

MEETING #1 – Kicking the Year Off Right by Engaging Parents & Caregivers

The Parent/Caregiver Meeting

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls when families step up and play an active part in the troop. Without meaningful support from parents and caregivers, it's difficult for a troop to be all it can be. Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing!

So, what is a Parent/Caregiver Meeting? It's the first meeting you must start each troop year – whether you are a new or returning troop. It is valuable for *all* troops.

100% of troops with the most satisfied parents and troop leaders report they hold a Parent/Caregiver Meeting.

Why? Because it helps:

- Parents/Caregivers understand what Girl Scouting can do for their girl.
- Parents/Caregivers and leaders identify ways they will work as a team to support the troop.
- Parents/Caregivers and leaders agree on what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually.
- Fill key troop positions—you never know which parent will make an awesome assistant leader, troop cookie manager, etc.
- Parents/Caregivers know how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events, schedule changes, etc.
- Parents/Caregivers learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics.

Kicking off each year with a parent meeting sets the troop up for success. Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging parents in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When parents are involved, leaders have support, and the troop has a plan, girls benefit!

The best news? We've made it easy for you. Check out our step-by-step guide and Parent/Caregiver Meeting Outline on the VTK. This 60 to 90-minute meeting will make all the difference in the year ahead.

The Parent/Caregiver Meeting: The Agenda

While you're welcome to put your own unique spin on this meeting, following this format will ensure the most relevant information is communicated clearly and that everyone's on the same page.

- **Welcome and Introductions** (10 mins)
 - Leader introductions (share why you volunteer your time with Girl Scouts) and go over dates/times/frequency and locations of upcoming meetings
 - Have caregivers introduce themselves and share expectations for this year of Girl Scouting
- **Wonderful World of Girl Scouts** (15-20 mins)
 - Explain our mission as well as the Girl Scout Promise and Law
 - Discuss how our girl-led, hands-on, collaborative program helps girls take risks, dream bigger, and gain important skills—all while having fun and making friends
 - Share overview of your year plan—including which badges, journeys, special trips, and outdoor adventures the troop may participate in
- **Family as Part of the Formula** (10 mins)
 - Explain how you'll be engaging parents in their girls' Girl Scout lives by keeping them in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting
 - Encourage them to let their daughters "be the expert" at home, explaining or teaching a new skill she's learned to the rest of the family—the *Parent's Tip Guide* will help them do it
 - Let them know there will be special events throughout the year for families to share with their girl and celebrate all they're achieving with the troop
- **Get them Hooked on Helping** (10 mins)
 - Using the *Make Her Experience Memorable* guide from the Volunteer Tool Kit, point out that spending just a little time to help can make a big impact
 - Secure adults to help with organizing and managing the calendar for troop snacks, the carpool schedule, and the troop phone tree or social media page—all activities that can take as little as 15 minutes per week
 - Encourage caregivers to consider other leadership opportunities listed—emphasize they're not just welcome to lend a hand, they're *wanted*
- **Money Matters** (10 mins)
 - Outline costs to parents and caregivers (sash or vest and other supplies needed for the year)
 - Explain dues expectations, and how they'll be used to support the troop
 - If participating in the Girl Scout Cookie or the Fall Product Program, explain how money raised benefits the troop, and briefly go over the five critical skills girls will develop in the process
- **Wrap It Up** (10-15 mins)
 - Recite the *Girl Scout Family Promise* (located on the *Family Tip Sheet*) as a group
 - Provide your contact information phone, email, troop number, next troop meeting date, time, location and any supplies the girls will need to bring
 - Collect forms then leave time for questions, concerns, and simply to get to know people better

Follow up with a thank you, then keep the conversation going all year via email, in-person chats, and/or social media. Updating caregivers on troop activities helps them feel more invested and gives them a chance to build on their girl's experience at home. **See *The Secret Ingredient of Successful Girl Scout Troops: Family Connections in the Volunteer Tool Kit* for more tips on family engagement.**