

Creating a Positive Atmosphere

How you work with girls, the atmosphere at meetings, and your interactions with each girl can affect her behavior and self-esteem. The following tips will help troop leaders develop a positive atmosphere at troop meetings and in activities.

Be Prepared

Be prepared—it is the Girl Scout motto and a way of life. Have a plan (and a back-up plan) for meetings. Get to meetings early to prepare for both plans. When preparing for a meeting or planning activities, consider the physical differences and the different talents of your girls to create an inclusive environment. If a girl can complete any part of an activity by herself, let her do so.

Establish Ground Rules

In the beginning of your troop year, you will need to work with the girls to establish troop rules and guidelines for behavior. The more say the girls have in the rules, the more likely they are to follow them. Always remember rules must be fair and reinforced consistently.

Establish a Meeting Agenda

By doing this, you're creating a routine for the girls. After several weeks, the girls will begin to understand expectations and know what comes next. This is important groundwork for girls to begin to take leadership roles within a troop meeting.

Also, be reasonable about time with the girls. Give plenty of warning to when activities on the meeting agenda begin and end.

Reinforce Positive Behavior

Reinforce what you want repeated. Every child desires attention, even shy and quiet girls. Often, we expect girls to behave and forget to reward them when everything is running smoothly.

Be a Role Model

You want the girls to be kind, respectful, and able to celebrate successes as well as learn from failures. You are a role model for all these traits. If you want respect, give it and if you want enthusiasm, show it.

Be Supportive and Interested

Spend time with the girls during troop meetings. Learn all of their names and be sure to get down to their level when speaking to them. When they speak about an issue they care about, show your interest and support.

When your girls achieve something important to them—no matter how small—be happy for them. Celebrate success and don't criticize failure. For example, you can encourage your girl by saying, "I'm really impressed at how you're sticking with this, even though it is very hard for you—that's a sign of real strength."

Let Girls Learn by Experience

Encourage girls to find out for themselves and try new things, but offer help and encouragement along the way. Be patient when they are learning. Growth takes time and your patience will be rewarded.