

USA Girl Scouts Overseas Overnight Spaces Orientation

We know spending the night away from home can be really exciting for some, and it can be really scary for others. In fact, it can be scary and exciting at the same time! Since sharing a sleeping space with others might be very different from the way our youth members sleep at home, let's think about some important rules and guidance you can share with your troop or group to make sure everyone feels as comfortable as possible in their shared spaces during overnights. Agreeing to healthy boundaries is a sign of respect for others!

Here are some talking points to help you communicate clearly and confidently with your troop or group:

- In our sleeping space you can use the available bathroom spaces. (Describe to participants where they can use the bathroom.)
 - Identify vulnerable spaces like single shower stalls, toilets, and changing areas.
 - Talk about the buddy system and privacy while in vulnerable space, shower stalls, toilets, changing areas.
- In our sleeping space it is important that there is only one person in a toilet/shower stall at a time.
 - Talk to the youth about what to do if they need assistance or help while in the bathroom or toilet/shower stall.
- In our sleeping space we respect each other's boundaries by never opening a toilet/shower stall or single occupancy bathroom door when someone is in them.
 - Restate what to do if they need assistance while in these spaces. Talk about respecting privacy and asking for consent, even if it feels like an emergency.
- In our sleeping space you can change clothes. (Describe where they can change clothes and give options for where they can change in private.)
- In our sleeping space we respect each other's boundaries by having only one person in a bed or sleeping bag. (Exceptions may be made based on advance caregiver permission or for family members.)

When orienting youth members on how to be respectful to others in their physical space, it is also important to remind Girl Scouts what our promise and law says about how to respect one another when we communicate.

Talk to the participants about what would be the correct way to communicate if something made them uncomfortable. Here are some tips and talking points below:

- Let your troop or group know that it is okay to speak up in a respectful way if something or someone makes them feel uncomfortable. Here are some examples you can share with your troop or group of how to clearly communicate their feelings:
 - If someone is playing with shower curtain or toilet door, you can say, “I don’t like it when you pretend to open the shower curtain or toilet door while I’m in the stall it makes me feel unsafe or uncomfortable.”
 - If someone asks to change with you and you don’t feel comfortable you can say “I would rather change in private.” and suggest that you can watch the curtain or door for each other while you change in private.
 - Talk to the youth about what to do if someone doesn’t stop when asked.
 - Locate a trusted adult and report the situation.
- It is equally as important to communicate with Girl Scouts their responsibility to listen when their fellow Girl Scouts are communicating their feelings.
 - In our sleeping space we will listen to other participants if they say something that makes them feel uncomfortable or they don’t like a situation.
 - What does listening mean?
 - When might our friends let us know that they feel uncomfortable?
 - When they lack privacy
 - When they don’t want to be hugged
 - When they don’t want to or no longer want to rough house or wrestle
 - When they just need space
 - Maybe the youth can come up with other ideas remind them that it is important for them to listen when their friends share their feelings.

Taking your troop for an overnight experience is a fun way to build treasured childhood memories. Guiding your troop or community to set boundaries to ensure everyone everyone’s safety and empowering members to effectively communicate is an important part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience progression. Setting boundaries and expectations together helps each participant have a voice in creating a friendly and kind environment with respect for others.