

Guide to Managing Girl Behavior

A proactive approach to creating structure and maintaining a positive environment during troop meetings.

The purpose of this guide is to support volunteers in facilitating a discussion with girls and caregivers about appropriate conduct and behavior during Girl Scout activities. While this guide contains basic strategies on managing girl behavior in group settings, please remember that each girl has their own unique personality and challenges and may need a different approach not found in this guide. With that in mind, use the behavior management strategies that best fit the girls in your troop.

Note: The strategies in this guide are not meant to act as a tool for girls that may need special accommodations. If you have any questions or concerns on managing girl behavior, please contact your Membership Manager.

Section 1

Creating a Troop Agreement

Creating a troop agreement is a great way to establish clear expectations early in the year and should be used along with the Girl Scout Code of Conduct Agreement form. Complete the following steps with your troop to guide girls through the creation of your own troop agreement:

What is a Troop Agreement?

- A troop agreement is a document created together by the troop, with guidelines for behavior that every troop member agrees to follow.
- Share with the girls that a troop agreement helps make sure everyone can feel safe and have fun at Girl Scouts.
- A new troop agreement should be created at the beginning of each year to incorporate new members and allow for growth and development. A troop agreement can be revisited and updated throughout the year as needed.

Review the Girl Scout Promise & Law and Girl Scout Conduct Agreement

- Review the Promise & Law as well as the Code of Conduct Agreement with girls.
- Ask the girls what words or phrases they like in the Promise and Law.
 - Examples of questions: How does it feel to be friendly? Helpful? What would it look like if you were being considerate? What does it mean to be honest and fair?

Brainstorm Ideas for your Own Troop Agreement

- Ask the girls to give examples of how they should behave at troop meetings. Topics could be related to your meeting space, materials, how to treat others, arriving/leaving, etc. Each girl should have a chance to share. If girls are talking over one another, consider using the Girl Scout talking sign (place hands out on the floor/table front of them) or using a talking stick or piece where only the person holding the stick or other identified object is allowed to speak.
 - Tip: Change “do not do this” negative statements into “do this” positive statements. For example, change “don’t talk when others are talking” to “listen when others are talking.”

- As a troop, choose a few items for your final troop agreement. Examples include:
 - Be honest and fair
 - Share resources and materials
 - Help one another
 - Leave the space cleaner than how you found it (a Girl Scout tradition)
 - Be a good listener

Create a Troop Agreement Poster

- On poster board, use markers and optional decorations/stickers to create your troop agreement poster.
- Girls can work as a group or take turns, writing each agreement on the poster.

Sign the Troop Agreement Poster

- Once the poster is completed, review the consequences for breaking agreements in the Conduct Agreement.
- Have each girl sign her name on the troop agreement poster.
- Display the poster at each troop meeting along with the Promise and Law.

Section 2

Keeping Girls Engaged

Instead of waiting for negative behavior to occur, take a proactive approach using the methods below to keep girls engaged throughout the course of a meeting:

Plan each meeting and activity in advance.

- Using the meeting plans in the Volunteer Toolkit, plan your meeting in advance and familiarize yourself with the activities and concepts. Be sure to have all the necessary materials, handouts, etc. set up prior to the meeting starting. This allows you to fully focus your attention on the girls as the meeting starts and helps set the tone for the remainder of the meeting.

Encourage positive behavior.

- Show approval when girls are on task, helping each other, and following the guidelines from the Troop Agreement.
 - Examples: giving a high-five/fist bump, a thumbs up, verbal praise, etc.

Build Relationships.

- Build some time in meetings to get to know the girls as individuals- this helps build trust and rapport.
- Connect with parents and caregivers by communicating regularly on troop business, celebrating girls' accomplishments, and seeking their support in running troop operations. This can be done in person at the end of the meeting, or through social platforms like Rallyhood.

Be consistent.

- Consistency in guidelines, expectations, and consequences makes for a predictable environment and ensures fair and equitable treatment for the girls.

Nip minor disruptions in the bud.

- Pointing out minor disruptions quickly and calmly can prevent them from escalating.

If something is not working, pivot.

- If the girls seem uninterested and appear to be getting distracted frequently, pivot to a different activity or change the subject briefly to regain their attention before getting back to the activity.
 - Examples: a 20-second dance party, a game of rock-paper-scissors, asking the girls to recite the Promise and Law, a quick stretch break, etc.

Section 3

Addressing Girl Conduct

Before addressing any girl behavior, it is important that a Troop Agreement (see page 2) is created with the girls and that a Girl Scout Code of Conduct Agreement has been reviewed and signed by the girl and parent/guardian. After these documents are signed, keep them in a safe place with your troop records. If a behavior arises that violates the Troop Agreement or Code of Conduct, please take the following steps to address it:

Address the Behavior

- If possible, speak to the girl one-on-one away from the other girls directly after the meeting.
 - Make sure you are still in view of other adults or bring a co-leader/chaperone with you.
- Talk with her, not at her.
 - Always speak with compassion: Use a calm tone of voice and maintain a neutral facial expression.
 - Start with questions: “Did you notice everyone was coloring and you were the only one not coloring?”
 - Share what troop agreement or expectation was not being followed.
 - State the impact: “When you talk while I am giving instructions, it’s hard for the other girls to hear what I’m saying.”
- Discuss what will be done to correct the behavior.
 - This might mean seating her away from certain girls, limiting her access to materials for activities, pairing her with an adult, etc.
 - Always follow through on what you say.
- Briefly inform the parent/caregiver of what happened.
- Document the date, behavior and correction for your own records.

Take a Break

- Ask the girl to step aside and take a brief break away from the group or from the activity– make sure she is still in a safe space within sight of both troop volunteers.
 - When you are able, address the behavior with her. Share what troop agreement or expectation was not being followed.
- Briefly inform the parent/guardian of what happened.
- Document the date, behavior issue, correction and length of the break for your records.
- Always lead with empathy- sometimes girls, no matter their age, just need a moment to take a deep breath and reset.

Meet with the Girl's Parent/Caregiver

- If the behavior does not improve, set up a time for the troop co-leaders to meet privately with the parent/caregiver(s)*.
 - Remind the family of the Code of Conduct Agreement and the troop agreements. Explain that all girls in the troop worked together to create the troop agreement.
 - Describe all incidents that have occurred in sequence.
 - Keep the conversation open, calm, honest and respectful.
 - Discuss how you will work together to ensure their girl has a positive experience in Girl Scouts:
 - Ask for help from the caregivers – is a parent/guardian or other trusted adult able to attend meetings with their girl?
 - Ask how the family may help their girl recognize the expectations in the Code of Conduct Agreement and the troop agreement.
 - Assure the family you look forward to working with their girl.
 - Assure the family you will keep in touch with them about their girl's behavior.

Contact your Community Partners or Council Staff for Support

- If the behavior does not improve, contact your Membership Manager for assistance as needed.
- Contact the parent/caregiver(s) to decide the next step of action.

*If parent/caregiver(s) are unwilling to comply with a request to meet with the troop co-leaders or address your concerns, contact your Membership Manager.