ICEBREAKERS
Learning Opportunity for Volunteers

Suggestions on How a Troop Leader Can Start the Year Off Right

With fall approaching, a new GS year is beginning. All summer you’ve been looking forward to meeting with the girls and exploring new projects, activities, and possibilities. So why do you have “new school year” jitters? Whether you are a seasoned volunteer or new to Girl Scouting, here are five steps to help you start the year off right.

Five Steps for Success for a Troop Leader:

1. **Set the Tone**—You set the tone for the girls. Whether they are new to Girl Scouting or returning Girl Scouts, you want everyone to feel comfortable.

2. **Have Some Fun**—Need an icebreaker to get things started? Try some games or energy burners. Get them up and moving, and before you know it, everyone’s having fun. Check out the attached games and icebreakers.

3. **Mix it Up**—It’s only natural for girls to want to stay with what’s familiar, but cliques aren’t cool! Encourage the girls to make new friends within the troop or group. Remind them of that Girl Scout classic: “Make new friends, but keep the old...”

4. **Ask the Girls**—Girl involvement is vital for success. Whether it’s deciding which petals to earn, where to take a trip, or what type of community service project to do, girls need to have a say in what they do. Encourage the girls to visit the GSUSA site ‘A World for Girls’ at http://www.girlscouts.org/ forgirl/ to get activity ideas and to get them thinking about what they’d like to discuss and do.

5. **Chill Out**—Everyone has hectic schedules—both you and the girls! They need to put their feet up, chat with friend, and have some down time. And so do you!

Remember—you have a lot of support. In addition to the wonderful staff at your GS council, GSUSA has a lot of resources. From new programming coming out, to the latest research, there’s a world of strategies available to you.

**How to Make Everyone Feel Welcome**

How do you create a comfortable and fun environment? These tips can help the girls feel welcome, regardless of their age.

- **Call each girl by name.** Girls will sense that you view them as individuals.
- **Acknowledge their questions.** They will know you are listening and interested.
- **Share your experiences.** Girls want to connect with you, this is one way they can do so.
- **Get them moving.** Movement release tension. Get the girls up for a game and watch their shyness or reluctance to participate disappear.
- **Mix and Match.** Assign rotating “buddies”. Have the girls draw names from a hat or draw colored straws.
- **Ask the girls what they want to do.** The latest research shows that if the girls don’t have a say, they are not doing activities they enjoy. They are more likely to either act out or drop out.

**Activity:** Pick an icebreaker from list on next page and play with the SU adults. You can also divide by levels instead and have each level pick an icebreaker and play it. Ask leaders to share first of the year meeting activities. (If time allows)
My Name Is

**How to play:** Girls sit in a circle or a number of small circle, depending upon the size of the group. One girl is asked to tell the group her name. She says, “My name is Kelly Green.” The girl on her left then says, “Her name is Kelly Green and my name is Maria Lopez.” (Girl use their real names) The next girls then says, “Her name is Kelly Green, her name is Maria Lopez, and my name is Shanna Smith.” This continues until the last girl in the circle tries to name all the girls in the group. If a girl cannot recall a name, others in the circle may help her.

Linda Lemon

**How to play:** Girls make a circle. Tell the girls they are going to the market to purchase something they like, but it must begin with the same letter as their first name. The first girl might say, “My name is Linda, and I am going to the store to buy a lemon.” The next girl might say, “My name is Malia, and I am going to the store to get a mango and a lemon.” Player three might say, “My name is Naomi, and I am going to the store to buy a nightshirt and a mango and a lemon.” The last girl gets to name everything!

Variation: Play shopping bag upset. Have the girls change places and repeat the process from any place in the circle.

Toss the String

**You need:** A ball of string or yarn. Groups of 15 or less.

**How to play:** Have the group form one or more circles. The girl with the ball of yarn starts by calling out a girl’s name and tossing the yarn to her, being sure to hold onto the end of the string. The girl who catches the ball must call out another girl’s name and toss the ball to her while holding part of the string. The object is to include everyone and create a spider web with the string. The leader can then ask one girl to pull on her string while everyone else holds on. How many girls can feel the string being pulled? Use this as a starting point for a discussion on the importance of group cooperation and an individual’s contribution to the group.

3’s Company

**You need:** Index cards, pens or pencils.

**How to play:** Write a word on an index card. The word must be a word that comes in 3’s such as Larry, Moe & Curly or Bronze, Silver and Gold. At the bottom of the card, write the other two words that match. Make sure to have enough cards, and if you have too many cards, make the adjustment accordingly. After everyone has found their “matches”, tell them that they have to sit with their “matches” for snack or for the next activity. This gets people to mingle even more instead of staying in their groups.

Colors of Life

**You need:** A bag of M & M’s.

**How to play:** Take a bag of M&M’s and tell everyone to grab a handful, but to not eat them. Assign a different meaning to each color, blue = family, green = school, yellow = friends. However many they have in their hands, that is how many facts they have to tell. They may also eat them either after the game or directly after they say their fact.