

Back to School (BTS) Parent Meeting Guide Overview

New troops and returning troops are encouraged to hold a parent meeting at the beginning of each new Girl Scout year! Start your year on a positive note with your parents by fostering good communication and teamwork.

WHY

To meet and touch base with parents face-to-face. Establish expectations and decide where parents will help and share how they can be engaged in the troop.

WHEN

Parent Meetings can be a separate meeting or at the beginning or end of a troop meeting. If possible, have an older Girl Scout present to do an activity with the girls during the meeting. If not, have a coloring page, word search or small activity for the girls to do.

BE PREPARED

A parent meeting can be challenging, especially for a first-time co-leader. Girl Scouts Spirit of Nebraska has many resources to help you:

- **First Parent Meeting Checklist** – Use this as your meeting agenda, to keep you on track, and as a reminder for everything you may need to cover (see page 2).
- **Parent Involvement Form** – Troops with family engagement are more successful than troops that don't. Use this form (see page 3) to encourage the family of your girls to volunteer.
- **Family Letter Template** – A letter from your council, written with the troop co-leaders in mind, to encourage parents/families to participate in their girl's Girl Scout experience. Share this letter with your troop families at the beginning of each year (see page 4).
- **Health History Cards** – To keep on hand for the safety of girls during future Girl Scout meetings and events.
- **Pricing information on Girl Scout Uniforms and Insignia.**
- **Family Guide** – Resource for families to learn about Girl Scouts and our program.
- **Annual Program Book and Girl's Guide to Summer Fun** – To help plan your Girl Scout year.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is key for any troop. Decide how best to communicate with your parents—email, text, Facebook, etc. Following your parent meeting, contact the parents by the means decided upon and thank them for coming. Be sure to follow up with any parents that volunteered to help the troop and send them additional information about the role they selected. Sometimes it takes a personal ask of a parent to get the help you need. Your Troop Support Specialist can help you “make the ask” if you need assistance.

OUTCOMES

Before ending the meeting, evaluate if you have covered your agenda. Do you have...

- ✓ Additional adult volunteers to help?
- ✓ Meeting dates and times discussed and decided upon?
- ✓ Decisions made on troop finances (what the troop will pay for and what would be on the parent), including uniforms (troop ordering or parent purchasing).
- ✓ All girls registered and their Health History Cards completed?

NEED MORE RESOURCES?

The Volunteer Toolkit has pre-written intro/family meeting plans for Daisy, Brownie, and Junior levels. These plans include preparation lists, talking points, activities, shopping lists, and more!

You might not have the answers to all their questions, and that's ok! Our Member Support Team and your Troop Support Specialist can help find you the answers. Contact Member Support at 800.695.6690 or email MemberSupport@girlscoutsnebraska.org

BTS Parent Meeting Guide: First Parent Meeting Checklist

Use this checklist as an agenda for a parent/guardian meeting to get to know the girls and parents in your troop, and to recruit volunteers for your troop committee. Good parent communication often yields better parent involvement. This meeting will help you set expectations and recruit adult help.

PRE-MEETING

- Complete Your New Leader Orientation with Girl Scout Staff
- Schedule Date, Time, and Location
- Invite Girls, Parents, and Other Family Members
- Ensure you Have Enough Paperwork for all Families—Health History Form, Family Guides, Parent Involvement Form (see page 3)
- Send a Reminder Text or Email One or Two Days Before the Meeting
- Plan a Craft or Interactive Activity for Girls for the Meeting or Request Help with this from Program Aides (more info on our website)

DURING THE MEETING / MEETING AGENDA

Welcome

- Co-leader Introductions – Share Why You Chose to Lead the Troop!
- Parent and Girl Introductions
- Recite the Girl Scout Promise and Law
- Dismiss Girls to Work on Craft/Activity and Gather Parents to Meet

Paperwork

- Health History Form (filled out at this meeting)
- Permission Slips
- Phone/Email Contact List

Troop Basics

- Time, Place, and Frequency of Meetings
- Troop Number and Service Unit Number
- Review Expectations (uniforms, parent pick-up and drop-off, etc.)

Share Responsibilities

- For Troop Co-Leaders:
 - Be a Role Model and Guide for the Girls
 - Ensure Safety
 - Ensure Troop Organization and Communication
- For Parents/Guardians:
 - Ensure Girls Regularly Attend and Participate in Troop Meetings
 - Provide Assistance/Support to the Troop as Needed

Financials

- Troop Funds
 - Badges/Recognitions
 - Program Supplies
 - Troop Activities

Financials (cont'd)

- Parent Costs
 - GSUSA Membership Dues
 - Financial Aid – Online Process
 - Troop Dues (how much, how often; decided by you and your troop)
 - Supplemental Funds (other future expenses such as trips, snacks, supplies, etc.)
 - Books and Uniform

Parent Involvement

- Criminal Background Screen (required for troop volunteers)
- Adult Membership
- Parent Volunteer Roles – customize to your needs. There's a job for everyone and people love to feel valued in specific ways. Sending around the Parent Involvement Form (see next page) and/or sign-up sheet is a great way to gauge interest and ensure no one gets missed. Add any additional roles you need filled in the blank spaces under "Desired Roles."
- Volunteer Toolkit
 - Inform parents they can access the Volunteer Toolkit in MYGS with read only access.
 - Parents/Caregivers can see your troop meeting schedule, activities, and weekly plans. Remind parents you may not complete every activity each meeting.

