

Startup Troop

Coach Guide

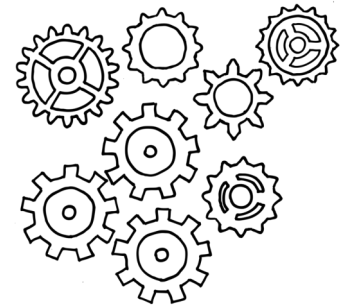


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What is a Startup Troop?



Startup Troops are key supporters for new troops, with the goal of setting newly formed leaders up to begin leading a fully functioning, volunteer led troop. Through a trained Startup Troop Coach, these troops will run intensively for between 4-6 weeks. This allows staff and coaches time to provide Girl Scout programming to interested girls while cultivating potential leaders. Girls who are interested in becoming Girl Scouts attend the troop meetings with a parent/guardian.



During the new troop meetings, you're not only going to give the girls a fun experience, but you're also teaching the parents how to be leaders and showing them first-hand that it's not difficult.

You are also introducing them to their coach– an important resource as they begin their first year as a Troop Leader. As we know, getting girls in K-5 excited about Girl Scouts usually isn't the hard part, it's getting the parents on board as volunteers that is our greatest obstacle. By providing coaching, girls get excited about Girl Scouting while the potential troop leaders learn how to manage troop meetings.





Coach Tip:

Startup Troops are a great way to onboard tentative new leaders. Providing extra support can ensure that the troop is sustainable!

Startup Troop Goals






Through the formation of Startup Troops, your Service Unit will:

-  Build sustainable membership
-  Form new, functioning troops
-  Cultivate troops that are retained from year 1 to year 2
-  Achieve additional goals set by the service unit



Through their Startup Troop experience, girls will:

-  Meet Regularly as a troop
-  Experience a variety of purposeful activities as a troop
-  Participate in Girl Scout traditions

Coach Tip:

Talk to your council about their programmatic goals, and make sure that the content of the meetings and the language you are using to recruit parent volunteers is in line with the council's goals and standard messaging.

Coach Position Description



Startup Troop Coach (Volunteer Position)

Reports To: Service Unit Manager, Council Staff

Term: One Year Appointment, renewable for subsequent membership[years based on Performance

Qualifications:

- Former or current troop leader, or dedicated volunteer with extensive knowledge of troop programming
- Ability to lead up to 5 startup troops within the membership year, and provide ongoing coaching support to the new leaders recruited

Responsibilities

- Work with council staff to identify potential spaces for local startup troops
- Provide 4-6 weeks of facilitated troop programming while providing hands on learning for new potential leaders
- Answering questions from potential leaders, and helping them build comfort in the role of Troop Leader
- Continue to provide support for new leaders for at least their first full membership year
- Other responsibilities as needed to support new troop leaders within the Service Unit

Coach Tip:

Spread the word with other troop leaders in your Service Unit about what you are doing with Startup Troops– and invite them to join you as a guest at your next startup troop meeting!

Startup Troop Coach Contract



As a Startup Troop Coach, I agree to:

- Make sure that all communications are in line with the brand and guidelines put forth by my council.
- Support at least 5 startup troops throughout the membership year.
- Provide ongoing support to new troop leaders through 4-6 facilitated meetings, and continuing to provide support when the troop is fully transferred to the newly established troop leaders.
- Support the council in finding suitable spaces to hold startup troops.
- Keep my Service Unit informed of the efforts to provide hands on, details support to new troop leaders.
- Assist new troop leaders in connecting with council staff to complete the required background check and trainings.
- Accept this position as a volunteer position, and I understand that there is no monetary compensation for this role.

Council Staff:

Signature

Print Name

Date: _____

Startup Troop Coach:

Signature

Print Name

Date: _____

Tips For Successful Coaching



Ask thought provoking questions.

Push new troop leaders to think. Ask them about the skills they currently have, and how those skills can be applied as a troop leader. Ask them about the gaps they see, how they can build their skills to address those gaps, and what support they might need as they move forward.

Provide a positive example.

Maintaining a positive outlook is key. Be the positive and encouraging voice they need about Girl Scouting, their troop, and their leadership abilities.

Listen more than you speak.

