.

Six Parts of a Troop Meeting
Start-Up Activity
Opening
Business
Program Activity
Clean-up
Closing
Optional

Troop Government
Girl Scout Daisy Circle
Girl Scout Brownie Ring
Town Meeting
Executive Board
Patrol System
Court of Honor

Activity
Host a mock troop meeting using these models. Pick an age level to represent, Daisy, Brownie, Junior, etc. If you choose Daisy, set up the meeting to be able to run a Girl Scout Daisy Circle. Have fun Daisy activities for the start-up and program activity. The business portion could be talking about the six parts and the troop government options. Your opening activity could be the Promise and Law and your closing could be the Friendship Circle. New troop leaders will need to practice both.
WHAT DO YOU DO AT A GIRL SCOUT TROOP/GROUP MEETING?

Most Girl Scout troop/group meetings have the same general format and are usually one to two hours in length. The basic parts of a meeting are:

Start Up Activity—Start up activities are self directed. Girls can do them alone or in pairs with minimal supervision. This gives leaders a chance to meet the girls and parents as they arrive. This could include games, making name tags, an activity that may introduce the main activity of the day, or journaling.

Opening - An activity that starts the meeting. Opening activities should help the girls focus on the meeting and begin interacting as a group. Examples of typical opening are: a simple flag ceremony, learning or saying the Girl Scout Promise or Girl Scout Law, learning about each other, reading a story.

Business - The business of the troop/group is conducted during the business portion of the meeting and may include basic elements such as dues collection and attendance, record keeping, short planning for upcoming events, or making a new kaper chart. (A kaper is a special Girl Scout word for “chore”. A kaper chart is a simple way to rotate responsibilities.) With kapers and all troop business, girls can get to try out a variety of skills. The girls should be encouraged to handle as much as their age and experience allows.

Program Activity - The highlight of the meeting: a girl’s answer when her parent asks her, “What did you do at your Girl Scout meeting today?” It might be and activity or two from a Journey you are working on, the badge you are going to complete, a guest speaker, or a community service project. When choosing an activity, it is important to look at it from the girls’ perspective. Is the activity driven by the girls’ interest? Also, is the activity suitable for your meeting place?

Clean-up - The girls assigned to clean up should have their names on the kaper chart. This assignment should be rotated among all of the girls in the troop. Girl Scouts always leave a place better than they found it. Work is easier while singing a song or when it's made into a game.

Closing - In the closing, emphasize what the girls have accomplished that day and what activities they can look forward to in the future. Closing activities could include gathering in a friendship circle and doing the friendship squeeze, or maybe going around the circle talking about their favorite part of the meeting and why. Meetings end with simple closing ceremonies. After a few examples and a little encouragement, the girls will come up with suitable openings and closings on their own.

Optional — Girls may choose to have a nutritious snack at any scheduled time during the meeting. The group decides on who brings the snack.

Where do we start?

Before you plan your first meeting, review the resources available for your troop/group grade level (The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting or the Journeys). Your first few meetings will include registration for girls and adults, getting to know the girls and helping them get to know you, learning the Girl Scout Promise and Law and sharing the special stories of Girl Scouting with the girls. You will want to find out what the girls are interested in, maybe help them plan an investiture and rededication ceremony, and participate in lively, fun activities such as songs and games.

Note: It is often easier to plan a meeting if you have a set goal or a special theme. For example, if the girls have expressed an interest in learning about safety, your activity for the meeting might be to practice fire safety procedures. You could extend this theme to your next meeting by arranging for a field trip to the fire house, arranging for a guest speaker from a child abuse agency, or creating a first aid kit with the girls. Working from a written plan is often easier and more effective than improvising, but make sure when making the written plan, the girls have given you the ideas of the activities. Always involve the girls in the planning to insure it is “girl-led”.