Plan for the Girl Scout Year

- General Year Plan – will engage girls in planning once you start meeting for a more detailed calendar
 - General timing of possible trips or events
 - Possible activities throughout the year
- Product Program
 - Fall – Nuts, Candy, and Magazines
 - Spring – Girl Scout Cookies
- Possible Additional Fundraising

POST-MEETING

- Send a Note to Parents and Girls Thanking Them for Participating, Include Bullet Points of Topics Discussed
- Share Family Letter Template with All Families
- Check-in with Your Troop Support Specialist and Let Them Know How it Went (were there any questions you couldn't answer, did you get enough parents to help, etc.)



BTS Parent Meeting Guide: Parent Involvement Form

NOTE: Any adult who assists with troop meetings, activities, attends overnights, transports girls, supervises girls or handles money must complete a background screen and be a registered member of Girl Scouts.

Girl Full Name: _____ Caregiver Full Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

DESIRED ROLE(S)

Running a quality Girl Scout troop requires the involvement of ALL parents. Please check how you and/or other adults in your family will support your daughter's troop.

- Co-Leader(s) - Plans/assists in leading activities, communicates with parents.
- Treasurer - Manages troop bank account and prepares end of year Troop Finance Report.
- Troop Fall Product Program Manager - Organizes Candy & Nuts fall product program sale.
- Troop Cookie Manager - Organizes cookies sale.
- Camp Parent - Certified camper who assists in planning/leading camping activities.*
- Troop First Aider - Certified in CPR and first aid, attend trips and camping activities.*
- Troop Trip Coordinator - Organizes and plans troop field trips.*
- Service Project Coordinator - Organizes and plans service projects.*
- Badge Coordinator - Learns about a specific badge or Journey and plans activities to fulfill its requirements.*
- Troop Parent Helper - Helps at meetings with pre-planned activities.*
- Troop Trip Chaperone - Drives and/or serves as adult helper on activities and trips.*
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

**These volunteers should register as "Adult Support" volunteers in your troop.*

SPECIAL SKILLS

- Y N Are you certified in First Aid/CPR?
- Y N Do you have a talent or interest that you would like to share with the troop, or do you know someone who does (i.e. STEM, outdoor activities, cooking, crafts, etc.)?
If yes, what? _____

AVAILABILITY

- Mon-Fri Days: From _____ a.m. p.m. to _____ a.m. p.m.
- Mon-Fri Nights: From _____ a.m. p.m. to _____ a.m. p.m.
- Saturdays: From _____ a.m. p.m. to _____ a.m. p.m.
- Sundays: From _____ a.m. p.m. to _____ a.m. p.m.

OTHER NOTES

BTS Parent Meeting Guide: For Girl Scout Parents

Hello Girl Scout Family,

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/guardians, 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!

Girl Scout troops rely on volunteer support for girls to receive the best experience possible. Your troop leaders have committed to provide the primary guidance and support for the troop, but all families are asked to give what they can.

What can your support do? It can:

- Increase a collective support base and strengthen a girl's chances of longevity with the troop.
- Inspire a positive effect within the troop and your daughter, thanks to your participation.
- Allow for your troop to accomplish so much more, with just a little help.
- Establish regular communication between you and other troop families.
- Serve as a model for volunteers as children witness parent/guardian engagement firsthand.
- Strengthen the bonding experience of your daughter with the Girl Scout program.

Troop co-leaders are just like you—parents that have full-time jobs and other responsibilities. They are not paid staff, but they are taking on a large commitment to your daughter and other girls in the troop. They cannot lead a successful troop without help from all families.

Though seemingly small, here are a few things you can do to help your daughter's troop co-leader(s):

- Do your best to be on time to Girl Scout meetings and events.
- Please follow through. If you cannot do or provide something for which you volunteered, please find another volunteer to do so.
- Read and reply to communications from troop volunteers in a timely manner.
- Respect troop volunteers' time and boundaries.

We know there are only so many hours in a day, and girls and their families have to balance many growing and diverging interests, commitments, and responsibilities. That's why Girl Scouting today is more flexible than ever! We highly encourage you to reach out to your troop leader(s) and have a meaningful conversation about what support you can provide the troop, and what that support looks like.

Please consider making a commitment to support your girl's troop. We promise, it's worth it!

Sincerely,

Girl Scouts Spirit of Nebraska Staff