New troop leaders don't know what they don't know. Listening to their questions, concerns and even complaints will help you identify what support they need, and how you can provide that support or connect them to the appropriate resources.

Acknowledge the process.

Becoming a knowledgeable leader doesn't happen overnight. Make sure to set expectations so new leaders know this is a marathon, not a race!

Identify teaching moments.

Learning can happen when you least expect it. When new leaders reach out for support, talk them through the answers instead of giving them a roadmap. Help them learn by doing so they can grow into strong and successful troop leaders.

Coach Tip:

There's a big different between a coach and an instructor. Instructors teach, while coaches help the individual to learn by doing.

Startup Troop Meeting Structure



Recommended Meeting Structure

Meeting 1: Fully Coach Led

This meeting should introduce girls and their parents to the world of Girl Scouting. Provide interesting activities that introduce girls to the concept of a girl-led learning environment, and engage parents in learning more about how to continue the troop after the four week program is complete.

Meeting 2: Coach Led with Volunteer Support

Plan and lead the meeting while actively engaging potential leaders in the meeting activities. Encourage potential leaders to take on parts of the meeting and coach them through leading activities with the girls.

Meeting 3: Volunteer Led with Coach Support

Provide potential leaders with the meeting plan and be on hand to coach them through leading their first meeting. Be available for questions or to step in if needed.

Meeting 4: Fully Volunteer Led with Coach Observing

Take a step back and let the new leaders fully lead the activities for the meeting. At the end of the meeting, provide feedback and suggestions for future meetings.

Coach Tip:

Begin to build parent support from the first meeting. Solidifying potential leadership early on gives new leaders the chance to learn through the troop meetings.

Setting up a Startup Troop



Finding a Meeting Space

Sometimes finding a safe and free meeting space can be difficult. Here are some tips on finding a good space for your startup troop meeting:

Schools

Schools are the best place to hold troops meetings if allowed. Not only do school cafeterias already have table space but usually they have some room to do a Friendship Circle, play some games or sing some songs. The parents will also feel more comfortable meeting at their child's school because it is familiar to them.

Community/Recreation Centers:

Often times community centers will have classrooms, art rooms or other classroom style rooms that are available for use.

Retirement/Nursing Homes

Nursing homes may not seem like it but they are actually amazing meeting spaces. They often times have classrooms or community rooms available and the troop could do service projects for the residents there.

Coach Tip:

Be sure to leave the meeting space you are using cleaner than you found it. Not only is this the Girl Scout way, but it will also ensure that you can use that space for future startup troops as well.

Setting up a Startup Troop



Setting up the Space

- You'll want to set up the space so that the group is sitting together at one or two tables.
- Set out markers and nametags for the girls to start working on as they come in. Encourage them to be creative, and as their parents to assist them.
- Set out the Girl Scout Family Talent Survey and pencils for the parents to fill out as their girls work on the nametags.
- Make space for parents with their girls. Remind parents that Girl Scouting is a family experience, and encourage them to participate with their girl, rather than sitting at a separate table.

Coach Tip:

The Girl Scout Family Talent Survey is a great way to get the parents thinking about ways they can support the troop. Even if they don't sign on to be one of the leaders they may be more likely to support the troop in other ways.

Tips For Leading Startup Troops



Set the tone

Arrive at your location at least 20 to 30 minutes early, depending up- on where it is; you may have to set up tables yourself. ALWAYS have the parents sit with the girls. This helps engage the parents in the activities instead of them sitting at a separate table not involved.

Give the parents tasks, have them help you pass out supplies, help any girls who are struggling with the craft/activity. The more involved they feel the more likely that they will engage with the troop after you're gone.

Explain the activities be sure to share with the parent's things like how long it took to prep for the activity, where you got the resources, etc. This should be informative for them.

Provide information to parents. If they are leaning toward leading, give them one of the meeting guide packets so they can look it over. Also bring troop number registration cards or paper registration forms for anyone who isn't registered.

Coach Tip:

Being prepared will help your recruitment efforts. The easier it looks to the parents in attendance, the more likely they will be to see volunteering as something they can do.

Tips For Leading Startup Troops



Communication

Contact everyone who will be in the startup troop by email or by phone as soon as the meeting is scheduled. Send a reminder email two days before the meeting and another email the day of the meeting so that everyone shows up and knows when/where to be.

