

CEREMONIES AND CELEBRATIONS FOR GIRL SCOUTS



Ceremonies in Girl Scouting are used to celebrate special occasions, to recognize accomplishments, or simply to begin or end a meeting. Ceremonies also provide a means of expressing feelings and values of friendship, patriotism, service, beliefs and so forth.

A ceremony may be informal, taking only a few minutes to prepare or, it may be of a more formal nature, requiring advance preparation.

Girls may decide to have ceremonies for a number of occasions throughout the year. In addition to those listed here, ceremonies are often used for a tree planting, making a presentation to a sponsor, thanking Troop Committee members or recognize a special day like United Nations Day, etc.



Celebrating important events together helps bind girls of different backgrounds together into a feeling of sisterhood. It becomes a special time in their lives for reflection on the "oneness" of being a Girl Scout and a member of the largest girls' organization in the world.

PLANNING CEREMONIES

Girl-planning is one of the principle ways in which leaders work with girls. Leaders need to recognize this method and solicit ideas from the girls to incorporate in the program. Even the smallest Daisy Girl Scout can contribute if given choices from which to choose.

As the leader, you will have to give many suggestions and much help in planning at the beginning. After girls have experienced a few ceremonies and see what can be included, they will begin to have ideas of their own.

Work with a committee, a patrol or the Court of Honor. Explain the purpose of the ceremony and have the girls talk about appropriate behavior during an activity. Discuss the form of the ceremony using questions to help make a plan.

There is no one way to plan a ceremony or celebration. However, you should recognize the difference between the two.

A ceremony can be an observance of tradition with a symbolic meaning, an expression of deep feeling or conviction and a means of stressing beauty and instilling ideas. It should be simple and dignified, appropriate to the occasion and easily understood by the girls who take part in it. It should never be too sentimental or solemn.

A celebration is a time for sharing such things as sisterhood, fun, food, dances, songs, talents, etc. over a longer period of time than that given to a ceremony. An example would be an international celebration in observance of World Thinking Day. It could include customs, food, songs and dances from other countries. A ceremony can be part of a celebration.

Girl Scout ceremonies are not required to follow a set procedure but may open, carry out the purpose, and close in a number of ways. The ages of the girls, the season, location, and the purpose of the ceremony will help determine what goes into the ceremony. A group may build up a repertory of songs and collect a file of poems, readings and quotations to be used in ceremonies.

Following are some ideas that might be part of a ceremony:

- Girl Scout Promise and Law
- Reading original words written by girls for the occasion
- Poems - done as choral reading or read by individuals
- Songs - sung by the entire group, by a special chorus, or hummed in the background
- Quotations and readings
- Candle lighting
- Flag ceremony

Some ceremonies, such as an opening or closing of a meeting, require preparation only by the persons leading them. The leader of the ceremony can give the Girl Scout quiet sign to get the attention of the troop then give any direction necessary, asking the troop to sing or take part in other ways.

Other ceremonies require preparation by the troop. The entire troop may need to learn a particular song. Groups and individuals such as a choral reading group, readers, and the color guard must practice their parts. The ceremony may lose its effectiveness, however, if it is rehearsed "word for word".

You can help the girls gain confidence by having them walk through the mechanics once or twice.

Each girl should know the order of events and exactly what she is to do all the way through. For example:

- Will everyone walk together?
- Does she stand or sit during ceremony?
- What movement occurs during ceremony?
- Does she come up front for her part of the ceremony?
- What is the order of events and what part does she follow?
- How does the group disperse at the end?
- What songs, poems, and quotations should we include?
- How will we end the ceremony?
- Who will do each part? An individual? A group?
- What do we need? Candles? Decorations?
- Who will bring them?
- Who will start the songs?

Parts of the ceremony may be announced as it goes along, or the troop may prefer to have one part follow another with no announcements. If a girl forgets her cue, or does her part out of order, you can cue in the next part with a few simple words such as, "Jane will now read a poem on friendship."

Make a final check just before the ceremony to be sure everything is in place and ready to use: pins ready to present, lists of names for insignia presentation, candles and matches ready, campfire laid with a pail of water nearby, etc. Check girls (and yourself) to see that everyone is as neat as possible.

PREPARING FOR GUESTS

Occasionally the troop invites guests to a ceremony or celebration. These may be family, troop committee, another troop, program consultants, or members of sponsoring groups.

