

The Best Half of Girl Scouts

*(a.k.a. The Care and Feeding (and Feeding, and Feeding!)
of Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador Scouts)*

Our Grab Bag of Ideas (in no particular order and with some overlap):

- Strong leadership from the Leader
 - Don't believe the hype! You can't just turn the Troop over to the girls.
 - There is a gradual method to letting them 'lead' the Troop. Start slowly and work up to real leadership. Model and talk about it.
 - Expect to have "7th grade Brownies"—forgetful, distracted, giggly
 - Girls need a strong woman helping them make decisions. If scouts become overwhelmed or unfocused, they'll quit.
 - Hold them accountable for badge work and service hours that they promised to do. The only way girls will complete awards is with the Leader's constant and loving enthusiasm.
 - Expectations should be kept high- they can do it if they try.
 - Teach them how to make good choices. Mentor.
 - Encourage the girls to stay in Scouts and have balance in their own lives by choosing healthy activities.

- Keep the Troop open to new members
 - To have a larger Sr/Amb Troop, take girls in throughout the years. If a girl doesn't quite fit in, give it a chance but have the grace to let her go find a Troop with a better fit if that is best for everyone.
 - Too many 9th through 12th grade Troops with 3 girls! It's not fun for them and they can't get anything done. No group dynamics.
 - Be open to girls a year older/younger who need a Troop.

- Find adult buddies to consult with
 - Sometimes join with Troops your own age.
 - More exciting and less work.
 - Girls already know each other anyway, but make sure girls want to.
 - Look to other experienced Leaders and their ideas.
 - Get older girl Leaders together in your SU, or find a Leader to mentor you.
 - Girls' night out for Leaders!

- Keep the Troop's program relevant to the girls
 - Teens/Tweens hate to be "babied"
 - Deal with relevant girl issues and the current trends.
 - Don't be afraid to discuss sensitive topics.
 - There are big gaps in child development across the Troop, especially middle school.

- Long-term goals and planning
 - Girls need a reason and purpose to continue, whether it's Silver or Gold Award, a trip, community service for college applications, etc.
 - Troops who become only social Troops often don't last.
 - Helps you as a Leader know when to schedule the calendar.
 - Busy girls need to know when events and meetings are happening.
 - Use the cookie money wisely. Save or spend with guidance and prudence.

- Scheduling fun
 - Schedule full meetings that achieve nothing but fun.
 - Sleepovers are great at any age and you can add fun badge work into it.
 - Girls love to dress up and go somewhere that they wouldn't with their parents, dinner, a play, movie, etc.
 - Give each girl a month to plan what she wants.
 - Don't always use majority wins.
 - Try out the weird idea no one voted for.
 - If a girl has a unique passion, try to make a fun meeting around that.

- Flexible scheduling
 - You will never work around everyone's schedule.
 - Plan things well in advance.
 - If you want a higher Award, scouts cannot be the lowest priority.
 - Don't hesitate to reschedule if you need to.

- Make sure the program is balanced
 - Must offer a little of everything.
 - Don't be the Troop that only camps or does community service or only works on IPs or is staying together only for the end of the year trip.
 - Find parents or other adults to come in for things you can't do. (You'll be shocked what people will do for a box of Thin Mints!)

- End of the activity/trip/project/year reflection AND Year End Evaluation
 - Questionnaire, "talk meeting," etc—what did they like, and what do they want to do!
 - Make it as anonymous as possible.
 - Then after seeing the results add them into long-term goals for next year.
 - Listen to their concerns closely and act upon them.
 - Take the time to reflect after each big event and camping trip. Helps to solidify good things that happened. Memories are made.

- Camping benefits
 - Time away from everything.
 - Time for Leader to watch girls work together to accomplish physical goals.
 - NO electronics! Teaches self control and the ability to communicate and be entertained in new ways.
 - Being natural and real leads to great talks.
 - Fun in the outdoors, girls can love it with YOUR good attitude.
 - Nature deficit is a problem that needs to be combated.
 - Empowerment by not being afraid to leave the comfort zone.
 - Group living skills.
 - Knives and axes and fire, treated with respect and safety.
 - Cooking. Food tastes so good when you make it yourself.
 - Tents are fun to be in no matter how old you are.
 - Everyone learns a lot about themselves when on a camping trip.
 - Future job as Camp Counselor.

- Be real with the girls
 - They will hit you with real life-changing issues.
 - Expect to get off track.
 - Challenge them to think outside the box.
 - Tell them what you expect and they will do it.
 - Be a mentor, but not a pushover.
 - Let them know that getting Awards is difficult and requires hard work and discipline, but you are there to help.
 - Be HONEST always and they will trust you.
 - Be a Girl Scout yourself and they will follow.

- Expect respect from them—use the GS Law
 - Do NOT let them push you around or waste your time.
 - Girls have plenty of friends. They need you to be a trusted adult.
 - Insist on communication, be prepared to be called, texted, facebooked!
 - Set rules and boundaries to meetings/GS events that you ALL agree on.

- Clique concerns
 - No girl thinks she's in a clique!
 - Challenge the girls to pair up differently.
 - Talk about it with the girls.
 - Girl Scout Law within and outside of the Troop.

- Girls change dramatically
 - Be prepared: the shy "nerd" in 7th may be "the popular one" in 8th grade.
 - Talk about stereotypes and pigeonholing (the smart one, the cute one).
 - If you are uncomfortable with their language and clothing, get used to it, but set limits for GS time.
 - (see: Be real with the girls and keep program relevant)

- Your relationship to the girls will change
 - Some people are better Leaders of younger girls, some of older.
 - Maybe a new Leader should step up if you are tired of it.
 - You are not a babysitter, expect them to come to the meeting prepared and treat them with respect for their abilities.
 - As they get older, you get to me more like one of them.
 - Let them come to you with concerns and be ready to talk about real issues in a mature way.
 - Don't think that every girl is just like your own daughter. Treat them all as individuals and they will thank you for it.

- Create a safe space (wherever the Troop is—is safe)
 - Be “Above School”
 - What happens in the Troop, stays in the Troop.
 - Allow the girls to be super silly or try new weird things.
 - Notice who feels uncomfortable and make sure they are OK.

Need more? Feel free to call/email us:

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