Inform parents about what to expect at the meeting. In all calls and emails leading up to the meeting make sure they know a parent/guardian must stay for the WHOLE meeting with their girl.

Create flyers to build girl and adult numbers at your startup troop. Include an RSVP so you know how many girls you are expecting, and can have enough supplies on hand for the meeting.

Clarify what a startup troop is– and what it isn't. At the first meeting, be clear that you are the troop coach, NOT the troop leader. Make sure they know who the troop leaders are. If no leaders have stepped up, let them know that you still need two leaders and all the parents to participate in the troop, and that you are there to provide them support throughout the year.

Coach Tip:

Don't overwhelm the parents with information overload. Answering unasked questions can overwhelm a parent who is new to Girl Scouts and make it less likely for them to become a leader. Try to keep the meetings simple and relaxed.

Tips For Leading Startup Troops



Preparation

Invite a fellow volunteer or troop of older girls to attend the meetings with you. Having that second person will make things A LOT easier.

Know the material and the activities. Set some time aside a few days before the first meeting to prep all the materials, read the information, make copies, and make an example using any crafts/projects.

Prepare extras of everything. The last thing you want is to look unprepared and run out of something.

Bring a stack of back up coloring sheets and crayons. You may think an activity will take 30 minutes but if it only takes the girls half that, you need something to fill that extra time. Also having some songs/games ready in case the girls need to get up and move.



Coach Tip:

Girl Scout songs are a great way to fill extra time during a meeting. Not only do they require no additional supplies, but they are a key aspect of the foundational girl experience.

Tips For Leading Startup Troops



Follow Up

Complete the Troop Startup Coach evaluation, and review it with council staff. The evaluation will provide space to highlight the new troops strengths, and where they will need support both from you and from council staff. If there are red flags that pose a concern regarding the troop's experience or readiness to continue on their own, this is where you can outline those concerns and review them with council staff.

Support the new Troop Leaders even after meeting four is complete. Keep in touch with them so you know how they are doing and can provide support where needed.

Check In with the new troop at critical times during the year, such as cookie sale time and membership renewal. Identify other times you think it is important to check in, and follow up at those times.

Introduce the new Troop Leaders to the Service Unit, and explain who the key volunteers are that can provide them with additional support throughout the membership year.

Coach Tip:

Follow up support is key in making sure the new troop is succeeding, and identifying when additional support is needed. Don't forget about the new troop after the fourth meeting!

Post Startup Troop Evaluation



Troop Number: _____ Service Unit: _____

Troop Startup Coach Name: _____

What concerns do the new troop leaders have?

What areas of follow up are required for council?

What steps will you take to follow up with the new troop leaders?

What additional support do you need from council to coach the troop leaders?

Additional Comments:

Coach Tip:

Use this evaluation form to provide council staff with a clear picture of how the troop is functioning, what additional support is needed, and what (if any) red flags council staff should look out for.

Startup Troop Recruitment Tips



Startup Troops give you the chance to show potential leaders that while Girl Scouting takes time and dedication, there are plenty of tools and support structures built in to help new leaders succeed. When recruiting potential leaders, consider these recruitment tips:

- * Every meeting is a learning opportunity for new leaders. Actively engage them and ask if they have questions or concerns throughout the process.
- * Ask parents if they would like to work together to lead the troop. Make sure they understand that they can (and should!) support each other in making the troop a success.
- * Make sure the new leaders and parents understand that you are there to serve as a coach for the troop leaders. While you will be assisting in facilitating the first 4 meetings, remind them that you will be available to support them throughout the year.
- * The VTK is the best resource for new troop leaders. Tell them it is available to them, and set up a time to sit down with them and review the resource. New volunteers might be concerned about the time it takes to be a leader or their limited knowledge of Girl Scout programming. The VTK will reassure them on both counts!

Coach Tip:

Remember to foster a cooperative learning environment where girls can connect, take action, and discover new things together. By providing this key Girl Scout experience, you'll demonstrate to the girls what they will be doing and modeling that for potential leaders.

Startup Troop– Parent FAQ's



Can I drop my girl off for the meetings or do I need to stay?

A parent or caregiver needs to be present with their girl for these troop meetings.

