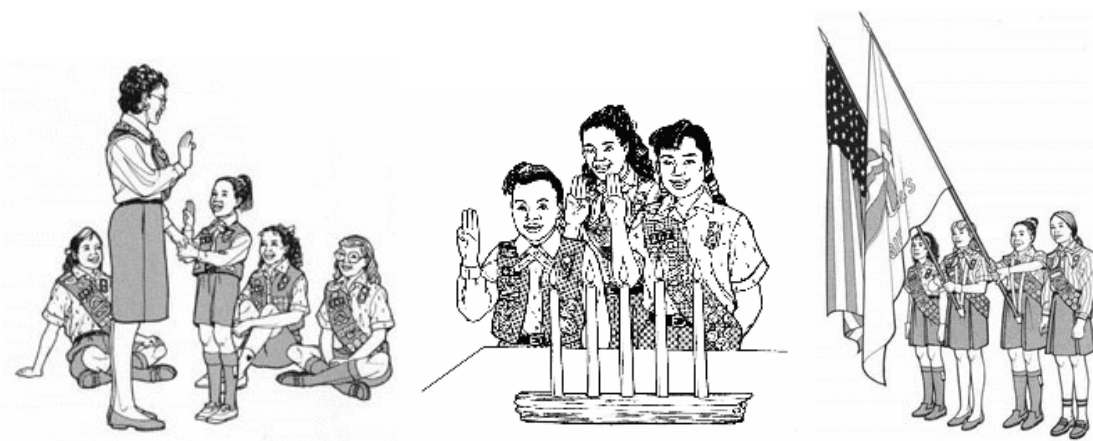


CEREMONIES AND GIRL SCOUTING

In Girl Scouting, you can find many reasons to plan a ceremony. Girl Scouting has celebrations, special days, and traditions that help mark the passing of the year. A troop may choose to celebrate a birthday, a holiday, or any other event whenever they choose.

Celebrating these special days helps foster a sense of belonging and historical understanding. Girls learn of the larger organization of which they are members. Best of all, a ceremony which the girls have planned and carried out is a creative expression of their ideals and aspirations.

Girl Scouts of all age levels enjoy planning ceremonies. Ceremonies can be performed by large groups or small groups, outdoors or indoors. Simple ceremonies often begin or end meetings. Formal ceremonies can honor achievements or times of transition, such as entering Girl Scouting or bridging to the next program level. The ceremonies that are remembered the most often have a clear purpose and a theme, such as nature, heritage, friendship, or peace. You can express themes in many ways: through music, songs, stories, poetry, dance, or light. And some ceremonies use common symbols such as a bridge for crossing over, a dove and olive branch for peace, and green plants for nature.



PLANNING A MEANINGFUL CEREMONY

No matter what kind of ceremony you are having, good planning is essential so that the ceremony will be meaningful. Ceremonies should be simple and sincere. They should have significance and beauty. Good ceremonies have both a clear purpose and a theme that enriches the meaning and mood of the ceremony. Whatever the purpose or origin, ceremonies serve to reinforce values of Girl Scouting. They provide opportunities for girls to share their feelings and reflect on what they have accomplished individually and together.

Basically, a ceremony has three parts – the opening, the celebration, and the closing. The opening can be used to welcome guests, explain the purpose of the ceremony, and set the mood for the occasion. For example, it might be quiet, festive, or serious. You can begin a ceremony by reciting The Pledge of Allegiance and The Girl Scout Promise and Law. The celebration focuses on the purpose of the ceremony, the reason you have gathered people together. The focus might include presenting awards, singing songs, reading poems or choral readings, performing dramatics, or sharing a candle lighting. The closing may summarize the ceremony. It might include forming a friendship circle, saying good-bye or thank-you to special guests, or singing a closing song.

Girl Scouting operates on the principle that girls grow, learn, and have fun by making decisions, doing, and discovering for themselves. That is why it is important that the girls do as much of the planning for ceremonies as possible. Ceremonies are opportunities for the girls, not the adults, to express themselves. Girls should have a part in making their own memories.

Planning should include the girls' ideas and input. As the girls get older, their responsibilities for planning should expand. Keep in mind that different levels or groups will have different abilities. Don't worry about doing everything "right." Be flexible, let the girls make mistakes and learn from them. It is the volunteer's function to guide the group and provide an environment for creativity.

SUGGESTED DATES AND OCCASIONS

Note: Many ceremonies and celebrations suggest the lighting of candles. For 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.

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 31 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 United States.

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 22 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, which is March 12, 1912.

GIRL SCOUT SUNDAY/SABBATH – a ceremony held each year during Girl Scout Week – the week of March 12. 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 Girl Scout 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 12 each year.

COURT OF AWARDS – a ceremony to recognize the achievements of 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 Scout 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 Scout year for Girl Scout Brownies bridging to Girl Scout Juniors. It is at this time the girls receive their Girl Scout Brownie wings.

