



Girl Scouts®
Where Girls Grow StrongSM

Service Unit 55-3's Encampment Chaperone's Guide

Girl Scout camping provides girls with a fun and educational group living experience that links the Girl Scout program with the natural surroundings and contributes to each camper's mental, physical, social, and spiritual growth. [Safety-Wise 2000, Program Standard 8]

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Each year millions of people around the globe enjoy outdoor recreational activities in their leisure time. These activities are an important part of life – a time for personal reflection, for challenge, for being together with family and friends, or being alone with a beautiful sunset. Many young people learn their respect for the outdoors through organized activities such as those provided by Girl Scouting. Under the guidance of a trained and enthusiastic adult leader, girls may take their first hike and, through a series of activities, can the skill to plan trips on their own to destinations of their choosing.
[Outdoor Education in Girl Scouting]

Service Unit 55-3's encampments are one of those “organized activities”. An encampment is a time for the entire Service Unit to get together in the out-of-doors. Our encampments are designed to accommodate a variety of skill levels and interests. Each encampment is different, with different options offered by the service unit. For example, some encampments may have options between tent camping or lodge camping. Some troops may elect to sleep in a lodge, partake of meals prepared by adult volunteers, and participate in activities planned by the Service Unit. Other troops may take their tents to a primitive camping site, cook their own meals, conduct their own activities and may only be seen during the camp fire and swap meet! And other troops may pick something half-way in between! Our goal for our encampments is to provide an outdoor experience that all girls will find challenging, regardless of their previous experience and skill levels.

To make that possible, we need a variety of adult volunteers to assist. This booklet is designed primary to discuss the roles of adults serving as chaperones with individual troops, but the information will be helpful for all our adult volunteers.

The Girl Scout Program

It's important that all our volunteers understand and support the Girl Scout program and it's goals for girls [Safety-Wise 2000]:

- To develop to her full individual potential.
- To relate to others with increasing understanding, skill and respect.
- To develop values to guide her actions and to provide the foundation for sound decision-making.
- To contribute to the improvement of society through the use of her abilities and leadership skills, working in cooperation with others.

In addition to the program goals, each registered Adult Girl Scout has agreed to accept the Girl Scout Promise and the Girl Scout Law. We ask our chaperones to respect our beliefs.

The Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:
To serve God and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

The Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be:
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,
and to
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place, and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.

Progression in Outdoor Activities

In Girl Scouting we believe strongly in the “look before you leap” and “walk before you run” philosophy! Before we take a group of girls off for a week-long backpacking trip along the Appalachian Trail, we’ll start off with something a little tamer! Our girls will “progress” through various skills levels during their Girl Scout career. Below are eight levels of outdoor progression and some of the activities associated with each level:

- Look Out - Wonder what it’s like, learn what to wear, learn good outdoor manners
- Meet Out - Play nature games, hold a meeting outdoors
- Move Out - Earn an outdoor badge or try-it, learn about plants and animals
- Explore Out - Learn and practice safe walking skills, know simple first aid
- Cook Out - Build a fire, prepare a one-pot meal, practice dishwashing and disposal
- Sleep Out - Plan what to take and wear, understand night noises, try star gazing
- Camp Out - Pitch and strike a tent, set up an outdoor kitchen, take a night hike
- Pack Out - Earn a Red Cross First Aid Certificate, plan a trip extending several days

Girl Readiness for Outdoor Activities

Before we take Girl Scouts on outdoor activities, we must assess their readiness level. The readiness level of the troop as a whole will depend upon the readiness of the individual girls. The troop's readiness level will determine what type of program they select during the encampment. We consider the following factors:

- Emotional Readiness
 - Wants to go
 - Is not afraid to be outdoors without security of parents
 - Able and willing to work with buddy or small group
 - Can function as a member of group
 - Maturity and willingness to learn new skills and try new foods
 - Able to follow directions and carry out simple tasks
 - Doesn't always have to have her own way
- Physical Readiness
 - Has stamina – does not tire quickly
 - Can control body functions
- Has Necessary Skills/Knowledge
 - Can help in simple planning
 - Can follow kaper chart
 - Can dress for outdoor activities
- Has Experience-Provided Ability
 - Has satisfactorily followed directions
 - Has been on a series of day outings

It's important to note that physical and mental handicaps need not prevent girls from participating in outdoor activities. If the troop you are accompanying has a girl with special needs, you can expect the troop leader to brief you beforehand, so that you'll understand any special requirements.

Minimal Impact Camping

Girl Scouts use minimal impact techniques while in the outdoors. Basically, minimal impact means that our presence will not damage our environment. When we leave, no one should be able to tell we've ever been there! Actual minimal impact behavior will depend on where you're camping. If you're backpacking in the back country, you'll use techniques that will spread the impact out so that the back country doesn't look like an established campground.

