

Top 15 Tips for Girl Scout Leaders

Girl Scout Blog

Starting a Girl Scout troop is a big deal! Some people jump in with both feet, and others might be a little nervous, perhaps not sure where to start or who to turn to for help.

If you fall into the second group, no worries! We jumped on Facebook, where we turned to the experts—bona fide troop leaders—for insight only they can provide. Specifically, we asked them for the single best piece of advice they have for new troop leaders. The response was overwhelming! There were so many great comments, it was hard to narrow them down. But here are some of our favorites, many of them reflecting clear themes among comments received, and all serving as valuable guidance for new troop leaders (and even those who've been at it a while) on starting and running a Girl Scout troop.

Starting in Daisies, give each girl a composition notebook. Every time the girl does some kind of community service, write it in the book, date, time and place. By the time she reaches college, she will have a complete record of service. My daughter had over 700 hours by the time she finished high school.

Have the troop vote on badges. Each girl ranks their top 3 badges, then assign each girl one badge and a meeting, and they are in charge of presenting and engaging their troop in earning it. Cuts down on nonessential chatter and girls not paying attention to the speaker(s) once they realize what it is like to experience it. Also, puts the responsibility on them. I started this in 3rd grade.

Go to your service unit leader meetings---you will make new friends & get loads of tips from more experienced leaders!

Get your troop into state parks! Almost all of them have badge programs! Take them to lots of different events

Don't try to do it all, especially not in the first year. Focus on one or two things at a time. Recruit other parents to take on as many roles as you can (money, cookies, camping, first aid, etc.)

Capers chart. Especially good when they are little. Divvies up responsibilities at meeting. You lead the pledge, you help hand out snacks, you lead the songs, etc. And you shift it once over each meeting so everyone gets a chance

Trust the program. Don't panic. Depend on your council professionals.

Get parents involved from day 1. Then later when you need them they will be used to lending a hand and it will be so much easier on you.

Have fun! A lot of focus is placed on rules, roles, recruiting and all that good stuff. Those things along with safety come first (and always should), but if you don't have fun or enjoy what you are doing...you will burn out quickly. So make slime with your girls, take in the sights on a hike, make yourself a s'more on the campfire and more! Not only will you have fun too, but it will allow you to develop a good connection with your girls.

Camp every year! We started taking the girls on camping trips as Daisies six years ago. Each year they learned new skills, tried new outdoor activities and went to new places. We've done rock walls, horseback, kayaking, canoeing, zip lining, lodge and tent camping, made countless campfire meals and more. And the girls always say their favorite part of scouts is camping.

ASK QUESTIONS! Don't flounder on your own. ASK! We would love to help you.

Do journeys while camping. We would split a journey into three segments. Friday after dinner. Sat morning and then sat afternoon with free time between.

Take advantage of any and all in person training. All these ladies are in the same place you are. It's nice to bounce ideas off each other and someone will ask a question you didn't think of. Although not required I like to take the training before both years of the level. New people = New ideas

Do Journeys in a weekend and make it hands on - don't just read through the books. You can teach the lessons and really impact the girls through action. Also, start Girl led early, do not do everything yourself! Kaper charts from Daisy level, meeting helpers as brownies, leading meetings with parent help as Juniors, running the badge meetings themselves from Cadettes on.

Do what the girls want to do. Provide them with lots of choices and facilitate what they're interested in. They want to camp but you're uncomfortable? Ask for help from your service unit and community! They want to work on a badge you know nothing about? Ask for help! I had the girls make the decisions on what we were doing majority of the time (with support), even though they were only brownies.