I'm thinking I might want to become a leader but I don't know anything about leading a troop, what kind of help is there for new leaders?

That's great! I'll be your coach, and will be available to provide you with advice and support throughout the year. For planning meetings, the volunteer toolkit is an online troop planning resource that will generate lesson plans for the badges and journey's and can even map out your entire Girl Scout year! It's a great way to keep track of your troop and your progress as well as being a communication tool for you and the parents in the troop!

What additional support will I have as a leader?

New troop leaders have support through the council staff, and a network of volunteers through our local Service Unit. As your coach, I'll introduce you to everyone who will support you in your troop leader experience!

How often does the troop meet?

Every troop is different, during this startup troop we'll be meeting every other week but some troops choose to meet weekly or monthly, it is up to the leaders, girls and parents to decide what's best for them.

Coach Tip:

Have a list of places in the area that allow troops to meet for free; one of the first questions the new leaders will ask will be about meeting space, so having a list on the ready will save some time.

Startup Troop– Parent FAQ's



Is there training for new leaders?

Yes, new leaders have to attend one, two hour in-person training class called Volunteer Essentials and two online courses on Girl Scout safety and Girl Scout 101. These trainings are free and will help you get started as a leader. You have 6 months after finishing the background check to complete these trainings as well.

How much time does being a leader take?

The Volunteer Toolkit is a leaders best friend, it can really cut down on troop meeting planning time. Of course planning time can vary depending on what you're doing, I would say you'll spend roughly an hour planning for every hour you meet. Planning field trips or events might take longer than that but these are things you can engage other parent volunteers to assist with as well. Many hands make light work, so the more parents involved as volunteers the easier it will be.

If I sign up to be a leader, am I on my own or will someone help me?

All troops must have a minimum of two leaders for safety reasons. With that being said, many troops have more than two leaders and other parents who are signed up as support volunteers. Having multiple parents to assist with the troop will make the experience much more fun and less time consuming so we recommend forming a committee of parents who will assist with different tasks.

Coach Tip:

Once you have two leaders on board, encourage them to get together to discuss leading the troop and to get to know one another. Leaders who get along will have a more fun Girl Scout experience and are more likely to come back next year.

Startup Troop– Coach FAQ's



If I do 4-6 meetings and nobody becomes a leader, should I continue meeting with them?

We've found that if you continue to meet with a troop after these initial four to six meetings they become too reliant on their coach and the parents are less likely to step up as a troop leader. In this case, less is more. If parents are not able to lead the troop, talk with your council staff member about alternative troop options for the girls.

Is there a curriculum for startup troops or do I plan my own meetings?

There is a set curriculum for Daisy and Brownie startup troops so you do not need to plan the activities for your meetings. Some of the meetings do involve a bit of prep work ahead of time (precutting some pieces, printing handouts, etc.) but after your first meeting is complete we recommend that you ask the parents to assist in some of that work – this will not only engage the parents further but it will take a little less pressure off of you!

How much time will facilitating a startup troop take?

Each meeting itself should be an hour. Using the curriculum that is provided, prepping for each meeting should take no more than half an hour or so, especially if you engage the parents to assist in prep after the first meeting.

Coach Tip:

Remember, it's easier to run Startup Troops with help! Invite a fellow volunteer or your Service Unit manager to join in, provide perspective, and welcome the new potential leaders to Girl Scouts.

Additional Startup Troop Resources



- **Council Events and Dates Flyer**– New troops don't want to miss anything, so make sure they have all the important dates they need for council deadlines and events.
- * **Startup Troop Coach Guide and Training Materials**– As a Startup Troop Coach, a solid foundation for facilitating startup troops is key to your success. The coach guide and training is a comprehensive resource that should be provided to anyone who is coaching a startup troop.
- * **Volunteer Toolkit**– The VTK is the best resource for new leaders! Make sure they know how to access it and utilize the meeting plans beyond the four week startup troop time frame.
- * **Family Engagement Guide**– Girl Scouting is a family experience. Provide coaches with the Family Engagement Guide, so that the family experience is a key component of the startup troop experience.

Coach Tip:

Preparation is key! Ask questions about your training, and inquire about additional resources you might find helpful from council as you make your plan.