

WHAT IS A PARENTS' MEETING

A parents' meeting is a meeting held traditionally by a troop leader to introduce themselves, inform parents about Girl Scouting, and what kind of help the troop will need from the parents. The leader has already been approved, cleared, and trained, and has probably had one or two meetings with the girls in her troop by the time she has the first parents' meeting. Some leaders have a parents' meeting every few weeks to recruit help as needed.

At times, when there are new leaders, they are unfamiliar with procedures of parents' meeting and will need guidance and help from the recruiter, troop consultant, or membership specialist.

The following is a step-by-step procedure for a parents' meeting

Planning the Parents' Meeting:

- The troop leader and co-leader are responsible for planning and conducting the meeting with the help of the recruiter
- The leader and co-leader decide how often they want to have parents' meetings. Each troop should try to have one parents' meeting at the beginning of each year. This meeting will help orient the parents to the troop plans and to make clear the responsibilities of the parents
- Consider who will be invited. Are girls to be included (parents are more likely to attend if they are), and if so, are activities planned for them?
- Arrange for a meeting place and time
- Objectives for parents' meetings:
 - Introducing leaders and co-leaders to parents.
 - Informing parents about Girl Scouting and what troop activities the leaders and girls have planned
 - Recruiting help from the parents of the girls in the coming year
 - Forming troop committees

Preparing for the Parents' Meeting

- A written checklist of the necessary preparation will be helpful
- Publicity should begin at least two weeks prior to the meeting. There should be a follow-up telephone call the week of the meeting (preferably 3 or 4 days before the meeting). Notify parents by e-mail, phone, or note sent home with the girls
- Check your supplies: Masking tape and large sheets of paper, felt tip markers, name tags, attendance sheets, and any handouts for parents. If parents will be filling out forms have pens and writing surfaces for them to complete the paperwork before they leave
- Plan the refreshments – perhaps coffee, tea, and cookies
- Early planning facilitates better organization resulting in greater success
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Conducting the Parents' Meeting

- Enthusiasm and use of a positive attitude are of prime importance
- How you begin the meeting sets the mental attitude of the group for the rest of the meeting. The meeting should be well organized so that everything runs smoothly and all pertinent information is covered
- The parents' meeting should be kept simple, fun, short, and to the point

Sample - Agenda for a First Parent Meeting

The first meeting with parents is crucial. It is where they learn about how Girl Scouting really works. Use the outline below or develop an agenda of your own.

Note: For new Leaders, a Girl Scout representative may be available to attend this meeting

Welcome

- Introduce yourself and other persons taking part in the meeting
- Brief explanation of your job and reason for being there

Business

- Briefly explain the structure and purpose of the Girl Scout organization
- Program information - explain:
 - Program level information for the troop - badges, journeys etc.
 - Future Service Unit or Council events
- Health and Safety Standards
 - Girl Medical History
 - Permission slips
 - Transportation and seat belts (booster seats when necessary)
 - Insurance (including Proof of Insurance .Coverage for drivers)
- Reintroduce Leaders - give some background information on them and what their jobs are.
Explain:
 - Troop meeting day, time, and place
 - Uniforms (optional)
 - Troop refreshments (optional)
 - What's expected of the girls
 - Parent's responsibilities as to leaving and picking up girls from meeting
 - Communicating - a two-way street between leadership and parents
 - Troop roster (confidential distribution)
- You or the GS representative talks about "How Parents Can Help the Troop"
 - Girl Scouts as a parent/child activity
 - Troop Team overview
 - Specific positions needed
- Finances - discuss:
 - National registration dues
 - Family Partnership Campaign
 - Product Program (primary income for troop)
 - Troop dues
- Paperwork to be completed by parents
 - Creating an eBiz account
 - Online GSUSA membership registration
 - Girl Medical History
 - Troop Meeting Permission slip
 - How you can help the troop

Closing Remarks and "Thank you for attending" Evaluation and Follow-up

- A thorough evaluation conducted by the leader and co-leader or the Recruiter in a few quiet moments following the meeting will allow for a positive learning experience. It will be a chance to appraise the meeting and find its good and bad points, so the next parents' meeting will run even more smoothly and successfully
- Prompt follow-up on potential parent helpers is essential