BRIDGING – a ceremony held for any Girl Scout moving up to a new age level in the program: Girl Scout Daisies to Girl Scout Brownies, Girl Scout Brownies to Girl Scout Juniors, Girl Scout Juniors to Girl Scout Cadettes, Girl Scout Cadettes to Girl Scout Seniors, Girl Scout Seniors to Girl Scout Ambassadors, and Girl Scout Ambassadors to Adult Girl Scouts.

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, at an inter-troop gathering, or at 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.

Girl Scout Daisies	Girl Scout Brownies	Girl Scout Juniors	Girl Scout Cadettes	Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a favorite song to sing • Decide who they want to invite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose songs and poems related to the theme • Decide who they want to invite and make invitations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on a theme • Decide when they want to host the ceremony • Find songs and poems • Make and serve refreshments • Clean up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on a theme • Find songs and readings • Work with a Girl Scout Junior sister troop to plan a bridging ceremony • Make their own props 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and host a community ceremony • Select site and make arrangements • Contact participants • Choose what to put into the ceremony • Conduct the ceremony

What kind of ceremony do we want?

A bridging?

An investiture?

A flag ceremony?

A rededication?

Where will it be held?

Indoors or outdoors?

In a park or in a building?

When will it be held?

In the morning or at night?

During a troop meeting or another time?

Who should be invited?

Parents?

Special Friends?

Adults in Girl Scouting?

Siblings?

Another Girl Scout troop?

Adults from the community?

What could be used in the ceremony?

Girl Scout Promise and Law?

Candles, lights, or a campfire?

A bridge?

A favorite song, dance, skit, or poem?

Flags?

A mirror (for a Brownie pool?)

How will we do it?

Who will start the ceremony?

Where will the guests sit?

Do we need to learn something new?

Should we sit or stand?

Should we speak together or separately?

Do we need to rehearse?

THEMES

Even though each person has many different feelings about complex subjects, the most effective ceremonies convey only one central thought. A theme gives continuity and cohesion to the ceremony.

Common Themes

Accepting Responsibility
Beauty
Cheerfulness
Creative Arts
Conservation
Friendship
Gifts of Girl Scouting
Heritage
International Understanding
Loyalty
Music
Nature
Patriotism
Peace
Service to Others
Women to Remember

Ways to Express Themes

Campfires
Choral Readings
Creative Movement
Dance
Dramatizations
Girls' Original Thoughts or Music
Lighting Candles
Music
Poetry
Quotations
Skits
Songs
Stories

SYMBOLISM

A symbol represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention. Often, a material object is used to represent something intangible or invisible, such as an idea.

Common Symbolism

Archway —entering a different atmosphere	Pebble —the largeness of the world
Bridge —a crossing over or phase	Planting a Tree —conservation, a living dedication to someone or something
Dove and Olive Branch —peace	Quiet Sign —silence, remembrance
Eagle —courage and patriotism	Signing Your Name —your own identity, personal involvement, support, loyalty
Feather —nature, personal growth	String —the human line binding all humanity
Flag —the official banner of something	Swaying From Side to Side —everyone agreeing to the same thought
Friendship Circle —the unbroken chain of friendship with Girl Scouts and Girl Guides all over the world	Trefoil —the three parts of the Girl Scout Promise
Handshake —hello, welcome	Wishing Well —hopes and dreams

Colors

Visual artists and poets have their own ideas of the meanings of different colors. Encourage girls to brainstorm how colors make them feel and how they can use meaningful colors in their words and descriptions. Use this exercise to decide on a color scheme for a ceremony.

Flowers

The sentimental tradition of flowers and herbs dates back at least 150 years. Victorians assigned symbolism to specific blossoms so they could send each other "secret" messages. Your local library and the Internet are good sources for dictionaries of the "language of flowers."

Light

A candle's radiating light or the glow of a campfire can add an inspirational atmosphere to a ceremony. Light can symbolize love, truth, hope, high ideals, a promise, or an individual. Many ceremonies use three candles to represent the three parts of the Girl Scout Promise and ten candles to stand for the ten parts of the Girl Scout Law.

Ceremony Worksheet

Name of Ceremony _____

Purpose _____

Theme _____

Date of Ceremony _____ Time _____

Place of Ceremony _____

Who will come? _____

Opening _____

Songs, Poems, Quotations? _____

Who Does What? _____

Main Section _____

Who Does What? _____

Badges or Awards? _____

Closing _____

Who Does What? _____

Rehearsal Needed? _____

Who will record ceremony? _____

Decorations? _____

Who will bring them? _____

Props? _____

Who will bring them? _____

Refreshments? _____

Cost? _____

What funds will we use? _____

Are invitations and thank yous needed? _____

Who will send them? _____