

# Tips for Successful Service Unit Meetings

## Why is the service unit and meetings so important?

The service unit is the local volunteer support group for troops in a specific area. Yes, a ‘support group’ - a place to share concerns and find mentors. Regardless of how committed to the girls a new leader may be, without the human connection this leader is highly likely to begin to feel isolated, and eventually lost after one or two years (taking all of those girls with her).

## Ways to Make Your Service Unit Meetings Friendly, Fun, and Informative

- Have refreshments where they can serve themselves and chat while they eat. Rotate hostess duties by school, troop, or level.
- Devote meeting time to hands-on activities rather than lecture or flier reading.
- Model meetings upon what a Girl Scout meeting for girls might be like. Inform people through activities that teach instead of lectures and reading.
- Have icebreaker activities that allow people to meet one another.
- Make name tags to be worn at each meeting. It’s easier to talk to someone new if you at least know her or his name. Collect the name tags after each meeting to hand out again next month.
- Have “Trivia” questions throughout the meeting. Throw prizes to the people with correct answers. This helps get the information out about Volunteer Essentials, Council Policies, Safety Activity Checkpoints, etc.
- Give out “leader bucks” and then have occasional auctions to spend them. These can be earned for attending, contributing, taking on a team position, helping with a committee, taking additional girls, etc.

## Meeting Attendance Tips

- Publish a calendar of meeting dates. Hand it out again at the first service unit meeting and explain that each troop should be represented at every meeting.
- Put the date of the next meeting on the bottom of your agenda.
- Meet the same day, time, and place every month.
- Send a reminder email, text or postcard prior to each meeting. .
- Have event registration deadlines coincide with service unit meetings.
- Make phone calls to extend a personal invitation to leaders and be sure to explain why they should attend (meet other leaders, stay up to date, learning opportunity, etc.)
- Have a designated greeter welcome everyone as they arrive, especially newcomers.
- Have an older girl troop offer babysitting in another room as a service to leaders.
- Assign “Girl Scout Sisters” or “Leader Buddies” who call each other to see how things are going, remind one another about the meeting and ride to meetings together.
- Have a theme! Incorporate it into your agendas, recognitions, ceremonies, everything! Use it to tie your year together. (I.e.: Teach a different knot at every meeting, give everyone a new recipe at each meeting.)

- Reward people for attending with candy, an extra handout, a special sticker on their nametag, etc. A little recognition items shows your appreciation that they made this meeting a priority.
- Have door prizes. Nothing fancy, just fun or thematic. Be sure to have one of the drawing at the very end of the meeting. Again, you must be present to win!
- Say THANK YOU! Remind leaders that what they are doing is important and how much you appreciate their making the extra effort to provide the best program experience for girls.

## Meeting Management Tips

If a group member...

Talks without allowing others to participate.

Always presents the negative side of an issue.

Talk about subjects that are not pertinent.

Gets lost while trying to make a point.

Engages in side conversations.

Represents the interests of another group.

Acts superior to the group.

States messages that are judgmental.

Acts bored or indifferent.

Is timid or insecure.

You might...

Thank them for their input and ask for other points of view.

Ask for group reactions to the views or alternate solutions to the problem.

Call attention to the issue at hand or suggest that the topic be discussed later.

Draw attention back to the discussion objectives. Remind everyone that time is limited.

Call on the talkers by name and ask an easy question to draw them back into the discussion.

Ask them who they are speaking for. Ask them to discuss how the issue compares to your group's goals.

Ask for other views on the issues.

Ask the group for other sides of the issue that should be considered.

Try to draw them into the discussion by listing other alternatives or asking for their opinion.

Draw out the person next to them, then ask their opinion of the view expressed.

## Handling Conflict

Everyday conflicts are a fact of life, and conflicts may arise from time to time within your Service Unit Team and/or between Troop Co-Leaders and parents. Here are some steps to resolving conflict in a positive and helpful manner.

### **All parties involved must understand the following guidelines when working to resolve conflict:**

- In Girl Scouts the needs of the girls should always come first, and adults should understand that it may be necessary to agree to disagree on certain aspects.
- The Girl Scout Promise and Law should be followed at all times.

*It may be helpful to share these guidelines and the following steps with everyone involved before moving forward with the conflict resolution process.*

- 1. Identify the Problem:** Everyone involved in the conflict needs to accept that the conflict is a problem that can be solved. Each person should write down and share exactly what the issue is. An objective third party can act as a facilitator by leading discussion, rephrasing what has been said and suggesting possible solutions.
- 2. Listen to Each Side of the Conflict:** Each person should have the opportunity to speak clearly and respectfully about their side of the issue. During this time, others should listen with an open mind and allow the speaker to finish without interruptions. The speaker should avoid “hot button” words such as “always” and “never” and make an effort to emphasize the facts.
- 3. Identify Possible Solutions:** Everyone can make suggestions as to how the conflict can be resolved.
- 4. Respond to Suggestions:** Each suggestion should be examined thoroughly and fairly. Often a combination of several different suggestions will end up being the best possible solution.
- 5. Reach a Compromise:** A compromise may not mean that everyone gets exactly what they want, but everyone should be able to agree on a solution that is fair, safe, and in-keeping with the Girl Scout Promise and Law. The needs of the girls should always come first, and adults should understand that it may be necessary to agree to disagree on certain aspects.