



Exploring Co-op Troops

What is a Co-Op Troop?

In an ideal world a Co-op Troop would be a Troop where every parent/child partner shared equally in the management of the Troop. The situation is very rare where this model would succeed! As you know, we all see and hear things differently. In the same way, we may interpret the GS Program in slightly different ways. We all have differing opinions about what is and isn't important. By following the Co-op model presented here, your Troop will benefit from everyone's contribution, while making sure you have a girl driven program.

A Co-op Troop is a wonderful example of Girl/Adult Partnership. Be sure all adults read the **Girl/Adult Partnership** handout or read it on-line at www.girlscouts.org/adults/partnership.html!

Role of the Leaders

Even though delivery of the Girl Scout program will be shared by the adults, your Troop still needs someone to be "in charge" - one or two Leaders that co-ordinate the activities the rest of the parents provide. The workload for the Leaders(s) is minimal in a Co-op Troop.

If you are an existing Troop wanting to try the Co-op model, the best scenario would have your current Leaders continuing in this role. The Troop will benefit greatly from a continuity in leadership style. Competing leadership styles, or lack of leadership, can negatively impact the success of the Troop. Leaders/Coordinators should play a role in each meeting - opening, closing and/or business. See **Helpful Suggestions** for other ideas.

Role of the Other Adults

All adults will take responsibility in the Troop. The Leaders/Coordinators present them with an outline of the year, based on girl choices, and the parents choose how they will help. Adults may fill standing roles in the Troop such as:

- Cookie Manager
- Communication - in a Co-op Troop it becomes even more important to have a person in charge of communication within the Troop.
- Transportation Coordinator
- Outing Coordinator
- Paperwork
- Other roles that fit Troop needs

Role of the Girls

The girls in the Troop, with the guidance of the Leaders/Coordinators, plan their year. They determine what awards they would like to earn, what outings they would like to take and what type of service they would like to participate in.

1. How involved are the girls in the decision making process? See the section on **Ways to Involve Girls in Planning and Leadership/Role of Adults** in the **Girl/Adult Partnership handout** online at www.girlscouts.org/adults/partnership.html#ways
2. Looking for a planning tool to use? Try the **Girl Planning - Brainstorming** handout for ideas!



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Making it Happen!

Step 1: Girl Planning

With guidance from the Troop Leader/Coordinator, the girls determine what they wish to do during the Girl Scouting year

Step 2: Leader/Coordinator Planning

The Leader/Coordinator(s) get together and set up a schedule for the year, complete with dates, based on what the girls want. Consider the following:

- Come up with a list of ways to help for those that “don’t have time”.
- Schedule at least one free meeting in case extra time is needed to complete things.

Troop management questions to consider (from www.girlscouts.org):

- How will decisions will be made?
- How and when will you communicate?
- What times are you unavailable to each other?
- How will you handle last minute changes?
- How will you handle discipline problems?
- How will you handle emergencies?
- How will you handle troop money?
- How will you handle registration and other paperwork?
- How will you work with your own girls if they are in the troop?

Step 3: Getting the Other Adults On-Board!

At a parent meeting, present the schedule for the year and let them choose what they will do. While the goal is full participation it is important to take note of those with fragile family circumstances. Don’t push that parent. Find them something to do, even if it’s just staying at a meeting.

At this meeting, you can also divide up the standing Troop jobs as discussed on the previous page.

Helpful Suggestions

- Keep your financial records open. Make the information always available so everyone knows where the Troop money is going. In doing so, be sure to keep confidential any information relating to a family who might be experiencing financial difficulties.
- Consider giving the girl who’s parent/adult presents the activity/award for the meeting a special patch that represents what was done at the meeting.
- Keep a “Filler Bag/Folder” Have things available for both the extra free meeting if needed and for other times a last minute activity is needed. Example: things to read for signs or other badges/try-its the girls have decided on.

FAQs

- Should all parents/adults be registered?

Yes!

- Should all parents/adults go through the Leader appointment process?

*It is preferred that they be appointed. They **definitely must** be appointed if they will be left alone with the girls. Check with your Neighborhood or Council for their policy.*

- Should all parents /adults go through Leader Training?

It is preferred that they receive Leader Training. Check with your Neighborhood or Council for their policy.