

## Girl Scout Troop 680 Patrol Parent Tips

**Purpose:** The goals of the Girls Scout program are to help girls develop their full potential, learn to work with and relate to others, make sound decisions, and contribute to the community and society. Patrol meetings provide an excellent opportunity for Girl Scouts to learn and practice these skills in small groups. Patrol meetings should also have an objective of being interesting, informative and fun.

**Schedule:** In Troop 680, Patrol meetings are generally held once every six weeks or so. Refer to the Troop Schedule for weeks when Patrol meetings are scheduled. The day of the week and time are decided upon by the Patrol with guidance from the Patrol Parent. Having Patrol meetings on Tuesday evenings should be considered since many families in the Troop have reserved this evening for Girl Scouts, but do not assume Bryant will be available.

**Location:** The location of Patrol meetings is decided on by the Patrol. Input from the Patrol Parent is important since some locations desired or volunteered by the Girl Scouts may not be available or feasible. The troop reserves Bryant Elementary School cafeteria on Tuesday eves from 6:30 to 8:30 PM during the school year, though sometimes it is reserved for other school events. If meetings are held at Bryant, the girls should make sure the cafeteria is clean before leaving. Whatever you decide, it is essential to communicate with each of the parents in your Patrol so Girl Scouts know where to go and when.

**Activities:** There are many possible Patrol meeting activities. The most important source for Patrol meeting ideas is the girls in the Patrol. They can refer to the *Junior Girl Scout Handbook*, *Badge Book*, and the list of 101 Patrol Meeting Ideas in the *Troop 680 Handbook* for suggestions. Adult guidance will be needed to help the girls understand what activities are realistic in terms of time, travel and cost. Girls will also need to use Patrol meetings to plan and prepare for Troop activities such as upcoming camping trips and Troop meetings, particularly if their Patrol will be designing and running a Troop program. Additional suggestions:

- Help the girls find a common area of interest in the *Badge Book* and select a badge to work on as a Patrol from this subject area. Young scouts enjoy working on projects and badges in a group.
- Nearly every activity the girls may select is related to or part of a badge. Find out what the girls are interested in doing and include this as a badge activity.
- Consider a community service project or activity to pursue as a Patrol.
- Since Patrols in Troop 680 meet less than once a month, there are many more Patrol meeting activities available than there ever will be time for.

**Patrol Parent:** While girl planning and participation lies at the heart of Girl Scout activities, adult guidance is important to keep the girls focused and on track. Adult assistance is also needed to help organize and coordinate Patrol activities. One parent from each Patrol is asked to volunteer as the Patrol Parent. This person should be the primary organizer of the Patrol and point of contact with Troop Leaders, but need not bear all responsibilities for organizing the Patrol. The Patrol Parent should seek opportunities to share responsibilities with other parents, such as rotating the planning and hosting of each meeting. Meeting hosts should have an agenda for Patrol meetings and serve as moderator. The moderator should provide guidance with the participation and input provided by the girls. Always look for and provide opportunities for the girls to lead. Take steps to help all girls be actively involved in the meetings.

**Parent Participation:** Parents of girls in the Patrol should be invited to Patrol meetings. This is especially important if their assistance is needed during the meeting or Patrol outing. Many Patrol meetings will involve the girls working together where their parent's assistance is not needed. Let the parents know what the Patrol activity will be and whether or not their assistant is needed. Do not hesitate to ask parents for assistance at Patrol meetings. Parents can also use the time to plan for future activities.

**Meeting Logistics:** Patrol meetings can be a bit chaotic. Advance preparation will help organize the chaos. Suggestions:

- Decide on meeting activities well in advance. Patrol meetings have a way of sneaking up so it is helpful if you know the general activity or meeting topic early on.
- Provide a handout to Patrol members at least a week in advance identifying the date, time and location of the meeting as well as the planned activity and any advance preparation they may need or items they may need to bring.
- Break up the Patrol into smaller groups of two or three girls to work together when suited for the activity. Match up girls who do not know each other. This helps the girls build friendships and teaches cooperation.
- Anticipate the meetings will take at least an hour and often an hour and a half to two hours. Having an agenda and helping keep the girls focused will directly affect the meeting length.
- Be flexible and expect these young scouts to get distracted, confused and off track at times. It is part of the learning process.

**First Patrol Meeting:** To be held next Tuesday at Bryant Cafeteria. Girls will meet in Patrol groups the entire evening with a short break for announcements and questions about Fall Campout. As Patrol Parent, you need to facilitate the discussion and keep it on track.

- The girls have some tasks to complete at the first Patrol meeting. This includes planning and making assignments for Saturday dinner and Sunday breakfast for the Fall Campout. This involves deciding the menu, identifying food supplies required, identifying cooking and clean up equipment required, assigning food supplies for each girl, assigning cooking and clean up equipment for each girl, assigning of cooking and clean up duties for each girl.
- Handouts are provided this evening to assist in campout planning activities.
- Bring pencils for Patrol members to use in filling out the forms.
- Consider asking the parents to fill out the forms as decisions and assignments are made since it is often difficult for the girls to write fast enough to keep up.

**Fall Campout:** Girls and parents will prepare meals and eat in Patrol groups at Fall Campout. Meals include Saturday dinner and Sunday breakfast. Suggestions:

- The girls should prepare the meals and clean up based on the assignments made at the Tuesday Patrol meeting. The parents should guide the girls but allow the girls to do the work.
- Consider having parents assist girls who are not their own children.
- Use three basins for washing, rinsing and sanitizing the dishes. This helps avoid food borne illnesses and is a good technique for the girls to learn.
- The new patrol should select a Patrol name at camp. The Troop Leader requires the name selection be unanimous.
- The Fall Campout is a great opportunity for the girls and parents in a Patrol to spend time together.

**Safety and Procedures:** Patrol meetings should always be conducted in a safe manner. The buddy system should be used whenever the Patrol goes somewhere. The Girl Scout *Safetywise* book should be referred to by the Patrol Parent to verify the planned Patrol activities comply with Girl Scout procedures.

**Finally:** Have fun with the girls. Ask lots of questions. Thanks for volunteering your leadership during these wonderful years in your daughter's lives.