When possible, have girls arrive at least a half hour before guests so that they can arrange the room and make preparations. Be sure some girls are assigned as hostesses.

You, or one of the girls, can begin with a short greeting and an explanation of the purpose of the ceremony. Give guests directions at the appropriate time if they are to participate in a flag ceremony. If you use a horseshoe formation, have the opening toward the audience.

SUGGESTED DATES AND OCCASIONS

Note: Many ceremonies and celebrations suggest the lighting of candles. For our younger Girl Scouts, lighting candles can be dangerous. Make paper candles. Mount them on a poster. To "light" the candle, have the girls tape a paper flame in place. Flashlights work well, too. If older girls are going to be holding candles, be sure there are collars of foil or heavy paper around them to catch the wax drips. Hot wax burns.

INVESTITURE - a ceremony to welcome new girls and adults into the Girl Scouting program. It is held anytime a person joins the Movement as a new member. Note: A person is invested only once in their lifetime.

REDEDICATION - a ceremony for girls and adults who have already been invested at some time in their life. It is a time for them to reaffirm their belief in the Promise and Law and to reflect upon the meaning of Girl Scouting in their lives. It is usually held at the beginning of each Girl Scout year.

Note: If a person rejoins the Movement after a period of absence, they are welcomed back at a rededication ceremony.

FOUNDER'S DAY (Juliette Low's Birthday) - a ceremony and/or celebration held on or about October 31st of each year. It is a program to recognize the important role that Juliette Gordon Low played in the development of the Girl Scouting program in the U.S.

PATROL LEADER INSTALLATION - a ceremony at which time patrol leaders receive the double gold cords of their position. It is held each time new patrol leaders are selected.

TROOP BIRTHDAY PARTY - a ceremony and/or celebration recognizing the anniversary date of the beginning of the troop.

WORLD THINKING DAY - a ceremony and/or celebration held on or about February 22nd of each year. New members can receive the World Trefoil Pin and all Girl Scouts observe the international aspects of the Movement.

GIRL SCOUT'S BIRTHDAY - a ceremony and/or celebration to mark the beginning of Girl Scouting in the United States - March 12, 1912.

GIRL SCOUT SUNDAY/SABBATH - a ceremony held each year during Girl Scout Week. the week of March 12th. It is a time for Girl Scouts to reflect upon the importance of the words, "to serve God", in the Girl Scout Promise. Some religions observe Girl Scout Sunday on the Sunday beginning GS Week while other religions observe the Girl Scout Sabbath on the Saturday ending Girl Scout week. People of the Jewish faith also call it Shabbat.

GIRL SCOUT WEEK - ceremonies and celebrations are held throughout the week of March 12th each year.

COURT OF AWARDS - a ceremony to recognize the achievements of the Girl Scouts. It is on this occasion that girls receive the insignia they have earned. This ceremony can be held any time during the Girl Scouting year. At the last Court of Awards of the year, members can receive their membership stars.

FLY-UP - a ceremony held at the end of the Girl Scouting year for Brownie Girl Scouts bridging into Junior Girl Scouts. It is at this time the girls receive their Brownie Girl Scout wings.

BRIDGING - a ceremony held for any Girl Scout moving up to a new level in the program. Daisy Girl Scouts to Brownie Girl Scouts, Brownie Girl Scouts to Junior Girl Scouts, and Junior Girl Scouts to Girls Scouts 11 - 17.

CAMPFIRE - a ceremony and/or celebration held around a fire. The meaning of a campfire lies in the spirit of the program. It can unlock the spirit of mystery, romance, sisterhood, humor, and magic within the heart of each participant.

ADULT RECOGNITION - an occasion at any time of the year when adults are recognized for their service to Girl Scouting.

GIRL SCOUT'S OWN - not a ceremony in the strict sense of the word but a time for Girl Scouts to reflect upon their feelings about Girl Scouting and the world around them. It is a solemn time given over to the girls themselves to create a moment of their very own. A Girl Scouts' Own can be held at any time and can take place at a troop meeting, an inter-troop gathering or camp.

OPENING - a ceremony to begin a meeting or event.

CLOSING - a ceremony to end a meeting or event.

FLAG - a ceremony to recognize our allegiance to our nation or discard a worn flag. A flag ceremony can be held as part of a celebration. It can also be used to open a troop meeting as well as on a separate occasion.