Use the sample meeting plan on the next page to help with this process. Girls can fill in the form. Young girls will need your assistance, older girls can do all the planning.
Sample Meeting Planning Form

Meeting #:____

Purpose:

__________________________________________________________________________

Preparation:

__________________________________________________________________________

Start Up Activity:

__________________________________________________________________________

Opening:

__________________________________________________________________________

Business:

__________________________________________________________________________

Program Activity:

__________________________________________________________________________

Clean-up:

__________________________________________________________________________

Closing:

__________________________________________________________________________

Leaders should bring:  Girls should bring:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Troop Government
- Every grade level of Girl Scouting uses some form of troop government.
- Troop government is a way for girls to learn responsibility, independence and how to become leaders!
- Troop government is designed to be progressive, building on the skills learned in previous years.
- When the girls reach Girl Scout Juniors and on through Girl Scout Ambassadors, the girls take on more responsibility of running the troop and thus should decide which form of troop government they will use.
- You may want to try all three out before the girls make a final decision. And, if the system they chose is not working for the troop, the troop can then decide on another form of government for themselves.

Girl Scout Daisy Circle
Girl Scout Daisies can help make some of the decisions about their troop through the Girl Scout Daisy Circle. It is the business part of a Girl Scout Daisy meeting and at this age lasts only 5 to 10 minutes. This part of the meeting is led by the Troop Leader. It is best for the Leader to give girls two or three choices to pick from at this age. Decisions could include things such as where to go on a field trip or what kind of service project the girls would like to participate in. Simplicity is the key here.

Girl Scout Brownie Ring
The Girl Scout Brownie Ring is very similar to the Girl Scout Daisy Circle but expands to the abilities of these now somewhat "older" girls. Girls can now begin to lead discussions and "brainstorm" ideas. A Ring "Leader" may be designated to lead discussions, but make sure that all girls are given this leadership opportunity.

When someone wishes to speak, a special "Talking Signal" is used in the Girl Scout Brownie Ring. This is indicated by the girl placing the two fingers of her right hand on the floor (or table, if you are seated at a table instead of the floor). The Girl Scout Brownie Ring is a good way to make all of the major decisions in your troop from how to spend cookie profits to which Try-It to work on next.

Town Meeting
In a Town Meeting, the entire troop makes its decisions together. A Moderator is generally needed to lead group discussions. Officers such as Secretary and Treasurer may be elected if the troop feels that there is a need. This generally only works well in small groups but can work in large groups if the girls can stay on task.

Executive Board
The Executive Board consists of the "officers" of the troop. They generally include a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Job descriptions should be agreed upon as well as the duration of office. It is important, especially at the beginning of self-government, that everyone has the opportunity to participate at some time throughout the year. These "board" members meet on a regular basis to decide matters for the troop. Some method needs to be devised for the troop members to give input to the Executive Board. This could be a simple suggestion box at a troop meeting. This system tends to work well with smaller troops.
Patrol System
The Patrol System is the most versatile of the systems of government. The troop is divided into smaller units called patrols. The ideal patrol size is about 5-8 girls. Each Patrol elects a Patrol Leader responsible for running their patrol meetings. An Assistant Patrol Leader is also a good idea in the event that the Patrol Leader cannot make a meeting. All troop business can be handled in these patrols. Attendance and dues can be recorded by the patrols. For any given outing, chores may be divided up with each patrol responsible for its own task.

In order for the troop to run smoothly and as a group, Patrol Leaders should come together periodically (at least once a month) to discuss troop issues and make group decisions. This is called the "Court of Honor". Each patrol gives their input to the Patrol Leader who presents their viewpoint at the Court of Honor. Also included in the Court of Honor are any other troop officers such as Secretary and Treasurer. The Patrol System can be very successful, but only if the girls are given skills with which to succeed.

Court of Honor
Generally consisting of the Troop Officers and the Patrol Leaders, the Court of Honor meets on a regular basis to plan troop activities. Monthly meetings can be used to plan events to occur the following month. A long meeting once or twice a year can be used for long-term planning of troop events and planning the troop yearly calendar. If you have a troop Moderator or President, this person generally presides over the Court of Honor meetings.

What if girls have little or no experience in troop governance?
If older girls have not experienced making group decisions on their own, use a very focused, single-topic version of troop government formats. For example, use the Town Meeting format with only one topic, like what service project would they like to do. Or run a discussion as if it were a Girl Scout Brownie Rig, using Girl Scout Brownie Ring rules for talking and brainstorming. Do this for several smaller topics. The leader might lead the first few discussions, but after that the girls should be leading the discussions. Rotate discussion leaders. A bit of practice and the girls would be ready to function more independently in patrols.