When our Service Unit holds an encampment we will most likely be using an established camp site. At an established site, good minimal impact camping rules require you to "stick with" already established areas. For example we only use existing fire circles, stay on already established paths (no short-cuts) and pitch tents in designated areas. Other good outdoor manners mean that we teach the girls to leave nature where we find it. We look, but don't touch. We don't pick flowers, chop down trees, rearrange the rocks, or bludgeon the snake!

Safety-Wise 2000

Girl Scouting provides our daughters with many exciting outdoor opportunities. One common theme, no matter what the activity, is safety. All Adult Girl Scouts are required to review and following Safety-Wise 2000 for troop activities. Safety-Wise 2000 covers "the rules" for almost any activity. For our encampments the sections on Arts & Crafts, Backpacking, Challenge Courses, Outdoor Cooking, Food Preparation, Cookstoves, Fires, Hiking, Science-Related Activities, Sports, and Camping may apply! Safety-Wise 2000 also specifies the number of adults that must accompany a troop on an outing.

Before the encampment, the leader will brief all the chaperones on the specific activity checkpoints and ensure the chaperones are knowledgeable about their responsibilities. It's important to remember that we will follow the safety rules even if we feel they are "silly". As an adult chaperone it's your responsibility to enforce the rules. These rules are designed to keep the girls safe – what's OK for your daughter isn't necessarily OK for someone else's daughter.

OK, So What Do You Want Me To Do?

OK, you've reviewed the information presented in this pamphlet and you've agreed to follow and enforce Girl Scout rules and procedures and you'll support our philosophy, now what? Well, the "now what?" will depend upon each troop's needs and the service unit's needs. As a rule you'll be probably be asked to drive a group of girls to the encampment and monitor the activities of a group of girls. You may be assigned to cooking and cleanup duties in the camp kitchen or serve the service unit or troop in some other capacity. You'll probably not be working with your daughter -- it's easier to be a chaperone, if you don't have to worry about being "mom" too!

You'll need to be physically and emotionally ready - just like the girls. As far as we can tell, all Girl Scout camps are built on the sides of hills! You'll need to be prepared hike up and down hills, use a latrine, eat scrambled eggs with shells in them, escort little girls to the latrine at 2 in the morning and smile the entire time! You'll get dirty. You'll see things in nature that you really don't want to see. And, possibly, you'll have do this without any coffee!

If you are a driver, you will be asked to show proof that you are a licensed and insured. Your vehicle must have seat belts - enough so that each girl gets her own seat belt and you shouldn't put girls under 12 in the front seat if you have air bags. You will be given an "event packet" containing a map, directions, the girls' permission slips and emergency procedures. Girl Scouts do not "caravan" to events (one car following another). Each driver will have the information they need to get to the camping site.

You will need the same gear that your daughter needs and have the same restrictions. No sandals, bare bellies, tank tops and we know you've got a candy bar hidden in your purse - give it up!

At the event you will be expected to focus on the girls - cell phones are great for emergencies, but don't expect to be available for calls! Also - no sneaking in a briefcase of papers to review! However, you should be prepared to entertain yourself for brief periods. The activities are designed to interest the girls not entertain their chaperones. We recommend a good paperback you can pull out during down-time!

You may be required to fill out an Adult Health History form. If you aren't required to fill out the form, you need to discuss any medical issues with the first aider before hand so that they can accommodate your needs.

You'll be a health and safety role model. This means no alcohol and no smoking in front of the girls. On Girl Scout property, smoking is only allowed in established fire circles. If you smoke, please discuss this with your leader before hand so that smoke breaks can be planned.

You'll have to remember that you're not "mom". Unless you're going to nag each and every girl to brush their hair in the morning, leave your daughter's alone! Talk with your daughter ahead of time, so that she'll understand that you're there to support the entire troop.

You'll be expected to monitor the girls, but not do things for them, unless it's a safety issue. For example, the girls might not be able to lift a big pot on and off the fire, but they can certainly stir the contents!

You might be asked to accompany the girls to the pre-planned activities. These activities are usually planned and executed by Cadette and Senior Girl Scouts who are learning to lead younger girls and your level of participation will vary. These activities may not seem like "professionally" executed activities - and they're not! Our teens will make mistakes and learn from them. Upon arrival at the activity, ask the teen if she needs your help. If she says "no", butt out! Sometimes you only need to stay close by and intervene if there is a discipline problem. Under no circumstances should you berate or brow beat the teen Girl Scout. If you've got an issue, talk privately with the teen's leader.

You'll be expected to follow the instructions of your troop leader, first aider, encampment coordinator and any other adult with Girl Scout Outdoor Certification. If you disagree with the instructions, please discuss the issue quietly, out of earshot of the girls. It's never appropriate to argue with another adult in front of the girls. It's important to remember that these adults are specially trained and responsible for the well-being of all the girls. Of course, you're also be expected to have fun, enjoy the outdoors, learn something new and do something you've never done before!