

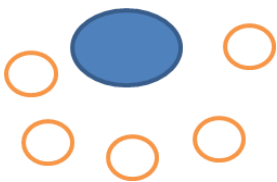
Girl Scout Troop Government

- Every grade level of Girl Scouting uses some form of troop government.
- Troop government is a way for girls to learn responsibility, independence and how to become leaders!
- Troop government is designed to be progressive, building on the skills learned in previous years.
- When the girls reach Girl Scout Juniors and on through Girl Scout Ambassadors, the girls take on more responsibility of running the troop and thus should decide which form of troop government they will use.
- You may want to try them all out before the girls make a final decision. And, if the system they chose is not working for the troop, the troop can then decide on another form of government for themselves.

What if girls have little or no experience in troop governance?

If older girls have not experienced making group decisions on their own, use a very focused, single-topic version of troop government formats. For example, use the Town Meeting format with only one topic, like what service project would like to do. Or run a discussion as if it were a Girl Scout Brownie Ring, using Girl Scout Brownie Ring rules for talking and brainstorming. Do this for several smaller topics. The leader might lead the first few discussions, but after that the girls should be leading the discussions. Rotate discussion leaders. A bit of practice and the girls would be ready to function more independently in patrols.

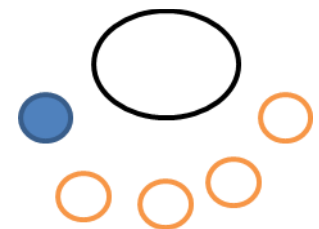
Girl Scout Daisy Circle



Girl Scout Daisies can help make some of the decisions about their troop through the Girl Scout Daisy Circle. It is the business part of a Girl Scout Daisy meeting and at this age lasts only 5 to 10 minutes. This part of the meeting is led by the Troop Leader. It is best for the Leader to give girls two or three choices to pick from at this age. Decisions could include things such as where to go on a field trip or what kind of service project the girls would like to participate in. Simplicity is the key here.

Girl Scout Brownie Ring

The Girl Scout Brownie Ring is very similar to the Girl Scout Daisy Circle but expands to the abilities of these now somewhat "older" girls. Girls can now begin to lead discussions and "brainstorm" ideas. A Ring "Leader" may be designated to lead discussions, but make sure that all girls are given this leadership opportunity.



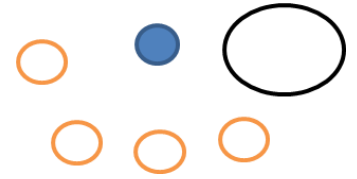
When someone wishes to speak, a special "Talking Signal" is used in the Girl Scout Brownie Ring. This is indicated by the girl placing the two fingers of her right hand on the floor (or table, if you are seated at a table instead of the floor). The Girl Scout Brownie Ring is a good way to make all of the major decisions in your troop from how to spend cookie profits to which Try-It to work on next.

Hints for keeping things fair:

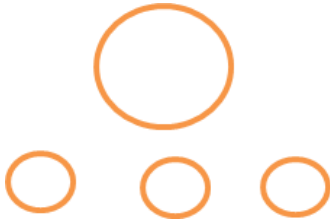
- No putting down people or ideas.
- Make sure all people speak, but no one dominates. Leaders can model behavior for the ring by listening without criticism to girls and parents.
- At first, the girls will need a lot of help from the leader in order to get the hang of using the ring to make decisions. After they become familiar with it, the girls can take turns being the discussion leader.

Town Meeting

In a Town Meeting, the entire troop makes its decisions together. A Moderator is generally needed to lead group discussions. Officers such as Secretary and Treasurer may be elected if the troop feels that there is a need. This generally only works well in small groups but can work in large groups if the girls can stay on task.



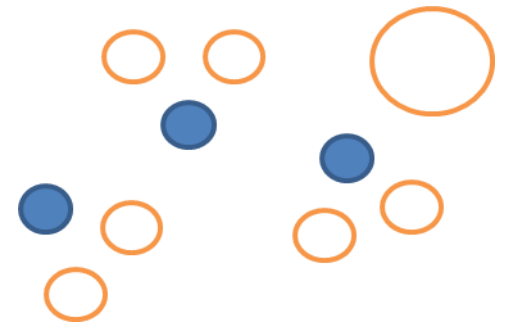
Executive Board



The Executive Board consists of the "officers" of the troop. They generally include a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Job descriptions should be agreed upon as well as the duration of office. It is important, especially at the beginning of self-government, that everyone has the opportunity to participate at some time throughout the year. These "board" members meet on a regular basis to decide matters for the troop. Some method needs to be devised for the troop members to give input to the Executive Board. This could be a simple suggestion box at a troop meeting. This system tends to work well with smaller troops.

Patrol System

The Patrol System is the most versatile of the systems of government. The troop is divided into smaller units called patrols. The ideal patrol size is about 5-8 girls. Each Patrol elects a Patrol Leader responsible for running their patrol meetings. An Assistant Patrol Leader is also a good idea in the event that the Patrol Leader cannot make a meeting. All troop business can be handled in these patrols. Attendance and dues can be recorded by the patrols. For any given outing, chores may be divided up with each patrol responsible for its own task.



In order for the troop to run smoothly and as a group, Patrol Leaders should come together periodically (at least once a month) to discuss troop issues and make group decisions. This is called the "Court of Honor". Each patrol gives their input to the Patrol Leader who presents their viewpoint at the Court of Honor. Also included in the Court of Honor are any other troop officers such as Secretary and Treasurer. The Patrol System can be very successful, but only if the girls are given skills with which to succeed.

Court of Honor



Generally consisting of the Troop Officers and the Patrol Leaders, the Court of Honor meets on a regular basis to plan troop activities. Monthly meetings can be used to plan events to occur the following month. A long meeting once or twice a year can be used for long-term planning of troop events and planning the troop yearly calendar. If you have a troop Moderator or President, this person generally presides over the Court of Honor meetings.